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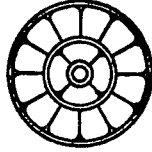
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All correspondence to be addressed to:

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

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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 a further Rs. 4,000. This has made a new 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 taxfree if sent earmarked for us through the Ashram Trust.

AN EXPLANATION TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

The good number of our advertisements must not be taken as a sign of great gain. We pay a very large commission on several of them, and after deducting press-charges our profit is small on the whole.

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXI

No. 1

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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THE BASIS OF LIFE IN THE ASHRAM

SOME WORDS OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

SURELY a big stride will have been taken when man will naturally turn to perfect himself instead of waiting to find perfection in others.... This reversal is the very basis of all true progress. The first human instinct: it is the fault of circumstances, the fault of people, the fault... this one is like this, that one is like that, the other one.... And this goes on indefinitely. The *first step*, the very first step is to say: if I were as I ought to be or if this body were as it ought to be, all would be perfectly all right for it. If for progressing, you were to wait for others to progress, you would have to wait indefinitely. That is the very first thing that is to be circulated everywhere. Never put the blame on others or circumstances, because whatever the circumstances, even those that appear as the worst, if you keep the true attitude and have the true consciousness, they will have no importance at all for your inner progress, no importance—I say this and I include even death.

Indeed that seems to be the first lesson to learn.

December 10, 1969

THE MOTHER

*

The basis of life here is wholly spiritual. An inner discipline is given, but it is on broad lines allowing each individual the necessary freedom for his nature and temperament to grow and change spontaneously. Broadly, the sadhana consists of a progressive surrender of oneself—inward and based upon it the outward also—to the Guru, to the Divine; meditation, concentration, work, service—all these are means for a self-gathering in all one's movements with the sole aim of delivering oneself into the hands of a Higher Power for being worked on and led towards the Goal. The Mother guides, helps each according to his nature and need, and, where necessary, herself intervenes with her Power enabling the sadhak to withstand the rigours and demands of the Path. She has placed herself—with all the Love, Peace, Knowledge and Consciousness that She is—at the disposal of every aspiring soul that looks for help.

SRI AUROBINDO

A TALK BY THE MOTHER WITH HUTA*

On the 14th, when I went to the Mother, with ^apensive mood, ~~she~~ She said with all Her Force, " One must prepare for the Hour of God. Don't you know what Sri Aurobindo had said in 'The Hour of God ?' "

(And here I believe, perhaps She ^omeant this).....

Sri Aurobindo's words:-

"Man's greatness is not in what he is, but in what he makes possible. His glory is that he is the closed place and secret workshop of a living labour in which supermanhood is being made ready by a divine Craftsman. - But he is admitted too to a yet greater greatness and it is this that, allowed to be unlike the lower creation, he is partly an artisan of this divine change; his conscious ~~action~~, his consecrated will and participation are needed that into his body - may descend the glory that will replace him. His aspiration is earth's call to the supramental creator.

"If earth calls and the Supreme answers, the hour can be even now for that immense and glorious transformation." (The Hour of God)

She resumed what She was talking about.....

"And that is why whoever aspires for the Truth, We - (She and the Lord) simply pull the threads ~~gather~~ together and bring them here to prepare for the Hour of God. This is the right time. And if you can't realise the Truth in - this very birth, ~~you can never ever realise after an perhaps 1000 years~~ ^{afterwards it may take hundred of lives} ~~hundred years~~ ^{will} And then who knows whether SriAurobindo and the Mother ~~would~~ be here to help directly, then there would be only a Force.

Human beings are lucky because they have ^aMind. So ~~that~~, they can think, observe, ~~we~~ express themselves, ~~with their instruments~~. While animals, trees and plants have no thinking Mind and they cannot express themselves or anything - and they are not capable to do something higher without Mind and its conception.

Didn't You see what Sri Aurobindo had written in SAVITRI ?

"And in the belly of the sparse rolling mass
A mind looks out from a small casual globe
And wonders what itself and all things are."

(to be continued)

* In the *Mother India* of November 1978 we published this matter under the title "Realising the Truth Now — and After. A Talk of the Mother — Revised and Approved by Her — from Huta's Diary" We are glad to publish here by offset the original typed copy which contains corrections in the Mother's own hand — Editor.

(2)

The Mind is a great thing ^{that} human beings have, and with It human beings ^{can} consider ^{be done} what should ~~do~~ and what shouldn't ^{be done} ~~do~~.

When attacks come, simply call the Lord. But you must remember that you must call Him ^{just in time} at the right moment, ~~and not after, and not before that time~~ ~~and not before that time~~. ~~There is no question of~~ ~~service or anything.~~ Most important thing is that, that you ~~must go towards~~ ~~your goal happily.~~

The Lord wants earth to be beautiful, peaceful and happy.

~~Therefore~~, you must remember that the Supreme Mother has innumerable - aspects and She holds the whole Universe in Her Arms. She wants each and - everything to be transformed and to attain their Goal. Her Consciousness is greater and vaster than Universe. And Myself is one of the physical aspects of the Mother. This physical body is limited but my Consciousness is limitless. I always spread my Consciousness ~~and~~ and with It, I answer many calls. But ~~very few~~ who receive my answers. - Most ~~people~~ people are not conscious and receptive, otherwise my work would be more easily ~~done~~ ^{had}. But who ^{with} collaborates and receives? If the human beings ~~would have~~ ^{had} collaborated the Divine in Her work - right from the very beginning, then, ~~what would have been~~ ^{the Father's} ~~realised~~ ⁱⁿ taken ^{a million} ~~hundreds of~~ years, to realise ~~the truth~~ ^{loveless} would have been realised ~~in~~ within a few years. And there wouldn't ~~be~~ so much struggle or difficulties. ~~All~~ All depends on sincere collaboration and receptivity.

But of course, there will be an end ^{to} ~~of~~ all miseries and difficulties. OM.

© HUTA

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

(Continued from the issue of December 1978)

(4)*

August 26, 1914

“ALL these worlds of bliss interpenetrating and completing one another...”. There are planes of consciousness that surround or envelop one another, each more subtle than the other. They are not only around us; they are also within us, filling the whole physical body.

“Throw a bridge between That which eternally is... and that which is manifested”, that is to say, between the world of mind, life and body, and all that has to come down from Above. Man’s business on earth is to establish his consciousness at a point between the upper and the lower worlds, so that he may receive the inspiration and the force from above and transmit them below.

August 31, 1914

“Illusory detours.” The Work that is being done, *l’œuvre qui s’accomplit*, is the growth of man towards the Divine, the growth of his consciousness from the limited to the Illimitable. This growth has not been in a straight line. There seem to have been relapses and all things appear to have begun all over again.

This at any rate is the evidence of history. There have been civilisations in which men attained a superb mastery over the forces of Nature, a high point in art. And then they have perished leaving not even a trace behind. Man has had to begin all over again and tread once more the path trodden before. He seems to have done the same things and achieved the same masteries as of old. Where then is the progress?

The progress is not evident, because the movement of evolution has been like the coils of a string. Each turn of the coils represents an age or civilisation, and each point in it stands for some endeavour in the innumerable fields of human activity. Each turn of the coils and each point on it stands above the one that is below, and each represents an advance over the preceding age. If one were to join up all the points in a vertical order, the progress will not only be evident; it will also appear as if in a straight line.

Where is the necessity for all these detours? The necessity lies in the fact that had the movement been in a straight line, all that lay on either side of the line would

*Editor’s Note. By oversight instalment 5 was printed instead of 4 in the December issue. We are now rectifying the slip

have been left out, and there would not have been the *integral* progress which is the aim of Evolution.

“All is... in a triple and clairvoyant total Consciousness...”. Normally, we see one thing at a time. But if we go sufficiently high, we can get a total view in which everything is clearly visible all at once, *d'un seul coup*, in a single sweep as it were. To that consciousness, everything *is*—the past and the future as well as the present—simultaneously. But they manifest in the lower planes, in thought and speech and action and embodiment in matter, in a certain sequence; they cannot appear all at the same time, in a jumble.

For example, one may see how things are going to be. But immediately one talks about them to one who has not seen things in their totality, one has to begin at a particular point and describe them in a certain order; one cannot obviously blurt out the whole thing at one stroke.

It is the same with events that take place on earth. It had been seen from on high about the end of 1920 that India would be rid of the British rule without an armed fight: the world conditions would shape themselves in such a manner as would make it more convenient for the British to give India her political freedom than to withhold it. It has taken twenty-seven years for this vision to translate into material fact.¹

September 1, 1914

“We knew that the earth was saved.” Similarly, the vision, the knowledge that the Supramental is to come down on earth and raise man towards the Divine was there. But in actual fact it may take centuries before it manifests here, on the outer physical plane. The Manifestation is a process. There are stages in the process, and it takes time. The Mother added with a smile, “I don't say anything more”, *je ne dis rien de plus*.

She emphasised once again that no description, no amount of book-reading, is worth a single concrete experience of the “thing”, a making real to oneself of what it is in its reality. And for that one needs first and foremost to will, make an effort, persevere, *vouloir, faire effort, persévérer*.

September 5, 1914

“This most external nature which is always ready to surrender to Matter.” This is the resignation of the physical mind, the notion that nothing can ever change, that all things are fixed from eternity and they will remain so for all time—this attitude of

¹ Compiler's Note: There exists a certain amount of uncertainty as to the exact date of the Mother's vision of free India. In the report of her Talk in 1947 (*Mother India*, August 1961), Purani gives the date as 1914; and so does Chaman Lal in the report of an interview he had with her in 1954 (*Ibid.*, March 1954). The Mother's tape-recorded Talks in the Playground sessions give two different dates: 1915 (18.1.56) and 1920 (29.7.53). The balance of evidence seems to favour the earlier date, 1914 or 1915.

hopelessness and submission to the force of circumstances as being definitive.

September 6, 1914

“The Divine Mother.” She is the original Creatrix of the worlds. From Her have originated all the universes. She is the first-born of the Supreme, His first act of Creation, the Source of all the Powers and Divinities that rule the worlds.

The Universal Mother is the Power that presides over each plane of the cosmic existence.

The Supreme is the Unknown, the Unmanifest, who manifests first through the Divine Mother.

September 9, 1914

“Mortal stagnation.” This is the refusal to change, the inert acceptance of all that exists, the passive refusal to advance and progress. It ultimately leads to death.

As a counterpart to this is the “blind destruction”, the impulse to a violent breaking of things and breaking away from things, from everything that exists: the desire to shape them anew by first breaking them to pieces.

The true way to progress is through a gradual change, effected voluntarily and with prevision, not through brute violence, nor through an inert passivity.

September 10, 1914

“All contrasts and contraries.” Just as in a photograph there is light and shade, so too there are within men parts that are full of light and parts that are dark. Likewise, there are tendencies that are opposed to one another: these are the “contraries” in this Prayer.

September 16, 1914

“Thy divine Dawn.” This is a symbol of the consciousness that is receptive enough to prepare the Descent of the supreme Light.

September 17, 1914

“Impulse to action.” Normally, we live in a consciousness in which most of our actions as well as thoughts and feelings come from outside, from the ocean of universal force. We are constantly bathing, as it were, in the waves of this ocean that clash and tumble and toss us about. They come to us from the people we meet—that is why it is of the utmost importance that we choose our associates with care. The golden rule to follow in this matter of choosing our associates is this: do not make friends with one whom you cannot perfectly admire. For otherwise you will get contaminations which will make your task of purification unnecessarily difficult. You must remember that

the risk of moral contagion is much greater than that of catching an infection. And one has to apply disinfectants for curing moral disorders with as much care or more.

This can be easily verified. You are calm and quiet. Then suddenly you meet a person who is angry. All on a sudden, without an apparent cause, you begin to get angry. What has happened is that the things, good and bad, that are within you get excited by the outward contact, and they come out. In the same way, if you meet a person who is full of kindness and good will, you too will feel a sense of goodness within yourself. If you chance to meet a person who is in contact with the Divine, you will feel within yourself the divine Influence. Indeed, the mere presence of such a person is enough to create an atmosphere of goodness and beauty.

If you wish to keep yourself free from all contagion, you have to come in contact with your psychic being and through it with the Divine Presence. Then you will not only be protected from the effects of the universal forces around you; you will also be in a position to act on them and control them.

September 22, 1914

"The Unknowable." Man has already attained to the highest point which his thought could reach, *le sommet de la pensée*. The Unknowable is what his thought cannot reach, for It has not yet manifested. But it is ready to manifest now. It has been described elsewhere (in the Prayer of September 24, 1914) as "Thy Principle", and as the Lord (throughout these Prayers and Meditations).

September 24, 1914

"How present Thou art amongst us, O beloved Mother!"

In this connection, a question was put to the Mother: "How can the Mother address herself to Her own self?"

The answer was this. The Divine Mother is beyond the universe, *par delà l'univers*. The Universal Mother is everywhere in the universe. And there is the physical Embodiment. What has been written in these *Prayers and Meditations* has been written by the physical Embodiment, by her physical consciousness. All of them are the various manifestations of one and the same Mother, in the various levels of being. She is conscious at all the levels, simultaneously.

In this context, the Mother said that the whole universe is full of beings, invisible to us but present all the same and everywhere. They are not known to us because they do not manifest themselves to our consciousness. They become tangible to our mental and vital beings when they assume mental and vital forms, that is, when they manifest themselves to our consciousness—the consciousness in which we ordinarily live.

Someone asked whether it was possible to get out of the universe. The Mother said that it was possible, but not for the physical body, because it is part of the material world. It is possible for the consciousness when it goes beyond all form, *passé par*

delà la forme.

“Thy present possibilities.” These are what can manifest in the world in its present state, *tel qu’il est maintenant.*

September 25, 1914

“Relativities of the physical world.” When one goes beyond the appearance of things, one can see clearly enough that everything here is indissolubly connected with everything else. There is an entire interdependence of things, and one cannot take out an atom from its place without disturbing the whole balance.

September 28, 1914

“By its very life” means “by the totality of its way of living, quite spontaneously,” *par la totalité de sa manière de vivre, tout à fait spontanément.*

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

SUPPLICATION

LINGER not on the supernal height,
O harbinger of Heaven’s delight,
On earth’s sorrowing thought a gleam bestow—
Enlace her heart-beats with Beauty’s dream-glow.

Let thy magic sweetness enrich all solitude,
And with thy marvellous Lustre make rainbow-hued
Each glooming soul plunged in time’s agony.
Waken Life’s unending swirl to Truth’s unborn felicity.

Widen the human mind to a tranquil vast,
Tear from man’s spirit Matter’s inconscient cast.
Let Knowledge break through God’s radiant skies,
Lift dark Ignorance’s veil from mortal eyes.

LALITA

THE SPARK AND THE MOTHER BEYOND

A MERE spark grown into a star
Upon this earth of sluggish pace
Suddenly viewed a sun ablaze.

Ere the mind stirred from its surprise
The impatient star with a straight run
Leaped, vanishing into its parent sun.

That pink-white fire on the Mother's breast
Was no smaller than our heavenly sphere;
All hearts its loving rays gathered here.

It was no globe in far-off lands,
Veiled it had remained with us on earth
Ever since we as sparks took birth.

The dive into that bottomless light
Was but a fleeting respite sought —
Yet agelong separation was forgot.

The vision changed, the puny star
Soon became the immaculate sun.
Then far beyond the breast it shone.

The fast expanding orb then left
This world, this varied cosmos and
Searched high above for its native land.

There the blue-white sun grew at once
All that it felt and all that it saw.
The miracles there were wonders no more.

Space now was the breath of immortal life.
The wideness broke into infinity
At every point, time into eternity.

Beyond them still the Splendour absolute
From where flowed forth the endless rivers;
Suns and stars were its tiny quivers.

There everything was held in Itself
And yet far more than all It was,
As the sky outvast the ethereal glows.

OUR LIGHT AND DELIGHT

RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of December 1978)

14

Some Famous People Admired by the Mother

THE Mother never hesitated to admire quite openly whoever impressed her as of extraordinary merit. Right from my early years in the Ashram—from 16 December 1927 onwards—I heard her speak enthusiastically of Ysayë. To her he was the greatest violinist possible. I had never come across his name before she uttered it. I do not see why, since, as I later learnt, Eugène Ysayë, born in Belgium at Liège in 1858, studied not only at the Liège Conservatoire but also at Paris and from 1918 to 1922 conducted the Cincinnati Orchestra, made several tours of Great Britain, the last in 1923, eight years before he died, and won sufficient international fame. My idols in violin-performance were Kubelik, Kreisler and more directly Heifetz whom I, along with Lalita, heard in Bombay and even met offstage where Lalita out of enthusiasm took off a gold-chain from her wrist and presented it to him. I also knew of the almost legendary Paganini who had lived from 1782 to 1840. But on listening to the Mother's praise of Ysayë I came to believe that he must have been superior to all of these. He could not have been so memorable to a being with such profound insight into the values of art unless he had been the very personification of the spirit of violin-playing. I remember her once alluding to his presence as having a head like a lion's. Even before she spoke at a little length about him in one of her evening sessions of Questions and Answers¹ at the Playground in 1953, I had known from her that something of Beethoven's power had possessed him or had reincarnated in him.

She regarded the musician César Franck highly for his pure psychic inspiration. Her admiration for Bach and Beethoven is well known, but perhaps it is not so commonly understood that Wagner also was to her one of the greatest musical phenomena, though not always of such unmixed quality as those two. I recall a special reference by her to one of his operas. I recall it all the more distinctly because I happened to distinguish myself on the occasion by being the only one to be able to name the opera about which she was speaking. She could not get the title from her own memory and nobody in the company—we were more than a dozen and a half, including Nolini, Amrita, Pavitra (Philippe Barbier St.-Hilaire), Datta (Miss Dorothy Hodgeson) and Shantimayi (Mrs. Jeanette Macpheeters)—could help her out. With some hesitation I dared to whisper in the midst of the general silence: "Parsifal." The Mother gave an exclamation of pleasure and said: "Yes, yes." It would seem that this bit of know-

¹ Centenary Edition Vol. 3, p. 106

ledge on my part—as well as at a later date the mention of 1066 (which every school-boy mugs) as the year of the Battle of Hastings—established for me a reputation for practical omniscience in the history of human achievement, a reputation which soon reached Sri Aurobindo's ears through the Mother's wonder at all that I appeared to know.

Rodin the sculptor, a contemporary, was to her an outstanding genius. Her mention of him brought to her face an expression as of grateful happiness kindled by his superb art. In judging writers she distinguished between those who had an elemental creative force and those who were perfectionists in their art. She gave Victor Hugo as an example *par excellence* of the former category, saying, "Such people are not very careful, they may misspell or even make mistakes in grammar, but their rushing inspiration carries them on to great results." Among the perfectionists she listed Flaubert: "He does not produce in such abundance but the little he writes is flawlessly done." Perhaps among writers of her own day she admired Anatole France the most. His style struck her as the very quintessence of literary prose. Sri Aurobindo also has ranked him among the great prose-stylists. The Mother had all his works in her private collection. Once, when I had written an article on French Culture and India and quoted a sentence from Anatole France and underlined an English author's notion that it was untranslatable in a direct fashion, the Mother took up the challenge and said in effect: "If it is not translated in a simple direct manner, it will lack the true flavour of Anatole France. And, though the original may be inimitable, its quality can still be transmitted without going in for a complex paraphrase." Her rendering appears at the end of the passage which runs in my essay:

"...Has not the agnostic Anatole France, ironical about the aspirations of the all-too-human, pitiful of blind pieties, shown also the irony of the negative attitude, the piercing pitiableness of the denying posture, when he penned that sentence of delicate inexplicable nostalgia: 'Ce que la vie a de meilleur, c'est l'idée qu'elle nous donne du je ne sais quoi qui n'est point en elle.' A sentence, we may observe, that is typical also of the beautiful directness of French prose in even the glimmers it gives of the far and the faint, a combination of the subtle with the simple and straightforward, a fearless use of the almost colloquial without sacrificing euphony. Paul Bloomfield remarks that this sentence is as mellifluous in French as it would be awkward in English if translated word for word; and we may add that the soul of its liquid elegance as well as of its pellucid poignancy would be a little missing even in the finest English rendering: 'The best in life is the idea it gives us of a something that is not in it.'"¹

The Mother had met Anatole France. She gave us her impression: "He presents himself in his works as someone detached and cool, but in life he was a very emotional person. I could clearly perceive this." Almost a rival in her eyes to France as regards perfect French prose, though with a different style, was Jules Romain. His multi-volumed novel, *Men of Goodwill*, in its French original, gave her great pleasure

¹ *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo (Mother India, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1968)*, pp. 201-02.

both for its language and for its subtle precision of psychological observation. She told Udar to read it. But when Amrita asked if he too could do so she refused. It would seem that its frankness in sexual matters would have brought in unnecessary trouble for Amrita's non-experienced vital being, whereas Udar was too blasé to be affected. I am sure the Mother would have thought of me also in the same way as of Udar.

It was rather surprising to see her admiring Lenin. Sri Aurobindo is reported to have thought highly of him as an instrument of progressive change in despotic Russia just as he adjudged Mustafa Kamal for Sultan-ridden Turkey, and to have helped him with his spiritual force to bring about the Revolution against Czardom. It was only with the advent of Stalin that Sri Aurobindo turned his spiritual force against Communist Russia. Communism in its Stalinist "Asuric" form was anathema to him. Here it would be well to realise that the politicians in charge have to be differentiated from the common folk. Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had a warm appreciation of the Russians in general. They are, according to her, a fine people, capable of devotion and self-offering, who were coerced into a mould not suiting their innate tendencies. Lenin, however, was esteemed by the Mother for his tremendous mental power. She once declared in a "Prosperity"-Room talk: "When he suffered a stroke he lost]all]ability to speak. The language seemed lost to him. But by sheer exercise of his will he drew the language-consciousness back into himself from the mind-plane which exists independently of the brain." What he did is a curious comment on his avowed philosophical beliefs. A Dialectical Materialist *à la* Marx, he did not accord mind a separate status from the complexly organised grey matter of the cerebrum, and yet his own experience was obviously of a distinct mental personality dealing masterfully with the brain's shortcomings under paralysis.

Apropos of Materialism and Atheism I may set down what the Mother declared concerning fitness for the Yoga that she and Sri Aurobindo were exemplifying and teaching. "I don't care," she said, "whether a man is a religious one or an unbeliever. What matters to me is the stuff of which he is made. If he has fine stuff I can work on him. His intellectual opinions may be anything and will not come in the way of his inner response to me." Not only will mere spiritual belief fail to bring a man into relation with the Mother, but even spiritual experience can keep him still apart from her. I have heard her comment on a person who had been meditating with her: "People sit before me and go into meditation and are quite pleased with the spiritual state they feel themselves in—and yet they may not be at all in contact with me. Nothing may pass between me and them. They can be in a world of their own which has no relation with my consciousness, with the work which I am here to do." Of course, the Mother in her non-personal aspect would be in touch with every kind of spiritual experience anywhere. What is at issue is the Integral Yoga of Supramental Descent and Transformation whose radiating centre was the embodied Divine Mother gathering around her all those children of hers who had in these times a special affinity with her mission and brought both their qualities and defects to lay at her feet in loving self-

surrender.

In connection with prominent spiritual figures I have heard the Mother speak at first-hand only of Abdul Baha, son of Baha-ullah, founder of the Bahai religion. She knew him intimately in Paris and some notes of hers regard him as a truly God-realised leader, though he never drew complete adherence from her and she refused to commit herself to any set religion. On one occasion she remarked in my presence: "When Abdul Baha used to lift his hands, palms upward, to pray, I could see Light descending into him from above."

I do not recollect anything in particular said about Théon, with whom she had been associated for several years both in Paris and in Algeria. But I may quote a few lines of Sri Aurobindo's, penned in 1936, which have not been published so far. I wrote to him: "I should like to know something about Théon who is said to have taught the Mother in Egypt. What role has he played in this new manifestation of yours?" Sri Aurobindo replied: "Théon was merely the Mother's guru in occultism—he had some idea of the aim to be achieved, but got much of it wrong. Moreover, what was true came from his wife and was not originally his."

One evening in the "Prosperity"-Room the talk turned on sleep. The Mother said that if one could go deep enough in the sleep-state and touch even for a second the Sat-chit-ananda consciousness which is in our inmost recesses one would awake completely refreshed. It is not the length of time spent in sleep but the quality of the time spent that relieves and refreshes one. Somebody mentioned Napoleon's capacity to snatch a short spell of sleep even in the midst of the loudest cannonading on the battlefield. The Mother said: "The great actress Madame Sarah Bernhardt had the same remarkable ability." From the manner in which these words were spoken, I could surmise a profound admiration in general for the character of that extremely gifted figure of the French stage during the Mother's days in Paris.

Discussing mental detachment, the Mother referred to Bernard Shaw: "He has a mind completely free from conventions. It stands apart and can look at things as well as at ideas with an unattached power. Beyond this I cannot say anything about his mental quality."

A stray remark about "Kaka" Kalelkar, a prominent Maharashtrian social leader, comes to mind. He paid a few-days' visit to the Ashram in the middle 'thirties. Several people found him a bit of a Puritan with some rigid Gandhian scruples. But the Mother was pleased with him and said something like: "He has a clear clean character, a nature well-disciplined, a good preparatory ground for something higher."

During the Korean War of 1950-51 the Mother expressed a high opinion of General MacArthur. She considered him one of the great military figures of history, comparable to soldiers like Wellington. There was also an appreciation of his bent of mind *vis-à-vis* Stalinist Communism and its force at work in Mao's China in the early days of Mao's triumph over Chiang-Kaishek. As long as MacArthur was commanding the American forces in Korea one might expect the right decisions in the necessary work of containing Stalin's ambition to get a hold over the entire world: one

might also expect his actions to serve as a check on any gamble by Stalinism to start a global clash of arms. Her point of view was totally the opposite of Truman's. Truman sacked MacArthur for putting forth suggestions aggressive towards Red China which was at that time serving as a base for the supply of electric power to North Korea, besides sending out an unofficial army of a million Chinese "volunteers" against MacArthur's troops. MacArthur believed that readiness to strike by air beyond the Yalu River which formed the frontier between North Korea and China was the best deterrent against the latter's open future participation in the war, a participation which could lead to Russia coming into the picture against America and thereby swelling the hostilities to global proportions. I wrote a long article in *Mother India* exposing the folly of Truman's act. The Mother gave me on 17 April 1951 a paradoxical-sounding thought-provoking message on the situation. It said: "We are sorry to say that the dismissal of MacArthur may well be one more big step towards a new world-wide war."

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN

TONES

FEEL

how the melody
pouring down upon you
runs together—

an eternal Law
creating itself,
ancient well of all-connection—

be
the timeless Purity's re-discoverer
in Heaven's mighty vehement song of hours.

ASTRID

FROM THE DEPTHS

- Two Poems

FLAME child
Born in the obsidian night
 of our earth's labour
Fueled in that darkened
 place by ardour unimaginable
Leaps up with laughter.
A Heart of fire
Supplicating Heaven
Is met by a Power
 descending,
A Love-radiance poured
 into life.
Embraced,
The Flame child lives
 Immortal

*

The blinded skein of my
 desires
Dissolved by one probing laser
of improbable Grace.
Ah the wide blue inner
 spaces of me—
An egoless love
An unfaltering Will
In every cell surrender's
 Bliss.

JUNE MAHER

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE SCRIPTURES

Scriptural Thought and Originality

It may be asserted that no philosopher ever invents a system of thought, if by invention we mean something absolutely new and not known before. For all progress in thought is from lesser knowledge to greater knowledge and never from the unknown to the known. Whenever a philosopher produces a new system of thought, he does so by renewing and enlarging previous knowledge that has been obscured or overlaid for some reason or other. Referring to the creative work of the philosopher, Sri Aurobindo observes:

What he does is to take up the material available to him in the past history of thought, to choose, select, reject, to present new lights on old ideas, to develop latent suggestions, to bring into prominence what was before or not so trenchant and definite, to give a fresh, striking and illuminating sense to old terms, to combine what was before not at all or else ill-combined; in doing so he creates; his philosophy, though not new in its materials, is new in the whole effect it produces and the more powerful light that in certain directions it conveys to the thinking mind.¹

What Sri Aurobindo has pronounced about the creative philosopher can be applied to himself. His philosophical treatises bear ample testimony to what he has said about the original work of the philosopher. He has shaped his thoughts and drawn his conclusions from the previous foundation of the Veda and Vedanta, although he is profound and original in everything he said and wrote.

A Divine Explanation of the World

Sri Aurobindo clearly recognises the values of the ancient Vedanta. He affirms that it ought to be the foundation of philosophical enquiry into the ultimate meaning and significance of the world. An infinite reality, ever-changing as well as ever-changeless, seems to be the underlying principle of the world. For a comprehensive knowledge of this principle we have to turn to the Upanishads. They deal with the different aspects of this principle and the light they throw on them are immensely helpful in understanding the real nature of the world. Referring to the importance of the ideas of the Upanishads, Sri Aurobindo says:

It is in those ideas that we shall find the best previous foundation.... It is with the old treasure as our initial capital or so much of it as we can recover that we shall most advantageously proceed to accumulate the largest gains in our new com-

¹ *Mother India*, July 1966, p. 13.

merce with the ever-changeless and ever-changing Infinite.¹

He accepts all the principal ideas of the Upanishads. The Upanishad declares that Brahman is the ultimate reality, by knowing which everything else is known (*Shandilya Upanishad*, 2-2). It defines Brahman as Existence, Consciousness and Bliss (*Taittiriya Upanishad*, 2-1). It says that the world and the Self are Brahman (*Mandukya Upanishad*, 2). It affirms that Matter, Life and Mind are also Brahman (*Taittiriya Upanishad*, 3-2 to 4). Above all it declares that Brahman is One without a second (*Chhandogya Upanishad*, 6-2-1). All these constitute the framework of Sri Aurobindo's thought. They frequently occur in his main philosophical work, *The Life Divine*.

- 1) The Brahman, the supreme Reality, is that which being known all is known.²
- 2) Sachchidananda is the one supreme affirmation of the Vedanta; it contains all the others or on it they depend.³
- 3) All this is the Brahman; this Self is the Brahman.⁴
- 4) He arrived at the knowledge that Matter is Brahman.⁵
- 5) Life is the energy of the Divine.⁶
- 6) He discovered that Mind was Brahman.⁷
- 7) Brahman is One besides whom there is nothing else existent.⁸

Although the Upanishad states that Brahman is the highest reality and all else is nothing but that, it does not clearly state how the unlimited, absolute Brahman could become the world characterised by limitations and relativity. If Brahman is the ultimate reality of the world, then we should know how the relative world could be related to the absolute Brahman. Otherwise the affirmation that by knowing Brahman everything else is known would be falsified. Sri Aurobindo says:

So long as the world is not divinely explained to us, the Divine remains imperfectly known; for the world too is That and, so long as it is not present to our consciousness and possessed by our powers of consciousness in the sense of the divine being, we are not in possession of the whole Divinity.⁹

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is a search for the link idea, the connecting principle which would offer a divine explanation of the world.

Like Sri Aurobindo, the later Vedantins also confronted this difficulty. They noticed the gap between the Divine and the world. But as they could not discover the link idea, they proceeded to explain the gap as if it were indispensable. Naturally they were obliged to retain a certain duality between Brahman and the world, even

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 66. ² *Ibid.*, p. 470. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 67. ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 231. ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 159. ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33. ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 393.

though they accepted the principle that Brahman is One without a second. Evidently they could not reflect the original spirit of the Upanishads. But the uncompromising spirit of Sri Aurobindo refused to follow the example of the later Vedantins and proceeded to discover the missing link. Sri Aurobindo thinks that Brahman must have a fourth principle besides those of Existence, Consciousness and Delight, a power of infinite consciousness to comprehend, contain in itself and measure out, that is to say, to produce Name and Form out of the vast illimitable Truth of infinite Existence. In other words, Brahman must have a power of self-limitation by Idea proceeding from its infinite liberty. Sri Aurobindo argues that the absoluteness of Brahman cannot be absolute unless it is possessed of this power of self-limitation. He says:

This power of self-limitation is necessarily inherent in the boundless All Existent.... The Absolute would not be the Absolute if it were denied in knowledge and will and manifestation of being a boundless capacity of self-determination.¹

This power of infinite consciousness is called Supermind. Sri Aurobindo points out that this principle is significantly referred to as the Fourth by the Vedic Rishis.

In the language of the Vedic Rishis, as infinite Existence, Consciousness and Bliss are the three highest and hidden names of the Nameless, so this Supermind is the fourth Name (*turiyam svid*).²

The Upanishad refers to it by other significant terms such as the True and the Vast, *ṛtam brhat*.

If we grant the existence of the power of self-limitation in Brahman, then it is easier to explain how the conditioned world could come into existence from the unconditioned Brahman. It must be possible for Brahman to become a conditioned world because otherwise it would cease to be absolutely free. Absolute freedom is not only freedom from relativity and conditioned existence but also freedom of becoming the relative and the conditioned. If the latter freedom is denied, Brahman would be bound by its freedom from the relative and incapacitated to exceed that condition. Its freedom from the relative is incomplete without the freedom of becoming the relative. This is what the power of self-limitation affirms. If this interpretation is accepted, duality in any form, overt or covert, can never persist between Brahman and the world. The world becomes a self-manifestation of Brahman, while Brahman presents itself as the original or direct source of the world.

Divine Life upon Earth

Another point, perhaps a very closely related issue, about which Sri Aurobindo

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 267. ² *Ibid.*

is greatly concerned, is the aim of human life in the world. The Upanishad generally says that it is possible for man to realise his identity with Brahman in his conscious self and that his outer nature has to fall away as no longer useful for the conscious self. It says:

When all the desires that dwell in the heart are cast away, then the mortal becomes the immortal, then he attains Brahman here. Just as the slough of a snake lies on an ant-hill, dead, cast off, even so lies this body.¹

But Sri Aurobindo thinks that this need not be the only possibility open to the evolving spirit in man. Nor does it seem to be the fundamental intention of the supreme Spirit that has created the world. If it is true that Brahman has created the world and entered into it as the indwelling spirit, then it must be for possessing the world and for enjoying the world-existence.

The later Vedantins, as they were given to an unwarranted dualism of the self and the not-self, preoccupied themselves with the exclusive inner realisation of Brahman and cared very little for continued use of the outer being and rejected the body as an unusable instrument. It led to the exaggeration that spiritual perfection is possible only at the annulment of bodily life or at the extinction of the *value* of embodied existence. As a matter of fact, this is partly due to the negative attitude of some of the Upanishads themselves towards the ultimate value of the body. Sri Aurobindo refused to accept the lead given by the later Vedantins in this regard. He even refused to listen to the frequent calls of these Upanishads to give up bodily life or to sacrifice the value of terrestrial existence for the sake of spiritual liberation. He thought that somewhere in the Upanishads there must be a clue confirming the possibility of a terrestrial existence which would serve as a means for the enjoyment of the liberated Spirit. His search for the clue was not in vain. He found that the clue was available in the *samhitopanishad* called Isha Upanishad.

The Isha Upanishad opens with the declaration: "All this is for habitation by the Lord." The object of habitation is enjoyment and possession. So the object of the Divine in the world is the possession and enjoyment of the universe. Then the Upanishad proceeds to call upon us to possess and enjoy the world like the Lord. It lays down three conditions for realising this aim: (1) identification with the Lord, indicated by the phrase "by that" (verse:1); (2) renouncement of the world in desire, indicated by the statement "lust not after any man's possession". (3) continued activity issuing from these states, indicated by the words (verse:1) "doing verily works in the world" (verse: 2). If these conditions are fulfilled, we shall be fulfilling the object of God's manifestation of the world. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "the Isha Upanishad is the gospel of a divine life in the world and a statement of the conditions under which it is possible and the spirit of its living."²

¹ *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishad*, 4-4-7.

² Sri Aurobindo, *Supplement*, p. 301.

Apart from this, there is a clue in the Gita also. In the fourth chapter the Gita talks about the divine birth and divine works in the world, *janma karma cha me divyam* (verse: 9), and goes on to say that he who knows the Lord thus is not bound by works (verse: 14). Commenting on the phrase, *janma karma cha me divyam*, Sri Aurobindo says:

To attain to the divine birth,—a divinising new birth of the soul into a higher consciousness,—and to do divine works both as a means towards that before it is attained and an expression of it after it is attained, is then all the Karmayoga of the Gita.¹

It means the Gita's aim is to show that on attaining divine consciousness one has to live in the body and do divine works, works proceeding from the divine self. Again, it is a clear affirmation of the possibility of a divine life upon earth.

In bringing to light the ideas of the ancient scriptures bearing on the possibility of a divine life upon earth, Sri Aurobindo may be said to have rediscovered the original Indian attitude of "spiritual pragmatism"² as reflected in the Veda and the Upanishads.

Transformation of Embodied Life

Sri Aurobindo considers that it must be possible to transfigure the whole outer being into a perfect and conscious instrument of the soul. If it is possible to manifest and maintain the divine consciousness in the mind and body, then it must also be possible to extend this divine consciousness to the level of the outer nature itself and remould mind, life and body into a perfect image of God. For not only the soul but the outer instrumental nature also is Brahman. In fact Sri Aurobindo announces that a perfected and divinised life upon earth is God's will in the world.

It is a perfected and divinised life for which the earth-nature is seeking, and this seeking is a sign of the Divine will in Nature.³

The idea of divinisation of life is in perfect accord with the original Vedantic principle that there is nothing which is not Brahman. For it is but a logical extension of the original content of the scripture. But neither in the Upanishads nor in the Gita has this idea been developed or envisaged. In this respect Sri Aurobindo follows his own light and seems to have added a fresh dimension to the teachings of the Veda and the Vedanta themselves.

It is held by those who take a wrong view of the scriptures that in spiritual matters we cannot affirm anything which has not been affirmed, explicitly or implicitly,

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, p. 168.

² Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, p. 134.

³ *The Life Divine*. p. 682.

by the scriptures. Sri Aurobindo points out that this attitude is born of a blind adherence to the scriptures and not of an enlightened respect for the same. All scriptures have a limit and beyond that one has to follow the lead of one's own inner Light. Sri Aurobindo has emphasised this point more than once:

a) Even the Upanishads and the Gita were not final, though everything may be there in seed.¹

b) The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, in the past, but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go farther.²

c) Why should the past be the limit of spiritual experience?³

d) You shall not say [of any Scripture] that there is nothing else or that the truth your intellect cannot find there is not true because you can not find it there.⁴

The idea of transformation of life may not have the sanction of the scriptures, but if it is sanctioned by the authority of the inner Light, we have no right to dismiss it as unscriptural. It is worthwhile to recall here the golden words of the Gita:

As much as there is in a well with water in flood on every side, so much is there in all the Vedas for the Brahmin who has the Knowledge (2-46).

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *On Himself*, p. 125.

² *Ibid.*, p. 122.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, p. 86.

THE DOCTRINE OF TAOISM

FROM *ARYA*, JUNE 1915

THE ancient, eternal teaching of unity has been cherished from the earliest times in India and in spite of all obscurations of ignorance, all diminutions and deformations, all trials, challenges, and invading influences she has up to the present day clung faithfully to this supreme and central truth of all which other nations have thrown away in the struggle of existence or put aside into the study and the cloister. We are therefore apt in India to look upon it as a peculiarity of this country or, if professed by others, then learnt from us. But the Truth has had its witnesses in all lands and in all ages; if it were not so, it would not be the eternal Truth, but a temporary doctrine or an individual or national idiosyncrasy of thought. We translate from a brief, but interesting volume¹ by a French writer on the schools and teachers of the doctrine of unity from the earliest times to the present days some passages expressing the doctrines of Lao-tse, the great Chinese thinker who lived and taught about six centuries before the Christian era. This account of the Taoism of Lao-tse is taken from a book by another French writer, Wu-Wei (Non-Resistance)², which is written in the form of an imaginary dialogue between a Chinese sage and a foreign seeker of truth.

Tao

Tao is nothing else in reality, than what you foreigners call God. TAO is the One, the Beginning and the End,—he contains all things and to him all things return.

TAO can have no name, precisely because it is the one. Wu, that is to say, *No-thing*,—behold TAO. Thou understandest not? Listen then. There exists an absolute Reality, without beginning, without end, beyond our comprehension, which therefore appears to us as if it were Nothing. That which we can understand, that which has for us a relative reality, is in truth only an appearance. It is indeed a product of the absolute Reality, since everything emanates from that Reality and returns to it, but the things which are real to our eyes are not real in themselves. What we call Being is in fact Non-Being, and what we call Non-Being is Being in the true sense. Thus we live in a great darkness. What we imagine to be real is not real, yet emanates from the reality; for the Real is all. Therefore both Being and Non-Being are TAO but forget not that this word is a sound articulated by a human being and that the idea is inexpressible. All things that the senses perceive and all the desires of thy heart are unreal. TAO is the source of Heaven and of Earth. One engendered Two, Two engendered Three, Three engendered the Myriads and the Myriads return into the One...

¹ *The Doctrine of Unity*, by A.L. Caillet. Paris, Ferdinand Drubay.

² *Wu-Wei*, a Fiction based on the philosophy of Lao-tse, by Henri Borel: translated into French by Pierre Bernard.

Thou knowest that TAO is the origin of all, of the trees, the flowers, the birds, the sea, the deserts, the rocks, the light, the darkness, heat and cold, day and night, summer and winter and thy own life. The worlds and the oceans melt into Eternity. Man emerges from the darkness, laughs for a moment in the clarity of the light and disappears; but in all these changings it is the One which manifests itself. TAO is in all, thy soul in its deepest self is TAO...

Make no mistakes—TAO is *in* what thou seest but it is not in the *thing* thou seest. Think not that TAO can be visible to thy eyes. Tao will not awake joy in thy heart; TAO will not extract from thy eyes tears for that which thou sufferest: for all emotions are relative and unreal.

Wu-Wei

I will speak to thee of Wu-Wei, of Non-Resistance, of the spontaneous movement directed by the impulsion in thee such as it was born from TAO. Men would be truly men if they allowed their life to flow of itself as the sea swells, as the flower blooms in the simple beauty of TAO. In every man there is the tendency towards the movement which proceeds from TAO and leads him back to TAO; but men are blinded by their senses and by their lusts.... They cling to all that is unreal. They desire too many things to desire the One. Sometimes they desire to be wise and good and that is the worst of all.

The sole remedy is to return to the source whence they come. TAO is in us; TAO is repose; and it is solely by renouncing desire—even the desire of goodness and wisdom—that we can attain to the Repose. Those who know what TAO is, do not tell; those who tell, do not know. I will not tell thee what TAO is; it is for thee to discover it by liberating thyself from all passion and all craving, by living with an absolute spontaneity, exempt from all effort that is not natural. One must approach TAO without shock or effort, with a movement as calm as the flowing of the vast ocean.... It is so that thou shalt return to TAO, and when thou shalt have returned to It, thou shalt not know It, for thou shalt have thyself become TAO.

*

No man can annihilate TAO and the imperishable light of the soul shines out in each of us. Think not that the perversity of man can be so great or so powerful. The eternal TAO inhabits in all of us, in the murderer and the harlot no less than in the thinker and the poet. They are all as alike in their essence as two grains of sand upon this rock, and none shall be banished from TAO for eternity, for all bear TAO in themselves.

Their sins are illusory, unreal as a mist.... They cannot be bad; no more can they be good; irresistibly they are drawn towards TAO as this drop of water towards the vast sea. It may take more time for some than for others, but that is all.... TAO is neither good nor bad; TAO is Real.

TAO alone is and the life of unreal things is a life of false contrasts, false relations which have no independent existence and which lead into great error. So, above all, desire not to be good and call not thyself evil. Wu-Wei—exempt from effort, carried on by the inherent Force in thee, that is what thou shouldest be. Not good nor bad, not little nor great, not low nor high; then alone thou shalt really be although in the ordinary sense of the word thou shalt have ceased to be. When thou shalt be delivered from all appearances, from all lusts and all desires, thou shalt be carried by thy own impulsion without being aware that thou movest, and this—the sole true principle of life, which is to move of oneself, free and unhampered towards TAO—will be as easy and as inconscient as the dissolution of this little cloud above us.

*

Speak not of this thirst for wisdom. Desire not to know too much; for so alone canst thou little by little become capable of knowing by intuition; the knowledge acquired by effort that is not natural only leads farther away from TAO.... Especially desire not happiness too eagerly, nor have any fear of ill-fortune, for neither of them are real....TAO would not be TAO if thou couldst represent It as joy or suffering, good fortune or ill-fortune; for TAO is a whole and there can be no contrasts in It....

Then for the first time, when thou shalt have become Wu-Wei—non-existent in the vulgar sense of the word—all will go well for thee and thou shalt traverse life with a movement as calm and natural as that of the vast sea before us. Nothing will trouble thy peace. Thy sleep shall be dreamless and thy waking will bring thee no cares. Thou shalt see TAO in all things, thou shalt be one with all that exists; thou shalt feel thyself as intimate with all Nature as with thy own self; and traversing with a calm submission the alternations of day and night, summer and winter, life and death, thou shalt enter one day into TAO in which there are no alternations and from which, once thou hast issued utterly pure, as pure thou shalt return to It.

Love

Thou knowest not what is love, nor what it is to love. I will tell thee; Love is nothing other than the Rhythm of TAO.

I have said it to thee; it is from TAO that thou comest, it is to TAO that thou shalt return....Woman reveals herself to thy eyes and thou thinkest that she is the end towards which the Rhythm leads thee, but even when this woman is thine and thou hast thrilled with her touch, thou feelest still the Rhythm within thee unappeased and thou learnest that to appease it thou must go beyond. Call it Love, if thou wilt; what matters a name? I call it TAO....

The beauty of woman is only a vague reflection of the formless beauty of TAO. The emotion she awakens in thee, the desire to blot thyself out in her beauty...believe me, it is nothing else than the rhythm of TAO, only thou knowest it not....Seek not thy happiness in a woman. She is the revelation of TAO offering itself to thee, she is

the purest form in Nature by which TAO manifests, she is the Force which awakens in thee the Rhythm of TAO—but by herself she is only a poor creature like thyself. And thou art for her the same revelation as she is for thee. It is the expression of TAO who has no limit nor form, and what thy soul desires in the rapture which the vision of it causes thee, this strange and ineffable sentiment, is nought else than union with that Beauty and with the source of that Beauty—with TAO.

Thy soul has lost its beloved—TAO—with whom it was formerly united and it desires reunion with the Beloved. An absolute reunion with TAO—is it not boundless Love? To be so absolutely one with the Beloved that thou art entirely hers and she entirely thine—a union so complete and so eternal that neither life nor death can ever separate you, so peaceful and pure that Desire can no longer awake in thee, because the supreme happiness is attained and there is only peace, peace sacred, calm and luminous. For TAO is the Infinite of the soul, one, eternal and all-pure.

DEEP DOWN INSIDE

I WITHDRAW from the cankering clamorous crowd
and step into the sylvan serenity of my Soul.
Deep down inside there stands high the Temple of God;
under its vast dome, lotus-posed I sit, steeped in reverie.

Vistas of the Supreme's domain soon
unfurl, stretch and widen Within.
A burnished brilliance mushroom-blooms,
purging my earthly tinsels in its radiant glow.

Converse I freely then with the mute and mighty Divinity
and listen to the deep-throated cadence of an immense Voicelessness
whilst rhythms and rhymes of unsung hymns
and recitals rendered from unwritten scriptures
echo-thud and reverberate all around again and again.

Attuned and conditioned, I sway to the lute of the Absolute
as fingers of faith balm my tired brow.
Tremor-vibrations from the flute of love
—like the lilting lifting lullaby in the Mother's lap—
lull life's pulses within
and leisurely lead unseen to an Eternity-sonorous trance.

ODE TO BRAHMAN

O to defy America's tradition!
To live exclusively for THAT! To seek
Forever the Eternal! Volition
Of Self shuns the Body's slaves, the weak.
Forever let us over mountains stride
With quiet will, ever before us the Goal
(For there is no end). May we nothing ask
Of THAT, and adamantly cast aside
The businessman's grasping heart. The Sole,
The Unique—may we in Its Presence bask.

America is young; and Wisdom's wreath
Has not been won by this land where gain
Is the sole purpose of life, where beneath
Its weight we stoop and strain to lift its pain.
Seeking heaven with matter's feet, we live
A spiritual death, weak with desires,
Chattels of the body, and the mind's lies.
The Bible fosters falsehoods; it cannot give
The whole Truth. In the sacrificial fires
Of man's soul, the Truth quietly sighs.

O Brahman glorious! Save the tender land!
Here, the Asura holds the blasted field
With a religion suited to the bland,
Self-satisfied blind, who blind power wield.
Yet, somehow, in the confines of the Night,
Your Hand holds the rudder of the ship,
Though to ignorant eyes it seems to sink,
And guides it through material seas to light;
For in time comes Light to the ones who slip
Through the darkness of the mind to mind's brink.

America needs THAT! No name nor form
Has THAT; no anthropomorphic God
Is Brahman—a name born in the Spirit-storm
Of Indian Souls—yet It IS earth's sod,
This very matter on which we stand; for all
This is THAT; so say the ancient seers
Of a wiser land, the land which bears the Truth,

India, the country of the Soul's Call,
 The World-Guru. When mankind someday hears
 And turns to Her, we will be released from ruth.

Still is there Truth in our young country;
 Truth in our religion, and seekers sincere;
 But mixed and poor is this truth to which we
 Cling, with many creeds and dogmas drear.
 Through Yoga only can Brahman be wholly known,
 For all must be given; surrender to
 THAT, the Soul's great Goal, must be absolute.
 By Sri Aurobindo, the seed has been sown:
 Mankind will rise, we will be born anew—
 And follow through the Night the sunrise-flute.

DONALD REEVES

LOTUS OF TRUTH-VISION

ABOVE my shoulders a vast and luminous sky,
 Behind my heart a depth of ocean-bliss,
 In my limbs a calm plenitude of sun-force,—
 My body is a flame and a rapture of God.

This Himalaya is the foot-stool of my will
 And the milky way a course for my nectar's rush;
 I am robed in a silence woven of measureless light
 And the tide of dream and the tempest of love are my songs.

I move through the heavens with infinity's pace,
 Crawl in the little snail and think in Man;
 I am the fire of Night that burns in the stars
 And the rod of lightning plunged in seven breasts.

Lotus of the cosmic vision's splendour-Truth,
 I put on the eternal Form in endless Time.

RENUKADAS DESHPANDE

TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of December 1978)

Chapter V

Descent into the Inconscient

(5)

All the world's possibilities in man
Are awaiting as a tree waits in the seeds.

But

Our life is a march to victory never won.

Let us begin this section with three prophetic utterances.

When I was lying vanquished, a faint voice breathed into my ear: "I have gone beyond struggle." I lay awake dumb with marvelling.

A gap of five years. Another wonder of words: "I have gone beyond sufferings." Was it a voice from dreamland? Perhaps not: subsequent events confirmed it. The seeds of truth that these words carried are not dying but forming roots. Suffering is there but it passes without leaving a mark. By a stroke the surface water suffers a rupture but is healed up at once.

To add to this is a "deathless voice": "I have got a new body." Was it the whisper of a Golden Messenger? No part in me could share the joy. Rather all the parts looked with breathless amazement. For it came at a time when I had entered almost the state of death. Did it spring from the region of the psychic which saw a silver lining in the darkest cloud!

To substantiate these singular statements I shall have to make some startling disclosures which cannot but be assailed with grave misgivings and may appear incredible or an airy fancy, yet in unmistakable terms they speak of the changes that came into the organic machinery by the descent into the region of the Inconscient.

Descent of peace in the mind and the vital being brought in me a new rhythm of life. Beyond feeling an impact the body itself could not share anything of the heavenly in earthly life. From 1969 the body was subjected to a new kind of attack: the withdrawal of the life-feeling inch by inch from the toes and fingers making these parts numb, ice-cold. This was accompanied by nervousness and the sinking of consciousness. I was driven to think the end was near. When the body itself got the strength—without the touch of mind—to overthrow the onslaught of the Inconscient and emerge rejuvenated and refreshed, forcibly repulsing the attack, the very

texture of the body underwent a change. Even the tortured cells put on a new look. As time wore on and I was blessed with a descent of Peace in the physical there rose a fragrance of hope: "A day may come when I shall have a new body."

I had to walk a million miles to reach this height and may have to walk a million miles or more to see the day of transformation. Since it is likely to take at least 300 years I may not be destined to see that day but Sri Aurobindo counsels that a beginning is enough.

Life is a continuous growth, an urge, irregular in its intensity but never at rest. The Mother puts it thus:

"... anything that does not advance, falls back; all that does not progress, regresses."¹

The work of transformation cannot be completed instantaneously like a magic feat. The very cells of the body have to undergo a radical change—and this change cannot but be gradual. The task is tremendous—the transformation of the nature of the bitter Neem, so to say, to the sweetness of the sugarcane. Hence one should not grudge time.

We have the Mother's words recorded in plain language regarding the 300 years in reply to a question:

Three hundred years with the same body?

"When our little humanity says three hundred with the same body you say: 'Why, when I am fifty it already begins to decompose, so at three hundred years it will be a horrible thing!' But it is not like that. If it is three hundred years with a body that goes on perfecting itself from year to year."²

A progressing life will not appear a wearisome burden but will make for joyous living.

The question of longevity is engaging the attention of the Western mind too. What about the increasing growth of world-population? Will the retired officers be paid for 300 years? If one like Hitler lived 300 years, must the weak groan for centuries under his iron heel?

These questions do not arise at all in the domain of spirituality.

One whose life is woven with the warp and weft of desires and ego cannot escape the fire and fury of death and decay. The evolution of man means the evolution of consciousness. One who has not the capacity to rise beyond mind to the status of a superman cannot live so long. In Sri Aurobindo's view the soul will escape from the body under one pretext or another if the body fails to keep pace with the soul.

And so, with the advent of the Supermind or Superman, will there be no change

¹ The Mother's Cent. Vol. V, p. 206.

² The Mother's Cent. Vol. V, pp. 61-2.

in the earthly life? Must man remain as he is for eternity?

The simple answer to this question is that man must consent to change. No one can bring a change in him if he refuses to change himself. But the effect of the supramental change will be felt by one and all, the very earthly atmosphere will undergo a change. When India became free all did not rise to the position of Rajendra Prasad but one and all breathed a free air, millions got the right to vote.

Another question that is often asked is: When the Supermind is well established in the earthly soil, will all men become Supermen?

The descent of Supermind will not dissolve the gradation. With the discovery of the aeroplane, have other means of conveyance disappeared? Even the use of the bullock cart could not be dispensed with.

Sri Aurobindo's Superman will conquer the heart of man by Love and Light, and "bring down God into their lives". He will be the harbinger of a new race of the Sons of God.

A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world...
The superman shall reign as King of life
Make earth almost the mate and peer of heaven.¹

This is Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future of man.²

Regarding 300 years, what is expected of us is year-to-year progress. Times without number I have marked changes going on in me but hardly without a break. In the beginning they occurred once or twice a year. Gradually the duration shortened—it was monthly or bi-monthly. The changes takes place with so many variations that it is difficult to keep a note of them. Whenever the clock was set back, the body not only tried to seize the first opportunity to regain the lost ground but invariably made it the stepping-stone for a new progress. The Mother's Force seems to be working hard to keep up the tempo of progress from year to year. If it is possible for one to keep his body free from illness and if one has acquired the inner strength to maintain youthful vigour instead of wearing out, he will find in himself touches and traces of immortality here and now.

Drawing on my experiences I can say that at times life appears more sweet and beautiful than it ever was even in my youth. When one is young, he is full of passion; so the joy that is earned by the momentary satisfaction of desires is more fleeting than the flight of a bird. The brooding mind will never allow one to be in peace.

Hence no price is too great for the quiet joy that emanates from spiritual silence. I have learnt to enjoy life not by dragging myself down but by rising to a higher pitch as far as I could.

¹ *Savitri*, Part II, Book XI Canto 1, p. 329

² "In future there will be no violence, for everything will be ruled by the Divine Consciousness."—The Mother (*Bulletin*, February 1978, p. 55)

“Remain always young”: these words of the Mother had a mantric effect on me. Their power can be realised when put into practice. Instead of feeling old and outgrown this Mantra makes me feel young again and again.

I am a sickly person—very much prone to illness; as sometimes the vital being takes joy in its own suffering, so the body also forms a kind of habit and, instead of resisting, welcomes illness. Formerly, during six months, I could hardly remain free from illness for even three days. In 1977 I was so full of health and vigour that it was as if I had regained my youthfulness and buoyancy. No trace of any illness or nervous trouble. Inwardly I found myself beyond the effect of age. But it is a pity I could not retain that state for more than six months at a stretch.

On keeping an observant eye I found that between August 3 and September 8, 1977, the feeling rose again and again, “I have recovered my former state”, but I was soon reduced to a condition worse than before. Thus a tug of war went on between the forces of disintegration and rejuvenation.

This point has been merely touched upon here in passing in order to lend clarity to what is to follow in the succeeding chapter.

Sri Aurobindo has said that when all is ready within progress will take place by itself.

Life in sadhana was flowing steadily like the course of a stream; so I did not feel the need for more than two months to practise Pranayama. One day I happened to meet one who has been here for the last ten years. He seemed well-versed in the art of Pranayama and was quite acquainted with its intricacies since this had been his way of sadhana for more than thirty years even before taking up the Ashram life. Renouncing the world he had gone to the Himalayas with the intention of doing tapasya there but the very name of Sri Aurobindo brought him from the extreme North to the extreme South.

I had been doing Pranayama without any proper guidance, so I wanted to pick up something new from him and if possible detect my defects. The period of struggle was now over, I could hold my breath without any strain for several minutes, but I could not make out why I was feeling weak. Where was the flaw? It had rained all through the night, the weather was very cool but to my surprise I found my body warm. I liked to sit outside in a chair without a shirt. There is a story about how I formed the habit to have my bath in the open when it rains.

Formerly whenever it rained during the time when the school children were at play in the Playground they rushed here and there for shelter. Rain is good for health. One day the Mother pushed some of them into the rain. From that very day the fear of being drenched disappeared from their minds altogether. Now they derive more joy from playing in the rain than in the hot sun. Some of them take delight in running during the rain on the beach-road.

I allowed myself to fall in line with them.

That particular day I took my bath at 3 a.m, long before daybreak. The body did not shrink or quiver, rather it enjoyed the cold bath. A weak person will not dare to

expose himself so early during the rains. Was it due to the action of the Yogic Force in the body or the energy generated by the holding of the breath? From time to time various kinds of doubts oppressed the mind, so I tried to elicit some convincing answer from X. I put him a question that was uppermost in my mind at the time.

“Must the pulse stop altogether with the stoppage of the breath?”

“Not necessarily. Pranayama is concerned with the control of the breath and not the pulse. I wonder how, leading such a comfortable life, you could succeed in holding the breath so long, an achievement which is considered one of the greatest by Yogis subjecting themselves to very rigorous austerities. Such a thing is possible here only.”

“My doubting mind does not allow me to be at ease, hence the questions.”

My friend’s spontaneous reply was:

“Why do you allow doubts to dampen your enthusiasm when your experiences are so splendid? Kumbhak Siddhi, perfect holding in of breath, is not a joke. Even those who have freed the mind from thoughts and the Prana from desires are considered accomplished Yogis. Then why do you let doubts poison your mind?”

He praised me perhaps to please me.

I felt I must not stop here. I should embark on a new adventure. So I started Pranayama again. Just after the cessation of breath for about two minutes I had a very fine experience. All of a sudden a number of tiny wicks seemed to blaze up in the region of the backbone illumining the whole area surrounding the spinal cord.

Another experience:

After a few minutes of ‘Kumbhak’ the crown of the head resembled a hill-top from which light was bubbling out and overflowing all around me.

One day the Mother helped me detect a mistake of mine. The moment the inhalation was complete, the subtle heart-centre got locked up. No life-current from the lungs could now escape. This opened the door for a new experiment. The *prāṇa* thus held in began to rise up and up, crossing the barriers of the body, past the muscles, the nerves, the tissues of the body’s upper part. All of them felt pulled up. The eye-balls appeared to be drawn deep into the eye-sockets. (This was something quite different from what happens when during the ascent one takes a flight into the sky on the wings of consciousness.) I could do my practice only for five minutes the first day. The next day I increased it to ten. A few days later when I found there was no strain I kept sitting for half an hour. This led me to believe that it was quite possible for one who has mastered the art to find his body lifted up from the ground. There must be some truth in the legend. As I increased the duration too much without systematic practice I ran a great risk. I found that the consciousness that got stationed high up at the crown of the head did not like to come down into the body. With great difficulty I brought myself to the normal state by stretching the body, relaxing, exhaling little by little.

According to Patanjali “Cessation of mental movements is yoga” (योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः). This seems to me no longer a day-dream.

Sitting motionless, यथा दीपो निवातस्थो, like an unwavering lamp¹, as said in the Gita (VI.19), seems to be growing normal. All this helped me to reach the state of inner void.

(To be continued)

¹ "Motionless like the light of a lamp in a windless place it ceases from restless action." Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, Ch. XXIII, para 12.

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NO REALISATION WITHOUT UNITY

A SERMON AND A STORY

THE aim of Integral Yoga is union with the Divine in all aspects.

Before we proceed further, let us stop and make certain what we believe in. We believe in *ekamevādvitīyam*—"One without a second"—and *eko'ham bahusyām*—"Let me be many." So the Divine Himself has become the Many. He has not *made* the Many. The natural consequence is, in essence, that the Many are the One. So every being, thing, happening, event is *HE*. If we want to have union with the Divine in all aspects, we must inwardly unite with the Many. This is the first step. And to unite with the Many we must love them. There can be no union without love. The Mother says:

"It is in all states, in all modes, in all things, in all worlds, in all elements that we have to discover Thee and be united with Thee, and if we leave out one element, however small it may be, the communion cannot be perfect, the realisation cannot be accomplished." (*Prayers and Meditations*, p. 150)

"Love is the source of the Universe and the Power that at once unites the manifestation in itself and with its Creator." (*White Roses*, p. 3)

So to get union with the Divine, one of the first steps is that one must have love for the whole manifested world.

In this connection I am reminded of a story in the Jain *Kathanuyoga*. But before we proceed to narrate the story let us know in what Jainism believes. Jainism does not believe in the axioms, *ekamevādvitīyam* and *eko'ham bahusyām*. Jainism believes in the plurality of souls and the ultimate aim is to realise *kevalajñāna*—Eternal Knowledge—and then *mokṣa* (liberation) of the individual. Even so, it believes that one cannot realise *kevalajñāna* if he does not achieve unity—oneness—in essence with all other creatures in the universe. There must not be ill-feeling for anyone.

Now let us hear the story.

In the time of Lord Mahavira—the twenty-fourth Tirthankar of Jainism—there was a king by name Udayana. After hearing the religious discourses of Lord Mahavira, Udayana lost all interest in worldly things and decided to embrace *dikṣā* (ceremonies of renouncing the world and becoming a Jain Sadhu). Then a question arose as to who should be crowned as king.

The rightful heir was his son. But Udayana thought that if he crowned his son as king, the son would fall into a luxurious material life and lose his soul. And what is the use of a kingdom if one loses his own soul? So he persuaded his son to embrace *dikṣā* with him. The son felt that injustice was being done to him in depriving him of his rightful inheritance, but being an obedient son he consented to embrace *dikṣā*. The son of Udayana's brother was crowned king instead, while Udayana and his son embraced *dikṣā*. In the course of time Udayana realised *kevalajñāna* and when his lease of life was over he went into *mokṣa* and became a Siddha (Perfect One).

Udayana's son observed all the Kriyas and austerities prescribed by Jainism in the minutest detail and all who were around him thought that he would realise *kevalajñāna*. But he left his earthly home without attaining that state.

A question was put to Lord Mahavira as to why Udayana's son left his body without attaining *kevalajñāna*. Replied Lord Mahavira: "He was not able to achieve oneness with all in essence." All who were gathered about him were surprised to hear this and they requested him to explain.

Lord Mahavira said:

"Udayana's son could not forget the so-called injustice done to him by Udayana. So when he did *pratikramaṇa*—a practice to be performed in the morning and at night, in which one reviews all one has done during the night and the day and if one has done anything wrong by thought, speech or deed to anybody, one asks forgiveness of the person concerned—he could not do what is required. In this practice one begins with the words 'Salutations to all the Siddhas', but he used to say 'Salutations to all the Siddhas *except* Udayana Siddha.' So you will see that he was not able to achieve oneness with all and therefore he died without realising *kevalajñāna*."

No unity—no realisation.

VALLABH SHETH

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THE MARRIAGE OF SUNDARAMURTI

(Continued' from the issue of December 1978)

OF all the demigods in Shiva's heaven
The most beloved of the Lord of lords
Was handsome young Halalasundarar
(For such was Sundaramurti's name before
His birth as Nambi Arurar in Navellur.
Theirs was an intimate relationship,
The wonder and the envy of all the rest;
For to his worshippers the Formless One
Appears invested with whatever form
Best answers to their nature and their needs.
To some he is a master before his slave,
To others a stern father with his son
Or a guru guiding his disciple's feet,
To Sundarar he was a bosom friend,
His comrade and companion in the chase
And the faithful go-between in his amours:
For Sundarar was a lover and all the girls
Attendent upon Uma gazed at him
When, arm in arm with Shiva, he sauntered by.
Of them, the two that most plagued Sundarar
Were named Kamalini and Aninditai.
The second, more alluring and more allured,
Was lovelier, and so less dangerous.
The passion of a life forever young,
Compact and burning through enkindled clay,
Radiated from her limbs and lit her eyes
With an excited and exciting glow
And made her smile a wonder of delight.
Such was the splendour of Aninditai
Kamalini's charm was of another type.
Her sister's complementary opposite—
An autumn moon to her mid-summer sun,
Or a pure white jasmine to her crimson rose—
She was as modest as Aninditai
Was forward and self-confident and pert,
And the radiance that lingered in her limbs,
Like a light passed through translucent ivory,
Was a reflection of the psychic fire

That burned white-incandescent in her heart.
She more than all the rest moved Sundarar
To deep emotion, and he found himself
Meeting her offered face and still black eyes
Wherever he turned, as if overmastering fate
Drew them together in a knot of love.
This Shiva noticed and with Parvati
He privately consulted to decide
Upon a strategem to keep the boy
From falling into the bright trap of desire.
It was resolved that at the sacrifice
Held in the goddess' honour, Sundarar
Should be the one to place the offering
Of Soma reverently at her feet.
To serve Parvati! Diffidence and pride
At once possessed the rapidly beating heart
Of Sundarar when he learned—to serve the Queen
Herself! But what if something should go wrong?
And what if he should see Aninditai?
Pride in the end proved stronger and the great day
At last arrived. Upon Kailas's peak,
In Alaka's great sacrificial hall,
Beneath a dome that for its vastness seemed
A thought projected in etheric space,
Clad in resplendent drapery, all the gods
Assembled in their legions. Parvati
Was seated in their midst upon a throne
Of flickering cream-white opal. By her side
The God of gods, his third eye closed in trance,
Sat motionlessly as Himalaya.
The ritual proceedings then began:
The fire was lit, the mystic formulas
Of adoration rhythmically pronounced,
And Sundarar, as representative
Of the devoted company advanced
With faltering steps towards Uma. In his hands
He held the bowl of Soma, sacred juice
Of the death-conquering flower, by virgins plucked
By the light of the full, nectarous moon and pressed
By Indra's thunder-stone, refined and strained
By priests incanting immemorial prayers
And poured into a gold vessel to be placed

Religiously at Umadevi's feet.
 Sundarar walked slowly; his heart beat loud
 In tremulous, warm confusion. The vast hall
 Was filled with a dense silence, palpable
 As newly fallen deeply drifted snow,
 While all the love of the assembled Gods
 Flowed up towards Uma. He had almost reached
 The place where the twin-bodied Unity,
 The awful presence of the nude divine,
 Sat throned in all-commanding majesty.
 Drawing close, he knelt, gazed reverently, bent low—
 When suddenly the stillness of the hall
 Was assailed by a volley of disruptive sound:
 It was Aninditai, whose breathless laugh
 Tinkled in rhythm with the frantic bells
 That jingled upon her swiftly dancing feet.
 Her hair, still wet from recent bathing, streamed
 Behind her like a black cascade. One hand
 Was raised to adjust an earring, one was pressed
 To her flushed bosom's panting nakedness.
 In a moment she had taken her vacant place
 Beside Kamalini, her reluctant eyes
 Obliquely fixed on the distracted boy.
 An unpleasant thrill shot down his taut left side
 As he felt the familiar importuning force
 Demand the accustomed tribute of his gaze.
 He turned mechanically. Aninditai
 Was standing with uplifted arms, her breasts
 Thrust boldly forward, as her hands behind
 Her long and slender alabastrine neck
 Were drawing out her gleaming unbound hair.
 A coy Kamalini, holding a silver mirror
 Before her immodest friend, was helping her draw
 Her filigree girdle over her swelling hips,
 As she too, out of the corner of her eye
 Looked mischievously at the helpless boy.
 Desire rose in his young and virgin limbs;
 Immortal substance felt the fires of love.
 He stared, oblivious of all except
 The luminous bodies. Then remembering
 His duty, in abrupt, unbalanced haste
 He whirled. The vessel slipped from his moist hands

And fell with a great crash at Uma's feet.
 The rapt-faced worshippers looked up amazed;
 The Goddess, smiling sadly, turned away.
 Sundarar from his posture of disgrace
 After a moment absent-mindedly
 Watching the Soma trickle across the floor,
 Not knowing whether he should shed tears or laugh,
 With an abashed smile, looked up to his friend,
 But the benignant deity was gone.
 In his place stood one of red complexion, huge,
 With a mouth like hell's gate, crowded with jagged teeth,
 And between his twisted brows one wrathful eye
 Seemed ready to spew forth volcanic rage.
 The gods looked on in terror, pitying
 The boy who, trembling, knelt with suppliant arms
 Stretched vainly up towards one who paid no heed.
 His fate would certainly have been the same
 As Kamadev's, who, when the vanquished gods
 Desired a general born of Shiva's seed,
 Approached the Great God with his flowery shafts.
 His body was reduced to nothingness
 By one swift glance of Rudra's flaming eye—
 And so would have Halalasundarar's,
 Had not the grace of Uma intervened.
 Casting herself between her terrible spouse
 And the boy, the Goddess cried out passionately:
 "Stay, Mighty One, the world-destroying fires
 Awake within thee, art thou not renowned
 As Ashutosha, Godhead swiftly appeased
 Even by man of the crooked ways? Great Lord,
 Thou outcast's refuge, give us again to see
 Thy form auspicious, crowned with the crescent moon
 And with thy throat tinged blue like the summer sky.
 O Mighty Rudra, turn thy heart to grace."
 As Uma spoke, the form of terror changed:
 The upraised javelin again became
 A three-pronged staff of peace, the lurid glare
 Of doomsday fire and pestilence was transformed
 Into a blue-white hue, like mountain snow
 Under an autumn moon. The Great God smiled
 And, looking towards his frightened servant, spoke:
 "Fear not, my son, for you and all are safe

Whom Uma, mother of the universe,
 Petitions for; misfortune can never come
 To anyone who like a candid child
 Takes refuge in her arms. Your life is spared
 That never was in real danger; but the seeds
 Of consequence are cast by our own hands
 And the ripened debt to Karma must be paid.
 Because you are allured by life and form
 And impatient of the pure unmotivated bliss
 Of Alaka, you must descend to earth
 And in a body composed of death and sin
 Work out your downward drawn propensities—
 But not alone: those who have brought about
 Your degradation”—here the Great God turned
 To Aninditai who, falling upon her knees,
 Tried vainly to pull over her naked breast
 The corner of her insufficient robe,
 And Kamalini who, eyes contritely down,
 Awaited fearlessly Kalasamhar's doom—
 “Must join you in your exile—Aninditai,
 You embodying yourself as Paravai,
 And you, Kamalini, as Sangiliar,
 Two mortal women in the Tamil land,
 To share with him you love the bittersweet
 Joy of connubial vicissitude
 And to help him in his work. When you have learned
 The secret of your femininity,
 Using the numen of your womanhood
 To aid his upward bound adventuring soul
 Ascend into the higher hemisphere,
 Lit by a gnostic sun, not drawing it
 By animal attraction crudely back
 Into the lower nature, you will be
 Apotheosised to undying types
 And live forever in your husband's songs.
 For he will be a singer without compare
 And, through him, Tamil poetry will reach
 Heights of expression unattainable
 To any other, and melodiously
 Lay bare the secrets of the bhakta's heart.
 He shall lead thousands to Kailas's gate,
 Confounding Jain and Buddhist heretics

Who, ignorant of Veda, turn their backs
On Uma's beautiful world...." But here the boy
Broke in, eyes overflowing with hot tears,
Crying out, "Lord, have mercy, do not condemn
Your servant to a life of suffering
So far from you, in a world of death and worse
Than death, impermanence, decay and age;
Where beauty fails and sense grows dim and frail
The thighs and shoulders, and the children pass
Laughing and glowing in their golden limbs,
And, looking up, fall silent." But Shambhu replied,
Like a compassionate mother, "Do not fear, my child,
In a transfigured body of flesh and blood
Virile and healthy in your eighteenth year,
Before the colour of your hairless cheeks
Has lost its glow, you will return to me
Upon the back of a white elephant.
And, reunited, we shall once again
Enjoy the blissful never-ending play
Of perfect friendship. Nor shall I ever be
Far off even when you have gone to earth,
But in the form of the celestial friend
Shall secretly watch over and play with you."
The Great God ceased and gazed in his comrade's eyes.
The wisdom that embraces the three times,
Aware of the inner sense of all things here
And of all the harsh necessity of fate,
Was wordlessly transmitted to his mind,
Like moonlight to a scarcely rippling lake.
Then Sundaramurti felt the universe
Open beneath him. He was tumbling down—
Down to the limitations, hopes and fears
Of earth, and as he fell the memory
Faded behind him of that luminous plane
Where all are one in Shiva. —Silent, dazed,
He stood before the linga in the dark shrine
Trembling with unpossessed delight; he knew
That he had somehow clasped the body of love,
And like a woman who has given herself
Completely to her lover, was fulfilled.
Slowly he walked out into the crystal light
Of a young morning that affectionately

Fondled the stones, and wakened the slumbering trees.
Another day, an ordinary day,
Cast from the depths of being upon the shore
Of life, the reoffered opportunity,
Repeating itself for action, for joy, for love,
For the fulfilment of its own desire,
Was marvellously beginning. For a while
He stood by the Pennar's side; her hurrying stream
Danced in the dawn-light's splendour. All around
Colour was wearing beauty's garment, that bared
The outlines of the loveliness it veiled;
And the Brahmins walking to their morning prayer
And the village girls returning from the well
With the round clay vessels on their swaying hips
Mid herds of goats and buffalo and swine,
And the outcast leper lying beside the way
Were perfect forms of the all-beautiful.
Attired still in his gorgeous wedding dress
And wearing still his golden ornaments,
Signs of his marriage, Sundaramurti turned
And set his foot upon the ancient road,
And, chanting low a song in Shiva's praise,
He walked towards Tirunavellur, alone.

THE END

PETER HEEHS

PIJUSH TELLS A TALE*

A STORY SHORT

A SUMMER evening, sultry heat. I go to my garden and drop into an arm-chair. Green leaves, fresh air and mild fragrance soothe my body and mind. I close my eyes and relax...

"Uncle, uncle..." my nephew and niece come running, "Uncle, please tell us a story."

"Tell you a story!" I brood, grope within, look at the foaming waves afar and the starry sky kissing the sea at the horizon. But being out of touch with tales for ages I cannot recollect any story whatsoever. To fabricate a plot extempore is also impossible for me.

"Uncle."

"Yes." I feel embarrassed and don't know what to say. Partha and Priti have arrived just this morning to spend the summer holidays with me and this is their first request. A sound at the garden-gate and someone strides in. "Oh, Pijush, you have come! Surely you are a Godsend and will live more than a thousand years." Pijush is a distant relative of mine and an excellent story-teller. "Listen, Pijush, please tell them a story on my behalf, will you?"

Pijush smiles, nods his head, looks affectionately at the children. "H'm, I shall tell them a story. Come on, my young friends." He makes them sit beside him and strokes their cheeks. "Now listen," he starts telling a story forthwith, fixing his eyes at the horizon:

Prince Kajal turns to the right and gallops ahead. His associates, also on horseback, lag behind. They exchange glances meaning, "What's the matter? Such a hurry? But the forest is not very far off from here and it's only morning now!"

"Why does the prince go to the forest?" asks Partha.

"To hunt a tiger, a man-eater, they say."

"He must be a good hunter then. Is not that so?" Priti wants to know.

"That's not known yet and has to be ascertained. In fact he is a poet, a painter and a musician."

"How does he dare kill a tiger then and a man-eater at that?" asks Partha.

"No, he doesn't dare, he has simply to carry out his father the king's order. He must prove his worth to become a crown prince as against his younger step-brother Sajal who is said to have many princely qualities. However, he hasn't to go alone. The king has arranged for a group of expert hunters to follow him as a protective measure. Now to come back to what happened next."

Kajal doesn't like his father's arrangement. He wants to face the situation alone. So fully equipped and finely dressed as a hunter he gallops much ahead of others on his stalwart white horse. He moves on nonstop and reaches almost the heart of the forest.

* A free adaptation from the author's Bengali story *Mayabi Rakshasa!*

The place is said to be infested with wild animals including the man-eater who is supposed to go out for prey only after dusk.

Kajal doesn't dare proceed further. He looks back. There is no trace of his followers. He recedes. It would be better perhaps to let the tiger find him instead of his fishing it out, he thinks and looks around. The trees are not equally dense everywhere. There are patches of open grassy ground here and there with only spare trees and big and small bushes at places. "Oh, how nice!" he exclaims at the sight of the sun-rays filtered through the leaves. He feels an unspeakable inner joy, the poet in him comes to the forefront. He completely forgets the purpose for which he has come to the forest.

'Kutch..., kutch..., kutch..., ' What's this sound for, where does it come from? Is it the chirping of a strange bird or the sound of someone's footsteps on the grass? Allured, Kajal directs his horse, following the sound. Just as he crosses a big bush he pulls the reins and stands still. A pretty golden deer is deeply busy grazing a few yards in front of him. "A lovely creature indeed, I must have it anyhow." He raises his bow and arrow and then lowers them instantly, "Oh no, how can I kill such a tender creation of God? Rather I shall catch it alive and keep it in the garden in front of my studio."

Meanwhile the deer straightens its ears, gets alarmed, raises its head even while chewing a mouthful of grass. A pair of large startled eyes fall on Kajal. He is fully overcome by their charm and beauty and goes on looking at them. But the deer is not at all attracted by Kajal's look. Rather it gets frightened and takes to its heels.

Kajal chases it then and there. He must have it anyhow. After a while his horse corners the poor little thing against a thick bush. But before he could prepare to trap it the deer takes a tremendous sidewise leap and clears off with lightning speed. Kajal is a bit late to settle and chase it again. But as ill-luck would have it, he cannot near the animal even after hours of pursuit. The big size of his horse and sundry obstacles like bushes and jungles stand in the way. The deer being small in size and accustomed to these hurdles starts playing hide-and-seek with him. But Kajal refuses to give up the chase and the game goes on throughout the whole day.

Finally he misses the trail of his target and finds himself abruptly on the other side of the forest. The beauty and grandeur of the setting sun and the many-coloured hues on the western horizon make him stand still with a vacant look. And it is then that a mysterious tender light shows him a huge white palace nearby.

After the day's random ride Kajal is dead tired, thirsty and hungry as well. He lets the horse loose and hurries towards the palace. He steps inside and finds none to ask about food and drink. He moves to the inner rooms but without avail. The place is desolate and forlorn. Frustrated, he now roams about from one room to another like a mad man for a little drinking water. Thus he enters the innermost part of the palace and stands astonished at the door of a finely decorated apartment. Inside, on a golden bedstead a girl of paragon beauty seems to be under the spell of a deep sleep. "This must be the princess," he thinks and wonders why she should be sleep-

ing at this odd hour of the day. He peeps into the room in search of water but his eyes are attracted by the superb frescos on the walls.

He cannot but observe and appreciate the colours, forms and figures depicted. Perhaps they are scenes from the forest nearby—trees, plants, flowers, fountains, birds, beasts, the king and his hunting party, etc. The flowers are so fresh and living that they seem even to exude fragrance. Suddenly he feels that there must be a small defect somewhere, something offends his sensitive eyes. But he cannot detect the exact spot of it. Being an artist he doesn't like to leave it undetected. Forgetting hunger and thirst he starts scrutinising the whole thing.

The tender body of the princess rests motionless on the precious bed. Her lac-dyed fair feet peep through the jewelled border of her gorgeous sari. A fringe of deep black curly hair has made her sweet face sweeter to look at. But the uncovered part of her throat and neck betrays a kind of suppressed pain. Kajal's thoughtful eyes fall on the wall over her head. "How is it?" he exclaims; "those pink flowers don't match at all with the background. Surely the two are not the work of the same artist." He steps inside abruptly and nears the wall without his knowing. Oh what a surprise, the flowers are not painted at all, they are real ones kept in a vase on the floor near the wall. Kajal casts his look on the opposite wall at the princess's feet. Yes, there are also a few white flowers quite out of harmony with the background. He moves over there and finds that they are also not painted: they are real flowers kept in a vase. But the colours of the floor, vase and wall are so matching that they help create a confusion from a distance.

Something impels him to change the position of the vases; he keeps the vase with white flowers near the head of the princess and that with the pink ones near her feet. Now he tries to judge the improvement due to the adjustment but is startled to hear a feeble voice, "Water, a little of water...." The princess is awake and prepares to sit up while muttering, "Oh, what a thirst! I am dying for a little water."

Suddenly Kajal gets frightened. He has entered the innermost secret room like a thief. It is an act of trespass and he is well aware of the seriousness of the crime and the punishment thereof. He stands motionless against the wall.

Meanwhile the princess sits up and turns her face towards Kajal but does not appear to see him. "Is she blind then? Or does she take me to be a painted figure on the wall?" She turns her face. "Whatever it might be, this is the most opportune moment to slip away," he thinks and steps towards the door.

"Stop, don't move a step further," a feeble but commanding voice, with a magnetic power in it. Kajal stands still.

"Who are you?" asks the princess.

"Nobody, I..I..," Kajal fumbles.

"What do you mean, what brings you here?"

"I am in search of water, I am very thirsty."

"Thirsty! you are also thirsty? So am I, oh a little water..." She drops down on the bed groaning. Kajal's heart aches in deep pity for her. He nears the princess

and whispers, "Oh princess, please tell me where I can get water. I shall bring it for you."

"No, it is not possible, the Rakshasa will kill you."

"Kill me! What do you say? I am a prince and am out hunting, fully prepared to kill a Rakshasa even and prove my worth to my father."

"Oh, you are a prince!" A faint smile glitters on her face. "But that won't help much. The Rakshasa knows magic. My father, a great hero, my brother, a first-rate fighter," her voice is now sombre and heavy, "in addition to them soldiers and generals, none could stand against the Rakshasa. Single-handed he killed all of them and made me a captive." Her voice sinks down, "Water, a little water..."

"Princess, please don't worry, simply tell me where water is available..." She resumes speaking in a very subdued voice, "There is a pond at the centre of the vast garden behind the palace. Alas! what a punishment! During the day I graze in the forest as a deer but at nightfall I get confined in my room and lie senseless by the magic power of the Rakshasa. Today I was almost killed by a cruel hunter on a white horse..." Tears roll down her cheeks and wet the milk-white pillow.

Kajal is awe-stricken, his eyes sparkle and his heart tosses between pity and joy. He takes both of her hands in his and speaks in a soft voice, "Princess, please excuse me. The hunter is none other than myself. But I didn't want to kill the deer. I wanted to catch it alive and tame and keep it in the garden in front of my studio. Oh, how happy am I that I have got it after all, not in its false form but in its divinely tender and true human appearance. Now, princess, please don't worry, endure a little more and let me come back with water."

She eyes him with love and hope and warns as well, "But beware of the Rakshasa, he knows magic."

It is easy to say but difficult to perform. Shortly after Kajal enters the garden a dense darkness descends. It is quite mysterious and in that dark garden he loses his way and deplores the folly of not bringing a light with him. But how could he know beforehand? It is so unexpected. Surely this must be the magic influence of the Rakshasa. What's the way out, how to return?—let aside the question of getting water. The thought makes him terribly nervous. His legs won't move, he suffocates and pants for breath. Already tired, thirsty and hungry, Kajal finds himself praying for the first time in his life, "O Lord, please deliver me from the magic influence of the Rakshasa..." At the next moment he falls flat on the ground senseless.

He wakes up in an altogether changed surrounding. The darkness has vanished. The full moon floods the garden with silvery rays with which has mingled fresh air and a fine fragrance of flowers. Refreshed by this gift of nature Kajal stands up and looks around to trace out the flower-plants. But his eyes are caught instead by some glittering objects afar. He nears them to find to his utmost surprise that they are gold vessels, a jar and a tumbler, lying beside the marble-ghat of a pond with crystal-clear rippling water, perhaps the one about which the princess told him. At its central part a few pink and white lotuses wave along with the trembling reflection of the moon,

as if they were playing lovingly with each other.

Overjoyed, Kajal hurries down the steps with the jar in hand.

"Wait," a shout from behind. Kajal turns round and seeks his bow and arrow. "Ho, ho,....got frightened, eh? No, there is nothing to be afraid of. I simply warned you. One who is not a prince will be stripped of his hands if he takes water from here." The voice comes from a blooming Kadamba tree beside the ghat.

"Of course I am a prince," Kajal flings the words.

"Well, take water then. But what will you do with so much water?"

"The princess will drink, not only she, I and my horse will also drink."

"The princess, you mean my sister! Is she still alive?" A heart-rending question.

"Yes, she is alive and you, her brother, seem to be alive still. Then why don't you come near?"

"I am already near you, I am the Kadamba tree."

"What! You mean you have been turned to a tree?" He yells as if a thunderbolt has fallen on him.

"Yes, I have been turned to a tree," a grave voice with a deep sigh, "I used to love trees, plants, flowers and precious stones and also works of art and painting. Above all I loved my sweet little sister Meghamala. But then on one fine sunny morning a Rakshasa came like a curse from nowhere covering the sky with a black cloud and making a terrifying stormy sound. I stood fully armed to save my sister but without any success. Within moments, I don't know how, I was hurled headlong in the air, found myself spinning like a top for some time and then lost my consciousness. I got it back in the body of this Kadamba tree."

Kajal is stupefied and doesn't know what to say. Suddenly he remembers that the princess is awfully thirsty. So he hurries down the steps and fills the jar with water and while on his way to the palace addresses the tree, "Please be patient for a while, I am just coming back with Meghamala."

Kajal finds Meghamala lying on the bed half-conscious and asking for water feebly now and then, "Water, oh, give me a little water..."

"Princess, look here, I have brought water for you." She takes the tumbler from Kajal's hand and drinks, "Oh, thank you, you have saved my life. Now let me give you some water." But hardly has she said this when the sound of a storm is heard fast approaching the palace. She gets startled and the tumbler falls from her hand. She becomes alert and warns Kajal, "Please run away or hide yourself somewhere, the Rakshasa is coming."

"Coming! Very good, this is the chance to finish him."

"No, it's impossible, he is endowed with a strange magic power. Come this side, follow me." She leads him onto the side-wall, pulls something, a door comes out, a wall-almirah. She pushes him into the almirah. "Please be a good boy and stay here till the Rakshasa departs." Back to her bed, she lies flat like a dead person.

Abruptly the storm stops.... Kajal peeps through the key-hole and trembles

in fear. A hairy figure ten to twelve feet high stands beside the princess looking at her with a lone blood-shot eye from the centre of his forehead. He has no neck, the big head rests directly on his broad shoulders. Then stretching his long hands he changes the position of the two vases, *i.e.*, he keeps the one with the pink flowers near her head and that with the white ones near her feet. As a result the princess who feigned unconsciousness actually falls into a swoon. The Rakshasa stoops down and looks at her face but there is no sign of her returning to her senses. The Rakshasa is perplexed and starts yelling hoarsely, taking her as actually dead. Otherwise why doesn't the magic rule work? At the same time he goes on beating his broad chest with his clublike hands.

"This is the most opportune moment to send the devil to hell," thinks Kajal and parting the door a little he aims his arrow. He pulls the string with all his might. Just then the Rakshasa stops yelling and mutters something to the princess. Kajal is all attention and hears. "Oh sweet princess, why don't you open your eyes? Please open them once only and let me tell you that none of your own men is dead. I can bring them back to life at any moment...."

Kajal's heart leaps in joy and at its sudden impact his fingers slip off from the string. The arrow flashes out and pierces the Rakshasa through and through. But lo, there is no trace of his body. It has simply vanished into thin air.

Kajal is about to come out of his retreat but pulls back instantly at the sight of a fierce tiger creeping in across the doorway. "A man-eater," he shouts, "princess, hurry over here, quick." At the shock of the event he has forgotten that she is still unconscious. The beast moves forward with bared fangs. "Halum," a terrifying sound and then a human voice, "I am a man-eater and naturally don't eat a woman and a dead one at that. Beware yourself now. I am just going to make a sumptuous dinner out of your fine flesh."

Assured of the princess's safety, Kajal gets set for self-defence and prepares to fulfil the mission assigned to him by his father. A hissing sound and within the twinkle of an eye the arrow shot from his bow runs through the heart of the tiger. But the tiger! where is the tiger? With a very heavy thud the huge body of the Rakshasa falls on the floor.

Kajal cannot believe his own eyes and stands bewildered till he hears the devil speak. "Young man, you are very brave indeed and an adept archer too. But to tackle me would have been impossible for you had I not offered myself willingly to be killed. I feel myself guilty for the untimely death of the princess. So I want to put an end to my life also. I lift my curse from everyone and all will live as before. As for the princess I am helpless, my magic rule does not work on her." So saying he closes his lone burning eye for good.

Kajal rushes out and exchanges the position of the vases. The princess wakes up, the whole palace wakes up and gets illuminated. It throbs with the pulsation of life. The king, queen and the prince, the brother of Meghamala, enter the apartment. The prince embraces Kajal with tears of joy in his eyes...

Meghamala utters in a very subdued voice, "Oh prince, you have saved me from perdition, my eternal gratitude to you, nay, my mind, life, body and soul are at your disposal. Do whatever you like with them."

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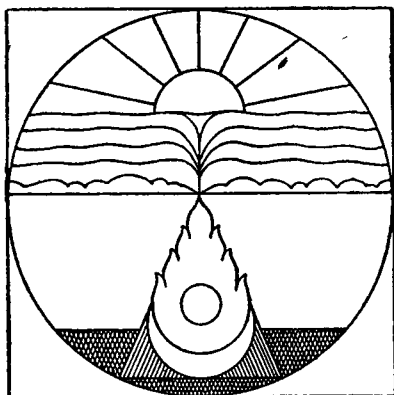
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BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo Circle: Special Thirty-Fourth Number, 1978, in Commemoration of the Mother's Birth Centenary. Published by *Sri Aurobindo Society*, Pondicherry. Pages 128 with 7 photographs of the Mother on art paper. Price Rs. 10.

THE special thirty-fourth number, *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, issued as an homage to the Mother on the occasion of her Birth Centenary, is a splendid gift. It is a significant landmark in the history of this journal. Perhaps to call it a "journal" would be incorrect, if by journalism is meant literature of passing value. Not that the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo need to *seek* any permanence. But even each of the other contributors has something of lasting interest in it. The Mother and her mission upon earth are the central theme. The contents are principally three: extracts from Sri Aurobindo, followed by those of the Mother and finally articles by disciples specially written to pay their homage to her.

The message of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are surcharged with a supreme spiritual power and there can perhaps be nothing more rewarding than letting them sink deep into our psyche. They rightly focus on some of the essential requisites of the path, like Faith, Aspiration and Prayer.

The article by the editor Kishor Gandhi, entitled *The Eternal Mother*, is a preface to the whole issue. The Mother's Birth Centenary, posed against a backdrop of Eternity, gives us a correct perspective. The writer refers to the role of "the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's personal presence" in "the unfolding drama of evolution". The best way to be worthy of the Centenary, he stresses, is to co-operate sincerely in a spiritual effort and hasten "the advent of her next glorious incarnation".

The physical incarnation of the Mother and its significance is precisely the theme of the next section: *The Mother on Herself*, which, the editor assures us, is part of a larger compilation in preparation. As usual, her words, in their essential simplicity and transparency of appeal, penetrate into the very core of our being. Her deep sense of Dedication, Surrender, Humility and above all a singular Patience to bear with a hopelessly erratic humanity comes out magnificently. For instance, looking at Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi, she says:

I do not want to be worshipped. I have come to work, not to be worshipped; let them worship Thee to their heart's content and leave me, silent and hidden, to do my work undisturbed—and of all veils the body is the best.

Or one like this comes as a striking eye-opener:

It is never work that makes me tired; it is when I am compelled to work in an atmosphere of dissatisfaction, despondency, doubt, misunderstanding and bad will, then each step forward represents an enormous effort and tells on the body

more than ten years of normal work.

And most of all an advice we should never forget:

When I say that I have given nobody the right to speak in my name and to interpret my words according to his own fancy, I mean that and nothing else.

Equally notable is the significance the Mother has given to her signature:

The Bird of Peace descending upon the earth.

The second series of *Conversations with Sri Aurobindo* adds a good measure of sparkling wit and humour, not to mention the sheer gems of wisdom. The conversations, embracing an amazingly vast number of topics, prove that the Divine is anything but grim and austere!

Witness the following:

DISCIPLE: Do two souls unite life after life?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, such a phenomenon often occurs.

DISCIPLE: It is not with every husband and wife.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then to many life would be an eternal torture. (*laughter*)

Remembrances by André Morisset, the Mother's son, is a remarkably sensitive account of his childhood impressions of the Mother that reveals occasional flashes of insight. *The Mother's Birth Centenary* by Prof. Srinivasa Iyengar is a more comprehensive attempt. It is written in a leisurely and expansive vein that the readers have come to expect by now from a biographer of his calibre. With a foreward called *Towards the Centenary*, he explores into the four main operational planes of the Mother, namely *The Mother and India*, *The Mother and Education*, *The Mother and The Supramental Manifestation* and *The Mother's Divine Ministry*. An easy conversational tone (the article is based on the author's talks given during the Centenary Year), anchored to suitable quotations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, makes delightful reading.

Prema Nandakumar's lucid piece *The Plays of the Mother* is a welcome windfall and a masterly display of scholarship. Tracing out the spiritual mission of the Mother, the writer deals with three of her "dramatic experiments": *Towards the Future (Vers l'avenir)*, *The Great Secret (le Grand Secret)* and *The Ascent to the Truth*. She sees them as "more than vehicles to drive home the Mother's view of evolutionary progress". "While they may appear deceptively simple symbolistic representations," she adds, they "are instinct with widening circles of significance."

Like the protagonists of the Mother's plays striving for freedom, Shyam Sundar's

The Mother of Freedom is a look into the nature of freedom, its enormous importance and the equally colossal perils of its abuse. He casts a lingering spell by a ready repertoire of fascinating tales.

Prof. Gokak's *Three Prose Poems*, a timely reprint from the *Pathmandir Annual* of 1958, admirably garners the impressions of the old Japanese days of the Mother. Lyrical in tone, the article brilliantly captures the best of the oriental charm and grandeur. For instance; this recollection by Madame Kobayashi of her association with the Mother during her stay in Japan:

The perfume of those two years, when we lived like twin roses on the same stalk, lingers like incense around the divine altar and sways serenely in the sanctuary of my mind.

Poetry is admittedly the highest mode of utterance and so it is fitting that the Number should end with a bunch of poems by Gleaner and Romen Palit. Although all four of Gleaner's poems have spiritual immediacy of sight, my favourite is the fourth one called *The Darshan Day*, where the subtle undertones buoy the poem into an intense mystical vision of the Darshan. Palit's forte, on the other hand, clearly lies in his evocation of a throbbing spiritual ecstasy.

The *Sri Aurobindo Circle* is a veritable gold-mine of riches. It can unreservedly claim a place beside the best of its kind.

SACHCHIDANANDA MOHANTY

EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

(20)

IN THE hoary past, not London, but Winchester was the home of the English kings. It was Edward the Confessor who in the early eleventh century decided to make the village of Westminster his abode. It was a momentous decision, fraught with far-reaching consequences. For London was then just a trading centre, with a small port and a tiny ship-building yard that made ships that were really large-size boats. It may have remained what it was had not the king moved to its vicinity.

The Confessor built his palace, and a few blocks for his officials. For the exercise of his power, the little that the king had, this modest establishment was enough. It was the feudal age and the barons were all-powerful, and administered their domains almost independent of the king. Only in war could the king use his power. Even then he had to be dependent on the barons for recruits when the time for mobilising came. England, destined to be a great sea-power, never maintained until recent times a standing army; as an island kingdom the Navy was its real strength. Today after two devastating wars England is still the third largest naval power in the world. For his prayers the Confessor built a small chapel, which in the future was to become the great complex of a Cathedral, the world famous Westminster Abbey.

We wondered as we roamed about the city what made the people of Londinium want to move out of the city and spread abroad. For outside the city, all was marshy land damp and cold. Even much later, the gay lords and ladies who built their mansions outside London, complained that the temperature was at least ten degrees less outside the city. Fire, pestilence and congestion forced people to build habitations away from the city to forget about the scourge. As the docks and shops were more to the south, the working class moved south and east. The rich moved towards the west, the biggest attraction being the king's residence in the village Westminster.

By the time the great Tudors arrived the Strand and its neighbourhood were the most fashionable part of London. Here the rich and the famous dwelt. This area and Whitehall got a further impetus to growth from the Tudors themselves. Cardinal Wolsey built his palace called Whitehall in York Place. It outshone both in its outer appearance and inside decoration any palace that the king possessed. The road on which the palace stood came to be known as Whitehall. Whitehall in those days was synonymous with banquet hall. For the Cardinal's banquet hall within the palace was something England had never seen before. Of one of his banquets it was said, "a most sumptuous supper, the like of which was never given either by Cleopatra or Caligula".

Naturally, the government offices were grouped around Wolsey's palace. When he was removed the king himself started residing there. King Henry VIII at once erased everything that might remind people of Wolsey. Now there was a definite demarcation. The Ecclesiastical organisation and parliament (in the rudimentary form that it was then) continued to be in Westminster; the king and his administrative offices remained in Whitehall. The octagonal hall known as the Chapter House, was the place where the Commons sat. The Chapel of the Pyx served as the royal Treasury. Later kings built other palaces and dwelt in other places, but the administrative offices were to remain in Whitehall permanently. It is so even today. The road Whitehall starts from Parliament Street and ends in Trafalgar Square.

James I lived at the beginning in Whitehall. Later he rebuilt St. James' Palace around which has grown St. James' Park. Elizabeth did not like Whitehall. One cannot but ponder over this. Was it that it reminded her too much of her father? Or was it that the palace was too near the Strand where she had lived as a princess in a palace built by the Lord Protector? She had been like a prisoner; intrigues and deception surrounded her in Sommerset House, and if there were friends she had also innumerable enemies. Sommerset House also has witnessed a very comic incident. They say Cromwell's effigy was crowned here king by his followers, after he died. And it was in front of Whitehall palace that Absolute Monarchy and Divine Right had been decapitated in the person of Charles I.

Whitehall housed officialdom; the Strand was the place where the rich and the fashionable concentrated. According to modern standards the roads are still narrow and the houses too close together and densely built. If you move about in this area with someone who knows London he will tell you that each and every house has a history. Dr. Johnson, he will tell you, lived in Gough Square where he wrote his Dictionary. He had come to London at the age of twenty-eight, a provincial from Liechfield.

The Pub he patronised was Cheshire Cheese. He dined there every evening in the company of the most famous literary men of the time. Of course Boswell used to be there and his other friends, Burke, Joshua Reynolds, Fox, Goldsmith, Pepys and the Thrales. Most of these people lived in the vicinity of the Strand. Someone said of Johnson that he was the "immortal patron spirit of Literary London". There is a church very near here where the poet Donne was once the Vicar. Even today his sermons are counted among the glories of the English language. The Strand was very much improved after the Great Fire. The magnificent mansion of Peter, Earl of Savoy, was turned into a hotel, which was considered as the greatest hotel in Europe at that time.

It seems this whole area, or at least part of it, belonged to Devereux, Earl of Essex, the great favourite of Elizabeth I. So we come across such names as Essex Street and Devereux pub and Devereux court, etc. It was from his house on the Strand that this misguided Earl, youthful blood still hot in his veins, started on his fateful procession one winter morning in 1601. Mutinous and hysteric he cried in

frenzy, "For the Queen; for the Queen! A plot is laid upon my life." He was promptly sent to the Tower.

He had been the Queen's darling, the one person who gave a sparkle to her declining years. Every evening the lords and the ladies surrounded the Queen. There was always a banquet and even a dance. Though in subdued tone everyone was allowed to have a good time. But when Devereux entered the hall there was pin-drop silence. The eyes met and the whole world was non-existent for a while for the two souls. Not until the Earl had knelt and kissed the Queen's hand and sat down beside her was the hum heard again. Was it love? Certainly yes. But not the thing we understand by the phrase "Falling in love". The great Queen was seventy-five then and the Earl a mere boy of thirty-four. Love it was but of a different dimension, inclusive of all the relations that a human soul could have with another—deeper, more purposeful, invigorating, protecting. After the party broke up, the two played cards in the company of a select few, into the small hours of the morning.

At one time, when they were great friends, the Queen had given the Earl a ring, saying that if ever he were to rebel against her and fear punishment he could send back the ring and she would know that he was repentant and she would come to his rescue. One of the greatest statesmen of all time, she could foresee the future; she knew England and its condition and the political situation; she understood human nature to the core. When the Earl rebelled and was imprisoned the Queen waited patiently for three weeks for the ring. But the ring did not arrive. So when the time came to take the final decision, she had no hesitation, thinking the Earl was lost forever. He was executed. Long, long after the incident one of her ladies-in-waiting produced the ring, saying she had not dared to bring it at that time for fear of the Queen's displeasure. It seems the Earl did send the ring. But it fell into the hands of a lady-in-waiting who was his enemy. When the Queen heard this story, her wrath was such that the thunderbolt of Zeus would have been a milder explosion.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA AND SANAT K. BANERJI

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 November 24, 1978)

WHAT I HAVE LEARNT FROM THE MOTHER

Speech by Krishnakumar Pandya

FRIENDS and fellow-pilgrims,

One day, some 33 years ago, a pilgrim couple from a far-off village in Gujarat, charmed and attracted by the double dawn of the Divine at Pondicherry, arrived at the Ashram and, casting the burden of their worldly possession—two little sons and two little daughters—at the restful feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, sought their divine blessings and refuge for the whole family. Well, the younger son is now in front of you. Namaskar!

Sri Aurobindo opens *The Life Divine* with the chapter entitled: 'The Human Aspiration.' My own little life, divine too he began with a human aspiration. Let me tell you how it happened. One day my father, on the spur of a moment of devotion, urged me, along with my brother and sisters, into a room of our house. It was a meditation room which he had specially set up. Beautiful draperies hung from the walls, and in front on a pedestal was a pair of large photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. My father gestured us to remain silent and be seated. Then, speaking in a sacred whisper, he explained to us that we could ask whatever we liked from the deities. Saying this he left us four alone in the room and closing the door mounted guard outside! We felt rather trapped and timid, and so while I watched the curling smoke from the incense sticks I tried to seek support on sounds outside. But I soon found that silence was my only support. In my small seven-year-old brain I started imagining what I should do. "What can I ask as boon? Costly clothes?—these can be given by my father! Tasty dishes?—they can be given by my mother! So I must ask something which only the deities can give, no one else. This one boon will be precious and must not be wasted." I waited and waited for the indication, and lo! it came. The boon I asked was: "Make me like yourself!"

From my long contact with the Mother I have selected eleven significant incidents which I shall narrate to you in this talk. For each incident I have chosen an appropriate title from a poem of Sri Aurobindo.

1. "*The Witness Spirit*":

One evening in 1948 or so, we children were cheerfully playing football in the Ashram playground. It was time for the Mother to arrive and she soon came and started witnessing our game. I got a little excited and wanted to show off; so when I got a chance to pass the ball I gave a hard kick. Unfortunately this ball went straight and struck the Mother in the centre of her forehead on a jewelled clip that held in place her kitty cap. Her body jerked into a new position of balance but otherwise she was undisturbed and unhurt. There was a real commotion among her entourage. What a blasphemy! What next? But since she appeared unconcerned at a foolish boy's behaviour that had led to such an accident, the ball was soon returned and she continued to witness our resumed game.

My grateful response to her after having asked for a boon must surely have sounded like "boom" in her ears!

But in May 1951 I asked her something else which must have surely sounded very different. Two of my friends and myself got together and sought her permission to maintain, each of us, a personal diary in which we would write a review of the day—a diary which we would submit to her for her corrections and comments.

2. "*A Tree*":

This incident, typical of a naughty little boy, is taken from this diary. It happened on 12 August 1951. You will see that this time I hit with stones something on a tree but not a forehead! I wrote in very poor French but I shall translate it into English.

"Sweet Mother, today I have, with my friends, drunk the honey in the house of bees ['beehives', corrected by the Mother], by breaking their houses ['beehives', corrected by the Mother]."

Her answer: "Not only is that mischievous but dangerous as well, because the honey from wild beehives is not clean and can make you sick."

3. "*Revelation*":

This deals with health and shows how the Mother at once revealed the right solution of a problem. One evening she was inspecting the Dortoir (boarding house for us children), and there was quite a crowd following her—children, adults, older sadhaks. She stopped abruptly in front of a little boy's bed that had a mosquito net hanging with rather too low a curve. When she asked why it was tied like that, someone said that the net was too long for the specially made bed. To this she answered that the four corners could easily be gathered up, wound round the supporting sticks and then tied. Somebody responsible objected to this solution of the problem by saying that the mosquito net would then tear and get spoilt very fast. She immediately turned round to the person who had objected, and with fire in her eyes and force in her voice snapped back: "It is better that the mosquito net tear than that the child suffocate."

4. *"The Human Enigma"*:

This incident also is from the diary I have mentioned. It deals with sleeping in a bed, but from a different angle. It is dated 12 September 1951.

"Little Mother, I have missed my Gujarati class because I was sleeping; is it bad?"

Her answer: "For Gujarati it is bad but for sleep it is good."

5. *One Day: The Little More"*:

This brings me to the question of what should be done the whole of the day—a thing that I asked her in my diary on 10 October 1951.

"Little Mother, can you write to me what should be done during the day?"

Her answer: "It is hardly possible because all the days do not resemble each other. What one must do in all circumstances, is to maintain a will to progress and to become conscious."

6. *"A God's Labour"*:

A related question is how not to do wrong things. On 11 September 1951 I asked: "Little Mother, what should be done to become a good boy?"

Her answer: "First of all you must have a persistent will. Then look within oneself: what is it that prevents me from being a good boy? Try these two things first, I shall tell you the rest afterwards."

7. *"Bride of The Fire"*:

The road was thus opened and the will generated. A few years later, in one of her Wednesday classes, the Mother gave a further clue to quick progress. She said that if you have nothing to hide from me then you make a great progress. So I decided to take this short cut: I wrote to her guarded letters in which I revealed to her some hidden dirt which I wanted to get rid of. She did not answer a single letter, and so, rather exasperated and thinking that perhaps she was not even reading my letters, I wrote one final letter and pinned a note to it. This little note I held in front of her when I went to her in the playground store-room so that she would read it. I mentioned that I wanted a reply to my letter. She held her head down while reading the note. Suddenly she looked up straight into my eyes and with intense force of stern demand said: "I can write but you must do, otherwise it will be much worse." And I trembled and went away, for I knew that something in me was at that time unprepared to 'shed the bloom of the earthly rose', unprepared to say 'I have slain desire.' The only consolation later on was that I found that the devil in me had shown sufficient sincerity on the path of progress for Durga to take him so seriously as at least to lift her sword!

8. *"The Divine Hearing"*:

Now the road of progress led through a subtle world where mysterious whis-

pers of intimacy with the Divine are heard and pursued. On one occasion on my birthday about 14 years ago, after an exchange of flowers, I was looking into her eyes when I felt an urge to express something to her. I was abashed somewhat, yet spoke out in French:

“Je veux t'appartenir pour toujours.”—“I want to belong to you forever.”

“H'm?” she asked straightening in her chair.

“Je veux t'appartenir pour toujours.” I repeated embarrassed.

“H'm?” she asked again leaning forward in her chair.

I was very much embarrassed and perplexed by this divine hearing.

“Je veux t'appartenir pour toujours,” I repeated a third time.

“O...,” she said in a drawn-out way as if at last understanding. “Inwardly you belong to me, but what you mean to say is that...”

“I want to realise that,” I said. And she answered, “Yes, you want to become conscious of that.”

Then she was silent for some time. Finally, deeply meaning it, she said: “For that you must become so much... so much sincere.... You see, you must find out all that is against this, that is unwilling, that wants to hide in its little corner and not move. You must go deep, deep inside and seize in a pincer-like movement the little dark snake-like something that lives and lurks in dark recesses of your nature, and, in one quick decisive movement, turn it up towards the light so that it may be changed or burnt up.... Then it is all right, the nature gets gradually prepared.” “You can read the *Bulletin*,¹ I have explained all this,” she added with a smile.

9. “Moments”:

Apart from individual effort and progress, there is the collectivity which must progress and change; there too is our share of labour and reward. Ordinarily this means work outside of oneself, for the others. About ten years ago it was the birthday of one of the teachers in our school and some of the students had decided that a beautiful hand-written magazine should be brought out to celebrate the occasion. As generally happens, the inspiration came at the eleventh hour and, perspire as we would, we could not get it ready by the twelfth hour. I, as one of the helper-teachers on the occasion, was given the charge to have it bound in time. I was very desirous to complete in good time the job, so that the students would be happy and the Mother could bless it at the right moment, *i.e.*, on the teacher's birthday itself. But the circumstances were against this, and I had to exert great self-control and patience and bear the sole blame for not getting it ready on time. Thus the moment passed. Finally, two whole days after the birthday, the belated magazine was taken to the Mother. She was very pleased and, on learning that it was meant as a birthday venture, she readily ante-dated her blessings by two days, so that the correct date appeared on the magazine! You can imagine our joy at this!

¹ See *Bulletin*, August 1964, “Questions and Answers” dated Feb. 8, 1951.

10. "The Infinite Adventure":

In this jewelled incident we find that her wonderful work is dateless and not pressed by time. Something has to be achieved by the collectivity but this is dependent on individual attainment. Once in our Big Boys' Home there was a theft of a hundred rupees, and it was evident that one of the boys was the thief. There was a breach of mutual trust, a rent in the social fabric threatening to mar our march towards collective harmony on which alone can be based other subtler diviner achievements. In my discussion with some of the boys I found that they had tremendous goodwill, but yet we were caught in a dilemma: how to find the thief without throwing a net of suspicion around him so that he may trust us? It was agreed that I should write to the Mother. Thus on 15 April 1967 I wrote a letter which ended like this: "It was at this point, Mother, that I felt a keen sense of the insufficiency of the mental light, a surfeit, a disgust for mental solutions to problems... I don't have to tell you that you are my only refuge."

The Mother did not send any *written* reply, so her silence was taken as being the form of her answer. *Three months* passed, three months, and the episode was almost forgotten by me. But when I went for pranam to her on my birthday, suddenly, *on her own* she started telling me certain things in French. I wrote down her words immediately on return from her darshan. I reproduce them here in an English translation:

(Long silence)

MOTHER: I remember... you wrote a letter to me in which you said that certain things were disappearing...

MYSELF: Yes, Mother, I do not know what to do...

MOTHER: Generally, when I am sent such letters, I do not answer; but what I do is like this: I put a great pressure (*she opened well her right hand spreading as much as possible her fingers, and made a gesture as if she were pressing forcefully on some thing with the greatest possible width of her hand*), a force of consciousness on the place, and then (*shrugging her shoulders and moving her hands outward*) I await the result...

(After a silence)

... It is always like this; there must be a change here (*she pointed to the centre of her chest, with the tips of her right thumb and index-finger joined*)... there must be a change of consciousness. That is the solution. The external solutions do not work... You see, it is the same thing with rules. As soon as rules are made, as soon as they are written down, there are nine out of ten persons who want to defy these. And then if there is one person who clings to them, he has his ideas, makes intellectual constructions on them, he wants to impose them... You see it does not work... There must... there must be an enlarging, a comprehension which sees things... which holds itself behind... which has largeness, sympathy... All this... All these

are not words, they must be lived... So, you see, that which represents the centre (*she pointed towards me indicating the chief, the representative of the group*)... there must be the change. So we come back to the same thing—a change of consciousness is needed.

(*Silence*)

You see, the things, the material things, they belong to nobody, they belong to all: if one has need of a thing one takes it and then puts it back, most naturally. It must be like that. But as soon as there is someone who wants to possess a thing (*she stretched her right hand on the table and closed her palm as if she wanted to hold something and bring it to herself*) it spoils everything: "I want this thing, it belongs to me." Then it is finished...

It is here that there must be a change (*she showed it the same way at the heart-centre*)... the solution is a change of consciousness... There must be (*and she said this slowly and with a kind of pressure which seemed to spring from the depths of her being*)... an atmosphere of liberty, of order, of plasticity... you see, where everything is in its place, where all things are situated where they must be. Each one takes what he wants when he has need of it, and then puts it back most naturally. All this is not words, it is a change of consciousness that is required... (*I interjected something about my own disorder and she continued*) You see, if you have a problem, a point to be clarified, put yourself in a corner and keep yourself very very tranquil, and ask about your problem. Be very quiet, quiet and you will receive the answer, you are sure to receive... Like this there is communication (*she touched her right temple with her right thumb and stretched her hand towards me, to indicate an invisible line of communication*). Like this I answer... Well, good-bye and happy New Year.

MYSELF: Thank you, Mother.

While using this invisible line of communication, we must be vigilant to see to it that our pilgrim-feet are not led astray. She has made her guidance clear in a message she gave me for the Big Boys' Home on 16 December 1962. I shall read this message. It was given in French and I have for you the English translation:

"May this day be for you the beginning of a new life in which you will strive to understand better and better why you are here and what is expected of you.

"Live always in the aspiration of realising your most complete and true perfection.

"And for a beginning take care to be honest, sincere, straightforward, noble and pure in a rigorous discipline that you will impose on yourselves.

"I shall be always present to help you and to guide you.

"My blessings."

II. "Ahana":

This invisible line of communication is not the only one; sometimes, by her

blessings we are led directly to the

“Vision delightful alone on the hills whom the silences cover.”

Once in June 1966 I wanted the Mother to listen to the recording of a devotional song feelingly sung by a friend. I wrote to her that I did not want to impose anything on her. My letter ended thus: “You know, Mother, when such vibrations of devotion enter into me after I have listened to religious songs, my mind is slightly perplexed, for people in the Ashram say that you have said that such songs are full of sentimentality. If this is true, Mother, then teach me, your child, that which is true devotion, for I do not understand it at all. How can I feel it?”

Her written answer: “It is all right, but where is the time to hear?—Blessings.”

As soon as I read this answer I told myself, “That is that, she has made it pointedly clear, she has no time—so the matter ends.” But actually this was the beginning of something unexpected. For at dinner in the Dining Hall I looked again at her answer, and realised that her last but not the least word was “Blessings”, something that I had trivially taken for granted and paid no attention to. The more I thought of this the more deeply the point was being driven home: “Did I not ask her to teach me true devotion? Then how could I neglect this bestowal of divine favour? How could I forgo her real help when I myself asked for it?” And I offered my deeply grateful self to her, simply and tearfully—for I had tears, tears innumerable shed with my head down so that no diner nearabout might think me to be a namby-pamby nothing! It was simply uncontrollable, this welling-up feeling for her blessings. And I am sure she knew of the “touch of tears in mortal things”, for there she was, a figure in blue sari over her head, her right hand curving gently in a gesture of blessing. She was there, right there, I could almost touch her. But there was no need, for she was so real, so vibrant, so sweet.

This intimate knowledge about her blessings is very simple and resides deep and clear in the hearts of children. Sometime back I put it to a little boy of seven that if he were made to sit down by his father in front of the photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and told to ask of them something which only they could give, what would it be that he would ask. He could not tell me immediately but the next day he had the answer: “Blessings.”

So, you see, dear fellow-pilgrims, I have offered to her eleven tiny pebbles of error and imperfection so that she may, in her Wisdom and Love, use them in her bridge built for the Divine to tread upon and lead us to Victory.

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI