

# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

OCTOBER 1979

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### TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS

The enormous rise in the cost of paper, production and distribution and the change in some other factors have forced us to raise by a small margin our subscription from 1980. We have kept the margin as small as possible because the cost of living is everywhere on the increase. In passing, we may state that the cost to us of each copy of *Mother India* is more than Rs. 3/-. It is only the donations and advertisements that help us out to a great extent.

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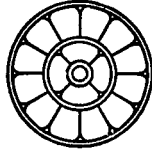
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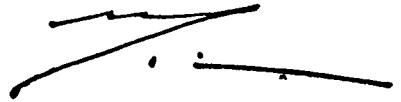


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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Vol. XXXI

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."*

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### AN APPEAL TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

*Mother India* is in need of donations of any amount that can be spared.

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 ear-marked 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.

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# NATURE, EARTH, OTHER PLANETS, FLYING SAUCERS, OCCULT EXPLORATION

## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

*What is Nature? That is, what is her relation with the Supreme Mother?*

I THINK that Nature is the most material part of the creative force which is concerned with the creation specially of the earth, of the material world as we know it upon earth.

I want some information about the latest astronomical discoveries... *(To Pavitra)* Is similar matter known in the worlds as that on the earth?

(PAVITRA:) *Everywhere, Mother. Up to now no difference has been found in the matter not only of the solar system but also of the others.*

It is all the same. And then, how is it that we are told that human beings could not live on other planets, not even on Jupiter or Venus?

(PAVITRA:) *The elements are the same, the chemical elements, for instance, are the same. But those which have been formed, at present—for example in Jupiter there would be an atmosphere of ammonia and carbonic gas...*

Yes. So the formation is not the same after all?

(PAVITRA:) *The physical body, evidently, organic matter cannot be the same.*

Yes, the one people usually know...

(PAVITRA:)... *cannot be the same.*

Cannot be the same, you see.

*Are psychic beings up there or are they only in Matter?*

I have heard that only on the earth there are psychic beings, precisely because the earth has been created as a symbol for concentrating the problem, and the psychic being, which is the result of the direct intervention of the Supreme, has been created here exactly for the necessities of this symbolic action.

*Are there really any beings on Jupiter or Mars?*

For me, if you ask me, there are beings everywhere. Everywhere. One doesn't see them. That's all. But they are everywhere. But they are everywhere. But certainly I don't think they are like what we see in the pictures—the Martians you were shown in the pictures with grotesque forms. I have no reason to think that they are like that.

*Have you heard the story of the flying saucer?*

Ah, yes! I have studied it also. However, I am waiting to have a physical experience. I indeed saw a flying saucer pass over Pondicherry during the war. I saw it clearly, with open eyes, and going fairly slowly, coming from the sea to the land. It was light blue and had a slightly rounded shape like this. I saw it passing by and said to myself, "Why, I have a vision!" I rubbed my eyes but my eyes were open, completely open... Suddenly I saw a form passing in the sky like this; I told myself, "How strange it is!" But as no one had spoken about it till then, I thought that I had a

vision. I see many things which people ordinarily don't see; but when people started speaking about this, then I said to myself, "Why, I have seen a flying saucer pass by." But I think Udar also has seen a flying saucer.

(UDAR:) *Yes, Mother. (Laughter)*

That it exists is unquestionable. What is it? Each one has his opinion. But what I would like is to find myself face to face with the beings as they have been described. There is someone who has, supposedly... anyway, he said that he has spoken to a being who was in a flying saucer. Well, I would be very happy to meet a being like that. After that I shall tell you what it is—when I have met it.

*Mother, it is said that there are other solar systems where perhaps one can find a similar situation as on earth. But out there can we find men like us?*

You must go there and see. *(Laughter)*

*Mother, can we go to the other planets by occult means?*

Ah! Yes, one can go everywhere. What prevents us from going? One goes everywhere. Only, you see, we must know that it is not the physical body which goes; it is the most material thing...the most material vital; and this is already very difficult.

Usually it is the mental part of the vital which goes out; not the mind, the vital. For short distances one can go out from his body with the subtle physical, and in these cases one sees things materially as they are. But one can't go long distances. There are practical reasons, but above all there is the reason of safety; because if one goes too far with the subtle physical, the body is not only in a trance, it is in a cataleptic state, and then, unless it is guarded by someone who has very profound knowledge and a great power, this can turn out badly. Therefore, for those long journeys it is usually the most subtle part of the vital (which corresponds to a kind of mental consciousness of the vital) which goes out.

So one sees everything which has a similar quality. But supposing there is something very material, one doesn't see it as it is. So one can't say with certainty, "It is like this or like that." One can say, "I saw this", that's all. But one can't recount stories like those in the papers about what is happening on the moon or Jupiter or Venus. One can have an experience and know certain things but usually they are things of a more psychological nature.

However, if it is in order to know whether there are some beings there I don't think there's any place in the universe, where there aren't beings, because that's the very principle of this universe: individual creations. Everywhere there are individual creations but they have different densities. Most of them are invisible except to those with a similar density, and only those who have the capacity of coming out of their bodies and going for a stroll can see these things. But so long as you use these eyes you can't see very much.

Such a limited field of vision! In fact, when you think of it, such an absolutely ridiculous limitation! The field of our sense experience has an absolutely ridiculous limitation; while in the mind, if you think of someone or something, a city or a place, you are there immediately, instantaneously, you see. And you are there—it is not that

you are not there, you are there, and you can have so precise a mental contact that you can have a conversation, ask questions and receive answers, on condition that the other person is fairly sensitive. Why, this is something which happens constantly, constantly. Only, you must have a little knowledge, naturally, for otherwise you don't even understand what is happening.

Even physically, with this, with the eyes, the nose, the fingers the mouth, the ears, oh, it is ridiculous! One can develop these if one wants. One can succeed, for example, in hearing something which occurs at a fairly great distance and hearing it physically, not by another means than the physical, but one must have a control over his senses and be able to prolong their vibrations sufficiently. One can see at a distance also, and not by an occult vision. One can manage to stretch his vision, and if he knows how to prolong the vibration of his nerves outside the organ, he can prolong the contact, I don't say some kilometres away, no, but in a certain area, say, for example, through a wall, which is considered something impossible; one can see what is going on in a room which is separated from another by a wall. But a very methodical practice is necessary. Yet this is possible, seeing, feeling, hearing. If one wants to take the trouble, one can enlarge his field considerably. But it asks for work, for perseverance, a kind of assiduous effort. Why, it has even been found that one can develop other visual centres than the eye. It has been tried out with people who, for some reason or other, have no vision in the eye. One can develop other centres or another centre of vision, by a continuous, methodical effort. Jules Romain has written a book about it. He himself conducted experiments and obtained very conclusive results.

This means that we have a number of possibilities which we let sleep within us, because we don't take the trouble to develop them very much. We can do infinitely more than we actually do. But we take things like that, as they come.

18 May 1953

# **“THE MORALITY OF NATURE”—AND OTHER MENTAL CONSTRUCTIONS**

## **WORDS OF THE MOTHER**

“THE morality of Nature.”

Oh! it is not interesting.

It was a group of people whom I met in Paris. A certain gentleman had founded a group called “The Morality of Nature”, and so he took his stand on all the movements of Nature to set up his moral code. But we know that Nature is, how to put it... a force, a consciousness or being, call it what you like, which is absolutely amoral, for whom the moral sense does not exist at all. So naturally this had rather disastrous results in practice. And in the very meeting where this gentleman was expounding his theories, there was a Catholic priest, a very learned man who had studied many things (he knew lots of things), who immediately began to tell him that his morality of Nature was not moral. Then the other gentleman was not pleased and told him, “Oh! Yes, you climb to the seventh storey of your ivory tower and from there you look at things without understanding them.” “The seventh storey of your ivory tower” was very amusing.

Well, he had found, according to himself (I don’t remember his name now), he had found the means of being happy, that everyone may be satisfied and men may love one another. So naturally people who did not agree with him, said to him, “But how does it happen that when the law of Nature alone reigns—as for example, without even going as far as the animal, in vegetal life—how does it happen that there are constant massacres between plants and the perpetual struggle for life? Is this what you call harmony?” Then the other man did not understand anything.

In fact, people who are interested in general questions, those who come out of their little daily preoccupations of being born, living as well as possible—there are people not satisfied with this, who try to have general ideas and look at world problems—these people make an inner effort or a mental effort, and in one way or another enter into contact with the great currents of mental force, of the higher light and sometimes of spiritual force. Then they receive a kind of drop of that within their consciousness and this produces in them the illumination of a revelation, and they feel that they have grasped the truth. They have a revelation and so naturally are very happy and immediately think, “My happiness I am going to pass on to others”; for they are very fine people, they have very good intentions. Then, to pass on their happiness to others they begin by making a construction around their revelation; they must make it into a system; otherwise how to preach to others? So they make a system, like this gentleman. I have met hundreds like this in the world. Now, each one had had a revelation and had constructed something which seemed to him to be the solution to all problems. They wanted to apply it to everything. So they gathered people around them; according to the strength of their influence, their power, they



gathered more people or less, from three or four to some hundreds; sometimes they had groups and they said, "Here we are, if everyone does what we do, well, the world will be transformed". Unfortunately it was only a spark of light, and their construction was purely mental and not free from the ordinary laws of life. And so the people in the groups who were to have preached to the world harmony, beauty, happiness, joy and peace, etc., quarrelled among themselves. This took away all power from their teaching. It is like this, and in fact it is true.

It is only when something absolutely new and absolutely superior enters the earth atmosphere and changes it by a kind of spiritual coercion, it is only at that moment that human consciousness will change sufficiently for circumstances also to change.

As for me, I have no illusions on the subject, because I know that Sri Aurobindo saw the truth of things and therefore, if humanity were ready to be transformed simply by the vision of the truth of things, well, at least all those who are in contact with this truth should be transformed. Well, they aren't.

You know all the defects which you have, personally and collectively, and how in spite of a goodwill which must be obvious, there is still much to do for the world to be as one conceives it when one comes out of ordinary notions—simply, let us say a world of harmony, peace, understanding, broad-mindedness, goodwill, unselfishness, disinterested consecration to a higher ideal, self-forgetfulness... you want more of these things, there are still many more. You must begin with just a little at first, simply this: to have slightly greater ideas, a little vaster understanding, not to be sectarian.

4 June 1955

## THE FIFTEENTH AUGUST

*(This beautiful piece of writing came too late for our August issue, but we are still close to the great day it celebrates and so we are publishing it now instead of waiting for a whole year. It was sent by reader Robi Das who writes: "I got it from a special issue of Khulna (defunct decades ago) without the writer's name. Khulna was a big district of undivided Bengal, with its headquarters under the same name. Dr. K. D. Ghose, father of Sri Aurobindo, practised there for a long period and was very popular both as a doctor and as a man of charity.")*

THE Fifteenth August is a day of awakening, of the birth of the spirit into the truth of manifestation, into the hidden reality of the worlds.

It comes as the august messenger of a Light that transforms the Seen, of a Love that bridges the gulf between the Seen and the Unseen.

The Force wherewith its message is charged is the Force of a Secret Agent that sets slowly in motion all the elements of this universal cauldron, and after many combinings and breakings and recombinings, will establish the equilibrium of ordered movement.

Not the birthday this of a mere individual, but the starting-point of a mighty movement that shall unfold the meaning of all birth-days, no festivity this to celebrate individual greatness, but the first notes of a hosanna to proclaim the sanctity and greatness and might of every individual life.

No evangel this of a Life that silences its movement into the void and inactivity of Nirvana or Samadhi, but of that which, when the storm rages and the battle clangs, adds its own fund of Divine Energy to the working out of God's purpose in the world.

The Fifteenth August marks the beginning of a New Fight, new because no longer in the wild impetuosity of a Titanic passion, but in the calm and ordered forcefulness of an Empyrean Will, does it find the mighty secret of its outer roar and whirl.

It is the august herald of a New Order, new because no longer in the mind's bondage to magnificent ideas and personalities, but in the realised oneness of all in the Supramental, does it find the mighty base and support of the social fabric.

It proclaims a New Heaven, a Heaven that rests not in the shifting joys and half-lights of the sattvic mind's suzerainty over life and body, but one that proceeds to find its fulfilment in the Supreme Joy of the Supermind that embraces the ugly, the depraved, and the terrible joys of the Earth.

It proclaims a New Earth, not the detestable home of passionate seekings and repulsions, of sin and vileness and suffering, but wherein God perfects Himself in the grace and glory of form and manifestation and in the din and bustle of struggle and fight and opposition and death.

## A POEM BY NIRODBARAN

WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS

SEEKING (for) thy Light I came  
Through (the) labyrinths of time  
To thy vast, O sun-crowned Name,  
My soul's felicitous rhyme!

*long*  
(For ages) I (have) travelled alone,  
*Before my eyes could*  
(I am now destined to) find  
Thy heaven-luminous throne  
Beyond the shadow-lined

Original version: *Shore*  
Shore of earth-memories (Waste) of earth's memories (.),  
*Beyond the sombre wave,*  
Breaking like sombre waves (Though they cast their phantom glow)  
*The mystic silences,*  
The mystic silences (Over the heart it cries)  
*The moon-illumined cave.*  
Of some moon-illumined cave. (For thy splendour's diamond flow)

*Thy*  
(Now thy) wonder-woven Light  
*On the verge of Time*  
(Across the time) appears,  
*An*  
(Like an) eye of the Infinite  
On a lone curve of the spheres.

1-5-38

Comment:

Exceedingly fine, sir.

But your typed third stanza is poor and commonplace compared with the rejected original version.

Q: The original version doesn't seem to mean anything.

A: It means more than can be said. The sombre wave is the Ignorance and Inconscience on which earth-life is founded. The mystic silences are those of the superconscient Self, the moon-illumined cave is the spiritualised inner (psychic) heart, হৃদয়ে গুহাষাম্, of the Upanishads.

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S SPIRITUAL SYSTEM AND THE MOTHER'S CONTRIBUTION TO IT

(Continued from the issue of September 1979)

3

(a)

THERE has been a little perplexity among the Mother's readers owing to a broad use of the term "physical mind" in two talks of hers and to a vague reference in them to some writing or letter of Sri Aurobindo's in the past. She says on 18 December 1971:

"I have heard something written by Sri Aurobindo saying that for the Supramental to manifest upon earth the physical mind must receive it and manifest it—and it is just the physical mind, that is to say, the body mind, that is the only thing that remains in me now. And then the reason why only this part has remained became quite clear to me. It is on the way to being converted in a very rapid and interesting manner. This physical mind is being developed under the Supramental Influence. And this is just what Sri Aurobindo has written, that this is indispensable so that the Supramental may manifest itself permanently upon earth.

"So it is going on well...but it is not easy.

"I could say truly that I have become another person. It is only that (*Mother touches the outer form of her body*) which remains as it was...To what extent would it be able to change? Sri Aurobindo has said that if the physical mind was transformed the transformation of the body would follow *quite naturally*. We shall see."

On 22 December 1971 she says:

"I heard a letter of Sri Aurobindo read out to me in which he said that for the Supramental to be fixed here (he had seen that the Supramental came into him and then it withdrew, and then it came back again and again withdrew—it was not stable) and...to become stable it must enter and settle itself in the physical mind. It is this work that is being done in me for months together: the mind has been withdrawn and the physical mind has taken its place, and I have noticed since sometime...that this physical mind, the mind that is in the body had become wide, it had a global view of things and the entire way of its seeing was absolutely different, I saw it is that: the Supramental is at work here. I am passing through extraordinary hours."

In the *Bulletin of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, February 1972, where both the talks appear in the series "Notes on the Way" on pp. 83-4 and 91 respectively, a footnote has been put in connection with the second talk, reading:

"We do not know exactly the text to which Mother refers here, but it must be some writing similar to the following:

"There is too an obscure mind of the body, of the very cells, molecules, corpus-

cles. Haeckel, the German materialist, spoke somewhere of the will in the atom and recent science, dealing with the incalculable variations in the activities of the electrons, comes near to perceiving that this is not a figure but the shadow thrown by a secret reality. This body mind is a very tangible truth; owing to its obscurity and mechanical clinging to past movements and docile oblivion and rejection of the new, we find in it one of the chief obstacles to permeation by the Supermind Force and the transformation of the functioning of the body. On the other hand, once effectively converted it will be one of the most precious instruments for the stabilisation of the supramental Light and Force in material Nature' (*Letters on Yoga* I, 340: Centenary Edition)."

Taken along with other talks of the same period, what the Mother is speaking of is obviously the work going on in her of the illumination of the body's cells by the Supermind. However, it is very improbable that some writing of Sri Aurobindo like the letter quoted in the editorial footnote should be the one to which she refers. No doubt, like her two talks, the letter points to "an obscure mind of the body" or "body mind" at work in the cells (as well as in the molecules, the corpuscles) and it also mentions the task of converting this mind and the important role its conversion will play in stabilising—that is, in manifesting permanently—the Supermind in earth-Nature. But there is here no focusing on this task of conversion as the one master-key to the physical transformation, the supramentalisation of the body. And—what is equally if not more significant—the omitted sentence, which immediately precedes in this letter the words quoted in the footnote, actually differentiates the "physical mind" from the "mind of the body" or "body mind" belonging to "the very cells", for we read: "The physical mind is technically placed below the vital and yet it is a prolongation of the mind proper and one that can act in its own sphere by direct touch with the higher mental intelligence. And there is too an obscure mind of the body, of the very cells..." Here the "body mind", to which the Mother alludes, is specifically regarded as additional to and not overlapping with the physical mind.

Finally, where in the letter is any hint about Sri Aurobindo's having seen the Supramental coming into him and then withdrawing and again coming and once more withdrawing? Such an experience as a background is not evident in any letter of his. Besides, all the letters at our disposal touching on the themes concerned in the two talks of the Mother—in fact, all the letters on any subject—go without a single assertion that the Supermind has not only been at work in Sri Aurobindo's inner parts but also descended into his body-substance for however short a time. Therefore, the letter in question as well as every other on allied topics is ruled out: nothing in his correspondence has a straight bearing on the Mother's themes. An oblique bearing, from the Mother's memory of Sri Aurobindo's correspondence, is possible, but to get to the definite point of her reference we must look elsewhere.

We do not need to search long. Two published statements of her own are at hand—statements which must have been read to her—and the second one quotes Sri Aurobindo's words as she remembers them.

The first dates back to 1954. It appears in an article by my then Associate

Editor, Soli Albless. He read out the article to the Mother before its publication in *Mother India*. It contained a report which I reproduced afterwards in two places: (1) *verbatim* in a pamphlet I published with the Mother's approval on 29 February 1960, where all that had been written by Sri Aurobindo and her up to that year about the Supermind's advent was collected, and (2) in a paraphrase in an essay I wrote in *Mother India* in February 1970. The Mother's report runs: "Even in 1938 I used to see the Supermind descending into Sri Aurobindo. What he could not do at that time was to fix it down." Here we have the exact gist of her bracketed phrase in the talk of 22 December 1971: "(he had seen that the Supramental came into him and then it withdrew, and then it came back again and again withdrew—it was not stable)." Nowhere, except in Albless's article and my collection and my own essay, is this fact given expression. Nor could it have been expressed in any of the letters we can pick out as relevant in one way or another, for they all precede 1938. The Supermind's descent, no matter how intermittently, into Sri Aurobindo's physical substance took place only in that year in which the Mother had told me, when I left Pondicherry at February's end for a visit to Bombay, that something great and definitive was expected to occur in the course of the year and that she would inform me of it as soon as it happened, so that I might hurry back.

No call came for me for months and then I wrote to Sri Aurobindo asking why I had not received the Mother's summons. He replied on 1 August 1938: "A general descent of the kind you speak of is not in view at the moment..."<sup>1</sup> Yes, a manifestation on a universal scale such as was attested by the Mother for 29 February 1956 was somehow delayed—for 18 years as it proved to be—but a breakthrough was achieved on the individual scale and this is what the Mother's statement first cited by Albless implied.

From my later essay the statement was pressed into service in a brochure on Auroville which architect Roger Anger was preparing in 1970. It was then read out to the Mother again after nearly 16 years. She criticised it saying it seemed to assert that Sri Aurobindo did not have the Supermind in his body until 1938. Such an assertion she dubbed "utter nonsense". And when I had an interview with her on my birthday on 25 November 1970 she scolded me for letting this suggestion spread. After I had apologised and she had characteristically responded, "Oh, it doesn't matter", she put before me the correct position of things: "Clearly, Sri Aurobindo did not have the supramental body, and neither do I have it. But that does not mean that the Supermind was not in his body. The two things are quite different. One can have the Supermind in the body without the body being supramentalised. It is not true that the Supermind descended into Sri Aurobindo's body only in 1938 or that it was not fixed there but merely coming and going."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life-Literature-Yoga Some Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (Revised and Enlarged Second Edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1967), p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Light and Laughter. Some Talks at Pondicherry* by Amal Kiran and Nirodbaran (Second Revised Edition, All India Press, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1974), p. 84

In view of what the Mother said in her talk of 22 December 1971, a little more than a year after my interview, the full situation appears to be as follows. Sri Aurobindo did have the Supermind in his body before 1938 but it had not penetrated his body-substance anywhere: it was a presence in the body inasmuch as it had settled within his embodied mental and vital and even subtle-physical being. His letters testify to individual "perfection" or "transformation" having been sufficiently achieved up to the subtle-physical level,<sup>1</sup> but they repeatedly admit that the Supermind had not entered Matter.<sup>2</sup> In one letter he says that it was on the point of doing so.<sup>3</sup> Thus we may infer that the entry into the body-substance happened only in 1938 and that even then it was fluctuant and not established once for all.

The Mother evidently accepted towards the end of 1971 her own early statement in the sense I have just tried to elucidate. She even repeated from it the word "fixed"; and the words of Sri Aurobindo, which along with it she interprets to the effect that for the Supermind to be fixed and stable on earth it must enter and settle itself in the physical mind, hail from a note which Nolani sent to me from her on 29 June 1953 when I was writing my article on "the Mind of Light". The note ran: "The Supermind had descended long ago—very long ago—in the mind and even in the vital: it was working in the physical also but indirectly through these intermediaries. The question now was about the direct action of the Supermind in the physical. Sri Aurobindo said it could be possible only if the physical mind received the supramental light: the physical mind receiving the supramental light Sri Aurobindo called the Mind of Light."<sup>4</sup>

While answering very closely to the phraseology of the second talk, this statement anticipates almost word-for-word the first talk's turn of speech. The first talk refers at the start to "Sri Aurobindo saying that for the Supramental to manifest upon earth the physical mind must receive it and manifest it"—and at the close the talk refers to his having "written that this is indispensable so that the Supramental may manifest itself permanently upon earth".

No question, I hold, can any more be raised as to what exactly was the text upon which the Mother drew. However, her usage of the term "physical mind" requires discussion. But, before we discuss it, we may say a few words on a point which must have puzzled many students of the Aurobindonian sadhana.

In the 'thirties the Master wrote semi-humorously of glimpsing the Supermind above his head and of trying to catch its tail and pull it down into himself. Evidently this tantalising situation, which was pictured to Nirodbaran in a letter of 1935 and a talk of 1938,<sup>5</sup> persisted until Sri Aurobindo's passing away, since even in

<sup>1</sup> *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1953), pp 390-1.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, *Ibid.*, p. 380.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>4</sup> *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo* by K D. Sethna (*Mother India*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1968), p. 100.

<sup>5</sup> *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1954), pp. 92, 104. See also *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* (Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, Calcutta, 1966), p. 51.

1947 he was still preoccupied with progressively supramentalising the Overmind at the brain-level and using on the world the Overmind force from there and not the sheer supramental.<sup>1</sup> But if, as the Mother declares and as the Master also implies, the supramental realisation was complete in him except that the Supermind had not yet permeated his body-substance—if the Truth-Consciousness had already descended into his inner mind, inner vital being and even subtle-physical nature—why could it not emerge into the gross-physical from within instead of being glimpsed up to the end above his head with its tail dangling just beyond?

The query is hardly illegitimate, but it overlooks an occult fact. There is a necessity for each part of the being to receive a separate independent descent. Not by an efflux from the Supermind already descended into the parts other than the gross-physical but by a direct pull from the latter upon the Supramental Consciousness, the Divine Gnosis, existing above in its own plane, would that Highest Reality be natural, authentic and inalienable to this part. Just as every component of us—the mental, the vital, the physical—must make its spontaneous individual surrender to the Supreme under the influence of the inmost psyche, in order to make integral our self-surrendering, so too the supramental descent must be accomplished essentially by a straight and unmediated relationship of each component to the Gnostic Truth. Even when the inner nature has been inhabited by that Truth, the consciousness in the outer substance has to act towards that highest Reality almost as if nothing of this Truth were achieved elsewhere in the being. No doubt, the consciousness of the outer substance would be influenced by the many-sided victory in the inner dimension and find its task helped to a certain degree; yet this victory could still leave room for a defeat in the outer region. The outer region has to pay its own crucial price for the laurel and the crown of supramentalisation to rest on its head. Thus alone would the Supermind “involved” in matter meet its free “overhead” counterpart and hold supramentalisation as if it were its innate *dharma*, its intrinsic self-law.

Not to understand this paradox of transformative perfection may lead us to a confused misreading of what Sri Aurobindo did or left undone until his mighty self-sacrifice on 5 December 1950.

A further misreading can there be if we confine the Integral Yoga to the phenomenon of descent. In understanding Sri Aurobindo’s spirituality we must not forget that, while the Supermind’s descent into all the components of earthly existence is the ultimate aim, knowledge of the Supermind is not born only of this descent: Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga strives also for ascent—the consciousness rising from its embodied state to “overhead” planes. All the planes above the mind were known to Sri Aurobindo before he undertook the responsibility of the monthly *Arya* in 1914, although detailed acquaintance with their specific powers obviously came later, as we saw in the preceding chapter. In 1947, at the very time that he declared what his preoccupation and capacity were, he unmistakably implied that he had the freedom of the topmost height itself of the “overhead” Spirit. This height was the far extreme of

<sup>1</sup> *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*. p. 245.



his multi-realised being. What he did at the moment was his own choice inspired by the Avataric mission he had accepted: transformation of embodied life in its totality, down to divinisation of the body, by the one sole agency that could consummate it: the Supramental Light and Force and Bliss. He begins the 1947 letter: "If I had been standing on the Supermind level and acting on the world by the instrumentation of Supermind, that world would have changed or would be changing much more rapidly and in a different fashion from what is happening now. My present effort is not to stand up on a high and distant Supermind level and change the world from there, but to bring something of it down here and to stand on that and act by that..."<sup>1</sup>

(b)

Now we may turn to ponder the Mother's usage of the term "physical mind". She equates it to "the body mind" or "the mind that is in the body" and the letter editorially excerpted from Sri Aurobindo as relevant, with its mention of "this body mind" to signify "an obscure mind of the body, of the very cells, molecules, corpuscles", leaves us in no uncertainty about the Mother's meaning. She means by "the physical mind" the dim mental consciousness which is working in the cells of the body. And such a meaning is even explicitly mentioned by her in April 1967: "there is the consciousness of the physical mind (what I call cellular mind)..."<sup>2</sup> But "the physical mind" figuring in the note sent from her by Nolani to me in 1953 is surely a different proposition. What it was may be perceived from her declaration to me on an earlier occasion: "As soon as Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body, what he had called the Mind of Light got realised in me."<sup>3</sup> The word "realised" is most important here: it stands for the Higher Power's permanent stabilisation, an achieved conversion of the instrument, an entry and settlement of the new consciousness for good.

There is no question of a continuing process. The Mother's "physical mind receiving the supramental light" is not like the physical mind of the two talks which is said to be "on the way to being converted" and in which "the work" for the Supramental's entry and settlement was "being done... for months" in order to stabilise it. The precise realisation is flash-lit by her comment on the two opening lines of a poem I wrote in the early 'fifties on the Mind of Light. The lines were:

The core of a deathless Sun is now the brain  
And each grey cell bursts to omniscient gold.

The Mother said that the expression here was revelatory, an absolutely inspired and accurate transcription of what had happened, whereas the rest of the poem was an

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 244-5

<sup>2</sup> *Bulletin*, August 1967, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo*, p. 100. To mask the personal element a little, the closing words in the book run. "...got realised here."

imaginative reconstruction by me of the phenomenon envisaged. Thus the physical mind concerned was only the mind in its brain-functioning, the cells concerned were solely the brain-cells and not those of the whole body though these must have been partially affected. We are face to face with an understanding of "the physical mind" dissimilar to the one prompted by "the body mind". Not to appreciate the dissimilarity would confuse the sense of "the Mind of Light" and the place of this Mind's realisation in the progressive stages of the Integral Yoga, the Yoga of Supramental Descent and Transformation.

How is "the physical mind" of those two talks to be interpreted in the light of Sri Aurobindo's employment of the term in his various letters? We may outline his usage with the help of his *Letters on Yoga*, from which the extract in the *Bulletin's* footnote was made.

In Sri Aurobindo the term covers two aspects. First, "the externalising mind" (p. 326) which is "a prolongation of the mind proper" (p. 340)—that is, of "the thinking mind" which "does not belong to the physical" but "is a separate power" (p. 327) — into the physical formula. This prolongation he labels as "the physical mental" (p. 373) as distinguished from "the mental physical" or "mind in the physical" (p. 326). The latter is the second aspect of "physical mind" (*Ibid.*) insofar as a certain functioning which is not too distant from the former is concerned. In this functioning, the physical mind "is limited by the physical view and experience of things, it mentalises the experiences brought by the contacts of outward life and things, and does not go beyond that (though it can do that much very cleverly), unlike the externalising mind which deals with them from the reason and its higher intelligence" (pp. 326-27). We may consider the "physical mental", which Sri Aurobindo designates "the true physical mind" (p. 328), as the high part of the physical mind, and the "mental physical" at its best operation as the low one.

Another "part of the physical mind" (p. 329), a "much lower action of the mental physical" (p. 327), is "the mechanical mind...which, left to itself, would only repeat customary ideas and record the natural reflexes of the physical consciousness to the contacts of outward life and things" (*Ibid.*). The mechanical mind is also called "body-mind" (p. 328). A turn of phrase similar to "body-mind" occurs when Sri Aurobindo says: "Everything has a physical part—even the mind has a physical part; there is a mental physical, a mind of the body and the material..." (p. 351). It is evidently the "mind of the body and the material" that he speaks of in writing of "the gross material part" thus: "it must be remembered that this too has a consciousness of its own, the obscure consciousness proper to the limbs, cells, tissues, glands, organs" (p. 348).

The description "body-mind" is not applied by Sri Aurobindo to anything above "the mechanical mind whose nature is to go on turning round in a circle the thoughts that come into it" (p. 329). At its lowest the description applies to "an obscure mind of the body, of the very cells, molecules, corpuscles" which has a "mechanical clinging to past movements and docile oblivion and rejection of the new" (p. 340). Hence "the physical mind" of the two talks by the Mother may be taken, from the

Aurobindonian viewpoint, to cover in general all that works mechanically in the mental physical and in particular the element of mental mechanicality in the cellular stuff of the body. We may broadly name it "body-mind" in distinction from "brain-mind".

Broadly, because the mechanical mind has still partially to do with "thoughts" and hence with the brain and so cannot quite be on a par with "the obscure consciousness" of the sheer bodily components. Strictly speaking, it is this consciousness that the Mother mentions by her specially narrowed employment of the words "physical mind" and it is also from this consciousness that, strictly speaking, the "brain-mind" is to be demarcated. In the latter the externalising mind and the mental in the physical, though unlike each other in several respects, are "in practice...mixed together" (p. 327). Further, through the externalising mind still greater mental activities than its own come into play in the mind of the brain. For, as we have noted, the externalising mind prolongs into the physical the mind proper and consequently what is characteristic of the mind proper is drawn to some extent into this aspect of the physical mind.

"The mind proper," says Sri Aurobindo, "is divided into three parts—the thinking Mind, dynamic Mind, externalising Mind—the former concerned with ideas and knowledge in their own right, the second with the putting out of mental forms for realisation of the idea, the third with the expression of them in life (not only by speech, but by any form it can give)" (p. 326). How the greater mental activities enter in may be yet more vividly seized from Sri Aurobindo's elaboration of his phrase "the true physical mind". He says: "The true physical mind is the receiving and externalising intelligence which has two functions—first, to work upon external things and give them a mental order with a way of practically dealing with them and, secondly, to be the channel of materialising and putting into effect whatever the thinking and dynamic mind send down to it for the purpose" (p. 328).

Thus the mixture of the physical mental and the mental physical has a halo, as it were, of higher things than its actual constituents. And this subtly rich mixture, which is the full sense of the "brain-mind", is what, on receiving the supramental light, gets converted into the Mind of Light. The conversion of the "body-mind" by means of the supramental light cannot be quite the same phenomenon. Inasmuch as mentality is still present we should adopt the same nomenclature but a new shade of it has to be clearly set forth, a corporeal shade standing off from the cerebral.

In a talk almost seven years earlier than the two we have discussed, the Mother does actually imply a distinction between the brain-mind and the body-mind, giving the term "physical mind" a higher connotation than in these two talks. She draws even finer lines of difference while pinpointing her subject—the part of the being with which she is busy—thus: "It is not the physical mind...it is the material mind, not even the material mind, it is the mind of *Matter*. It is the mental substance which belongs to *Matter* itself, to the cells. That is what was once called 'the spirit of the form' when it was said that the mummies kept their body intact so long as the spirit

of the form persisted. It is that mind, this wholly material mind."<sup>1</sup> In the same talk she says about herself: "It is long since the physical mind has changed" — and explains: "The physical mind is the mind of the physical personality formed by the body but it is not the mind of Matter: it is the mind of the physical being." In differentiating what she has been working upon at the moment she goes so far as to state: "You cannot even call it the bodily mind—it is the mind of the cells..." Then we learn from her: "...the physical mind, as soon as you take up an integral yoga, must be dealt with, but this material mind, the cellular one, I assure you, is altogether new..." Finally, we get an autobiographical disclosure: "Sri Aurobindo had said that it was unorganisable and it had only to be thrown out of existence. And I too had the same impression. But when the action for transformation upon the cells is constant, this material mind begins to be organised. It is this that is wonderful..."

A year later (1966) the Mother has another pronouncement on the same lines and of autobiographical interest: "When we were working in the physical cells, Sri Aurobindo realised the difficulty of transforming the mind of the physical cells. I am not speaking of the physical mind or physical consciousness. He thought of leaving the mind of the physical cells alone. Then I saw that their refusal to change was not due to any bad will but to ignorance. The cells have a great aspiration and the progress is steady, there is no vacillation as in the mind or the vital. So Sri Aurobindo, before he left his body, entrusted to me this work and said that I alone could do it, but it takes long and I can't give sufficient time to it. I work upon it only in the first part of the night. In the second part I go about [in the subtle body] visiting people and things. Otherwise they go wrong. When the work in the cells will have been finished, there won't be any further difficulty."<sup>2</sup>

The Mind of Light in an increased aspect which has to do with the mental substance belonging to Matter itself—an aspect involving an extension of the Supermind's establishment in the cerebral mentality which the Mother had realised in the immediate wake of Sri Aurobindo's departure—is the goal she posited for herself in the period of the two talks when she wanted her "physical mind" to be "developed under the Supramental Influence".

Already at the time of talking, a remarkable development was in evidence, since, in her own words, "this physical mind, the mind that is in the body had become wide, had a global view of things and the entire way of its seeing was absolutely different". As hers had been the first incalculable experiment in supramentalising the most obscure part of bodily existence, the process had been fraught with a great deal of suffering, but she was well on the way to acquiring a radical lever for the transformation which would pass from the mental physical to the vital physical and then to the material physical, which is the physical proper. Suddenly on 17 November 1973 she chose to give up her embodied state, put in abeyance her terrestrial progress and join Sri

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin*, November 1965, p. 87

<sup>2</sup> *The Mother—Sweetness and Light* by Nirodbaran (Éditions Auropress, Auroville, 1978), p. 149.

Aurobindo to work from behind a veil—for reasons which must essentially be the same as inspired his strategic self-sacrifice: the future good of humanity's spiritual career.

Before she took the momentous step, she had contributed appreciably to Sri Aurobindo's spiritual system not only in the realm of visioning but also in the field of living.

*(To be continued)*

K. D. SETHNA

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## AND THEN...

ONE sat as ever, in prosaic swirl of mind  
and then, through will directed  
pierced the curtain that is thought  
and glimpsed the play of consciousness behind.

One was not as before—and ever was  
a beat of Truth, that changes all to come  
remembrance and recognition of a timeless fact  
all-too-brief but all-inspiring pause.

Cascade of ecstasy from unknown height  
that left a dull reflection, void of urgent truth  
again each act became a turn towards ending  
mercifully shrouded, ignorance avoiding sight.

But now a shadow of the Light  
oversaw the life  
demanding a return to will  
in lieu of death.

STUART

# WITH MY SWEET MOTHER

## REMINISCENCES BY LALITA

(Continued from the issue of September 1979)

6

### The Mother Makes Me An Animal-Lover

I WAS not a real animal-lover before I joined the Ashram in 1927. We had dogs from time to time, but I did not have a true love and understanding of their nature and needs, such as I acquired much later.

It may sound strange but certain animals prefer to live with certain people rather than with others, as the following true story will show.

#### Nancy

My younger brother Jamshed (called Jimmy by us), then about ten years old, was coming home from school one day, holding the servant's hand. I was walking behind. As we turned the corner of the West End Watch Co., a beautiful white dog with long hair suddenly appeared as if from nowhere. It smelt me all over and then ran to my brother ahead, and smelt him too. The servant did his best to drive it away, but it returned and started following my brother. I also did my best to shoo it off but it persisted in following us right up to the fifth floor of the house called "The Development Building" behind the Old Customs House of Bombay.

As soon as we reached the top floor, this little dog went under our telephone table on the landing and settled there as if it were his home. We gave it some bread and milk and left it where it was, waiting for my father to come back from the office and decide what was to be done with the dog.

When my father was back, the dog came out from under the table, started wagging its tail and jumping. My father patted it and asked us whose dog it was. We told him the whole story and he said that we could not keep it, as its owner might be searching for it everywhere. He told my servant to take it out of the house very carefully, and to let it loose at the very spot where we had found it.

The dog was very unwilling to leave us and had to be dragged, as well as threatened with a stick all the way. As soon as it was left loose at the place where it had been found, it ran as fast as it could back to our flat and, panting heavily, went and settled once again under the same table.

What was to be done now? We were in a fix. Then my father said that he would insert an advertisement in the *Times of India*, and request the owner to come and take the animal.

A few days later, a handsome elderly Englishman came to our house and asked for the dog. We told him the whole story which seemed strange to him. He said that it was a female dog, and that its name was Nancy.

He called it several times and we helped him to bring Nancy out from under the table, but it was of no use. It went and smelt him all over, wagged its tail, and then went and sat at Jimmy's feet.

My father offered to send my servant with the gentleman to help him take Nancy home in his car, but the gentleman said, "It won't work. As soon as she is left loose she will come back to you, and she may even get lost for a few days and suffer. She has taken a liking to your son, so you had better keep her."

That's how Nancy came to stay with us and was completely devoted to my brother till it died after a few years of happy life with us. If my father raised his voice when speaking to Jimmy, Nancy would growl at him. Or if I gave my brother even a gentle tap when teaching him his lessons, it would at once threaten to pounce on me. So all of us had to be very careful all the time.

To see it jump with joy and to make all kinds of sweet sounds when my brother returned from school was a daily treat for us. It seemed madly in love with him, and even refused to be mated with a male dog. It endured the heat period quietly rather than be taken to another place, or to have another male dog in our house for the time being.

### At the Ashram

When I joined the Ashram in 1927, I saw a number of cats everywhere, but no dogs; so a little later I said to the Mother, "Why are there so many cats in a sacred place like the Ashram?"

The Mother looked surprised at my question and said, "What is the objection? Why do you ask this question?"

"It is because cats are evil creatures, and they always bring us bad luck. In our religion we are told to recite certain prayers if we see a cat the first thing in the morning. And if a cat happens to run across when you are going somewhere, you must wait till someone else goes before you, otherwise bad luck will come to you."

"Oh, religion!" the Mother said. "Every religion has its dogmas and you follow them blindly. In the animal kingdom the cats are the most open to my Force, I can charge them like a battery, and when I give a cat to someone I can work on that person through this animal. Far from being evil the cats are very good creatures, and in Egypt they were worshipped in certain temples."

Much later, when I was working in the Mother's room, Chinmayi and I were shown a large picture of a big black cat set as an idol in a temple in Egypt, with people at its feet worshipping it. This picture was in the magazine *L'Illustration* which the Mother used to receive regularly.

If I had known at that time what I read some fifty years later in the Mother's book of *Questions and Answers*, Volume 5, p. 150, I would not have said the above to

Her. Here is the passage:

“People always speak about the wickedness of cats, for instance, playing with the mouse before eating it. That’s an example given to children; but I have seen cats, I know what they do. It is not at all true, they don’t do this at all through malice. Usually it happens like this: the mother cat hunts for the little ones and catches a mouse. If it were to give the mouse immediately to the kittens to eat, they wouldn’t be able to eat it, for it is hard, tough flesh. Besides, it is also bad when it is like that. So they play with it (they seem to be playing with it), they toss it about, roll it, catch it, let it run, run after it, until it is very nicely softened, ready for eating, and the meat already worked upon, then they give it to the little ones who can now eat it. But certainly they don’t go and play with the mouse for the pleasure of playing! They hunt first, you see, and then prepare the dinner. They have neither furnace nor fire to cook and soften the thing. They must prepare it and make it ready for eating.”

Anyway, I said to the Mother after She had told me about Her being able to “charge them like a battery”, etc., “If the cats are what You say, please give me one to keep.”

The Mother was surprised at the change in my attitude, and looking at me for a while She smiled and said, “You will have to wait for some time. I can’t give you just any kitten. Our Bushy is expecting, and when she delivers I shall choose one kitten and give it to you.” I was quite happy to learn this and, embracing Her sacred feet, I made my “pranam” to Her and came away.

I must say here that Bushy was a remarkable cat. Each time it had kittens, it would carry them one by one to the Mother, who would caress them and then ask Bushy to take them away. I have myself seen it doing so.

At that time there was some space under the almīrah which is on the middle landing of the staircase, to the Darshan Hall on the first floor, and Bushy would remain there for some time with its kittens. Many of us caressed it, and so did Sri Aurobindo when it happened to go to his room.

We have all read his poem “Despair on the Staircase”. It is about our sweet and very good-looking Bushy.

Finally when Bushy had delivered, and the little ones were old enough, the Mother called me upstairs one day and gave me one kitten which she named “Pink Nose”. It was a very pretty little kitten and I was delighted. But a few days later I had to go and tell the Mother that Pink Nose was very miserable and was taking neither its fish nor its milk. It was crying all the time, so I wanted to return it to the Mother.

“Oh, she is lonely!” said the Mother. “Wait a minute!” I waited quietly for some time and to my surprise the Mother brought and gave me another kitten which She called “Black Nose”, and told me to take it home. No sooner had I placed Black Nose near its sister than they smelt each other and started jumping and playing happily.



At this time Amal and myself were staying in the house where there is the Embroidery Department at present. One of our friends who had come from Bombay on a visit saw these kittens playing and he asked me, "Are these really kittens or little angels?" They were indeed very charming and friendly. Later he too became an animal-lover, and had a number of stray dogs which he had saved from being killed.

Some time after, when I shifted to the Macpheeters' house the kittens came with me, but only Black Nose accompanied me when I went to live at what is now Huta House because Pink Nose had been badly hurt by some wandering tribesmen and it died on the operation table. As Amal has already written about this sad incident in *Mother India* of March 1979, p. 154, I won't repeat it here.

It was very difficult to shift Black Nose to Huta House because these animals are more attached to the house than to their masters. The Mother told me that in order to erase from the cat's memory the sense of the old house I could lock it up for a couple of days in a dark room in the new house, opening the door slightly in order only to give food and water. There was a small empty store-room under the staircase; so I could easily do as instructed by the Mother. Black Nose emerged from the dark room forgetful of its previous home and remained with me in the new one. Most probably the transition was all the easier because the Mother used Her subtle Force and Black Nose was receptive. The circumstances preceding this cat's acceptance by me were conducive to this relationship. I have already mentioned how the kitten had been sent to the fish-market and how it had returned and fallen at the Mother's feet in the Ashram and the Mother had asked me to keep it.

As a cat is supposed to have a litter every few months, the Mother told me what to do so that the house might not be overrun by a whole tribe of cats. I must take away all but one kitten as soon as they were born. The mother-cat must be given no time to count them, as it were, and then miss them. One kitten must be kept for it to feed: otherwise the mother cat's teats would be swollen and it would have fever and suffer. When the kitten was old enough, it could be taken to the fish-market and left there. The kittens that were taken away immediately after birth could be put in a small bag, weighted with stones and dropped into the sea from the pier. They would feel almost nothing as they were barely alive to the world.

I had followed instructions with the kittens of Pink Nose, but remembering Black Nose's early history I did not take her surviving kitten to the fish-market. I adopted it. The Mother named it Pichun ("The Little One") and, though it had a brown and black body, streaked with yellow in places, as well as a bad habit of spoiling my bed, it was quite sweet and lovable. Once it was sitting in such a graceful way on the stand of my dressing-table mirror as if she were an ornament, that the Mother who was with us on her weekly visit laughed admiringly when she saw it.

Black Nose was indeed a very intelligent cat. When I was with the Macpheeters, an old Ashram servant called Mutal used to bring the fish and milk-pudding prepared for the cats by Dr. Rajangam on the Mother's orders. There was an empty room on

the ground floor where Mutal used to keep the food and the cats would go running there as soon as they heard Mutal saying, "Fish, fish." They had everything placed for them in separate dishes and bowls on the floor; then when they had finished, Mutal would collect these and wash them, and take them back to the Ashram. In one of his books Champaklal has related how Sri Aurobindo Himself used to remove all the bones before giving the fishes to the cats to eat. This was very essential, because if one of the bones got stuck in an animal's throat it was very difficult to remove it, as I had once experienced in Bombay. When I shifted to Huta House, there was no facility for the servant to bring the cats' food and keep it safely, so I used to take their food home myself, after the Mother had gone to Sri Aurobindo's room from the Library House.

Every day, without fail, Black Nose would be waiting for me at the main gate of the Ashram, and accompany me home. My friends, seeing this, would ask me, "Is this really a cat or a dog given to you by the Mother?"

Black Nose seldom liked petting or hugging, and would run off from me each time I did it, jump away to some high place and sit there. Amal had given it the pet name of "Profy" (short for "Professor") because he said it looked an intellectual type and kept making sounds very often as if lecturing.

When I finally shifted to Fenêtres, it was very difficult to take the cats there, but this too was accomplished by the Mother's help.

An amusing incident took place every day when I was taking the fish home to Huta House for the cats in the evening. At that time there was a Christian lady living at the place occupied by Kishor Gandhi at present. She had a big Alsatian dog which sat either at the door or on the footpath and, seeing Black Nose coming, it would get up, hunch its back and growl. I was afraid lest it should attack my cat one day, but Black Nose was not to be outdone. As soon as it saw this dog it would rush forward in such a furious way that the Alsatian would scamper off with its tail between its legs. This made all of us laugh.

Besides cats the Mother had a pet crow which would wait quietly on the parapet for Her coming. The Mother came with Chinmayi for a walk on the terrace of the first floor. There was no second floor at that time. She would give a piece of bread or biscuit to the crow, which it would take gently in its beak and fly away.

Crows seem to have a remarkable memory. In Bombay I had saved a baby crow from being attacked by a vulture and nursed it till it was able to fly on its own. After that I went for a holiday to a hill-station but, when I returned and went to hang my clothes in the backyard, it came and gave me a gentle tap on my head or shoulder to remind me that it was there, and I must give it some left-overs to eat.

Crows also are unselfish. In Prasad House at Pondicherry a baby crow fell off its nest on the coconut palm in the courtyard. I lifted it up and kept it on the branch of a Champa-flower tree. I gave the parents some pieces of white bread to feed the little one, but I always noticed that as soon as the pieces of bread were thrown, the parents would call other crows and start eating only after they had arrived. This

practice continues even today and I buy the bread from the bazar and feed them three times a day. Now their number has considerably increased.

I may say here that cats too are unselfish. As my house in Bombay had wire-netting fixed on all its doors and windows (to prevent our cats from going out and being cruelly treated by our neighbours) our pets could not go out and hunt for rats, which they loved to do. So a neighbour's cat used to hunt for a rat and, when it had killed it, the hunter would jump on my window sill with the rat hanging from its mouth, and ask me to open the shutter. Then it would jump inside and, leaving the rat on the floor, go away. My cats used to feel very happy but none of them ate the whole rodent. They all shared it, though it was a rare treat. I wonder how many of us human beings would share our meals.

The Mother also had a cow and a calf, which were brought under Her balcony almost daily. The calf seemed particularly happy and jumped at the sight of Her.

A pet squirrel was also a favourite with the Mother. She used to feed it with nuts daily. This squirrel used to come to the first window in the passage (near the Mother's refrigerator) and when the Mother went there with Chinmayi the squirrel would jump onto the Mother's chest and the Mother would caress and fondle it, give it nuts and then let it go.

Chinmayi was always standing near the Mother, but if I dared even to peep, the squirrel would get frightened and scurry away, and the Mother would not like it; so I had to give up peeping.

This squirrel used to take bits from the Mother's carpet, roll them into a ball and then run to its nest. Some sadhaks did not like it and complained to the Mother, who told them to leave it alone. But after some time the squirrel stopped coming

*(To be continued)*

# SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

(Continued from the issue of September 1979)

4

## The Mother's Conception of Teaching

DORTOIR was the first children's hostel. Now the children's Boardings are called "Homes". A hostel for which Orissa Government had given a grant was named by the Mother "Home of Progress". There are now twenty two Residential Boarding Homes.

Four children came with their parents from Delhi in August 1944. Before this a sum of Rs. 200 was being spent on the education of each of them and they were kept separate—one in Rawalpindi, another in Lahore, etc. When their visit to the Ashram was about to end, the eldest went to the Mother and expressed her desire to stay here. This induced the other three to follow in her footsteps. All of them were very young, so a question arose about their accommodation. Their father purchased a house. Thus came into being the first hostel on January 15, 1945.

One of these four was Chitra, one of the nine teachers in the Kindergarten today.

Once a child is admitted, the education is free. The students have not to rush to book shops for texts. All requirements are furnished by the school even exercise-books, pencils, etc.

The cover of the note-books are adorned with various quotations of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's writings; one of them runs:

"The children should be helped to grow-up into straightforward, frank, upright and honourable human beings ready to develop into divine nature."

After the passing of Sri Aurobindo when the question of a fitting memorial to Sri Aurobindo arose, the first thing the Mother did was the summoning of the Sri Aurobindo Memorial Convention at Pondicherry. It was held on April 24, 1951 at the Tennis Ground. In her inaugural message the Mother said:

"Sri Aurobindo is present in our midst, and with all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of the university centre which for years he considered as one of the best means of preparing the future."<sup>1</sup>

The Convention was presided over by Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee who concluded by saying: "...the proposed university will symbolise the world's urge for a new spiritual rebirth; it will stand out as an oasis amidst the barren tracts that breed jealousies, suspicions and petty conflicts."

Addressing the Convention, Dr. Kalidas Nag reminisced:

"The fiery lines penned by Sri Aurobindo in the *Bandemataram* used to be

<sup>1</sup> *Advent*, August, 1951.

quoted on the cover of the exercise-books and those lines used to inflame the souls of mere schoolboys like us." He considered Sri Aurobindo himself the "University".

Speaking in the same vein Surendra Mohan Ghose, M.P., said, "The university was already there at Pondicherry from the day Sri Aurobindo came there and it has been functioning there vigorously....The voice of Sri Aurobindo is the true voice of India with her hoary civilization and culture and has universal appeal."

Prof. Tan-Yun-Shan voiced his feeling in these profound words: "Universities in ancient India were famous all over the world for their Catholic outlook.... The Mother has therefore given us the sublime idea of an International university, the culture-centre where, as in those of old, men and women from the whole world would receive training in the various arts and sciences, whose essential varieties will be reinterpreted as dynamic factors in the cultural evolution of man preparing him for his divine destiny."

Among the messages sent to the Convention was one from Señor Salvador de Madariaga, Director of Spanish studies at Oxford:

"The analytical age is coming to its close. It has fulfilled its purpose. The age of synthesis is about to begin. And how could it begin if no high centre of perspective were provided for all the parts to fall into harmony."

On the memorable day of January 6, 1952 the Mother opened the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre with a message which mirrors the goal of our education:

"Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born, against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them."

Why the Centre has been called "International" is thus described by the Mother:

"...Not only because students from all countries will be admitted here...but particularly because the cultures of the different regions of the earth will be represented here in such a way as to be accessible to all..."

The Centre has had a quarterly of its own from 1949. Till the year 1958 it was known as the *Bulletin of Physical Education*. The above statement is an extract from the Mother's article in the *Bulletin* (April 1949) under the title of "International University Centre". In 1959 the word "University" was dropped and what stood before the world was *Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*.

Some stray facts may be cited for further light.

A few lines from *The Hindu* will speak for themselves:

"...There is a large group of students who are given a fresh type of education aimed at bringing out the inner potential of each student. No degrees or diplomas are awarded; no examination of the usual kind is held. The students are encouraged to follow the true bent of their nature...and thus evolve and mature in the way of freedom.

"One important feature of the system of education imparted here is that there is no attempt at inculcating moral or religious principles. Instead they are constantly exposed to the example of a life of dedication to Truth by their elders.

“Every student has the freedom to leave when he chooses to do so... Each student is provided with ample facility for the development of his many-sided being.”

A word about the religious attitude:

No religious rites are observed in the Ashram. The Ashram school does not close even for Dassera or Deepawali. Altogether the number of working days is, on the average, 261. Drawing a comparison with other institutions Dr. Iyenger states:

“In the ‘traditional’ schools and colleges, vacations long or short are considered essential. Schools work for 200 days in the year and colleges for about 150 days—and more days may be lost through strikes and bunds. And numerous are the incidental holidays.”

It should be noted here that there is only one occasion when the Ashram children prayed for a holiday. The Mother granted it but a light stroke of rebuke from her pen brought such a change in their attitude that there has not been any further request. This is Ashram discipline. Here are her words:

“I did not think you required more relaxation... However I agreed to your request. But the way in which you received the ‘good news’ pained me. Some of you even seemed to consider it a victory. But I ask, victory for what, against what? The victory of inconstancy against order and rule? The victory of superficial will, over the endeavour towards progress and self-conquest?

“This is, you must know, the very ordinary movement of those who live in the ordinary condition of life and education. But as for you, if you wish to realise the great ideal that is our goal, you must not remain content with the ordinary and futile reactions of ordinary people. You must not allow them to shape your feelings and way of life... If you wish to belong to the family of the new man, do not imitate pitifully the children of today and yesterday. Be firm and strong and full of faith; fight in order to win, as you say the great victory.”

To walk as children of light, of course, our students will have to go a million miles more, but if the basis is solid, like that of a tree, then it can bloom and bear fruit.

This is the sphere of psychic education, the most important aspect of the New System of Education.

*(Concluded)*

NARAYAN PRASAD

# SRI AUROBINDO'S CONCEPTION OF BRAHMAN AS THE ILLIMITABLE REALITY

## I. Conception of Brahman and the Negative Element

WHEN we attempt to conceive Brahman as an illimitable Reality we do so not only positively but negatively. The negative element is necessary because, as Sri Aurobindo points out, only by reading into the positive "the suggestions of its opposite" can we know its deeper truth. The positive element is useful in affirming a particular truth or aspect, or a sum of truths or aspects of the Illimitable. But it is at a disadvantage in so far as it limits the Illimitable to that truth or aspect, or to that sum of truths or aspects. The negative is introduced with a view to overcome this difficulty. Its purpose is to bring home the rest left unsaid about the Illimitable and to deny the limitations by the positive. Explaining the significance of the negative Sri Aurobindo says:

The positives of the Absolute are its various statements of itself to our consciousness; its negatives bring in the rest of its absolute positivity by which its limitation to these first statements is denied.<sup>1</sup>

When we say, for example, that Brahman is indeterminable, the negative, *i.e.* the indeterminability, emphasises that Brahman is not limited to a determination or a sum of determinations. It is a contrary affirmation that Brahman is free from limitation by its own determinations as also from all external determination by anything other than itself. Often there is a tendency to interpret the indeterminability in the negative sense to mean that Brahman is incapable of determinations. To do so is to defeat the very purpose of the negative in the conception of the Illimitable—because in doing so the illimitability of the Illimitable is lost sight of. We try to turn Brahman's freedom from all limitation into a limitation and consequently deny its freedom of self-determination. A Brahman without the freedom of self-determination is no Brahman at all. The indeterminability is therefore not really negative but positive. It only exceeds the power of self-determination and does not deny the freedom of self-determination. This is what Sri Aurobindo calls the logic of the Infinite. He brings out the significance of the negative element of indeterminability in all its aspects:

a) It is perfectly understandable that the Absolute is and must be indeterminable in the sense that it cannot be limited by any determination or any sum of possible determinations.<sup>2</sup>

b) The Absolute...is not bound down to an indeterminable vacancy of pure existence. On the contrary, it is the source of all determinations: its inde-

terminability is the natural, the necessary condition both of its infinity of being and its infinity of power of being; it can be infinitely all things because it is no thing in particular and exceeds any definable totality.<sup>3</sup>

c) The indeterminability is not in its true sense negative, not an imposition of incapacity on the Infinite, but positive, a freedom within itself from limitation by its own determinations and necessarily a freedom from all external determination by anything not itself, since there is no real possibility of such a not-self coming into existence.<sup>4</sup>

We therefore conclude that the negative element in the conception of the Illimitable has a twofold significance: (1) it saves the illimitability of the Illimitable by showing that it is not limited to its positives; (2) in its true sense it is not negative but positive, because it is the indispensable condition for the possibility and existence of the positives. In short, the negative ensures that the Infinite is illimitably or integrally free, "free to determine itself infinitely, free from all restraining effect of its own creations".<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Taittiriya Upanishad and the Principle of Negation

According to Sri Aurobindo, the Upanishads are aware of the true significance of the negative as conveying the integral freedom of Brahman. The Taittiriya text is a case in point: "In the beginning all this was the Non-Being. It was thence that Being was born" (2.7). The text says that Being appeared out of Non-Being. Sri Aurobindo says that the true significance of the text can be grasped only when we know that the Non-Being is not a denial of Being. The negative (Non-Being) is used here in a special and positive sense to indicate that it is merely a something beyond the positive conception of Being. For otherwise it is not possible for the Being to appear out of Non-Being. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

Pure Being is the affirmation by the Unknowable of Itself as the free base of all cosmic existence. We give the name of Non-Being to a contrary affirmation of Its freedom from all cosmic existence,—freedom, that is to say, from all positive terms of actual existence which consciousness in the universe can formulate to itself, even from the most abstract, even from the most transcendent. It does not deny them as a real expression or any expression whatsoever.<sup>6</sup>

It is therefore evident that the Upanishad, while employing the term non-being, uses the negative with a view to emphasise the integral freedom of the Illimitable. It is needless to say that what applies to non-being also applies to other negative terms wherever they occur in the Upanishads.



### 3. Brahman and Contrary Expressions

An important consequence of this interpretation of the negative element in the conception of Brahman is that there can be no real opposition or contradiction when such pairs of opposites as the formed and the formless, the qualified and the unqualified, are used to define it. If we keep in mind the context of the illimitable Reality, we can understand that the formlessness is "not a negation of the power of formation, but the condition for the Infinite's free formation; for otherwise there would be a single Form or only a fixity or sum of possible forms in a finite universe".<sup>7</sup> Likewise, the qualitylessness is not negative but positive. It does not negate but, on the contrary, provides an indispensable condition for a free and infinite self-expression of the Infinite in quality and feature.<sup>8</sup> Thus what seem opposites are the "obverse and reverse affirmations"<sup>9</sup> of the same Reality, one supplementing another.

But then it may be asked: how is it that we come to see opposition where there is really none? Or what is the justification for the seeming opposition between them? The idea of negation expressed by such words as 'formlessness', etc. is developed originally in the context of rigid linguistic definitions and logical oppositions applicable to finite things divided in space and time. Therefore in this context the idea of negation stands for trenchant division and rigid exclusion. When it is applied to the Infinite we are likely to forget the context of the illimitable and remember, by habit, its original context as if it were still relevant. This is the reason why we see opposition between the negative and affirmative expressions of Brahman, though in reality such opposition does not exist. In fact when we bring out the flexible element in the idea of negation, we are merely trying to disabuse our mind of the habit of forgetting the context of the illimitable and remembering the original context of rigid definitions and logical oppositions.

### 4. The Later Vedantic Conception of Brahman in the Light of Sri Aurobindo's View—The Two Views of Brahman

According to the later Vedanta there are two views about the nature of Brahman. (a) Madhva and Ramanuja hold that Brahman is determinate. Brahman is inconceivable without determinations. They are auspicious and bring out the infinite beauty of Brahman. They are eternal and immeasurable. Though they are infinite, they do not divide the indivisible substance of Brahman. On the contrary, they represent the manifold perfection of the One. The names and forms of the world derive their value and significance only from the infinite determinations of Brahman, otherwise they will be reduced to nothing. The determinate Brahman is therefore the ultimate presupposition of the universe.

(b) Shankara is of the view that it is only from the lower point of view, which is the point of view of the ignorant, that Brahman is determinate. The ignorant brings it to the level of a totality of determinations and thus deprives it of its position as the

transcendent or indeterminate reality. Hence we have to give up this view. From the higher point of view, which is the point of view of the wise, Brahman is indeterminate; the determinations may be in Brahman but are not of Brahman; they are not related to Brahman as they are empirical ideas superimposed by the power of maya.

### 5. The Determinate Theory

Though in theory Brahman is said to be independent and therefore completely free, it is clear in actual presentation that Brahman is reduced to the level of a limited reality. Let us first examine the view that Brahman is determinate, the view commonly held by Madhva and Ramanuja, and see if such a view does not take away the freedom of Brahman.

Both Madhva and Ramanuja say that Brahman is the supreme reality possessing infinite determinations. It presupposes that Brahman is a supreme reality which exceeds its determinations and is therefore not definable in terms of any of these determinations, for otherwise it is impossible to possess infinite determinations. If it were not indefinable or indeterminate in this sense, it would be merely "a fixed eternal determinate or else an indeterminate fixed and bound to a sum of possibilities of determination inherent within it".<sup>10</sup> But Madhva and Ramanuja argue that Brahman without determinations is inconceivable and dismiss the indeterminate theory as a figment of imagination. They have built up elaborate arguments to prove that Brahman is determinate and not indeterminate. It is held by them that even the negative expressions which the scripture applies to Brahman do not teach that Brahman is indeterminate. They only teach that Brahman is devoid of material qualities, *aprākṛta*. Madhva and Ramanuja hardly realise that this brings Brahman to the level of a limited reality. To say that Brahman cannot rise above the determinations is to put a double limitation on it. First, it is incapable of exceeding its own determinations; second, as a reality bound to a sum of determinations, it is also incapable of possessing infinite determinations. A Brahman so limited is not a Brahman at all. It would be a magnified version of the finite characterised by limiting conditions. They do not realise that indeterminability is the essential condition for the manifestation of infinite determinations because they seem to confuse two things,—the capacity to possess many determinations simultaneously and the capacity to possess them limitlessly. To be free to possess limitless determinations is one thing and to possess them all at once without being limited to this or that is another thing. It is therefore clear that the determinate theory, however ably defended, fails to achieve its aim in so far as it does not allow the freedom natural to Brahman.

### 6. The Indeterminate Theory

Let us now come to Shankara's view that Brahman is indeterminate. According to him, all determinations arise from maya. In our ignorance we fail to notice that

maya and Brahman do not belong to the same order. Hence we come to believe that the determinations are really Brahman's. When we rise to the level of knowledge, we find that Brahman does not belong to the order of maya, and that it would be subject to external limitation if it should be possessed of determinations. Hence Brahman is devoid of determinations. To dismiss the determinations as those of the order of maya is to reduce them to the position of empirical ideas superimposed on Brahman by the power of maya. Shankara makes out a powerful case that when the scripture employs negative expressions to describe the nature of Brahman, its aim is to show that Brahman is indeterminate. He further argues that wherever the scripture talks about the determinate Brahman it does so as a concession for the ignorant who cannot see the fundamental difference between the order of maya and that of Brahman.<sup>11</sup>

Even the indeterminate theory of Shankara is not free from difficulty. When Shankara says that Brahman is indeterminate, he means two things: (1) it is devoid of determinations because it cannot be determined from without or all determinations belong only to the order of maya; (2) it is incapable of creating its own determinations because in doing so it would become another and forgo its freedom. Shankara is right when he says that Brahman cannot be free if determinations are imposed on it from without; but he is not right when he argues that if Brahman is to form its own determinations then it has to do so at the expense of its freedom. Sri Aurobindo points out that Shankara is mistaken in this respect. Since Brahman is infinite, it is capable of exceeding its self-determinations, otherwise it would cease to be infinite. Further in so far as the determinations are self-imposed and not imposed from without, they do not constitute a real limitation which Brahman cannot surpass. If, as Shankara says, Brahman is incapable of forming its own determinations, then it is deprived of its freedom of self-determination. In other words, it is bound by its own freedom from limitation. It is this incapacity rather than the power of self-determination that makes Brahman a limited reality. Referring to this difficulty Sri Aurobindo says:

Its freedom from all limitation, from any binding by its own creation cannot be itself turned into a limitation, an absolute incapacity, a denial of all freedom of self-determination; it...would be an attempt to define and limit by negation the infinite and illimitable.<sup>12</sup>

### 7. The Inadequate Conceptions of the Illimitable

The foregoing analysis of the views of the later Vedantic thinkers reveal that none of them has fully understood the implications of the concept of Brahman as the illimitable. Madhva and Ramanuja believe that Brahman is illimitable in so far as it is not limited to this or that particular determination and possesses all of them simultaneously. Illimitability consists not only in simultaneous possession of determi-

nations but also in the capacity to possess them limitlessly. But unless the possibility of not being any particular determination is granted, the capacity for limitless determinations is inconceivable. Hence illimitability also includes the capacity for exceeding any determination or any sum of possible determinations. Neither Madhva nor Ramanuja takes these important aspects into consideration. This explains why Madhva and Ramanuja define Brahman in a rigidly positive sense which excludes the essential condition necessary for possessing infinite determinations.

If Madhva and Ramanuja excluded the negative element in the conception of Brahman in favour of a limited positive idea, Shankara goes to the other extreme. He takes the illimitability as the opposite of determination. To be determined is to become a finite form, be bound by it, and forgo the position of being illimitable; hence illimitability means denial of determinations. This has led Shankara to conclude that the illimitability of Brahman is to be understood in an exclusively negative sense, and the indeterminate theory is the result. As we have already stated, Brahman is illimitable in the sense of not being bound by determinations; but it does not prevent Brahman from imposing its own determinations and exceeding such self-imposition, otherwise it would not be illimitable. Illimitability does not exclude but permits the power of self-determination. Shankara fails to note that the negative, when applied to the Infinite, does not exclude but supplements the positive. This is the reason why he is led to believe that the ideas of illimitability and determination are opposites.

### 8. The Integral View of Brahman

According to Sri Aurobindo, to define Brahman either as the determinate or as the indeterminate is to limit it. It would be quite appropriate to define Brahman as the indeterminate, for it is both the determinate and the indeterminate and also greater than the two. With Madhva and Ramanuja Sri Aurobindo says that the determinate theory is valuable in so far as it emphasises the power of self-determination in Brahman. But this theory, he points out, reduces Brahman to the level of a fixed totality of determinations, as it shuts out the possibility of having a status exceeding all determinations. With Shankara he agrees that the indeterminate theory is useful in so far as it focuses our attention on Brahman's freedom from all determinations. But the theory, he says, turns the freedom from determinations itself into a limitation on Brahman as it does not permit the freedom of self-determination. Needless to say, Sri Aurobindo's definition of Brahman is free from the defects associated with the definitions of the later Vedanta; it preserves the valuable elements of these definitions and reconciles them by going beyond their limitations. Indeed the conception of Sri Aurobindo is illimitable like the illimitable Brahman.

Sri Aurobindo invites our attention to the scripture also. The claim, that the scripture exclusively supports either the determinate theory or the indeterminate theory, is false. For it is based upon one class of texts to the exclusion of another

class of texts, though both of them deal with the nature of Brahman. While the determinate theory excludes the negative texts in favour of the affirmative ones, the indeterminate theory favours the negative to the exclusion of the affirmative. If the claim is to be legitimate and true, then it should be supported by the texts belonging to both classes. Sri Aurobindo argues that the purpose of these two classes of texts is to bring out the illimitable or indeterminable nature of Brahman. Hence the true nature of Brahman can be known only when we take the two classes of texts together. He says:

The ancient sages spoke indeed of Brahman negatively,—they said of it, *neti neti*, it is not this, it is not that,—but they took care also to speak of it positively; they said of it too, it is this, it is that, it is all; for they saw that to limit it either by positive or negative definitions was to fall away from its truth.<sup>13</sup>

### 9. Brahman and the Law of Contradiction:

It would be in place to consider the criticism of a modern advaitin against Sri Aurobindo's conception of the integral Brahman. He writes:

As regards the principle of contradiction, it is true that Sankara recognises its supremacy. It...applies not only to the realm of common experience but also to ultimate questions. Reality cannot be both possessed of qualities and at the same time be devoid of them. We cannot bring ourselves to believe in such a contradiction. The logic of the Infinite cannot be something quite different from the logic of common experience. A contradiction is a contradiction everywhere.<sup>14</sup>

Our previous analysis of Shankara's position is itself sufficient to answer the above criticism. But in view of the fact that the critic is here invoking the law of contradiction to defend Shankara we have to show that this criticism issues out of a blind admiration for the law.

According to the law of contradiction, affirmation and denial are inapplicable to an object at the same time. The object to which the law refers is usually the one belonging to "the realm of common experience". In fact "the realm of common experience" is the original context in which the law has been evolved and employed to deal with the issues of that realm. Further, it is the realm of finite objects divided and conditioned by space and time. It is clear now that the law is originally meant for finite objects characterised by spatial and temporal limitations. We cannot say, for example, that a given object is both red and non-red at the same time. Being a finite, subject to the spatial and temporal limitations, it cannot be both at the same time. The law of contradiction is just a generalisation of this fact about finite objects.

When the notions of affirmation and denial are applied to Brahman, that is,

when it is said that Brahman is both *saguna* and *nirguna*, we forget the real context of Brahman and illegitimately transfer the law of contradiction to it and argue that it cannot be both *saguna* and *nirguna*, possessed of qualities and devoid of qualities. By this illegitimate transfer we bring the Infinite and Indivisible to the level of the finite or that which is divided by space and time. For it is the finite that cannot be both simultaneously. If we remember the real context of Brahman which is indivisible and illimitable, we can interpret the notions of affirmation and denial suitably and show that the *saguna* and the *nirguna* are not contradictories but complementary aspects of the same Reality. Hence Sri Aurobindo observes:

A law founded upon an observation of what is divided in Space and Time cannot be confidently applied to the being and action of the Indivisible.<sup>15</sup>

To say, as the critic does, that the law “applies not only to the realm of common experience but also to ultimate questions” is to abandon the basic idea that Brahman is infinite and illimitable. It is sheer dogmatism to assert that the logic of the Infinite is not quite different from the logic of common experience.

Of course, there is a sense in which the law of contradiction is applicable not only to the world of common experience but also to Brahman\*. It is capable of such wider application if it can be stated in a more general sense. In this sense the law may be stated thus: If two terms are contradictories, then they cannot be true of the same thing at the same time. In this form the law by itself is insufficient to tell us what terms or attributes are or are not contradictories. Unless we take into account the nature of the object to which the law is applied, we cannot say whether a given set of terms or attributes has or does not have contradictories. In the context of a finite object, limited by spatial and temporal divisions, the law says that the notions of affirmation and denial are contradictory; whereas the same law in the context of Brahman, which is an infinite and illimitable principle, tells us that these notions are not contradictory, for the context indicates that they do not exclude each other. Here the law works negatively rather than positively: if two terms are *not* contradictories, then they can be true of the same thing at the same time. Thus what was contradictory in one context ceases to be so in another context. Hence it is pointless to say, as the critic says, that “a contradiction is a contradiction everywhere”.

N. JAYASANMUKHAM

\* *Vide* K.D. Sethna's article *Logic and Reality*: “The laws of logic apply always with an ‘if.’ Once we understand that they are formal or normative and do not dictate content, we can assert that no kind of consciousness, not even the most superhuman, can transcend them in its functioning and that they are the explicit or implicit laws of all reality's nature.” *Mother India*, April, 1960, p. 16.

## NOTES

1. *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1972, p. 378 (Hereafter LD.)
2. LD., p. 312
3. LD., p. 316
- 4,5. LD., p. 333.
6. LD., pp. 28-29.
7. LD., p. 337
8. LD., p. 334.
9. LD., p. 32.
10. LD., p. 333.
11. Shankara's Commentary on *Mandukya Karika*, 3-16.
12. LD., pp. 333-34.
13. LD., p. 378.
14. M.K. Venkatarama Iyer, *Advaita Vedanta According to Sankara*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964, pp. 76-77.
15. LD., p. 328.

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NOTICE

I HAVE received several requests for permission to print copies of the paintings of *Meditations on Savitri* and the paintings of *About Savitri* for various purposes, such as making the covers of books, greeting cards and so on. But it was the Mother's view that it would be best if these paintings were not used in the ways proposed. It is felt that these paintings will have their best value if they appear only in the series of books—*Meditations on Savitri* and *About Savitri*—as planned by the Mother herself. *Savitri* is sacred and should be left untouched, otherwise the truth behind each painting which is the creation of the Divine Mother will be distorted and everything will become common and meaningless. The Light and Power will not be there any more.

I am also asked to give my permission to record the commentaries of the Mother from the book—*About Savitri*. The same idea and feeling hold for this matter too.

Many of my other paintings directed by the Mother are already printed as greeting cards without my permission. Besides, the writings from my books are taken without my knowledge and without acknowledgement of their sources. So I request all the Centres and their members, disciples and devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to consider the matter seriously.

Whatever the Mother has given to me I shall be very happy to share with everybody. Everything will surely appear in book-form in the course of time, according to the Mother's Will and Vision.

Let us all respect Her wish. Thank you.

HUTA

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## ONE AIM—ONE DESIRE—ONE GOAL

“Look there! Your target.  
In yonder tree a blue bird.”  
So said Drona, the master-archer  
to the princes—his disciples.  
“A test to my disciples and  
a challenge to my skill.”  
Drona smiled.

With bows bent and arrows eager  
the princes stood, ready to shoot.  
Ears sharp—eyes staring.

“Not all—not all.  
The fittest should shoot.  
Prince Yudhishthira, the eldest,  
be ready to shoot.  
But tell me first—what else  
you see other than the target?”

Yudhishthira, proud of his eyes,  
painted the scene with words:  
“I see the branch long and slender.  
I see the tree tall and green.  
I see my guru, my brothers,  
And what else—everything around.”

Vexed, Drona asked him thrice.  
And thrice came the answer  
same with additions one or two.  
“The fittest to shoot  
is yet to be found.”

Prince after prince, Drona called  
And the same questions he posed.  
And all alike made answer,  
boasting of their perfect eyesight.

The fittest to shoot  
is yet to be found.  
Not from many, for  
only one was left.



Drona, with his visage joyless,  
to his last chance turned:  
“Tell me, Arjuna, the precocious,  
what see you besides the target?”

“My Lord,” spoke Arjuna, duty-conscious,  
“Holding this bent bow and the saddled arrow,  
I see only the bird.”

“And what else? Not me,  
not your own blood and not the lovely landscape?  
Are your eyes so poor?”  
asked Drona feigning anger.

“No, my Lord, nothing but the bird.”  
“Of what colour is the bird?  
Tell me if you have eyes.”  
Shouted Drona, the wise.

“I see only a bird’s neck.”  
Replied Arjuna, with his bow bent.

Rejoicing, Drona commanded:  
“Shoot, then shoot!  
The fittest to shoot  
is found at last.”

Swishing the air, the arrow sped.  
Headless fell the bird.

P. RAJA

## OBJECTIVISM AND SUBJECTIVISM IN MODERN POETRY

(Continued from the issue of September 1979)

STILL, the objectivist movement has brought about some wholesome changes. Revolutions are needed to keep poetry in touch with the times, especially in matters of diction. The literary atmosphere of post-Victorian England *was* stagnant. If we read, on the one hand, the works of Wilde, and on the other the then popular verse of Phillips and Noyes, we are obliged to concede Eliot's point. A revolution *was* needed, with this Sri Aurobindo was in agreement: "The modern poet is perfectly right in a way in breaking down in whatever direction the bounds erected by the singers of the past."<sup>25</sup> "The old habits of speech cannot contain the new spirit and must either enlarge and deepen themselves and undergo a transformation or else be broken up and make way for another figure."<sup>26</sup> But it was not only nineteenth-century diction that Pound attacked. He found the forms of contemporary poetry moribund, taunting, "If you are using a symmetrical form, don't put in what you want to say and then fill up the remaining vacuums with slush."<sup>27</sup> He considered contemporary rhythms insipid and urged poets "to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome."<sup>28</sup> He called for an "absolute rhythm", one which "corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed".<sup>29</sup> He demanded precision, clarity, hardness, neatness, economy. He said a great many other things which are as useful, well-expressed and quotable. And he wrote lines like these:

Possum observed that the local folk dance  
was danced by the same dancers in divers localities  
in political welcome...  
the technique of demonstration  
Cole studied that (not G.D.H., Horace).<sup>30</sup>

He was a critic, not a poet; a destroyer, not a creator—the Rakshasa of the great revolution.

His technique must be adjudged a failure. Read for example, this passage from *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*:

They fought in any case,  
and some believing,  
pro domo, in any case...  
Died some, pro patria,  
—non "Dulce" non "et decor"...  
Walked eye deep in hell  
believing old men's lies.

Now compare this with the close of Owen's well-known poem:

If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
 Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
 Bitter as the cud  
 Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—  
 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
 To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
 The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est  
 Pro patria mori.<sup>31</sup>

Pound merely tells us that it is neither sweet nor seemly to die for one's country—the old men were liars. Owen makes us feel the lie, the whole terrible falsehood of war. We feel it in our solar plexus—and in our entrails (for this is the virtue, and vice, of realism); but we feel it also in our hearts; it is borne aloft in the ironic lilt of the rhythm and nailed home by the surprising rhymes. And if part of the fifth line quoted is slush, the sixth, despite its "poetic" vocabulary, tells us more about the false allure of battle than whole paragraphs of prose, and much more, to be sure, than hundreds of bare and rhythmless lines like Pound's.

I suppose, nevertheless, that most poetic *cognoscenti* in the West would prefer Pound's poem. Literary taste is largely a matter of fad. The rebels of yesterday are the heroes and godheads of today. Eliot (though he is suffering from something of a bear market), Pound, the later Yeats, Stephens, Williams—these are the chief members of the modern pantheon. They compose the establishment the young must rebel against. But only two of those listed could be considered poets according to traditional standards; for Yeats and Stephens, with all their modernism, were consummate masters of word and rhythm. Great art or literature is never produced by the *avant-garde*. The rebel's purpose, as we have seen, is destruction. The masters are those who come after, occupy conquered territory and build new cities.

The presence anywhere of two well-defined and opposing tendencies is always an indication of a subconscious effort to arrive at a synthesis. Twentieth century poetry in its revolt against earlier traditions has taken the form of a creative interaction, if not conflict, between the objectivism of Pound, Williams and others, and the subjectivism of the symbolists, led by Eliot. Neither of the tendencies has fulfilled itself in permanent poetry; but this is what was to be expected, for polarisation and experimentation always cause onesidedness and overemphasis. The future may well look back on the poets now considered major with the same eye that the present looks back on once respected minor writers like Southey. "The crudities of these experimentalists," a twenty-first century literary historian might write, "was the result of their preoccupation with the concerns and tendencies of the day, chief among them a recoil from the artificial forms and standards of the preceding century. In their effort to find something more authentic to base themselves on, they missed the Real which is the

base of all things, and the source of the beauty they so shamelessly neglected." A blunt objectivism, like a weak magnifying glass, can only show us more clearly (and, at its best, with a deeper burden of meaning) the naked outlines of that which is already known. But neither can a superficial symbolism get through to what is ideal. And even if the mental ideal were seized, we would not have what we seek. "Idealistic" literature always suffers from a lack of hold on reality, because the Real is not only that which is beyond change, but also the expression of this immutable in the world. It is not a mental ideal, but a supramental real-idea which holds the secret.

The touch of the actual is always invigorating. To see eternity in a grain of sand or be aware of the significance of a red wheel-barrow surrounded by chickens is the poet's business, or at least part of it. Blake at his best also shows us, at least dimly, that which he sees; but do Williams and others in his camp ever create a spell with their words which enables us to realise something out of the ordinary in the ordinary? Have they anything to show us in the first place?

The concreteness of the actual and objective must have joined to it the suggestiveness of the symbolic and subjective. Words are not merely counters of the quantities of the universe, they have value—layers of value. Some are current and serviceable, others deep and of apparently unlimited significance. But, even more than through words, it is through rhythm, through a certain intonation, that poetry reveals to us its mysteries. It is this deepest element of rhythm that has been neglected by nearly every writer of reputation in the twentieth century. In an effort to get rid of the encumbrances of metre, they have all but forgotten the evocative power of verse.

In *The Future Poetry* Sri Aurobindo prophesied the return of a theory and practice of "the art of rhythmic self-expression," that is, of poetry, as the mantra. This prophecy has been fulfilled—in his own work. The mantra is "an inspired and revealed seeing and visioned thinking, attended by a realisation ... of some inmost truth of God and self and man and Nature."<sup>32</sup> It is at once a highest degree of verbal style and, more essentially, of verbal rhythm, supporting a deep soul-vision. Too much, perhaps, has been written already about the mantric character of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. Verboseness leads always to obfuscation, facile statement to meaninglessness. But no one can read such lines as these

Then through the pallid rift that seemed at first  
Hardly enough for a trickle from the suns,  
Outpoured the revelation and the flame<sup>33</sup>

and not feel, vibrating within them and behind them, some touch of the reality which their surface sense only hints at. The passage is much more than an imaginative word-painting of the first outbreak of a physical dawn; but it is more too than a simple statement of spiritual realities. The mantra can, but need not, concern itself with spiritual truth; to it each word is a revelation of the Spirit, each object a symbol of that which expresses itself through forms.

All poetry cannot attain to the supreme power of the mantra, but a poetic literature even touched by it would be delivered from the Scylla of superficial objectivism and the Charybdis of vapid subjectivity. The literary historian of the future may well trace the course of modern English poetry, from the pioneers of the early nineteenth century, past the reaction of the Victorians, to a recovery and culmination in Sri Aurobindo. And the development need not stop here. For Sri Aurobindo's work, while basing itself on all the past of the East and West and gazing consciously towards an unhorizoned future, was necessarily the work of a path-finder. Who knows what will be possible when the elements of the path—the mind or supermind of the human race, the English language and the rhythmic voices of its instruments—have been more fully prepared? The twentieth-century modernistic movement will be regarded then as an inevitable detour, one that proved useful even to Sri Aurobindo—the destructive counterpart of his creation. Its positive tendencies, clearness and naturalness of diction, freedom from convention and sentimentality, largeness of life, concern with everyday things, will be preserved and extended so that the mainstream of poetry shall become also its finest current.

(Concluded)

PETER HEEHS

#### NOTES

- 25 *The Future Poetry*, p. 247
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 268.
27. Pound, op. cit., p. 7.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p 9
30. *Canto LXXXI*.
31. *Dulce at Decorum Est*.
32. *The Future Poetry*, p 199
33. *Savitri*, Book I, Canto 1.

# TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

*(Continued from the issue of September 1979)*

## PART II

### CHAPTER II

#### Sparks of Surrender

(4)

I HAD come to think I had won the battle and brought everything to a happy close. But what does surrender denote after all? Is it not to equip ourselves "to wear the earthly body of God"? Could such a tremendous project be successfully accomplished at one sweep? Life in Yoga rarely runs in one line, it takes many curves, many turns. What forced me to retrace my steps, the following events will tell.

The occurrences of June 8, 1979 gave me such a shock that I was awakened as if from a swoon. Oh, how cruelly I had been deluded! It is not for nothing the Mother has warned that, out of a hundred, ninety-nine times we run the risk of reaching a wrong decision. It has grown almost into a habit with me to keep a detective eye on my inner movements: What are those that foster the evil in me, what should be done that there might blow a wind of change in my life? I become my own examiner. To me such introspection seems no less important than plunging in meditation. The self-scrutinising drove me to the conclusion that in the school of surrender I was still in kindergarten. The lesson of surrender cannot be learnt by rote. It has to be ingrained in the very cells of the body.

Work affords a great field for sadhana. It brings into operation all the crookedness that lies embedded in our nature. At times one is placed in such a situation that it sucks his blood.

As the mind is the seat of ego, the vital is the native home, rather a thick-walled fortress, of all the ills of life. I had the impression that my mind was fundamentally liberated (why, I shall explain later on). It was the vital, especially the heart centre, that remained unconquered. Till light conquers it I shall ever remain exposed to its treacherous blow. It was for this reason I had directed all my energies to the purification of the vital.

Before conquering the citadel of heaven Sri Aurobindo's Yoga demands the conquest of the domain of the demons.

We must observe also the wisdom of the following: "As long as you remain in your corner and follow the course of the ordinary life, you are not touched or hurt. Once you come in contact with the Divine, there are only two ways open to you. You surrender and merge in it and your surrender enlarges and glorifies you, or you

revolt and all your possibilities are destroyed.”<sup>1</sup>

Surrender is not merely to be thought of but lived. We have “hardly any idea even of what true surrender is”.<sup>2</sup> One problem that defies solution is: how to give up all that is dear to the heart—how to overcome the rigidity of human nature? If we insist and persist in going our own way, we are put on the black list of Yoga—“not fit for a higher life, not ready for further evolution and conversion”. If we use force, all in us raises a painful cry. The mind induces the vital to rise in revolt. How to change this rigidity in us to plasticity? That is the question that hangs most heavily.

“Plasticity within is opposed to the rigidity which insists on maintaining one’s own ideas, feelings, habitual ways of consciousness as opposed to the higher things from above or from the psychic within.”<sup>3</sup>

However challenging the problem, the rigidity must disappear: surrender and rigidity of the nature cannot go together.

On June 7, 1979 I discovered some weaknesses I did not know to be there. In my daily duty I have to bring on my head the wrath of many. Something was done which my vital ego could not tolerate. My blood began to boil. I was as it were bombarded with silly violent suggestions. I could not check them. Even when they stopped, they returned with double force. Caught “in the threads of the dark spider’s web”<sup>4</sup> it looked as if all I had acquired was blown off like a straw. “Use our names when you are attacked or tempted”.<sup>5</sup> The heart had turned to stone and I could not even once bring their names to my lips. But something within refused to be disturbed or depressed.

The weather was dull. It reflected my mental condition. It was a dark moonless night. I kept awake till 3 a.m. to see what was going on within.

In between, at 10 p.m. before going to take some milk, I went to my Pooja room. While I pressed the portrait of the Mother to my bosom there came to my full vision the benign right hand of Sri Aurobindo extending from his framed photo and giving me blessings. This created an invigorating inner mood. I found myself ready to meet the new situation. I resolved that I must avail myself of this opportunity to consolidate my position in the domain of my surrender.

The vital went on jumping, roaring: you must hit hard, tit for tat, say this, say that, must not allow yourself to be ignored, and a host of other things. The mind left the vital to fight its own battle. It kept on watching the drama from a distance. Next day we were to remain indoors due to a hartal in the town, so I was free to pursue my experiment. At about 1 a.m. I encircled the area of the heart with my hand while keeping the Mother’s name on my lips, invoking her power of protection. That very moment the fury of the vital fell back. But the experience lacked the joy of surrender.

<sup>1</sup> *A Practical Guide to Integral Yoga*, p. 279.

<sup>2</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 406.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>4</sup> *Savitri*, Part I, B. II, C. 8, p. 207.

<sup>5</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 151

These days I snatch a few minutes out of the busy hours of the day and open at random Tome Two of *On Yoga II*, and read a few lines. This is the best way to keep oneself turned to higher thoughts.

To mention a couple of passages which mirror my case: "The mental being" should "stand back, refuse to accept—then if the vital responds to the attack one part of the nature can be free and observe and discourage it". Why are we subjected to repeated attacks? The reason, says Sri Aurobindo is, "the resistance of the Universal Nature which does not want the being to escape from Ignorance into the Light. This may take the form of an insistence in the continuation of the old movements, waves of them thrown on the mind and vital and body so that old ideas, impulses, desires, feeling responses, continue even after they are thrown out and rejected and can return like an invading army from outside until the whole nature, given to the Divine refuses to admit them."<sup>1</sup> In the same vein Sri Aurobindo points out: "It is not easy to keep the vital immune from the attack."

The following anecdotes will show how far I could succeed in my attempts.

When the vital exhausted itself for lack of mental support—hitherto it was the mind that had aggravated the situation—the higher elements took the field and I had exceedingly beautiful experiences, as if in the Kurukshetra of life: the rock-like heart seemed to have lost its hardness and turned into a lovely image of an emerald lawn bordered with tender plants and blooming flowers here and there, swinging in the gentle breeze. Then the heart got irradiated with pink light, which is a rare phenomenon, for it signified the light of the psychic. More heartening was the vision of a hill—the rock, broken into two and separated by a flowing stream, all bathed in red light.

Not long ago, I had seen a crack, just a crack on the crust, as referred to earlier, with Sri Aurobindo's interpretation from *The Life Divine*. My heart beats fast to say something now from the Veda. Before I take up the venture let me finish my story.

On the fourth day I kept a sharp eye on my inner movements. The moment even one ripple of thought or the vibration of a contrary element arose I became conscious. Thus I could keep not only the mind but also the vital blank like a clean slate. Nothing could enter into my house without my permission. This gave me a real taste of mastery over myself. I had hoped it would open new doors in my being, enhance new possibilities but this state could not be sustained for more than eleven days. Though I breathed something of the purer air, there gleamed no new splendour of surrender.

An imperfection dogs our highest strength.<sup>2</sup>

In order to give the principle of surrender a practical shape one must have a stout heart to stomach any amount of insults and remain untouched. It is very easy, when alone, to live in the illusion of self-mastery but the ability to endure is put to test

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p 698      <sup>2</sup> *Savitri* Part I, B II, C. 12, p 256



when one has to fight against heavy odds. On June 22, 1979 I purposely allowed my vanity to be hit hard so that I could know where I stood in the field of surrender.

I was subjected to inhuman treatment by one of my own men. It was a severe blow to my pride. I did not leave the machine-work in a huff, rather continued till the time to close. The inner torment is not less painful than the outer torture. Again and again I turned my gaze within to see the reaction. I was struck to see that the inner did not feel the least affected.

Quite reverse was the case at night. But the higher part in me was strong enough to hold its own and refuse to yield. When nothing in me gave way or agreed to bend, "the invading forces"<sup>1</sup> began to retreat after a prolonged fight all through the night. No sooner was the whole area of the heart free from the footprints of the enemy than it was filled with "the purity of emptiness".<sup>2</sup>

The next day I found myself more resolute to meet another challenge and awaited the sudden emergence of the foe but none could dare raise its head. Then there arose a profounder voice from the depths: "I have got something great." It will be childish to take all these experiences for a permanent acquisition. With the fall of one General the battle does not come to an end. The place of invincible Bhishma was taken by Drona and then by mighty Karna.

Word was sent to me, which was quite contrary to my expectation. This produced such a sharp reaction that I was as if thrown into the air, only to fall flat on the floor. For full two hours I remained almost senseless. When on the verge of a crisis the Mother's Force came to my rescue. I felt a strong action both in the head and heart. Not only did it avert the catastrophe but also restored me to my normal mental health and "spiritual vigour". I could not make out why the reaction was so terrific. Only the other night I had dared the devil in his own domain and had remained unconquered. Consequently I was put to a dilemma. I had been expecting another assault, so had kept myself ready to meet any eventuality and had pledged to resign myself to the Divine Will whatever be the consequence. This had given me an unwavering joy of surrender; then what was the cause of my fall? The critical part of me got the upper hand and argued: Was my vivid experience of surrender not genuine? The "vital had refused to be overpowered". If I had gone astray, how could this be possible? How could the vital remain "immune" to such a fierce attack—a posture which Sri Aurobindo had said "is not easy"? There rose a host of questions, like fireworks.

When I was in such a frame of mind the feeling came up: "Maybe the Sun of Surrender was eclipsed by the lord of Night, Rahu."

Before we go to the next phase let me say something on how my mental region was fundamentally liberated as a result of the inner fire.

Once in meditation (July 1936), during a period when I had pain in my legs, the lower part of my right leg seemed merged with the earth and in my vision I saw it emitting sparks. This was followed by a star of diamond light. A vision arose of some-

<sup>1</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 698.    <sup>2</sup> *Savitri*, Part II, B VII, C. 5, p. 161.

body plastering the loins with white cement. All looked white. When the experiences were referred to the Mother, Sri Aurobindo wrote: "They seem to be all symbols of the force of consciousness working in the place of illness."

The experience repeated itself on June 6, 1979, forty-three years later. I perceived a display of profuse sparks gushing forth in a wide area of the mental region. This experience was given to me in my body's sleep. It was from then that I acquired full control over my mental faculties.

To go back to my subject. When "Fear" entered the scene as the Commander-in-Chief, it was the Mother's protection that shielded me from its arrows of fearful suggestions, repeated warnings of dire consequences, etc. Nothing daunted my spirit of surrender. The dominating motto was: the lower must learn to submit to the Higher.

When the mantle of darkness was lifted and the mind's horizon grew a bit clear there came to view the seated image of the bull Nandy facing the *hṛīga* in all Shiva temples. The image was not made of stone but of pure white light. This vision was followed two or three times by that of a cow and an unusually bulky bull. I was set thinking why so far I had not even once seen a cow or a bull such as spoken of in the Veda? Against this background, together with a bit of curiosity, I took up Sri Aurobindo's *The Secret of the Veda* for the first time on June 22, 1979. I was wonder-struck by the way Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the rock, the honey, the spiritual sweetness, the cow, the bull, etc. illuminated my darkened consciousness. All along I had had the impression: "No hope to appreciate or imbibe anything enshrined in the Veda in this life." So I had hardly felt an urge to give a look to it. Now by the very first reading of a few pages here and there my heart began to dance with joy. The following extracts gave the feeling of a revelation:

"The cows are the hidden rays of the Dawn or Surya: their rescue out of the darkness leads to or is the sign of the uprising of the Sun that was hidden in darkness."<sup>1</sup>

"The higher existence is the divine, the infinite of which the shining Cow, the infinite Mother, Aditi is the symbol."<sup>2</sup>

It is hard to determine how this significance of the cow has anything to do with my experience, I feel shy to lay any claim. The only point worth consideration is that after four consecutive days of fight with the night, as elaborated earlier, and spending hours seated in concentration I had the luck to witness Nandy and the cow in my vision. For a time it looked as if the heart had grown free from all darkness, giving place to a "blissful vacuum".<sup>3</sup> If it has earned for me even "One small grain of spiritual certitude"<sup>4</sup> it is something whose value cannot be assessed. I do hope it will go a great way towards establishing the higher poise of the spirit in life.

Another curiosity of mine was about the 'rock' in the heart. How far was my feeling correct? What does *The Secret of the Veda* say about it? To my joy I found the problem dealt with at several places. I would like to mention two of them as I

<sup>1</sup> *The Secret of the Veda*, p 142.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p 235

<sup>3</sup> *Savitri*, Part II, B VII, C 3, p. 134    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 142

have come to understand them. The rigidity in our nature is so stubborn that it amounts to the hardness of a rock. Mental constructions, formations, propensities, ambitions, life-long fixed habits—all these rubbishy things that are dear to the heart cling so rigidly that all efforts to shake them off are like breaking the head to the point of bleeding. And then there is overwhelming inertia. No wonder this rigidity has been termed a rock by the ancient seers. If one aspires to taste the honey, the sweetness of spirituality or of true surrender, this rock must dissolve, must melt; then only can there flow in life the sweetness from its source—the immortality.

“For in the hill of the physical being there are dug for the soul those abounding wells of sweetness which draw out of its hard rigidity the concealed Ananda; at the touch of the Truth the rivers of honey, the quick pouring of the wine of immortality trickle and stream and break out into a flood of abundance over the whole extent of the human consciousness.”<sup>1</sup>

Samadhi brings with it “the smile of heaven”. It occupies a unique place in all Yogas. It brings such an inner felicity and serenity that all within remains eager to welcome it. It is not indispensable in our way of sadhana. The goal set before our eyes is somewhat different: not self-fulfilment but the fulfilment of the Divine Will in us and through us.

Nothing in me now seems to respond to the “claims of life”. There are no surges of passion. The spirit is no longer inextricably tied up with the senses. So in no time the consciousness finds an access to the inner regions. On June 12, 1979 before day-break, while I was still in bed, the consciousness slipped from the body. When there remained no perception of anything, there rose the feeling: “I am reduced to a state of Zero.”

Thus I have no more to make any effort to enter into the state of Samadhi. Even if one part opens to the Mother’s working, by and by it spreads to other parts and I get so absorbed that there remains no awareness of the body. It is a God-given boon to me. By my own effort I can reach the state of void but not to the height of heaven.

Before speaking about another type of Samadhi let me state a cheering event. When there is a knock on the door, I do not wish to be found sleeping and snoring; so impelled from within I keep on concentrating, looking at the star-lit sky up till 1 or 2 a.m. on the eve of almost all off-days. This is in tune with the oft-quoted lines of Sri Aurobindo’s *The Hour of God*: “Unhappy is the man or the nation which when the divine moment arrives, is found sleeping or unprepared to use it, because the lamp has not been kept trimmed for the welcome and the ears are sealed to the call. But thrice woe to them who are strong and ready, yet waste the force or misuse the moment; for them is irreparable loss or a great destruction.”<sup>2</sup>

It was Saturday night. When I fell asleep I do not know. But even the memory of what I happened to witness in the whole of the latter part of the night sends a current of thrilling joy. Wrapped in wonder, rubbing my eyes in disbelief, I exclaimed: “Am I so lucky?” Formerly, whenever I passed into Samadhi, almost every time I

<sup>1</sup> *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 171.    <sup>2</sup> P. 3.

was overtaken unawares by sleep—at times sound sleep. That is not the case now. I enjoy the bliss fully and consciously. On one of these days, though in deep sleep I was wide-awake within. All of a sudden the whole space in front of the right side of the body got irradiated with the presence of Sri Aurobindo as he is seen seated on the darshan sofa. He was so close to me that my worshipping heart clasped his feet and entreated that I might get so merged in him that there would remain no sense of ‘I’-ness in me. It was not a momentary vision. It lasted long. All I remember is that a part of me felt sad: the Divine had come to my door, given me the joy of his blissful touch, but this invoked no waves of gratitude, no surges of surrender.

Next morning all in me grew so still that I was reduced to an onlooker. The absorption was of such strength that there remained nothing but light and light; then I visioned a flowing stream—not of water but of light—into which the ‘I’ in me lost its separate identity. Before the bodily consciousness returned, the word “Ganga” came to my ears.

The joy was granted to me of leading a life of action and not resorting to a peaceful retreat. This is the blessing of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga.

On July 7, 1979, my favourite day, Sunday, when I was expecting to make a great stride, hours passed and I could not push myself even an inch. Then this line of Savitri, “Is there a God whom any cry can move?”<sup>1</sup> took hold of me. When I was about to fall into the dungeon of frustration and disappointment someone caught hold of me and set my feet on the path of surrender. Some forceful words of Sri Aurobindo, read sometime back, came floating in the air one after another:

“There is no reason to be so much cut down or despairing about your progress”<sup>2</sup>, “the slaying of all darkness and limitations”<sup>3</sup> cannot be done at a stroke. “The lower forces seldom yield the ground without a protracted and often repeated struggle.”<sup>4</sup> One has to learn to put up with “periods of a sublime and golden illumination and other periods of obscuration. For in both states there works, hidden or manifest, the same divine intention and the same high-reaching labour.”<sup>5</sup> “Dawn and Night,” runs an impressive Vedic verse, “two sisters of different forms but of one mind, suckle the same divine child.”<sup>6</sup> “The new born child”<sup>7</sup> “climbs stumbling held up by an unseen hand.”<sup>8</sup>

It must be borne in mind that there can be no new Dawn till the wonder-child grows to adolescence.

*(To be continued)*

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*, Part II, B. VII, C 2, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 781.

<sup>3</sup> *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 780.

<sup>5</sup> *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 353.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 353.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 110.

<sup>8</sup> *Savitri*, Part II, B VII, C. 5, p. 166.

## THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM IN *PARADISE LOST*

CLOSELY allied to the theme of *Paradise Lost* is its theological problem, the justification of God's ways to men. Milton says:

What in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support;  
That to the highth of this great Argument  
I may assert Eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.<sup>1</sup>

'Justifie' means "to set right, or put on a right footing, one whose relation, either in consequence of misunderstanding or misrepresentation, or because of misconduct, has been what it should not be."<sup>2</sup>

In the light of this definition we have to suppose that Milton wants to set right God's relation to his subjects. This makes us wonder why he should have undertaken this responsibility.

A few events of his life and some of the dominant religious tendencies of his age give us an insight into this problem.

Heredity and environment have a tremendous influence on man and Milton's life is no exception to this. His grandfather was a bigoted Romanist, his father a Protestant, his brother a Catholic and he himself was a Puritan. From this we can infer that there may well have been some religious toleration in his family. As for environment, his Puritan home as well as outside influences contributed to his Puritan faith. He first came under the influence of his tutor, Thomas Young, the Puritan preacher. The age in which he lived was one of religious upheaval. The Puritans were gaining ground. In this Puritan Revolution "the language of the Bible filled the speeches, letters, pamphlets, state papers and daily conversations of the chief protagonists."<sup>3</sup> Milton was no thorough-going Puritan but he agreed with the Puritans in the individualistic interpretation of the Bible.

In the 17th century the Bible served as a source of unique value. The metaphysical poetry of Donne, Herbert and Vaughan was theological in content. Donne feels repentant and prays for mercy. The poems written towards the close of his life bear this sense of guilt, and they are all of them a prayer for God's benignity. The dominant note of Donne's devotional poems is the inward searchings of his guilt. In a mood of agony he appeals to Christ for mercy.

Only thou art above, and when towards thee  
By thy leave I can looke, I rise againe;

<sup>1</sup> Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book 1, 22-25.

<sup>2</sup> Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, Volume 2, p. 286

<sup>3</sup> D. M. Wolfe. 'Milton in the Puritan Revolution', p. 8

But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,  
 That not one houre myselfe I can sustaine;  
 The Grace may wing me to prevent his art,  
 And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart.<sup>1</sup>

Herbert often feels that Man has alienated the sympathies of God by his disobedience. Several of his poems are an expression of his holy fear. The same mood is found in Quarles. Vaughan's poetry also is religious, but he does not share either the fear of Herbert or the guilt of Donne. He is more of a mystic. Besides these metaphysical writers, there were others like Bunyan, whose literary work was dominated by the influence of the Bible. Milton, like all other writers of his day, was influenced by the Bible. But he was no blind fundamentalist.

On the whole, there was little unbelief in the period. Men were of opinion "that if things seemed to lack order or justice, it was only man's ignorance that rendered him incapable of recognising the fact, and his own evil nature that prevented him from expressing and admiring it."<sup>2</sup>

If this be the implicit faith in God's justice, why should Milton justify it? Probably he himself might have questioned the justice of God. He believed that he stood for righteousness and for upholding the liberty of the people. But in the year 1659, he expressed his fear that the Republic might be overthrown. In one of his letters written that year, he said, "like you, I am afraid that this civil discord or rather madness will leave us too much at the mercy of the enemies of liberty and of religion, who have already lately joined forces."<sup>3</sup>

He must have felt momentary revolt against God's ways, when he found monarchy re-established with enthusiasm. Even a year before the publication of *Paradise Lost*, even then, he was still retaining this mood of frustration, for in a letter he said, "one of these virtues, however, has not requited me very handsomely for my hospitality. For the virtue you call statesmanship (but which I would rather have you call loyalty to my country) after captivating me with her fairsounding name has, so to speak, almost left me without a country."<sup>4</sup>

By the time he began *Paradise Lost* he experienced disillusion of all sorts. He had lost faith in kings, clergy, people and even in Cromwell. Added to this, in the year 1658 he lost his second wife, his 'late expoused saint.' After the Restoration, with the loss of sight, with foes on all sides, he must have often asked himself whether after all it was the fitting reward meted out to him by God for the services he had rendered to his country. "In fact *Paradise Lost* should be studied with certain works written by prisoners and exiles, especially by men who have had the prizes of life suddenly and, it would seem, unjustly, snatched from them, and who grasp desperately for some deep

<sup>1</sup> H.J.C. Grierson. *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems*, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Percy Ames *Milton Memorial Lectures*, p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> Westminster, December 20th, 1659. To Henry Oldenburg M.P.C., p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> London, August 15th, 1666—To the accomplished Peter Hembach, M.P.C., p. 5.

meaning in life, some spiritual possession of which one may not rob them."<sup>1</sup> It is reasonable to suppose that under these gloomy circumstances he might have doubted the justice of God. A few months before the Restoration he was still hoping that God would protect his country from the tyranny of kings. He expressed this hope in one of his letters, "But I hope that God will not permit the machinations and assaults of our enemies to succeed as they desire, on his own account and for his own glory, which is now at stake, whatever disorders kings and cardinals may plot and desire."<sup>2</sup> With Restoration this hope is shattered and the immediate reaction must have been the doubting of God's justice. It is this conflict, this questioning that is presented in *Paradise Lost*.

### Man's Fall and Free-Will

Let us now consider Milton's attitude towards man in general. It is based on a conflict between Puritanism and Humanism. As a Humanist he believed in the essential goodness and dignity of man. He imagined him as one who could surmount all his troubles through his individual efforts. At the same time his Puritanic faith firmly convinced him that nothing was good except in so far as it carried out the will of God. His conception of Man reflects this conflict in a striking manner.

God made Adam perfect, but he gave him the choice to pursue the right path or sink into degradation. Milton repeatedly stressed the freedom of Man, freedom to serve God or the devil. With all his belief in the innate potentialities and dignity of man he could not portray Adam as an artificial Adam, meekly depending on God's will. He gave him a tremendous energy and even the right to learn more of heaven. As Adam shows his desire to probe into the mysteries of heaven, Raphael does not blame him. On the other hand, he tries to explain everything to the best of his ability and he says,

"Stand fast; to stand or fall  
Free in thine own Arbitrement it lies.  
Perfect within, no outward aid require;  
And all temptation to transgress repel."<sup>3</sup>

Milton here seems to be in disagreement with the Puritans by giving Man the unquestioning right to judge things for himself. But this is only one side of the picture. On the other side we have the Puritanic Milton expressing his former faith in the divine Grace through words given by him to the Deity,

"Man shall not quite be lost, but sav'd who will,  
Yet not of will in him, but grace in me  
Freely voutsaft;"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. K. Rand. *Milton in Rustication* S.P. Vol. XIX, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Westminster, December 26th 1659, to Oldenburg M.P.C., p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book VIII, 640-643.

<sup>4</sup> Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book III, 173-175.

In trying to understand Milton's attitude towards Man we have to bear in mind these two conflicting faiths. And a happy combination of these diverse thoughts is found in the concluding books of *Paradise Lost* where Adam who regains his equanimity of temperament through his own power of reasoning, is yet more ennobled by divine grace offered through visions and dreams.

What is Milton's idea of the Fall? Milton believes that man is by nature pure, divine and perfect. He is endowed with reason as well as passion. But if he allows the passion in him to have an undue importance over his reason then he goes down to the level of a beast. This strong insistence on reason at the expense of emotion is one of the characteristic beliefs of Milton. No doubt all the important elements in the 17th century thoughts—Puritanism, Humanism and Cambridge Platonism—influenced Milton to varying degrees. But he was, however, an individualist and his one great belief was in reason as the glorious attribute of man. Adam falls only when he is overpowered by passion. This is true of Satan also. When he loses his reason he becomes an easy prey to pride. As Adam yields to passion with an almost unflattering tone Milton expressed his belief in reason through Michael,

“Reason in man obscurd, or not obeyd,  
Immediately inordinate desires  
And upstart Passions catch the Government  
From Reason, and to servitude reduce  
Man till then free...”<sup>1</sup>

In *Comus* also we have the same Miltonic idea of depravity resulting through the exuberance of passion. Milton through the Elder Brother says,

“but when lust  
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk  
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,  
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,  
The soul grows clotted by contagion,  
Imbodies, and imbrates, till she quite loose  
The divine property of her first being.”<sup>2</sup>

So with Milton reason is everything. It is the soul of perfection, a divine attribute and a sign of obedience to God.

When we speak of reason and free-will we have to understand them in the way Milton did. Free-will, according to him, is free choice, choice to resist or yield to the temptation, and freedom is nothing but the service of God. Self-will is enslavement to passions. Reason consists in submitting to the will of God, for, as Abdiel says,

<sup>1</sup> Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book XII, 86-90

<sup>2</sup> Milton's *Comus*, 463-469.



“This is servitude,  
To serve th’ unwise, or him who hath rebelld  
Against his worthier...”<sup>1</sup>

So when a man is deviating from his upward path and coming down lower and lower to the level of a brute, he is alienating the sympathies of God, or rather forgetting his true-self. Milton offers the explanation of the Fall through Raphael when the latter says,

“...freely we serve  
Because we freely love, as in our will  
To love or not; in this we stand or fall.”<sup>2</sup>

We notice that there are the two essential requisites necessary for man’s inward ripening—love and obedience to God. When a man forgets these elementary principles of right conduct he is said to be losing his sense of reasoning and hence he becomes morally and spiritually depraved. The tragic and pathetic fall of Man is based on this complicated theory of reason, free-will and liberty.

Now it remains to be seen why Milton introduced the taboo. He takes the few lines from *Genesis*, “But the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”, and interprets its significance from his standard of reason and right conduct. With Milton the taboo is a test of obedience to God. He thinks that God wants to test the fidelity of his subjects by imposing certain restrictions on them. The angels are expected to obey the Son, but Satan revolts, motivated by a sense of wounded pride. In other words, he has broken the pledge and in so doing he yields to his lower self, his pride. Consequently, he loses his divinity.

In a similar manner Man is given everything and he is created in the image of God. But he has only one condition to fulfil. This signifies a moral obligation on the part of Adam to obey God. Adam forgets his duty, his reason clouded by passion. He is overpowered by his excessive fondness for Eve, which runs counter to reason and faith in God. Hence the taboo serves primarily as a test of fidelity and secondly as a proof of reason, the divine attribute in Man.

(To be continued)

ADARSH BALA

<sup>1</sup> Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Book VI, 178-180.

<sup>2</sup> Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Book V, 538-540.

# LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE IN NORMAL PERSONALITY

## I

THE rise of biology in the 19th century influenced knowledge as a whole and the ideas of development, evolution and organism came to be looked upon as almost universally valid. Psychology also tended to take them up as necessary to mental life and adopt biology as its very model, giving up its former models of physics and chemistry. And thus the idea of development became integral to psychology and we find in recent and contemporary psychology many ideas and schemes of the stages of development as levels of experience. In the eighties of the last century James Ward clearly formulated two levels of experience in normal personality which he called the "presensational continuum" and the "representational continuum". The same were called by Stout the "Perceptual" and the "Ideational" and availed of with great success in the characterisation of the varied processes of mind, McDougall also followed the same plan. The classification of mental processes into perceptual and ideational, those that are essentially determined by sense-perception and those that primarily consist of an inner activity of ideas, gives very great facility in understanding and relating mental processes to one another. Sensation, perception, instinct, emotion, imitation, etc., all come in one class and memory, imagination, thinking, volition, etc. in the other. And these two levels broadly correspond to the animal and the human levels of evolution and have, therefore, a sound biological and evolutionary basis.

However, contemporary psychology presents to us many other schemes of the stages and levels of development. Psycho-analysis, *e.g.*, gives us the conscious and the unconscious as the two primary levels and then an elaborate scheme of several stages in the development of the sex life of an individual, which are really stages in the development of normal personality. These stages, in the normal personality, come in succession at different times in the chronological life of the individual, yet as unconscious facts they continue to exist all the time since abnormal circumstances can always cause a regression to any earlier stage lived through previously. Jung's Analytical Psychology specially presents a level of experience called the "Collective Unconscious". Similarly do other psychological schools present, in some form, the idea of development in mental life.

Typology is an important branch of contemporary psychology, which treats of human personality as consisting of different types. Jung's introversion and extraversion have become famous and they represent two psychological attitudes, those of outward-directedness and inward-directedness, of regarding the external events and things or internal experiences as the real or primary values of life. Stranger, from the point of view of the Cultural Science Psychology, distinguishes six fundamental types, the theoretical, the economic, the aesthetic, the social, the power-seeking and the religious. Here six values or ideals of Life are the basis. Kretschmer makes

physique the basis of psychological types. These are, however, a few principal attempts at classification of personality into types. Evidently we have here a variety of standpoints, each of which has a sphere of validity, but we cannot discover a scheme to relate them together and bring typological knowledge into a coherent form.

This treatment of personality is related to that of the levels of growth and experience. The introvert lives largely at the ideational level and the extravert a great deal at the perceptual. And then, in fact, everybody is both and there can be a change from the one to the other. In a sense all the types and levels, as possibilities of human nature, are present in everybody. Those that occur in succession in the natural order of growth we call levels of experience and those that appear as relatively fixed forms or trends we call types. But the growth can get halted at an earlier level or there can be regression to a previous state.

Here the aim is not to go into the exact relationship between the two approaches to the study of personality, but just to show that they are connected and that in the treatment of both of them we have a variety of standpoints amongst which a systematisation seems to be almost impossible.

The essential thesis of this paper is that with the discovery of the primary constituent factors of human personality and their mutual relationships a right base for the levels of growth and types of personality could be found and that might show a way of relating and systematising the various standpoints and classifications of the levels of growth and the types of personality. Sri Aurobindo in his treatment of human personality offers a plan, which is distinct from all the rest and which is supported by strong facts and reasoning. Basing himself upon the facts of general evolution he affirms that human personality is a synthesis of three factors: matter, life and mind. The original suggestion in this connection came to him from the Upanishads, where *anna* (Matter), *prāṇa* (Life) and *manas* (Mind) are referred to many times, in connection both with cosmic nature and with individual human personality. He, however, elaborates it into a vision of evolution and an original view of personality, and in doing so he principally relies on the facts of his observation and introspection.

Now Matter, Life and Mind are recognised by Modern Science too as the three principal steps or stages or emergents of evolution; and man, as the last product of the continuous process, is surely a synthesis of them all and, therefore, must of necessity partake of the characteristics of all. This argument based on the facts of evolution is supported by the facts of introspection too. Ordinarily we regard all consciousness as mental. Mind and Consciousness are considered identical. Sri Aurobindo says that this is a consequence of confining our introspection to the surface movements and actions of consciousness. There they are all mixed up. But if we try to seek the origination of these movements and actions, we shall discover three broad kinds of consciousness. One, the Mental, consisting of thinking, imagining, remembering, all ideational, essentially motivated by thought. Two, the Vital, involving activities of instincts, emotions and other adaptations of organic life. Three, the Body Consciousness, a pervasive abiding sense of our physical existence, which fills us

out to the frontiers of our skin. These do, of course, run into one another in the life of the adult person and give rise to processes of a composite character. But they are qualitatively distinguishable and, when distinguished, contribute to a clearer understanding of the psycho-physical activities of personality and to their more effective direction, control and modification.

Let us illustrate it with concrete introspections. Food-seeking is a fundamental impulse of all life and a most familiar experience to everyone of us. Now it will be interesting to ask how it works at the adult human level. Obviously its working is not so simple as it is at the animal level. Here, besides the animal vital impulse for food, we have a whole mass of hygienic, medical, social, aesthetic ideas and opinions, which are present in the situation. McDougall has admitted that he could not always distinguish between hunger and thirst and that to decide in cases of doubt he would take a glass of water and if that satisfied him then he regarded it as a case of thirst. Surely the inner situations of these experiences are complex and it needs a careful and a dispassionate observation to be able to disengage the mixed strains of our personality. Now in our behaviour of food-seeking three situations would probably be recognisable. One, that of craving and restless seeking for food. Two, that of a sense of need in the body for food. Three, that of a calm and detached feeling that you should take food. The first is the most common experience and appears to have a strong visceral reference. The second has no restlessness about it, nor a special visceral reference. It is a steady pervasive feeling of the body as a whole. The third, though believed to be a common experience, is in fact not. The ideas and opinions are availed of by the vital craving for its own justification and satisfaction. The presence of craving and restlessness, in the situations when we believe we are guided by a medical or social 'ought', will show up the true and the primary determinant of that behaviour. Craving can also turn up in a situation where the body-consciousness seems to ask for food.

Here all the three consciousnesses above considered are represented in our normal food-seeking behaviour and a failure to distinguish among them will surely lead to confusion and disappointment in practical life. Craving is not hunger or need, and it can easily be pampered and the consequence will be strain to the digestive system. The local references of those consciousnesses in the body are a great help in their identification. In a confused situation of food-seeking, it is, *e.g.*, possible to suspect the presence of craving and try to dissociate oneself from the strong visceral sensations. After some practice, this becomes quite easy and, when that element has thus been in a measure eliminated, one can at once recognise if there is a real hunger present. Similarly by eliminating the vital element we can find out if we are truly determined in a situation by our ideas and opinions of what would be right food under certain circumstances. By distinguishing those three consciousnesses we can also become aware of a conflict we might be creating or labouring under in regard to our food-seeking impulse

Now what is true of the food-seeking behaviour would be true of many other

activities. Under the influence of the social and ethical standards of life we normally ascribe our behaviour to certain justifiable 'oughts', but actually we are determined by instinctive urges of the vital factor of our personality. That evidently means inner division and conflict and with that go the consequences of the same. But what is more regrettable is the case where we sincerely want to be determined by an 'ought', to live by reason or impersonal objective truth and therefore strengthen the 'ought' and the reason in us by our adhesion to it and in consequence cause a suppression of the vital drive and then believe that we are determined by reason, whereas in fact we continue to be determined at least partially by the same desire, though now from its subconscious quarters. A more rational handling of the situation would be a clear recognition of the mental factor, the reason we want to live by and also of the vital factor, the reason we want to be relieved of and then steadily dissociate ourselves from the latter and more and more identify ourselves with the former. This kind of handling of such a situation will not lead to suppressions and repressions.

In this connection it will be worth examining how the Free Association method of Psycho-analysis works out its cure. The method is supposed to consist of a free revival of ideas. The patient is asked to speak out whatever occurs to him, in particular what occurs to him in connection with the symptoms of his disease. And the becoming conscious of the original causes of the disease is supposed to effect the cure. Now the cause of the disease, according to Psycho-analysis, is always some minor conflict and the cure must consist in the removal of the conflict, *i.e.* in the reintegration of the divided will. And the Free Association method is virtually a process of revival of the previously lived emotions and attitudes involving a recognition of what has been repressed and partially dissociated from the self and thus reintegrating it into the central will of personality. Thus psycho-analytical work is not primarily one of ideas, but of emotions, instincts and attitudes, these divisions and conflicts and reintegrations. Primarily all this belongs to the vital factor of our personality and the id, ego and the superego are all in greater part distinctions within the vital being.

Now if Matter, Life and Mind are the three main stages of the general evolution and man, who is a product of the same, must evidently consist and partake of them; and if the same factors seem to be verifiable in the workings of personality by introspection, then they must naturally constitute the basic references in the treatment of personality. That is to say, in our classifications and characterisations of processes they must be our best guide and right basis. But before attempting a substantiation of this point, it will be necessary to characterise the three basic factors of Matter, Life and Mind a little more fully.

Considering them as terms of general evolution, Matter is inertia and repetitive mechanical action, Life is impulse and activity expressed in self-preservation and self-propagation and Mind is ideational activity serving as an aid to Life and trying to raise it to impersonal objective truth. In personality it is very interesting to observe that there is a definite positive impulse to inactivity, continuing in the same state, inertia and it is recognisable in all our repetitive habitual behaviour. This impulse is dif-

ferent from that of rest and sleep, though the latter may involve it. It is positively recognisable as such and is a conscious state though the vividness of consciousness is much lower than that of the normal ideational activity. The various goal-seekings connected with self-preservation and self-propagation constitute a class by themselves and this is our life-factor. They all are conscious seekings, more conscious on the whole than the impulse for inactivity or routine activity. These seekings by themselves are able to maintain a fair balance between the organism and the environment, which is very well represented in animal life. But the ideational activity in man brings into being an idealised world, which seeks to impose a new order on these seekings. Out of a conflict of the two arises the trouble and tragedy as well as the progress and the greater possibilities of human life. The ideational activity is essentially the mental life. It represents, on the whole, the highest degree of consciousness and at its highest presents to us a vision of impersonal objective truth. But it enters into compromises with the vital, which is strongly individualistic, self-assertive and self-aggrandising and the super-ego is perhaps the most important resultant formation. The super-ego is intolerant, aggressive and egoistic like the vital impulse, but it acts in this form in the name of society and objective truth. Obviously the super-ego is primarily a vital formation. The true reason and objective truth appear in our experience as free, large, comprehensive and dispassionate and they are a very small part of us. Thus what we call mental life consists of mental consciousness, vital consciousness and bodily consciousness and of these the vital is the predominant. Contemporary psychology treats them all as one mental phenomenon and that certainly does not contribute to clarity in understanding our behaviour and, in particular, in trying to modify it in education and self-culture.

*(To be continued)*

INDRA SEN

# INDIAN LIFE IN ENGLISH WRITINGS

(Continued from the issue of September 1979)

## PART II: Of Land and People

FROM the past with its glamour, chivalry and patchwork of intrigue, savagery and heroism we now arrive at a closer perspective. Not the historian's re-creation of the past, but a near view at the Indian landscape, its people, customs through descriptions, and at the biographical evaluation of two eminent Indians. The tone will not be exacting, and few romantic touches will be there. Nevertheless, the picture will be of India as she is.

Margaret Parton was an American journalist who visited India during the first years of India's freedom. Like many Americans she was drawn towards Gandhian ideals. Though it was not a guided tour, her impressions had snapshot-like effects, instead of giving a sustained panoramic presentation; her treatment was cursory and descriptions sketchy and at times read like notes from a diary.

She harboured great sympathy for India. She did not have the British bias, as for example had Aldous Huxley. She took in the picture that stood before her and took it at its face value, instead of assessing it with a deeper light of reason. This is true of other American journalists also, whose writings we are going to study at a later time.

When she went to Jaipur, she witnessed a procession which she described thus: 'Blazing with color and light, led by three of His Highness' elephants in gold trappings, it wound through the city and finally passed below the royal box on the palace walls.

'Following the elephants came twenty camels, twenty white horses, finally one hundred men of the palace staff, all in red tunics and pink turbans. Behind them, they pulled a chariot lighted by pink flares of phosphorescence. It bore the golden image of Gangor, the goddess of plenty, in whose honor the procession was held.' (*The Leaf and the Flame* by Margaret Parton, London, Bodley Head, 1952, p. 14)

The Maharaja of Jaipur, Parton noted, was very hospitable. He made special arrangements for her to stay in a special suite in his palace. Parton, considering that all Indians were well-versed in religious lore, questioned the Maharaja about the Gita. He, brought up under a bygone British tradition, knew nothing of the Gita, but knew everything about Monte Carlo and the Derby. He was singularly ignorant of Indian tradition. In fact these feudal lords had no link with the Indian people, such was their education at Princes' College at Ajmer which fostered European opinions and tastes and at the end made them totally useless either as individuals or as princes.

She noted the same with the Rana of Simla. Theogs, a mountain tribe from the foothills of the Himalayas, had come in a group to perform a ceremonial dance before their chief, as a mark of their respect.

The dancers wore 'white trousers and white tunics and waved purple and orange handkerchiefs as they danced. The women in flowing hill-skirts and pantaloons, brandished silver-gleaming swords.' (*Ibid.*, p. 68)

But the Rana was the least interested. Perhaps he desired to return to his cronies, his drinks and his western way of life. 'In a bright blue western style suit and a pink turban, he sprawled on a divan, yawning occasionally and looking at his large gold and diamond wrist-watch.' (*Ibid.*, p. 67)

The western individual, visiting India, sought the typical oriental and exotic and not a repetition of what they were familiar with. Hence Parton was not happy with her visits to Jaipur or to Simla.

She began her description of Banaras thus: 'Banaras was built atop a tall bluff overlooking the Ganges and facing east.' (*Ibid.*, p. 32) Women were bathing, Brahmans were chanting hymns, priests were anointing people's foreheads with the '*ulak*'. It was full of colour, noise and life—the typical Indian scene. But she did not miss the dirt and squalor, the corpses burning in the *ghats*.

She had come to India somewhere at the end of 1950. Soon after, in the middle of February, she witnessed the spring festival. 'One of my favorite days in India is *Basant Panchami*, which to Indians, at least in the north of India, is the first day of the spring. The great fields of mustard are yellow and tender green and the peasants put on clothing to match the colors, yellow saris on women, little yellow or green caps on children, yellow shirts on men, or green the color of the fields... The beauty of India often is a by-product of tradition or necessity.' (*Ibid.*, p. 30)

Parton travelled to Allahabad. It was the *Kumbh mela* there she described: 'We went first to Allahabad to see the annual *mela* at the junction of the sacred Yamuna and even more sacred Ganges. The *mela* is an enormous gathering of Hindus who come each year by hundreds of thousands to bathe at the confluence of these rivers during the month of Marg.' (*Ibid.*, p. 31)

She went on to describe the *sadhus* and ascetics of diverse sects in the vast throng, which included beggars, also lepers and cripples. She described the boats carrying pilgrims to the confluence.

Apparently Parton had not been in the South; if at all she did so, she failed to mention it. What seemed to impress her was Northern India. But she detested Calcutta with its dirt, slovenliness and inefficiency. Even the service in the best of Calcutta hotels like the Great Eastern was abominable.

She missed the character of Bengalis, their intellectual maturity, their volatile temperaments and artistic nature. It was also curious she did not visit Bolpur, the seat of Tagore's educational experiment.

Describing a communist rally at Calcutta, she commented, 'To day more than anywhere else, at any other time, I have been conscious of the great shock-absorbing quality of India. It does not fight back, it merely tolerates, ignores, blankets and encompasses the opposition.' (*Ibid.*, p. 47-8)

But every one who visited India did not have such a superficial regard. Two



exceptional persons were Jon and Rumer Godden. These two writers spent their early life in East Bengal. Rumer and her sister have recorded their life in East Bengal, also their travels to other parts of India. *Two Under the Indian Sun* is a book of reminiscences. In it they have expressed their love for India and described the pageantry of Indian life, their own life in its midst, all with deep-rooted sympathy.

But Rumer and Jon Godden wrote other books as well, the most notable of them were *The Episode at Sparrows*, dealing with child-delinquency in England, and *The Black Narcissus*, the life of white nuns in the Himalayas.

The present book under review, *Two Under the Indian Sun*, was a simple account of the children's life in Bengal, all seen from the point of view of two girls, aged nine and eleven respectively. The perspective was unsophisticated. Rumer contrasted very clearly the cold, grey straight-jacketed Edwardian English life in India with its sun, freedom and joy.

Though she spoke of two sisters narrating, it is difficult to discern their two voices, so much are they one in tone and expression.

'In the background of our house in Narayangunj, there were always three sounds: the regular puff of escaping steam from the jute works across the road, puff-wait-puff like the pulse of our day and night, then, from the first daylight until dusk, the cawing of the crows in the garden and all day and most of the night the tympany of the bazaar: a chatter like sparrows, street cries, a woman wailing, a baby's cry.' (*Two Under the Indian Sun*, London, Macmillan, 1966, p. 23)

East Bengal was a land of many rivers, unlike the canal-like rivers that flowed in England. Hence Rumer exclaimed, 'Our lives were conditioned by our big rivers; they gave a sense of proportion, of timelessness to our small township and our family... This river country was where we belonged.' (*Ibid.*, p. 29)

The rivers were the Padma, Meghna, and Budi Ganga. Close by, a few miles away, was the capital of East Bengal, Dacca.

Sometimes the three children, their father who was a manager of a jute works, their mother and their dog along with a couple of servants would go for a boat-ride. In East Bengal boats were the only mode of conveyance, at least in the greater part of it, be it visiting friends and relatives, attending parties or going to clubs and so on.

'Out in the middle of the river the water was deep green, translucent with white foam. If a steamer passed we drew up our legs or we should have been splashed to our waists; families in country boats stared at us and we at them, while the smell of cooking wafted across the water from a pot boiling on the brazier. We counted the porpoises, so slipperily lazy that they were easy to catch; we lifted our poles free of the floating hyacinth. Now and then we passed a jute station with its warehouses.' (*Ibid.*, p. 70)

The Godden children loved animals. And here in Narayangunj it was a veritable paradise for them. Apart from the domestic dogs, cats, parrots, etc. the garden was replete with animals.

'Animals were important, a necessary part of our lives, as they always were to

be... Here in Narayangunj the garden was full of strange and exiting birds and there were chipmunks with stripes on their backs, stripes that came there, so Indian stories tell, when God Shiva stroked the chipmunk with his sacred fingers. Monkeys would suddenly appear in our trees, the small brown rhesus found everywhere in India, and the big, bold langurs who were Govind's enemies.... At night there would be owls calling and we would often see the dim forms of jackals skulking in the shadows under the trees... As for tame animals, we had ponies and fast-increasing guineapigs and rabbits. "This place is becoming a zoo," Aunt Mary often said. And Aunt Mary had her mare, and Fa had Maxum and his old black cat which still produced kittens regularly.' (*Ibid.*, p. 40)

'Fa' was the nickname given by the children to Godden *Père*.

Coming down to life, Rumer said, 'Our house was English streaked with Indian, or Indian streaked with English. It might have been an uneasy hybrid but we were completely and happily at home.' (*Ibid.*, p. 46)

This was because the children had not matured into race-conscious adults. But they were mostly at home and the little education they had was at home. Therefore they, like all foreigners, lived apart in their own world.

'The Indians we knew best,' Rumer continued, 'were our own servants. At first their faces looked much alike to our unaccustomed eyes. Yet they were utterly different from one another and each brought a tail of other differences, differences of place, custom, religion even of skin.' (*Ibid.*, pp. 32-3)

Rumer was referring to the bevy of domestic servants which usually constituted an English household in India. There were Govind the gardener, Abdul the stable-boy, the Muslim cook, the *masalchi*, the ayah. Lastly there was the sweeper and his family—all of whom lived in the outhouses.

The house itself was a huge affair, all white-washed, double-storied.

Not only in the Godden household, but in the little township the differences between the natives and the English were well marked. Even to the immature and sensitive mind of the children this was evident.

'The two societies, English and Indian, did not often intermingle except in the large towns where there were more cultured circles. It was partly prejudice, partly because it was so difficult; Indian women who play such a prominent and vital part in political and social life now, were still inhibited.' (*Ibid.*, p. 80)

Perhaps the cause was psychological rather than anything else. The ruling class and the ruled bore no real point of sympathetic contact. Then there was the case of hatred burning as a subtle under-current, on both sides, which gave birth to repressive measures on one side and revolt on the other.

Sometimes the Godden children went out for a walk in the early morning. 'Early mornings seem more precious in India than anywhere else: it is not only the freshness before the heat, the colours muted by the light, the sparkle of dew; it is the time of cleansing and prayer.' (*Ibid.*, p. 48)

Also walking through now sparsely crowded street, they say: 'In the bazar temple

with its pointed silver roof, silver because it was covered with beaten-out kerosine tins, the gods were being got up too.' (*Ibid.*), p. 49)

Once the Goddens were invited to a wealthy person's residence, where they listened to Indian classical music. Indian music, as a rule, seemed monotonous to the Western ears because they could not catch the subtle melodies and *nuances* of musical expression. But to the Goddens it was different.

'...our ears could hear the infinitesimal changes in scale and mood, the intricacies on percussion of silver cymbals no bigger than half crowns; the different notes on the *tabla*, drums that could be tuned, the deepness of the big stringed instruments in an Indian orchestra, a *tambura* or a *sitar* or a *vina* that was like a guitar and graceful as a swan.' (*Ibid.*, p. 82)

Rumer went on to describe the panorama of Indian seasons.

'For us the cold weather, the Bengal winter began with Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.

'It came at the end of the long holiday of Durga Puja in Bengal, was dedicated to *Kali*...we always kept [observed?] Diwali in our home and all day we helped or hindered Guru, Govind or other gardeners as they made the lamps ready and set them on the arch above our gate, along the parapet of the roof, on every veranda, railing and window ledge.' (*Ibid.*, p. 80)

Next in succession were the *Holi* and the Indian spring.

'*Hoh* is a day of complete licence; when children and the lower castes find new daring in an orgy of play and colour and noise. Old clothes were kept especially for it and anyone and everyone can throw coloured powder over passers-by, squirt them with coloured water; the children all have squirts.' (*Ibid.*, p. 90)

Rumer echoed Parton's description of the spring, 'In India, yellow is the colour of spring; the yellow of the mustard fields, grown for the mustard oil of Indian cooking, stretching round the village under the pale blue sky that met the flat horizon as exactly as a bowl inverted over land. We never thought, as many people do, that the Bengal landscape was dull; each little village, with its thatched roofs among tall slim coconut palms and dark mango trees, the jewel-bright background of the rice and mustard field was beautiful in its own way and full of interest.' (*Ibid.*, p. 91)

Then came summer time when the English populace fled to the hills—to Darjeeling in Bengal, Simla in the Himalayas, etc. etc. Sequestered in the long middays the children spent their leisure composing verses or writing stories. Rumer and Jon had shown early talent for literature.

By the time they returned home the rainy season was breaking all over Bengal.

'The first rain was exhilarating and we dashed out in it; Rose coming out after us... The Indians were excited too; the servants' children danced and shouted in the rain; everyone talked with happy jabbering voices. There was a brisk new life.' (*Ibid.*, p. 95)

But after a while, with the mud and bog and dun cloudy weather, things became different. Clothes would not dry, fruits and vegetables would grow moulds, the adults

could not go out meeting friends. This continued throughout August and part of September when... 'the rain lessened, the deluges ceased, the sun shone for hours and hours and then for days on end... this was most unpleasant.' (*Ibid.*, p. 98)

But soon after came the pre-autumn season, *Sharad*, with its golden sunshine. This has not been recorded by Goddens.

Or speaking in symbols, 'Agni, Vayu, Surya, Indra, Agni. The wheel of the year turned a full circle, but for English children the most important day was Christmas.' (*Ibid.*, p. 99)

Once the Goddens had a trip to the Sunderbans, by motor launch; here 'we did not see a tiger, but we saw plenty of monkeys and several groups of does and fawns and a few proudly antlered stags... we saw huge crocodiles, the man-eating muggers, sunning themselves on sandbanks; one was at least twenty feet long and the birds were picking at the teeth in its enormous jaws.' (*Ibid.*, p. 139)

It was indeed an exciting trip. Godden *Père* fired a shot or two, but the quarries escaped.

Before sailing for England, the Godden family went to Kashmir, which was 'a pearl between mountains, a pearl of water and flowers; it is called the Pearl of Hind.' (*Ibid.*, p. 153)

Arriving at Kashmir valley, they settled down in two house-boats, because the family was large. Their house-boats were 'carved and ornamented, the rooms connected by sliding doors, and with an open fore-deck and a flat roof above where, under a scalloped awning, chairs and tables were set for sitting and for meals. Our boats were moored in the big Dal lake by an island fringed with willows where king-fishers live.' (*Ibid.*, p. 153)

Then they went to the 'old pleasure gardens of Nishat, Chasmashahi or Shalimar. There really was a Shalimar of those pale hands pink-tipped like lotus-buds.' (*Ibid.*, p. 153)

Returning to Narayangunj they found 'March was the month of weddings in Bengal and all that March we got, though we were supposed to be in bed, to look down from the veranda and watch each procession go by... The groom would ride a horse with tinsel trappings and would wear a muslin turban with a groom's hat or even a crown. This bridegroom's mother, spinster aunts and girl cousins stayed behind; they would welcome the bride when, after long wedding ceremonies, he brought her home in another procession, but if he were rich the family maid-servants might follow the horse and musicians, carrying trays of gifts on their heads.' (*Ibid.*, p. 182)

The place of Fa Godden's head-clerk, Mr. Chakravarty, was the *venue* of one of the weddings. The Goddens were guests of honour at the Chakravarty residence, where they witnessed the elaborate ceremony of a Hindu wedding. They saw the 'gifts' for the bridegroom, the wrist-watch, the bicycle (which was then a novelty), the gramophone and discs and many other such items. The whole house was astir with crowds of relatives, friends, neighbours and invitees, with excitement and fun. 'The one person for whom a Hindu wedding has no fun was the bride.' (*Ibid.*, p. 182)

This was because she had to fast the entire day. Most of the brides in these arranged marriages never saw or met the bridegrooms before the actual ceremony—a thing most strange to English eyes.

‘Red is the colour for Hindu weddings; it is also the colour of courage and it seemed fitting that Sushila [Chakravarty’s daughter] had worn a red sari, magnificent with gold and silver threadwork,’ while her neck and arms were literally stiff with jewelry. “A load of jewelry,” Mam told us, “Many jewels in her ears and one in her nose”.’ (*Ibid.*, p. 184)

But life was not all. Death too formed an integral part of a man’s world. This was how the Goddens described it, ‘A pyre would be built on the river bank, built of logs and stuffed in the cracks with dried hay, grass and twigs, the quicker to catch fire. The body was laid on the pyre and if the family had enough money, *ghi*, melted butter, but *ghi* being scarce and expensive, usually a little paraffin would be used instead. The eldest son, or grandson, or perhaps even a brother, but always a male, would set it to the head while the priests chanted prayers....On the third day after death, the men relatives would come back and collect the bones and ashes in a vase or bag and that would be given to the river.’ (*Ibid.*, p. 126)

They also witnessed a few Christian deaths.

‘When any European died in Narayangunj, the whole western community would leave what they were doing, the men their work, the women their homes...’ (*Ibid.*, p. 127) All this to pay respect to the departed.

(*To be continued*)

ROMEN PALIT

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## COURAGE

BOLDNESS—leap out! Have you not  
Hidden your face long enough  
Behind the burdened front of yesterdays?

See the Future! Take it in hand  
And blaze through with torch-light bared.  
Who has said you can’t be new born and free to create?  
Leave that shameful counsellor  
And greet your own vivifying flame!

You would be strong when all the world’s defiled.  
You would be brazen before the weakened spirits.  
Light again the golden fire that the Ancients knew  
And stand unafraid on the laurel-laden road!

PATTI

## CHILD CARE

SUDDENLY the child has become the focus of attention. The United Nations has designated 1979 as the International Year of the Child. All over the world, Social Welfare organisations and politicians have started giving big talks on child care, the welfare of the young and coining new slogans like 'a happy child is a nation's pride', etc. etc. But to deal with the various problems concerning, the welfare as well as the healthy growth of the children, hardly anyone is suggesting or taking a realistic view or steps which would ultimately help the growing children. In India, all the state governments have formed committees to celebrate this year and allocated special funds for this purpose. The Central Government is being pressed to pass the Adoption Bill. It has been decided to open four research centres for the benefit of physically handicapped and mentally retarded children. Can the neglect of so many years be compensated by distribution of free books, toys and dresses to children of poor families, this year? Will the hectic activity of one year suffice to make the children of this great country grow into a healthy and happy lot? These and many other pertinent questions come to mind the moment one starts thinking about this much-publicised International Year of the Child.

The problem of children differs from country to country, and from state to state in a vast country like ours. All over the country, the children are always showered with love and affection and much sympathy is shown to them. Indians as a rule adore children. A home without a child is not considered a home at all. It is the Indian genius which invented the most adorable child-God the human imagination can devise, Sri Krishna. Still out of 25 million children who are born every year, two million are "throw-away babies." They are abandoned in parks or on the steps of the temples, churches, mosques or hospitals mostly because their parents do not have enough to bring them up. And two lakh children join the ranks of beggars. The problem of children in India is part of a vast socio-economic problem of which no more than the fringe has been touched in these thirty-two years of independence. The majority of children in our country are wallowing in a vast sea of poverty, illiteracy and ignorance. The problem of malnutrition and even starvation, which affects half the population of India is acutely painful in the case of children.

Much spadework has been done during the last few years due to the launching of various Family Planning and Welfare Programmes. But all this has reached the surface only. We have yet to penetrate all the sections of our population, specially the majority who live in villages. In spite of frantic efforts made by many governmental and social welfare agencies, the rural folks are the worst sufferers. Any programme based on a total view of the problem will have to consider eradication of poverty and ignorance along with the spread of health education to make child care effective. Moreover, the problem of neglected mothers, themselves a prey of ignorance and malnutrition, cannot be overemphasized. In their race for equality, women in India have suffered heavy casualties and the new phenomenon of broken homes is on the

increase. It is a fact that a working mother cannot do full justice to the needs of a growing child. A child needs love and security and these two basic ingredients for the proper growth of a healthy and happy child are being denied to the majority of city-born children in modern India. In their eagerness to make up for this loss, many parents try to shower various gifts of baby foods, special toys and fancy dresses on their young ones, whose growth is stunted in the absence of affection of parents. A child is a product of love and it is his natural right to be loved. In our ignorant competition with the West, many of our parents want to be ideal parents by providing the child with many objects, forgetting easily that a child needs the warmth of personal attention, which no amount of baby foods and toys can bring. In our country we have two extremes—too poor and too rich parents—and in both the cases the children are being starved either of love or of nutrition.

Government-maintained nurseries and crèches are springing up everywhere but the child is being neglected. The woman—the mother—is becoming more extravert and fashion-conscious. She will have to be made conscious of her responsibility. Merely giving birth to a child is not sufficient, nor providing food and shelter: even rabbits do that. The children are to be taken care of like a precious gift: this has been forgotten by most women in India. We adore Sri Krishna but lose no time in hurling abuses at the child in the street.

Spreading of health education and distribution of free books and free meals by various agencies can help a lot to improve the condition of children, but—and it is a big BUT—Mother's love and attention is essential. Leaving the child with ayahs or at crèches will not help him grow into a happy and healthy person. The child is often torn apart by lack of love and insecurity at home. Women are feeling shy at breast-feeding, which is very essential for the human offspring. Let it be not misunderstood that women are being asked to go back to the four walls of their houses. The only plea that is being made is to make them responsible for the healthy and happy growth of their children and not to throw the task on to the government or various social welfare agencies. Women seem to have become indifferent to their children and somehow want to pass the buck on to someone else. That will not do. That is one of the main reasons of increasing juvenile delinquency in our country and the rising number of crimes committed by young ones. If we really adore the child, let us love him and make him feel he is needed at home. The child seems to be lost. He must get back his mother and the warmth of maternal love. Let us try to restore the mother to the child and we shall have done really something worth doing in this year of the child.

PUSHPA ANAND

## EUROPE 1974

### A TRAVELOGUE

*(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1979)*

(29)

SEVERAL hours spent inside closed rooms and with antiquities made us feel the need for a breath of fresh air. Our choice fell upon the Embankment on the river Thames. This was a place almost due south and we reached it quickly by taxi, crossing on our way Oxford Street and the Strand. Cool fresh breeze was blowing from the river and we felt refreshed after a while. Here we heard delightful music from a Brass Band, music played with quick tempo and vigour that soon helped us to get out of the dreamy torpor that we had fallen into. There was a garden there sprinkled with equestrian and other statues of some well-known figures in Britain. There were also some statues of Camels purposely put there, they say, to encourage the Imperial Camel Corps. Cleopatra's needle is there, a monolith immensely high. But really it has nothing to do with Cleopatra. It is one of the two pillars of Heliopolis of 1500 B.C. This monolith or Cleopatra's needle as it is called was given to England as a present by Mohammed Ali of Egypt in 1918. It finally arrived in London in 1970. Its hieroglyphs record the deeds of Thotmes III and Ramses II. The second one of the two pillars is now in the Central Park, New York.

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The river Thames is here broader than at most places in London, and as the Embankment is on a huge horse-shoe bend of the river, one can with a help of binoculars see the Houses of Parliament, Millbank and even a bit of Vauxhall. The Thames has been looked upon differently by different people. Some have called it wonderful, some have found it full of magic. Some have great reverence for Old Father Thames for what it stands for.

The Thames has the honour of having on its bank the greatest port in the world. It is a working river not fit for swimming or fishing, at least not in this part of London. London is the clearing house of goods imported from all over the five Continents, not only for England, but for Europe too. It is only after the two World Wars that Rotterdam in Holland gets more tonnage than London. The best way to enjoy the Thames is to board a pleasure-steamer and cruise along from Woolwich to Hampton Court (a distance of about twenty-five miles) and you will see the most interesting water way there ever was in Europe. On either side you will see history, commerce, beauty and romance. The ever-changing scenes will grip your attention for a while. First come the docks, busy grimy all-steel frames and cranes. If you are lucky you



may see a half-built ship gliding down to the sea, or a liner gracefully coming up the river. It is somewhere here that the two famous under-river tunnels are. After the docks comes Greenwich, serene and green, more docks and then China Town. The Tower Bridge emerges slowly with the Tower of London as its background picture. Then you pass under the London Bridge, you can wave at the people on the Embankment if you like.

The next interesting thing we pass are the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, perhaps booming across the clear morning sky. Then we arrive at Millbank where the Tate Gallery is. The next place, Vauxhall, does not look very extraordinary today, but it must be remembered that during the Tudor and the Stuart periods this was the place where the rich built their Pleasure-Houses. There were no clubs in those days so the nobles and the rich assembled in one or the other of these beautiful houses and had a good time, in the gardens on the river bank. They played cards and other games and there were always music and dance. Invariably the King and his court were present.

Chelsea, the next congested area, appears next and here is situated the mammoth power-station. Leaving Chelsea behind we almost come out into the country. Then emerges the emerald foliage of the Royal Botanical Gardens. It was started in 1759 at the instigation of Caroline, mother of George III. Here we encounter the fabulous Kew Gardens. A show-piece of London, a botanical garden second to none in the world. Who thought it would be so enchanting when as first-grade students we learnt:

Go down to Kew in lilac time, in lilac time, in lilac time,  
 Oh, so near from London  
 And you shall wander hand in hand in love with  
 summer's wonderland  
 Go down to Kew in lilac time, Oh, so near from London.

\*

The sea-borne life and the busy city ends with the first lock at Teddington, where the tideway comes to an end. The river now resembles a high-born lady wearing a scintillating green chiffon robe all flying in the gentle breeze, with golden curls and amulet.

“London is the most interesting, beautiful and wonderful city in the world,” wrote H.G. Wells. One wonders if he had not just arrived from a river cruise when he wrote these lines. Wordsworth was obviously in love with the Thames, but not Heinrich Heine the great German poet. It seems he wept standing on one of the bridges of London. He found the Thames heartless and cruel. He wrote, “... [it] has already swallowed up such floods of human tears without giving them a thought.”

\*

There is another side of the Thames. Queen Elizabeth I was very fond of cruising up and down the river. There were huge gilded Royal barges and these were beautifully decorated on these occasions. The great Queen used to have her admirers and friends on board and music and dance and masqueraders accompanied her. On the banks her subjects did the same. In honour of the Queen, the whole route used to be decorated and people cheered her and danced and played music. Men, women and children came out to see the Queen's barges pass by. When Queen Elizabeth died she was taken to her last resting place, Westminster Abbey, in a barge over the river. But the great Cunard liner "Queen Elizabeth", is so large that she cannot come up to London, she has to anchor at Southampton. Queen Elizabeth II coming back from one of her World tours some years ago, entered London sitting on the helm of a fairly large ship and showing herself to the people. It seems her subjects applauded her and liked her gesture.

"For a nation whose whole heritage is founded on marine wizardry, whose literature is coursed through and through with the metaphor of rill and weir, whose pond life is the envy of microbiologists throughout the world what more fitting locale for a merry afternoon jaunt than an English punt in the shallows of a summer stream?"

The writer was thinking perhaps of smaller streams and not the river Thames when writing these lines, yet they rightly reveal the inclinations and the characteristics of the English people.

*(To be Continued)*

CHAUNDONA and SANAT K. BANERJI

## THE SILENT CALLS

THE dawn approaches noon, then evening falls;  
 Anon the night enfolds the earthly skies.  
 From the starlit heavens come the silent calls  
 That drop like dreams in sleep-imprisoned eyes.

If all our sweetest dreams for long endure,  
 Then we can live devoid of all unrest,  
 And fill our lungs with air nectareous-pure  
 Whilst keeping peace enthroned within our breast.

My heart aspires for immortality  
 Promised to me for taking mortal birth,  
 Encumbered with high goals unendingly,  
 And labouring for Truth upon this earth.

SAILEN