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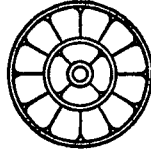
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Subj.

"KNOWLI



Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.

---

#### AN APPEAL TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

*Mother India* has again to call for financial help. Our last appeal brought a very good response and we are deeply thankful. Costs have been steadily rising in everything. Our immediate need was to stock paper. We have paid a further Rs. 4,000. This has made a new gap in our resources. So we badly require donations of any amount that can be spared by our well-wishers.

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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

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# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXI

No. 4

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

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# MEDITATION AND TRUE SPIRITUAL LIVING

## SOME WORDS OF THE MOTHER

AMONG people who meditate there are some who know how to meditate, who concentrate not on an idea, but in silence, in an inner contemplation in which they say they reach even a union with the Divine; and that is perfectly all right. There are others, just a few, who can follow an idea closely and try to find exactly what it means; that too is all right. Most of the time people try to concentrate and enter into a kind of half sleepy and, in any case, very tamasic state. They become some kind of inert thing; the mind is inert, the feeling is inert, the body is immobile. They can remain like that for hours, for there is nothing more durable than inertia! All this that I am telling you now—these are experiences of people I have met. And these people, when they come out of their meditation, sincerely believe they have done something very great. But they have simply gone down into inertia and unconsciousness. People who know how to meditate are very few in number.

Besides, admitting that through much discipline and years of effort you have in your meditation succeeded in coming into conscious relation with the divine Presence, evidently this is a result, and this result should necessarily have an effect upon your character and your life. But this effect is very different according to individuals. There are cases in which the person is split into two in so radical a way that while in meditation such people can enter into contact with the Divine and obtain this supreme felicity of identification, yet when they come out of this and lead their normal life, begin to live and act, they can be the most ordinary men with the most ordinary and sometimes even the most vulgar reactions. Indeed, I know people who become altogether ordinary men, and they do, for example, all the things one should not do, like passing their time in gossiping about others, thinking of themselves only, having all selfish reactions and wanting to organise their life for their petty personal well-being; they do not think of others at all and never do anything for anybody, have no large idea

And yet, in their meditation, they have had this contact. And that is why people who have discovered how very difficult it is to change this petty outer nature that one takes up along with the body, how difficult it is to transcend oneself, to transform one's movements, say, "It is not possible, it is no-use trying; in coming to the world, you have taken a body of dust, you have only to let it fall off and prepare to go away, leaving the world as it is; and the only thing to do is to run away as quickly as one can; and if everybody runs away, there will no longer be a world and therefore no more misery." That's logical. If they are told: "But perhaps what you propose to do is very selfish, to go away and leave others floundering?"—"Well, they have only to do what I do. If everybody did what I am doing, they would get out of it, there would be no longer any world, no longer any misery." As though it depended upon the will of individuals who have not even taken any part in the mak-

ing of the world! How can they hope to stop it? At least if it was they who had made it, they could know how it was made and could try to undo it (although it is not always easy to undo what one has done), but it is not they who have made it, they do not even know how it has been made and they have the presumption to want to undo it, because they imagine that they themselves can run away from it.... I do not think it is possible. One cannot run away, even if one tries. That, however, is another subject. In any case, for me, my experience (which is sufficiently long, for it is now almost fifty-three years since I have been dealing with people, with their yoga, their inner efforts; I have seen much here and there, a little everywhere in the world); well, I do not believe that it is by meditation that you can transform yourself. I am absolutely convinced of the contrary.

---

## PRAYER FOR PERFECTION

LET not my life be a hush of sleep.  
 Forgetting the clouds of yesterday  
 Waken it to the smiling morn's gold beam.

Let Thy sunlight melt my frozen mind.  
 Thy kiss of love a white ray on a rose,  
 Slowly unfold a perfect pearl of dream.

In these aching limbs let Thy Grace divine  
 Steal in like a lovely slow surprise,  
 And change all to a perfection hyaline.

To my heart so weary of mortal things  
 Reveal Thy blissful swards and laughing flowers  
 Upon Thy summits ever cloudless and calm.

Embracing Thy sacred feet, I implore  
 Thy flawless silent Presence, and a new life's hours  
 Born from the light of those limbs even Gods adore.

LALITA

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

(Continued from the issue of March 1979)

(8)

May 24, 1915

“NARROW field of the external being’s possibilities.” The physical body cannot do much, *peut faire peu de choses*. Our powers, that is, the powers we normally can use are very limited indeed, *tout petit, tout petit*. And yet, with proper training, they could be increased beyond anything we might imagine.

The Mother spoke in this connection about her own experiments with the vital being’s powers of doing things at a great distance, by going out of the body: she related the story of her writing with a pencil at a planchette session in Paris while she was physically at Tlemcen in Algeria.

She also spoke of the Railway employee whose vital being could save his fiancée in a railway accident where everyone else perished. The Mother emphasised that he was a man without any kind of special training in occultism, but a very sincere man and much attached to his fiancée.

It is our ignorance and want of faith and confidence that limit our capacities.

“The vital being had for a long time already realised this freedom.” This, the Mother explained, is the record of an experience. Unless one has had the experience, one cannot really understand the meaning. It was something like this:

The vital being had acquired the power to act through other bodies, *pouvait agir à travers eux*. The physical body would remain where it was, and yet she could make others do exactly the things she wanted them to do, *exactement comme je voulais*. It was done by some kind of projection, a throwing forward of her vital being. Of course, there had to be some sort of affinity with the person on which her vital being acted. He might have been feeling lazy and disinclined to do anything, and suddenly he would feel an inclination to work in a particular way—the way in which the Mother wanted him to act. All the time it was the Mother’s vital that acted through him, even though he could not feel it and believed that it was no other than himself.

“The becoming” is the manifested world, the world that is in perpetual change, that “becomes”.

“The Law of Truth” is the Origin, the Eternal Principle.

The world is an expression of the Origin, but a distorted expression, *l’expression déformée*.

The idea expressed here is to form the world in accordance with the Origin, infuse the Origin into the Becoming, so that the world becomes an expression of the Truth

and no longer a deformation.

“The Yoga of Nature.” Nature in the course of her evolution has been moving towards this change, namely, the expression of the Truth in the manifested universe. But the progress, *la marche de la nature*, has been slow and uncertain. From the stone to the plant, from the tree to the animal, from the animal to man: this has been the course of evolution. But in the process, there has been much wastage, *gaspillage*. Things have been made and then thrown away and destroyed. Things have been put forth and then withdrawn. It has been an uneven march, this Yoga of Nature.

“The divine Yoga” is a conscious process of change: one is no longer submitted to the vagaries of Nature. By means of aspiration, concentration, consecration, one moves on rapidly and surely on the way to change.

July 31, 1915

“The heavens have been definitively conquered.” These are all the states of the inner being, *tous les états de l'être intérieur*.

“Thy eternal plan.” The whole universe exists in its totality beyond Space and Time, everything becomes in Time. It is in this progression that there arises the possibility of change.

In the Supreme, the world exists, but is unmanifest. The manifestation of the world, its coming into birth and its progress are therefore an adding of the manifestation to what was not manifest... The manifestation of the world is a perfecting of what is not manifested.

“Thy Will of tomorrow” is what will be realised in the future. “Thy Will of yesterday” is what has been already expressed in the world. Looking at this, people take the stand that things cannot change because they have been “always” like that. This is foolish, because their “always” is but a moment in the eternity of Time. Do they know how things were millions of years ago, and how they are going to be millions of years hence?

Things *shall* change, and there will come a time when death will be no more.

November 2, 1915

“The blind gropings” were for experience, realisation: one tried to find without knowing what or how. It was like someone groping blindly in a dark room. When one comes out into the light, when one comes over to the other side, one knows that all the blind gropings have led to the light, towards realisation.

This is an idea impossible to grasp unless one has had the actual experience.

That is the trouble with the philosophies. They build all kinds of theories and each is or can be supported by arguments. They provide fine gymnastics for the mind. And in its pride, the mind thinks it has found the Truth. But the whole thing falls when it is put to the test of life-experience, when one tries to live it out.



November 7, 1915

"The material resistance." It is the consciousness of matter that resists.

"Waiting itself becomes a perpetual menace." This refers to the helpless waiting of the men in the trenches for death to come and meet them at any moment. It was frightful, that trench-warfare, during the Great War. The Mother had read and heard a lot about it during the War and afterwards.

"Death has passed, vast and solemn..." Death is something concrete. It has its own organisation, a perfect organisation.

At this moment all was concentrated within, in a small space—a future Life and a present Death. And it was offered to the Supreme. Out of it all there came the Promise of a Life... It was absolutely marvellous.

November 26, 1915

"A many-headed serpent." Even before the present civilisation came into being, the serpent was taken as the symbol and image of the universe; it has neither beginning nor end

The experience came like this. The Mother was meditating, when all on a sudden she felt that she had no body at all, and no limbs; there was only a rounded globe in place of the body. She could feel it and touch it with her hands. A fiery serpent wrapped up the earth, *un serpent de feu enroulait la terre*. On top of the serpent she saw the symbol of a human form which was most magnificent; *symbole de la forme humaine très magnifique*.

"The Eye". The universe is made up of a number of planes. At the top stands the Supreme. At the bottom is the Inconscient. Anything that comes down from the Supreme has to pass through all the intermediate levels. But if one goes into the Inconscient, one meets the Supreme Himself once more; the two extremes touch each other. This is also represented by the symbol of the serpent figured as eating its tail.

The Mother emphasised once again that one could understand nothing of what has been said here, unless one had the experience.

January 15, 1916

"This individual being in all its complexity." The complexity is in the diverse elements and tendencies, very often the most contradictory, that co-exist in the same person. This complexity is the result of the lives which the psychic being of the person has had, the experiences through which it has passed. The more developed a being, the greater its possibilities, the more complex a person is likely to be in the elements of his nature. There is an occult tradition which says that a man may have as many as 365 different personalities in him; and that is perhaps not the maximum.

The Mother elaborated it thus. "I have seen people who had a sort of mania for purity, and there was in parts of their nature a frightful vulgarity. I have seen people who were capable of extraordinary heroism, they had a courage, a power of devotedness and self-abnegation; but at a certain moment they turned out to be the worst cowards. I have known people who had an extraordinary generosity, who gave without keeping anything but who had an absolutely sordid avarice in certain matters, sometimes the most petty. I have come across people who had a fine intelligence, who could follow with perfect clarity a chain of reasoning, and yet at certain moments they were perfectly stupid. This is not theory; I have actually lived with such people."

Each psychic being has a certain mission to fulfil. It will have in its mental, vital or physical formation something diametrically opposite to what it has to manifest. Its work will be to act on these contrary elements till they are transformed and illumined. Each one of us has his work of transformation to do. Once this transformation is done, when each has solved his own difficulty, he will have automatically solved that type of difficulty all over the world. The transformation of the individual becomes symbolic of the transformation of the type he represents.

Now, you can amuse yourself by looking within yourself to see what are the things you find the most natural and instinctively attractive, and which are the things that look like horrors. You will see that they are exactly the opposites. You have to see yourself as you are, *il faut se voir comme on est*, in a perfect sincerity. You must be absolutely honest with yourself. Do not try to deceive yourself, ever. Do not look at your faults with dark glasses, and do not try to see yourself in a good light. Look at yourself with the impartiality with which you look at others.

You will see that there is an aspiration, a great anxiety to be this or that, *un grand souci pour être ceci ou cela*.

For example, when you happen to be ill and cannot take part in active exercises, you may try this game. You may make the experiment of looking at yourself, with an absolutely scientific precision, and follow each element, each movement as if in a chase, *comme à la piste*. All on a sudden, there comes a thought or a feeling in your mind. You ask yourself, "Why is it like this?" You follow it step by step and go deep inward. When you go sufficiently deep, you come to a dark space like a sheet of water, very still in a dark place. Suddenly, on this sheet of water a light falls, like the rising moon...

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

## PAGES FROM A SADHAK'S DIARY

(Continued from the issue of March, 1979)

(4)

THERE is a general belief that the offering of food, etc. to the Mother for the departed souls helps them a lot. This is not so, for after leaving the body, the soul rests in the psychic world and assimilates its experiences.

There is no fixed time for the soul for its rebirth. It may come back to the earth after a year, or after a hundred years.

Even, it may happen that on coming into a new body the soul does not find the body suitable and then it leaves it. It sometimes enters the body at the time of birth; sometimes it comes later.

What helps the departed soul most are the good wishes that accompany the offerings, and not the offerings themselves.

When a woman comes back to this world, she generally prefers a female body, and a man a male body. They seldom like to have it otherwise.

\*

There have been many outstanding spiritual figures among men, but how is it that they have been so rare among women? The Mother says that things are not quite like that. There have actually been many outstanding spiritual personalities among women.

But women are more interested in action than in mentalisation and intellectual expression. That is why very few have recorded their spiritual experiences, and thus they have remained unknown.

\*

There is some danger in doing *pūjā* (ceremonial worship) in the ordinary way.

Generally, the *pūjā* is performed through priests who are not always of a pure character; and often they think more about their *dakṣiṇā* (fees) than about the worship.

The worshipper too is full of desires, for money and power and other things, as a reward for his *pūjā*. This opens one to Asuric influences, which first tempt one with some little money and benefit, etc., and after a time destroy the whole family in many cases.

The best thing is to perform *pūjā* without any ulterior motives.

\*

There is a general belief that temples are holy places and that they are spiritually helpful. But that is not always the case. Most people go to the temples for the satisfaction of their desires, and so these places become abodes for unhealthy influences.

The Mother gave an example. In the early days in Pondicherry, she used to go out for long evening-drives in a car. One day, as she was passing by a famous temple, she met one of these evil forces from this temple. It was a very powerful hideous-looking being of the vital world. It sought the Mother's collaboration in its work and tempted her in various ways. It did not know that it was playing with fire. Finally, it surrendered at the Mother's feet.

\*

Desire is the real source of danger, and sex is the root of all desires, including the desire for wealth.

There is a huge snake—it is fifty times bigger than the ordinary snakes—which guards the wealth of the world on behalf of the Asura. When the Mother approached this snake and asked it for the wealth it guards, it agreed, but only on one condition: the Mother must conquer the sex-consciousness on earth.<sup>1</sup>

\*

Is it possible to make our old bodies young? Yes, it is possible, says the Mother, and it has even been done partially. But such a *tapasyā* is needed for the victory that few are ready to pay the price.

(Concluded)

<sup>1</sup> In one of her *Entretiens* (10 March 1951), the Mother has avowed that she had not yet been able to obtain the needed mastery of the sex-impulse in man. *Editor*

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

*(These talks are from the notebooks of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others after the accident to his right leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were Dr. Manilal, Dr. Becharlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshankar. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.)*

AUGUST 3, 1940

To a letter of Dilip's, regarding the present world condition, Krishnaprem wrote a reply which was read by Sri Aurobindo.

S. Krishnaprem quotes the Gita's "By me these have been slain" and says, "The war has already been fought and won", by which he means action in the subtle worlds.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Of course it is there that things first happen. They are decided in the higher worlds before they are projected here.

N: So what happens here will be the result of the decisions and actions above?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but what happens here doesn't always take place exactly in the same way. There are variations, and the decisions also can be changed. When there is a struggle of forces it is always possible to change the balance of forces and thus alter the decision. But there can be variations only in what has been decided by the Supreme Vision.

For instance, there are forces which are trying to destroy the British and their empire—forces above and here in this world—I mean the inner forces. I myself wished for the empire's destruction but at that time I didn't know certain forces would arise. These forces are working for the evolution of a new world order which is bound to come. But for this new arrangement the British Empire need not be destroyed. It can be achieved in quite a different manner by a change in the balance of different forces, more quietly and without much destruction. Were it not for Hitler I wouldn't have cared whether the British Empire remained or went down. Now the question is whether this new order is to come after much suffering and destruction or with as little suffering as possible. Destruction of England would mean victory of Hitler and in that case perhaps after a great deal of suffering and through various difficult reactions on the part of men to Hitlerite oppression the new order will come or it may not come at all or come after Pralaya! Of course the issue has been decided by the Divine Vision and there can be no change in that. But nobody knows what it is.

Krishnaprem puts it in a rather absolute way which I don't think is true. He doesn't give sufficient importance to the material world. If everything is fixed and

whatever happens is, as he says, according to the decisions above, then this world will be only an illusion. He says that by a psychic change the new world order can be brought about. Psychic change is useful for much higher spiritual purposes. Even so, it is possible only in a small number of people, and how can that alter the world? Besides, for changing the world order the psychic change is not necessary, it can be done by a change in the balance of forces.

N: That balance will follow by the psychic change?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but is the psychic change possible for the whole world? By psychic I suppose he means the mental and vital changes. I don't know how even these are to come about if Hitler wins and if everybody is busy taking refuge in cowardice and trying to save their own skin.

N: You said that what is decided above takes place here with a certain variation. Is that variation in the process and method of working things out?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, even the whole decision may be changed, as I said.

N: Can the Vision of the Supreme be different from the decision of these higher worlds?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not? There can be variation of the play of forces in the different planes. The play of forces may show as if the destiny was in favour of one or other group of forces and they were the makers of destiny. There are different layers of destiny, so to say. When one is born one comes with a physical destiny, then there is the vital and mental destiny. By bringing vital and mental forces the physical destiny can be changed. It is the mental destiny that is difficult to change. The astrologers are usually concerned with the physical destiny. They don't see the others and hence make mistakes because they look at the physical graph of things. Only the Supreme Vision can't be changed.

N: What is the Supreme Vision?

SRI AUROBINDO: Nobody knows.

N: Not nobody; you must know, and as you said just now the new world order is bound to come, that must be the Supreme Vision.

P: But at present before the Supreme has a chance there are many others who are already busy with their own idea of the new world.

N: To the supramental vision the Supreme Vision must be known.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but I haven't yet become supermind and no one knows whether supermind will descend.<sup>1</sup>

N: How is that? You have already said it is bound to descend.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): But I didn't fix a date—whether it will be tomorrow or not.

N: The Mother seems to have said that the Divine Descent will take place when

<sup>1</sup> What is meant—as we know from other pronouncements of Sri Aurobindo and from the Mother's statements—is that *bodily* Sri Aurobindo had not yet become supermind. In other words, the final plenary stage of supramentalisation—the total transformation of the body by the supermind's descending power—had still not been reached —Nirodbaran

everything will be dark with not a ray of hope anywhere.

SRI AUROBINDO: That was the ancient prophecy she repeated.

P: I suppose the world is sufficiently dark enough already. England alone stands in the way of Hitler's triumph.

SRI AUROBINDO: Have you not read the Mother's prayer this year?

N: I have.

SRI AUROBINDO: Those who received it in France are already realising what it means.

#### EVENING

N: I couldn't quite follow Krishnaprem when he said that this war is not a real war. His words are: "It is the troubled wake of a ship that has passed, the trail of a snail, the dead ash of a forest fire," etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: He means the psychic past as he makes clear afterwards. All karma that has been done in the past and this is only the result while the karma has passed into the inner worlds. It is a one-sided view of the matter. Of course he takes the psychic in another sense than ours as he speaks of world-psychic.

P: He takes his stand on the Buddhistic karma theory.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. His contention that everything is fixed reduces this world to Maya. Even the result of the psychic past belonged once to the material world before it passed away into the subtle. And the material can always modify the result. He himself admits that in the case of Hitler he could reject the influence. So can others. It is the same as in yoga. If you accept the influence, it will then try to throw its formations on you and come true in the material plane. There also the manner of acceptance makes a difference. If you accept it in one way, a certain result comes; you accept it in another, then there is a different result.

N: Krishnaprem says England has some soul-purpose to manifest.

SRI AUROBINDO: He puts a big *if* and says that if it is so England will win.

S: Yes, he says that every drop of his blood says this. His English blood!

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, in spite of his being a sannyasi, his blood is English. At this moment all English men will feel like that. Even Arjava who cavilled at the English would have felt so. By soul-purpose Krishnaprem means perhaps some higher values. But standing for higher values doesn't make for victory. Look at Poland and Czechoslovakia. Perhaps you may say Poland made many mistakes, but wasn't Czechoslovakia absolutely blameless?

S: Japan has openly declared now her aim and policy about Indochina, the Dutch East Indies and the South Sea Islands.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but let China be settled first, though there is no sign of settling.... These Russians are the most brazen-faced people. Have you seen Molotov's speech?

P: No.

SRI AUROBINDO: He says America is trying to be imperialist in the Western

Hemisphere. That is the move he sees behind the Pan-American conference (regarding the transfer of American territories to the Western Powers). And Russia is going to take steps against America and England's illegal action in freezing the Baltic States' finance. What can she do against America?

N: To these Russians everybody is imperialist except themselves and their grabbing of the Baltic States is for self-protection! The world is not such a fool, as to believe that.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is meant for the Communists who will believe everything from Russia.

AUGUST 4, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO (*addressing P*): The death-sentence has been passed on De Gaulle.

P: Yes and he has given a reply.

SRI AUROBINDO: Has he? What does he say?

P: He says the Pétain Government is dictated to by Germany. At the end of the war he will appeal to the Public to give their verdict. ...Rumania is now turning away from the Axis—perhaps wants to go to Russia.

N: What is the use if Hitler divides and gives away Rumania to other powers?

SRI AUROBINDO: Rumania's claim on Transylvania is right because the majority of people there are Rumanians and they don't want to go to Hungary. Already their peasant leader is organising resistance against any such move.

P: This is all due to their separate policy. If they had made the *entente* together, these things wouldn't have happened.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, then their *entente* would have been formidable. Turkey tried her best for it. Turkey, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia are fighting races; Armenia and Greece are not.

EVENING

P (*after starting a talk on art and on Kumarswamy's criticism on art and saying that he had written very well*): He says the artist expresses his individuality in his art.

SRI AUROBINDO: Individuality? Who has done that? Does he mention any name? Michelangelo?

P: No, he means the ego perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO. The ego! that is different. But an artist doesn't express individuality. I don't think Kumarswamy is right there. A poet may do that. If you speak of individual tendencies it is different. An artist may have theories and ideas about art but he does not express his individuality. In Modern Art, the artist figures much, while in old Indian art he didn't: he remained behind.

NIRODBARAN



## TWO VISIONS OF CHAMPAKLAL

I

AT DARBAR HALL, HYDERABAD,  
DURING THE INSTALLATION OF SRI AUROBINDO'S RELICS ON  
FEBRUARY 10, 1979

I WAS sitting near brother Channa Reddy. A little later, when I looked at him, I saw his figure as very hazy. I saw him going in order to give a speech but could not see him clearly. I heard his first two or three sentences only. I could not understand what was happening in me. Generally I close my eyes. When I close my eyes, I feel very nice, going to the other worlds. That is why, very often, there is a tendency in me to keep my eyes closed.

But this time I felt very uneasy as I saw everything dark. The whole universe appeared to be covered with something almost tar-black in which many people including children were floating. Some persons were coming out and going back again in that stuff as if they were very happy there. This continued for some time. Then I saw a huge ball covering the whole universe. It was dark red in colour—and water of the same colour was pouring from above like a big waterfall. I use the word 'waterfall'—but there are no words to describe what I saw—so I say 'waterfall' as the nearest substitute. Gradually its colour was becoming less and less dark till it became very light. Just as the water changed its colour, simultaneously the colour of the huge ball also changed. And, one after another, I saw all the colours of a rainbow, then silver and finally gold. What I saw—this change of various colours—is very, very difficult to express in words.

The water was passing through the huge ball and going farther and farther, covering everything. It was so beautiful!—this transparent golden water above the huge ball. Then at a very very great height, a figure was there. I cannot describe this figure, but can only say that both his hands were spread wide in a blessing posture. It looked as if all this golden water was coming from all over his body. My whole being was filled with gratitude. With folded hands, I bowed. I was in an indescribable condition.

2

Some people were standing in the middle of a vast open space. Some arrows were going towards them but I could not make out from where the arrows came. The wonder was that the arrows, as soon as they approached these persons, turned into beautiful flowers which were of several varieties—some of them never seen before. They spread their sweet beautiful fragrance everywhere.

Around the persons was formed a huge mountain of flowers. All the persons who were standing there began to come up. The mountain of flowers disappeared and in

its place was found a big lake with various kinds of flowers floating on it. Those people were moving around in the water. At first I saw only their heads. Gradually the other parts of their bodies were also seen. Then I saw the flowers going inside the different parts of their bodies, after which they began to walk on the water just as we walk on the ground. Now they did not move round and round as before, but were going straight—far and far away.

The atmosphere was full of a wonderful sweet fragrance such as I had never experienced before. I took a long breath and the Vision disappeared. I remained in that atmosphere for some time.

*(Translated by Pujalal from the original Gujarati)*

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## CRUMBLING ROCKS

O SWAN flying over the marshes,  
 We hear you!  
 Words and wordiness are wearily dead,  
 Dead dogma for us,  
 All the church bells are dying.  
 Beauty of form and formalities,  
 Too long repeated:  
 Clichés creeping about like clothes-moths,  
 Meaningless mumblings  
 And simpering sweetness;  
 Coughing and clearing the throat  
 For self-conscious attention.  
 Sleeping and sighing and  
 Scrambling for money.  
 O Swan flying over the marshes,  
 Where are you?  
 The storm winds are rising,  
 Crashing and crumbling rocks,  
 Trees stirring and falling,  
 Suffering and Life are behind you,  
 A menacing silence is coming,  
 O Swan flying over the marshes,  
 We await you!

MAUD KENNEDY

# OUR LIGHT AND DELIGHT

## RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of March 1979)

17

### The Mother and the Beings of the Vital Plane

THE Mother and Sri Aurobindo did not work only on the physical plane. Behind the physical are subtle realms with influences good, bad and indifferent. The Victory Day of 24 November 1926 brought the Overmind Gods into direct alliance with our Purush's purpose of earth-transformation and rendered more effective their fight with the occult Evil that acts upon earth from its headquarters on the vital plane either directly or through human beings open to it.

The Overmind dynamism, preliminary to the Supermind power which was the ultimate aim, came into repeated use during the Second World War. This war brought into play two figures whom Sri Aurobindo and the Mother recognised as tending into the physical plane the occult Evil at its most dangerous. Hitler was seen as possessed by the Rakshasa-aspect of that Evil. The Rakshasa is a devouring "Giant" who openly declares his enormous greed and makes no secret of his ambition to dominate the world with a master-race of ruthless henchmen. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is a glaringly open manifesto of such greed and ambition. In Stalin Sri Aurobindo and the Mother discerned a phenomenon not merely of possession but of incarnation, a vital being born in a human form and not just employing that form as its medium—here was the Asura-aspect. The Asura is an all-gripping "Titan" who is even more destructive than a "Giant" but with a cold cunning intelligence which conceals its subversive policy under a mask of high ideals like economic equality and social classlessness. Stalin's pronouncements are all couched in noble-sounding terms borrowed from Marx and Lenin but directed to nefarious ends.

There are several other orders of vital beings bent on harm—like those who bear the Pisacha-aspect. The Pishacha is the "Demon" obsessed with a defiling and mutilating mania: he is utter foulness and ugliness personified. The Pisacha always puts himself slavishly at the service of the Rakshasa and Asura.

The characteristic mark of all these denizens of the vital plane is that the force they express is "typal" and not, like the earth's, "evolutionary". The sign of a typical force is a drive towards mechanical uniformity, rigid regimentation, strict conformity to one type alone—a drive contrary to the many-sided, flexible and free movement of the evolving human soul striving, by means of trial, error, self-correction and through a thousand truths and innumerable impulses, to live and let live more and more abundantly, more and more profoundly.

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo considered the Second World War as their own war because of Hitler's typical tyranny which, if successful, would have blocked their work of spiritual evolution. Sri Aurobindo kept in close touch with every development by means of a radio fixed in his room by Pavitra. Many of us understand that he intervened at various turning-points. But not many realise a most crucial intervention by the Mother. I came to know of it from private sources nearly twenty years ago, directly from Udar and indirectly through André. We may look upon it as based on a prophecy Sri Aurobindo had made at the end of his poem "The Dwarf Napoleon".

This poem ridiculed Hitler's pretensions to equal "the immense colossus of the past" who had arisen as a master-militarist to save the results of that progressive uprising, the French Revolution, from being submerged by the old-world powers ranged against it in all Europe outside France. Indeed, Napoleon was an autocrat, but Sri Aurobindo always pictured him paradoxically as a despotic defender of democracy. As the poem puts it:

A movement of enormous depth and scope  
He seized and gave cohesion to its hope

Far other was Hitler, yet "a mighty Force" had taken hold of him

In his high villa on the fatal hill  
Alone he listens to that sovereign Voice,  
Dictator of his action's sudden choice,  
The tiger leap of a demoniac skill.

And Sri Aurobindo concludes.

Thus driven he must stride on conquering all,  
Threatening and clamouring, brutal, invincible,  
Until he meets upon his storm-swept road  
A greater devil—or thunderstroke of God.

This prophecy was penned in October 1939, when Hitler and Stalin had already signed a pact of non-aggression. Thus Stalin, the "greater devil", seemed close-linked to the lesser—and against them both there could be only God's thunderstroke preparing in the dim future. But within two years—to be precise, on 22 June 1941—the possibility of Sri Aurobindo's prophetic words coming true loomed up: Hitler attacked Russia. Strangely enough, Stalin was caught somewhat on the wrong foot and there were German victories at the start. But "the Man of Steel" soon showed his diabolic superiority, and after the decisive blow at Stalingrad in 1942 on 25 November (Amal Kiran's thirty-eighth birthday, by the way!), the lesser devil was critically weakened. Spiritual-minded historians may surmise that Sri Aurobindo,

especially since Russia was now automatically allied to Churchill's England and Roosevelt's America, backed with his Overmind puissance the greater devil temporarily in order to smash Hitler who was at that time the bigger immediate menace to civilisation. But would any of them guess that the folly Hitler committed of turning upon Stalin and drawing the more heinous devilry against himself had the Mother's occult goad behind it?

The Mother knew exactly what Vital Being was egging Hitler on. She has dubbed him "The Lord of Falsehood", a Rakshasa and Asura in one, as it were, who arrogates to himself the title: "The Lord of the Nations." Finding Hitler going from strength to strength, she resolved to imitate the special form in which the Lord of Falsehood always appeared to him at his secret headquarters in the Bavarian Alps and inspired him to fantastic actions which yet proved triumphant. He used to come to Hitler clad in a silver cuirass and with a silver helmet from which a plume-like flame shot forth. Taking the same form in her subtle body and exteriorising her consciousness, the Mother went to the Führer and commanded him to launch on the most fantastic-seeming action of all: an attack on Stalin's Russia, his publicly avowed ally Hitler, as usual, accepted the order implicitly. In view of the unexpected brilliant successes in the past, there was no question now of his doubting the new mandate delivered out of the same flashing presence by the "sovereign Voice". His resolve to unleash a sudden onslaught on his former partner was unbreakably set.

The Mother, on her way back from him, met the real Lord of Falsehood proceeding towards the Führer's "bunk" at Berchtesgaden. He was astonished to see his own special form face to face with him. He realised what must have happened. He hurried to Hitler to contradict what had been commanded. But Hitler remained unconvinced and carried out the attack. Secretly he had himself wished to destroy Communist Russia and, when that long-cherished yet hitherto checked dream, which had been outlined in his *Mein Kampf*, was given so glorious a push forward, he could not help thinking that the second appearance of the guiding spirit was some piece of fraud.

As Sri Aurobindo had predicted, the greater devil brought about the lesser's downfall, but the prediction now revealed an unsuspected significance. At first sight Sri Aurobindo's words would seem to posit two alternatives as responsible in the future for the downfall: either an encounter by Hitler with a more diabolical darkness than his own or else a terrific bolt from the Divine's blue. Now the dividing "or" turned out to imply not a pair of different destructive forces but simply two different names for one and the same Mahakali, for the greater devil was pulled into action willynilly by the hands of the Divine. The Mother, by a bold piece of what we may call a divine outdevilling of the super-devil, the Lord of Falsehood, created directly a headlong clash between the two arch-enemies of Light, and managed to make this very clash a thunderstroke of God.

Not every non-evolutionary force from the occult planes is evil. One embodied typical being, who was neither Titan nor Giant nor Demon, came into touch with me from very nearly the beginning of my stay in the Ashram.

It was a young French girl, the eldest child of a highly cultured lady who belonged to a one-time ruling family in Pondicherry but who became a disciple of the Mother although she was not technically an Ashramite. She had her own house in the town and lived there with her husband, three other daughters and a son. This lady was our tutor in French and sometimes when she could not come to teach us her eldest daughter took her place. This girl was seventeen at the time, a very clever person of marked talent and an extraordinary fascination, pretty in an unusual way which mostly affected one through her eyes. She had been regarded as dead at birth but seemed suddenly to come alive, a phenomenon characteristic of cases where a being of some other plane than the earth, most often the Vital Plane, takes hold of an infant body.

The Mother, after seeing her as a young girl, confided to her parents that this child of theirs was not human but a spirit from the world of fairies who had wanted to come into contact with the Mother and so had entered a family which was likely to get associated with her. As normal with such entrants, this one had a tremendous fund of energy and a conquering drive of will, added to her sharp intelligence and charming personality. I was nearly ten years older than she and came to be trusted by her. All her difficulties she used to put before me and she was eager to learn whatever I had to teach her. When she became engaged to a tall Apollo of a Swede, she would invite me in the mornings to talk to her on Ibsen or Tolstoy or some other literary celebrity and she would in the evenings amaze her fiancé with her versatile knowledge.

Inhabiting a human body she could not escape altogether "the thousand natural shocks the flesh is heir to" and, in spite of her brilliant gifts and natural force and spell-binding beauty, she suffered a good deal. Her marriage was on the rocks after ten years and fate separated her from all her three children. From Europe where she had made her life she returned to Pondicherry and spent her last years here, resuming her old friendship with me and her physical proximity to the Mother. These years were rather unhappy and troubled, but she never lost her energy and *esprit*. Every now and again one could feel something strange in her. Especially on certain evenings she would carry an atmosphere that appeared to be filled with unknown influences. My personal editorial office was a flat adjoining the one in which she and her old mother lived. So I had ample opportunity to observe her in all her moods.

One evening she called me and said: "Amal, I feel that I shall die in a week." I laughed off the idea and told her that she had to live for a decade after I was gone. "Please hold my hand for a while," she begged. I did so and cracked some jokes and she was in a better humour when I left. Almost exactly after a week a servant of hers came to my room at about 8 p.m. to say that she was unwell. I left my typing and went to see her. She was in a doze. Knowing that she used to drink beer, I thought

she had slightly overdone it and was asleep. I went back to my work. An hour later I was summoned once more. She was still unconscious but was now throwing up watery stuff at intervals. I sent for a doctor who had his residence opposite hers. He was out. I sent for her family doctor. He was not in Pondicherry. I sent to the hospital for a doctor. The reply came that nobody from there could come but an ambulance could be sent. The state of my friend was getting worse: there was breathing difficulty. I asked the ambulance to be sent. A minute before the vehicle stopped at the door my friend ceased to breathe. A few seconds later her heart failed. I did whatever I could to resuscitate her. All in vain. The ambulance men came in with a stretcher. They could give no help. I insisted that she be taken to the hospital. I accompanied her. It was nearly eleven at night. At the hospital I called the doctor in charge to come into the van and examine her. He tried all the possible tests and declared her stone dead. I took her back home.

News was sent to a friend of the family, a Swiss sadhika named Padma. Early next morning she and I went up to see the Mother. I told the Mother the whole story and conveyed the message of my friend's mamma that she wanted her daughter's body to be taken care of by the Ashram and carried by the Ashram people in a coffin to the family's vault. Later in the day the Mother communicated to the shocked old lady that her daughter had returned to her own world and was having a rest which she had badly needed.

Her younger sister—another beauty but with a physical appeal different from the strange "vital" attraction of the dead woman—flew from France and made a fairly long stay in Pondicherry. A fortnight after her arrival, strange things began to happen in the house. Suddenly a gust of wind would be felt in a closed room or a light touch brush one's arm or an oil-lamp inexplicably go out and just as mysteriously re-ignite. The phenomena were reported to the Mother. She sent word that nobody should get perturbed, for the being that had left its human body was playing practical jokes and having a bit of fun at the expense of its erstwhile family.

The family did not seem to miss their departed member much. She had not been very popular with most of them: she generally had the better of everybody with either her glamour or her brains. But the poor of her acquaintance felt a void in their hearts, for she had been a very sympathetic and generous person with them. She was also almost madly fond of children—any child, rich or poor, white or coloured, would be sure of being carried along in her arms and caressed and given sweets. Interestingly, these two traits go well with what popular tradition suggests by that term in common usage: "fairly godmother."

After my friend's death I would wait till a late hour night after night to glimpse an apparition of her. As she had been very close to me, I thought she might visit me. But I never saw her "ghost". The strange memory of her, however, keeps her alive before my eyes: she was the most striking woman I have known because really she was no woman at all.

A case of possession by a hostile and not a friendly vital force was enacted under my eyes in the early days of the Ashram. A fellow-sadhak and a personal friend was a young Indian, an Oxford-educated free-minded "moderner" who yet spontaneously took to Yoga and developed into a fine devotee. Suddenly he changed to an aggressive type, showing all the signs of an old-world religious fanaticism.

The altered attitude first betrayed its symptoms in the way he dealt with the Master's handwritten corrections of the Jnana-Yoga chapters of *The Synthesis of Yoga* as they had appeared in his monthly *Arya* of 1914-1921. He had promised to type out the new matter together with the old and pass everything back to Sri Aurobindo. Instead of doing this, he made a present of the original corrected pages to the spies of the British Government who in plain clothes were always hovering around the Ashram houses and seeking evidence to prove that Sri Aurobindo had not yet abandoned his political activity but was secretly continuing it.

The young man's rebellion came to a head one morning when he rushed up to the door leading to the Mother's interview-room. Dilip Kumar Roy was with her. He came to the door to answer the loud knockings. As soon as he opened it, the rebel stepped in. Dilip, having a bulky body, served as a good buffer between the Mother and the intruder, but his stalling tactics by means of what he jokingly dubbed "brute strength" were not conclusively successful. The intruder was attempting to push past him. The Mother, who had come up behind Dilip, saw the situation worsening and shouted: "Purani! Purani!" Purani had his room nearby downstairs. He was the most fiery inmate of the Ashram. He had been famous as one of the inspirers of young Gujarat in the Nationalist struggle against British domination, an expert wrestler, a fearless fighter, an all-round heroic personality. I remember Amrita telling me: "Purani has a gigantic vital being, something approaching the Mother's." He had also some occult powers. When he ran up in answer to the Mother's call, he grabbed the intruder by the arm and tried to pull him downstairs. The latter clutched whatever was available and resisted Purani. Purani told me that the fellow had stood his ground and stuck to the door as if with superhuman strength, the kind of capacity that comes to possessed persons. With jerk after jerk Purani loosened his opponent's hold and moved him from the top of the staircase and finally with one terrific pull dragged him scurrying non-stop down the steps right to the bottom on the ground floor. There he challenged him: "Do you want a fight? I am ready." The opponent knew that a vital energy greater than the one which had entered into him was pitted against it. Without a word he turned away and disappeared. Shortly afterwards he ran off from the Ashram and became a sort of wandering fakir.

Almost two decades later he returned for a while. The Mother allowed him to get free food in the Ashram's Dining Hall but he had to have his quarters outside. She could not forget his early good days of devotion when he had made an offering of his money to the Ashram.



Apropos of occult forces and entities, I may set on record two extraordinary phenomena. To one of them not only I but Sehra, her sister Mina and a Goan servant-girl of ours can testify. I say "extraordinary", not "unprecedented". In fact, it was paralleled by a series of happenings to which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as well as Amrita and some others had been witness. We have all heard of how stones mysteriously started falling inside the "Old Guest House" (41, later 11, rue François Martin) in the winter of 1921, about a year and a half after the Mother had returned for good to Pondicherry. On Sri Aurobindo's advice she had taken up quarters in this building where he was himself residing. The strange story as told in Sri Aurobindo's own words is included in Dilip Kumar Roy's *Among the Great* and the Mother has recollected it in her *Questions and Answers*. The phenomenon I am going to describe took place in the first house I occupied—13 rue Ananda Rangapillai—on my arrival in Pondicherry in 1954 for permanent residence. Sehra and I were staying downstairs and Mina in a room upstairs.

One night a brick-piece came crashing against Mina's door. The next day a similar object struck against a door on our ground floor. Stray pieces kept coming for a few more days. On the fourth day while Sehra was working in our garden in the early morning, a number of such objects began falling around her, though not with any murderous speed. When I came back from the Balcony Darshan she told me of the perplexing incident. The brick-pieces fell at several other times and we thought that somebody was doing mischief from the terrace of a house across the side-street, where some building job was in progress. I spoke to Kameshwar who was the Mother's man for all relations with the police. He came to our house and looked at the pieces. We were asked to wait a little before bringing the police upon the scene.

The same night we arranged a secret watch on the veranda of our first floor. From our hiding-places we were keeping an eye on the empty opposite terrace. Two hours passed and nothing happened. When we were on the point of turning in, a brick-piece flew at a terrific velocity from an unknown direction and broke into fragments against the outside wall of one of the rooms. The next day Sehra took a few samples of the missiles to the Mother and spoke to her about them. The Mother asked if we had lately dismissed a servant. She recalled how Datta had done the same in 1921 and stones had fallen within the house: the dismissed cook had employed a black-magician to harass Datta and the other inmates. She also inquired whether there was a young person of puberty-age at our place, for such a person could serve as a medium for the occult force exercised. We had dismissed a servant but we had no adolescent residing with us. Then she said: "You must see whether on any part of the house cryptic signs have been chalked. If they are there, rub them off. If they are not there, the phenomenon is directly an occult one—beings of the Vital Plane are amusing themselves at your expense with the help of available bricks in the neighbourhood. I strongly suspect that they are responsible. But, if they are, I will take action at once."

We searched for cryptic signs. None could be discovered. The Mother was right. For, from that day no brick-pieces came furiously flying or slowly dropping.

Peace was completely restored. Kameshwar was told not to bother the police. The Mother had turned off the invisible culprits by her own invisible means.

The second extraordinary phenomenon is very recent. The time was a little after 2 a.m. on 19 December 1978. I happened to be awake in bed. In the bed across the room Sehra started moaning very piteously. I thought she was doing so in sleep, as on some occasions she had done during a nightmare. As she went on moaning, I spoke loudly to her and then got up and touched her so as to rouse her from sleep.

She answered: "Someone has attacked me with a stick and beaten me on my head." I said: "It's only a bad dream. Don't worry." But she complained of severe pain in the head and shouted to our servant Lakshmi who was sleeping in the next room. I said: "There is no need to wake her. Tell me what you want." She went on shouting for Lakshmi. I called out also and Lakshmi came in.

Before this I switched on the light. When Lakshmi came, I pulled back from Sehra's head the counterpane which had been over it. The sight before our eyes was horrible. Above the upper ridge of the left eye there was a huge ugly lump and a swelling along the bone between the eye and the ear. In the middle of the lump was a point where the skin seemed slightly abraded: it was a reddish spot as if the stroke of the stick had especially fallen there.

What we saw was unbelievable. How could a beating received on the head in a dream have such a strong physical effect? I have read accounts in journals of occultism in which people getting hurt in dreams showed visible bodily marks. The Mother also has in one place spoken of the body showing signs of mishaps experienced in a dream. But never had I witnessed such a consequence and never could I have imagined that so concrete and severe an injury to the body might appear as the result of a nightmare.

If I had not been absolutely sure that Sehra had not got up and fallen somewhere, I would not have believed a nightmare had hurt her so grievously. But here was no room for doubt. She had not got up at all after she had been to the bathroom just before retiring at about 10.30 p.m. on the night of the 18th. Besides, if she had fallen in the bathroom or on the way to it or back from it she would have cried out from that place and not from under her counterpane in bed. I could at once have known—and so would Lakshmi or her daughter who early that night had been sleepless and later asserted that she had not heard Sehra go to the bathroom any time after 10.30 or so. Again, our bathroom door creaks very loudly whenever opened or closed and is likely to wake up anyone who is not too heavy a sleeper. It is quite certain from my own evidence as well as from that of others that the terrible hurt was received during a nightmare.

Sehra asked Lakshmi to apply lightly a balm to the hurt area. She also asked for water to drink. The great pain continued for some time, accompanied by a splitting headache. We did our best to make her comfortable. I sat by her, soothing her and invoking the Mother's help. Gradually she fell asleep.

At about 3.15 she woke up, wanting to go to the bathroom. I took her there. When she saw her face in the mirror she was amazed at the gravity of the hurt.

I brought her back to bed and she slept up to 6.30 in the morning.

While drinking her coffee she recalled that she had started dreaming of going to meet the Mother. Before she could proceed she was crossed by some being and dealt a blow with a stick. The blow was aimed at her head and meant to break it. Somehow it was diverted to the area of the left eye and it landed on the temple above it.

The enormous swelling subsided just a little during the day by getting spread along the temple, but the entire part round the eye became a deep blackish red and the skin below the eye was puffed up. (It took Sehra nearly seven weeks to get back to normal.)

The whole event proves how dangerously one can be attacked by a hostile force in one's sleep. One must always call in the Mother's protection and be on guard even in a dream. People have got up with pain in some parts of the body—*e.g.* the abdomen—after a nightmare. I was myself once attacked during one of my out-of-the-body rambles several years ago and the sensation was as if the spine had been smashed. But there was no physical injury left. Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri* has written of how a spiritual worker in the subtle world

Assaults of Hell endured and Titan strokes  
And bore the fierce inner wounds that are slow to heal.

But I think that in the Ashram's history the case I have reported is the first in which a misadventure in the dream-state got translated so substantially in the body.

I may end by striking a spiritually optimistic note. When I had an occasion to relate the incident to Huta, she suddenly lighted upon an implication I had not guessed. I had seen only the frightful possibility of hostile blows having more and more gross-physical consequences. I had not let my mind appraise all-round the critical point at which the workings behind the scene might have arrived. But she exclaimed: "What has happened shows that the Divine Force also can now have a direct effect upon the body. If the dark powers have this new possibility, the inner Light and the higher Consciousness can just as well emerge into the body with concrete changes in it if we are truly receptive!"

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN

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## MUSIC AS A COSMIC AND SPIRITUAL POWER

THE material world is essentially a picture of the formative realm of Spirit. "Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis,"<sup>1</sup> wrote Goethe. Our earth plane is of the lowest, slowest and densest frequency and is interpenetrated by planes of higher frequency up to the spheres of spiritual light. Music in its archetypal form is part of the workings of the Logos, the creative Divine Imagining. Everything on our earth plane is formed out of spirit. First it existed in Divine Idea; then in celestial rhythm, colour and sound until, passing down through the ethers, it can be materialised on the earth plane. In this sense everything is music. The human organism itself is made up of musical relationship and harmonies, as was well known by Renaissance architects. Music is the soul-stuff of the Universe and on higher planes it is inseparable from colour.

The great composers are to be seen as channels for this free formative music to enter the earth plane. They did not so much *invent* their symphonies as record them. They 'found out beautiful tunes'. I quote Ernest Newman on the "Eroica", from *The Unconscious Beethoven*:

"Here, more than anywhere else, do we get that curious feeling that in his greatest works Beethoven was 'possessed'—the mere human instrument through which a vast musical design realized itself in all its marvellous logic ... We have the conviction that his mind did not proceed from the particular to the whole, but began, in some curious way, with the whole and then worked back to the particular.... The long and painful search for the themes was simply an effort, not to find workable atoms out of which he could construct a musical edifice according to the conventions of symphonic form, but to reduce an already existing nebula, in which that edifice was implicit, to atoms, and then, by the orderly arrangement of these atoms, to make the implicit explicit."

Mozart records that he would hear a whole symphony as a single form in an instant of time. Cyril Scott in his little book *Music, Its Secret Influence Through The Ages* contends that the composers are to be seen as channels for soul-formative power. They all seem to appear two generations *before* the corresponding psychological developments in society. They are not so much reflectors of society as inaugurators of new soul quality. They actually make the psychology of the coming age. They are handling the soul stuff of the world. Steiner as mystic describes the plane of the archetypes. It is a realm of creative being, where beings of sound and colour and light are perpetually weaving and forming and experimenting in new patterns, any of which can be selected to be materialised into the forms in the material plane. Thus behind every form of plant, animal or crystal we can see the weaving forces of creative spirit and, conversely, realise that a sphere of Divine Music interpenetrates the cosmos on an exalted frequency. Music pre-exists, and the composer is one so constituted in his earth incarnation that he can reflect it and shape it creatively. We know well that music and architecture are closely linked. On the heavenly plane souls released from

<sup>1</sup> "All things impermanent are symbols only"

limitations find themselves in temple structures of light which are also formed of living music. It is these which are apprehended and in some sense experienced by architects and reflected in shadow form into man's earthly temples. We are in these realms in meditation and in sleep and they will therefore colour our creation on the earth plane.

Here I wish to speak about the phenomenon of Sir Donald Tovey. It was said humbly when he left Oxford after reading Classics that he could write down from memory every note that Bach and Beethoven had ever written. In later life he seemed to be able to read all Western music from the earliest plain-song to the music of his own time, and once read it was remembered. His pupils could never find a work he did not know, and in such detail that he could tell them they should have a sharp in the 72. If you told him you knew a work, his answer was "Can you write it down?" He would. Here we are simply up against a phenomenon. It is easy to say Tovey had a photographic brain. This materialistic explanation is not good enough. He had not in his life to turn the pages of every work of music written since 1300, let alone read them. Surely we must feel that in him is a faculty which supervenes on our normal powers of study. He could somehow apprehend all music direct. Somehow, as we say, he *was* all music.

We suggest that Donald Tovey stands before us as a phenomenon inexplicable in normal mechanistic way. In some way beyond our comprehension he is the incarnation of an exalted being who is one with the whole sphere of music. He *is* the music. Imagine an archangelical being, close to the Logos, identified with the sources of music who chooses to enter an earth body. He would never have to *learn* a work. He could simply direct his attention to that part of his own great being and consciousness which *was* the symphony and it would pour through him afresh in conscious knowledge. Every time he would tap the symphony afresh at its source, not digging it out of his memory.

Tovey must be such a being. Many of the wonderful stories about him suggest how ill-adjusted he was to ordinary life. It is as if he hardly belonged to our sphere. We know that every human thought, feeling or will impulse is impressed indelibly on the Akashic Record, that celestial 'tape recorder' of spiritual substance surrounding the earth plane. Thus each symphony once realised and recorded is available for re-experience by everyone who knows how to tune in to it. The great composers are the channels for recording eternal musical form in the earth vibration. Tovey may be an example of the yet more exalted being who is the total sphere of music. His incarnation at the turn of the century is significant.

Steiner came then to show a new way of lifting human thinking into the whole of knowledge. His thinking is also inexplicable on a mechanistic level. He showed a series of lectures on so many different subjects, that the human faculties of clear thinking, once lifted beyond the limitation of the senses, could become so one with the Thought Processes of the World that there were no limits to knowledge. In like manner Tovey showed that the entire framework of music could be available to pour

afresh through one human consciousness.

Now consider the significance of all this for the New Age which is breaking upon us. The urgent need is that man should awaken to the fact that matter is interpenetrated by Spirit, that the higher worlds exist. Man in the 19th and 20th centuries has gone through the stage of being so closely identified with the material world and the five senses that he loses all knowledge of higher worlds and even denies the existence of the Divine. This is of course a critical stage in the evolution of consciousness since, through this separation from his Divine Source, he attains freedom. Then in full consciousness he may now 'return to his Father'.

Here the concept of Teilhard de Chardin is magnificent. The 'noosphere', having enveloped the earth and discovered its unity, now begins, particle by particle, soul by soul, the triumphant surge towards unity with the Divine Source, 'homing' at last on the Omega Point, which is, of course, the Christ Being. It is in precisely these years that this process is being consummated. A great acceleration is taking place. Consciousness is being raised. A realm of higher frequency is impinging upon our human awareness. The spiritual world is 'raising the pressure', turning on the heat. Evidence pours in from all parts of the world and from all religions suggesting that some sort of Advent is imminent. Many believe that a heightening of consciousness is likely to manifest in the near future. Such an event would be immensely disturbing and disruptive!

Those who have no recognition of spiritual reality would feel they were going mad and be bewildered. Those who knew would recognise in it the coming of the Christ. The world situation is so critical and man has, through his ignorance, brought the planet so near to disaster, that the realms of spirit are watching and preparing to intervene, in ways which, however, will not interfere with freedom. Great soul-changes may be expected. In the plane beyond bodily limitation, beyond so called 'death', is truly a society, a civilization, a culture based on creativity, love and affinity, not on acquisitiveness. Communications show that groups of soul-entities are striving to work with and through man. We know, for example, of the so called "Myers Group" of scientists who are working for a break-through so that their higher knowledge may be received into the thinking of scientists on our plane. Once this was achieved the importance for the salvation of man would be enormous. Doctors who have passed over are also grouping to help in healing. So also with music. There must be groups on the higher plane working to release the formative power of music into our consciousness. As the soul-stuff of the Universe, a flood of music rightly used would break up and disperse false thought-forms and lift the spirit of man. In the New Age and in the apocalyptic changes which are upon us the power of music is absolutely primary. It will be a creative bridge towards understanding of spiritual reality and of lifting human consciousness. Thus we must expect that the great souls who were the composers would be working together as another of these soul-groups, seeking to make their break-through as part of the cosmic plan for the redemption of mankind.

## WHAT REMAINS?

AND what remains,  
The roads all run,  
When all the many songs  
Are sung,  
And all our knowledge  
Amounts to none?

And what remains  
Of all our days,  
All our hopes  
And passion's blaze,  
Of loved ones dear  
Once held so near  
Before we knew  
The valley's fear?  
And what remains  
This afternoon,  
This Summer late  
In Boston town,  
Among the bricks  
And dying slate,  
And youth fled  
All around,  
For the years  
Have passed  
And nothing has been found,  
The years ungrasped?  
And the many lives outlived?

O what remains  
Of form, of name?  
And silently was heard an answer:  
"A deathless growing flame."

ROGER HARRIS

# TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

*(Continued from the issue of March 1979)*

## Chapter V

### The Descent into the Inconscient

6 (*Contd.*)

“To realise the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo the control of one’s body is a first indispensable step. Those who despise physical activities are people who won’t be able to take a single step on the path of the integral yoga, unless they first get rid of their contempt. The control of the body under all its forms is an indispensable basis. A body which governs you is an enemy. It is the enlightened will in the mind which must govern the body and not the body which should impose its law on the mind. When one knows that a thing is bad, one must be capable of not doing it. When one wants a thing to be realised, one must be able to do it and must not at every step be stopped by one’s inability or ill-will or through the body’s lack of collaboration. For that, one must follow a physical discipline and become a master of his house.”<sup>1</sup>

On the day I am at my best, the body even while running appears light as paper and, except for the frontal portions of the soles which come in touch with the ground, there hardly remains the sense of a body. It was only a 100 or 200 metres at the utmost that I could go on running without getting out of breath. This sort of thing first happened in 1953, about which I have to say something enthralling.

When I joined the playground activities, I felt so easily fatigued that on return home I had to fall flat in bed. The one saving point was the immediate action of the Mother’s Force. A silent call from the body and the response was invariably there.

Since May 1978 I have been passing, in a way, through a dry period. No action of the Mother’s Force, no descent into the lower parts regularly, yet an hour spent in body-building does not produce any unfavourable reaction nor make me feel exhausted. The limbs seldom tend to feel tired and I have not to drop into my bed.

Asked how one can control or prevent the process of disintegration, the Mother made the answer:

“By carefully maintaining the physical balance.”

I try hard not to break the regularity of my physical activities. On November 27, 1978 I had to pass the whole day as if half-dead. Departmental work must not suffer, so I had to drag on. It was unthinkable to go in for any kind of exercise. Someone seated within said in a persuasive tone: “Why not try for five minutes?” My astonishment knew no bounds when with a sudden warming up all sense of lethargy

<sup>1</sup> *Questions and Answers* (1958), p 71



disappeared and I spent one full hour in exercise. The body felt so replenished and refreshed that it did not feel it was exerting itself. Bodily movements went on by themselves, by force of habit, I suppose. Such things no more appear abnormal. The cells know how to organise themselves, what to accept and what not.

Yet another event. On the eve of the November Darshan, 1978, I watched with wonder my unwrinkled face, cheeks with the glow of health on them, the champakke colour of my skin, the youthful appearance of the body full of vigour and spirit. Inwardly also I felt young. The physique put on a muscular shape to such an extent that I looked as I used to do in my youth. But the very next day I looked dull and dry and dark-skinned, with sunken cheeks as never before! The change for the better has been very slow.

This contrast, this change from the best to the worst and *vice versa*, drove me to the irresistible conclusion that something unimaginable was in the making in the system.

Physical exercise proved a godsend to me. It was Divine Grace that pushed me to the venture. Not even once during my school-days did it ever occur to me to take to any kind of sports. The one thing in which I took some interest was to watch football matches.

The year 1949 may be termed the year of excitement in the life of the Ashram; the year when even those who had never stepped out of the Ashram Gate for twenty long years felt drawn to enlist themselves for physical education. As elderly people joined one by one, the event became the talk of the day. More exciting scenes were witnessed by grown-up girls of aristocratic families when they joined the March Past in shirts and shorts. Now playground activities have grown so natural, such a part and parcel of the Ashram life, that we cannot envisage what thrill they produced when they were first introduced by the Mother—the Architect of our spiritual destiny. Their inner import will be assessed with the passing of time.

It was the guiding light of the Divine which prompted me to choose a path of which I could not think even in dreams. I was chronically ill, so how could I think of participating in athletics? I did not even make a note of the schedule as to when I should enlist myself. But look at the working of the Mother's Grace. Incidentally, Sukhvīr—who was the talk of the day at the time because of his ranking first in the 5,000-metre-walking almost every time—caught hold of my hand and got my name enrolled in three items, and to this like an innocent child my mind gave a silent consent. From then onward daily I began to devote all my morning hours to athletics. Back home, on reclining for relaxation, the limbs were gripped by the Mother's Force; in no time, the lost energy was recovered, increasing my capability a bit more, to lack more courage to improve my lot. I found more energy to do my day's work as well.

Mine was a bulky, flabby body weighing 79 kg. (Now I have brought it to 63.) Running even a furlong was for me a tough job, yet I stood first both in running and hammer throw" and got a third place in "walking". (Pavitra was slim and swift, so

he easily topped the list.) That was a wonder of wonders in my life. What prompts me to say so?

I had been suffering from rheumatism right from the year 1934 and it had continued for decades. It never allowed me any respite from pain for even a week at a stretch, but I fought hard and seldom allowed myself to be in bed (except in 1958). Was it not sheer grace of the Mother that saved me from being reduced to an invalid, pitiously raising a cry to the Lord of Death to come to my rescue?

There was a time in my life when it was impossible for me to lift even a bucket of water. On my writing to the Mother, "I have given the best part of my life to the Divine. Am I destined to be an invalid?", she replied: "Keep faith. There is nothing impossible for the Divine." These words proved prophetic.

Here let me reminisce about an elevating event. It was the year 1953 if I remember aright. I was to take part in the running competition. So great was the pain that day in my backbone, that I could not climb down from my bed to attend to my work. "No hope for me." That was my feeling up to 2 p.m. At 3 p.m. somehow I went to Nolini Kanta Gupta with a request for a word to the Mother. "I don't want to miss the chance at any rate," so saying I went to the reception room and stood before Sri Aurobindo's photograph. At 3-30 p.m. I felt a flow of bright white light from the crown to the knees. I can still relive the experience.

Every day punctually at 4 p.m. the Mother used to go to the sportsground. To catch a glance of her I stood on the way (near the garage). The moment her celestial gaze met mine she filled my heart with so much sweetness by her smile that I forgot all about my suffering. "Suffering was lost in her immortal smile."<sup>1</sup>

When on the sportsground I stood in line awaiting my turn, I was not sure of my movements. With the sound of the shot, as I started running I lost all sense of myself, the body grew light like a feather. I did not feel at all it was I who was running till I reached the tape, one end of which was held by the Mother. In competition with the youngsters I came at the top of the group. (Groups were arranged not according to age but in terms of capacity.)

Amazed, Laljibhai told me: "How is it that you could be far ahead of the others?"

Imagine my joy when Amita told me: "The Mother was well pleased to see your running."

The sense of feeling light like a feather repeated itself first in 1975—22 years later—and occurred several times thereafter. When the experience I had in the presence of the Mother comes to my memory I feel thrilled with a rare blessedness.

I have not exhausted myself. There is something more worth analysing: I doubt if, ever before, the colour and complexion of the skin of my body was so fine, soft and velvety smooth as first marked in 1977. But that mysterious change could not last long. When the "uplifting deity" withdrew, its influence continued for a time and then the body lost its charm, the colour of the body got darkened and the

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*, Part I, p 285

texture turned rough. But the forces of disintegration had to beat a hasty retreat. When I was restored to my normal health I made this setback a launching pad for a new leap. Changes in the physical cells cannot but be gradual.

I wonder more and more at the unexpected alterations in my body. Dark complexion, lustreless face, loosened skin and the like are not visible as they used to be very often before 1977. But I think the lower part of my body has acquired better power of resistance than the upper since 1978. The deterioration there is less frequent. The feet could maintain the change for a much longer period. There were occasions, though rare, when my observant eye perceived that the rear-muscles of the knees had grown strong and hard like steel. The youthful appearance was fully shared by the thighs.

Even in the most material part of the body—I mean the soles of the feet, the skin of the palms—the action of the Mother's force is clearly sensed. While in Calcutta I had a corn on the sole of my left foot and it had to be operated upon. When I started running, corns appeared on the soles of both the feet, the skin round the edges of the heels grew hard like stone. Now I have not to suffer from corns. They disappeared without any operation. Stone-like hardness of the heel is not there, either. Changes are visible here also alternately.

On June 1, 1978 at 2-30 p.m. mine was an aging face, a wrinkled forehead with nothing to show a healthy look. I was staggered to mark my own physiognomy in the mirror and blurted out, "How awful I look!" I have said that in the early formative period the mysterious changes in the cells occurred only once during all those years. In 1978 I marked hourly though not long-lasting changes.

Frequent changes in the colour of the skin continued till the 4th of June 1978 and on the 5th I emerged better than before. The face appeared creamy and there was a glow. Thus I am reduced to being a spectator of a weird drama enacted on my own body.

Two days after the 5th of June the handsome look disappeared. My body could not share the freshness that the morning hush imparts to Nature. It grew dark and dull and loosened skin everywhere met the eyes. But a change for the better started the same day: the left hand looked different in outer shape from the right. The knees and thighs also exhibited new vigour. The dying cells came back to life. Do they not provide plausible reasons to suppose that yoga has come down to the very constituent elements of the body?

It was in the year 1978 that I found my feet firmly set on the sunlit path. I shall bring this pretty long chapter to a close with some typical experiences in that felicitous year.

How to convey my sense of gratitude as to what the Mother's Centenary Year 1978 has showered on me? It was in this year that I had the luck to break many new grounds, witness several fresh departures, rise to novel dimensions leading to a new realm of consciousness. Though they are mere preliminaries yet do they not usher in an "enlightening ray" of a bright future?

“Bright future”: what a play of possibilities these two words promise! They were seen written in the spacious sky of the heart in letters of light, the moment I bowed down in deep devotion and boundless gratitude before the Mother’s couch on the first day of the Mother’s Centenary Year (January 1, 1978). This golden message of the shining Angel was followed by various kinds of experiences consecutively for twelve days, which induced me “to take a flight towards a wider horizon” with the “sunlight of confidence”. One of those days I saw myself calmly seated cross-legged on a blazing half-opened lotus in meditation.

It was in this momentous year that I reached the state of void and a concentration started between the eye-brows. It led me to realise what joy awaits one when concentration reaches the state of perfection.<sup>1</sup> A kind of sweet drowsiness that flows from it might be termed intoxication. Meditating, I did not feel I was meditating. It was difficult to stop meditation. I had heard a lot about the charm of concentration between the eye-brows but the mind could not visualise its impact. Its lure was so great that hours passed unnoticed without my losing consciousness and the heart hungered for more. No sense of heat or cold or other trifling things could hamper its easy flow. In concentrating between the eye-brows it seemed I was reduced to a witness, looking at myself from a distance, standing at the door of the surface mind, absolutely unaware of all that went on around me.

The day the higher force crossed the surface mind and thrust itself into the inner chambers of the mental range, the whole area got illuminated. All that remained was a dim perception of a bare outline of the head. The inner part was fully possessed by a bright white light.

There is a third category. I have gone into some detail about it. Whenever the yogic force tried to break open the inner rooms of the mind it was thrown off. Just a few ripples of thought and the consciousness dropped down. The force had to wait a month or two for another chance. The day it penetrated into the inner recesses of the mind its exhilarating effect was so impressive that I felt I had acquired a “passport to paradise”.

But the sweetness that flows from an access into the heart is something quite different. No doubt, each excels in its own domain and imparts a new type of spiritual exaltation. This point is merely touched upon here and requires much elaboration. The experience happened in January 1979.

Once I had a very happy time at night and I wished I could be left alone to avail myself of the ecstatic mood but I had to go out to bring a delivery order from Cuddalore. When the distance is long I am allowed to use the Ashram car. Along with the cool weather if the mental weather is favourable I try to see how far what was gained in meditation, could be retained in movement.

<sup>1</sup> .When you attain a kind of perfection in concentration, if you can sustain this perfection for a sufficiently long time, then a door opens and you pass beyond the limit of your ordinary consciousness — you enter into a deeper and higher knowledge — or you go within. Then you can feel some sort of dazzling light, an inner marvel. —The Mother

That day (November 5, 1978) within minutes I passed into the inner recess of the heart. No sooner did I gather my scattered consciousness and take a plunge than I perceived a curtain sliding and shifting from the mind and there lay before my inner eyes an exceedingly beautiful, neat and clear road neither very wide nor quite narrow, just sufficient for one-way traffic. It looked as if it were made not of brick and stone but of pure sparkling white light. There was no hurdle or hindrance of any kind anywhere. The car was flying with the speed of the wind but the road went on stretching and stretching endlessly.

In between there came to view many kinds of sceneries, consisting of tall trees of various shapes and sizes, thick bushes, palm-tree groves, all bathed in white light. The enchanting span of the silvery sky leaning to meet the glittering thoroughfare was not only pleasing but bewitching. At a far distance in my hilly journey there appeared a range of hill-tops with a vapour-white canopy of the heavens. I was so withdrawn inward, feasting the eyes all along that I never knew anything of myself and those around me. The body felt the movement of the car but the mind was lost in itself.

In another context regarding roads Sri Aurobindo wrote:

“The experience you had of the wideness with many roads opening was an image of the higher consciousness in which all the movements of the being are open, true and happy—the ignorance and incapacity of the lower nature disappear. It is that that the light from above is bringing.”<sup>1</sup>

(This is my fourth experience of travel by car. First was along with the Mother in her car as said earlier.)

When about to reach the end, the speed of the car slowed down. It seemed to be moving cautiously over a zigzag mountainous tract, up and up in a dense forest. When it could not move forward it came to a halt. Just then my eyes opened and I found the car had come to its destination. The broken thread could not be put together during the return journey.

On November 11, 1978 there was a searching question in my mind all through the night. “What should I write about the cells? Where to begin? What should form the body of the writing? How should it end?”

When Barindra Kumar Ghose, Sri Aurobindo’s younger brother asked Sri Aurobindo “The Mother has written in her Prayers what she felt after she saw you. But what was your feeling when you saw the Mother?” Sri Aurobindo thought for a moment and told him:

“That was the first time I knew that perfect surrender to the last physical cells was humanly possible; it was when the Mother came and bowed down that I saw that perfect complete surrender in action.”<sup>2</sup>

To bring about the surrender of the “inconscious” cells and create pockets of light—upon which hinges the success of the ideal of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga—the

<sup>1</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome II, p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> *Glances of the Mother's Life*, Vol. I, p. 252.

Mother worked till the last days of her earthly life and still this dream is not fulfilled, it remains a dream, a vision: then what hope is there for one like us?

Each great work of the world was once the fantastic dream of someone. How many believed that an engine would be run on railway lines? When Stephenson was told, "Your engine cannot run. The problem has been mathematically proved insoluble", he quietly quipped, "The problem will be solved by the engine's running."

Must all great work left incomplete be abandoned because it could not be accomplished in the leader's life-time? Will it be a crime for those coming after to try a step forward towards its fulfilment?

In sleep once, I found myself at the feet of Sri Aurobindo. He seemed to be very close to me. I have a clear memory of seeing a full typed sheet and I read it as one reads while awake but the "blind brain" could retain only one line, and that too mutilated: "If our attempt is successful we shall soon have a glorious body." Thereafter thoughts began to leap forth.

On one occasion at night the atmosphere was very congenial for concentration. Stripping the mind of all thoughts I went to sleep. While I was locked in slumber there opened before my eyes a unique scene. First, I saw a river flowing before me, then it appeared my heart-centre had assumed the shape of a river and amalgamated with it. This was followed by rain. I clearly perceived threads of rain dancing over the bosom of the river, which was covered with light. Was it a rain of Grace? When my eyes opened, the downpour had not stopped. The inner reflecting the outer presented an exalting, elevating scene.

Says Sri Aurobindo: "It is usually only if there is much activity of Sadhana in the day that it extends also into the sleep state."<sup>1</sup>

Despite so many experiences, the day of illumination does not seem to be near. The Gordian knots in the heart-centre are there as they were before. No efflorescence of a new faculty or the emergence of those qualities which make one feel near to God, no overall change in the nature—yet it was in this fateful year 1978 that I found my feet firmly set on the sunlit path.

In one of his last letters Sri Aurobindo had written to me that descents and experiences are all right but it has to be seen whether there is a change in the consciousness, change in the nature. This theme will form the subject of our next study.

The sapling that was transplanted in the transforming hour, instead of withering away in stormy and snowy weather, has grown into a healthy tree and waits for its hour of God to flower.

*(To be continued)*

<sup>1</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome II, p. 575

# SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

*(Continued from the issue of March 1979)*

## I

### THE SCHOOL IN THE MAKING *(Contd.)*

#### 2

BEFORE the opening of the Ashram school, children below fourteen were generally not encouraged to go to the Mother. There were four exceptions. The first was R. He came at the age of ten in 1930. Nolini Kanta Gupta was his first teacher. He taught him English, History, Hygiene and Geography. With his help he rendered a Bengali poem into English at the age of eleven. From the age of twelve he started sending poems in English to Sri Aurobindo and had the joy of getting them corrected by him. He started music at the age of thirteen and when he was fourteen he studied painting under the direct guidance of the Mother.

The first exhibition of Ashram paintings was held in an old building where Golconde now stands. There the paintings of Krishnalal, Sanjivan, Nishikanta and Anilkumar were exhibited. The number of R's paintings at the display was thirty. He was seventeen at the time.

He looks quite young even today. On his 50th birthday the Mother filled his heart with joy by saying, "Hello, you are not getting old!"

R had come to the Ashram in July 1930. S came the same year in November. His father had been in the Ashram since 1928. Even when he had secured permission for his son, a wire was sent to S not to come. On being informed about S's age the Mother said he was too young to take up yoga. It is interesting to see how a boy of thirteen made a place for himself in the Mother's consciousness.

On receiving the wire S did not lose heart but went on writing, pleading, praying till he was permitted to come only for Darshan.

The very day S came he was granted the joy of seeing the Mother and he told Her that he did not want to go back. The Mother said that She would speak to Sri Aurobindo.

Just after the Darshan he was informed that Sri Aurobindo had been pleased with him and the Mother wanted him to learn French.

After 15 days of his taking lessons in French the Mother spoke to him in French but he could not follow. A little later when he began to talk with the Mother in French, She expressed her appreciation of his accent, to which he said, "The credit must go to my teacher Premanand."

How quickly childhood passes! But something imprinted in childhood leaves

a mark which cannot be erased. The very name Premanand floods S's eyes with tears of gratitude. "Whatever little literary capacities in French, sense of duty, habit of punctuality, cleanliness there is in me," he asserted, "is due to my loving teacher. It was he who grounded me in the French language. He was a man of great discipline and led a very regulated life. He is remembered by some for the sternness of his temperament but I remember him for the seeds of good qualities that he sowed in my young age. He was very particular about regularity. Even if I was late by five minutes he would ask me to leave.

"Another thing that I learnt from him was his love for perfection, and accuracy about facts and figures. Anything done haphazardly was alien to his nature and he could not tolerate it. These, I suppose, are the very soul of discipline and form the key to the secret of a teacher's life, the work for which the Mother was preparing me."

One day P stopped giving S lessons and told him that he had taught him all he could.

Henceforth the Mother became S's teacher. At what height She resides but to meet the needs of a novice, a raw boy, She came down to his level. A day will come when people will remember how much the Mother has laboured "to lead the great, blind struggling world to light".

S started sending his notebooks to the Mother, not one but five or six daily on different subjects : French grammar, translations from English into French, arithmetic, history, geography and various questions on different topics. When he was assigned the work of a teacher, there were practically no books in French. S had to prepare lessons and get them corrected by the Mother. This process continued for many years. The last correction he had was in 1946.

Along with all this he was given work with Amrita. His job was to note the meter readings in all the houses in a notebook and present it to the Mother on the first of every month. Once he found an electric meter running during the daytime in a particular house. He spoke to the Mother and she put the remark in the notebook: "Why?"

A memorable day in S's life was his interview with the Mother on his birthday on May 22, 1932.

The Mother started the conversation and asked him : "What are your ambitions?"

S : "I don't know, Mother."

Reading his mind the Mother said :

"You nurse an ambition to be a big Guru with lots of disciples round you?"

S was startled. He realised that he had some such hidden desire and said : "Yes, Mother."

The Mother: "Do you know that to be a Guru one must have a realisation of the Divine and live in the Divine Consciousness?"

Hearing this S said that he did not want to be a Guru any more but only the Mother's child.



This pleased the Mother and She said: "Very good."

Then he suddenly remembered about his other ambition to become a big writer.

In reply to this the Mother explained to him what qualities are required to be a writer and that one must have a wide knowledge of so many things before one could become a writer.

Finding that this too was not possible he dropped the idea.

Thus the Mother helped him to give up his ambitions.

Six months after S's coming to the Ashram, the Mother hired a house and gave him a room in it all to himself. She went to see his room. No one was allowed to visit his room, not even his father. If S had to go to see, or talk with someone, or allow anyone to come to his room, he used to seek the Mother's approval. He was given the full liberty to write anything to the Mother and he wrote twice a day for many years.

I shall close this story with one more episode. The day when there was no morning pranam the Mother used to stand on the meditation-hall staircase and give flowers to each one of us. The two boys, R and S, would remain standing below with their hands raised upward with the intention of being blessed with flowers first. The Mother took the flowers in both her hands and gave her gifts to the two of them at the same time.

A few extracts from S's notebook:

Q: What am I?

The Mother: Outwardly, you are a child who is unconsciously trying to become conscious, inwardly you are an eternal soul trying to manifest itself in a body.

Q: I think too much of my own movements, wrong or otherwise. Hereafter I won't write to you of them more than once.

The Mother: No purpose would be served by not informing me about them. On the contrary, if you tell me I can help you more easily. (18.1.1935)

Q: One part of me says it is not necessary to inform you of this incident but another part says I must inform. I am inclined to the latter. What are these parts?

The Mother: Both of them are parts of the physical mind; but one is submitted to the Divine Will, while the other is not.

Q: I have decided that on the day I do not study, I shall not take my food.

The Mother: What a funny idea! You are going to punish your body for a fault the vital commits? That is not just. (22.12.1934).

### 3

Even before the Ashram school was started Pavitra<sup>1</sup> undertook the coaching of a group of children who had the privilege of entering the Ashram very early in their lives. S was one of that group.

Pavitra was a versatile scholar and a great educationist. He was often invited as

<sup>1</sup> Pavitra was the name given by Sri Aurobindo to P. B. Saint-Hilaire. He was born in France on January 16, 1894 and passed away in the Ashram on May 16, 1969.

an examiner by the local French College and as a juror by the French High Court in Pondicherry during the French regime.

He came to this divine land of our soul, after spending four years in quest of Light, wandering in China, Japan and Mongolia.

His connection with the Ashram began from the period when the Ashram was not yet officially born and he was one of the very few at the time to take a hand in the material shaping of the Ashram according to the Mother's dream.

One of his outstanding later achievements was the organisation of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, of which he was the Director from the beginning. It was he who introduced, under the Mother's guidance, the Free Progress System of education which is growing popular as the days pass. He inspired the teachers in various ways to prove the efficacy of this system. He has left a part of himself in his pupils who are looking after some of the departments founded by him. They recall with gratitude how they were shaped by Pavitra. He was ever ready to give a lift to a deserving student and extended his helping hand to those who obtained the Mother's blessings to go to foreign countries for higher studies. He admitted even the son of his driver<sup>1</sup> to the Ashram school and was instrumental in getting him admitted to the French Military School of Saint-Maixent.

To many, Pavitra's life was a benediction and an inspiration. Let one of them speak:

"The first thing that would strike anyone who came in contact with Pavitra was the softness of his heart, his sensitiveness, simplicity, sincerity and extreme humanity. No one, I am sure, had the least idea of the mastery he had attained in many fields of knowledge both practical and theoretical. He was a perfectionist and would therefore devote cheerfully hours and hours of hard work to whatever he undertook to accomplish. His sincerity and absorption were a joy to watch.

"He remained for us always a teacher in the truest sense of the term as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo. He took the greatest pains to correct our notebooks and always taught us with loving care. It is only due to him that we know what the joy of learning is. Not only that but what perhaps is more important is that he taught us how to handle material things and be aware of the consciousness that is behind them....

"He who had reached so high in spirituality considered all of us his equals and never treated anyone otherwise. Is it any wonder that all of us loved him as our elder brother to whom one could always turn in moments of difficulty? However busy he might be, he had a moment to spare and one would invariably come back full of cheer and faith.

"For him life was sacred, a precious gift of the Divine, and he never wasted a single moment of it. He always tried to do things to the best of his ability and as a humble offering at the Feet of the Divine Mother. A perfect yogi, he left the results to Her.

<sup>1</sup> Five generations of this driver's family have been in touch with the Mother in one way or another. It was Pavitra who taught him driving.

“‘Love and what you love attempt to be.’ He loved the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and under their compassionate guidance marched ever happily forward to his final destiny.”

From the time he set foot on the soil of Pondicherry, he never went out of the town and the Ashram became his universe.

In the course of a casual talk to one of the teachers, he said, “I say what I feel and I do what I say.”

When this girl was installed as a teacher he asked her out of fun, “What prompted you to give a ready consent to be a teacher?”

“To learn,” was her cryptic answer. This brought a smile of satisfaction to his lips.

The subjects taught by Pavitra were: Mathematics, Natural Science, Physics and Chemistry. Experiments were carried out in a small laboratory in the class itself.

He was very particular about homework and spared no pains in making corrections in the copies submitted to him. He did not give out much by way of explanation but liked the students themselves to work. He was very economical in allotting marks and a very strict disciplinarian. He wanted everyone to be punctual and regular. All students complied with the discipline willingly and gladly. He was held in awe but also loved by the students.

*(To be continued)*

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## “WHERE THERE’S A WILL . . .”

### A STORY

I AM a Devon gentleman of sufficient means to allow me to indulge in my most treasured pastime, book collecting. All my life I have enjoyed visiting auction rooms, markets, hole-in-the-corner places where I would often find some bargain to gladden my heart and increase my knowledge. It was in this way that one day at a sale I saw a dusty, battered book lying half-concealed among a load of junk. Trying not to show too much excitement, I approached and carefully extracted it. The grubby, thick paper cover, with two broken ends of tape for tying, told me at once that my instincts had been right; for this book was, as I had judged, Elizabethan. I opened it gingerly. The title page read:

A  
WORLDDE  
Of Wordes,  
Or  
Most copious, and exact  
Dictionarie in Italian and  
English, collected by  
JOHN FLORIO.

At the foot of the last page were the words:

Imprinted at London by Arnold Hatfield,  
for Edward Blunt: and are to be sold  
at his shop over against the great  
North dore of Paules Church.  
1598.

My heart beat fast. This was indeed a treasure; but how much of one I was yet to discover. I managed to buy the “load of junk” for a few shillings, and with my precious book wrapped in newspaper, I hurried home to look at it more closely.

In the seclusion of my study I examined my find. It appeared to be a very sound Italian-English dictionary, but little used if one could judge by the absence of thumb marks, dog-ears or marginal notes. On the fly-leaf I saw there were a few lines of Elizabethan handwriting. What could they be? With the aid of a magnifying glass I succeeded at length in deciphering them. It was a guarantee of some sort and read:

“If this be not the last, the best and  
largest dictionarie in Itall. and  
English, I promise to pay 6/- again.  
By me William Aspley.”

Who was Aspley? and why would he say that the purchaser of this book could, in modern parlance, “have his money back if not satisfied”? Such a warranty was surely most unusual for a mere book. I looked more closely, and with mounting interest realised that the signature had at first been written “Will Asp ..”, and that the “iam” and the “ley” had been added by another hand in slightly different ink. This same hand had crossed out the “re” of “repay” and had added the word “again”, so that the sentence read “I promise to pay 6/- again”, and not, as originally written, “to repay 6/-”. Could these alterations and additions mean that the warranty had been written in the main by one person and completed by another?

Aspley .. William Aspley? ... of course, I remembered now! he was an Elizabethan printer and bookseller — indeed it was he who, with Thorpe, had printed Shakespeare’s sonnets in 1609. Since, like many booksellers of his day, he had had a shop in St. Paul’s Churchyard, where writers would foregather to discuss the sale of their work, browse through books and meet one another in friendly rivalry, it was reasonable to suppose that Shakespeare knew him well ... my thoughts gathered speed .... in which play of Shakespeare’s could I remember having read of a warrant for a book? I rummaged wildly among the notes I had made for my University Thesis on the Comedies until I came to “Much Ado About Nothing” — surely, I thought, there had been such a reference somewhere in this play?

In Act IV, Scene I, my search was rewarded. Hero lies unconscious on the floor of the church after being falsely accused by her betrothed, and the Friar, who was to have married them, says to her father:

“Call me a fool,  
Trust not my reading nor my observations,  
Which with experimental seal doth warrant  
The tenour of my book; trust not my age,  
My reverence, calling, nor divinity,  
If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here  
Under some biting error.”

Suddenly I realised that the date of publication of my Italian/English Dictionary was 1598 and that “Much Ado About Nothing” was written by Shakespeare in 1598 .... I sank into an armchair and allowed my thoughts to wander....

\*

“Nick, N.i..ck, where the devil are you?”

Master William Aspley, Printer and Bookseller at the sign of the Tiger’s Head in Pauls Churchyard, peered from the low doorway of his shop into the sunlit street. It was seven o’clock on an April morning and time the shutters were down and goods displayed. Nicholas Ford was a good lad as apprentices went, and he seemed to be

genuinely interested in the printing of books, but he lacked all desire to sell or arrange displays which would tempt customers to buy. No doubt just now he was busy with the printing-press—that was where he could usually be found. Master Aspley sighed and decided to open up himself.

He groped his way between the laden shelves and equally laden tables to the window. There he fumbled for the bolts and slid them open. He groped his way once more through the shop to the street, raised and removed a heavy wooden bar, then lowered the oak shutter horizontally; supporting it with one hand, he raised a hooked iron arm and fitted it into an iron eye in the corner of the shutter. He repeated this on the other side and thus his display counter was ready. He propped open the oak door and went inside, where the dim interior of his shop was now flooded with spring sunshine.

Would he have a profitable day, he wondered. He could do with one, for the past two or three weeks had been very quiet. Before he could finish arranging books on his counter the first customer arrived. After this the morning seemed to pass very quickly. It was now near ten o'clock and several people had called, amongst them Michael Drayton, the "golden-mouthed" poet. He had spent only sixpence, buying an old book on flowers he had needed for a work commissioned by the Lady Harrington. An apprentice had hurried in to ask if his master could exchange a book on beasts by Turbeville for Master Chapman's "Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy", and Aspley had obliged. A merchant had bought a book on weaving, another had wanted a gift for a friend. Yes, it had been quite a good morning, but a long time since breakfast and he was hungry. As if on cue Nicholas Ford, his face and hands besmeared with printer's ink, appeared in the shop bearing a tankard in one hand and a platter in the other.

"Your morning ale and bite of bread, master," he said cheerfully.

Aspley grunted.

"Thank you, lad, set it down there. What are you doing now?"

"Cleaning, sir. The press must be in good shape and kept so or it will not run smoothly when next you need it."

Aspley smiled at the boy's earnestness.

"Good lad, you are right of course. I only hope I will be printing soon—it is time I brought out something new bearing my name."

"What will you have new bearing your name, my friend?"

A rich, melodious voice spoke in his ear, a warm hand clapped him on the shoulder. William Aspley swung round, his rather pale, aesthetic face flushing with pleasure.

"Why, Will friend, it is you—how good it is to see you after these many weeks."

Will Shakespeare, at the height of his fame, a mature, well-set-up man of thirty-four, actor, writer, poet, dramatist, flooded the little shop with the warmth and magnetism of his personality.

"I hadn't forgotten you, but I am mightily busy. Not only are we rehearsing, but

we go down into Southwark almost every day to watch the building of our new theatre." His voice bubbled with enthusiasm. "I tell you, William, it will be a splendid place for our plays. And it is near finished, I think we will be able to open it this summer."

"So soon," exclaimed Aspley, "and the vast sum it must be costing! Do you hope to be able to recover the cost?"

Will's hazel eyes grew serious and shrewd.

"There is always hope, my friend. Some dozen of us are involved. I myself hold a tenth share in the venture, and we have calculated our outgoings and set them against the minimum incomings, counting even the odds of misfortune. We hope to recover our outlay within a year. There is no doubt that we can fill the theatre. The people like my plays, and when they tire of the familiar ones I have others in mind to take their place."

"You have more plays in mind?"

"Assuredly. It is touching this question I am here now. I would look among your books, friend William, with your kind permission?" Again Aspley's youthful face flushed, and placing his arm affectionately across the older man's shoulders, he said quietly:

"My humble shop is honoured by your presence, Will. Sit down and work at your leisure."

He took Shakespeare's short cloak from him. The poet seated himself at a table near the open window and took some rough scribbled notes from his doublet. Aspley placed pen, ink and paper before him. Shakespeare smiled at him, a smile full of warm friendship, the smile which charmed nearly all who knew him.

"Now, friend, give me, if you can, a translation of Ariosto's 'Orlando Furioso'. I doubt not but that you have such a book upon your shelves?"

Without hesitation Aspley moved to a shelf and took down a fat volume. He blew some dust from it, undid the tapes and passed it to Shakespeare.

"This is Sir John Harrington's translation. I think you will find it sufficient if it is only a plot you are seeking. I have heard tell that as a translation it is not very accurate."

Thanking him Will took the book and began to read. As he turned the pages, every now and then he broke off to make some notes. He wrote swiftly, hardly pausing, his head bent over the paper. A shaft of sunlight through the window played on his hair, showing up its auburn tints, hair that fell softly behind his ears to the nape of his neck, and which already, at thirty-four, showed a distinct desire to recede from the broad, high brow.

He appeared to be completely absorbed, seeing and hearing nothing of what went on around him. Apparently writing a new and witty comedy was not easy and needed concentration. Will sighed. He had to be sure of pleasing each of the groups which made up his audience; he needed to write broad and bawdy humour for the groundlings, whose regular attendance at the theatre supplied the players with their bread and butter—they would not stand for a play without a clown, a buffoon at whom they

could roar and shout their lewd jokes; then there were the merchants—many such men were against the players, holding them to be full of vice and debauchery, and so would not visit a theatre, but others more tolerant did come, and they liked romance in a play, a love story with tears in it to move them; but perhaps the most important group he had to please were the gallants. No doubt there were fools amongst them, but for the most part they were educated, travelled men, patrons of the theatre and generous to writers who pleased them. They required subtlety of wit, topical satire, Italian, Latin and French tags, hidden allusions to current affairs; truly it was no light task to be a successful playwright. So far he had managed to please all, there was something for everyone in each of his plays. Would he be able to keep this up in the future? He felt he had so many more plays to write. It was all very well to accuse him of taking his plots from other men's works, but what in God's name did that matter provided there were his own new-drawn characters to enact out these plots? He knew he would never have difficulty in creating people. He might appear to be absorbed in writing, acting, organising, but his keen eye and even keener ear never missed a single thing. Men's deeds, men's words, men's emotions were shrewdly noted. Thus the rich variety of human nature was mirrored in everyone of the characters in his plays, and this alone, he felt sure, would cause them to endure long after he was gone.

This new play now, should he use the plot he had found in "Orlando Furioso" for its second love interest? It was one which would surely draw the necessary tears from the sentimental ones in his audience. a young heroine about to be married and accused by her betrothed at the very ceremony of having been false to him. For the intellectuals he already had his main characters, Beatrice and Benedick, whose repartee, as they pretend dislike of each other, and witty play on words would be fully appreciated.

As for the groundlings, this time he would not give them bawdiness, but an oaf, a thoroughly stupid, but conscientious Master Constable—oh, he would enjoy poking fun at the Watch, and so would his audience, this he knew full well.

While Shakespeare worked Aspley went outside. All around him the apprentices were crying their masters' wares to the passers-by and he knew Nick should do likewise, but the boy was so patently bad at it, Aspley felt he could do better himself. He liked owning a shop, but sometimes he wished he could live from printing; he was no true salesman and disliked persuading customers to buy.

As he began to sort through the volumes he kept one eye on possible customers. Presently he noted a young man walking purposefully through the busy yard, glancing every so often at the many-coloured sign-boards above each shop. The man's attire proclaimed him a gallant, the rich quality yet simplicity of his doublet and hose, his short cloak and plumed hat, and the obvious precision with which he wore them, showing either that he was over-particular in his dress, or that, not having a large wardrobe, he had need of prudence. He was a slim, fair youth of about nineteen or twenty, with an air of assurance about him that might betoken arrogance.



As he came towards Aspley's shop he glanced at the sign and paused. Aspley moved towards him and bowed slightly.

"Can I be of service to you, sir?" he enquired hopefully.

The gallant did not return his bow, but merely said:

"If you are Master William Aspley you may perhaps. I am to make the Grand Tour shortly and wish to study Italian before I go. I was told that you have as good a selection of dictionaries as any in Paules Churchyard."

Master Aspley was pleased. He picked up a volume from the counter and waved the young man towards the shop.

"I pray you enter, sir, it will be quieter within."

He followed his customer into the shop and handed him the book he was carrying.

"This, sir," he explained, "is the new edition, just out, of Master John Florio's Italian/English dictionary. The first edition was printed but two years ago and was quickly sold."

The young man leafed a few pages of the book.

"It seems to be something of what I require," he said, "but perhaps it is too copious. Have you a smaller one of a similar nature?"

At this remark Shakespeare, writing busily at the nearby table, raised his head. The idea that a dictionary could be too copious amused him mightily. It was almost as if the gallant were buying a pair of gloves which were a little large and wished to try a smaller size. This promised to be of interest. He listened attentively. What would William do?

Aspley in fact did little. He would in part satisfy the customer, so he made a brief show of searching his shelves for a smaller dictionary, though he knew well he had no such book. After a moment he turned to the young man again:

"Alas, sir, I fear I have no smaller book, but if you are to reside in Italy any length of time I am sure you will need a dictionary as profuse as this one."

The young man interrupted abruptly:

"And the price?"

Hesitantly Aspley said, "Six shillings, sir."

The gallant laid the book upon the table and without a word turned to leave the shop.

Shakespeare thought it was time he took a hand. It was obvious that his friend was no salesman and was disappointed at losing so good a sale. He rose from his seat and bowed to the young man, his eyes twinkling with mischief.

"Sir, allow me to introduce myself. I am Will Shakespeare, writer and actor. Touching the matter of this dictionary—may I be allowed to tell you that I know it is widely used among the gentlemen of Her Majesty's Court; I have myself used it frequently when translating for my plays; it contains all known words of the Italian tongue explained fully in good English; and it is printed clearly and upon good paper which will not tear or despoil easily."

The young man was obviously impressed by Will's words and allowed himself

to pick up the book again, albeit a trifle dubiously. Sensing that he was weakening, Will suddenly plucked the book from his hands, took up his pen and said:

“Sir, you have an estimable bargain here at 6/-. Master Aspley sells only books of good value. But to ensure that you shall be satisfied, he will give you a warranty.”

Ignoring Aspley’s start of surprise Shakespeare opened the book and before he could be hindered dipped his pen in the ink and wrote:

“If this be not the last, the best and  
largest dictionarie in Itall. and  
English I promise to repay 6/-  
By me Will Asp”

Shakespeare had intended to write his own name, but after writing his customary “Will”, he realised in a flash that it was Aspley’s warranty, so he began to write his friend’s name instead. He had got as far as “Asp” when William, who had been looking anxiously over his friend’s shoulder, intervened.

“Do not sign for me, Will,” he cried urgently, “this would be a misdemeanour. Since you have pledged my word, let me make the pledge wholly mine.”

“Perhaps it would be safer so,” Shakespeare conceded and held out his pen. Aspley, however, had already taken his own pen from the shelf behind him. He read the warranty through carefully. Young as he was, he tended to be very precise in all he did. In the event of the 6/- being claimed by the buyer of the book, it would not of a certainty be the same 6/- which he would repay. William, therefore, found it necessary to scratch out the “re” of “repay” and add the word “again”. He then added the letters “iam” to Shakespeare’s “Will”, since he always signed himself William, and lastly he completed his half-written surname. It was evident, however, that he still felt a little uneasy.

“What is it, man?” asked Will, a trifle impatiently.

“You have written my name with the old ‘A’ and I am used to signing it in the new form,” Aspley replied slowly.

“That is no obstacle, friend, write your name as you will, below the other.”

William looked doubtfully at the warranty, but by this time the young gallant was showing impatience to be gone.

“Come, sir, have done and let me bear away my purchase,” he said speaking with some haughtiness.

In haste, Aspley signed his name again below the first signature, sanded the writing and passed the book to his customer. The young man took it with no word of thanks, placed a golden crown and a shilling upon the table and left the shop without a backward glance.

Will sat down and roared with laughter, but Aspley could not even smile.

“Why so glum, William? It’s only a jest and one much to my liking!” William sighed. His friend’s high spirits and love of jokes were all very well in a play, but in

real life they could have awkward repercussions. Suppose the gallant *did* come back for his money? He voiced his fears, but Will only laughed the more.

“Be not so timid, man. I doubt he will return, it cannot be worth the trouble. But if he does come, why, he cannot eat you, he can at worst demand the return of his money. And should he do so, come and fetch me, and I will deal with him for you since it is my jest and I know full well you do not care for such dilemmas.”

At his friend’s words, Aspley managed a smile. If Will would deal with the troublesome customer, what need had he, William, to worry?

“I’ll wager it is the only book that bears such a warranty,” he cried more cheerfully.

“I am with you on that. But think no more of it, it was but a trivial affair, though one which caused me some amusement. I think I must put it in my play....” Aspley interrupted him:

“Your play? You are writing a new play now?”

“Why, yes. Indeed it seems I am always writing one. This one is a comedy. I have it nearly finished, I have but to merge the various parts into a pleasing whole and name it. Although this jest which we have enjoyed was, in truth, a mere trifle, much ado about nothing in fact, yet I might....” He broke off, and Aspley saw that his eyes were gleaming as if his thoughts had lit a spark in them. Will rolled the words around his tongue:

“Much ado about nothing...why it is very apt, it is as good a title as any I could have thought of. I will use it. Thus, friend William; our happy jest will live for all time in a play of mine.”

As he spoke Will gathered up his papers, took up his cloak and bidding his friend a cheerful farewell, he left in such a happy mood that he could be heard singing, “Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more, men were deceivers ever....” as he threaded his way through the crowds in the busy churchyard.

Somehow, Aspley thought, the shop, the street, even the very air seemed dull, stale and lifeless with the going of Will. Whenever he was around life itself seemed fuller and everyone was imbued with his own zest for living. No man observed his fellowmen with a keener eye, nor understood their moods better than Will Shakespeare. What a sweet companion and good friend he was!

Suddenly William felt hungry again and realised with surprise that it was noon. How quickly the morning had gone—ah well, perhaps the afternoon would prove as profitable. Gathering up the 6/- from the table and calling for Nick, he made his way to the rear of his house.

\*

Some two or three days later, at about 9 o’clock in the morning, William Aspley was seated at a table in his shop attempting to balance his accounts. Nick, for once, was outside asking passersby what they lacked, and doing his best to sell the books which lay scattered on the oak counter. The incident of the dictionary had been for-

gotten, for Aspley judged, like his friend Will, that he would hear no more of such a trifling matter. But therein they both erred. Before the day was much older, down the street came Master Aspley's erstwhile customer, Florio's dictionary held firmly under one arm.

As he stopped to enquire of Nick if his master was within, Aspley closed his books and slipped swiftly out of the doorway through a passage to the rear of the shop. A moment later he heard Nick usher in the young man and request him to wait while he sought his master. When Nick appeared, Aspley put finger to lip and whispered:

"Stir not and make no sound. Ask the gentleman to amuse himself with the books for a while. Say I have gone out but will be back shortly. Then back to your post and cry my books."

Nick nodded, and Aspley ran from the house and made his way as quickly as he could in the direction of Bishopsgate, where he knew Will Shakespeare lodged. It was a warm morning and by the time he had pushed and jostled his way through the crowded streets to Will's lodgings, he was sweating and out of breath. But he was in luck, for in answer to his shout Will's head appeared from an upper casement. William explained.

"I'll come at once," Shakespeare answered readily, "I need a breath of air, for I am stifled and cramped from much writing."

In a moment he emerged and the two men set off. Quite soon they had reached Paules Churchyard and entered the Tiger's head, Will's hand resting reassuringly on the younger man's shoulder. Aspley bade the customer good-morning and apologised for having kept him waiting. Rather petulantly the young gallant said:

"Master Aspley, I am not happy with this dictionary I purchased from you. It is merely a book of words, whereas it seems to me that I have more need of sentences and phrases which will allow me to make my needs known..."

He broke off and it was obvious that he wanted to mention the warranty and ask for the return of his 6/-. But Will Shakespeare gave him no chance to speak of money.

"Master Aspley is indeed sorry that you should feel displeased with your purchase," he said soothingly. "Since I persuaded you to buy it, allow me to answer for him."

The young man bowed slightly and Will continued:

"I think you remember me, sir, and perhaps know of my repute?"

"Indeed, Master Shakespeare, I have heard much of your plays and lately even read some of your poetry, which, I must confess, pleased me well."

Shakespeare answered him gravely:

"I am honoured that you like my writings. But touching this dictionary—it is true, of course, that it is a book of words, yet these words are so many and so well arranged, that it is an easy task for a scholar like yourself to pick them at will and form any sentences you may require. You will not, I fear, find a book of phrases such as you suggest, for indeed, sir, how could such a book be writ to serve all men, whose needs must of necessity be so varied?"

The young man listened, and the words seemed to make an impression upon him. Will followed up his advantage.

"Be content with your dictionary," he appealed, "and I will content you even further. I will make you a gift of a value far higher than any of the books in this shop."

He sensed, rather than heard, Aspley's gasp of astonishment and it amused him. With a kindly twinkle in his eye he went on.

"I will write you a sonnet, sir, here and now in this very shop. You shall take away with you lines which will bring you lasting fame. For such is the quality of my verse, that this poem writ by me for you will be remembered when you and I are both long dead. William, pen and paper, please."

"At once, Will, at once."

Aspley hurried to produce them as Will seated himself at the table. He spread the paper William brought him, sharpened the quill-pen, looked long and seriously at the young man, dipped the pen in the ink and wrote:

Or I shall live your epitaph to make,  
Or you survive when I in earth am rotten;  
From hence your memory death cannot take,  
Although in me each part will be forgotten.  
Your name from hence immortal life shall have,  
Though I, once gone, to all the world must die:  
The earth can yield me but a common grave,  
When you entombèd in men's eyes shall lie.  
Your monument shall be my gentle verse,  
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;  
And tongues to be your being shall rehearse,  
When all the breathers of this world are dead;  
You still shall live—such virtue hath my pen—  
Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men.

Several times, as he wrote, the young man made as if to speak, but Aspley put finger to lip and there was no sound in the little shop save the scratching of Will's pen as it moved unhesitatingly over the paper. When he had finished he looked up.

"Your name, sir, or at any rate your initials, that I may inscribe the poem which is to bring you fame?"

The young man answered slowly, in some bewilderment, his former arrogance quite gone:

"My name? Oh, it is Hartford, sir. Walter Hartford of Devon."

With a flourish Will wrote at the foot of the paper:

W.S. to W.H., Nineteenth April 1598,

put down his pen, rose and offered the poem to Master Hartford with a low bow.

Quite overcome by the whole situation, and at a loss to understand how he happened to be leaving with the dictionary and a poem by a famous writer clutched in his hands, instead of the 6/- he had come to claim, Master Hartford muttered a few incoherent farewells and fled the shop.

Nicholas Ford, apprentice, hearing sounds of—could it be laughter?—from within the shop, turned and beheld the edifying sight of his master and Master Shakespeare, their arms about each other's shoulders, almost crying with laughter and dancing around the shop like two performing bears....

\*

The sound of laughter broke through my consciousness and I found that I too was laughing—the wonder of my thoughts, and the possibilities aroused by my imagination had surely caused me to dream. If it had indeed been a dream, it was a most vivid one, and I could remember every moment of it in all its detail.

I rose and walked across to the table where my “most copious and exact Dictionarie” lay. Once more I bent over the handwriting on the fly-leaf, and what I saw caused an electric shock to run through me. How was it possible I had not noticed it before? Perhaps because I had been too eager to proceed with my search for the reference in Shakespeare's plays to a “warrant for a book”. Be that as it may, my startled eyes now clearly saw beneath the completed signature of the warrant a second “Aspley” with a different capital A....

FRANCES YATES

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# THE FLAME OF D'ANNUNZIO

## A LETTER

YEARS ago I read a panegyric by Arnold Bennett upon the famous Italian poet Gabriele D'Annunzio's novel, *The Flame of Life*, which is an elaboration of his amour with the celebrated Eleonora Duse. Now that I have gone through the book itself, I am inclined to doubt Bennett's judgment. D'Annunzio the poet has tried to be in full blast in its prose. But I am afraid this heated prose has not the vibrant genuineness I prize. Though there is no denying that D'Annunzio has an extremely expressive mind, his expression here is rarely shot with imagination enough to make it great poetic literature. I find him more a rhetorician than a poet. There is a basic want of piercing felicitous vision and intuition in his language, and to cover that lack he has brought an artificial vehemence, a forced intensity.

The true *furor poeticus* does not shout and gesticulate: it has a deep reserve in the midst of even its dithyrambs: one feels that the Word simply has to be itself and its revelation is secured, there is no need to usher it with stage-effect and a flourish of trumpets. D'Annunzio appears mostly to clutch his words by the hair and drag them out and, even then, they are generally the wrong sort! Wrong not in the sense of entire inappositeness, for whatever is said has a point and a power; but both point and power are without the crystallised keenness which forms poetry. The creative idea and the creative vision are absent and instead we have the oratorical effect, the histrionic gesture. The theme of the book is excellent because it deals with lights and shades of emotion and character which are of considerable value; only, the treatment of them is not equal to their intrinsic worth.

D'Annunzio tries almost throughout to keep up a high pitch of imaginative excitement and succeeds in producing little except verbal fever. There comes to one, in all supreme passages of literature, a perfect balance of vision and word, of thought and tone. No disproportion is there, resulting in mere sound-fury or falsetto. Poetry has been described as a fine excess, but it is never forced or flashy: it goes beyond the ordinary pitch of feeling and range of sight in order to give richness and magic, yet the strange new light falls as if from an atmosphere to which it is completely natural—it carries an authentic spontaneity, while D'Annunzio again and again seems to shake and fume and vociferate as though somehow the dream divine failed to glow and he were attempting to create a glaring heat to make us forget that the revelatory light is not present. It is quite true that in places the inspiration is genuine; still, he has the air of always giving us an apocalypse whereas in reality it is only brilliant fireworks that we get. The poet in him has seen and felt the wonder and beauty of Venice and the Moonlight that is love; hence we cannot escape being filled with a sense of the greatness of the theme and the picture, yet this is in spite of the writer and his work. We receive the touch of stupendous upheavals of experience without actually being stirred to our foundations by the account of them

in the book. The tone is generally too loud, the writer thinks we would not catch the deepest secrets unless he bawled them out. D'Annunzio has flogged his heart and mind and the outcome is a many-coloured shriek.

A man of immature genius has written the book: the genius is perceived in a certain verve and rush but it is put at the service of a pseudo-aesthetic consciousness which likes to be showy and dramatic: it underlines thickly every little phrase as an utterance of superlative value and it overcrowds every moment of experience with superfluous tensions. The play of the poet in D'Annunzio is obscured by the lavishness of the actor: a thousand pities!—since a really beautiful and profound subject is treated, a subject which should have given rise to a piercing and mighty yet unpretentious splendour.

Surely, episodes occur where the language and attitude escape being hectic. Whenever Richard Wagner is introduced, we at once catch something genuine. The picture of him alive or in a faint or in the sleep of death is always impressive: somehow he seems to be the undeclared hero of the book—a hero mostly absent from the foreground of the story but present as a kind of ideal throughout. Perhaps D'Annunzio meant him to compare with Stelio Effrena, the central figure, and to confirm the portrayal of poetic frenzy attempted in the latter. I, however, find that he serves as a touchstone which shows up the rhetorical exuberance of Stelio by this quiet and tremendous authenticity.

Other passages of beauty can also be extricated: I liked the whole incident of the dogs in Lady Myrta's garden—there is in it a speed of imagination and a sympathetic insight. Then, the visit to the workshop where delicate dreams are shaped to glassware is memorable. I wish everything were as truly conceived and executed, and the language everywhere charged with the poetic vision such as animates the phrase about the stones of Venice “along the hidden veins of which the human spirit rises towards the ideal as the sap ascends to the flower through the fibres of the plant”—or the simple yet vividly true sentence: “And the still formless work he was nourishing leapt with a great shudder of life”—or, finally, that most magnificent image in the whole book: “An infinite smile diffused itself there, so infinite that the lines of her mouth trembled in it like leaves in the wind, her teeth shone in it like jasmine blossoms in the light of stars—the slenderest of shapes in a vast element.” Why could not the man write always like that if he had a *penchant* for the prodigious? Or else why could he not avoid the empty painted hysteria in which he so often luxuriates, and express himself with a controlled beauty that never rings false?

Well, D'Annunzio has to be D'Annunzio, I suppose—and there must be many to admire him for being what he is. I cannot bring myself to worship either the writer or much of the man. The figure he cuts in Isidora Duncan's autobiography is very equivocal: one is made to think that he could play divinely the lover but at the same time there is an impression of shallowness and gush. It strikes me that there is too much conscious poetry about him—and whenever a thing like poetry which has to be deeply one with the pulse and the breath of life becomes outwardly conscious, it is liable to



degenerate into a pose or at least an ornamental superficiality. The true poet is not over-anxious to flaunt the colours of his soul: his soul is too sensitive to bear a naked public exhibition—it is only to a few he undrapes himself and then too the undraping takes place almost unconsciously as if the secret form of his being caught fire with its own intensity and all the veils and coverings got burnt up. Or his genius and beauty reveal themselves by a mysterious movement which renders the veil concealing them vibrant with a dumb ecstasy, as it were—a warm darkness proclaiming most naturally the living light behind.

No show, no unnecessary *éclat* but a wonderfully revelatory reticence—that is the mark of the poet in life. Or if the reticence is not always there, a spontaneous bubbling as of a crystal-clear spring is felt—a white laughter and luminosity held out by a nature that has the simple calm and unpretentious firmness of rock. In any case, a quiet strength and authenticity surrounds and frames all that shimmer and flow. No matter how keen the rush, how bright the rapture, there is invariably a quality of inspired sleep accompanying them: that is to say, a kind of unconscious naturalness and inevitability with nothing cheap and vulgar and theatrical about it, though this does not preclude the grand pride or godlike confidence that inspiration has in itself through a Dante or a Milton or a Shakespeare sonneteering about his “powerful rhyme” and its ability to outlast monuments of brass and marble. Sometimes the sterling artist and the gaudy actor co-exist: but we must never mix them up and even when we cherish the former we must realise how the latter flaws and diminishes him.

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# INDIAN LIFE IN ENGLISH WRITINGS

(Continued from the issue of March 1979)

Part I (Contd.)

## Reliving the Days Gone By

COMPTON-Ricketts commented about Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*; '*The Light of Asia* (1879) may not be a great poem, but it breaks fresh and fascinating ground; and although we may desire for so vast a subject a more dignified, a more profound treatment, yet it has that agreeable fluency and play of fancy that pleases a large number of readers. At any rate, it opened what was practically a sealed book to the public at large—the life and faith of an Eastern people, a subject that of late years bore increasing attention from men of letters.' (*History of English Literature* by Alfred Crompton-Ricketts, p. 483)

The comment was correct, for recently a great number of persons have been getting interested in Buddhism—such as Alexandra David-Neel, Suzuki, Adam Beck and others among whom is Herman Hesse.

Herman Hesse too has written a novel on the same theme and period as chosen by Arnold. The title is *Siddhartha*, which was rather an intriguing one. For it did not refer to the Buddha but to a rebel with the same name. The original Siddhartha too was a rebel, who rose against the decadent form of Hinduism in his day and created a new order of the religious, which turned out to be a new religion.

But the Siddhartha of Hesse was a European in Indian garb who revolted against the current practices including the Vedic rituals and did not or rather could not accept the Great Buddha himself. He questioned his teachings most bluntly. Finally he fell a prey to the snare of a courtesan who became the guiding principle of a greater part of his existence.

The external facts were few. But it was not a subjective novel, akin to *The Waves* by Virginia Woolfe. The hero hovered between hedonism and asceticism, between the world of thought and ideas and the world of the senses.

Hesse has given us a scanty description of Indian life, except for a few sketchy outlines, and reading the book one would have a totally wrong impression of India. Arnold too had offered us scanty materials but whatever he had presented had not been unveridical. In Hesse there were no descriptions of the market place, for example, or the life in the cities, the life of the hermits, or their ideas or ways, from which we could form some notion of the existence of the post-Upanishadic Rishis. He painted the Indian woman as a shameless creature, given to lust. He attempted to show the *samana* ascetics as false men. But he did not give any convincing description of their falsity. Perhaps Hesse should have studied Indian antiquity more in detail before he ventured to write this book on India.

Siddhartha and Govinda were hermits in the forest, with teachers unknown, and life-ways undescribed. They abandoned the woods, sojourned to a place where the Buddha was preaching to a body of men. Govinda, attracted by the Master, became a Buddhist monk, while Siddhartha, dissatisfied (dissatisfaction seemed to be the key to his character), went on wandering; till he came to a river-side where he met a young girl. From her he got the initiation to flesh. Leaving her he sojourned to the city, where he met Kamala, who introduced him to the ways of love (that is, sex) and also introduced him to the world of commerce. He learned the ways of trade and became extremely wealthy and also had a son by Kamala.

At the height of his career, he abandoned all and travelled to the river-side, where he met Vasudev, the ferryman. He stayed with this man till Kamala, hearing of the Buddha's demise, rushed to the river-bank, in order to go and have a last glimpse of the departed Master.

But she died before she could do so. Siddhartha and Vasudev cremated her body, and at this juncture Siddhartha's son, now a young man, made his appearance. Taking advantage of the darkness, he stole all the money which belonged to the two friends, and took away even their boat, the chief means of their subsistence.

After some time, Vasudev too died. Siddhartha was now the ferryman. By accident, Govinda, now a venerable monk, passed that way, and the two old friends exchanged notes on each other's lives.

The book ended thus, almost inconclusively.

Siddhartha's dissatisfaction began with his life with the hermits. He declared that the hermits had not shown him the path of Nirvana. Now Nirvana, as a state of Nihilistic realisation, came to be known only after the Buddha. So there is a crucial error in Hesse's role as a historical novelist. And when Siddhartha did meet the Buddha, the one who had travelled the path of self-extinction, he did not seek guidance about this Nirvana, which he claimed to have been the one object of his search.

But he was dissatisfied with the Buddha as well. He was dissatisfied with the merchants. The only person he was not dissatisfied with was Kamala the prostitute. Till the end, he remained in this state of uncertainty, and up to the end of his life he did not find the clue to his dissatisfaction.

Even his friend Govinda failed him, so also Vasudev and his own illegitimate son. He stoutly rejected the influence of the Buddha till the end. But he had learnt his lessons in life. The following two extracts from the book could be taken as the theme:

'When I lived with the ascetics in the forest, I came to distrust doctrines and teachers and turned my back on them. I am still of the same turn of mind, although I have since that time had many teachers. A beautiful courtesan was a teacher for a long time, and a rich merchant and a dice-player on one occasion, one of Buddha's wandering monks was my teacher.' (*Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse, tr. by Hilda Rosner, New York, New Directions, 1951, p. 118)

This dissatisfaction Hesse has termed "seeking", but seeking with no goal or pur-

pose. Siddhartha declared, 'Seeking means to have a goal, but finding means to be free, to be receptive, to have no goal.' (*Ibid.*, p. 113)

The failure of the European mind to grasp the fundamentals of Indian life was not in Hesse alone, but in most of Western authors who have written on India.

Hilda Seligman, in her book *When the Peacocks Called*, failed too, specially at the outset. A superiority complex haunted the author and she was unable to get over the impression that Indians were some sort of elevated barbarians.

In this book the author tried to trace the lives of three Kings: Chandragupta, Bindusara and Ashoka the Great. The treatment was fanciful, with serious errors in details such as Kautilya's being described as a magician from Taxila and Chandragupta as an animal-tamer in his early youth. There were other mistakes as well, like Porus's coming down with Chandragupta conquering all the tracts from Taxila to Pataliputra. Alexander was painted in brilliant colours (he had to be!) and shown to be the saviour of India. Seligman has given him the fanciful name (called by Indians, according to her) Alex-Skanda. In reality he was known in tradition as Sikandar.

She has made the peacocks roam the forests of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and from these peacocks, it appeared, came the name of Maurya which was later attached to Chandragupta.

No doubt, the origin of this illustrious king was veiled in mystery. But Seligman has made him the offspring of a princess Mura and an obscure captain. After his birth his mother left him in a jungle. A nomad couple picked up the child and brought him up. But R. C. Majumdar opines, 'He is said to have been the son of a Nanda King of Magadha by a low-born woman named Mura, from whom the dynastic name Maurya is supposed to have derived. It is more probable, however, that Chandragupta belonged to the Kshatriya clan of that name which are referred to as Moriyas of Pippivana in the Mahaparinirvana sutta. According to this Buddhist sutta, the Moriyas were a well-known clan as far back as the time of Gautama Buddha.' (*Ancient India* by R. C. Majumdar, p. 108)

Seligman has described the nomads and their life-ways, how they snared the birds and the peacocks, their revelry, and drinking bouts. Anyway, Chandra, as the nomad couple called him, grew up and became proficient in taming animals. Later he was called to the court of Nanda to tame a caged lion sent as a gift by the king of Ceylon. The lion, as Chandra discovered, was a cleverly wrought effigy in wax. It is a curious fact that the entire court could not detect this. Further, lions were not found in Ceylon and, in India, only the Gir forest was the habitat of lions.

Enraged, for no reason at all, the Nanda King ordered Chandra to be seized. That is, he made him the scapegoat; actually it was the king of Ceylon who had played a prank on the Nanda King. Chandra, by taking recourse to black magic, disappeared. This is another example of the author's stupidity.

Chandra fled to the foothills of the Himalayas where he met a strange man. This man introduced himself as 'The magician of Taxila chosen for my magic to be adviser of kings'... 'When my advices with the Nandas were not heeded, I came away', he de-

clared. 'It is they who will regret it.' (*When the Peacocks Called* by Hilda Seligman, with an introduction by Tagore, 1951, p. 46)

Thus it was Kautilya who wanted to avenge himself through Chandragupta, who could wreck the Nandas.

Kautilya and Chandragupta moved along the mountains, met the defeated King Porus, who conveniently remembered Mura and called him Chandragupta the last of the Maurya Kings.

Before Alexander retreated from India, Chandragupta met him and the latter was immensely impressed by the Greek. By now, for no apparent reason described or mentioned, Chandragupta's fame had spread. He gathered around him a vast horde and in the trail of 'Ashwamedha', the horse-sacrifice, he and Porus conquered the entire Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

With the aid of Kautilya's spies who spread false rumours, they broke the morale of the people. They also poisoned the water-tanks and did other mischiefs. The Nanda army, broken in spirit, fled, and Chandragupta entered Pataliputra in triumph; he set fire to the palace and the Nandas were completely exterminated.

Porus married a lovely Maghadhan princess who had been reared on poison. Porus dies due to this contact. This was another invention by Seligman.

In the meantime Seleukos Nikator, Alexander's lieutenant, declared himself the emperor of the world and invaded India. This invasion was repulsed and Seleukos retreated, yielding Sind and Afghanistan to Chandragupta in exchange for a few elephants.

Seligman made it appear that Alexander had retreated from India of his own accord. But Majumdar says, 'The credit of freeing the country of the Greeks is un-animously assigned to Chandra-Gupta.' (*Ancient India*, p. 108) Further, the eminent historian considered that the statesmanship of Kautilya was equally responsible for Chandragupta's success; other factors were division of opinion among the Greek ranks and the discontentment of the army.

Chandragupta married and soon had a son, Bindusara, whose tutoring was taken up by the venerable Kautilya himself. When Bindusara was twenty-five, Chandragupta retired to a Jain monastery in Karnataka as a Jain monk. He had lived to see his grandson born, whom he called Ashoka.

Ashoka, as a young boy, was extremely mischievous. He had for pals and companions shepherds and low-born lads. This was one of the lessons his grandfather had taught him: to mix with the common people.

Ashoka grew up and married his teacher's daughter, Devi. They had two issues, Mahendra and Sanghamitra. At that time, Ashoka was viceroy in Ujjain and was leading a carefree life when news reached him that an uprising had taken place in Taxila. He was sent post-haste there. He quelled the revolt more by tact than by force of arms. Just then Bindusara died.

Seligman did not mention how many brothers Ashoka had. She has made it appear that he was the only son. She also did not mention the means he adopted to

become a king. (Here the historians are at variance as to the number of brothers he had and the method he employed to eliminate them.)

He toured his vast domain and when he was in Kalinga, under the pretext of a minor difference, he pounced on the little kingdom and, after a terrible carnage, left it crushed.

This happened to be the turning-point of his life. He became a Buddhist, touring the land and conquering it by love. He established several hermitages, erected many pillars and rock-edicts. He also built the stupa at Buddha Gaya. He died in Nepal.

The latter part of the book reads like a history-text instead of like a novel with living persons. The characters of Chandragupta, Kautilya, Bindusara and Ashoka are not well brought out. The whole lacks the verve and intensity of a literary creation, in spite of Tagore's blessings.

*(To be continued)*

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# EUROPE 1974

## A TRAVELOGUE

(24)

THE year we visited England it was the Birth Centenary of the great Englishman, Sir Winston Churchill. The grateful nation tried to honour him in various ways. Naturally, for the tourists the most interesting aspect of the celebrations was the exhibitions held in London, one in Somerset House and another in the palace of the Marquess of Bath. In these exhibitions were displayed the personal belongings of the late Prime Minister and a huge number of photographs, which in themselves were like a biography showing all the aspects of his personality and work. We see him there as the young soldier in the Boer war in South Africa; then the rising politician, endearingly called by the people "Good old Winnie"; then the statesman and orator about whom Bevin, his arch-opponent, once said, "He is stupendous, history itself was in the House and spoke to us when he spoke." There were photographs of him laying bricks, or painting in his leisure hours. Novelist, journalist, biographer, historian, his greatest work of course is his Memoirs which should be read by everyone interested in recent World History. We see Churchill all dressed up for a great formal ceremony, or for the Ascot or Derby races. The English people are fond of races. They say that in peace-time Lord Salisbury avoided calling a cabinet meeting when there was racing at Ascot, Derby or New Market; and the House of Commons adjourned for the Derby. Most members of the Houses of Parliament were leading sportsmen on the Turf. Churchill himself was at one time a racehorse-owner. And the hats that he wore with his various dresses were displayed in the exhibition in a most novel manner.

We got a glimpse of the several homes he had lived in: 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister's official residence; Chequers, his official holiday rest-house; Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, his ancestral mansion and his birth-place. And then there was his own house Chartwell in Kent. He loved Kent and said it was the Garden of England and called his own house "God's Own Corner". In this restful place he spent his leisure hours gardening, building rockeries and water-works. There were also photographs of the various offices in which he had worked and the rooms he had slept in during the war-years under air-raid shelters. The Cambridge University had already honoured Churchill by naming a college after him. Harrow too did not lag behind in showing its respect. When he died the State gave him the most expensive burial possible. According to his wishes he was buried near his parents in the churchyard at St. Martin's Bladen Parish Church at Bladen, which is near his ancestral home.

\*

In the atomic era it is no longer possible to give the credit of a great achievement

to one person only. Yet one cannot but ponder: "Could England have won the war without a Winston Churchill?" His gusto, his courage, his indomitable will, his imaginative patriotism, his tenacity were such that they could have moved mountains. A colossus among men, he projected a personality of superhuman dimensions during the war. His speeches reveal the man, and one cannot but admire him, and they leave one wondering from where he got the inspiration. Such utterances are rare in human history. Who but a Churchill could have said when the Dunkirk disaster was imminent: "Of course whatever happens at Dunkirk we shall fight on"?

Under Chamberlain's stewardship England had made no preparations for war and was caught napping. When the war came and Chamberlain was ousted and Churchill came to power, one of the latter's first utterances was: "You ask, what is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all the might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the past, a lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory—Victory at all cost, victory in spite of all terror: victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival. At this time I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say: 'Come then, let us go forward together with our united strength.'" At another meeting he said, "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat." This was a dynamic echo of what the Italian Garibaldi had once uttered. And he was applauded by the nation. He wrote later. "There was a white glow, overpowering, sublime, which ran throughout our island from end to end."

\*

Himmler (Hitler's deputy) had thought the war would be over by October 1941. Why then did Hitler not follow up his victory instead of allowing the enemy to escape at Dunkirk? This episode will never be really understood. On the 24th of May, for no reason at all, Hitler inspected the front-line of the German Army, and cried halt, although the German Supreme Army Headquarters had ordered General Halder to see to it that the enemy did not escape by sea. Was it the fear of his armoured formations being damaged or was there a political consideration behind Hitler wanting to stop for a while? England was sounded from various quarters. And Hitler's speech reveals his cunning hypocrisy. On July 19, he addressed his Reichstag: "In this hour I feel it to be my duty before my own conscience to appeal once more to reason and common sense in Great Britain as much as elsewhere. I consider myself in a position to make this appeal, since I am not a vanquished foe begging favours, but a victor speaking in the name of reason. I can see no reason why this war need go on. .... . Possibly, Mr. Churchill will brush aside this statement of mine by saying it is merely born of fear and doubt of final victory. In that case I shall have relieved my conscience in regard to the things to come." And Churchill did brush it aside.

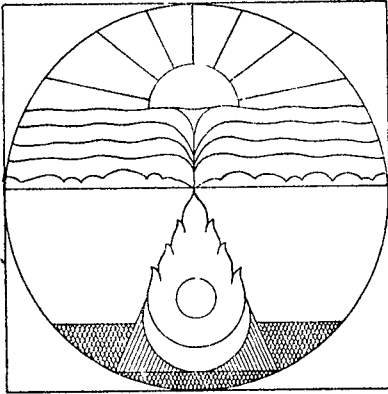
One of Churchill's speeches at this time ended like this: "Even though large



tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end; we shall fight in France, we shall fight in the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing-grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender. And even if we were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the Old."

*(To be continued)*

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