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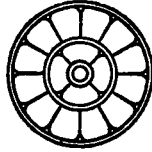
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.

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# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXI

No. 6

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

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# PRAYER TO THE SUPREME

## SOME WORDS OF THE MOTHER

HUMBLY, quietly, my prayer rises to Thee, O sweet Master, Thou who acceptest without argument and without censure all that is offered to Thee, Thou who givest Thyself and makest Thyself known to all, without asking whether they are worthy of it or not, Thou who findest nothing too weak, too small, too modest, too inadequate to manifest Thee....

Let me lay myself at Thy feet, let me melt into Thy heart and disappear in Thee, let me be annihilated in Thy beatitude, or rather let me be only Thy servant, claiming nothing more. I desire, I aspire for nothing else. To be only *Thy* servant is all I ask.

JULY 27, 1914

\*

Thou whom I call my God, Thou who art the personal form of the Transcendent Eternal, the Cause, Source and Reality of my individual being, Thou who hast through the centuries and millenniums slowly and subtly kneaded this Matter, so that one day it could become consciously identified with Thee, and be nothing but Thee; O Thou who hast appeared to me in all Thy divine splendour—this individual being in all its complexity offers itself to Thee in an act of supreme adoration; it aspires in its entirety to be identified with Thee, to be Thyself, eternally Thou, merged for ever in Thy Reality. But is it ready for that? Is Thy work fully accomplished? Is there in it no longer any shadow, ignorance, or limitation? Canst Thou at last definitely take possession of it and, in the sublimest, most integral transformation free it forever from the world of Ignorance and make it live in the world of Truth?

Or rather Thou art myself divested of all error and limitation. Have I become integrally this true self in all the atoms of my being? Wilt Thou bring about an overwhelming transformation, or will it still be a slow action in which cell after cell must be wrested from its darkness and its limits?...

Thou art the Sovereign, ready to take possession of Thy kingdom; dost Thou not find Thy kingdom yet ready enough for Thee to link it definitively to Thyself and become integrated with it?

Will the great miracle of the integral Divine Life in the individual at last be accomplished?

January 15, 1916

# WHAT HAS BROUGHT US HERE?

## AN ANSWER BY THE MOTHER

*Mother, what's interesting is this: What is there in us that has made us come here?*

AH, that is interesting! What is the reason of your being here? Well, it's for each one to find it. Have you found it, you? No, not yet? Why, that's another very interesting question!

If you...(Silence) If you asked yourselves this, you would be obliged to seek the answer somewhere, within—because it is *within* you, the answer. “What is there in us that has made us come here?” The answer is within. There is nothing outside. And if you go deep enough, you will find a very clear answer...(silence) and an interesting answer. If you go deep enough, into a sufficiently complete silence from all outer things, you will find within you that flame about which I often speak, and in this flame you will see your *destiny*. You will see the aspiration of centuries which has been concentrated gradually, to lead you through countless births to *the great day of realisation*—that preparation which has been made through thousands of years, and is reaching its culmination.

And as you will have gone very deep to find this, all your incapacities, all your weaknesses, everything in you that denies and does not understand, all that—you will feel that it is not yourself, it is just like a garment which serves in some way and which you have put on for the time being. But you will understand that in order to be truly capable of profiting fully by the opportunity to do what you wanted to do, what you have aspired to do for such a long time, you must gradually bring the light, the consciousness, the truth into all these obscure elements of the external garment, so that you may be able to understand integrally *why you are here!* And not only that you may understand it, but that you may be able to do it. For centuries this has been prepared in you, not in this...(Mother pinches the skin of her forearm). This is quite recent, isn't it?...but in your true self. And for *centuries* it has been awaiting *this opportunity*.

And then you enter *immediately* into the marvellous. You see to what an extent it is extraordinary...that things which one has so long hoped for, things for which one has prayed so much, made so many efforts, suddenly a moment comes when *they are realised*.

It is the moment when great things are done. One must not miss the opportunity.

4 August, 1954

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

(Continued from the issue of May 1979)

(10)

DECEMBER 20, 1916

"I SEE in your heart a diamond surrounded with a golden light." This was the Divine Self, *le moi divin*.

The Mother said she had seen the Buddha for the first time at a lecture given by Mme. Alexandra David-Neel, in Paris during the first decade of the century. That lady was a well-known Buddhist, a luminary of the Buddhist world in those days. As Mme David-Neel spoke of the Buddhist doctrine, the Mother saw the Buddha appear in person behind the speaker. He had a bluish light around him. The Mother went up to the lady and told her that the Buddha was actually there, inspiring her speech. She was shocked, and said to the Mother that she must have been seeing visions!

Later on, when the Mother was in Japan, the Buddha would come to her quite often. He resembled very much the type of face we see in the Indian images. He told the Mother that he had not finished his work: the work of transformation remained to be done.

"I know and love you as you knew and loved me before." In reply to a question from one of the children, "Who were you at that time," the Mother said in a discouraging tone: "Every time the Consciousness has manifested on earth, I was there." We were left to guess who she was at the time of the Buddha.

December 25, 1916

As this was Christmas Day, the Mother spoke at length on the Christmas festival. It is a very old festival, she said, much older than Christianity. It really means the renewal of the light, *le renouveau de la lumière*. The days go on growing shorter and shorter in Europe during the winter months. Then suddenly, one day the sun turns round and there is promise of the spring's return. It is in celebration of this that the festival came into being. Later on, some two hundred years after Christ was born, some of the doctors of the Church met together and decided to make it the birthday of Christ.

It has been a long tradition that on Christmas Eve a complete peace reigns on earth, so that even a sheep is safe with the wolf. One who does not have regard for this tradition is looked down upon as unworthy of manhood.

At the end of that day's talk, the Mother asked a question: "Do you remember, sometimes you feel so very good and so full of good will that there is a nice warm feeling in your chest—and you automatically make a wish, a prayer, have an aspiration? Can you tell me what is the prayer you make on such occasions? Of course, the prayer must be absolutely automatic; it could not be something that you may have read in a book..." There was no answer. The Mother said, "Try this experiment sometimes."

January 5, 1917

"Love is nothing else than the tie which unites and holds together all the flowers of Thy divine bouquet." The *raison d'être* of the Divine Love is to bring back together, *ramener ensemble*, the consciousnesses. Without the Divine Love, the entire creation would break up into fragments. But this Divine Love is very different from the distortion it undergoes in the hands of egoistic human beings. It has been distorted like an image seen through a distorting mirror.

January 10, 1917

"When the will puts itself forth for an outward result, then it is powerful and effective." This happened when the will worked for making others progress. But that was something personal to the Mother and should not be taken as a general rule to follow. "What you should do," said the Mother, "is in fact just the opposite of what has been described here: your first aim should be to concentrate on your own progress. When you find something wrong in the world, correct it in yourself, that would be the best help you can give to the world."

March 27, 1917

The Dialogue: in this dialogue, the words within the inverted commas are spoken to the Mother's being, the other words are the replies given by that being. It is a sequel to what was said a few days ago about the future work of the Mother.

"The living form and the three inanimate images." Violet is the colour of the vital. The "living form" is the *forme vitale*. The three "inanimate images" are the three forms of the physical being—mental-physical, vital-physical and material-physical. The "dust" stands for inanimate matter. Each state of being is composed of three degrees, *trois degrés*.

"The door of consciousness." There are planes or levels of consciousness, one above the other, rising in tiers. But there is a sort of barrier between each pair, a door which has to open before one can pass from one to the other. The reference here is to this door.

"Knock at the door...and it will be opened to thee." Have an aspiration towards a knowledge and you will have it.



"The river streams limpid and silvery." This is the spiritual force. It has a silvery colour.

"Thou hast sown the seeds in the fields", that is, thou hast awakened the consciousness.

"Thou wilt be the woodcutter who binds the faggots." This is the role of the Divine Love, which leads the creation back to its Origin. It is through love that creatures try to go back to their Origin, not through any other compulsion.

(Concluded)

SANAT K. BANERJI

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## WORD-WEATHER

LET the word form like a cloud in the sky,  
 Charged with the lightning and great with the rain,  
 Let it swell till it breaks with a violent cry  
 And pours down in life-giving streams to the plain.

The windless blue heavens in silence prepare  
 An unseen foundation to bear up its mass;  
 Then it heaps its himalayan shape in the air,  
 Over fleece-foothills that gather and pass,

Taking the form of a thunderhead-tower,  
 Brilliant and white, based with glittering black,  
 A densely packed monolith vibrant with power,  
 That swells till it breaks with a flash and a crack.

Let it grow, silently taking its form,  
 Slowly condensing the mists of the mind  
 Into a shimmering seat of the storm  
 That brings speech to the voiceless and light to the blind.

PETER HEEHS



## TO MATRIMANDIR AGAIN

RECOUNTED BY CHAMPAKLAL

OUR brother Narad had arranged on 21st February 1979, The Mother's birthday, a flower-show at his place in Auroville as a loving offering to our Divine Mother from his dedicated family. For me to go to his garden would have been a joy even on any other day, to see brother Narad with his plants as if he were near The Mother. The plants speak to him—of course the plants speak to others also, but everyone does not hear. When he is near the plants, his face beams. It is a happy sight to see him and the plants also. His love for nature and his dedicated devotion thrill us. If one loves nature and becomes one with nature, one gets the feeling of being in another world when one is in his garden.

As soon as we reached his place, we entered into a pleasant, joyful and devotional atmosphere. We saw all the flowers arranged in a very simple and artistic way, with their significances given by The Mother. It was not only a show of flowers but their living presence. All the flowers were expressing themselves and it was very difficult to move away from their presence.

After we had seen the garden, we were taken to the top of Matrimandir, to the Meditation Hall. We sat there for some time. It was very quiet. The atmosphere was extremely peaceful and full of dynamic force.

I saw The Mother with Her supreme sweet smile, pouring all Her love. The Hall was filled with supreme Love. She caressed my head for a few seconds, with both hands, and put Her seal on my forehead by way of a soft kiss. I saw in the Hall nothing except brilliant golden Light. I felt She covered both my eyes with Her palms, the way She used to do when She was in Her physical body.

I saw the Auroville Foundation Ceremony of 28th February 1968 as I had heard it being narrated to The Mother then. But now I saw all with an inner significance. I saw The Mother just above each youth participating in the Foundation Ceremony, with Her beatific, sweet, supreme smile. She radiated bright golden light and Her Divine Love. This reminded me of Krishna's Ras Lila. Each participant was on a lion, holding his country's flag in one hand and the earth of his land in the other, marching towards the Foundation Urn. The whole sight was magnificent. The lions were beautiful and most majestic in a shining golden colour. Their huge manes were almost touching the ground. The whole atmosphere was permeated with some unseen substance. This day of 28th February 1968 was unique in the world's history—as expressed in an ancient Sanskrit saying— न भूतो न भविष्यति —it has never happened before and will not occur in future!

This vision reminds me of what The Mother once told me—that the flowers of Divine Love, which She used to give to Kamala for preparing Blessing Packets, were charged by Her. Now She gave me the experience of how She would do it. I

saw the whole Meditation Hall of Matrimandir charged with the supreme Divine Love.

When I went to Matrimandir on 7th December 1978, I wanted to go down, but could not do so. The second time on 4th January '79, when The Mother arranged the visit again, it so happened that I went down but could not go up. Now when She arranged my going for the third time on 22nd February 1979, I was taken up. This is The Mother's way—She arranges everything without one's asking! It is all Her Glory and Grace!

---

## THE FUTURE

No more with lilting melodies  
 Shall I bedeck the morn,  
 For summer's gone and evensong  
 With autumn now is born.

And golden winds from ancient fields  
 The old year now outrace,  
 Whose haunting timeless melodies  
 Through the future make their ways

With lines of splendid majesty  
 That hint at what's to come,  
 The flaming twilight hierarchies,  
 Announcers of the sun.

And in the gathering twilight  
 Now trembling like a veil  
 I have felt the mighty harmonies  
 That shall one day prevail.

ROGER HARRIS

## A GOLDEN VISION

### A REPORT BY CHAMPAKLAL

ON 16th April 1979, just before we left Calcutta, I was sitting in Umesh bhai's drawing room,

I saw The Mother standing in space, just in front of me, looking at me. The Mother's look was very very intimate and full of compassion. She looked at my forehead with very penetrating eyes. I began to feel vibrations in my forehead and all over inside my body. After some time I felt as if a fire was burning inside and everything became very hot. With this there was a throbbing in the whole body. In spite of this fire burning inside, my external body was very cool. It is very difficult to put in words what was going on within me.

I looked at The Mother. She was smiling. Her smile seemed meaningful. I noticed that Her body was expanding more and more, in all directions. The whole space was covered by Her. There was nothing except Her—no sky, no earth—there was only The Mother with Her Virat Kaya (Stupendous Form). I am now surprised as to how I was able to see this form of Hers. Then this gigantic figure was no more there and I could only see bright cool golden Light. I saw The Mother coming out from it with Her transparent golden body which appeared to be made of Light only. I saw a golden hammer in Her hand. This hammer also seemed to be made of bright golden Light only. In Her other hand, there was a luminous golden lotus.

The Mother looked again at my forehead. This time my forehead expanded and became vast and vaster as if there was no end! The Mother lifted Her hammer, turned it around in space and struck it hard on my forehead. Something came out from my forehead and vanished in space. Inside me there was a movement like an electric current going up and down again and again. This lasted for a few seconds. The body was extremely cool. Then I saw the golden Light inside all the parts of my body. This golden Light began to radiate from my body and spread around in space. It was going far and more far.

The Mother came very near to me and with both Her palms covered my eyes and forehead—just as She used to do when She was in Her physical body.

The vision was over. It gave me a feeling of a great change in myself.

# OUR LIGHT AND DELIGHT

## RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE WITH THE MOTHER

*(Continued from the issue of May 1979)*

17

### Lights and Shades of the Yogic Life

AN elderly lady who had come to the Ashram through me and stayed here for several years went back to Bombay because of some dissatisfaction with her lodgings as well as in response to a call from her family. She must have thought Bombay-life would be a bit of a relief after the rigours of Yoga. But she was soon disillusioned. A lot of suffering had to be undergone and she was very anxious to return. The Mother, however, did not encourage her. Time and again her request went unheeded. I was again in Bombay at the time. So she visited me with a plea to recommend her to the Mother. She said she was prepared to accept any condition of life in Pondicherry. As I was shortly to make a trip to the Ashram I agreed to take up her case. I told the Mother: "X is frantically eager to come back. Won't you let her do so?" The Mother answered: "When she was here she was always complaining." I urged: "She will accept whatever condition you keep her in." The Mother smiled and said: "They all say that. But once they are settled they make demand after demand." I persisted in my brief, and ultimately the Mother said "Yes". The lady lived up to her promise and the rest of her days in the Ashram were peaceful.

I have mentioned her because we are inclined to forget what a blessing it is to be allowed to stay in the Ashram and breathe its purifying and uplifting atmosphere. We should be ready to put up with a few inconveniences, especially if they keep recurring in spite of efforts to remove them, for then they assume the role of challenges to our nature and press upon some part or other of our being which refuses to change. Frequently the advice proffered to bear them is disliked but the excuse to dislike it would be valid only if those who are comfortably off and do not know where the shoe pinches start a spiritual discourse for our soul's benefit. Even so, while perceiving the hollowness of the discourse, we should not fail to realise in our recurring disadvantages the possibility of Sri Aurobindo's finger falling on the obscure spots of our psychology.

The lady whom I have brought into my narrative had a vein of maternal solicitude and as a nurse she could be very helpful even if occasionally a little nagging with her over-attentions. There was also a streak of simplicity, almost of naivety, in her mind which was pleasing and gave a chance now and again to a mischievous person of my type to play a prank. Even if a trifle irrelevantly (or irreverently) I cannot resist a small anecdote connected with her.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had come on a visit to Pondicherry and the Ashram.

After he had gone I met my friend in the Dining Room and told her: "From the pavement outside my house I saw Nehru's car slowly pass and I had a very good look at him." She said: "I had much better luck. He was at the Samadhi at a distance of only a few feet from me. I could see him clearly from top to bottom." The imp in me put the question: "How was the bottom?" At once she lit up and answered: "Very fair." The people around us burst into laughter, but the poor lady could not understand why and seemed to think them rather silly.

My impish strain surely needed control at times but it cannot be declared quite inconsistent with a Yogic life led under the Master's lavish humour and the Mother's keen wit. The humour of Sri Aurobindo was indeed so ready to cover any aspect of life and could so easily turn even upon himself that one had to exercise a certain censorship in print lest the public should misunderstand his temper. With a view to inclusion in the periodical I was editing, I remember submitting to the Mother a snatch of conversation recorded by Nirodbaran. She enjoyed it but shook her head.

\*

On page 96 of *Champaklal Speaks* it is recorded on December 15, 1949 that to meet the demand for bonus by the employed workers of the Ashram—Rs. 20,000 in that year—the Mother was thinking of selling some of her jewellery. As the expense on the workers kept increasing with the years, the need to sell her jewellery also increased. As far as I know, the Mother sold it in batches on several occasions. Luckily there was a very generous man connected with the Ashram, who bought it up two or three times and each time gave it back to her. After he died, the situation changed. Finally I believe the jewellery had to go out of her hands. On the last occasion she gave a choice to many of us to buy what we wanted. When my turn came to take something, she said: "You are poor. You can't buy anything. I'll give you a tie-pin which I used to wear at one time." It was a gold tie-pin with a small gem in its head.

It is one of my most precious possessions. Another gift from her is the typewriter I am using. The letters to her typed on my old machine taxed her eyes. She told me: "Your lines are wavy—they are like little curving snakes. I shall give you a new typewriter. I have ordered four Remingtons."

An object that had immense worth for me arrived from Sri Aurobindo one day in the 'thirties. Whenever I had anything I valued, I had the impulse to offer it to him or the Mother. I thought everybody felt the same. But I came to know that often good gifts to people were sent up to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo merely to be blessed. A fellow sadhak, of whom I had a high opinion, sent up a beautiful fountain-pen. When I saw it with the Mother, I took it to be a present. She said: "It is not a present. To give it would never even enter the head of this man." I was surprised and came to the conclusion that extraordinary experiences were not the master-clue to the spiritual status of a disciple: the master-clue was the capacity of self-giving, the flow of the being towards the Master and the Mother, the inner generosity forgetful

of one's own importance and interests.

Either prompted by the sight of the pen or else independently, I remember writing to Sri Aurobindo for specifications—whether he liked a pen that was thin or substantial in body, one that wrote fine or thick. As I had expected from his usual writing, he preferred a fine point. I got my mother in Bombay to send me the best fountain-pen available with the characteristics liked by Sri Aurobindo. When it arrived I dispatched it to him with the words: "This pen is fit only for your aristocratic hand. It will go ill with my peasant paw. Please make use of it." Imagine my astonishment when he sent me in response the pen he had himself been working with. How happy I was, holding it in my fingers, the reddish-brown body of it a hint of some new earth-creation and the sharply pointed gold nib the spring-head of a divine outflow from that transformed terrestriality. All that I wrote with it carried for me the sense of the Master's hand subtly one with my own.

\*

During the last visit of mine to the Ashram before I came back to settle in it at the beginning of 1954, the Mother said to me in effect:

"The mental plane is so vast and so varied that one can go on and on in it and be lost in its wonders and surprises, its vista upon vista of search and discovery. Feeling at home in it, one may never turn to the true spiritual realm.

"It has also a certain watery nature. It easily flows into any channel, any mould. It is open to infinite diversity and does not have the inherent strength to hold on to one life-theme. Nor can it be firmly caught—it keeps slipping away.

"In your instance, it is not, as you believe, your mind that has kept you on our Path. No doubt, Sri Aurobindo has paid an extraordinary compliment to your mental ability. I should not tell you this, it may make you proud. But what has supported you in your ideal of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, what made it possible for the inner psychic call to persist all along, and brought you safe to us through all dangers and deviations, is your vital being. It is the strength and loyalty of the Vital that has ensured your return in spite of numerous obstacles."

The Mother's speech was quite a startler to me. I had always blamed my Vital for all the difficulties I had had in Yoga, and I must have been right on many occasions, but I had never realised the positive contribution made by this part of my nature to my very adherence to Yoga. Now that I cast my mind back to a certain incident, I feel that it was my Vital that had made a pronouncement which must have astonished the Mother herself. When I was on the verge of a decision which she did not approve of, she remarked that I seemed to think this decision would make no difference to my spiritual future and to my relationship with her and Sri Aurobindo. I declared in reply: "Nothing can ever come in the way of my spiritual future, nothing can ever change my attitude to you and Sri Aurobindo. I don't accept from anybody that any difference to my destiny as your disciple can come about through



whatever happens or is done.”

It was evidently the inmost soul, eternal child of the Divine, speaking, but the words of indomitable strength, with an oddly arrogant accent, in terms of concrete life-values, life-situations, were shaped by the spontaneous collaboration of the Vital with that soul. The reasoning mind was not looking at the future: the unthinking life-force that had been gripped by the Divine was pushing with utter faith towards the time to come. It could dare anything, it was sure of its adherence and its ability to endure. I am reminded of some lines in one of my poems:

The exquisite heart, the delicate reverie gain  
Miracled escape, but never the God-life's zest.  
Blind hungers alone draw down transcendent things...

It is such hungers—the vital impulses in a super-state, as it were—that are reponsible for all massive creations giving form to the Spirit's vision: a Pyramid of Gaza, a Borobudur temple-complex, a *King Lear*, a *Ninth Symphony*, a Sistine-Chapel-ceiling. And the supramentalisation of matter depends essentially on the reckless self-abandonment of man's vital being to the Divine's call. The Mother once told me: “When the Vital surrenders to the Divine we have a marvellous event. Something indescribably beautiful and grand takes place—the absolute sweep of the Vital's throwing itself at the Divine's feet is incomparable.” The Mother also observed that the true joy of the sadhana comes when the Vital co-operates. Till then all happiness of Yoga comes and goes, and there is no fixity, no planting of it down into the earth—into our physical existence.

\*

Talking of adherence to the Divine, I recall the Mother's comment on a sentence which I once approvingly quoted to her from George Meredith. Meredith had written to the effect: “Men fall from God's Grace because they cling to God not with their strength but with their weakness.”

The Mother's instant reaction was: “That is rubbish!”

I was taken aback and from her attitude I understood what she meant. Let me explain.

Meredith's is nothing more than a clever contrived statement with no real insight into the critical situation it flashes out. If the Grace is to respond and lift Man up, Man has to feel his weakness before the Divine, develop a sense of dependence on Him and make a self-surrender. To have a feeling of strength before the Divine is egoism: the feeling of strength comes when one has clung to the Divine with all one's natural weakness offered to Him—the strength comes from the Divine, it is not something one has to boast of, independently of Him.

The Mother's infallible inner perception of the truth in words and things and persons came home to me also when she told us what she had seen in regard to a

Frenchman who had landed in Pondicherry and suddenly got interested in the Ashram's doings and as suddenly run away. He was given quarters in Boudy House on the beach-road. Recalling the interview she had given him, the Mother said:

"He told me a very remarkable incident. While shaving himself one morning here, he saw in the mirror a ball of light entering his head from above it. Although the account looked unbelievable I could see at once that he was speaking the truth. For when he told me some other things, I could perceive immediately that he was making them up. A sort of shadow came over his face and I knew the presence of falsehood."

It would indeed be a helpful development on our part to acquire a little bit of her truth-sense. A general danger to which a lack of such a sense would expose us is hit off very pointedly by some words of the Mother. On one occasion she said: "I had two visions. In one while I was walking at 6 p.m. I saw children rushing to hear a humbug! I thought: What will happen in my absence?"

Of course the first step is to be able to catch all that goes humbugging within our own selves—all the pretensions, all the self-satisfactions, all the sense of superiority, all the manoeuvre to be impressive Yogis, as if an infinite of the unachieved did not stretch before us, the supreme egoless soul-sweet spirit-wide range after range of evolutionary possibility to which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother constantly beckoned us.

Either we are too important in our own eyes or else we cast about for spiritual excitement from whatever direction, groping for gurus and seeking substitutes for the Mother. We forget the special Light and Force she and our Master brought down for earth-use and fixed it in the earth's subtle being for all future. While we have to respect spirituality wherever it genuinely occurs, while we should be ready to profit by every authentic aspiration around us, we must cling centrally to the Great Presence that has been granted to our souls and never strive to find somebody to stand in the Mother's place. We must also guard against being swept off our feet by glittering shows and high-sounding claims—the fanfares of what the Mother bluntly designated as "a humbug".

No matter what may have attracted us in our days of ignorance, the moment the immaculate Himalaya of Sri Aurobindo rose up before us and the silvery Ganges of the Mother flowed down from it to our lowlands, all our work in the world should lie in giving ourselves to that Guardian Peace of the Eternal and that Gracious Power of the Infinite.

*(To be continued)*

AMAL KIRAN

# THE MOTHER AND THE LORD OF FALSEHOOD

## A READER'S LETTER AND THE EDITOR'S ANSWER

### The Letter

I WAS going through the article "Our Light and Delight" in the April *Mother India* and was astounded by the statement that the Mother assumed the form of The Lord of Falsehood in order to misguide Hitler and make him launch an attack on Stalin's Russia. This seems incredible. I have not heard of this before and surely it is not the way the Mother worked for achieving results. Did She really say at any time that She had assumed this form?

### The Answer

I am sorry I have disturbed you. But what I have written about is factual. Both Udar and André heard it from the Mother herself. It is also in the tapes which are being published as *Agenda*. You have been shocked because you have misconceived the world-roles played by evolutionary Avatars like Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Old ideas about spirituality are leading you astray in the assessment of the Supramental Incarnations.

Let me elucidate my point. But before I come to immediate particulars I may say a word on Incarnations in general—Incarnations in the Indian sense. The two greatest and most recognisable Avatars before Sri Aurobindo were Rama Dasarathi and Krishna Vasudeva. Both of them carried out sanguinary tasks involving the direct destruction of those who embodied anti-divine hostile forces. A lot of lives were lost not only on the side of these embodiments but also on the side of the Avatars. War in the full sense of the term, involving secrecy, ruse and surprise, was accepted as part of the Avataric mission. Orthodoxy is bound to get shocked and several attempts have been made to allegorise away the lives and deeds of Rama and Krishna.

By insisting on transformation of the physical existence and not merely a purification as a step towards transcendence of earth and life—by bringing the new message of the Supramental Descent—Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are more specifically evolutionary in their mission and more openly opposed to the rule of the Asura and the Rakshasa in the world. Sri Aurobindo did not hesitate to take part in revolutionary politics in the days before he came to Pondicherry. His work meant risk of life both to himself and his followers, as well as to those who were ranged against him. He had even in mind an armed insurrection.

When World War II broke out he went out of his way to give support to the Allied Cause. This evoked a protest from orthodox spiritual thinkers: "How can a master of spirituality associate himself with a war instead of standing above both the parties? Surely the Allies are no saints as compared to the Nazis!" Sri Aurobindo took care to show that, whether the Allies be saints or not, they could not be equated

to Hitler and his henchmen: the Allies represented a side which was in accord with the many-moded evolutionary drive of Nature, unlike Nazism which was an inrush from the typical Rakshasic plane to take possession of the human world. Sri Aurobindo also pointed out the common error of putting together a human historical phenomenon like British Imperialism and Hitler's barbarous gospel of the Master Race. Finally, he not only espoused the Allied Cause but also took the bold step of calling the War the Mother's War.

All this should show you how intimately the Mother and he were connected with the conduct of the war and with all its vicissitudes. They were like two Super-Generals. Sri Aurobindo has explicitly declared that he pitted his spiritual force against the Nazis and later against the Japanese. He kept himself acquainted with all the turns and twists of the campaigns both on the European front and on the Asian. What the Mother did at a critical moment was absolutely in accord with the roles they had assumed—and it was a continuation or development of the subtle and occult process which Sri Aurobindo had hinted at in the concluding lines of *The Dwarf Napoleon*.

I hope I have clarified the doubt you had expressed by saying that the Mother could not have acted in the manner I have depicted and that this could not be her way of action.

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## A STRANGE CURE

### A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I READ with special interest the incident about a vital being's attack on Sehra on 19-12-78 during her sleep (*Mother India*, April '79, pp. 220-221).

I relate a similar incident which I came across recently.

I have a cousin with a wife, two sons and grand-daughters and their sons. The cousin couple and the sons have had Darshan of the Mother, and the whole family, including all the children, is devoted to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The eldest son had a son following four daughters. He must have been about three months old when brought to me on 6-1-79. He had haematoma of the brain. The local doctor had extracted a lot of blood from the brain but could not check it. There was no outer sign of injury. No one knew how the brain became blood-flooded.

When the local doctor found the case beyond his capacity, the child was sent to me at Ahmedabad. His condition was very bad. He might have died at any moment. Froth was coming out of his mouth, the eyes were dilated upwards, the skin was near-green. I immediately put him under a good neurosurgeon, who proposed an operation after tests had been completed within two days.

The X-rays showed about 1½ cm. crack (vertical) on the top of the skull without any outside mark. Haemoglobin was low with symptoms of acute anaemia. The boy was kept in the hospital, pending the operation. Every now and then he showed signs of collapsing. On each occasion I rushed to him, and with my pointed first finger made a vertical downward sign, uttering the Mother's name. The boy immediately responded—the froth stopped, the eye-lids and eyes became normal, and the child lapsed into sleep with a sweet smile on his face whenever the Mother's name was uttered. This went on for three days.

On the operation day the head was shaved and I took the child to the operation theatre. The neurosurgeon took him from me and went into the theatre. Within ten minutes he came back saying, "Nothing requires to be done. There was no interior bleeding at all and the case can be treated normally and medically to increase the blood which was lessened by the earlier loss." The child was kept indoors for five days more. Medicine and our Mother's name and my finger-gesture—this therapy went on. The child has regained normalcy and even after two check-ups there is no after-effect.

When the incident was being discussed, people suspected that some family member might be responsible for the injury. No one knew for sure, and none knows now. But somehow, when the boy was discharged from the hospital, the first words which slipped from my lips were, "Anyhow, the Mother has entered the child's brain-cells through the catastrophe." At the back of my mind was the thought of the new race, the new children, the transformation of the cells, etc.—themes on which the Mother had touched.

The Divine's ways are unorthodox and possibly they are at work—from the

subtle to the gross plane—even by means of what may seem a hostile entity. Perhaps Sehra's case itself might be seen in this light? Then what Huta is quoted by you as rightly saying may already have been coming true, though in a surprising and paradoxical manner!

AMIDHAR BHATT

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### “WHAT DOES YOUR SOUL LOOK LIKE?”\*

A LIGHTED jewel  
brighter than the sun,  
A fiery flame  
stretching towards God.

The Kiss of God  
enshrined in Man,  
The Eternal Smile  
filling every heart.

A pure white swan  
seeking the Eternal Light,  
An earthbound butterfly  
searching the Eternal Flower.

The searchlight of Truth  
revealing Beauty's face.

KIRIT HEMSELL

\* See *Mother India*, February 21, 1978, pp. 108-112.

# WITH MY SWEET MOTHER

## REMINISCENCES BY LALITA

*(Continued from the issue of May 1979)*

### Music

I HAD been very fond of Western music since my early childhood. In the Town Hall of Bombay where we were living because my father was its Custodian, there was a very big organ, about two storeys high, with four hand-manipulated bellows at the back.

Every Sunday a fine robust gentleman came, with four coolies to work the bellows, and played upon the organ for two hours. It was so wonderful. I refused to move from there.

The violin was my favourite instrument and I wanted to learn how to play it, but at that time there were no lady-teachers, and my father being orthodox would not allow me to study with a man, so I took up the piano.

My Parsi piano-teacher was an elderly lady on one of whose birthdays I had been born. She was glad to have me because she thought I had been sent by God to continue her work when she would pass away. Hence she wanted to give me a wide knowledge of Western music, but unfortunately my mother (whom I loved very much) was ambitious, and wanted me to pass examinations with flying colours, so that she could be proud of me when my name appeared in all the papers. Thus my study was confined to the syllabus of the Trinity College of Music, London.

My poor teacher often pleaded with my mother to give me a chance to study other pieces of music, but my mother would not agree, because she wanted me to concentrate on the exams.

Since I was going to school, I did not have more than a few hours to spare for music. Besides, what I really wanted to learn was composition, but I could not do so because my teacher asked for double the fees, which my father could ill afford. Still I used to improvise a lot (which, too, both my mother and my teacher did not approve of). My desire remained an unfulfilled longing in me.

When I came to the Ashram there was no piano here, so I was out of practice for many years. Finally my father sent me my Steinway and the Mother had it placed in the front part of our dining room for me and others to practise on. She also organised a concert there for a high French Official, but he did not care for our playing of Western music. The Mother told me later that these pieces of music were being played so well in France and elsewhere that our rendering seemed quite childish. She Herself was not much pleased with them either.

Later, when I shifted to "Fenêtres" ("Windows") I had my piano in my room and could practise for a longer time. Both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo could hear

me playing on it.

My first big experience of hearing music of some other worlds took place when I was staying in the same house as Vaun and Jeanette Macpheetter, the first two American Ashramites, at a little distance from the Ashram. I was meditating one morning on the terrace, when suddenly something at the top of my head seemed to open, and I heard a wonderful piece of music. It seemed as if an orchestra of five hundred or more musicians had been playing. I told the Mother about it and She was very pleased. Later on She told me to remember it and play it on Her organ. But oh how flat it sounded on an earthly instrument ! How could one transcribe on an organ or piano the quarter and other tones which I had heard? These instruments had only half tones. Perhaps on a string instrument the piece could have been rendered, but even then it would have lost its many-sided harmonies.

I tried repeatedly to reproduce the strange music on my piano also but it sounded absolutely flat, so finally I gave up. I only practised and played to the Mother on Her organ some music by Bach Beethoven, and other composers. She was so gentle and tolerant all the time, and showed me my defects and the way to correct them. She had Herself played this music in France and elsewhere. She was as great a musician as She was a painter.

She told me that Her maternal uncle had once produced an opera in Paris and, knowing well Her beautiful voice, he had given Her a part to sing, which was greatly appreciated by the audience. She was very young at that time.

The Mother often played Her own music to me on the organ, and I sat listening to Her quietly. What wonderful music it was! As Sri Aurobindo has said somewhere, even the Gods came to listen to it.

As time went on, by the Mother's Grace I was able to hear music behind any and every sound. If a tap was running, or the wind was blowing, there was always music behind it. I informed the Mother about this and She said that it was the harmony behind everything which translated itself into music.

When, after a long stay in Bombay, I returned to the Ashram, I commenced to hear from the very first night the music of the sea. I mentioned this to the people of the Guest House where I was staying. They thought I was slightly demented. I had said to them: "In Pondicherry the sea is constantly singing." It is still singing, and I hear its song every day.

Before my piano had arrived and I had shifted to "Fenêtres", I was staying with Sahana on the first floor of what is now called "Huta House". Here I started learning Indian music (specially Mirabai's songs) with Dilip Kumar Roy. I had been given a pedal harmonium and later a Tanpura to play. Dilip and Sahana were excellent musicians, and it was a pleasure to hear them.

Dilip was equally good at singing Western music. Once in 1933, when an Austrian lady—Mrs. Fulop-Miller—was giving a concert in the Meditation Hall on the first floor of the Mother's house, Dilip sang a few songs in German by Schubert,



accompanied on the organ by that lady. The Mother was extremely pleased with his singing. She told me later that he had the voice of an operatic singer. I was there to turn the pages of the music-book, so I had a good chance of hearing everything at close quarters.

Later, when I was staying at "Fenêtres" and I had my piano, the Mother gave me two pupils to teach. One was a young boy who (if I remember correctly) was the son of the architect of Golconde, and the other our poet Arjavananda, or Arjava in short (originally John Chadwick). The young boy was fond of music, but he went away after some time. He told me many interesting things about his life in Japan, from where he had come. On departing, his mother gave me a very pretty brush-holder of purple and gold brocade and some water-colours, all of which I offered to the Mother. She told me that the Japanese were a very aesthetic people and when they got an inspiration they would at once put it down in poetry or in painting, wherever they might be at the time.

Arjava was a perfect gentleman, and treated me with great respect. He learnt to play the piano but he always asked me why Western music could not be composed mathematically. Being a mathematician of a high order who had invented a special method called the Chadwick Method, which was being used at Cambridge at the time, he wanted to know why this music could not be written in that way. "It would be very uninteresting," I said, "if instead of following one's inspiration one made a mathematical problem out of it." This made him smile.

I had put some of his beautiful poems to music and these I used to sing in a soft voice to the Mother to find out how She liked them. Some She approved of, and others She rejected, and asked me to do them again under Her guidance.

A day, however, arrived when both Arjava and myself were attacked by a strange disease, which gave small boils in the armpits. After a lot of trouble I recovered with the help of the hospital doctor. He prepared a serum by taking some blood from the boils, and it was an extremely painful affair. I remember how I wept when I went to the Mother and told Her about it. Poor Arjava could not recover, and had to be sent to a hospital at Bangalore. This he never reached, for he died on the way. I learned he had many physical ailments, including a diseased heart.

It seems that the Mother sent a telegram to his parents in England, asking them if they wanted the body to be sent to them by air. But as the parents did not want it, I believe it was buried in a European cemetery in Bangalore.

I knew nothing of this at the time, but some time later I commenced to hear at night some mysterious sounds in my piano. It was as if someone were passing his hand along the strings inside. I told the Mother about it, and She said to me that it was Arjava, and that he had passed away.

"Poor Arjava!" I said. "I can scarcely believe it!" Then the Mother gave me some incense-sticks which She told me to light before going to bed and then, taking both the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's names, go round all the rooms and finally leave the incense-sticks on the piano. "How kind of Arjava to remember me!"

I said to myself. I prayed that he might rest in deep peace at the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's feet.

Among our musicians in the Ashram was a cellist called Nandini (name given by Sri Aurobindo), an Englishwoman who had come from South Africa where she had been a member of the famous Durban Orchestra. I played accompaniments to her.

With the Mother's approval the wording of "Ave Maria" had been changed, and we played and sang to Her according to the new wordings, beginning with the phrase: "Mira, divinité."

Next came Elizabeth Caspari from Kodaikanal, who also helped us with music for a few months. She wanted me to go with her on a long journey to that famous Himalayan lake (Manassarovar) where sadhus, sannyasis and yogis went every year. The Mother was very displeased when I told Her about it, and it could be because of this that Madame Caspari was made to leave in a hurry. But we kept up our correspondence and I found her very kind towards me. She visited the Ashram again later.

After she had left, another musician came, a French lady whom the Mother called Suryakumari. She was not only a fine musician but also a sincere sadhika. She taught me singing as well as increased my knowledge of playing the piano. She wanted me to take up singing seriously, because she liked my voice and said that I had a good ear for music.

You will see from the above that whenever the Mother wanted a music-teacher, She had only to send a call from within, and the person always turned up.

When I returned to Bombay after a long stay in the Ashram, the first thing I did was to look out for a teacher of Western Music composition. I found an Australian composer who was engaged by the All India Radio (Bombay), but as he was a Government employee he could only teach me on the sly, which did not last long.

Then I went to another teacher who was a great pianist, but she could not teach me much of composition. And the same happened with a beautiful foreign organ-player. Finally I had to give up and just write down what came spontaneously from within.

I had kept up a constant correspondence with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and also sent fair copies to the Mother as an offering of some of my compositions, and received Her blessings.

*(To be continued)*

## REFLECTIONS ON SOME RECENT EVENTS AT PONDICHERRY

ON THE 22nd of January 1979, Pondicherry observed a bandh to protest against a proposal to merge the Union Territory with Tamil Nadu. The Ashram kept its departments closed and the inmates viewed the event with sympathy because they believed that centuries of history had given Pondicherry a distinct personality and it would be crude and unimaginative to ignore the healthy peculiarities of this territory for administrative pragmatism. In this context, it is important to remember what the Mother had said: "Externally, the provinces of India are very different in character, tendencies, culture, as well as in languages, and any attempt to unify them artificially could only have disastrous results."

While this was their attitude, the Ashramites were surprised to see groups of people, mostly consisting of boys, running in a disorganised manner and beginning to stone the Ashram buildings. It seemed they did not know what they were doing in their misplaced enthusiasm. But soon they were followed by other groups of people who could no more be described as boys and who too repeated what the younger lot had done. When questioned why they did so since the Ashram itself was in full sympathy with their sentiment, they had no answer.

However, soon some leaders of the anti-merger committee were good enough to arrive on the scene and request the mob to leave the place. One wishes the leaders had made it clear to their followers earlier that the existence of the Ashram amidst them was one of the boldest arguments in favour of maintaining Pondicherry's individuality.

Although the Ashram sustained considerable loss through the damage caused to its buildings and felt shocked at such illogical conduct of a section of the people, it decided to wait and see, and hoped that in future the people would realise how to record such protests in the correct way.

### A Hope Belied

But it was not to be so. On the 26th of January, there was a boycott of the Republic Day celebration as a protest against the threats of merger and the imposition of Hindi. Again, quite inexplicably, the Ashram houses, workshops, and farms became the targets of attack. A piece of neglected land which the Ashram had taken on lease and, with years of toil and investment, had made into an ideal orchard-cum-garden that, known as Nandanam, had become an attraction even for visitors to Pondicherry, was destroyed in a brutal fashion. Not only were the houses ransacked and vehicles including a new tractor were burnt down, but also the plants were uprooted. The nature of the blind fury can be understood from the shameful fact that the cows were mercilessly beaten up.

The property and papers of a workshop, *Autocare*, were reduced to ashes. Out of a fleet of ten automobiles entrusted to it by the public for repair, three were totally gutted and seven were damaged.

Arson destroyed the Wood Working Unit, situated near the Sports Ground, with its stock of furniture. A school founded by the Hand Made Paper Factory for the children of its local employees was badly damaged. Along with the furniture, slates, etc. the vessels used for serving food to the children were smashed.

A number of residential houses which were situated in the suburbs were subjected to a similar treatment.

### **Why the Ashram did not Intervene**

All are surprised and many people of the city have asked how the Ashram, with its disciplined youths who could have certainly protected the property of the institution did not intervene.

As has been stated earlier, the Ashram had sympathy for the well-meaning demonstration and it never expected a part of the demonstration to take such a turn. Secondly, it believed that the leadership of the stir and the police would take care of law and order. The leadership of the stir, which appreciated the Ashram's attitude, was in constant touch with the Managing Trustee of the Ashram.

But even after the Ashram realised that some people were out to take advantage of the situation to harm the Ashram, it is a fact that it took a decision to refrain from offering any resistance. Indeed, it was a hard exercise in self-restraint. In fact, youths who were guarding various spots and were ready to take any risk to protect the Ashram departments were urgently brought back and were kept under a central supervision. Any sensible man can visualise what the outcome would have been if the youths of the Ashram, with their just anguish, would have acted against the elements which were plainly guilty of harming the innocent. The situation would have taken a turn for the worse; the real issue would have become blurred. It was with this attitude that the Ashram did not even send any report to the press about the senseless harm caused to it.

### **Genesis of the Attack**

The history of Sri Aurobindo Ashram is an indispensable part of the history of modern Pondicherry. The growth of the Ashram and the growth of Pondicherry, over a period of more than half a century, have been a close-knit process. It is a matter of satisfaction for all concerned that the relation between the Ashram and the people of Pondicherry has always been cordial.

Hence, on the day after the attack, when respectable people of Pondicherry said on the authority of their intimate knowledge of the situation that hooligans had been brought from outside to attack the Ashram, we were inclined to believe them, more so, when it is common sense that the local people have nothing to gain from such

an attack. In fact, at two distantly situated farms of the Ashram, 'Gloria' and 'Lake Estate', the people of the nearby villages came forward to forestall any threat to the properties. The Auroshikha Agarbathi unit was zealously guarded by the people of the village.

What could be the motive behind importing hooligans to attack the Ashram? One theory is, the Ashram being a widely respected institution, an attack on it would create a nation-wide resentment against the anti-merger stir. It follows that the attack must have been engineered by people who wanted to sabotage the stir.

This may or may not be true. If we mention this, it is only to highlight the fact that a handful of people can use a crowd to act against the very purpose for which the leaders had mobilised the crowd.

Another theory is that some people who meant to harm the Ashram simply exploited the occasion and they brought the hooligans and also spread the rumour that the Ashram favoured the proposed merger. Yet another theory is that in a rivalry between two groups of people with different political affiliations, each was eager to steal the limelight by attacking the Ashram.

We do not know. Neither are we interested in identifying the elements. We wish to be frank with those people of Pondicherry who might have been misguided, either by their own misunderstanding of the Ashram's stand or by instigation from outside elements.

In 1965, an attack had been mounted against the Ashram in the wake of the anti-Hindi agitation. Then too the Ashram had been taken by surprise. Apart from the bare fact that the number of Hindi-speaking people in the Ashram is a minority, nobody could have had any reason to believe that the Ashram had ever done anything to propagate Hindi. The Mother had expressed Her clear view that English should continue to be the link language for the time being. If India could agree upon one national language, it should be a simple form of Sanskrit. At the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, the media of instruction are English and French. The students are also encouraged to learn their mother-tongues as well as Sanskrit. The International Centre of Education teaches most of the Indian languages and several foreign languages.

Innumerable people of India who have read the works of Sri Aurobindo which are in English and who have come to realise that His works carry the light for the future of humanity, would naturally like English to prevail in India.

Not that violence against the Ashram could be justified even if the Ashram had a different stand on the language issue, but these obvious facts only highlight the utter absurdity of making the Ashram a target of any anti-Hindi sentiment.

It may be relevant to remember here that way back in the 'forties the French Government had proposed to establish a model University at Pondicherry to honour Sri Aurobindo. Again, on the eve of Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary (1972), the national committee formed by the Government of India to celebrate the occasion planned the establishment of an ideal Central University at Pondicherry, to be named after

Him. Neither had the proposal emanated from the Ashram nor had the execution of the plan anything to do with the Ashram. Yet some people tried to exploit the opportunity to cultivate an opinion against the Ashram as if, simply because the University was to be named after Sri Aurobindo, the Ashram was going to benefit by it!

The University under this scheme was lost to Pondicherry. Let it be left to posterity to say whether it was wise to launch an agitation against the proposed University and whether it would not have been in the fitness of things for Pondicherry to have an ideal University bearing Sri Aurobindo's name. The Ashram was silent then and is silent now on that question. What we intend to emphasise is, there seem to be some who drag the Ashram's name into issues with which it is least concerned.

We understand that the slogan that comes handy to rouse the passion of a section of the people, however small, is that the Ashram is a citadel of North Indian people. It is a sad fact and a shame for the whole nation that in every part of the country there are people who can still thrive on instigating communal or provincial feelings. They keep their eyes shut to the truth that there is no town or city in India the population of which is not formed of people from all parts of the country. Sometimes the intermixture is by tens of thousands. To disturb this healthy fibre of our vast country would be suicidal.

Sri Aurobindo Ashram has a population of about 1800 people coming from South, North, East and West of the country and from abroad as well. As observers point out, there is no second organisation in the world which has grown so spontaneously and with such a living example of unity in diversity.

### **The Ashram and Pondicherry**

The simple fact that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother chose Pondicherry as the seat of their spiritual quest is enough for all the people of the Ashram to look upon Pondicherry as a sacred place and to feel proud to be here. What is more, there are innumerable people in India and all over the world—and their number is ever increasing—who deem it a privilege to visit Pondicherry because they adore or admire Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The people of Pondicherry whom providence has chosen to host Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the institution that symbolises the unity of India, should feel equally proud. It is their responsibility to nurture, patronise and protect such an institution.

It is not possible to give an introduction to Sri Aurobindo's vision here. For all interested, his works are there, in the original as well as in translations. Sri Aurobindo gives us the promise of an enlightened future for man. He says that man is an evolving being and a time will come when man will surpass his present imperfect state and grow into a higher being.

In a world torn with ideological tribalism and a variety of pettinesses, Sri Aurobindo's message is a great source of strength. The world is waking up to Sri Aurobindo's message, slowly but surely. The Ashram and Pondicherry have import-

ant roles to play in preserving and disseminating this message.

At Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education which is a part of the Ashram, certain creative experiments in education are carried on which have drawn the attention of the topmost thinkers and educationists. Teachers from many universities and institutions from all over the world come to study the system practised here and they invariably go back with new inspirations.

But, even at purely social and economic levels, the Ashram's participation in the life of Pondicherry is undeniable. It may be relevant to state here that, according to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, all the areas of human activity can become the means of Sadhana. That is why the Ashram does not shun work. All the Ashramites work. That also helps the Ashram to sustain itself.

In this process, the Ashram has built up some small factories, farms, printing press, etc. which employ a large number of skilled and unskilled workers. Hundreds of families of the territory are thus economically associated with the Ashram. The Ashram is Pondicherry's biggest tenant, for it has taken on rent a few hundred houses from the local house-owners. It is because of the Ashram that Pondicherry is on the tourist map of India, drawing an appreciable revenue on that account. While the various State Governments are eager to attract entrepreneurs to their states, at least some entrepreneurs have chosen Pondicherry for their business enterprises because that would enable them to be near the Ashram.

The Ashram is a place where individual seekers pursue their spiritual goal. What is more important, it is a spiritual experiment at the collective level. The inmates are all different yet they are united in the singleness of their aspiration. The Mother did not believe in imposing rigid outward laws to create a semblance of discipline. She wanted the discipline to flourish from within. Such inner discipline, cultivated by a community of people who represent the various shades and degrees of the consciousness of humanity, could alone have an impact one day on the human consciousness as a whole.

For such an experiment, a certain atmosphere is necessary. The Ashram will defeat its purpose if it cannot give those seekers this needed atmosphere. That explains why the Ashram has a certain seclusive character. Such a character is nothing new to the tradition of India. Any normal society should respect this tradition. To say the least, it should be deemed natural to leave a group of people in peace if it wishes to pursue certain values, as long as it does not disturb others' rights to their values of life.

It is well known that Sri Aurobindo Ashram does not participate in politics. That is why it will not be proper to expect the Ashram to come out with its stand in regard to issues strictly political. If there is a broad national question on which the Ashram feels it necessary to express its view, it must be left to do so in the manner it deems fit.

Of course, the Ashram has its handicaps when it comes to communicating with the wider public. It is a complex organisation with people coming from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Also it attracts thousands of visitors, some of

whom are genuine seekers and some of whom are just curious. Although the latter are expected to follow a certain code of conduct during their stay in the Ashram, it cannot be enforced on them.

But, surely, for all men of goodwill, the creative and non-interfering role of the Ashram would overweigh such flaws.

To conclude, we reproduce a declaration by the Mother made on February 16, 1965, in the wake of an attack on the Ashram during the Anti-Hindi stir:

“Some people looking at things superficially, might ask how is it that the Ashram exists in this town for so many years and is not liked by the population?”

“The first and immediate answer is that all those in this population who are of a higher standard in culture, intelligence, goodwill and education not only have welcomed the Ashram but have expressed their sympathy, admiration and good feeling. Sri Aurobindo Ashram has in Pondicherry many sincere and faithful followers and friends.

“This said, our position is clear.

“We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

“We do not fight against any form of government.

“We do not fight against any social class.

“We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

“We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

“We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth; and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.”

8.2.1979

*A Devotee of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo*



# TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of May 1979)

## Chapter I

### Glimpses of Change in Nature

#### I (Contd)

ONE of the knots I faced with my newly-found weapon of reliance on the Divine's help, was the octopus-hold of attachment.

Formerly, whenever an occasion arose I thought that whatever I had belonged to the Divine. The far-reaching tentacles of attachment revealed themselves to me when something worth even about Rs. 2/- was missing. The thought ran after it time and again. Then came to my memory the lines:

"...If the Divine wants you to enjoy anything enjoy it; but be ready to give it up the very next moment with a smile." (The Mother)

I willed to train myself to be free from inner attachment to things. We are provided with so many things not that we might hold them tight to our bosom and, when they are gone, shed seas of tears.

I went up to the terrace of my house and at night threw away the small coins I had with me at the time. It was for me a moment of surprise when a maid-servant brought back a four-anna piece in the morning. So poor and so honest! I was never so honest when in Calcutta.

Out of habit, out of fear, often something spurts out before we can check it:

"The character is made up of habits and it clings to them, is disposed to think them the very law of its being and it is a hard job to get it to change at all except under a strong pressure of circumstances."

This shows that "some...parts are still subject to the inconscience and sub-conscience and to the lower automatism of habit or so-called law of the nature,—mechanical habit of mind, habit of life, habit of instinct, habit of personality, habit of character, the ingrained mental, vital, physical needs, impulses, desires of the natural man, the old functionings of all kinds that are rooted there so deep that it would seem as if we had to dig to abysmal foundations in order to get them out..."<sup>1</sup>

The other servants took whatever coins caught their eyes. It caused no serious reaction in me because the being was ready for the test. When I started studying my reactions in this sphere I found that with every little thing in my possession I was tightly tied by an unseen cord. Once a thing was lost, it stirred up in me a tumult of anger, self-pity, sense of loss and the like. Sometimes hot words shot forth like shafts upon the culprit or I waited to wreak vengeance or I punished myself by

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine*, American Edition, p. 825.

giving away more than was lost.

Once a mere loss of one anna inflicted on my mind no fewer than thirteen knocks! It might be that as I was mostly on the alert the wrong forces lay in wait and took the chance of teasing me all the more. But there is no denying the fact that attachment too, like desire, has a leech-like tenacity, liberation from which can come only through the action of the Mother's Force leading to purification.

Just after writing the above, within a fortnight occurred two incidents which bespeak how the Mother's force acts in our life.

My lack of faith in people's honesty made me keep every little thing under lock and key. Once something was stolen. My reaction was too strong to be got rid of even in meditation. Then rose a fervent cry from the heart: "Shall I, all my life, remain tied down to such petty things? Will the 'eager hopes' for a change in life ever remain unfulfilled?"

Next, a new fountain-pen with a golden cap was given to me as a birthday-present by my wife and it dropped at the Playground from my pocket two days later.

There rose no regret. The Mother had given and she had taken it back. Such was the happy reaction.

Regarding the first sign of change in the vital Sri Aurobindo wrote to one of us: "The other experiences you have are the beginning of the change in the vital, e.g. peace with yourself and those you thought had injured you, joy and freedom from all worldly cares and desires and ambitions."<sup>1</sup>

One of my co-workers used a very harsh word. I looked within. One great gain now is that the brute in me is no longer the ruler of my life. The inner being does not allow itself to be easily irritated. If the person before me is rude, there is steadily growing a pleasant habit not to be caught in his vibrations or helplessly pulled out of my poise. Three days after, the co-worker herself admitted her mistake and asked to be pardoned. To cite another instance:

I had written something in praise of a foreign lady, Miss Margaret Wilson, who was a neighbour of X, and in his eyes she was quite different from what I had painted her to be. No sooner did we meet on the way than he lost control over himself. But my being refused to be caught in his vibration. I did not feel the least offended. I made up my mind to pay him in another coin. I returned to my room and, taking out the best sweets I had, I placed them in his room stealthily. With a smile on my lips I inquired the next day, "Could you relish the milk preparation?" Staggered, he kept looking at me.

Trying to give this theory a trial I was confronted with a dilemma.

(2)

I am fortunate in having a room facing the sea. Almost every night I spend some time enjoying the sea's nocturnal aspect, its stillness, its immensity, and try

<sup>1</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome II, p. 400.

to attune myself to something higher. The play of moonlight on its expanse suggests Mother Nature's call to us to dive deep and sense the beauty and joy of our inner expanse.

In May 5, 1963 for half an hour there was a perfect silence in the mind; then burst upon my view at a far-off point a meeting of the blue above and the blue below.

Let us plunge to a somewhat deeper level.

In September 1936 I wrote to Sri Aurobindo: "These days I often see visions in sleep. Do they indicate that my Sadhana is going on in sleep?"

His heartening answer was: "Yes."

To another question of mine—whether my seeing a blue light falling upon a drain and upon nearby thorns indicated a touch of the Divine Light in the most dirty and crude part of my being—the reply was again "Yes."

There was a time when my heart took the form of a ditch about which Sri Aurobindo observed: "The ditch of water is the vital material, you rose towards the spiritual light and then came down with it into the vital material."

Life has since then travelled from the condition of a ditch to that of a river, as referred to earlier, and now to the state of a sea.

Let me relate two impressive events thirteen years later during sleep:

All of a sudden there came to my ears the chanting of the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's names arising as if from deep within. Along with the chanting the whole area of the spinal cord got illuminated as a house gets lit up the moment the switch is put "on". The colour of the light was dim red. Such was my inner atmosphere that night.

At another time it appeared that all that keeps the consciousness veiled disappeared giving place to a unique panoramic view of the smiling sky, extending upward to an immeasurable height. I was in my bed with the mosquito curtain down but "the eyes were doors to a celestial sense".<sup>1</sup>

When the blessings of the sky rain down on the bosom of the thirsty earth at night and when solitude reigns supreme I try to enter the state of *ātmadīpabhava*. The "inner rest" that follows proves infinitely superior to any earthly comfort.

According to Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of visions, "the rain is the symbol of the descent of Grace or of the higher consciousness which is the cause of the riches, the spiritual plenty".<sup>2</sup>

We may gain a glimpse of something unusual in what took place on March 12, 1979 while I was lying unconscious in sleep. Suddenly I was overtaken by the fall of rain. With torrential velocity the whole area was bathed in white light. It brought such an inner exultation that the body seemed to be dancing with joy exclaiming—"Spiritual riches, spiritual plenty." The eyes did not open: I have no recollection of "When the rapid end came of the momentary delight". But the scene is still retained by my memory.

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*, Part I, Book II, Canto III, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome II, p. 87.

All-devouring darkness of the outer world did not in any way hamper these visions. At such moments no awareness of outer things could prevail and night's darkness seemed metamorphosed into daylight. Visions of snow-capped hills with shining light of the blue heavens have also been frequent at the dead of night during sleep.

I may say here that prayer has all along been the mainstay of my sadhana. When all is quiet within, I try to be as earnest as possible and leave no stone unturned to go into the inner recess of my being. The day there is response, the tears of the night turn into glittering dew-drops of the morning sunshine. After long practice I have reached a stage when during the prayer-time there remains no awareness of anything in my consciousness, no thought, no vibration, not even one disturbing element. In that state of tranquillity, when all is still within, at times I feel an intense action of the yogic force either in the heart or in the navel-centre, which causes a kind of silent stir, a quiet commotion. On December 18, 1978, the inner yearning was so intense that I became the aspiration itself. The following story told by the Mother is relevant:

“Once I was invited to meet a young lady (I believe she was Swedish) who had found a process of knowledge... a process for learning. And so she explained it to us. She said: ‘It’s like this, you take an object or make a sign on a black board. Now sit in front of the design and concentrate all your attention upon it. You concentrate, concentrate without letting anything else enter your consciousness—except that. Your eyes are fixed on the drawing and don’t move at all. You are as it were hypnotised by the drawing. You look, look, look... I don’t know it takes more or less time, but still for one who is used to it, it goes really fast. You look, look, look, you become that drawing you are looking at. Nothing else exists in the world any longer except the drawing and then suddenly you pass to the other side: and when you pass to the other side you enter a new consciousness.’

“We had a good laugh for it was amusing. But it is quite true, it is an excellent method to practise.”<sup>1</sup>

Now let the reader read my story and laugh.

On July 9, 1934 I saw someone meditating in my lower vital. On asking Sri Aurobindo who it was I got the reply:

“When there is a sense of somebody meditating in a part and its receiving and welcoming the higher influence, it indicates a full opening in that part.”

The experience repeated itself forty-five years after when I was offering Pranam to the Mother before the couch in the Meditation Hall. All of a sudden I was switched on to a new level of consciousness and blessed with a clear perception of an exceedingly beautiful child seated in a meditative pose in the heart-centre.

Here one can distinctly mark where lies the difference between “opening” and non-opening of the adhara. What was achieved in 1934 by simply opening myself to the working of the Mother’s force when I was newly initiated into Yoga, had to go

<sup>1</sup> The Mother’s Cent. Ed., pp.319-20. (*Questions and Answers* 1953)

through a period of relentless labour extending to more than four decades before I could acquire an opening in the emotional centre, and yet it does not appear that the doors have fully opened. The adhara still needs purification.

In order to form a clear picture let us take a simple analogy. If one procures a perforation machine, he can have sheet after perforated sheet within minutes, but if one tries to do the same with a needle what amount of labour and effort will be needed to prepare even one sheet!

However one meditates, knee-deep mud rests in the subconscious. Hence the demand upon us to surrender the whole man. The crucial turn consists in the full opening of our vital being—its accepting the rule of light.

About a dream on October 29, 1936 that my physical had surrendered Sri Aurobindo remarked: "In the inner physical probably as it was in dream."

About another dream on November 25, 1936 that my vital was undergoing a change and being psychicised the reply was: "Yes."

Next I wrote about a feeling on October 7, 1936: "I feel that every part has opened to the Mother, is under her direct control and nothing bad can happen to me. Am I right in my feeling?" The answer was: "Yes."

One may wonder why despite such a wealth of experience, the deadlock in the heart-centre still persists. Why am I not able to dive deep within? In order to solve this riddle I shall have to take up some more space. Careful study of one's nature will reveal that one layer opens today, then another comes up and blocks the passage. And the toil has to be persisted in till another spell of heavenly touch gives a push to the effort. So far only once I had the luck to perceive a well in the heart-centre, the upper part of which was full of light and the lower held nothing but darkness (18.3.1979).

What constitutes the riddle? Our vital is full of ego. The moment it is hit, it loses all sense of decency. Each vital being wants to go its own way. Anything going against its whims and fancies makes it feel wounded, at times offended. Mental or moral control does not carry us far. Hence they are not among the essentials in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. The insistence is on "spiritual mastery". If the vital is quieted, half the difficulty is over.

It may be added here that it has no capacity to tolerate anything. Once I was confronted with a situation extremely painful, an insult which badly hit the vital ego. The inner turmoil was so intense that I lost my balance. I said to myself in wonder: "Had there been a real change in nature it would have allowed the wave to pass. Am I on the right lines—or cheating myself?"

To cheat the mind with the idea of change  
A different picture that was still the same<sup>1</sup> —

have these thought-provoking lines a direct link with the situation in which I

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*, Part I, B.II, C.6, p.180.

was placed? To attend to some work I had to go to the Ashram. No sooner did I stand before the Mother in front of her couch than there came to my ears a voice which said: "Why do you worry. These things are due to old habits." At once I became calm and quiet.

This matter about the movements of the lower vital nature has been thus put by Sri Aurobindo:

"There are some that tend always to persist and return until the whole physical nature is changed..."<sup>1</sup>

In order to hammer it into our consciousness Sri Aurobindo has repeated the same topic at several places. Still we fail to apply it in life. One great good that accrued from this episode was that it made me learn a hard lesson. Quietly I took the resolution that instead of getting excited, agitated by such trifles, I must endure, tolerate—put in practice the very first principle of equanimity. But it is still a verbal resolve. Old habits cling so rigidly, so stubbornly.

The adverse forces have a thousand ways of attacking us. If the roof is of cement not a drop of water will get in, but if it is made of earth the water will at once pour. Hence the stress in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga on the purification of the vital first. If the vital refuses to be a toy of the adverse forces, what "joyous *sānti*" dawns on life!

Now let us pause to assess, to survey how far my vital has responded to the call of change. Has the wind of change been reflected in my life in any way? Can it yield some evidence?

Even at the risk of a digression, mention may be made of a remarkable change. The rush of thoughts during the evening meditation in the Playground was so great that I could receive nothing, absolutely nothing. I had to return empty-handed. Half an hour's meditation even in front of the Mother appeared so boring, dull and dry that I opened my eyes again and again to see whether the light was on and it was time to disperse. In between there rose voices, obviously from the vital, "Torture, it is torture!" I have seen many such gloomy days.

What had appeared years earlier an utter impossibility, a fantastic dream, came within the orbit of possibility in the year 1974. Often the consciousness got so absorbed that there remained no sense of the body or the Playground. Among hundreds of people sitting around me, merged in meditation, I felt myself alone—a solitary figure, at times encircled by a white light or enwrapped by my own aura. Once I found the whole space in front of me full of a bright violet light (19-3-1979).

Now I realised why our Shastras speak so fervently about *Brahmavānī*. Not always, but often the moment the Mother's sonorous tape-recorded voice enters into my ears, her luminous figure comes floating before the mind's eye and the consciousness soars to the crown. It remains stationed there while the talk goes on. But the same height is hardly maintained thereafter in the meditation that follows.

In 1979 once I felt as if the ear was above the crown of the head and the Mother's nectarous words were pouring in. The mind was so absorbed in the hearing that not

<sup>1</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome II, p. 434.

a ripple of thought could steal in. I was not keen on following what the Mother said. The centre of attraction was *Brahmavānī*.

Something more exhilarating happened. Not once but twice the moment her first word struck the ears, it gave a thrill, a shock illuminating a part of the body—from the occiput down to the upper section of the spinal cord. The colour of the light was blue.

The response was only on those days when all was still within, no curiosity, no expectation. Regarding the shocks, Sri Aurobindo has observed that they are the shocks of the psychic to make an opening.

A word about the impact of the change during the working hours. Once while I was attending to my departmental work, the consciousness got fixed by itself between the eyebrows. It gave me the touch of the same *adhyātma sukham*—the term used by Sri Aurobindo in a letter—that happens during absorbed meditation.

The experience repeated itself the next day in a different way. The consciousness got centred in the heart. Everything was there but it seemed I was not there. That day the troubles I had could easily have taxed the brain, caused annoyance to the vital, but I was so merged in myself that nothing could disturb the inner poise. It gave me a vague idea of how one could keep his head above the waters of trouble in all circumstances.

On February 23, 1979 the first signs were visible of a long-cherished dream getting fulfilled. But it did not cause any excitement. Instead there reigned peace in the heart and it continued for more than two hours. There are more flashes of a change. No gain is a gain till it becomes part and parcel of the nature, till all in me consents to surrender, enabling me to make a free and full gift of myself.

*(To be continued)*

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# SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

(Continued from the issue of May, 1979)

3

## The Ashram School

THERE is much to be learnt from the history of the Ashram School. Four years after the birth of the Ashram School, Sri Aurobindo spoke to Surendra Mohan Ghose, as reported in *Mother India*:

“The Mother is trying to develop this Ashram into a university, but not according to the common conception of a university.... Everybody will be taught to work in a spirit of service.”

During the Second World War the children of the Mother’s devotees were permitted to stay in the Ashram. So something had to be done for their education. This led to the opening of the Ashram School on December 2, 1943, with twenty-three boys and girls on its roll.

The 1973 session had 660 students and a little more than 150 teachers. From this session it had been decided that for two years there would be no new admission to the Centre of Education.

The school was started in three or four rooms of an old building which now forms part of the Gymnasium. In 1952 the Mother bought a beautiful spacious building facing the main gate of the Ashram which now houses the Centre. The nearness of the sea-beach to the site of the university adds greatly to the beauty of its delightful surroundings.

To be free from the conflicts of modern life, to be free from lust, greed, ambition, the desire for power, wealth and comfort is an achievement that few in the world of today can hope to reach. Yet on the emergence of such dedicated ones hangs the fate of the coming generation, even the nation.

One of the two main teachers with whom the school started was Sisir K. Mitra. He came from Konnagor—the native place of Sri Aurobindo. His memory went back to the Swadeshi days when Sri Aurobindo visited Konnagor.

Mitra was a confirmed bachelor. From his early youth he cultivated wholesome habits which bring lustre to life: simplicity, humility (*Vidyā dadātu vinayam* goes the saying), discipline, devotion to his mother and the spirit of dedication.

He was very fortunate in having a mother who possessed some very high qualities and had taken *sannyāsa* in the later part of her life. It is significant that she didn’t wish him to be initiated by her Guru. Intuitively she felt that her son’s spiritual destiny lay elsewhere. Asked if he would like to join her Guru’s Ashram quick came the answer from Mitra:



“No. If I am to take up Yoga, I shall join Sri Aurobindo’s Ashram.”

This pleased his mother very much and she said, “I shall be happy if you go there.”

His mother held high hopes for her son and knew that he would not give himself up to an ordinary life.

When there was a talk of Mitra’s marriage, his mother asked him, “Do you want to marry? I thought you were not destined to lead a married life.”

Sisir was her only son and his mother kept a careful watch over his day-to-day activities. One day in his childish way he lodged a complaint with his mother that one of his classmates had given him a kick. He felt bewildered when his mother asked him, “Why did he kick you, what did you do?”

“Nothing, mother. I simply poked him with my finger and in return he gave me a kick,” he replied pleading innocence.

“So, you are to be blamed. You did the mischief first. Go and ask his pardon.”

Without a word of protest, he meekly went to the boy’s house as he could not even think of saying, ‘No’ to his mother, whatever her command. He looked on her with much awe and reverence.

“What brings you to my house, my child?” inquired the other boy’s mother sweetly. After hearing all that he had to say she went in and brought a dish of sweetmeats for him.

Teachers and parents do not know which thought implanted in the child’s mind will bloom like a rose. Mitra first turned to Sri Aurobindo’s writings in order to learn English. He had his education under the care of his maternal uncle. This uncle cherished a great desire that his nephew should have a good foundation in English and acquire the ability to express himself. With this in view he placed in his hands the file of Sri Aurobindo’s *Karmayogin* and said that the language of this journal was far better than the English that Englishmen wrote. At that time Mitra was in class IX.

During the mid-twenties when he was doing some research work in the history of Indian art a friend lent him his volume of the *Arya*, asking him to read the portion on art appearing under the title “A Defence of Indian Culture”. By this time he had read all the authoritative works on Indian Art but when he read Sri Aurobindo he felt that the history of India should be rewritten in the light of Sri Aurobindo’s vision. Later on he wrote four books on India.

Mitra’s first visit to the Ashram was in November 1939. Without his knowledge Dilip Kumar Roy fixed up an interview for him with the Mother. He did not know the proper date of his birthday. Looking at his horoscope Pavitra ascertained December 5 as his birthday. To his pleasant surprise that was the day the Mother had granted him the interview.

At the end of the interview there rose a call in him from within and he prayed to the Mother:

“Mother, I want to come and stay here.”

And the response was immediate. Flooding him with the sweetness of her smile She said:

“Yes, you can come immediately if you like.”

Regarding the initial impact of the Ashram he wrote later:

“I began to feel a change in me. The world that I had left behind almost vanished from my mind. I stepped into another world which I felt was throbbing with the spiritual dynamism of a new life. One is bound to feel it and be exalted by it, if one is receptive enough to take in the subtle influences which the atmosphere of the Ashram radiates...”

About standing before the Mother for the first time he observed, “I saw the Mother and felt with all my heart that she was really the Mother of the Universe.”

When the Ashram school began to take shape the Mother called Mitra and gave him the charge of our Centre of Education. Thus from the beginning he became the Joint Director of the Centre and one of the four members of the Academic Council:

Charu Dutt (Rtd. I.C.S.) came from an illustrious family. His father was a well-known figure in Cooch Behar as its Dewan. It was he who had told Mitra that his place was in Santiniketan which Mitra had been invited to join, in appreciation of his series of articles on Art and Culture in Ancient India.

When Mitra took the decision to join the Ashram, Charu Dutt said, “I too will follow you.” And after a year or two Dutt entered the Ashram life. Mitra requested him to give the Ashram children the benefit of his knowledge. He treated this work as a privilege.

Dutt’s contact with Sri Aurobindo began from his stay in Baroda. How intimate was his connection with Sri Aurobindo can be inferred from the following letter of the Master:

“Charu Dutt? Yes, saw very little of him, for physically our ways lay apart, but that little was very intimate, one of the band of men I used most to appreciate and felt as if they had been my friends, comrades and fellow-warriors in the battle of the ages and would be so for ages more. But curiously enough, my physical contact with men of his type, there were two or three others, was always brief. Because I had something else to do this time,—I suppose.”

Children who had the good luck to be in the Ashram at a very early age had the joy of their first education under these devoted souls.

Sri Aurobindo said:

“Every child is a lover of interesting narrative, a hero-worshipper and a patriot. Appeal to these qualities in him and through them let him master, without knowing it, the living and human parts of his nation’s history. Every child is an inquirer, an investigator, analyser, a merciless anatomist. Appeal to those qualities in him and let him acquire without knowing it the right temper and the necessary fundamental knowledge of the scientist.”

During the evening meditation (which started from 1939) at about 6 p.m., the main gate of the Ashram used to be kept closed and the children were not allowed to

come in. An Ashram youth took delight in keeping them with him and regaling them with stories. He continued doing so for some years even after the opening of the Ashram school in 1943.

When Charu Dutt was requested to teach, he wished that the children should be sent to his house. The joy that he gave these little ones still remains in the grateful memory of some of them.

Dutt was virtually a literary genius and he poured many things into the minds of these young ones by way of stories of great men, their adventures, discoveries and achievements. To produce genuine humour is not an easy thing. But Dutt was a man of wit and humour.

“Whether you are a parent or a teacher, in order to successfully deal with children you must be able to understand their thoughts and feelings. And you must have a sense of humour. To be humorous with a child gives him the feeling that you love him. However, the humour must never be cutting or critical.

“It is delightful to watch how a child’s sense of humour grows. Call it fun rather than humour, for a child has a sense of fun before humour develops.... Perhaps children like to be treated with humour because humour involves friendliness and laughter.”<sup>1</sup>

Dutt’s fun and humour kept the little ones enthralled while they were with him. Off and on his room would resound with roars of laughter.

Another teacher was Prانبhai. He was the head of the Gujarati Vidyalaya, Calicut. From 1936 he began spending his month’s vacation in the Ashram. The Montessori diploma came to him when he was here. From time to time he expressed his desire to join the Ashram.

In May 1943, while he was here during the summer vacation, Nolini said to him, “Mother likes the Montessori system. Do you really want to come here? We want to start a school.” It was to him a God-given gift. After making arrangements he finally came for the November Darshan 1943.

The third teacher was an Englishwoman, Margaret Odwinkle, renamed Pavita. Here since 1937, she knew quite well how our school had been started. Children who came very young still remember her with a deep sense of gratitude for their basic training under her care.

I may add that when one of the two main teachers in charge of the school fell ill and the doctor advised him to have no contact with children, the Mother asked the Englishwoman if she could take class temporarily. And she agreed. His illness dragged on and on and she continued to teach.<sup>2</sup>

*(To be continued)*

NARAYAN PRASAD

<sup>1</sup> I. A. S. Neill, *Summerhill*, pp. 200-1.

<sup>2</sup> In the year 1943 three other teachers were in the Ashram School: Lilavati, Pravakar and Tinkori Mitra. This completes the list of teachers with whom the School started.

## THE ELIZABETHAN THEATRE

THE readers of Shakespeare's plays wonder how the great playwright could have enacted his plays successfully in an age when there were only very limited facilities. What sort of costumes could he have used for his actors? How could he have set the scenery on the stage? With what confidence did he manage to enact his plays effectively without the aid of electricity? These are some of the many questions that face the modern reader of Shakespeare. And here is an attempt to show how the performance took place in the Elizabethan theatre.

### Structure

From the outside the theatre was in the form of a hexagon, but inside it was circular and open-air, except above the stage. The stage was a rectangular platform measuring as much as 40 feet across projecting into the yard, which was open to the sky. Around the stage, no seating arrangement was provided on the floor. But on all the three sides the groundlings stood and enringed the actors. Right round the sides of the building ran three galleries. The topmost gallery had a thatched roof. The galleries contained the finest furniture of the Elizabethan times, and all the seats were reserved for the nobility and the élite of the society. They were nicely separated from the rabble in the yard.

At a height of eight to ten feet above the floor a kind of gallery which served for a variety of purposes ran along the back of the stage. The actors who were supposed to speak from upper windows, mountain-sides, towers, balconies or any elevated place took their stand on it. There was a canopy above the centre main area of the stage painted with the sun, moon and stars to represent the heavens. These heavens made it possible to let down angels on a rope and enabled the stage-hands to produce lightning and thunder effects. There was a trap-door on the platform of the stage through which ghosts and apparitions rose and descended. If the space underneath the stage represented hell and the canopy the heavens then the stage itself in a sense represented the earth. At the back of the platform were two doors through which the actors entered. In the space between these doors hung a curtain which when drawn revealed the inner stage. It was about ten or twelve feet wide by eight feet deep, and served for the tomb of the Capulets, Lear's hovel and Prospero's cell. It would also have served for the performance of the play-scene in *Hamlet*. A tall building called the tiring house, known as the backstage, occupied one side at one end. Above all, the Elizabethan stage had no curtain to come down at the end of scenes and acts.

### Preparatory

Posters were printed and set up on convenient posts. Printed bills were also distributed to advertise the performance. Usually the play commenced at three

o'clock in the afternoon to last generally two to three hours. When a performance was about to be given a flag was unfurled on the roof of the theatre. The "gatherers" who stood at the main entrance or entrances to stairs leading from the yard to the galleries collected the fees. The black stage-hanging represented a tragedy and the gay mythological tapestry a comedy. Behind the curtain of the inner stage stood some stage-boy (sometimes the anxious playwright too) peeping out to estimate the audience as it gathered. The synopsis of the play was hung up on a peg for the actors to consult. There were stage-keepers to render mechanical help and close to the inner stage sat the prompter with his prompt copy.

### Performance

The first sounding of the trumpet warned the dressed actors to get ready for the stage. The second served as a signal to the audience that the play was about to commence. The performance began upon the third sounding. An actor dressed in a black cloak introduced the play by a prologue to pray for favourable reception. Then followed the play proper. In the early days of the theatre the play was probably acted straight through. Later the development of music brought the practice of having intervals between the acts. During the intervals bottled ale, crack-nuts, and other edibles were sold and the audience occasionally fell to riot. The epilogue followed, generally by some character in the play, to beg applause. A good response to the epilogue reassured the actors. An afterpiece called a "Jig"—an elementary comic opera—followed the epilogue. The entertainment concluded with the jig and the audience dispersed in a merry mood.

### Actors

The Elizabethan stage had no actresses. All women's roles were played by boys. Some of these young boys acted their roles with so great a skill that the Elizabethan audience saw no incongruity. The theatre was also called "Single Sex Theatre", for the professional actresses appeared on the stage only after the restoration of Charles II, in 1660. "The actors of that stage were competent to perform the lowly jig, to sing and dance expertly as well as with comic verse. They could indeed take charge of what we should now call 'variety' as well as legitimate performance. A wrestling match in *As You Like It*, a fencing match in *Hamlet*, Sir Andrew Aguecheek's illustration of dancing feats in *Twelfth Night*, all would be genuine skilled exhibitions by trained experts." Though the Elizabethan actors were then classed with vagabonds in the eyes of the law, they were in every respect better qualified for their profession than the generality of actors today. The actors appeared in costumes, sometimes costly, and acted their parts in masks and wigs.

### Scenery

Movable scenery was unknown to the Elizabethan stage directors. A change of scene was represented by the introduction of some suggestive articles of stage-furniture. Pebbles were placed helter-skelter on the stage to represent a seashore; a bough of a tree to represent a forest; a cardboard imitation of a rock for a mountainous place and wooden imitations of amputated parts of the human anatomy to represent a battlefield. But the most common way of indicating a change of scene was by hanging out a board, painting in large letters the name of places of action. No "pencil aid" supplied the landscape of Shakespeare's plays. The castle of Macbeth, the great tower of London, the forest of Arden were only seen by the intellectual eye. The audiences did not demand realism and they were prepared to use their imagination.

### Acting

There was no such thing as the beginning and end of the scene. When one scene was over, one lot of actors left and another lot came in, so that there was absolutely continuous flowing action. As and when necessity arose, the characters told their audiences where the action was taking place. When it was unnecessary they did not refer to it. Regarding the question of time, the characters referred to it when it mattered to the play, for the Elizabethan dramatists did not bother much about time. Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, which contains a succession of very short scenes located in a variety of widely separated places, is the extreme example of Shakespeare's free treatment of place and time. Owing to the absence of a curtain for the main stage, the dramatist had to take special measures when he required a scene to end with a definite break in the action. Of course the comedies posed no problem but it became serious at the end of tragedies. The best example is the final scene of *Hamlet*. Any modern playwright would bring down the curtain as soon as Horatio, bending over the corpse of Hamlet, utters:

Good night, sweet prince,

And flight of angels sing thee to thy rest.

But on the Elizabethan stage, if the play had ended here, it would have created an absurd scene, for the dead would have had to rise and walk off. And so it was not without a purpose that Fortinbras and the English ambassadors were brought in and Fortinbras given a chance to say:

Let four captains

Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage...

And the stage direction reads: "There is a dead march and the soldiers carry the bodies of Hamlet and the other dead off the stage."

P. RAJA

# INDIAN LIFE IN ENGLISH WRITINGS

(Continued from the issue of May 1979)

## I

### RELIVING THE DAYS GONE BY

(Contd.)

FROM Orissa in the thirteenth century we pass on to Vijayanagar in the sixteenth. The writing in question is not a work of fiction, but extracts from three Portuguese travellers: Barrados (1614), Dominga Paes (1520) and Ferrao Nuniz (1535). These extracts were translated and presented by Robert Sewell. They offered a vivid description of the life at Vijayanagar rather than a mere chronicle of events.

Barrados, however, did not provide any substantial material about the life in Vijayanagar, except for giving us some historical outlines of this great empire's decline, which is of no interest to us. He recounted the intrigues and counter-intrigues, the inevitable results of a weakening nation. The only thing of interest is the description of the queen of King Venkatgiri, who committed *sati* (self-emmolation) at her royal husband's death in 1614.

'...the king died at the age of sixty-seven years. His body was burned in his own garden with sweet-scented woods, sandal, aloes and suchlike; and immediately afterwards three queens burned themselves, one of them was of the same age as the king and the other two of thirty-five years. They showed great courage. They went forth richly dressed with many jewels and gold ornaments and precious stones, and arriving at the funeral pyre they divided these, giving some to their relatives, some to the Brahmans to offer prayers for them, and throwing some to be scrambled for by the people. Then they took leave of all, mounted on a lofty place, and threw themselves in the middle of the fire, which was very great. Thus they passed into eternity.' (*A Forgotten Empire*, ed. and tr. from the original Portuguese by Robert Sewell, New Delhi, A Government of India pub., 1962, pp. 215-6)

Domingos Paes wrote in 1520-22: 'These dominions [of the Narsimhas of Vijayanagar] are very well cultivated and very fertile and provided with quantities of cattle, such as cows, buffaloes and sheep; also birds, both those belonging to the hills and those reared at home and this in greater abundance than in our tracts. The land has plenty of rice, Indian corn, grains, beans, and other kinds of crops which are not sown in our parts.' (*Ibid.*, p. 230)

Paes gives us a glimpse of the life then prevalent. 'These pagodas [Paes meant temples] are buildings in which they pray and have their idols; the idols are of many sorts, namely, figures of men and women, of bulls and apes.... In the temple of Darcha [probably Darwar] is an idol in the figure of a man to his body and the face that of an elephant with trunk and tusks [Ganesh]. They feed the idol every day, for they say it eats; and when it eats [this is probably the rite of *arati*], women dance before

them who belong to that pagoda [priests] and they give them food and all that is necessary, and all girls born of these women belong to the temple. These women are of loose character and live in the best streets that are there in the city...They are very much esteemed and are classed amongst those honoured ones who are the mistresses of the captains; any respectable man may go to their houses without any blame attached thereto. These women [are allowed] even to enter the presences of the wives of the king.' (*Ibid.*, p. 234)

Not only that, they can exchange betel with these queens and attend important social functions, added Paes.

Paes also offers us lengthy descriptions of Vijayanagar, which he called '*Bisnaga*'. (In fact all Indian names are mispronounced thus by these Portuguese travellers.)

Even villages were walled by earth-walls except Vijayanagar which has a stone fortification. This was built by royal decree.

The country was flat and was well watered by lakes and rivers. The western limits touched Portuguese India : that is, Goa.

Of the king's three queens, one was previously a courtesan (this woman had been the king's lover before he came to the throne and he had promised her that he would make her his queen when he became king).

Apart from these there were twelve lesser queens. The queens did not live in the palace; instead each one had her own house with her own hand-maidens and women guards. Most parts of the palace, including the chambers of the king, were guarded by women. These guards numbered a few thousands.

The queens went out in closed litters attended by two or three armed escorts. Whenever the king desired any particular queen, he sent his eunuch to fetch her.

The king's kitchen was closely guarded lest he should be poisoned. He ate out of gold dishes and bowls. Paes expresses his surprise at the abundance of gold in Vijayanagar.

He described the daily routine of the king. The king rose very early from bed. He did some exercises with weights which were various earthen pots. Then he did some wrestling with some of his court wrestlers. After that he did fencing as well. Lastly, he had a fast and long horse-ride across the country.

At the end of his exercises, he was rubbed down with 'jingelly' oil (which was probably 'sesame' oil). Then he drank this oil as well. (This appears to be most improbable.) Then he had his bath given by his favourite priest, after which he went to the temple.

After all this, he attended his court duties in a building shaped like a porch without walls which had many pillars and hung all around with cloth. His favourite courtier was one 'Temersea'. This must have been Timma Raja.

The king had *liaison* with other kingdoms, some of whom were his vassals. One of his wives came from the royal house of 'Orya' or Orissa; another hailed from Seringapatnam.

The Brahmins had a great influence over the king. Sacrifice of human beings



was in practice. Once the walls of a dam burst. Instead of repairing the damage, or enquiring after the physical cause of the same, the Brahmins gave the verdict that the damage was due to certain gods being angry. To propitiate these gods, human sacrifices must be made.

'The king,' wrote Paes, 'was of medium height and of fair complexion. He had a good figure. He has on his face the signs of small pox. He is the most feared and perfect king that could possibly be; cheerful of disposition and very merry.' (*Ibid.*, p. 239)

Describing Vijayanagar, Paes wrote, 'The size of this city I do not write here because it cannot be all seen from one spot, but I climbed a hill whence I could see all because it lies between several ranges of hills. What I saw from thence seemed to me as large as Rome and very beautiful to sight; there are many groves of trees within it, in the gardens of the houses, and many conduits of water which flow into the midst of it.' (*Ibid.*, p. 247)

Paes went to a feast. There was dancing by dancing-girls on the square; then there was the worship by the king; then came the sacrifice of twenty-four buffaloes and one hundred and fifty sheep. In the afternoon there was wrestling by strong men and again dancing by nautch girls. The wrestling was of the all-in kind: maiming, knocking out teeth, and gouging out eyes were allowed.

About the dancing-girls Paes says, 'Can we fitly describe to you the great riches these women carry on their person?—Collars of gold with so many diamonds, rubies and pearls; bracelets also on their arms and upper arms, girdles below and anklets on their feet.' (*Ibid.*, p. 260)

The feast ended with a display of fire-works and the review of troops by the king. Paes was amazed at the amount of gold, precious stones and velvet, etc. on the persons, specially on the bodies of the captains and the guards. The costume of infantry consisted of polished armour covering the body, and battle-axe, spear and sword.

The king's army consisted of 35,000 cavalry, 150,000 infantry, plus a formidable elephant corps. There were also about one million soldiers as reserves. But the king had to pay very little for the army. All the captains owned lands of different sizes, and the soldiers were the tenants of these landlords and under their pay.

The king had five lesser kings under him as his vassals. They were: the kings of Bankapur, Gerosoppa, Bakanur, Calicut and Bhatkal.

Paes gives an approximate idea of the Vijayanagar city. 'Of the city of Bisnaga they say there are more than one hundred thousand dwelling houses in it, all one-storied and flat-roofed, to each of which there is a low surrounding wall...' (*Ibid.*, p. 277)

The chronicle of Feranao Nuniz (1535-37) was not an account of actual travel, but a repetition or hearsay from other sources. He spoke of Muhammad-bin-tuglak's sweeping to Vijayanagar after overrunning Gujarat. The king offered no resistance but simply abandoned his city. The Pathans came and killed numerous peo-

ple, looted the city and departed. The king re-entered Vijayanagar after the departure of the enemy. Nuniz also noted other kings of Vijayanagar and mentioned the battles of Raichur, Orissa, etc. We shall not enter into these details, which are for the historians.

From the glitter and splendour of Vijayanagar, we shall pass to Udaipur in the seventeenth century. We move from the lush short-lived exuberance to the heroism and the romance of Rajput chivalry.

Frank Sell's book *Bhim Singh* was based mainly on the annals of Todd. Bhim Singh, who came to inherit the little estate of Banera at Mewar, was actually the second son of Raj Singh who could easily have possessed the throne of Udaipur, if he had so willed it, because of his valour and heroism. But Bhim Singh was not ambitious and with a noble gesture he gave away the throne to his elder brother Jai Singh.

About Raj Singh, the celebrated Bengali novelist Bankim Chatterjee has written a splendid novel in Bengali. He has described the heroic struggle between Aurangzeb's forces and Raj Singh. But in Sell's book Bhim Singh has been given a position of eminence in the struggle.

Bhim Singh showed his mettle, when he was hardly out of his teens, in a boar-hunt in which he saved his father's life. Contrary to the popular belief, the Rajputs were non-vegetarian in diet and the five boars killed in the hunt were consumed by Raj and his party.

Thakur Ghanerao had a lovely daughter, who was a true Rajput woman proficient in riding, hunting and swordsmanship. She was secretly in love with Bhim Singh.

During the *holi* festival, in 1679, news reached Raj Singh that Afzal Khan, Aurangzeb's general, was on the way to Udaipur and intended to capture Korum Devi, Raj Singh's cousin wedded to Jashwant Singh, who had been poisoned previously by the Moghuls. Soon after, Korum Devi reached Udaipur and narrated her tale of woe. Raj Singh must save Jashwant's young son, the heir to the throne of Chitor.

Raj Singh called a council of war. Under the leadership of Ghanerao the chiefs of Bednor, Devgargh, Mandal and Benera should immediately raise an army to chase out the enemy.

Now another fugitive, the princess Ambalika of Amber, joined Korumdevi, her son and Premabai. Under an escort of guards they went to a mountain fortress.

Aurangzeb had overrun entire Rajasthan except Mewar. This was the thorn in his side. Anyway, the Moghul forces was unware of the terrain and the treacherous rocky country. Bhim Singh and Premabai, under cover of darkness, let loose the Moghul horses, who ran amuck, creating a terrible confusion. The picked men of Ghanerao and Bhim Singh hacked down the half-awakened and dazed Mughul army. Afzul Khan fled to Ajmer, leaving his supplies behind.

For this victory a great rejoicing took place. Raj Singh and his whole family

went to his family shrine to offer prayers of thanksgiving and express gratitude to his family deity, Eklinganath. It was here the family received the news that Aurangzeb had commenced a fresh oppression: the Ziziah (poll-tax) and the wrecking of Hindu temples.

Raj Singh, face to face with this emergency, did two things: he sent a personal letter through his son Bhim Singh, in which he pleaded for the cessation of the tax, reminding the Moghul emperor of the benign policy of the late Akbar the great.

Secondly, he sent a band of emissaries who went post-haste to Muttra and carried away the idol of Krishna. In spite of repeated attacks by the enemy, they brought it safely back to Udaipur.

Enraged, Aurangzeb sent a special envoy to destroy the idol of Eklinganath. This attempt too was foiled by Bhim Singh and his men.

Then Bhim Singh went to Delhi with his father's letter. Aurangzeb apparently received him with all due courtesy, but did not give any reply to the letter; instead, he kept Bhim Singh under house-arrest, under the surveillance of Akbar Khan, one of the sons of Aurangzeb. The two young men became fast friends. Taking advantage of Muharrum celebrations, Bhim Singh escaped, swimming the canal next to his house.

Bhim Singh reached Udaipur after many adventures. Foiled in his triple attempts to capture Korum Devi, Ambalika of Amber and the crown-prince of Chitor, or breaking the idols of Krishna at Muttra and Udaipur, or even keeping Bhim Singh imprisoned as hostage, Aurangzeb organised a vast campaign against Udaipur, attacking it from three sides: from the north, the south and the east. He himself led one group, Akbar Khan the second, and the third was led by Jahawar Khan.

Seeing a formidable enemy on his three sides, Raj Singh promptly deserted Udaipur and went into hiding. Looting and arson went on when Aurangzeb entered the deserted city. He was complacent that he had won a great victory.

Again a surprise ensued. Aurangzeb fled. Bhim Singh even attempted to capture the emperor. But a small accident saved the dare-devil plan.

A new complication set in. A Thakur of Banera, Goculdas, infatuated with Ambalika's beauty, wanted to marry her. Raj Singh, as the protector of this girl, naturally refused. Incensed, Goculdas went over to the enemy as informer. Again Premabai's timely interception and Bhim Singh's courage foiled the attempt at abduction.

Ambalika had, in the meantime, adopted Bhim Singh as her 'bracelet brother'. This act gave a double incentive to save the honour of the girl.

The Moghuls fled. Goculdas was captured. Raj Singh banished him from Rajasthan.

Later travelling from one place to another, Bhim Singh encountered this fugitive. They had a bitter and prolonged duel, after which Goculdas was killed.

The army of the Moghuls coming from the south was stopped by the chiefs of Gujarat, and by Bhim Singh after a reconnoitre and a struggle. A spy intervened

with a forged letter from Aurangzeb, causing the peace negotiations to cease. Nevertheless, by cunning the catastrophe was averted. Akbar Khan returned to Delhi with a verbal treaty between Mewar and Delhi.

Aurangzeb, seeing the futility of the struggle, sent his emissary Shyam Singh of Bikaner, a vassal of the Moghuls, for further parleys.

Raj Singh, though on his deathbed, refused to sign the treaty. But soon after he died the treaty was signed by Jai Singh who succeeded Raj Singh as the Rana of Udaipur.

There was peace at last in Mewar.

Bhim Singh was the most popular figure in his land. If he had chosen, he could have superseded Jai Singh. Instead he stepped aside and asked for the small state, Banera, left vacant on Goculdas's demise. Jai Singh felt relieved at his brother's decision.

Now Bhim Singh began considering the prospect of a marriage. He wanted the hand of Ambalika; but the Rhathors objected. In place of him, Gopinath, a Thakur and a widower, was chosen as her bridegroom.

During the marriage festivities, however, Bhim Singh, galloping on his horse 'Thunderbolt', arrived at the site of the wedding and carried away the bride. Gopinath was white with fury. Ghanerao patched up the quarrel by giving him his own daughter, Premabai, as bride.

The literary merits of this book are no better than those of Seligman's *When the Peacock Called*. But Sell has two things in his favour: sincerity and truthfulness to history and tradition. He has not shown any Anglo-Saxon bias and on the whole he reveals great sympathy for the Rajputs and an appreciation of Indian chivalry. But he has failed to make his book a living document, because he has chosen too wide a canvas, too large a span, which necessitated sweeping over the events and characters in a perfunctory fashion.

The treatment is archaic and lacking in the sparkle of a true literary creation.

(To be continued)

ROMEN PALIT

## SMILES

SMILES are scattered like flowers on the pathway of life. They are just flashes of sunlight yet very helpful and the effect they produce is marvellous. The joy that the flowers experience at the caress of sunrays, the same joy springs up in the heart of an unhappy man when we smile at him. One sparkling smile that beams out from within us can dissipate the clouds of sorrow and gloom around. As the dew vanishes at the kiss of the sun, so does our depression at the sight of a smile.

What is a smile? Surely not the artificial grinning of the face without any feeling; a smile is the expression of beauty and joy. It could also be a state of happiness within, which expresses itself without.

How fortunate is man! God has bestowed on him a priceless gift whose worth is unknown to man. This sparkle of smile has various shades and each is charming: a child's innocent and pure smile—the blush of a young virgin—the challenging and zealous smile of a courageous gallant youth—the warm, loving and comforting smile of an elder—a doctor's encouraging and optimistic smile at his patient—the godlike detached smile of a saint.

For humanity, a smile is a sun shining in the dark and, touched by its light, we overcome the difficulties of life. He who smiles at life lives in a bit of eternity and no sorrow or pain can trouble him for long. Sri Aurobindo says in *Savitri*:

A smile on her lips welcomed earth's bliss and grief,  
A laugh was her return to pleasure and pain.

Whatever comes from the Divine one must accept with a smile. No matter if one lacks glittering ornaments or shining dresses, the glow of a smile is more attractive, pleasing and precious than material possessions.

Indeed a great role a little smile plays in our life. It is well expressed in this small quotation from Joseph Addison: "What sunshine is to flowers, smiles are to humanity. They are but trifles, to be sure; but scattered along life's pathway, the good they do is inconceivable."

The very thought of a smile revives in my memory the loving Divine Face of the Mother. Her compassionate ever-protecting and affectionate Presence floats vividly before my eyes. In Her soul-encouraging smile all our sorrows and depressions vanish. She is surely to be invoked with that line in *Savitri*:

O radiant fountain of the world's delight!

Whenever I find myself in a sad or gloomy mood I look at the Mother's comforting and ethereal-atmosphered photograph. I feel very happy and these lines flash into my mind:

A smile came rippling out in her wide eyes,  
 Its confident felicity's messenger  
 As if the first beam of the morning sun  
 Rippled along two wakened lotus pools.

Instantly my tears dry up, the shadows of gloom disperse by Her smile and my heart leaps up with joy. A flame of love is kindled within and expresses itself in a bright smile of my own which whispers: "Oh Mother dear, You have dissolved my sorrows into your immortal and rapturous consciousness—and through Your lips You have taught me how to smile at life!"

Surely, as we know that we cannot explain to a blind man what colour is, nor capture a rainbow in words, so the feelings of my heart too are inexpressible. Hence I take help from these golden lines of Sri Aurobindo:

"Grace and charm and tenderness flow out from her like light from the sun and wherever she fixes her wonderful gaze or lets fall the loveliness of her smile, the soul is seized and made captive and plunged into the depths of an unfathomable bliss."

There are persons who do not smile at all, it could be that some dreadful anxiety weighs heavy on them; or some shocks in life have stolen away their smile. I certainly do not mean that one must always have a smile on the face. But what I mean is that one must preserve one's smile from fading away. Man has to learn to smile at every obstacle or difficulty of life. If we smile at all that we think to be in our way, we shall soon realise that it is not really a foe but our disguised friend helping us to progress. After having gone through the hardships our victorious smile has another glow and shines more brightly. Even an enemy who cannot be conquered by right or might can be conquered by a smile. To conquer him by a smile is the correct attitude of friendship. The Mother says, "To smile at an enemy is to disarm him."

When we smile at someone an invisible bridge of light and love links the two hearts and a traffic of doubled happiness passes over our faces.

Even if we look at a tiny little flower we can know the role that a secret truth in Nature plays in the universe: in spite of its short life it innocently and charmingly kindles the flame of joy within every heart. This joy manifests itself on our faces in a glowing smile.

UMA JOSHI

# THE PILGRIMAGE

## A PLAY

### Characters

Kabir	...	The weaver of Varanasi.
Loi	...	His wife.
Kamaal	...	Kabir's son.
Sundar	...	An orphan-lad adopted by Kabir
Narayan Pandit	...	A Brahman from Kalyanpur.

### Preface

THE life of Kabir Zolah, the weaver of Varanasi, was crowded with incidents, which border on the miraculous. He was a saint, a poet, a mystic, a religious reformer, and also a weaver,—which fact he would always emphasise,—of medieval India.

He was a singer of repute, and we find him bursting into songs even when crises gather round his life. The main incidents narrated here are considered to be historically true—the finding of a sari and Kamaal's going on a pilgrimage; only Sundar and Narayan Pandit are creatures of my imagination. The brief songs are mostly translations of Kabir's own verses.

### Scene One

*(The action takes place in 1455 A.D. It is high noon of a day in January.)*

*Kabir is in his late fifties. He is sitting on a mat in the courtyard of his hut, by the side of his loom. The courtyard is neat and clean and protected by high mud-walls on all its three sides. It is square and has only one entrance. On the other side is a hut. The hut is on a higher level and is reached by a short flight of stairs leading from the courtyard.*

*As the play opens, Sundar, a lad of barely fifteen, fair-looking and with dreamy eyes, opens the door of Kabir's hut and descends the flight of stairs. He comes to the courtyard where Kabir is sitting.)*

SUNDAR (*Excitedly*): O father, father....I have good news!

KABIR (*Facing Sundar*): Have you?...What is it, my boy?

SUNDAR: Yesterday I went to Kalyanpur, and there I met a Brahman. Narayan Pandit, they call him. His daughter will be married this Falgun. I told him all about your skill in weaving saris. Father, please make a special sari for him. It will be the bridal robe of Narayan Pandit's daughter. He is a very good man and will pay you handsomely.

KABIR: True, true; but what will he give you, my boy?

SUNDAR (*Delighted*): Why, he will give me sweetmeats for three whole days. Father, please do this job. Narayan Pandit may come here at any moment. I have told him all about you,—all about us.

KABIR (*Rising up from the mat and advancing towards Sundar*): So, Sundar, you want me to weave! (*After a brief pause*) O Lord! How can I weave? (*He stares vacantly towards the sky.*)

SUNDAR (*Frightened*): Yes, father, you must! Mother has not even a paisa to buy things. We cannot go on like this...now nearly all the food has gone, mother says...O father, father...(*Sundar cannot speak; his voice becomes choked with emotion. He fears he has said too much; and he breaks into tears.*)

KABIR (*Advancing closer and patting Sundar*): My boy, my boy, you must not weep. "Insah Allah", I shall try. Call your mother, Sundar.

(*Sundar brightens up. Loi comes in before Sundar has advanced even a step forward.*)

LOI: I heard what Sundar has said. My Lord, you must weave the sari,—otherwise what are we to do? I cannot go on like this...(*She breaks into a sob.*)

(*At that very moment, a knocking is heard at the door. Loi mounts the steps and vanishes inside the hut.*)

(*An elderly man, with dignified steps, comes in. He is Narayan Pandit.*)

NARAYAN PANDIT (*To Kabir*): Can this be the hut of Kabirdas?

KABIR (*Bowing very low*): It is indeed, sir! Lord Hari has given this humble shelter to His servant, Kabir, who now stands before you. Pray tell me your commands.

NARAYAN PANDIT: I have journeyed from Kalyanpur. I am known as Narayan Pandit. I am very pleased with your humility. May you, and all that are yours, have long life. (*After a pause*) I am in a hurry. I have come here to request you to weave a sari for my daughter. She is my only child. I need your help. She will be married this Falgun. I want to give this sari as her bridal robe. You understand, my good man? Moreover, I cannot tarry here longer. If the people come to know, they will slander me.

KABIR: Because I am a low-born? (*He pauses for a moment and then sings:*)

Hari will never seek thy race,

Nor will He ask of thee thy birth;

One thing alone He will demand:

What hast thou done upon this earth?

NARAYAN PANDIT: Very true, very true. The people are, of course, ignorant. They follow what they think to be truth and not the truth itself. However, my good man, I must go now. Please weave a sari. I shall pay whatever you will reasonably ask. Farewell. (*Goes*)

SUNDAR (*Coming forward*): What is a Brahman, father?

KABIR: One who knows the Lord and loves Him. One who is pure in thought



and action. But he alone is pure, he alone is holy who loves the Lord and lives in Him.

SUNDAR: And what are we, father?

KABIR: We are Untouchables, my son. Untouchables, do you understand?

SUNDAR (*Vaguely*): I think so. But what are Untouchables really?

KABIR (*Sings*):

Hari, the Untouched, has numberless

Followers; their Hari is only one.

The sun has a thousand lotuses,

The lotuses have a single sun!

(*Loi opens the door of the hut and stands at the top of the stairs. From there she speaks.*)

LOI: Come, my lord; come, Sundar. What little there is to eat is ready, and you must be hungry; already it is late. Come.

SUNDAR: Coming, mother...(*Links his arm with Kabir's and they slowly enter in.*)

## Scene Two

(*The same courtyard. The action takes place two months later. It is the early dawn of a spring day. Kabir is lying on a mat near the loom. The doors of his courtyard are barred from inside but the door of his hut is wide open. Not a sound is to be heard,— a stillness pervades the whole place. Kabir is not sleeping. He is a picture of weariness itself. There is a shade of paleness on his face; he did not have a wink of sleep for the last two nights. His eyes are sunken and he wears a woe-begone expression. Slowly he rises to a sitting position.*)

KABIR (*Rubbing his eyes*): Two nights, how weary, I am! I had no sleep...nor could I work...(*again rubs his eyes wearily, gets up and paces slowly and feebly, and does not look behind.*) O Lord, Lord (*raises both his hands beseechingly*), I am absolutely Thine! (*pauses for sometime.*) O how can I work? What am I to do? How can I weave when I have no thread? How could I keep the skill in my fingers when my mind is absorbed in Thee? Thou who hast woven this wonderful universe out of Thyself, help me (*shuts his eyes as if in prayer*). O Hari, O Rama! (*He slowly opens his eyes.*) Why this wavering? My heart, take refuge in Him. (*Suddenly he looks up and fixes his gaze over the loom. He finds a beautiful sari over it. His face brightens up and there is an expression of wonder in his eyes.*)

KABIR: What do I find? (*He fondly takes the sari and kisses it.*) O, thou art a gift from my Lord. The Lord is our sole helper. (*Excitedly*) Wife... wife... wife...

LOI (*Advancing from the varendah*): Yes, here I am. Why are you shouting? (*Kabir silently shows her the sari and faintly smiles.*)

LOI: Ah! now you have made it at last,... that is good. I thought you were never going to do it. (*Approaching nearer and nearer and delicately touching the sari*) What a beautiful sari this is! Surely we shall get a good price from the Brahman. It

is beautiful and fine like the wings of butterflies... But why do you not always weave like this? (*She pauses.*) Oh my lord... (*with surprise*) you are weeping?

KABIR: See how Hari supports us all. Rama takes away all our burdens if we leave everything to Him, if we could love Him... (*He stops suddenly.*)

LOI (*Taken aback*): What! What did you say? Pray tell me about this sari. Never have I seen such a fine piece of work, my lord; and never did I know that you had so much skill.

KABIR: Hush, woman! You do not understand. Can anyone understand the ways of the Lord? (*Looking sternly at her*) This is not my work... my skill is little but my faith is boundless. This sari is the gift of my Lord... (*softening*) wife... wife ... (*He sings*):

Make gracious Rama's feet  
Thy safe firm anchor-sheet;  
Have faith in Him, on Him rely,  
And all your needs He shall supply.

LOI (*Puzzled*): I have never seen... (*stops; her eyes are glued to the sari*) never ... never...

KABIR: Woman, my heart is full... where is Kamaal? Call him here. (*Loi goes inside the hut and presently reappears with Kamaal. Kamaal is in his early thirties; he has a beard and is dressed in spotless white. He is tall and has a majestic bearing.*)

KAMAAL (*Descending into the courtyard*): Salaam, father, you have called me?

KABIR (*Smiling*): The peace of the Lord be on you, my son. Look, Kamaal, what a wonder! For several days I could neither work, nor sleep. Last night I thought of weaving a sari for Narayan Pandit but the Lord sealed my eyes with slumber. Soon I was rapt away, then after a short while I dreamt that two resplendent young brothers had come to me and ordered me not to rise up. They bade me sleep. They smiled and the elder one told me that he would weave the sari for me. When I woke up this morning, I found this wonder-gift. (*He shows the sari to Kamaal.*)

KAMAAL: True—but there was nobody here, father. (*He looks puzzled.*) It is so beautiful!

KABIR (*Gravely*): Yes, my son. It is beautiful; and we may never see its like again. It is as light as gossamer and has a sheen like moonlight! O, how loth am I to part with it! It is not of this earth! (*He shuts his eyes.*)

SUNDAR (*Stealthily enters and, descending the flight of stairs, goes to Kabir*): Father, what are you thinking of?

KABIR (*Opening his eyes*): O Sundar, here is the sari. Go, take it to Narayan Pandit. (*He is about to give it to Sundar.*)

SUNDAR (*Overjoyed*): O father, (*He eyes the sari seriously.*) It is beautiful... beautiful, beyond words! How they will like it!

KABIR (*Patting Sundar and then advancing towards Kamaal, addresses him*): The Lord did not forsake Kabirdas. He, in His infinite mercy, toiled while wretched Kabir slept. Ah me! (*He sobs.*)

SUNDAR (*Overwhelmed*): Father... Father (*He falters.*)

KAMAAL: We are not going to sell this sari. (*To Loi*) I will work from morning till midnight... but, mother, we shall not part with this sari. (*With emphasis*) No, never!

KABIR (*Slowly*): Yes... Yes... do as you say, my son; ... do (*stops.*)

(*Suddenly a gentle knocking is heard at the gates of the courtyard. Loi beckons to Sundar and herself swiftly vanishes inside the hut. Kamaal hastens towards the doors and opens them.*)

Sundar is behind Kamaal. The knocker enters in—it is no other than Narayan Pandit. Sundar is beaming with joy and keeps a little distance from Narayan Pandit.)

NARAYAN PANDIT: Blessings to you all, my children. May God bless you! (*Approaching Kabir*) O Kabir, the sari you sent to me is a work of splendour; my daughter is not merely delighted but enchanted with it. I have come to pay for it... nay, even to express my complete satisfaction.

KAMAAL (*Bewildered, addresses Narayan Pandit*): Sir, my father... (*He falters.*) We have decided not to sell the sari. We want to keep it as our treasure.

KABIR (*To Narayan Pandit*): I do not follow you, sir. You say you have received a sari sent by me?

KAMAAL (*Interrupting Kabir*): Which sari? And who gave it to you, sir?

NARAYAN PANDIT: Why? Of course last night a mendicant came to my house with the sari. He said (*looking steadfastly at Kabir*) you had sent him. Therefore I have come as soon as possible to tell you of its safe arrival and how we all appreciated it and of course to pay you. Indeed such craftsmanship is beyond all price!... You all have my blessings. I have to go back home. It is a long way,—I must go quickly. Please tell me, how much have I to pay?

KABIR (*To Narayan Pandit*): Behold, to the Lord the Brahman and the Untouchable are all one! Blessed be the name of the Lord! To each he gives the same. Sir, you have in your possession not the work of this poor weaver, but a gift from Heaven. I know of no mendicant, and I sent you no sari!

NARAYAN PANDIT: You did not send the sari? It is almost unbelievable!

KABIR: The Lord has better messengers than me. (*Showing the sari to Narayan Pandit*) Look here, sir, I found this sari on my loom this morning, no human hand could weave a thread so fine...

NARAYAN PANDIT: O what do I see? This sari is identical with the other. How strange, how very strange, but true!

KAMAAL: I cannot follow. O my head...

KABIR (*Coming to Kamaal's rescue*): My son, who can understand the mystery of the Lord? O, no! Let us love Him with our heart and soul. (*To Narayan Pandit*) You are really a fortunate man. The Lord Himself brought a sari for you.

NARAYAN PANDIT (*Snatching up Kabir's words*): O Kabir, you are my Guru. You have opened my eyes. You have shown me the path. (*He kneels down.*) Pardon me, Kabir, I thought you were an ordinary weaver... (*He cannot speak any more.*)

KABIR (*Raising him by the hand*): Rise up, sir. We are all fellow-pilgrims. It is only the grace of Rama that makes our life worth living. Else we are all dull clay.

NARAYAN PANDIT: Very true! How purblind we are! We do not follow the light of the Lord but man-made flickers of rites and ceremonies! (*Aside*) Henceforth I shall follow you, Kabir, come what may. (*To Kamaal*) I want a favour from you, my son. I would like you all to celebrate my daughter's marriage here. I leave a little sum with you. (*To Kabir*) You will please give her your blessings.

KABIR: May the Lord bless her! I cannot speak any more, my heart is full.

NARAYAN PANDIT: Give me leave to go now. (*To Kamaal*) You too, my son.

KABIR (*Very slowly*): "Khoda Hafiz!" Lord Hari guide you.... (*Narayan Pandit goes.*)

SUNDAR (*Now coming forward*): Father, the Brahman has given me two silver coins to buy sweetmeats. What would you like to eat? (*He looks shyly at Kabir.*)

KABIR (*Smiling encouragingly*): Whatever you give me, my son.

SUNDAR (*Delighted*): Let us go in to mother. (*They all go*)

### Scene Three

(*One and a half months later, the action takes place inside Kabir's hut. It is late afternoon. Loi is sitting on a mat. Kamaal is standing close to her feet. There is a look of determination in his eyes.*)

LOI: My son, ever since we received that sari, your father has given up everything. He scarcely works! He is always singing and sometimes weeping. I do not know what is going to happen to him. (*Bitterly*) They say that he has become mad. (*She breaks down.*) How unhappy I am! O God.

KAMAAL (*With entreaty*): Mother, please do not hear what others say.

LOI (*Bravely*): You have worked so hard all these days. You have toiled from morning till midnight—and all for us. You are our only bread-winner. If you go away on a pilgrimage, my son, who will look after your father? (*Appealingly*) Kamaal, do not leave us now.

KAMAAL: O mother, you must not give way to despair. You know the Lord watches over us all. Put your trust in Him. Father says that if you lay all your burden on Him, He will take you under His Protection,—He will guide you. (*He pauses.*) You know that since I was a little boy I have had a mind to visit the holy places—to see the holy men and hear from them all about the Lord. (*Repeats*) Holy men—to see the holy men and pay my homage to them. (*He closes his eyes, folds his hands and then opens his eyes.*) Now a chance has come, through the grace of God. Mother, I shall come safely back to you. Please do not be frightened on account of me, only bless me, my mother!... (*He prostrates himself at Loi's feet.*)

LOI (*Moved to her depths*): Rise up, my child. You have my blessings. May the All-merciful God shower His blessings on you.

*Kabir's gentle footsteps are heard on the varendah. Loi arranges her veil and rises.*

*She goes to the door and speaks from there.)*

LOI: My lord,... my lord, please come in...

*(Slowly Kabir enters the hut. Kamaal spreads a mat for him and Kabir sits down.)*

KABIR *(To Loi)*: Sit down. *(To Kamaal)* You too sit down, my child. Why do you two look so grave? What is the matter?

LOI *(Sitting down and a little encouraged)*: Your son wants to leave us... He will go on a pilgrimage.

KABIR *(His face brightens and, after casting a glance at Kamaal's face)*: O that is very good, indeed! Go, my son. Man's heart is much ennobled by travelling to holy places,—it unfolds itself like a flower in the sunshine. Go, seek holy men and humble yourself to them and thereby you can become wise. My son, go. You have my blessings.

LOI *(Very much surprised)*: I do not understand you, my lord. You have told me several times, that our heart is the only holy place; we are to find God there. If that is so, why then should men go on pilgrimages?

KABIR: True, but sometimes to know what is in your heart you have to wander. Man is the eternal pilgrim,—his quest is the Lord. The whole world is Hari's,—so every blessed inch of this earth is ours,—and it is holy.

*(Turning close to Loi)* Let him go,—my dear wife, let him go. He will come home a perfected man, a pilgrim who has found the true love of God. *(To Kamaal)* Go, my son. Make Faith your staff, Devotion your only wealth, and Love your cloak of protection. Let Aspiration be your only lamp and the sacred name of Hari your only guide. Thus go, my son,—seek your only friend, your Lord.

KAMAAL *(Kneeling down)*: Father, give me your blessings, *(Turning to Loi)* You too, my mother.

KABIR *(Fondly touching Kamaal's head with his right hand)*: Get up, my son, and get ready for your wonderful adventure.

LOI *(Bewildered)*: I cannot understand...all these things...but I do bless you.

KABIR: We are all fellow-pilgrims—we are all journeying on God's highway. Let us kindle the lamp of aspiration in our hearts. Let our cloaks be dyed with immortal love and let us make faith our companion. The Lord is our one and only guide. Thus have we been marching from eternity—and we shall continue our march till we find our Lord, our only Lover. Go...Go...my son.

KAMAAL: I am so fortunate that I have such a father to guide me. *(He folds his hands.)*

KABIR *(Raising both his hands to the sky singing)*:

Unsheathe your sword, O men!

Bravely enter the fight;

Slay the foe self, and only then

Will you come to the throne of Light.

*(End)*

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**The God-Touch** by G.N. Goyle. Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry. Pages 279. Price Rs. 20.

It is there throughout this book—the inevitable God-touch, the touch that has not only been blessing numberless lives of clay and mire and taking them under its pinions of Love and Grace, but, squandering an infinity of multiple Consciousness, has been labouring day in and day out, year after year, for more than six decades to transform them into moulds of gold. It strings together the candidly seeking, struggling, suffering, doubting, faithful, blissful, winging, loving and grateful episodes of the author's life-long contact with the twin-Avatars of the Supreme, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The book shows the author to be essentially a man of devotion and reveals its exuberance in rich and wide-ranging terms, chapter after chapter. It is an inspired result of his love for Sri Aurobindo. Apart from it, the book is a treat to read and relates in a concrete style the trials and tribulations that a seeker of truth must go through even before he can set himself on the path in a fairly workable way—not to speak of arriving at the final realisation.

The author tells the tale of his yogic journey from its inception, and describes in a palpable manner his felicities and failures before he could steer his voyage on an even keel and acquire a more balanced pace. The book will give the reader a rewarding insight into the life of a sincere traveller on the path of truth.

A number of pictures of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and a glossary of various terms used in the book has enhanced its value.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

**Guru Gobind Singh Invokes the Mighty Mother** by Har Krishan Singh. The Mother's Birth Centenary Publication—published by Har Krishan Singh, 16, Rue Saint Louis, Pondicherry-605001. Price Rs. 2.90.

GURU Gobind Singh was a mere boy when his father Guru Teg Bahadur was executed along with some of his followers. He was too young to offer any armed resistance to the powerful Mughal Empire. In his famous book *Vachitter Natak*, he has related his own story of this birth of his and his previous birth. He writes, "*tahi ham adhak tapasyā sādhamahā kāl kālka āvādhī*"—"In my previous birth I meditated on the Almighty Lord and the Mighty Mother." In the years of preparation he invoked The Lord and the Dynamic Force, the Mighty Mother, and gave a crushing defeat to the Mughal Empire.

Guru Gobind Singh has written a lot on the Mighty Mother in *Dasam Granth*. His famous book *Akāl Ustat* was written half in the masculine gender and half in

the feminine. There he declared, "Mahakal is my father and Mahakali is my Mother." He wrote *Chandi Charitter* three times in Braj Bhakha and Panjabi.

Har Krishan Singh's book covers, among other things, many poems of Guru Gobind in English. "Ugradanti" is the most famous poem of this Guru. It is the morning prayer of Namdharis and Nahangs. About forty years back I saw a *Dasam Granth's* manuscript in which there was "Ugradanti."

This book has many selections of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother Almighty and also on Guru Gobind Singh and his mighty work for the political unity of India. On page 8, Shivā means Mighty Mother. Shiv is the Lord and Shivā is the Mighty Mother. From Her he seeks the boon to perish for Truth's sake.

The language of the book is very simple and illuminating. The main long poem "Ugradanti" has been translated in Quantitative Hexameters. This is a good piece of work on Guru Gobind Singh and the Mother Cult. "Mother" is the word which brings up the deepest feelings in every heart. With this favourite "Ugradanti" poem on their lips ten Namdharis embraced the gallows in 1872 when a batch of a hundred Namdharis resolved to capture the State armoury at Malerkotla. The book is a valuable collection of material on Guru Gobind Singh.

SANT SINGH PRITAM

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# EUROPE 1974

## A TRAVELOGUE

*(Continued from the issue of May 1979)*

(28)

IMPERIAL England in the 19th century started many a project to embellish London, the central point of the Empire, to match its Imperial status. The idea of opening a National Gallery of Art was a favourite one supported by all. Two great collectors, Sir George Beaumont and Holwell Carre, bequeathed their entire collection to the nation. This coincided with the sale of the collection of a city broker Julius Angerstein. Lord Liverpool's government bought the collection in April 1824 for 57,000 pound sterling. This was the beginning of the National Gallery in London, the most marvellous gallery we have ever visited in England. A site was acquired north of the Royal Mews which was to become later the famous Trafalgar Square, in the middle of which is a column sixty feet high on which stands Nelson in his two-pointed naval cap.

It is impossible to list what you will find in the National Gallery. All the names you can think of, all the countries you can think of in Europe, all the periods and all the styles you can think of are represented there. From the 12th century onwards to the 18th, you can see there almost everything and everyone. One can only add that the concentration here is on High Renaissance and the Great Masters, just as the Tate Gallery concentrates on the modern English painters. A short film was being shown inside the National Gallery when we visited the place and some lectures were going on. We took advantage of these and gathered a wealth of information.

The halls are well lighted with skylights at the most propitious angles. Comfortable leather sofas are provided in the middle of the halls and you can sit and gaze to your heart's content at your favourite painting. Photography is allowed, but no flash-lights. A tiny enclave made specially dark and illumined by a faint blue light shelters carefully the cartoons of Leonardo da Vinci's "Virgin and Child with St. Anne and John the Baptist". It is considered a rare treasure. His self-portrait which we wanted to see so much was in one of the bigger halls.

In 1961 when the British Royal Academy wanted some funds to start a free full-time art scholarship, it decided to auction the Da Vinci cartoons. The public was alarmed and contributed heavily, and finally a parliamentary grant provided three million dollars, which enabled the cartoons to remain in London. Entrance to the Gallery is free but the directors are thinking of demanding a small entrance fee for cleaning the paintings. Something goes out of our breath and skin that is harmful to the paintings.

\*



In the National Gallery there is a painting by Luini, one of Leonardo's pupils, called "Christ Among the Elders". A few years back a painting was found in an art gallery in Madison Street, New York, called "Christ Among the Doctors", with the initial L.D.V. at the back of the canvas. Vasari mentions a painting by Leonardo called "Christ Among the Doctors". But it was lost to the world. The painting shows Christ in the middle and four other heads. The heads are very similar to some other drawings found elsewhere done by L.D.V. Now it was necessary to confirm the authenticity of the new find. With the aid of X-Ray and infra-red spectrum photography all the evidence necessary to convince the connoisseurs, that it is truly a Da Vinci work was found. Here are some of the points they found to support the hypothesis: the youthful head of Christ that only the brush of L.D.V. could produce; the curls with left-handed strokes, for we all know that the master was left-handed; one of the Doctors is Da Vinci himself; the colouring and tone and the softness give out that it is a Da Vinci work. No one else could have painted a picture like that.

The next thing that puzzled everyone is the question: "How did it reach America?" Leonardo was in France under the patronage of the French king Francis I when he painted this canvas. It was ordered by Isabella D'Este, Marchioness of Mantua. But Milan was then in foreign hands. So there was no means to send it to her. Where the painting resided so many years no one knows. At one time it was in the hands of Etienne Aufrère, the parliamentary secretary of Louis XII. It remained in the family until Sophia Aufrère the heiress married Lord Yarborough and the painting went to England. In 1929 Yarborough auctioned his collection, but who bought "Christ Among the Doctors" is not known. In 1952 one Stephen Breslin sold it to the present owners Catherine and Robert Gregory. And they brought it to the Madison Street gallery. To the great consternation of Europe it is another Da Vinci in American hands.

\*

It is impossible to say how many complete pictures L.D.V. painted. Today people guess there are some nine hundred in the world. Out of these some six hundred are in the possession of the Queen of England. It is said that Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, travelled widely in Italy about the year 1637. He brought back a huge number of Leonardos. The Royal family by 1690 had six hundred of them. But it seems neither king William III nor Queen Mary was much interested in the paintings. And the paintings were just tucked away in the attic. At the end of the 18th century someone discovered them and since then they have formed part of the Crown's fabulous collection. Some of them are exhibited permanently in the Queen's Gallery at the Buckingham Palace. The Queen's Gallery also is open to visitors.

Apart from paintings there are in the Queen's collection drawings of L.D.V. when he was an apprentice in Verocchio's studio in Florence. And there are others done in France when he was eighty. The diversity of interest and his restless mind

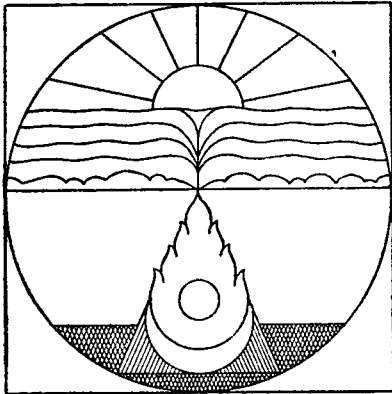
are very apparent in these drawings. In one single sheet one may find drawings of gear-wheel mechanism, waves of the sea, human figures and animals, and in one corner of the same sheet there are scientific data. While the crowned heads of Europe were asking for more of his paintings he suddenly stopped painting for five years to devote his time to his other hobbies.

Here we may quote from Sri Aurobindo:

“Augustus Caesar organised the life of the Roman Empire and it was this that made the framework of the first transmission of the Graeco-Roman civilisation to Europe. He came for that work and the writings of Virgil and Horace and others helped greatly towards the success of his mission. After the interlude of the Middle Ages, this civilisation was reborn in a new mould in what is called the Renaissance, not in its life-aspects but in its intellectual aspects. It was therefore a supreme intellectual, Leonardo Da Vinci, who took up again the work and summarised in himself the seeds of modern Europe.”

*(To be continued)*

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