

# MOTHER INDIA

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July 1979

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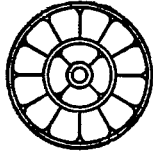
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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. 7

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

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# IS EVERYTHING PREDESTINED?

## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

*Sri Aurobindo has written: "All the scenes of the earth-play have been like a drama arranged and planned and staged by her [the Mother as the Mahashakti] with the cosmic Gods for her assistants and herself as a veiled actor." So this means that everything that happens here has already been staged on a higher plane. So everything is predestined, Mother. Then there is no free-will?*

It is not like that. It is put like that and it is one particular way of seeing things. But in fact, it is... *(After a silence)* It could be said with as much exactness, that at each moment the entire universe is recreated, and both are equally true.

*(Long silence)*

If we take the world as it is, like a chemical compound of a certain nature, with all the inevitable consequences resulting from the composition of this body, and if we think that in this composition there can enter at any moment a new element, it will necessarily change the composition of the whole, you understand? Well, it is something like that, on a greater and more complicated scale; but it is something like that.

The universe is a mass of elements which form a certain compound, and in accordance with this compound all things are organised—as in an internal organisation, you see *(Mother makes a movement as of holding a globe between her hands)*, quite strictly. But this is not a culmination; it is something in the course of construction. And at any moment at all, through a certain kind of action, one or several new elements may be introduced into the whole, and *immediately*, necessarily, all the internal combinations change. Well, the universe is something like that.

I am speaking of the material universe. The material universe is a concretisation of a certain aspect, a certain emanation of the Supreme. But this concretisation is progressive—and not necessarily constant, not necessarily regular, but answering to a much more subtle law of freedom.

In this compound new elements penetrate and change the whole organisation. So, this organisation which was in itself perfect and unfolding itself according to its own law, is almost suddenly changed and all the internal relations become different. So this gives the impression of something either incoherent or unexpected or of a miracle according to how one looks at the problem. And this makes for two concomitant things: a determinism which would be absolute in itself if there were not this freedom, absolute also, of the unexpected and additional in the universe. I don't know if you have followed, but I have tried to express that.

*But how is this addition made?*

Eh, this addition?...

*This addition of a new element...*

Yes. By the aspiration of the supreme Consciousness.

*The aspiration of the supreme Consciousness?*

Yes. It is at work in this world and, working in this world, for the necessity of the work, it works for a certain end, you see, to bring the darkened consciousness back to its normal state of divine consciousness. And each time in its work it meets with a new obstacle, a new thing to conquer or transform, it calls to a new Force. (*Mother opens her hand*) And this new Force is like a new creation. And so, as everything has its correspondence, it may be said in the same way that each being has in its different domains—a human being—it has in its different domains a destiny which is, so to speak, *absolute*. But it has also the capacity, through aspiration, to enter into contact with a higher domain and introduce the action of this higher domain in these more material determinisms. And there it is still the same thing; these two things combined: a determinism which we could call “horizontal” (to make it understandable) in each domain, which is absolute, and the intervention of other domains or a much higher domain, in that determinism, which changes it completely. So, everyone *at the same time* is a set of determinisms which seem quite absolute, and has a total freedom to bring in the intervention of states of being or states of consciousness or forces of a higher domain; and calling these forces and bringing them into the external determinisms alters everything completely. And it is only thus that things can give the impression of the unexpected, the unknown and of freedom.

*Mother, is this what we call “Grace”?*

(*After a silence*) From a certain point of view, yes. That is, without the Grace this could not happen. (*Silence*) But it is not...unless one brings everything back to the Grace. There is certainly a state of consciousness and a vision of things which make you refer everything back to the Grace and finish by discovering that it alone exists, and that it alone does everything. But unless one goes to this extreme, before this, one can very well imagine that there is an element of personal aspiration in the being and that the Grace answers. That’s a way of speaking. The other one also is a way of speaking. The thing is more subtle than that, more unseizable. It is very difficult to express these things in words, because, necessarily, it takes on a mental rigidity and there is a whole part of reality which disappears. But if one has the experience, one understands very well. The conclusion: one must have the experience.

## A POEM BY NIROD

WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS

*A glowing*  
(The growing) heart of day  
*Woke diamond-*  
(Is lily) white  
*From its prison-bed of*  
(Rising out of the) clay  
Clothed with the night.

lily white cheap ?  
*Not only cheap, but gratis*

heart can rise ?  
*It doesn't usually*

Silent and slow and dim  
*Its infant-*  
(Are its hidden) beat:  
*But in the*  
(On its) invisible rim  
*Worlds on worlds met*  
(Various worlds meet)  
*ed*

'various' prosaic ?  
*Terribly prosaic*

And flow upon a high  
Current of thought  
*ecstasy*  
To an unknown (destiny)  
*wrought*  
Transparence-(shot).

*the*  
Behind (an) emptiness  
Of light and shade  
*Heaven's intimate*  
(Dreams of a heaven-) caress  
*S played*  
(Are) (s)ecretly (laid)

*eyes*  
And (the) luminous (wings) of stars  
*Looked from*  
(Come out of) the deep

*e*  
*And its* (E)ngulfing (darkness) bars  
*Of*  
(With its) passion-sleep (.),

*I don't think bars ever engulf, but as it is surrealistically appropriate—*

||| *And*            *could*  
 ||| (Then) voices (can be heard  
 ||| Across the sky,  
 ||| *C*            *the white*  
 ||| (F)alling (like a) sun-word  
 ||| *Of*  
 ||| (From) infinity.

||| *Transient*  
 ||| (They are the) voices of time  
 ||| Fading away  
 ||| *Around*  
 ||| (Beyond) the mystic chime  
 ||| Of the heart of day.

Can the last stanza be  
dropped? *It can't*

7.7.38

Q: This again is a riddle. I absolutely surrendered. To whom? Can you tell me and solve the mystery?

A: Not very cogent, whether realistically or surrealistically. But see how with a few alterations I have caged it. (Excuse the word, it is surrealistic 'it'). I don't put double lines as I don't want to pay too many compliments to myself. I don't say that the new version has any more meaning than the first. But significance, sir, significance! Fathomless!

As for the inspiration it was a very remarkable source you tapped—super-Blakish, but your transcription is faulty, e.g. lily white, rising out of the clay, that horrible "various", and constant mistakes in the last four stanzas. Only the third came out altogether right subject to the change you yourself made of destiny to ecstasy and shot to wrought. But obviously the past tense is needed instead of the present so as to give the sense of something that has been seen.

8.7.38

Q: Guru, I have seen how your little touches have 'caged' the poem. Does it then show that if my transcription becomes perfect some day, the whole thing will drop perfectly O.K.?

A: Of course. At present the mind still interferes too much catching at an expression which will somehow approximate to the thing meant instead of waiting for the one true word. This catching is of course involuntary and the mind does it passively without knowing what it is doing—a sort of instinctive haste to get the thing done. In so doing it gets an inferior layer of inspiration to ....<sup>1</sup> for words even when the substance is from a higher one.

Q: I didn't get the time to revise it. But even if I had got it, do you think I could have made it better?

<sup>1</sup> Word illegible. (Nurodbaran)



A: Not necessarily.

Q: I When a thing is not at all comprehended, how to correct? By inner feeling?

A: No; by getting into touch with the real source. The defects came from a non-contact or an interception by some inferior source as explained above.

Q: Wherever alternatives came, I put them and in two places they stuck. If I go to understand the thing every bit seems ridiculous.

A: Because you are trying to put a mental meaning and your mind is not familiar with the images, symbols, experiences that are peculiar to this realm. Each realm of experience has its own figures, its own language, its own vision and the physical mind not catching the link finds it all absurd. At the same time the main idea in yesterday's poem is quite clear. The heart of day evolving from clay and night is obviously the upward luminous movement of the awakened spiritual consciousness covering the intermediate worlds (vital, mental, psychic) in its passage to the Supreme Ananda (unknown ecstasy, transparence-wrought, the transparence being that well-known mystic experience of the pure spiritual consciousness and existence). In the light of the main idea the last four stanzas should surely be clear—thoughts and the well-known symbols.

Q: What remarkable source, please? Inner or over?

A: Can't specify—as these things have no name. Inner—over also in imagery, but not what I call the overhead planes. These likely to be the inner mind or inner vital or the intuitive mind or anywhere else that is mystic.

---

## ASPIRATION

SILENTLY we shall raise our being up  
 Offered in a sacrifice of love supreme  
 To what we have seen in our hope and dream.  
 For so touched to deny would be death  
 Or, worse, a lingering life undone,  
 As torn we flee our impelling sun,  
 Harbinger unseen of a world to come.  
 And where all respectably walk devoutly on  
 May ever we burn in rage of song,  
 As heretics onward looking,  
 From dawn to greater dawn.

ROGER HARRIS

# OUR LIGHT AND DELIGHT

## RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE WITH THE MOTHER

*(Continued from the issue of June 1979)*

18

### The Mother's Attitudes and Actions

To ensure the success of the Mother's workings on our behalf we were called upon to accept implicitly her advice, however difficult or unpractical it might look, and not wonder whether she had truly her finger on the pulse of changing day-to-day reality. A particular episode in this connection has got impressed indelibly on my mind.

A couple put before the Mother a difficult life-situation. Her instructions were accepted without argument, but in the course of time various unexpected circumstances, seeming to show a path out of the impasse, arose and made them think of new possibilities. They wrote to the Mother about the fresh turn of events and asked a number of questions. When the Mother failed to answer for a few days I inquired the reason. She wrote back:

"I did not answer because their minds are terribly restless, they do not know how to make use of the force and they spoil my formations. But you need not tell them that—send them only blessings." (13.5.1955)

A formation, as I understand it, is a subtle mould created in the stuff of the inner world for a person and empowered to guide the outer process of events to a happy issue, a fortunate pattern, even out of an apparently unfavourable posture of things. Naturally, it is important not to come in the way of any such occult phenomenon.

The next day I wrote again to the Mother: "Please allow me to tell them what they should do not to spoil your formations. This seems to me very necessary. They are not at all unwilling to try their best to cooperate, but they don't know how and the position is indeed difficult. Please forgive their ignorance. Don't give them up. They need your help very badly. But of course they must not spoil your work and waste your grace. At least in order to prevent them from doing so, I should like to tell them what to do. They will be very grateful to know whatever will enable them to co-operate with you when you have been so kind. Shall I tell them something like the following?—

"Have simple, unthinking, firm faith. Do just what you have been told by the Mother. Trust her vision and her work. Don't spoil the occult formations she makes for you. Don't bring in all kinds of fears. Don't start looking in diverse directions, muddling the situation by trying this, that and the other. Stop being so restless and snap out of all depression. Be natural, cheerful, and co-operate calmly, clearly, single-

heartedly with the Mother's plan."

The Mother drew a line in the left margin against the last paragraph of my letter and wrote underneath: "Yes, you can write that, with my blessings." (15.5.1955)

About a month later I heard again from the couple. They reported a good chance to solve their problem. The closing words of the note were: "We have done our utmost on our side—but really the final touch would be the Mother's help. We find it very hard at present to live as we are. But it just can't be helped... All we can do is to put our faith in the Mother. Perhaps she'll make the new chance come true."

I asked the Mother whether there would be any message. I added: "If the new chance also does not come off, should I ask them plainly not to try for anything else but continue quietly and contentedly as you have advised? Some clear instruction or command seems necessary."

The Mother replied: "Amal, you must understand one thing. Before giving an answer to a question, I look at all the sides of the problem present and future, so when the answer is given *it is final*. It is no use coming back to the question any more. Blessings." (12.6.1955)

This sounded a little like giving up the parties involved, but that was not the Mother's way with her children. She tolerated their mistakes and looked essentially at their central turn towards her. All through the succeeding years her Grace kept pouring upon the man and his wife and their children. He appealed to her in all difficulties. I vividly remember one occasion nearly thirteen years later. He wrote to me: "Please tell Mother that I feel all the time as if life and energy were flowing away from me out of my hands and feet and I cannot stop it." The Mother's reply is both personal and general, focusing on a truth not always understood. She sent me the note:

"Why does he complain? The energy must be spent to be renewed. The human body is not a closed jar that gets emptied by spending. The human body is a channel that receives only when it spends.

"Let him eat well, sleep well, avoid wrong thinking and spend normally. He will soon be all right." (20.4.1968)

\*

Spiritual action, with or without physical props, was always the Mother's advice in dealing with the ailments or defects of the body. Group captain Mona Sarkar had a small but long-standing and resistant handicap owing to an accident during a game. On the morning of 24 August 1960 the Mother gave him a little lecture in front of me as well as a few others, gathered on the first floor of her apartment:

"That knee of yours is still troubling you? But you must keep in touch with athletics. Otherwise you will become incapable. Do you want to go about with a stick and, in your old age, get weak and tottering? Learn from Nolini's example. Look at what he is doing even at his age!

“The trouble is not the mere fact of the knee being bad. You have to put your full consciousness there and be obstinate at it. It is by constantly putting your consciousness, day after day, month after month, and by doing exercise, that you can cure the knee. Truly you have to be very obstinate and do consciously the movements which do not allow the dislocation to recur. Of course, you can't go on thinking of the knee all the time. You have to do so many things together. But it is not necessary to go on thinking. You have just to fix the consciousness at the place and it will take care automatically to ward off the forces of accident. This is the only way, and it is by persistently pursuing it that people have cured themselves.”

The report of the talk was shown to the Mother and found by her to be accurate.

\*

One of the most dazzling things the Mother told me was in reference to an experience of hers in her young days. It showed me how high she could reach even before she met Sri Aurobindo in 1914 and what destiny awaits *homo sapiens*. According to the most popular version of modern evolutionary theory, *homo sapiens* appeared not only very late on the scene but also at the end of a lengthy series of blind genetic mutations sifted by an equally blind process of natural selection due to the demands of the ever-changing external environment.

The Mother said in effect: “I realised long ago that the human form carries a fundamental importance. I used to rise into high levels during my trances—till I seemed close to the very ultimate spiritual reality. It was certainly beyond Sat-chit-ananda. There I once saw the figure of a being like a man with uplifted arms as if calling down something from the Unknown and Unmanifest. So, you see, the human form goes back to the utmost origin.”

This vision should fill us with an immense hope: but to fulfil our destiny on earth we have indeed “miles and miles to go”. The Supermind is what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have held out to us as the all-fulfilling power. To receive and embody it is the aim of their yoga for us, and they have laid it open to our aspiring reach. But we must beware of crying “Supermind” glibly. Even the most advanced amongst us have to be careful in their convictions or claims. Sometime in the 'fifties the Mother said to me: “I had a vision in which I saw you and X on the mental level. Both of you were arguing and acting together. It was a state in which the mind is ignorant. Usually I see X's head filled with light. However, we must remember that this light is a very different thing from the Supramental Consciousness. There is a big gulf between the two, no matter how brilliant the light may be from the great mental planes above the human but below the Supermind.”

\*

Of course the light proper to the mere mind itself is even less a thing to be proud

of—though it may be very attractive. Along with it some soul-quality has to be at play if it is to be by its own strength a part of the spiritual life. Knowing my attachment to the mental personality in me, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother always tried to summon me beyond it. The very name I have been given by them—“Amal Kiran”, meaning “The Clear Ray”—is meant to point not only towards clarity but also towards radiancy—towards being on the mental plane the manifestation of a light above it, a sun of Truth from which a revealing ray acts in the mind. Another pointer to the state in which my mental personality should be—a rather difficult and tall order—is the flower which the Mother allotted to me. In the old days when I was asked by her to paint the flowers she used to give at the Pranam in the morning, a certain number of them were set apart for particular rooms. I had to paint them on small pieces of drawing-paper and have them hung on the wall of one room or another. Thus I was asked to paint the flower called “Falsehood” for the room in which the sadhaks read daily newspapers. For my own room the Mother told me to paint “Krishna’s Light in the Mind”. I was very happy with this choice of hers—especially as “Krishna’s Light” is said by Sri Aurobindo to be also “Sri Aurobindo’s Light”.

Ever since this choice, cleverness for the sake of cleverness has ceased to be a pursuit, though I cannot pretend that I always succeed in being truly luminous. What at least I seek to achieve is some soul-quality infusing the mind’s functioning. And, of course, for us the soul-quality lies in being open in our inmost self to the new yoga Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have made active amongst us. If one has turned away from them one cannot expect a legitimate place in the field of mental expression that the Ashram’s magazines afford. Not that everything published must be directly Aurobindonian; but it should not emanate from a consciousness that has explicitly strayed away from the Master’s and the Mother’s light. I realised this issue in connection with my editorship of *Mother India*.

A man in Bombay who had been once a devotee had become sceptical and sarcastic. He was contributing a series of commentaries on an Upanishad to *Mother India*. The articles were appreciated very much. I had kept the man’s personal attitude apart from my judgment of his writing. As long as the writing bore no trace of the attitude, I could afford to be impersonal. The Mother came to be told of his attitude and the several unpleasant things he had said. She knew also that his series was appearing in *Mother India*.

She raised the topic with me one afternoon. I told her how much the articles had been admired and that they had no tinge of his critical approach to the Mother’s workings. She very calmly heard me out. Then she expressed her wish that we should not seem to support the man by publishing his work. I inquired whether I could be allowed to run the series to its end and then forswear publishing anything else by the same hand. She paused for a minute and said: “It is best if we stop just now.”

I could see that there was no personal feelings involved on her part. Actually,

I had noticed in the past that complaints had been made to her about somebody or other's hostile remarks against her and the proposal had been made that she should take steps against that person. She had said: "As the remarks are about me, I can't take any stand. If they were about Sri Aurobindo, I would certainly act." On the present occasion her decision must have had behind it some insight into occult forces which might harm either me or the readers or else the Ashram's general work. Obviously, through my backing of the article the hostile elements were drawing sustenance. Purely literary principles have little validity where the battle between the illumined future and the obstructive past is concerned. I put aside the impersonal editor in me and acted as the obedient disciple.

It was a test for me over and above its being a lesson to the writer of the commentaries. There cannot be a compromise in such matters. But, of course, as the Mother's talk with me indicated, everything has to be done without personal animosity. A wide and wise serenity has to be at play in all decisive moves.

I dare say the Mother's move was even for the benefit of the writer himself—a quiet criticism which was an act of Grace to stir his soul to come forward again. And I am told that before his premature death he did turn to the Mother once more.

\*

While I am about the subject of *Mother India* in relation to the Mother's wishes, I may touch upon the hints she gave me of what *Mother India* should never stoop to. Once a co-worker offered the suggestion that we should ask our readers their reactions and their expectations, so that we might increase our periodical's popularity and be more successful. No doubt, the co-worker had no insistence in his suggestion and was as willing as myself to accept the Mother's ruling in every respect. But somehow the Mother came down with a pretty heavy hand. She must have intuited a non-Aurobindonian force putting out its tentacles from behind the co-worker's innocent inquiry. She wrote to me: "Let us become as vulgar as we can and success is sure to come." (16.I.1965)

We were a little taken aback and I pursued the topic by seeking her views on what changes the journal might undergo without falling below standard. She was again uncompromising: "No—I have no superficial views on the subject—and what I could say would not fit the 'new spirit' of the journal. Let me out of all this, it is better." (17.I.1965) One point, however, she clarified by adding the next day: "All that is done with the purpose of pleasing the public and obtaining success is vulgar and leads to falsehood. I enclose a deeper view of the subject. Blessings." The deeper view was expressed in a Message of hers that we should want to please neither ourselves nor others but only the Lord.

Some time later she told me that *Mother India* was playing very well the moderate role it had adopted—not setting itself exclusively in the direction of the spiritual élite but allowing a certain wideness of appeal which would keep room for general

writing of various kinds without letting the spiritual theme go into the background or stop holding the centre of the stage—yet she warned me against any further move towards making it broad-based and popular. I have tried my best to live up to her vision, never forgetting the core of spiritual truth which we must preserve in full blaze, and always keeping a continuity with what Sri Aurobindo meant when in reply to an Ashramite reader's criticism of the opinions voiced in the early semi-political editorials, he exclaimed: "Doesn't he know that *Mother India* is my paper?"

\*

Although the Mother often asked us to be sensitive to subtle realities and activities behind the visible happenings of the world and of the Ashram, she could pour ice-cold water when we indulged in spiritual fantasies. Thus on 10 May 1967 I informed her:

"The following is going round the Ashram as emanating from you. If it is authentic, may I publish it in *Mother India*?—

"4th May 1967 (4.5.67): the Supramental will start working on earth, but the working may start even a little earlier.

"I observe this day as the Supramental Manifestation day thus: this is the day of India's New Year, Earth's New Year and the whole Universe's New Year and all these three strangely coincide on the same day which may change the face of the whole Universe."

The Mother's brief answer was: "It is all fancy!"

A short time afterwards—to be exact, on 15 July the same year—I sent her the letter: "There is a story current here that into the body of Auroson you have put the soul of Paul Richard! Apart from anything else, I believe Paul Richard is still alive. Or have you put him to sleep in order to give his soul a better embodiment? The story strikes me as rather fantastic—but one never knows until one asks you. A less colourful report is that this time you have completely succeeded in putting a great soul into a baby at the very moment of birth."

The Mother wrote back: "When will you learn not to listen to all the rumours going about in this place?"

\*

In her spiritual pronouncements the Mother could be very positive at times as when she said in February 1965: "Nothing can delay the inevitable realisation." But at other times she was ready to make whatever reservation appeared to her necessary. On 14 January of the same year I quoted to her some words which she had uttered and which I had wished to publish in *Mother India*: "The will of Sri Aurobindo is bound to be done ... His work of transformation cannot but end in a supreme victory. And what he calls the supramental world will be brought down on earth and realised by us here and now." After Amrita had read out the quotation to

her she did not say "Yes" but wanted to know where it had come from. Amrita told me of her inquiry and I wrote to her:

"I had jotted down these words in my diary but omitted to mention the source. On asking Kishor I have found the source: *Words of the Mother*, Third Series, pp. 54-55. The talks in that book date back to the time of the meetings you used to hold in the Prosperity Room before the Soup Distribution. They were recorded by me and, before publication by Kishor, approved by you.

"As a rule, when we print what has already been published, we do not ask your permission. I asked it because I wanted to remind you of the extremely encouraging and heart-cheering things you had said. But how is it that you have not let me repeat them? Any particular reason at the moment for keeping them out of sight?

"I do hope your words still hold true. If you have changed your mind—or supermind—my life seems hardly worth living."

The Mother's reply was reassuring, but as she appeared not to consider the occasion appropriate I did not republish the sweeping statement. Now, after nearly a decade and a half, seeing that the statement stands as permanent part of the Centenary Edition of her works, as indeed it should, I think that her reply must be made public. It was:

"My conviction is not changed, but the word 'now' must be understood in a supramental way." (15.1.1965)

I believe she wanted us not to be too sanguine about the great realisation. We must abstain from seeing it as in the very near future, much more from imagining the supramental world as already taking shape amongst us. A proper sense of the time needed for so radical a "divine event" is surely the Mother's intention. But, if her statement is to be tied in with the one a month earlier and with several others in the same vein, earlier or later, we have to put the concerned span of years—long though it may be by ordinary standards—still within the Mother's own life-time and regard that life-time as extendable by Yogic Force to cover the "now" understood "in the supramental way". Then alone the categorical expression "Nothing can delay." becomes intelligible.

Somehow the extension was not done. For reasons best known to her, the Mother let her life be cut short even before her own centenary which she had more than once appeared to take for granted. There is a mystery here, before which we have ultimately to stand silent. However, our silence must carry the certainty that whatever the Mother has chosen to do is in conformity with the demands of her work as an Avātar of the Supermind. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "the Divinity [that is the Avatar] acts according to...the consciousness of the Truth above and the Lila [Play] below and It acts according to the need of the Lila, not according to man's ideas of what It should or should not do. This is the first thing one must grasp, otherwise one can understand nothing about the manifestation of the Divine."<sup>1</sup> Returning to the same theme elsewhere, Sri Aurobindo tells us that the Avatar's Divine Consciousness,

<sup>1</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome One (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1958), p. 414



bent as it is on only two things fundamentally—"the truth above and here below the Lila and the purpose of the incarnation or manifestation"—does "what is necessary" for them "in the way Its greater than human consciousness sees to be the necessary and intended way".<sup>1</sup>

In this vision our groping hearts must find the rest they need to prepare them for a new life with the Mother.

(Concluded)

AMAL KIRAN

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 427.

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## THE MOTHER'S DICTIONARY

ONCE perhaps round about 1946-47 I was in bad shape and in a bad mood but I could not help going to the Mother as the interview had already been fixed.

As soon as I came before Her She said, "How are you?" I angrily said, "I am very unhappy, very sad, I am feeling miserable, discouraged, disappointed, depressed and very much disgusted."

The Mother got up and went inside and brought a big-size Dictionary. Placing the Dictionary on Her lap, She said, "But these words do not exist in my Dictionary. In my Dictionary the words are Happy, Cheerful, Joyful, Encouraged, Hopeful, Exhilarated and Pleased."

It is surprising that She remembered the order in which I had spoken the words and She just spoke the opposite words in the same order.

I wanted to tell Her to give the Dictionary into my hands and I would show the words which I had uttered but Her influence was so powerful that I bowed my head in shame and had to come away.

I was never defeated anywhere but I suffered defeat here and in the course of time the words of the Mother's Dictionary caught hold of my being and gradually possessed me although in fact it will perhaps take 'Janmas'<sup>1</sup> and ages to achieve all this.

SURENDRA NATH JAUHAR

(From *The Call Beyond*)

<sup>1</sup> Lives.

## A COMMENT ON CHAMPAKLAL'S "GOLDEN VISION"

Dear Champaklal,

I was greatly impressed by the Golden Vision whose report by you was published in the June *Mother, India*. It reveals the Mother in her full reality—not only the Universal Form of her but also the Individual Being. People often say that now that the Mother has left her body she is a Universal Form—as if the bodily shape alone constituted her individuality. What you saw shows not only the cosmic power set to greater use by her departure from the body but also how closely and organically the Universal and the Individual in her were related and how naturally they interplay.

It would seem that her individuality no less than her universality can now come home more vividly. Her individual aspect acted on you in the very way the embodied Mother used to do: she put her hands over your eyes just as she had often done when she had been tangible on the earth. But she repeated the old gesture with a luminosity and a meaningfulness which exceeded the old personal relationship.

This meaningfulness, disclosed by your vision, acquires a plenitude by her bringing in one hand a lotus and in the other a hammer. The lotus would point to a power of effecting a spontaneous opening of our being to the Divine, especially to the Divine as Avatar. The hammer suggests a forceful action of swift grace. And what she did with the hammer to you personally is for me the climax—the most momentous part—of the vision. You do not say much of the change brought about in you, but from your few hints I conclude as follows.

The Mother has broken open your normal individuality and made something of you spread its consciousness in the universal existence. This change has come about by at once a profound interiorisation, a further plunging into the inner self and, as a result of this new deepening, a new widening.

How would I understand this new widening? I would say that it modifies the whole aspect of your future movements to distant places. I am sure that you did not go on travelling here and there merely because you needed an outing. There was an inner call to meet the outside world for the sake of that world's good. Now, according to me, there will be an answer from you not simply to whatever possibility of good there may be for the world's sake. If only the world were concerned, you could sit at home and not go out at all and, without going out, get some work done. At present, there will be a going out purely because the Divine shall call you for purposes that you may not even know. *The thinking mind will have no part in the motive of your travels.* The thinking mind has been hit open and something more inward has been set free—something inward beyond all your previous depth. Deriving from that suddenly revealed centre, your movements are bound to be a sheer *motiveless* response to the Divine Will—the individual Mother within you going forth ecstatically into the Universal Mother who enfolds your greater being outside the body that is the visible Champaklal.

Affectionately,  
AMAL KIRAN

# WITH MY SWEET MOTHER

## REMINISCENCES BY LALITA

*(Continued from the issue of June 1979)*

3

### Tea and Pickles

AFTER joining the Ashram I was much troubled by my attachment to tea. I tried very often to give it up but without any success. Then one day I said to Mother, "Mother dear, the one thing I am very much attached to is tea. As soon as I get up in the morning and finish my toilet, I must have a nice hot cup of tea."

The Mother smiled and looked at me for a second or two and then said, "Is that so? Wait a minute." I was expecting a good scolding which would help me to get over this attachment, but instead She went inside and brought me a fine tin of tea. "Take this," She said. "Sri Aurobindo also takes tea." I was quite surprised, but thanking Her for Her kindness I took the tin home.

Day after day passed, and I tried to take the tea, but I felt no inclination to open the tin. I returned it to the Mother and told Her that somehow She had taken away all my desire when She had given me the tea, so I was returning the tin to Her.

The Mother was very pleased and smiling sweetly She said, "All right", and took the tin back.

Another thing I liked much were pickles. This too I told the Mother, and with Her permission I sent for them from Bombay. The Mother kept the bottle in Her hands for a few seconds and then gave it to me saying, "You can take a little of them at a time since you like them so much."

I took the bottle home, opened it and ate the pickles sometimes, but strange to say they no more had that delicious taste I was expecting, and I could not finish the bottle.

I showed it to the Mother and asked Her if I could give the rest away to my servant.

"If you really don't want to eat it, you can give it to her," She said. So one more attachment was broken.

### The Mother's Instant Forgiveness

When I was staying on the ground floor of the house whose top storey was occupied by the Macpheeters, I did a very wrong thing, I threw rubbish into a well which was in the courtyard behind my room. This was because of what I had seen in Gujarat. I had gone for short stays there and found similar deep wells, called "Patala Kuva".

These wells were not meant for drinking water from but for throwing all kinds of rubbish in. When I asked why it was so, I was told that the water of the sea (which was not very far) entered underneath and carried away everything. And as this well too in my courtyard was pretty deep and not very far from the sea, I mistook it for a "Patala Kuva". I am thankful that somebody reported my misdeed to the Mother who sent Amrita to get the well cleaned.

When I went to see the Mother a day or two later She asked me, "Is it true that you were throwing all kinds of rubbish in your well?"

"Yes, Mother," I replied. "And I am very sorry for it." Instantly She forgave me and said, "It's all right." Then I explained to Her why I had made this mistake, and She was full of compassion and repeated, "It's all right."

### **Amrita**

Speaking of Amrita, I recall two incidents. He was simple as a child. One day he told me that he had received a good scolding from the Mother because of what he had said about me when I had first arrived in Pondicherry. He had gone up to Her and exclaimed, "Look at this Parsi girl who has come to do Yoga dressed like a princess and even using make-up!" The Mother was grave for a moment and then said severely, "What has Yoga got to do with dress? Don't be stupid. You can't judge people by the outer appearance."

As I had already mentioned, I had been married only a couple of months before my arrival here and I had no other things to wear except those that formed part of my trousseau.

Most of us never disclose the scoldings we have received from the Mother and speak only of her smiles and kisses. But we do not understand how she dealt with us. She once told me that She could give a scolding or speak in a forthright rude-seeming way only to those She considered as very intimate with Her. I have seen how many times Pavitra and Chinmayi had this Grace (in front of me). They always took it in the right spirit and kept quiet. I am thankful for not having been excluded from this Grace either, but I was often reduced to tears by it. Of course the slashing was well deserved. Among those who were intimate with the Mother, our saintly Pujalal who worked in the Mother's room and the long passage outside, cleaning the shutters, etc., seemed to have given the Mother no occasion to administer a rebuke. Our Dyumanbhai also, with his wonderful attitude, appears never to have provoked a cleansing storm from Her.

Amrita was not only simple and childlike but very helpful to everybody, as I soon learned.

After a long stay in Bombay, when I came on a visit to the Ashram, there was a drama one night at our Theatre which I went to see. On coming out, I found that the new pair of sandals I had left outside was missing, and instead an old pair with a broken strap was waiting for me. What could I do? I wore it somehow and went

limping to the Castalini Guest House where I was staying. The next morning I went to Amrita and showed the sandals to him and told him what had happened.

"I will put up a notice," he said.

"But do you think that the person who has taken the sandals will return them?" I asked.

"If they have been taken by mistake, they will certainly be returned to you," he said. "But not otherwise," he added laughing. "People here sometimes make such so-called *mistakes*, Lalita, and are later on sorry for them." He laughed all the more.

The notice was put up but my sandals did not come back to me.

After a few days there was meditation around the "Samadhi" and all the sandals were kept at a certain place in the compound. I went there to remove my shoes—and lo! there were my old sandals staring at me.

I told Amrita about it. "If you are sure that they are yours, then take them," he said. I replied, "I am quite sure because they are of a new type and colour, but what makes me hesitate is this—how will that person go home without them?"

"Well," Amrita said with a chuckle, "that person did not think how *you* would go home from the Theatre at night, so why do you bother about that?" I took the sandals but before I went away he told me, "Don't forget to *hide* them properly another time."

### The Mother's Work

There were many kinds of work that the Mother gave me to do. Besides being asked to embroider Her crowns and cover her bags, I received some empty perfume boxes from Her to cover with brocade or satin, and then paint and place a picture inside the lid of the box. She gave me all the materials (as was Her custom) and I did the job. I had never seen such boxes treated in this way anywhere in my life nor had the Mother shown me how they were to be managed. But, as we all know, whenever She allotted a particular work to anybody, She inwardly imparted the knowledge as well as the capacity to do it. Thus I prepared more than a hundred boxes for Her, both big and small. One large box of golden-coloured satin embroidered by me with a design of chrysanthemum flowers She liked very much, and told me that She would use it for Her "darshan" saris. This made me very happy.

When I was doing the pictures for Her boxes, suddenly by Her Grace a subtle sight opened within me, and I was able to see beautiful things in the subtle world even with open eyes. This was very helpful to me. She also gave me some picture-postcards to copy. "Copying is the best way of learning to paint," She said. "In France the art students spend most of their time in the Art Galleries copying the old masters." But my pictures were done mostly in a single colour—sepia—because it could go with all the coloured coverings of the boxes.

One day She told me that She had sent some of my boxes to Paris, where they were a novelty and were much appreciated. "Why to Paris, Mother?" I asked. "It

is because they hold a large exhibition there at certain times, and I was asked to contribute something. So with some pictures by Sanjivan and Krishnalal and other things, I sent some of these boxes also.”

In connection with these boxes I remember that one day when I was standing near the Mother, and we were arranging things in Her almirah, I asked Her, “Mother dear, it seems strange to me that You should so confidently give me these boxes to do, the like of which I have never seen or even heard of anywhere in my life.”

“There is nothing strange about this,” She said. “It is a Japanese art, and you were a Japanese in your recent past.”

“Is that so?” I asked, and we both laughed. This statement by Her led me later to understand many things in my nature which made me so different from all my family members and friends. The Japanese are very aesthetic people, they love Nature, and have a great dislike for crudeness and vulgarity. Some time afterwards, in a dream-vision I saw myself in Japan, worshipping the Goddess Kwanon (Goddess of Mercy) in a kind of temple with a lovely garden all around. This brought home to me very forcefully what the Mother had told me about my recent past.

The boxes I prepared are still there in the Mother’s Store-room (below Abhay-singh’s flat), nicely wrapped and kept along with other things, in the charge of Dyumanbhai, now one of our Trustees.

The Mother also put the work of stitching Her blouses and saris into my hands. I embroidered only one sari with a design of swans and silver clouds. Meenakshi, Tripura and Padmasini worked with me. And of course Vasudha was always there to help. She was a perfectionist and a very patient worker. Tara and Lila also embroidered different things.

Once Tara did a beautiful embroidered lion for Sri Aurobindo’s bedcover which was very much admired by everybody, and specially by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Apart from the above-mentioned sari another big piece of embroidery I did was a kimono for the Mother with a design of the Buddha sitting in his well-known posture and a train of disciples all round him. It took me a pretty long time but at last it was finished, and the Mother looked magnificent when She wore it. I asked Vasudha how she managed to keep her patience when it took months to finish one sari. She told me that every day she concentrated only on what she had to finish on that day and never thought of the rest of the sari. This was a good lesson to me, for I was impatient and wondered all the time how many months would pass before my sari was completed.

Once Vasudha was given a grey georgette sari with a broad border of fishes. At first the saris were embroidered on small frames, but when I told the Mother that in Bombay they were done on very large frames, She had a large frame made for Vasudha. There was a special process of fixing the sari on the frame which I taught my friends after informing the Mother about it.

Vasudha did not embroider the georgette sari in the ordinary way but passed the gold or silver threads between the woven threads of the sari. This was unique

but she was a master of this art. Yet she was not quite satisfied with her work. The Mother saw it and was very pleased.

Vasudha also did a handkerchief for Sri Aurobindo which He greatly admired. He said that the fishes embroidered seemed to be Supramental ones!

### Washing and Dyeing the Mother's Saris

When the Mother had no new sari to wear on a certain Darshan day, I told Her that I would get one done in Bombay for Her. She agreed. I wrote to my papa to get one embroidered for Her at a famous shop there, and to consider this request as a Grace and privilege. I added that first he should send me a special design for it.

My papa gladly agreed and the designs were sent, but I am not sure if the Mother selected one from them or asked Sanjiban to do it.

The design was of wheat stalks with a bunch of grains on each stalk, and it was to be embroidered on a grey georgette sari with silver thread. In spite of obstacles it arrived in time and, after we had stitched it, the Mother wore it on the Darshan day and looked very beautiful as well as pleased.

My papa must have received Her special blessings, for he felt very happy.

Now the question arose as to how to wash this sari without spoiling the embroidery. The Mother always had Her saris washed after wearing them only once. In Bombay we had big shops where such articles were "dry-cleaned" but here we could not do as those shops did, and the Mother did not approve of such a process either.

She asked me if I knew of a way to wash this sort of sari without allowing them to shrink or get spoilt in any way. I said that I had never done it, but I would like to try. As I have said before, I knew that when She gave a particular work to us She also gave at the same time the knowledge and capacity to do it. She provided us with a very large oval tub and a large long table, as well as plenty of old cotton saris as asked by me. These were placed outside Datta's room on the first floor, in the house in which Ichchhaben is staying at present.

I set to work by dissolving some Lux soap-flakes in the tub. I had many helpers, and we were all learning with the Mother's inner help. We passed the whole sari through this soap-water without crumpling it. We changed the water several times and repeated the process. Then we spread it lengthwise on the table and mopped it thoroughly before hanging it in a particular way. While it was still damp, we pulled it gently breadthwise as well as lengthwise, to make it as near as possible to the original size. After this we ironed it on the wrong side, keeping up the gentle pulling.

Many other saris did not need this pulling because they were not made of georgette and so they did not shrink when washed.

All embroidery-threads given by the Mother were of fast colours, but those saris which were not embroidered here had to be very carefully handled, lest the

colours which were not fast should run and spoil everything.

After some time I told the Mother that I would like to dye as well as shade the saris with the colours.

“Do you know the process?” the Mother asked. “Dyeing I know a little, but not shading, which I would like to try with Your help,” I said. So the Mother gave me some saris and Twink dyes, and of course the inner knowledge. I started the work with my friends and by the Mother’s Grace all went well. The knowledge came automatically as well as the inner guidance and the result was remarkable.

Later, when I was working in the Mother’s room with Chinmayi, She gave me the charge of the almirah where Her saris were kept (very, carefully folded) and She would tell me which sari, blouse and crown She would require for the evening or the next day, and we would pull them out and keep them ready.

One day, there was no matching crown for a certain sari, so Chinmayi and myself set to work and each made a different type of crown using the jewels and other things placed at our disposal. Chinmayi made a gorgeous crown with a necklace of diamonds and emeralds, whereas I prepared a simple one with a necklace and pendent of ivory fixed on a pale pink band.

The Mother looked at both carefully and then chose mine. Chinmayi was perplexed and asked the Mother why She had chosen this simple crown when hers was much more elaborate. The Mother explained very sweetly and quietly that it was because mine was aesthetically more suitable for that sari, and Chinmayi was satisfied.

Chinmayi was a very dear friend of mine and I learnt many things from her, in spite of her occasional queer behaviour. She was very close to the Mother, Her constant companion, and the only sadhika who was allowed to go to Sri Aurobindo at times.

Many people in the Ashram have asked me if I met and spoke to Sri Aurobindo when I was working upstairs and I have said “No”. But on rare occasions, when I was with the Mother, and neither Champaklal nor anybody else was there, He would suddenly come with a piece of paper—or without one—to consult the Mother. He knew that I would be there, but the matter must have been urgent.

I would move away from Them till they had finished and He had left after casting His wonderful glance at me.

His voice was soft and extremely refined, and His walk was majestic. But what was most enchanting was the smile that the Mother gave to the Lord when He had finished and was about to leave, and His sweet quiet response. No words can ever describe these magical exchanges. One had to see them to believe, and like many other things they have left an indelible mark on my consciousness, and I am so grateful for them. From this you can imagine what a treasure-house of wonders and delights Chinmayi, Champaklal and some others who were constantly with Them must have had.

*( To be continued )*



# SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

(Continued from the issue of June 1979)

4

## The Mother's Conception of Teaching

WHEN the Ashram school started, the war had not yet come to an end. The start was made almost from scratch. There were no books except *The Mother* and *The Yoga and Its Object*. Pavitra got some books from France. The Englishwoman who was a teacher spoke French fluently. It was under her care that the school-children had their first grounding in the French language.

There is a tale behind the introduction of work-sheets in the Ashram School. The Mother came to know that children loved the short stories narrated by Norman Dowsett. One day she asked him, "Why don't you get your stories published in book form?"

"I have no time, Mother."

"What is your programme?"

On hearing that his routine work lasted till 10 p.m. she observed, "Yes, you have no time. At what time do you get up?"

"At 5.30 a.m., Mother."

"You could get up at 5 a.m. and write for half an hour."

It was thus that Norman's first book saw the light of day. Once he proposed that if work-sheets were prepared, the needs of the individual students could be met. The Mother liked the idea. This was the way the Mother worked. She put forth a force. If one was receptive, one felt the impulse to do the right thing in the right way. The system of work-sheets is followed even today. A specimen of the work-sheet is given below:

Think of a "Mountain";

- a) How are mountains formed?
- b) Do mountains serve any purpose? If so, say what it is.
- c) What relationship is there between a mountain and an ocean?
- d) Which is the most formidable mountain range in the world?
- e) Write about fifty words on the beauty and grandeur of any particular mountain or mountain range you like.

The Mother's own words about her conception of teaching are: "The teacher ... instead of going through his course with a textbook, should take the trouble of preparing the course himself. He must know enough and take enough pains to pre-

pare his course from day to day, and he will close a subject only when—I do not say when everyone has understood, that is impossible—when those at least whom he considers as interesting elements of his class have understood, then the next subject is taken up. And if that continues, and if a particular type of subject extends over two years instead of one or one and a half, it matters little, because it is his own course and he writes according to the needs of his class. This is my conception of teaching.” (She did not like the idea of all the children in the class being made to read the same book.)

When Norman joined the Ashram in December 1945, he was given the work of teaching. His first report on record is dated December 12, 1945. We can perhaps get some idea of the earnest approach he made to teaching and of his novel method, if we examine the correspondence that passed between him and the Mother.

To quote the Mother again about her new method of teaching: “It would be interesting to formulate or to work out a new method of teaching children; to take them very small, very small, it is easy. One would need people (Oh, one will need very remarkable professors who have first a sufficient documentation of what they know, to be able to answer all questions; and at the same time, at least the knowledge, if not the experience of the true intellectual and intuitive attitude... a silence that is wide awake, turned towards the most true consciousness, and the capacity to receive what comes from there... the exact indication of how to do it... and a precise indication of when it should be done....)

“... it is not a matter of collecting books and retelling them: one cannot be a professor like this. It is true, it is not easy to put such a lofty ideal into practice in a day—the higher the ideal, the greater the difficulties—but what great work in the world has been accomplished treading the path of roses?”

The school is a child of the Mother. The Mother expressed the hope that her children would develop this institution into one of the greatest seats of knowledge on earth.<sup>1</sup>

“... the thing which we should cultivate in our teachers,” Montessori advocates, “is more the spirit than the mechanical skill of the scientist; that is, the direction of the preparation should be towards the spirit rather than towards the mechanism.”<sup>2</sup>

Our expectations are much more than that. We expect the school to find the individual’s real strength, challenge it and make it productive.

In fact one must be a Yogi by choice, by temperament—a living light to guide the destiny of children of the future. We have given some idea of the make-up of those with whom the Ashram school made its start.

Here we mention one who was called upon in later years to elevate the new method of teaching to a greater height.

It was *The Life Divine* that first touched K’s soul. The problem of education

<sup>1</sup> cf. Srinivas Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo*, p. 1382.

<sup>2</sup> Maria Montessori: *The Montessori Method*, p. 9.

had occupied his thoughts even when he was in his teens. He felt that there was something wrong in the existing system of education and that there must be a change. From his early years he came within the orbit of Dayananda's influence. He aspired to be like him and the idea of *Brahmacharya* appealed to him. Daily he used to recite a *shloka* before going to bed.

His leaning towards philosophy came from his college days. He made a deep study, first of Western and then of Eastern philosophy, in search of a solution to the problems of life.

The more he read the greater grew his thirst. His father was a politician and wanted him to follow suit but he refused. To please his father he appeared in the I.A.S. examination and secured highest marks in philosophy.

In 1955, it so happened that someone who could not follow *The Life Divine* (Part I) lent it to him. He got so absorbed in it that he read the book twice. Here was the answer to his problems, an answer delivered from experience. At that time he was an Administrative Officer in Gujarat. He had served only for six months when he resigned and linked his life with the one from whom the light of *The Life Divine* had emanated.

There is one more teacher who deserves to be placed among the creative artists of life. It is so surprising that H didn't feel the need for writing to the Mother for anything during more than two decades of his stay in the Ashram. He says that he has no problems, no desire for anything. He eats only what the Dining Room has to offer him. Except for a mat, nothing—not even a water bucket—can be seen in his room and yet he wears a cheerful expression on his face. Save some slight indisposition, he says that he has never fallen ill. He is a picture of a healthy mind in a healthy body.

He has been coming here since 1946 when he was at college and is now on the teaching staff of the Centre. During the Darshan days he would come from Bombay or Poona and return by the evening train.

His father was a Sanskrit scholar and had a Yogi as his guru. It was the guru who instilled in him the love for Yoga.

During his college days, he had no money to buy books and so either he borrowed books or wrote down what was necessary. Despite this handicap he obtained a first class out of fifteen students admitted for M.Sc.(Tech.)

The Mother has always laid stress on the teaching of languages and science. Let us hear the illuminating words of Nolini Kanta Gupta. The past rose before his eyes when he described Sri Aurobindo's novel method of teaching:

“Sri Aurobindo has taught me a number of languages.... His method has always evoked surprise. I should therefore like to say something on this point. He never asked me to begin the study of a new language with primary readers of children's books. He started at once with one of the classics, that is, a standard work in the language. He used to say that the education of children must begin with books written for children, but for adults, for those, that is, who had already had some

education the reading material must be adapted to their age and mental development. That is why, when I took up Greek I began straight away with Euripides' *Medea*, and my second book was Sophocles' *Antigone*.... I began my Latin with Virgil's *Aeneid* and Italian with Dante.

"I should tell you what one gains by this method, at least what has been my personal experience. One feels as if one took a plunge into the inmost core of the language, into that secret heart where it is vibrant with life, with the quintessence of beauty, the fullness of strength. Perhaps it was this that has prompted me to write prose poems and verse in French, for one feels as if identified with the very genius of the language. This is the method which Western critics describe as being in *medias res*, getting right into the heart of things. One may begin a story in two ways: one way is to begin at the beginning; from the *adikanda* and *Genesis*, and then develop the theme gradually, as is done in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bible. The other method is to start suddenly, from the middle of the story, a method largely preferred by Western artists like Homer and Shakespeare, for instance."

At another time he said in one of his talks (20.12.1970):

"When I was reading with Sri Aurobindo, he didn't lay much stress upon the grammar or the language—just the most elementary grammar that was necessary. He used to put me in contact with the life, the living personality of the poet—what he was, what he represented in his consciousness. That was the central theme, because a great poet means a status of consciousness; in order to understand his consciousness you must become identified with his being.

"Amrita also used to say the same thing, because he was learning the Gita from Sri Aurobindo. He could feel the spirit of Krishna and the spirit of Arjuna throughout—their relations and the atmosphere they created. It is not the mere lesson, the teaching, that's important—that's secondary. The person is the primary thing. And the person in the book or outside, you can approach only through your soul, through love. The soul alone can love."

Sri Aurobindo gives some practical hints on the way a "scientific attitude, scientific habits, scientific knowledge" are to be imparted to the minds of very young ones, without formal teaching, without loading their brains "with names and that dry set acquisition of information."

"The observation and comparison of flowers, leaves, plants, trees will lay the foundations of botanical knowledge...by the observation of the stars, astronomy, by the observation of earth, stones, etc. geology, by the observation of insects and animals, entomology and zoology may be founded. A little later chemistry may be started by interesting observation of experiments without any formal teaching or keeping in the mind of formulas and book knowledge. There is no scientific subject which cannot be prepared in early childhood.... This will prevent the necessity at a later age of teaching the boy everything in class."

At times the class appears boring. Why? The Mother gives a pointed answer: "...it may be that the class is given by a teacher who does not know how to amuse you.

He may be a good teacher, yet he may not be able to entertain you, for it is not always easy. There are days when one does not feel like being entertaining. There are days, for him and for you equally, when you would like to be elsewhere than in the school. Still you go to your class, you go because you must, for if you obey all your fancies, that will control you. So you go to your class."

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

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## STATISTICS

THE craze for statistics is modern but the Western mind has always had an urge to count and to note precise numbers. By contrast the East in general and the Middle East in particular has had what a recent historian of the Black Death, Professor Dols, has dubbed "the non-statistical attitude".

The Black Death ravaged Muslim countries too, but we have very few figures from their chroniclers. Professor Dols attributes the fact to "a cultural aversion to numbering the faithful which may be derived from a strictly religious attitude". But the reviewer of his book in the *Times Literary Supplement* of 11 November 1977 (p. 1317) has a critical comment and a revealing quotation which are very piquant. He writes: "I should have thought that the reasons were at the same time more simple and more complex. In the early part of the nineteenth century an English scholar wrote to a Turkish Cadi inquiring as to the commerce and population of an ancient city. Typically the Cadi entertained a 'non-statistical attitude', and his candid answer was:

My illustrious Friend and Joy of my Liver!

The thing you ask of me is both difficult and useless. Although I have passed all my days in this place, I have neither counted the houses nor have I inquired into the number of the inhabitants; and as to what one person loads on his mules and the other stows away in the bottom of his ship, that is no business of mine.... Oh my soul! oh my lamb! seek not after the things which concern thee not. Thou comest unto us, and we welcomed thee: go in peace."

## UFOs—THE REAL EXPLANATION COULD BE ASTONISHING

### AN AMERICAN ASTRONOMER SPECULATES

WHEN asked whether he believes in UFOs, astronomer Tom Gates is fond of replying, "No, I don't believe in them. I know they exist. I've seen 'em."

The 40-year-old Sunnyvale resident teaches astronomy at Foothill College, does consulting for NASA and was director of the Space Science Center of Foothill and De Anza Colleges until money problems brought on by the passage of Proposition 13 caused a staff cutback. He says he saw his first UFO in 1957.

Gates, a teenager in Pomeroy, Wash., at the time, was standing outdoors looking at the Northern Lights with his mother, his grandmother and a neighbor when he and the others saw several "oval shaped objects, traveling due north, making no sound. Each of the oval lights, through the binoculars, looked like a row of portholes. Our estimate was they were more than a mile away."

"When they arrived at the northeast horizon," said Gates, "they went from a yellow color to a bright blue white and at the same time they very quickly picked up speed and disappeared.

"Shortly after that, while we were standing there with our mouths still agog, two more appeared. They were just north of zenith (directly overhead), traveling north... It took them about 12 seconds to arrive at the north horizon. That is much faster than aircraft or satellites, particularly in 1957," said Gates, "and much slower than meteors, which don't fly in formation."

Gates and his companions didn't report the incident, but he assumes someone else did because "Fifteen or 20 minutes later, we saw scramble jets all over the area."

Very few people, believes Gates, can look at UFOs "from a clean emotional space." Most find them frightening, but to Gates and his mother the sighting was so exciting they couldn't stop talking about it.

Gates' second sighting took place more recently, he said, after he had studied astronomy at Washington State University and become a "student of the subject" of UFOs. He was in the Siskiyou mountains in a logged-off area where, according to Gates, there had been reports of UFO sightings. Gates and a fellow UFO researcher were driving away from the site when they looked back to see a "great big, oval, orange object. We estimated that it was no more than 3/4 of a mile away.

"It was an iridescent, Day-Glo orange," he said, and it came up from behind a saddle between two mountains, throwing an "orange reflected light over the ground cover. It was probably 30 feet across."

His camera, confessed Gates, was packed away in the car.

These would seem to have been powerful experiences, but Gates likes to think

that neither one has made a “believer” of him. To him, a believer is someone who is religiously or psychologically wedded to a particular explanation of the UFO phenomena. “I like to think of myself as a person with an open mind on the subject.”

There can be little argument as to the existence of UFOs, said Gates; they are, after all, simply “unidentified flying objects.” Between 75 and 80 percent of UFO sightings eventually are explained by known phenomena, he said, thus becoming “IFOs”—identified flying objects. But “that still leaves us with substantial reports that are truly ‘unidentified.’”

“We do have the phenomenon,” he said. “The question is, ‘What is it?’”

“The conclusion that most people jump to is that we are dealing with extraterrestrial visitors. But it could be we are dealing with something that is far more complex and profound.”

Explanations of UFOs abound, he said. There is, for example, “the hollow Earth theory,” which holds that an entire civilization lives within the core of the earth. This explanation simply does not fit with what is known about the earth’s core, and its proponents are regarded by most UFO researchers as the “fringe” element.

Somewhat more plausible is the notion that UFOs are the result of natural earthly phenomena, bioplasmic forms, perhaps—conscious living entities that live in the atmosphere and manifest themselves from time to time in bizarre ways to humans. This theory may explain some UFO sightings, said Gates, but it wouldn’t explain, for example, the imprint in the ground some individuals claim they have seen left behind by UFO landing gear.

Another natural earthly phenomenon—and one that seems to appeal to Gates more readily than the bioplasmic forms—would be a “collective unconscious” like the one described by psychiatrist Carl Jung. It may be that the collective unconscious of the entire human race—“a greater mind into which all of us are plugged”—is working on individual consciousnesses in such a way that they have the experience of a UFO sighting.

Such an explanation might not seem provable according to the scientific method, but, asked Gates, “Are scientists the only ones who are allowed to pronounce reality? The scientific method might not be adequate to deal with all kinds of reality,” even though it is “a fantastic method for dealing with physical reality.”

One other common theory holds that UFOs come from another dimension. It’s possible that when a person sees a UFO he is seeing only three dimensions of a four-dimensional object, said Gates, just as a two-dimensional creature might see only a plate-shaped cross section of a wrist or chest cavity if a human walked through its world.

Of course, that fourth dimension might very well be time, rather than space, which brings the subject back to the possibility of extraterrestrial visitors. The idea that “we can’t have extraterrestrial visitors here on earth because it takes too long to travel at the speed of light to get here” from other star systems or galaxies “is ridiculous,” said Gates.

“It might be very easy to travel those distances. All we can really say is that we can’t explain it.”

Somewhat akin to the notion that the collective human unconscious is affecting the consciousness of individual humans is the idea that some other being or beings—from another planet or dimension—is manipulating the human race psychologically. In other words, it may be that UFO sightings have no basis in physical reality; they are psychological experiences inspired by extraterrestrial beings or by what conventionally might be described as God.

The purpose of such psychological manipulation, speculates Gates, might be to prepare the human race for an eventual visit from extraterrestrial or extradimensional beings. Before such beings “could communicate with us, it would have to be part of our belief pattern that such creatures could be here. There has to be a place in our belief structure for the extraterrestrial beings” before we could react to a visit from an alien culture rationally.

“My speculation is that we are still a dangerous or, perhaps better said, an immature society to deal with,” said Gates. “We jump to the punch. Trying to deal with us on any more than a one-to-one basis with people alone on a back road (which is where he said most bonafide UFO sightings take place) might lead to panic.”

Still another possibility is that “advanced beings came to this planet and genetically manipulated beings here so that they became the humans that we think we are. It could be that those beings are still here, watching the results of their experiment, bringing us along to also become star people.”

(If, as some UFO researchers speculate, non-human beings are attempting through UFO sightings to make the human race gradually aware of their presence, the non-humans couldn’t have done better if they’d hired a Madison avenue public relations firm to do the job. According to a 1978 Gallup poll, 93 percent of Americans had heard or read about UFOs and, of those, 57 per cent—many of them college educated—thought UFOs were real.)

Gates, who is heard regularly on KCBS radio’s “Stargazer” program, said that he believes that no one of the theories he described is adequate to explain all of the UFO sightings being reported.

“I am convinced that many (UFO sightings) are psychological. Yet there are many (sightings) that seem to imply aliens from somewhere else...an impression from a landing gear, soil analysis that shows the soil was affected by radiation.”

If Gates is as impartial a student of UFOs as he likes to think he is, why is he so intensely interested in the subject?

“That’s a good question,” he said. His preoccupation with the subject started, he thinks, back in the mid-’60s, when he was head of San Francisco’s Morrison Planetarium and he and his colleagues decided to put on a show called “UFOs—Fact or Fantasy?”

“It was far and away the most popular show we put on,” he said. “Four times the average attendance.” Gates soon found himself being so “sucked in” by public



interest in UFOs that he was giving more than 150 lectures a year on the subject.

"I also can talk about quasars, black holes, relativity, Stonehenge, and the Christmas star," said Gates wistfully, "But I don't have many chances."

BARBARA FALCONER NEWHALL

*(With acknowledgments to San Francisco Chronicle, March 16, 1979, p. 28)*

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## NOT YET

THE dust was thick on the temple floor,  
And cobwebs everywhere.  
I cleaned them all and opened the door,  
I heard your footsteps near.

The incense burnt with the sacred scent,  
Fresh flowers decked the shrine.  
With a hopeful throbbing heart I went  
To see your Face Divine.

Your anklets jingled, I could hear.  
A melodious music rang.  
My Beloved's Face I saw nowhere.  
"Not yet, not yet," the flute-voice sang.

SAILEN

# TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of June 1979)

## Chapter II

### Sparks of Surrender

(I)

AFTER playing its part on the world-stage, 1978 made way for the New Year. The New Year day is one of rejoicing, so I was in no haste to retire to bed on the night of December 31. The time was 11 p.m. Seated comfortably in a chair I kept gazing intently on the battle that was going on in the far-distant sky between the battalions of dark clouds and the shining moon. What a fierce fight it was! Off and on the moon got overrun, eclipsed by the rush of the forces of Darkness but nothing could keep it long in shadow. Piercing its enemy's strategy of clouds, the moon emerged again and again in full glory but it too could not hold its own indefinitely. I thought: "When the bright moon-god could not escape the assault of gloom, how could we earthly creatures hope to be spared? Ravana is not less powerful than Rama."

One hour! Just one hour more—and the year 1978 would sink into oblivion. Who will not love to greet the New, rush to welcome it with extended hands? But my curious mind inquired:

"O harbinger of a new splendour! What fortune do you promise for the future? I have read: 'dream walked along the highways of the stars'.<sup>1</sup> With your advent will such high endeavour consent to descend 'on the bosom of a torn and quaking earth'?<sup>2</sup> In your regime will a lotus bloom on the stem of our life? O tell us, will new rays of hope burst forth from the horizon that is engulfed today in darkness? Or will the old resume its role in a new dress and you too prefer to dabble in troubled waters?"

For a time I felt drowsy. At once the scene changed. There appeared before my dreamy eyes the spectacle of midnight when we had the privilege of standing before the Mother to receive New Year blessings, her affectionate look and loving touch—"A touch that can alter the fixed front of fate."<sup>3</sup> Such was the backdrop that night. Whipped up by the desire to offer pranam when the New Year slipped in, I kept awake.

The sea was calm and quiet. There was no breeze to disturb its tranquillity. So was the ease in my inner being. There was nothing to disturb its poise. Soon I got drawn into deep meditation. When the eyes opened, it was past 1:15 a.m.

Hurriedly I rushed to my Puja room and, before I could bend my head in front of Sri Aurobindo's portrait, I saw with open eyes the whole of my being thrown at

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*, Part I, Book II, Canto IX, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.     <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

his feet. A surge of emotion too deep for words filled the heart. What could be a more pleasing gift of the hour?

Maybe, it was a mere vision, for it evoked no living feeling of surrender, nor did it give me a touch of the Divine, yet it offered a clear indication that a turning-point was coming in my life.

Now I "must come out of the word and get into action".

It is pleasant to remember and put on record the experience I had of a sudden tearing of the limits and an emergence on another altitude. On what particular date, at what auspicious moment I was blessed with them I have no recollection but their perfume still pervades my consciousness. Both of them happened during the waking state, while I was walking on the verandah at night, enjoying the cool breeze of the open sea. They did not come like a gust of wind and pass. I was granted the joy of feeling them vividly, living them joyously and imbibing the ideas intimately. In the first phase the heart radiated with a glow which made me realise what is meant by the psychic presence. Life appeared so sweet, so sweet!

At this moment dawned another experience which brought me a clear perception of what is meant by *Yogavala*. I seemed to be stripped of all weaknesses and incapacities. There remained no trace of the old self. For a moment I became another man. Then I was forced back to where I was. This is a puzzling point in Yoga. There is no knowing when the hard-earned gain may be swept away in a split second, the refreshing stream lost in the sands, unperceived. The toil has to be persisted in till another spell of heavenly touch nerves the effort. That is why experiences are for us welcome showers to the thirsty earth, a life-giving breath in a stuffy cell.

The one thing that appears most trying and tiresome is the long periods of unrelieved dryness and seemingly fatuous waiting. Hence is the Path a razor's edge.

The war is between ego and soul, lower and higher nature. So long as the lower elements maintain their hold on our being there is no question of the higher and purer ones coming in to stay. The *ādhāra* is not only to be emptied of all this crude stuff but "baked red", *tāpta tanu*:

Only by hard sacrifice is high heaven earned.

From all this it can be inferred that surrender is not something to be discovered, it has to be developed.

To pick up the thread of January 1979. The first impact of surrender was the sense of utter dedication, giving rise to a joy intense but very quiet, calm, serene. No exuberance, no exultation. Whenever the attitude of surrender vibrated, it evoked a kind of *ātmatripti*, self-containedness. This made me realise where lies the charm of surrender and why it was spoken of at the end of the Gita.

The quality of surrender depended upon the degree of receptivity and preparation of the *ādhāra* at the moment. Once I found myself withdrawing from the outer to the inner, leaving everything in the hands of the Divine. There remained nothing to ask. The act of giving caused more joy than the act of asking. At times nectar seemed to be dripping from the very feeling of surrender. Once it appeared as if I

were being born into a world whose laws of life were different from ours. From then began my training to take a surrendered attitude in all events, even amidst the shocks of life.

Another important aspect:

Till now the true significance of reliance on the Divine was a sealed book for me. I failed to feel its effect on practical life. When by experience I learned "silent reliance",<sup>1</sup> then dawned on me the real sense of surrender. And there rose a sacred yearning to trust the Divine at every step. This helped me to feel the touch of surrender in my day-to-day life. Sadhana on this line now seemed congenial to my nature. But from where did such ideas spring? "The ideas and feelings that came up from within you were those of the new-born psychic nature."<sup>2</sup>

Surrender demands that no matter what happens one must not allow himself to be shaken but remain absolutely unperturbed, be ever ready to resign himself to the Divine Will.

The real test comes when something goes against the whims of the vital and it feels thrown down and humiliated. On April 16, 1979 I was confronted with a situation which could easily upset me. If we force ourselves to swallow the bitter pills, the vital begins to grumble: "My limbs are cut and I am asked that not a drop of blood should fall!"

If I keep on simmering within I shall be knocked out at the very first blow administered by the untoward circumstances. This was my case all these years. If I cultivate the habit just to pause a second and turn within—what the Mother calls "step back"—the tables can easily be turned.

At the present moment the inner feels a shock, I grow conscious and the following passage, read and re-read and reflected over, comes to the mind and the whole attitude undergoes a change. It seems a great burden is lifted from my bosom. At once I regain my lost ground. The problem no more remains a problem. One feels freed from mental worries. Then arises a saving voice: "All problems are hers, she knows how to solve them." This strengthens the cord of reliance and stimulates the spirit of surrender:

"If you give yourself entirely to the Divine without asking for anything in exchange, if you merge your consciousness in the Divine, it will put an end to your sufferings—but the surrender must be total, unconditioned, unbargaining and absolute, including all your desires, your needs, your likings, your dislikings, your wishes, your wants, your wills, everything that constitutes your small person and then you will find peace and your torments will come to an end."

This is another precept of the Mother which I have been trying hard to enshrine in my heart but have not yet seen it crystallised in life.

"...When you can no more call anything, not even yourself, yours, when everything, including your body, sensations, feelings and thoughts, belongs to the Di-

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine*, American Ed., p. 774.

<sup>2</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 240.

vine, the Divine takes the entire responsibility of all and you have nothing more to worry about.

“When you fall into a difficulty, instead of becoming restless... call for the Light and await its coming.”

There is so much rigidity in the nature that it is difficult to bend it, whereas it has to grow plastic so that it may be moulded to any shape, any pattern by the Divine. No preference for anything, no choice, no desire to be this or that. This is among the first essentials of surrender. One has to be, as it were, torn to pieces.

On December 12, 1964 while reading *The Life Divine* I was overtaken by a kind of disappointing question: “Where am I and what distant land is my destination? Have I realised even a fraction of my seeking?” The question haunted me even in my morning concentration. All of a sudden arose a feeling of reliance. The more the feeling of reliance captured the heart, the weaker grew the hold of the obscuring elements and deeper and deeper grew the concentration.

Likewise one day a thought stole into my mind: “How could the ego exist in me? I have given all I had, lived for Him, worked for Him, done what was demanded of my nature. Nothing for myself, nothing with the motive to amass money. What more could be expected of me? How could the ego find place in me?”

Those were the days when I was sunk knee-deep in the swamp of obscurities. Little did I know that I lived not in the Divine but like a fish in the sea of ego. Life passed in the worship of my own ego. When I read the following I laughed at my own ignorance. How childish I was!

“Human nature is shot through in all its stuff with the thread of ego. Even when one tries to get away from it, it is in front or could be behind all the thoughts and actions like a shadow.

“To see that is the first step, to discern the falsity and absurdity of the ego-movements is the second, to discourage and refuse it at each step is the third...”<sup>1</sup>

These words of Sri Aurobindo and the following of the Mother served as an eye-opener:

“Ego is much more difficult to seize, because, at bottom, to be aware of what ego is, one needs already to have come out of it, otherwise one does not find it. Man is wholly made of it, from the hair of the head down to the feet... ego is his stuff.”  
“...as everyone is an egoist he does not like egoism in others.”

Until the shell of the ordinary human consciousness breaks, the vehicle cannot be said to be ready for inner illumination.

The fascinating story of surrender did not begin in 1979, it only reached its *denouement* then. It is not easy to visualise when it will reach its final stage. It began many years ago—before 1938—when we had the joy of Sri Aurobindo’s touch through letters. At that time I had a number of fine experiences about offering, the psychic and surrender but the *ādhāra* was not ploughed and manured, so the seeds that were scattered could not sprout. The desert life could not grow lush with greenery.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 466.

The implication is that all talk of soul's mastery is merely a vain chimera. The Prakriti keeps the soul hypnotised, entangled with a thousand ties. It dominates one ruthlessly. One cannot escape its snake-snare. Sri Aurobindo says that if the soul intends to assert itself and regain its mastery, it must do a lot of *tapasyā*.

To quote some of the numerous experiences I had before 1938:

QUESTION: I saw someone coming out from me and clasping the feet of the Mother. Its colour was white and white light was falling on it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Surrender of the being steeped in the Mother's Light.

QUESTION: I heard two voices:

i) "the psychic of your mental, vital and body has surrendered."

ii) "your consciousness is being psychicised."

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly.

(October 10, 1936)

Surrender of the central being enabled the descending force to begin its work of churning. It further showed that the *ādharma* was ready and responsive and not inert. Can anyone become a graduate by simply getting himself admitted to a school? He must pass the annual examinations till he gets a degree—a degree from the University of Spirituality.

About the vision of a triangle in the sex-centre with a yellow-red light Sri Aurobindo said:

"Offering of the whole physical being (physical mind, vital, physical,—this is the triangle) through the physical mind consciousness (yellow-red light). The sex-centre—the physical consciousness."

QUESTION: The whole body is becoming like a white *chaddar* fully spread.

SRI AUROBINDO: Purification and straightening out of the consciousness.

About another dream-vision of a *chaddar*, the record of which is missing, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

"The 'chaddar' indicates the higher consciousness acting in the sleep and wrapping it, as it were; only, there is still something of the physical (subconscient) that escapes from its influence in sleep (both the feet uncovered)."

A few more questions and answers:

QUESTION: Is any working possible in sleep?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is only when the sleep is conscious.

Once during most of the night I felt the touch of the Mother. And it roused repeated feelings of surrender. It seemed as if the heart had become the receptacle with the Mother's Feet in it. Then it felt soft as butter. The next day I felt the descent of the Mother's Force like a torrent! Though in deep sleep, I was conscious that the body was full of joy. When I wrote all this, Sri Aurobindo commented:

"These experiences indicate close contact with the Mother and the action of the force or consciousness or Ananda in sleep."

On September 22, 1936 I wrote:

"During the last evening meditation I saw something like a white liquid flowing through the heart and filling the stomach; the latter became full of it and began

to shine like light falling on snow. The passage in the heart through which it flowed became white also! A little after, I saw a white pigeon dancing in joy with outstretched wings.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Descent of the Mother’s consciousness through the heart in the vital. The white pigeon must indicate the resultant freedom of the Mother’s consciousness there.

Hereby hangs a tale of two life-events. I must describe them.

Action in the vital proper—the abdomen—had begun in 1934, as hinted above. Then for a period of twenty-nine years I never had the occasion to feel any working of the Mother’s Force there. It was from 1963 that I began to feel some stray action. It is peculiar that it invariably happened at daybreak when I was still in bed and not at any other time. But as soon as the eyes opened I was forced to leave the bed and rush to attend nature’s call. Thus almost daily I was deprived of the God-sent opportunity. This went on for more than two decades. The navel centre forms an important part in Yoga and the higher Force was not allowed to have a free hand there.

I think that sometime in 1977 there rose a silent prayer to my lips: “Mother, I am being exploited. Someone is playing tricks.” I don’t know why I did not even once refer my plight to the Mother. Perhaps this was a necessary step in the developing stage.

Our vital “does not like to wait”. It wants immediate results. Since there was no response I forgot all about it. But I began to feel an action in the navel centre from time to time.

March 4, 1979 was a Sunday. Before rising from the bed I felt a fine action in the navel centre. But as I had to run to the toilet I was sure of losing the chance. It was 5 a.m. To my surprise I found the sea and the street below the balcony full of morning-fog. It was quite unusual, for summer had set in. Anyway, finding the weather cool I gave myself up again to concentration. Regarding the action in the vital proper I felt inclined to take a surrendered attitude: “Is it thy will, Mother, that I should remain stuck in the mire all my life? If so, let me submit to thy will. I offer that part of my being which readily opens the door in me to the opposing forces.” At once I felt a strong action in the belly, filling the whole area with light and making it aglow. By and by the force penetrated deep into the waist, spreading all over the spinal cord. Slowly it moved upward; crossing the neck it reached the occiput and the crown. Then the whole being was so possessed with light that all that remained was nothing but light, giving me a vivid, ecstatic experience of conscious Samadhi. Such were the “moments of the touch of the luminous planes.”<sup>1</sup>

This is a typical example of the Mother’s working which had begun in 1934 but reached its culmination in 1979.

Another instance readily comes to mind:

It was the eve of the Tamil New Year day, April 14, 1979. So an off-day for me. Generally after working hours I do not allow any reaction to keep on lingering in the

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*, Part II, Bk. VII, Canto III, p. 135.

quiet hours of the night. This time I could not stop the hammering of the thoughts connected with the affairs of the day. Such is the obstinacy of the physical mind. Whenever possible it does not fail to send its army. When the ripples of thought went on recurring I felt inclined to appeal to the Mother: "The physical mind refuses to surrender. When the inner is alert and conscious, nothing of that kind finds an access there; but with any weakness anywhere, it jumps into the fray. How to make it consent to surrender?" That very moment the ravages of thoughts stopped.

These days whenever there is any pain anywhere I feel the action of the higher force at the exact ailing spot.

Next morning while reclining I felt the working of the Mother's Force. There and then it slowly spread to other parts of the body giving me the joy of partial Samadhi. When I was about to sink into deeper levels, a servant brought *The Hindu*. Keeping aside the joy of Samadhi I began to give a look at the striking news of the day! A typical example of how we are tied to the "little joys and pleasures of life".

It may not be out of place to recall another story. Once thoughts came crowding; I was taken aback: "Am I still so weak?" The question stimulated an inner fire. I took my seat in the lotus pose and made a resolve: "Not a single thought must dare enter into me." And it acted. Thoughts remained hovering round me but could not enter in. Somewhere I had read: "Nothing can resist the will of the Purusha." This is the only experience of its kind I have had so far.

Occasions have not been rare when the more I tried to be bold, the more I had to submit. The good luck of smooth sailing is only for "the few fit initiates".<sup>1</sup> Only the pure in soul can walk in light.

The reason for such difficulties on the path is thus explained by Sri Aurobindo in *The Life Divine*:

"...for the road is as yet ill-built, easily obstructed, the wires often cut or crowded with communications of another kind and proceeding from another origin..."<sup>2</sup>

I am still a bundle of weaknesses and have to meet stubborn resistances. At such junctures when no hand comes to help I resort to the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's name and invoke their power, and have derived immense benefit from it. Times without number it has broken sealed doors, opened new avenues, served like a torch when I was thrust into the cave of darkness. I shall try to illustrate the point clearly later on.

Reading the life-history of a prophet I came across the line: "My life is in the hands of providence." It struck the chords of my heart, but I could not visualise the actual state of the being that could say so.

In 1957 while taking her class in the playground the Mother is reported to have asked the children if they had formed a relation with the Divine. For long the question remained unanswered for me till I found the solution in the pages of my life. In this context the Mother says: "Whenever you concentrate and aspire, you

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine*, American Ed., p. 774.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 796.



feel a force, a light, a peace coming down into you—you aspire and the answer is immediate. This shows that the relation is well established.” This is my hard-earned treasure, a valuable asset.

Yet I do not feel I belong exclusively to the Divine. A ray of celestial heights is often engulfed in a Cimmerian darkness. How to keep the soul’s fire aflame?

Times without number I have seen a blazing fire within, turning the heart into a hearth. But it is not enough to see, one must learn to understand what is seen, and make it one’s own. To put it in Sri Aurobindo’s words:

“It is one thing to see things and quite another to let them enter into you. One has to experience many things, to see and observe, to bring them into the field of consciousness and know what they are.”

The whole thing boils down to one point, that there can be no “unfolding of the higher states” till everything melts into a mighty yearning to seek Him and Him alone. A mere devotional approach will not take us far. There must be an exclusive turning of the whole being by means of a complete surrender.

“Surrender is the decision to hand over your life to the Divine.” Each part in us must give up its own way and accept the way of the Divine. We must cut the knot of the ego and offer it free and whole to the Divine. It is here we have to press on, inch by inch, against innumerable odds. Our ego resents this vehemently.

The Mother says that if you belong to the Divine, all you have belongs to the Divine. To this our ego rudely retorts, “No. Hands off! All that is in my possession is mine. None can dare lay his claim on it. Not even the Divine. I cannot allow Him to encroach upon my territory. If you do not obey me I shall send my battalions and till they are vanquished no one can deprive me of my birthright.”

And this battle between the forces of Rama and Ravana goes on endlessly. Even beheaded, Ravana refuses to surrender. He regains his lost head and fights with double force.

However you drive the ego away, its offspring leap back over and over again. No victory till this very image of Ravana in us is slain.

*(To be continued)*

# INDIAN LIFE IN ENGLISH WRITINGS

(Continued from the issue of June 1979)

## PART I: RELIVING THE DAYS GONE BY (Contd.)

THE following centuries (seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth) were dramatic and fate-changing in Indian history. These were centuries of unrest, insecurity, revolts and also new possibilities.

English literature, however, failed to record these events, although in other languages there existed fine specimens. In Bengali, Narayan Ganguli's *Pada Sanchar*, (*The Footsteps*) was a record of the Portuguese advent in India; *Sataranjan ki Khiladi* (*The Chess-player*) by Premchand was about the occupation of Oudh by the British; *Anand Math*, a Bengali novel by Bankim Chandra Chatterjée, dealt with the Sannyasins' revolt in the eighteenth century; *Créole et la grande dame*, a historical study of Madame Duplex in French, by Yvonne Robert Gaebelé, dealt with the eighteenth-century French occupation in India; Jules Verne's *Cinq cent millions de la Begum* dealt with the British atrocities after the Sepoy rebellion.

Of the Sepoy mutiny Bengal produced two notable novels, *Lal Kella* by Pramatha Bishi, and *Bhanghi Banyan* by Gajen Mitre. The former had its setting in Delhi, while the latter's location was Cawnpore.

In the same category we have three novels in English before us: *The Night-Runners of Bengal* by John Masters, *Mutiny in Meerut* by Vivian Stuart, and *Dando on the Delhi Ridge* by William Clive. All the three deal with the same subject, the atrocities of the Indian sepoy inflamed by the disgruntled Mughal and Maratha chiefs.

The Sepoy Mutiny was the external expression of far deeper causes, like the crippling of the Indian handicrafts, the barbarities of the British upon the Indigo planter-workers, the extortions and bribes and other unfair means by which the British waxed extremely rich, so much so that some of these gentlemen returned 'home' as millionaires. Warren Hastings' case was only one out of numerous that came to light.

We must remember that the Indian soldiers and armed forces had a tradition for chivalry and fair-play, courage and respect for women. They were not the sex-starved tommies, eager to pounce on any available female. There must have been some profoundly rooted source of discontent which made these obedient soldiers maniacs of fury.

Rodney Savage in *The Night-Runners of Bengal* was a lieutenant in the 144th Bengal Regiment, stationed at Kishanpur. We have met his forefathers in *Coromandel* and later in *Bhowani Junction*.

At the time when the sepoy mutinied and went about madly killing people, many became their victims: Victoria Forrest, Eddie Hodges, Major Anderson, Mrs. Savage, Lady Isobel and several others.

Victoria, an unmarried girl, and Hodges were having sex when the sepoy burst on them and killed the pair with bayonet thrusts.

Major Anderson, a bachelor, was similarly killed. Rodney Savage's nurse escaped with Rodney's two-year-old son and thus was saved. But Mrs. Savage did not escape the wrath of the sepoys.

Lady Isobel was killed in a state of advanced pregnancy. Likewise Simpkins, Harriet Caversham, Tom Meyer and others were pawns in this hectic carnage. Only Rodney was saved by the aid of Piroo the carpenter.

Behind this gruesome tale runs currents and cross-currents of treachery. The bewitchingly beautiful widow queen-regent of Kishanpur was one of the typical sexy and depraved females. Masters has a predilection for painting such creatures. Not only was she beautiful, she was also an extremely clever politician and fomentor of troubles. She was one of the elements in and behind the sepoy uprising.

Then there was the 'Silver Guru', who was actually an English deserter. Having contracted leucoderma, he utilised this to his benefit by posing as a religious mendicant and to guide or misguide public opinion.

Another character was the Dewan of Kishanpur, who had his bit of treachery in the fabric of the story.

Masters interwove sex and adventure. There was sex between Sumitra, the queen, and Rodney, and between Rodney and Caroline. Masters had a definite leaning towards sensational sex, like most modern writers. We witness this in other books of his, like *The Rocks* or *The Kanchapara Venus*.

In this particular instance, he introduced sex and adventure as relieving elements or deviating themes to lessen the horror of the situation, but they served also to dilute the intensity and cheapen the story.

Before the night the sepoys mutinied, Rodney was invited to a party at Kishanpur palace. There he could discern that something unusual was ahead, like a lull before a storm. At the end of the festivity came the performance of a naked dancing girl.

Actually this girl was not a dancer at all, but a prostitute sent by Sumitra to find out if Rodney knew anything about the coming uprising.

There was an enigmatic figure squatting under a banyan tree, wearing a loin cloth, in the posture of a holy man prophesying destruction. This was the 'Silver Guru', mentioned earlier.

Two nights later the sepoys entered Rodney's bungalow and killed his wife. The ayah escaped with Robin, the child, bundled in a shawl. So too did Rodney, helped by the carpenter; he fled in a bullock cart.

There was pandemonium everywhere. Rodney by chance reached a fort in order to be out of the range of the sepoys' angry tentacles. This fort was the stronghold of the queen of Kishanpur and the Dewan.

Other British officers and their families, who had escaped the frenzy of the sepoys, were here too, held as prisoners in a large hall. The men and women were

treated shabbily, harshly and with contempt. Only Rodney had a better treatment, because Sumitra was secretly in love with him. She shared her bed with him and he got an insight into her unpredictable character and some inkling of the diabolical scheme.

Rodney arranged to escape with a few of the officers. On the way they had many adventures.

Earlier, before the catastrophe, the queen and Rodney had gone on a tiger-hunt. This was another highlight of the story.

'The Royal Bengal tiger, ten feet long, male, heavy and white-ruffed, ran and crouched past a tree trunk. It ran with head and tail down, elbows up, stomach close to the ground. The waving grass swallowed it. All the elephants fidgeted.... Away to the left a rifle exploded with a heavy boom... The tiger burst from the patch of thorn. The sun burnished him, made him a glory of black and gold.' (*The Night-Runners of Bengal*, London, Michael Joseph, 1951, p. 89)

Rodney reached a garrison-town which was yet held by the British officers. Then the tide turned for the better. In the next book Masters continued his narrative with the life of Robin.

We shall now look at a more recent work, *Mutiny in Meerut* by Vivian Stuart. Stuart gave us a more unbiased picture of the mutiny, because he was not a resident of India and as such did not harbour the bias of the conqueror and ruler.

Yet there were some parallels in this narrative to Masters' book.

Like the 'Silver Guru' in Masters' story, we had Maulavi Ahmedulla, who under the pretext of preaching religion incited the sepoys and in turn was the tool in the hands of the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah's men.

Like Masters, Stuart believed that the old Moghul overlords pulled the strings and the sepoys danced.

Here the parallel ceased. Stuart did not introduce the sex-element, and his was on the whole a straightforward narrative. He stressed one point missed by Masters: the over-dependence of the British officers on their Indian soldiers. These officers could not have the ghost of a suspicion that the sepoys would mutiny. This element of credulity on the part of the ruling section made officers bear the blame for what happened.

The fabric of the narrative ran on the following lines. Captain Alex Sheridan, of the Native Light Cavalry, returned to India after his campaign in the Crimean War where he had suffered the handicap of losing his right arm. He was married and expecting his first child.

He had clear proof of the treachery of the sepoys, at least some of them, and he left his post, most unwillingly, at Ayodhabad to go to Meerut, his district headquarters, bearing clear proofs of the complicity of the soldiers. The British officers had an implicit faith in their men. Even Sheridan's immediate superior, Sir Henry Lawrence at Lucknow, who was the commissioner of Oudh, turned a deaf ear to his plea.

On the way to Lucknow, he met the newly-released Maulavi Ahmedulla who jeered at his handicap. Further ahead on the way, his horse 'Sultan' was stolen, and his body-servant killed. Further adventures followed when he was ambushed by sepoys and nearly assassinated.

In Lucknow, the officers did not believe a word of Sheridan. Sir Henry was a personal friend of Nana Saheb and trusted the latter implicitly. Sheridan tried to persuade his fellow-officer to disband his men and send them back to their villages, before they could do further harm.

When Sheridan sent the message to General Hewitt, the fat general did not care even to read the despatch. His second-in-command, Brigadier Archdale Wilson, refused to take action without the general's consent.

'If General Hewitt had acted as any general worthy of the name would have acted, he [Sheridan] thought bitterly, this might not have happened. If he had sent even half the British troops under his command in pursuit of the mutineers at once,... how many lives would have been saved, how much tragedy averted.' (*Mutiny in Meerut*, London, Hale, p. 178)

■ The actual incident was triggered by the appearance of old Bahadur Shah before the deserting sepoys who came to fight for him. The eighty-year old man was half asleep, drugged by opium. He hardly realised what was happening, and why was all this armed crowd below his balcony, and wherefore the furore and warlike cries. Captain Douglas shouted a command for the sepoys to move back; instead one sepoy shot at the captain. This was the signal for hell to break loose.

'Joined by a yelling crowd of palace menials, a band of Light Cavalry *Sowars* surged about the steps of the gate house, in a frenzied demonstration of hatred, and the commissioner was cut down as he made a last appeal to reason. The old king's retainers slashed his body to bloody pulp... two terrified girls were dragged from the cupboard in which they had taken refuge.' (*Ibid.*, p. 161)

Thus a whole body of officers died at the hands of the insurgents. News from the city became more alarming. Hearing it the Brigadier Commander ordered all women and children to leave the cantonment and take refuge at Flagstaff tower, a hundred-and-fifty feet high edifice where many died due to suffocation and heat.

Other English populace attempted to flee. Telegraphic messages were sent, but most probably the lines had been cut, hence no message could reach Meerut.

This was the message to Ambala: 'Cantonment in a state of siege. Mutineers from Meerut 3rd Light Cavalry, number unknown, said to be one hundred and fifty men, cut off communication with Meerut. Taken possession of boats. 54th N.I. sent against them but could not act. Several officers killed and wounded. City in a state of considerable excitement. Troops sent down, but nothing known yet. Further information would be forwarded.' (*Ibid.*, p. 168)

News reached Simla through horse-couriers that Delhi had fallen and that there was mutiny in Meerut. Two days after the conflagration had begun, the commander (on leave at Simla) sent word to all British officers on leave to march to

Ambala. By and by the whole mutiny fizzled out.

'The mutiny fulfilled the prophecy (*sab lal ho jayega*—all would turn red), for it brought about the fall of John Company, but the British rule in India was saved by the Sikh chiefs of the Punjab, by those sepoys—even in the Bengal army—who remained true to their salt and fought against the mutineers, and by the fact that very few of India's 180,000,000 people gave active support to the uprising. Had they, in fact, done so, not a European would have remained alive.' (*Ibid.* p. 1a)

Stuart has mentioned the Sikhs. Apart from their cult of devotion to their leaders, it seems to have suited them as a community to support the British. They were not inclined to put themselves on the side of a cause which struck them as a losing one.

The reasons why the people at large did not support the mutineers were many. The rich were contented and would not risk their lives for a band of rebels, specially when the British did not affect either their prosperity or their position.

The man in the street was too downtrodden to feel the sting of slavery. Had he felt it, no foreign power could have remained long in India.

Lastly, mutual jealousies, distrust, and hatred were at play.

How did the Western nations, specially the British, take possession of India? By treachery, by all types of atrocities. Only to cite a few: the cutting off of the thumbs of the expert weavers of Dacca, so that the British textile manufacturers could flourish and have no competition. They denuded whole fertile tracts of Bengal and Bihar to raise Indigo. The cruelties of the Indigo-planters are still remembered in these places.

It was only a brave minority who dared raise their heads against the foreign rulers. But even they seem to have lacked unified vision.

Now for the third narrative, the one by William Clive. He made his position clear at the outset: 'This is a view of the life and times of an ordinary soldier of Queen Victoria, and the sepoy revolt in India. It is a limited view, as might be expected of one man's experience.' (*Dundo on the Delhi Ridge*, London, Macmillan, 1971, p.ii, introduction)

Clive avoided the over-view of the historian and pin-pointed his regard to the close and limited ordinary soldier who was in the pay of John Company. He attempted to visualise the life of the common Englishman at that period.

Boredom was the one prevailing factor in the two sections of the British people in India. Except for their duties which were none too heavy, both the sections—the lower consisting of the poor whites, and the higher which included the officer-class, merchants, bankers, teachers and missionaries—had not much of work. They had no social life, no pubs, no recreational facilities.

The officer-class fought the boredom and the heat with the bottle of gin, cards-games, gambling of various kinds and lastly native women, among whom their choice fell on voluptuous Punjabi girls. They found their own pale womenfolk insipid and incapable of assuaging their lust. They had no real home-life with wife and children

such as they could enjoy in England.

The second section of Englishmen or *Lal Kurti*, as nicknamed by the natives for the red coats the soldiers usually wore, had for relaxation the 'Padminis', 'Champas' or others of the same brood of Sadar bazar. Their additional recreations were drinking and gambling.

Joseph Dundo was a waif, an orphan, with parents unknown, brought up amid dirty and unhealthy surroundings. The orphanages, like the one where Dundo was brought up, were no exception to the rule. The one in question was overstrict but this did not prevent the teenagers (both boys and girls) from playing pranks, enjoying escapades and covert sex.

Dundo enlisted himself in service of the Company as soon as he was of age and, boarding an over-crowded vessel, came to India. There he was installed in the 60th Rifle at Meerut as a rifleman.

The local people of Meerut were aware of the coming uprising. On a Friday, when Dundo visited a young prostitute, Padmini, she cautioned him not to go to church on the following Sunday.

But the warning was not heeded. As a result, 'The green-coat soldiers—the *Rifle ka paltan* (Riflemen)—were in their church without their guns, helpless and trapped. *Maro Feringhee!* Kill the English! Kill their haughty, chalk-faced women and whining whelps! *Maro Feringhee!*' (*Ibid.*, p. 45)

A pretty young woman, Mrs. Chambers, in a state of pregnancy, was stripped and viciously butchered. At another place the children of Mrs. Freer had to watch their mother being violated, while the mother in her turn had to see her children's throats cut.

Thus carnage and atrocities continued and in between were Joseph Dundo's going to bed with Esther Finnis, the wife of an army officer, as if nothing could stop the eruption of the sex-urge, not even the greatest peril.

'There was horror in the streets, in the Chandni Chauk, on the steps of Delhi Bank, in canal street and custom house road, but there was little that Bahadur Shah could do to prevent it.' (*Ibid.*, p. 86)

While a large number of people were being exterminated, Bahadur Shah sported with his concubines, many of whose names he could not remember; but no amount of medicament could call back his bygone youth. So no normal sex was possible for him. And just a little distance away, 'Most of the European civilians in the streets had been killed within minutes of the *sowars* bursting through the Calcutta gate.' (*Ibid.*, p. 87)

Mrs. Beresford, Mrs. Forster, Miss Jennings, Mrs. Skinner and many others were 'stripped of every vestige of clothing, were paraded through the streets, then dragged triumphantly to the palace. The queen of Delhi did not care for English ladies. They were not so haughty after a dozen rapings and thrashings with *lathis* and the taste of their own infants' blood in their mouths. Zenat Mahal Begum ordered them to the garden, to be beheaded and burned.' (*Ibid.*, p. 87)

Then acutally fighting began and exchange of fire, for now new reinforcements

had arrived from Ambala. The sepoy's began to withdraw. Behind them they left total destruction and misery, misery to the wives of the officers who were never used to a harsh life and found themselves on the point of starvation. The *bunias*, taking advantage of the unsettled conditions, extorted as much as possible from these hapless females, huddled in tents and camps, till some arrangements could be made for them.

In England, there was public demand urging the crushing of the mutiny in India.

'Delhi had fallen, Delhi after seven days of savagery, was once more in British hands and the surviving, broken-spirited sepoy's were streaming southward in disorder with a pursuit column on their heels.' (*Ibid.*, p. 235)

The mutiny, however, did not end with the fall of Delhi and Meerut. It continued for another year in Lucknow and Cawnpur, till Bahadur Shah died in Burma, awaiting transportation to the Andamans and his sons and grandsons were shot.

Most of the atrocities cited were based on documents from the archives in the India Office in London and from hearsay. But they show only one side of the picture. The mutiny was a chapter which revealed the baser aspects of both the Indian and the Englishman. Nor was it merely a matter of frenzied passion. Truer motives were at work, but they were veiled in the excesses of animal nature.

(*To be continued*)

ROMEN PALIT

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## BERTRAND RUSSELL

He stretched reason to giant heights  
 To scan a star or scorch a sham;  
 By the same clearness he set sights  
 Free from the shells of form.  
 Against the crystal of his articulation  
 Doctrines splinted into inadequacies.  
 With the master tape of calm precision  
 He strove to chart the immensities.  
 Soon the dome cracked and logic failed  
 To prove the sum of truth beyond its writ.  
 • And then its lispings lips of half-lights paled  
 Leaving its mazy mansion slumbering unlit.

G. VISWANATHAN



# THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER

*(Alexander Pushkin, the great poet of Russia, known to his friends by the petname "Posh", died as a result of jealousy. This one-act play tells the circumstances that led to the poet's death.)*

## Scene I

*(Pushkin's study. Relaxing in his favourite rocking-chair Pushkin's thoughts are deep-rooted in a letter he holds in his hands.)*

PUSHKIN: More than three times I have wounded myself with this poison pen. Do all the words of this pusillanimous writer speak the truth or do they simply awake the green-eyed monster that slumbers in every human being and stirs up at the smallest touch? My darling Natalia, my love, my life, can this be true? The poltroon, who has no guts to reveal his name, says *(reads the letter)*, "Your dazzling and flirtatious beauty is involved in a clandestine love-affair with your cherished friend D'Anthes. Are you aware that you are cuckolded? Look into the mirror if you have eyes. Two fine horns you will see on your head. If you have any sense of shame, hang yourself or fire your bed-usurper." O Lord! Shall I load my pistol or first spy upon my wife? I, a responsible man holding a responsible post, should on no account be over-hasty. Time should decide my action. But I will be on the *qui vive*. Meanwhile, my mind—be not perturbed. Have peace.

## Scene II

*(A park. Pushkin is seen on a cement bench writing a poem with the stub of a pencil. Enter D'Anthes.)*

D'ANTHES: Hello, Posh! Nice that I have met you here. How's life?

PUSHKIN: Hello, friend of my heart! What attracted you here? *(looks around)* I find no 'Best for Men' here. Yet, Frenchman, you are here.

D'ANTHES: We, Frenchmen, are misunderstood. No doubt, we crave to have voluptuous company quite often. But we have an eye for sight-seeing too. The flowers, the grass and the trees that are far from the madding crowd attract me. And so I am here.

PUSHKIN: And what lures you, my friend, to my house when I am away from it?

D'ANTHES: That...that..., is! hm...ah...who informed you? Ah, ah, yes, I know, I know. Natalia must have. I told her to keep it a secret. All women are born Pandoras. The 'Best for Men', as you said, attracts me to your house.

PUSHKIN: How do you mean? You say that Natalia must have informed me. Well, what then draws your attention? It's all surprisingly strange.

D'ANTHES: Since the cat is let out of the bag, I'll throw open my heart. I am deeply in love with your wife's sister.

PUSHKIN: Then get married. Let your marriage tie up the tongues of scandal-mongers.

D'ANTHES: Scandal! Posh, what do you mean? Scandal about whom?

PUSHKIN: Your marriage with my sister-in-law will end the farce.

### Scene III

*(Pushkin's study. He is seen pacing the room nervously, holding a bunch of letters.)*

PUSHKIN: My friend D'Anthes. His marriage left my raging heart in peace. Two years are not yet over. And here are bomb-shells to rive again my mind. If only I could identify the coprophagist who pens these letters, my long starving pistol would have a target. O pestilential idiot! Till yesterday there were sunrise, sunset, life and hope. Your letters debar me from all the worldly things and the world seems to be standing still. *(Reads a letter)* "You lie in ignorance—like a tired dog sleeping in mud. The man who rode on your horse behind a screen, now has two to ride on. Holding the licence to ride on the younger, he grabs the liberty of doing the same with the elder, and you become a *souteneur*. I will let all sleeping dogs lie, but not without some discomfort. Has the word 'cuckold' no meaning in your dictionary?" Every word in this letter whistles a deadly shower of bullets. The passage of time will not heal this wound. Oh! I am goaded to madness. I have to resort to some expedient to test the truth of the accusation. In the evening of one fine day I will invite D'Anthes to dinner. Natalia, unaware of my doings, will serve as a snare. If D'Anthes is trapped, that night's moon shall be his last.

### Scene IV

*(A dining room. Pushkin has seated Natalia at table opposite himself and next to his guest. They are seen chatting.)*

NATALIA: French dames are all experts at their cuisine. Did you enjoy the food that came from the Russian cuisine?

D'ANTHES: I will gulp any stinking morsel, if it is served by a beautiful hand. And this dinner, to be frank, outcuisines the French cuisine.

PUSHKIN *(inaudibly, to himself)*: This is the time to set the snare. As a prelude to my action, I'll first snuff out one of the two lights and contrive to extinguish the other in attempting to relight the first.

D'ANTHES: What, Posh? All the lights are out. Like the heart of suspicious fellows, the room is utterly dark. Have we to grope our way? Lights! Lights!

PUSHKIN: It is high time for my waiters to retire and I myself will go and fetch

a light from the other room. Meanwhile have some more vodka. (*To himself*) My plans are nearing completion. I'll blacken my lips with this burnt cork and kiss my Natalia before I leave the room. If I find the lips of D'Anthes blackened when I come back with a light, I'll blow him to pieces with my fully loaded pistol. (*He leans across the table, kisses and exits*)

NATALIA: D'Anthes, you were talking about... ah, yes, suspicious fellows. Their deep affection for their wives is the cause of their suspicion, and they are as if possessed.

D'ANTHES: Well said, Madam. Look there. Posh comes back like Prometheus and he will enlighten us on this topic.

(*Enter Pushkin with a light. He sees the blackened lips of D'Anthes.*)

PUSHKIN (*in his rage*): Oh D'Anthes! Shall I call you a cur, a lout or a womanizer? You, a stray dog from the gutter of France, have spoilt the sanctity of my life. And I curse myself for keeping company with a French vagabond, who runs in search of another man's....

D'ANTHES: Stop that nonsense. Why should you heap such insults on me?

PUSHKIN: Insult. Ah, ah! You feel insulted? You'll no more be insulted. My pistol will put an end to all insults. (*He shoots at D'Anthes, but misses his target; D'Anthes, to defend himself, shoots at Pushkin, who falls down mortally wounded.*)

## Scene V

(*Pushkin on his death-bed. Natalia and a nurse stand on either side of the bed. Enter D'Anthes.*)

PUSHKIN: Hell and all its incumbents come in the shape of D'Anthes. Away, D'Anthes. I hate to see your face. Let me have some peace before I die.

D'ANTHES: Friend! Even now I wonder what made you hate me like this. All Frenchmen are very sensitive to insults. But as a real friend, I have forgotten all the insults. Let us pardon each other.

PUSHKIN: You have set visible horns on my head and you want me to pardon you?

D'ANTHES: Now I understand, Posh. You are not wounded by my pistol but by the fangs of the green-eyed monster. You, poets, quite often imagine things that have no proof at all. Don't heap such baseless allegations on me and on your wife who is immaculate in character.

PUSHKIN: Baseless? To test the scandal, I purposely snuffed out all the lights. In the darkness I blackened my lips with a burnt cork and kissed the lips of Natalia before I left the room to fetch a light. I found your lips blackened. They gave life to the scandal. Do you need any more proof?

(*Natalia and D'Anthes are shocked.*)

D'ANTHES: You are led astray. Your suspicious eyes are responsible for this

havoc. The eyes that noticed my blackened lips failed to notice the spotless lips of Natalia. In the darkness you were unable to identify the right lips. And you kissed me! Posh, you kissed me and none else. I thought it was a custom in this land to kiss the guests when you leave them in darkness.

PUSHKIN (*shocked*): O God, blind Pushkin is damned. The scandal, my own suspicion, my jealousy—all have dug my grave. My Natalia, my love, my life and my death. (*He breathes his last.*)

P. RAJA

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## SHAKTI

Do not touch us with your flame fingers,  
 Or hug us in your watery arms to death:  
 Designed for tempered airs and easy breath  
 We fall in fear!  
 Behind an empty mask  
 With arm upraised to strike  
 Do not fall upon us in the dark of night—  
 But as our soul of light,  
 Do only in the guise of love draw near.

SONIA DYNÉ

## EUROPE 1974

### A TRAVELOGUE

*(Continued from the issue of June 1979)*

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THE Tate Gallery in Millbank is another place that must not be missed if one has the time. It is situated at a place where the river Thames, flowing east, suddenly swings north forming a horse-shoe bend. Sir Henry Tate had a difficult job persuading the authorities to grant him a plot of land on which to build an appropriate house for his vast collection that he was about to offer to the nation. He was ready to pay for the land, and even meet the cost of the building. This was in the late 19th century. After a tough fight a plot was at last offered him in Millbank.

To the Tate collection soon was added the whole set of Turner's paintings. Turner had bequeathed to the nation all his own paintings that were still with him. They made a considerable number. The gallery was opened in 1897 by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII). It was decided that the new gallery should devote all its space to exhibiting the modern English painters only. And to this day it has kept to this objective, except that some foreign painters and early English artists are also represented here. Blake, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Constable, Wilson, Sargent, Whistler and even the first English Impressionist Sickert have their paintings exhibited in the Tate Gallery. The Sculpture section of the Tate is also very impressive. Some Rodin pieces are there. Henry Moore, modern England's best and now world-famous sculptor, has thirty pieces.

Moore is very much in demand these days. They say a few years ago the UNESCO paid him 7000 pound sterling for a single piece. He has built for himself a sort of open-air studio in Herfordshire. Sculpture is an art of the open air, he opines. "Daylight and sunlight are necessary to do it, and I would much rather see my sculpture in a landscape than in a most beautiful building." His work can be seen today in many a great metropolis occupying the most honoured place in the museums. Fifty-three museums in the world exhibit Moore's work. Someone once remarked, "Why does he leave gaping holes in most of his sculptures?" Said Moore in answer, "Because I was trying to become conscious of space in sculpture; the hole was to carry the eye into, through, and around the work to tracing the inside-out view."

Moore's work can be admired or disliked but it can never be ignored. The conventional concept of beauty does not interest him. The most original of the modern sculptors, he once declared, "For me a work must have a vitality of its own. Beauty, as was understood in the later Greek or the Renaissance periods, is not the aim of my sculpture." Beauty of expression and power of expression are to

him two different things. According to many it is the latter that he tries to convey. He calls it spiritual vitality and this he claims produces in his onlookers a deep inner excitement and wonder. It does not soothe the senses or the eye, it strikes the deeper chords in man. A critic once wrote of his work, "I would go and talk to it, I wouldn't expect it to answer because it is made of stone, but I know I would hear every word because it is a living thing." Even the veteran sculptor Sir Jacob Epstein was all praise for Moore's work. We feel, however, that some of his productions are positively grotesque.

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Everyone has heard of Greenwich. The B.B.C. gives us Greenwich time and we always used to correct our watches by it. Roughly speaking, this place is the southernmost point of London. Of course the famous Observatory is there, around which there is a beautiful park we have already spoken elsewhere about. The Royal Naval College is in the same park. The central building of this college is known as the Queen's House and it seems that Queen Elizabeth I used to spend her holidays here. And it was here that Elizabeth II, then a princess, first met her future husband who was at that time a young naval officer. He was known as Prince Phillip of Greece. The college has a unique museum called the National Maritime Museum. It was opened in 1637, and paintings are only a part of the collection. It was started by James, Duke of York, who commissioned painters to paint portraits of the officers who fought against the Dutch in the Battle of Lowestoft. Among these portraits can be found that of Sir William Penn, father of the founder of the State of Pennsylvania in the United States. Other notable pictures are those of the Tudor Monarchs and other dignitaries. In addition, there are pictures of the great battles that England has fought. A hall called the Painted Hall, decorated in Italian High Baroque style, is also open to visitors.

Ships and anything connected with nautical science are the next most interesting things there. Samuel Pepys was secretary of the Admiralty in 1673. His hobby was to collect ships' models. His collection was so valuable that shipwrights actually consulted his collection when designing or manufacturing men-of-war.

The special feature of the Bethnal Green Museum, apart from its art gallery, is the Dolls and the Doll Houses, silver wares, textiles, costumes and sculptures. Auguste Rodin gave some of his pieces to the Victoria Albert Museum in 1914. But today they are housed in the Bethnal Green Museum. The sculptures are in marble, bronze and plaster. To those who are admirers of Rodin perhaps the following list would mean much: The Age of Bronze, The Prodigal Son, St. John the Baptist, Cybele, and Cupid and Psyche. There is also a bust of Napoleon by Canova.

\*

Outside London there are a few Galleries that should be mentioned in this connection, for they are very neat and must not be missed. At the Windsor Castle

there is a fine art gallery. The castle was built by William the Conqueror in 1070 and it is still used as a Royal residence. Many of the State Apartments are open to visitors. On the walls are hung portraits of monarchs and high officials and even foreign dignitaries. The Windsor Great Park, as the parkland surrounding the castle is called, is a beautiful and serene place, with rolling hills and meadows and roads running criss-cross throughout the park. Prince Phillip, it seems, practises his chariot-racing on these roads and in these delightful surroundings. Apart from the main Castle there are several other Royal residences in the park. One called the Fort was occupied for several years by Edward Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII). And even as king he spent many a private and peaceful hour in this Fort. The name Windsor became famous during the First World War. George V, no longer desiring to be called one of the House of Saxeberg-Gotha, changed his family-name to House of Windsor. Later, King Edward VIII, when he abdicated, was given the title of His Royal Highness the Duke of Windsor.

Oxford has other galleries than the Ashmolean. For example, the gallery at Christ Church is very interesting. Cambridge has its Fitzwilliam Museum on Trumpington Street but attached to the University. The collection is vast and varied and the building is simply gorgeous. So far as the building is concerned, it was, we thought, perhaps the best of all galleries.

We should like to end this description of the art galleries with a short note on Stratford-on-Avon. In 1877 a sort of Shakespeare Centre was built there, with a theatre, a library and an art gallery. It was destroyed by fire in 1879. The Shakespeare Memorial, as it is called, was completed in 1932 and was declared open by the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII). The new theatre looks smart and every year a Shakespeare festival takes place there, like the one in Bayreuth for Wagner. The whole of England takes an intense interest in the festival and even visitors come from the Continent. Foreign Embassies send representatives to plant their nations' flags on the roads. Very interesting souvenirs are sold that people take as mementos.

The art gallery there is a unique one. It shows Shakespeare-portraits. Almost all the Shakespearean actors and actresses are represented. The Kemble family is there. Sir Robert Redgrave looks striking as Hamlet, so does Peggy Ashcroft as Imogen. Ellen Terry, Mrs Siddons and several others adorn the gallery. Many of the characters of Shakespeare's plays have been painted by famous artists and these pictures are on the walls. Some scenes and characters from the plays are there also: noteworthy are the shipwreck-scenes of *The Tempest*, portraits of Miranda and Caliban from the same piece, and one of Titania from *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*.

The township is very quiet and the surrounding country very pleasing. In the Parish church they will show you the grave of the Bard. Ann Hathaway's cottage is about two miles distant. The Avon flows by gently and the swans glide dreamily along as if nothing jarring or unhappy has ever happened in the world.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**The Quest for Political and Spiritual Liberation:** By *Jane O'Connor*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, London, and Associated University Press, Inc., Cranbury, New Jersey. £ 5.25

"THE quest for freedom or liberation is at the heart of every revolution occurring today, in Asia, Africa, or in the Americas, in both the social sphere where political and governmental structures are radically challenged and in the spiritual revolution of consciousness where people's values and visions of life are profoundly reoriented."

Since Sri Aurobindo dedicated his life, first, to secure freedom for his country and, second, to explore the ways of securing for man his freedom from ignorance and suffering, the author finds in him the example of the spirit of the day, "both dimensions of the revolution."

Keenly, but gently, in the best lines of academic analyses, the author scans the important events in the early phase of Sri Aurobindo's life and observes that although his life and thought "reveal two strong urges, the political and the spiritual, the political inspirations are subordinate to and take their inspiration from his spiritual conviction."

After a discussion of Sri Aurobindo's "metaphysics" with select references to highly relevant sources, and showing how it reconciles spirit and matter by grounding both in the reality of a transcendental and cosmic consciousness, she goes over to the main theme of her enquiry: "freedom, or liberation."

She shows how, even in his political days, freedom to Sri Aurobindo meant something much more than a freedom from bondage to a foreign power—"freedom of the whole person." Then, focusing on Sri Aurobindo's concept of true freedom as reflected in his great works of the later years, the author goes on to discuss the problem of the freedom of the individual in relation to the society. She quotes from Sri Aurobindo's *Human Cycle*:

"For the perfectly spiritualised society will be one in which, as is dreamed by the spiritual anarchist, all men will be deeply free, and it will be so because the preliminary condition will have been satisfied. In that state each man will be not a law to himself, but *the* law, the divine law, because he will be a soul living in the Divine and not an ego living merely if not entirely for its own interest and purpose. His life will be led by the law of his own divine nature liberated from the ego."

The tone of the exposition of the issues remains throughout dignified and detached—traits that are to be expected of a scholar inspired by a genuine spirit of research. However, in *Conclusion*, she raises a few questions which, to a keen reader of her work, appear to have been raised more as a concession to the grooves of academic discipline than as expressions of any real doubt: for instance, a question like "Is it possible that Sri Aurobindo's impact might delay or even impede the progress of social reform in India?" It would have appeared far more natural and relevant, after



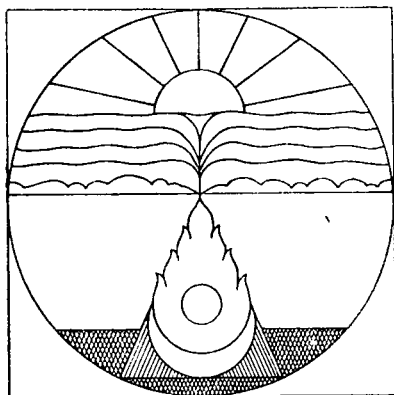
the problems she had so ably discussed, if she would have raised a question like "What would be the impact of Sri Aurobindo's vision of the evolution of man—perhaps the greatest-ever contribution to man's faith, courage and optimism—on the sociological and political thoughts of the future?"

It may be pertinent here, in the light of the problem she has posed, to state that mankind's waking up to its spiritual potentiality and the possibility of transformation is not likely to disturb its normal and natural activity any more than Arjuna's enlightenment disturbed his participation in the battle of Kurukshetra. In fact, the effect of man's opening to a transforming power and a lofty destiny would be marked more on his consciousness behind his activity than on the activity proper. "Social reform" as a field of work is certainly not excluded from the range of spirituality.

The author concludes her work on a note that issues from a sublime feeling:

"Aurobindo's thought is shot through with a hopeful vision of human possibilities inviting us to consider a future marked with both freedom and unity rooted in a consciousness of and surrender to the spirit. Although his contribution to thought and experience evokes questions as well as admiration, to be in touch with his writings is to be richer for the contact and to intend that it continue."

MANOJ DAS



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