

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SEPTEMBER 1979

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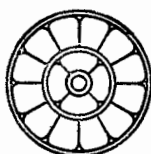
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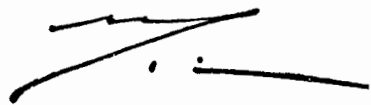


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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AN APPEAL TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

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AN EXPLANATION TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

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FAULTS AND FAITH

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

“To be always observing faults and wrong movements brings depression and discourages the faith.” How does it discourage the faith?

THE faith spoken about is faith in the divine Grace and the final success of the undertaking. You have begun the yoga and have faith that you will go through to the end of your yoga. But if you spend your time looking at all that prevents you from advancing, then finally you say, “Ah, I shall never succeed! It is not possible. If it goes on in this way, I shall never get there.” So this is to lose one’s faith. One must always keep the faith that one is sure to succeed.

Many people begin, and then after some time come and tell you, “Oh, I shall never be able to go through. I have too many difficulties.” So this means not having faith. If one has started, one begins with the faith that one will reach the goal. Well, this faith should be kept till the very end. Keeping one’s faith, one attains the end. But if in the middle of the road you turn back saying, “No, I can’t” then, obviously you will not reach the end. Some people start on the way and then, after some time, they find it heavy-going, tiring, difficult, and also that they themselves, their legs, don’t walk well, their feet begin to ache, etc. You see, they say, “Oh, it is very hard to go forward.” So instead of saying, “I have started, I shall go through”, which is the only thing to do, they stand there, stop there, lamenting and saying, “Oh, I shall never be able to succeed”, and then they leave the path. So, obviously, if they leave the path, they will never succeed. This is to lose one’s faith.

To keep one’s faith is to say, “Good, I have difficulties but I am going on.” Despair—that’s what cuts off your legs, stops you, leaves you like this: “It is over, I can’t go on any longer.” It is indeed finished, and that’s something which should not be allowed.

When you have started, you must go to the very end. Sometimes, you see, to people who come to me with enthusiasm I say, “Think a little, it is not an easy path, you will need time, you will need patience. You will need much endurance, much perseverance and courage and an untiring goodwill. Look and see if you are capable of having all this, and then start. But once you have started, it is finished, there is no going back any more; you must go to the very end.”

Sometimes I tell them, I tell them that I give them a few days or a few months. There are some to whom I have given a few years for reflection, I told them, “Look well, be quite sure.” But once they come and say, “Now I have decided, I want to start”, it is good. Now, one must go on to the very end, whatever the cost; even if it is very difficult, one has to go to the very end.

When one draws back from the path, one draws back for the present life or...

In this, you see, there are many different cases, and they depend on the nature of the drawing back. If it is a small set-back or a small halt, you can start again. But it is ten times more difficult than before.

Why?

Why? Because it is so. Because you have accumulated obstacles in yourself by your cowardice and weakness. All those difficulties which you must conquer are like spiritual tests which you have to pass. And if you fail in your test, well, the next one will be much more difficult. This is the general occult law. One can't escape it. If you are faced with making an effort and making progress, if you fail...And now that in the present conditions you are not warned beforehand, which makes the test much more difficult to pass. In former days, the days of old, the candidates were told, "Now, prepare yourself. You are going to undergo terrible trials: you will be enclosed in a coffin, you will have to face terrible dangers. But these are tests to find out if you have the necessary qualities." A man forewarned, you understand, is as good as ten, as we say. Once they were warned that it was a trial, they did not take it seriously and it was much easier.

But that's no longer the practice. This is no longer done. It is life itself, the circumstances of each day which are the trials through which you have to pass. Some people instinctively feel that they are facing a decision that's to be taken, a special effort that's to be made, and they make this effort within themselves and cross the step. These acquire a much greater strength to cross the next step. When one has gained a small victory over his lower being, the next time he has a much greater strength to take the next step. On the contrary, if one is blind, ignorant, stupid or ill-willed and, instead of saying "yes" to the trial that faces him, he revolts or refuses it, then, you see, this is expressed by: "One has not passed his test, one has failed in his test." But the next time, one is compelled not only to make an effort to win against this, but to make a still greater effort to redress the wrong one has done to himself. So it is much more difficult.

But these things happen to everyone on the path, all the time, perhaps even daily. There are small things, there are things a little bigger. The small ones one can turn, you see, by chance the right way. For the big ones one must first have a kind of instinct. One must pay attention and do the right thing in the right way. But there are other things still. When one is at a critical moment of his development, and it is absolutely necessary to cross the step in order to go forward—at that moment, there are always two possibilities: that of crossing the step, and then one immediately makes a terrific progress; or else to become slack, and then this indeed is more than a halt, even more than a set-back, it can be a very serious fall into a chasm. There are abysses from which one does not come up again; and so, in this case it means a life lost.

But if one has within, besides the part that has given way and fallen, if some-

where one has a very ardent flame, if one is ready for anything, all possible suffering, all possible effort, all possible sacrifices to redress what one has done, in order to climb back from the bottom of the abyss, to find the path again, one can do it. This flame has the power to call the Grace. And with the Grace there is nothing impossible. But it must be a real flame, something very powerful, because when one is at the bottom of the hole it is not easy to come out of it. Between the first kind, which is simply a little halt on the way and which makes the next step just a little more difficult, and the last one I am speaking about, there are many degrees; and so one can't say that if one leaves the path it is for a lifetime. That would be only an extreme case.

But if one leaves the path, it is even very difficult to find it again. What is strange is that in leaving it one loses it. There are legends of this kind in all countries: of people who have left the path and then later searched for it and never found it again. It was as if it had vanished. They lost it and this truly is a very sad thing.

But when you are on the path, I said this—I was just saying it—when you are on the path, do not ever leave it. Wait a little, you can hesitate as long as you want before taking it; but the minute you set your foot on it, it is finished, don't leave it. Because this has consequences which can even extend to several lives. It is something very serious. That is why, besides, I never push anyone to take the path. You are quite a number of children here; I have never asked anyone—only those who came to me and told me, "I want it." And to these also, unless I am absolutely sure of them because it is written in their destiny that they have come for that, I always say, "Think about it, think, be quite sure that this is what you want and nothing else." And when they have reflected and decided, it is finished. One should no longer move away, one should go straight to the end. I mean, one should not leave the path any more. One should go forward at all costs and try not to stop too often on the way, because it is easier to continue even if it is hard, you see, than to begin all over again when one has stopped. A much greater effort is needed to get going again than to continue on the way. And you see, logically I should not say it, but I have already warned all who are here, I have told them, "Don't ever take lightly all the circumstances of each day, all the tiny little things of life, all the small events, you know; never take all this lightly." Never react with your lower being. Each time you are told to do something or not to do it—you are not told this very often, but each time you are told, before reacting think a little, try to find in yourself the part which reacts. Do not react just like that with what is most commonplace in you. Enter within yourself, try to find the best in yourself and with this you must react. *It is very important, it is very important.*

There are people who mark time for years because they haven't done this. There are others who seem to fly, so fast do they go, because they pay attention to this. And those who don't do that throw the blame always on the Divine. They accuse the Grace. They tell her, "It is You who deceived me, it is You who put me into difficulty, it is You who made me stumble, it is You who are a monster", not exactly in these words, but their thought is like this. And so, naturally, they make

their case worse because they push away even the help they could have had in their difficulty. There we are.

I could tell you many more things, but it will come gradually. In any case, if you can keep within yourself a confidence, a candid trust which does not argue, and the sense of... yes, it is truly a kind of trust that what is done for you, in spite of all appearances, is always the best thing to lead you in the quickest way possible out of all your difficulties and towards the goal... if you can keep that strong in you, well, your path will become tremendously easier.

You will tell me that it is very difficult to keep it, but children keep it very well. They must have truly come upon particularly detestable parents to lose it; but if their parents are simply good enough, they keep this very well. Well, it is this attitude; if you can tell yourself, "Good, perhaps the divine Grace deserves our confidence", simply this, nothing else, you will avoid many difficulties, many. In fact this avoids many difficulties even in ordinary life, and many worries. And particularly here, if you can do that, well, you will see things which seemed formidably difficult dissolving suddenly like clouds.

22 December 1954

HERE

HERE the impossible becomes possible!
 All you do is pledge your heart away
 And your dreams can turn to sparkling diamonds,
 Because the Almighty walks the earth to-day!
 She is there with you with soundless steps—
 A soul-companion who will never desert,
 The queen of miracles, the undreamed-of answer
 To silent prayers, a beautiful Saviour from all hurt.
 She demands no outward grandeur or pomp
 But quietly, sweetly glances your way—
 And the stored-up yearnings of a million years
 Can be made possible in a single day
 If She so chooses, and looks into your heart
 Whose veils your faith and love have rent apart.

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALA

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

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1979)

The first instalment of this series has been much appreciated in some quarters while being received with mixed feelings in some others. The theme was the development of Sri Aurobindo's definition of "Supermind", and the time when it acquired a radical distinction from that of other "above-mind" levels.

In the article there was clear acceptance of the fact that Sri Aurobindo had the general experience-knowledge of the supreme divine Truth-Consciousness already in the days of his monthly review, the Arya, which ran 1914-1921 and in which he himself says that without the necessary experience-knowledge he would never have ventured on its publication. The central question in the article was: When exactly was the crucial line of demarcation drawn between Overmind and Supermind?

The most significant data available on the question were presented and a certain interpretation given. It seemed the best possible to the author, but he is not wedded to it inalterably. Further data have now come to hand and the question will be reopened and the conclusion reconsidered after the three instalments comprising the present series have been completed. The search is always for the truth.

2

IN Yogic practice the master-technique in the days of the *Arya* and even later was to make "the thousand-petalled lotus", *sahasradala padma*, on the top of the head one's main centre of Yoga, helped by the inner and inmost being from below. But, after the first few months succeeding the descent of the Overmind on 24 November 1926 into their bodies, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother saw that the transformation from above could not be achieved in their disciples: the disciples were not ready for such a direct process. The sadhana assumed a new form: Sri Aurobindo and the Mother took their stations in the physical mind, which begins at the brain-level of the mental consciousness, and kept pulling there what was high up and from there acted upon individuals and the general earth-scene. The principal opening which they insisted upon in the sadhaks now was the *hr̥it-padma*, "the heart-lotus", in whose depths is the inmost entity in man, his true soul or psychic being.

The psychic being in full blaze had always been the Mother's secret of sadhana. And basically due to her example and to her guidance of the Ashram in the wake of 24 November the master-technique came to be the bringing forth of the heart-lotus

into activity and the setting of it as the leader of the transformation. There was also a more direct working upon the "subconscient" and the "inconscient" in order to lighten their heavy drag upon the consciousness and to expose them to the inner as well as the higher Illumination for a change of the physical being's habitual and automatic reactions.

Several other shifts of viewpoint and movement took place either on Sri Aurobindo's initiative or on the Mother's or else on those of both jointly. The final version of the Truth they sought to establish on earth may be considered not only Aurobindonian but also Mother-moulded. That is to say, the Mother introduced a number of extensions of significance and vision into the spiritual system we find in the Master's writings.

At least one term of Sri Aurobindo's acquired an extra meaning. He has used the word "involution" in three senses. The first covers the supreme Superconscience in which everything is merged beyond manifestation in a self-absorbed trance of the Spirit. In relation to this sense Sri Aurobindo considers the manifested cosmos, with the many levels or planes he demarcates in it, as "a self-graded devolution out of the Superconscient Sachchidananda"¹— or else he speaks of "Spirit in which all is involved and out of which all evolves downward..."²

But when he does not bring in this sense he regards the graded formation of levels or planes descending from the supreme Superconscience as a movement of "involution" because the gradation expresses a more and more limited quality, an increasingly held-in nature, of the Divine. There is first a cosmic hierarchy of powers above the mind, then a ladder of planes mental, vital and subtle-physical. These latter levels are different from the world which is ours and which we look upon as that of matter with life and mind appearing out of it. Our world has to be designated gross-physical and as lying outside and under the cosmic ladder. For, all the rungs of that ladder are, according to Sri Aurobindo, "typal": each is a diverse play of one type of consciousness without any other type arising from it: the other types are not absent but they are subordinate to the single principle which makes the particular plane, presenting a certain aspect of the Infinite and Eternal as the prominent ruling factor. Thus on the life-plane there is no expression of mind proper or of characteristic matter but only a mentality and a physicality subjected or subdued to the nature of the life-force's impulses, desires, passions, ambitions, adventurous dynamisms, incalculable changes of motive and shape. In short, none of the typal planes has the phenomenon we name "evolution"—the state of affairs we find on our earth where we initially see a purely material existence and afterwards the outbreak of life in it and later the outbreak of mind in a life which has no self-conscious thought and will, and lastly the seeming preparation of a more-than-mental, an ever-luminous spiritual, consciousness in a mind which is a seeking ignorance. It is the fact of earthly evolution that brings in Sri Aurobindo's third sense of "involution".³

¹ *The Life Divine* (American Edition, 1949), p. 684.

² *Ibid.*, p. 120. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 591

Evolution implies for Sri Aurobindo the gradual emergence of what was concealed: an involution of various powers precedes their evolution. Involution here differs from the movement of involution by which the typical planes are formed. And in its original state such involution signifies a total locking-up or engulfment of all the possible powers, in what the Rigveda (X.129.3) describes as “darkness wrapped within darkness”—an absolute Inconscience at the inverse pole to the Supreme Superconscience in which all the powers are plunged or lost in light.¹ Our material world is the first upsurge from this Inconscience. It is the release of the subtle-physical principle hidden there, release due to the pressure upward of that locked element as well as the pressure downward of the same element from its free state on its own plane.² And whatever is subsequently developed is the similar release of the hidden vital and mental and more-than-mental principles through the material world.

The Mother employs a fourth sense. In her talk of 21 May 1958 she opposes to the phenomenon of evolution in which there is an ascent towards an ever higher consciousness the descent of a higher consciousness into the mould of an already evolved lower one: this to her is a phenomenon of involution. Thus the animal nature growing human is evolutionary: a mental being, entering from above, as it were, into the semi-animal semi-human would be involutory. In the traditional figure of the Ramayana's Hanuman, the ape-devotee, the Mother reads the symbol of “the evolutionary man”, whereas in the traditional figure of the same epic's Rama, the Avatar, she discerns the symbol of “the involutory being, the one who comes from above”. She further explains: “The evolutionary being is the one that's the continuation of the animals, and the other is a being from higher worlds... But in the evolutionary being there is that central light which is the origin of the psychic being and which will develop into the psychic being, and when the psychic being is full-formed, there is a moment when it can unite with a being from above which can incarnate in it. So this being from above which descends into a psychic being is an involutory being—a being of the Overmind plane or from elsewhere...”

When I was writing in Bombay during 1953 my article on “the Mind of Light”, which the Mother had realised on 5 December 1950, she let me know through Nolini that this Mind, which was constituted by the supramental Light settling in the physical mentality, was involutory rather than evolutionary. She meant that an already luminous consciousness was manifesting in a cast of evolving mind to create the new power.

Even as early as 1931 the Mother³ spoke of “certain human organisms” in the remote past progressing enough to allow “a junction with certain beings descending from above”. The junction led to the birth of “a race of the elite” and to the claims of races like “the Aryan, the Semitic and the Japanese” to be each “the chosen race”. But, according to the Mother, there has been “a lot of intermixture” because of “the necessity of prolongation of the superior race, which drove it to intermix with... animal

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 491. ² *Ibid.*, p. 859.

³ The Mother's Centenary Volume 3, pp. 150-51.

humanity". After a few remarks on "some beings who had a very strong desire not to mix"—a desire which is "the real origin of race-pride, race-exclusiveness and a special caste-distinction like that cherished by the Brahmins in India"—the Mother concluded: "at present it cannot be said that there is any portion of mankind which is purely animal: all the races have been touched by the descent from above, and owing to the extensive intermixture the result of the Involution was more widely spread."

Considering the date—1931—we should believe that the Mother's usage was known to Sri Aurobindo and accepted by him though he never employed it in his own writings. Our belief would seem to get a direct confirmation when in her talk of 2 November 1955 the Mother speaks as if Sri Aurobindo himself had it in mind. Asked whether the Vedic Rishis were men who had evolved to that state or were special manifestations, she wants to know if the questioner means "whether they were evolutionary beings or involutory beings". Her answer is: "... they were surely involutory beings. But the body was the result of evolution." Asked again whether now the evolution would continue or be replaced by involution, she replies: "... there is one thing you forget—that Sri Aurobindo has said that each new species which appeared upon earth was the result of an involution. So there has always been the combination of the two. A double work: a work that goes from below upward, and an answer which comes from above downward."

Involution, in the Mother's extra sense, implies simply the descending penetration of a conscious force from a plane beyond the earth into earth's formula of evolution in order to manifest there the nature proper to that plane.

The Mother has also given, on account of circumstances not visualised in the works of Sri Aurobindo, a somewhat altered perspective to the spiritual picture comprising features describable in Aurobindonian language as New Race, Superman, Gnostic Being, Gnostic Community.

Sri Aurobindo, in his writings, conceived a further rise in the earth's evolutionary scale which has so far produced man the mental being. A question put to him about the Mother elicited an answer which, after dwelling on the chance her embodiment gives to the earth-consciousness to receive the Supramental into it and finally undergo a transformation by the Supramental, focuses at the end the result of evolution he had in view: "...the whole earth-consciousness will not be supramentalised—but there will be first a new race representing the Supermind, as man represents the mind" (18.3.1933).¹

The power called supramental by Sri Aurobindo is the all-creative as well as the all-transformative divinity to which he attaches several names besides Supermind—"Truth-Consciousness", "Gnosis", "Gnostic Being", "Vijnana"—and which he considers to have never before been directly manifested. It is by the descent of this power into the figure of humanity with the co-operation of the aspiring soul that man's entire complex of mind, life-force and body will be altogether divinised to bring about evolution's fulfilment: the Superman. For, as Sri Aurobindo says repeatedly,

¹ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953), p. 404.

“Supermind is Superman.”¹

The nucleus, with which the supramentalisation or divinisation or transformation will begin what ultimately will be a racial step forward, is designated by Sri Aurobindo the Gnostic Community, a small group organised harmoniously according to a perfect inner light, love and liberty.

Sri Aurobindo also conceived the appearance of a semi-supramentalised group, “a new humanity”, possessing what he called the Mind of Light. In this context he labelled that humanity as “the new race”, and told us: “Its mentality...at its highest... would be capable of passing into the supermind and from the new race would be recruited the race of supramental beings who would appear as the leaders of the evolution in earth-nature”,² a community entirely Gnostic, totally transformed. Sri Aurobindo adds: “Even, the highest manifestations of a mind of Light would be an instrumentality of the supermind, a part of it or a projection from it, a stepping beyond humanity into the superhumanity of the supramental principle.”³ The word “recruited” indicates that “the race of supramental beings” would grow by enlisting and including members of the “new humanity” ready to rise higher and perfect themselves. Both the batches have the common base of the terrestrially human, even though Sri Aurobindo distinguishes the former as “superhumanity”.

That “the race of supramental beings” consists of the human turned into a divine quality all-round is precisely stated by him when he ponders what “the descent of Supermind into our earthly existence” would have as its “consequence”.⁴ He writes: “It would certainly open to man the access to the supramental consciousness and the supramental life; for we must suppose that it is by such a transformation that a race of supramental beings would be created, even as the human race itself has arisen by a less radical but still a considerable uplifting and enlargement of consciousness and conversion of the body’s instrumentation and its indwelling and evolving mental and spiritual capacities and powers of a first animal state.”⁵

In the original plan Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were to be the initial representatives of a “superhumanity” resulting from an accelerated evolution. As Avatars of the Supermind, they were to form the double centre of “the race of supramental beings”, Men grown Supermen by practising the Integral Yoga with their help. This plan is obvious from a pronouncement like: “What is being done is meant to prepare the manifestation of the Supermind in the earth-consciousness, down to Matter itself, so it can’t be for the physical of myself or the Mother alone. If it comes down into our physical, it would mean that it has come down into Matter and so there is no reason why it should not manifest in the sadhaks” (15.9.35).⁶ For occult reasons Sri Aurobindo chose to pass through the process of physical death, thereby removing as if with a strategic self-sacrifice some block in the way which would

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 44. Also, Sri Aurobindo’s Centenary Volume 17, pp. 7, 8, 76.

² *The Supramental Manifestation*, Centenary Volume 16, p. 67.

³ *Ibid.* ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50. ⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, p. 358.

have taken very much longer to demolish otherwise. The moment he left his body the Mind of Light was realised in the Mother. Six years later (1956) the manifestation of the supramental light, consciousness and force on a universal scale was brought about in the subtle-physical layer of the earth. (This layer, which the earth possesses just as it possesses a vital and mental layer, must be demarcated from the subtle-physical plane as such, although the two have a connection. That plane, being typical, exactly like the independent vital and mental ones, has no need of any other light, consciousness and force than its own.)

Generalising from her realisation of the Mind of Light and applying to the Ashram's Yogic life Sri Aurobindo's view of "a new humanity" moving forward to become a "superhumanity", the Mother refers on 24 December 1954 to "what Sri Aurobindo has written in his last article which appeared in the *Bulletin*", and tells us: "He says that if you want to prepare for the descent of the Supermind, first of all your mind of ignorance and incapacity must be replaced by a mind of light which sees and knows. And this is the first step. Before this step is crossed, one cannot go forward."

Then the Mother proceeds to a dimension of future achievement which is nowhere quite explicit in the Master's books. With Sri Aurobindo not on the material scene, the Mother, under the inspiration of his inner message to her, after his passing on 5 December 1950, that he would be the first to come in a supramental body built in the supramental way, saw the fulfilment of their work under two aspects. Taking a cue from his latest writings and developing it along a novel line with a nomenclature not actually used by Sri Aurobindo but attributable to him from the drift of his utterance, she declares: "Sri Aurobindo said that there would be an intermediate race (a race or perhaps a few individuals, one does not know), a kind of intermediate stage which might serve as a passage or might be perpetuated, following the needs and necessities of creation. But if one starts with a body formed as human bodies are formed, the result will never be the same as in the case of a being formed wholly according to the supramental method and process. It may be farther on the superhuman side, in the sense that all animal expression might disappear, but it cannot have the absolute perfection of a body purely supramental in its formation."

The opposed aspects projected here in general she defines more particularly though still in a broad manner thus: "There are two possibilities, the possibility of a purely supramental creation and the possibility of a progressive transformation of a physical body into a supramental body or rather that of a human body into a superhuman body; this progressive transformation might take a number of years, probably a considerable number of years and produce a being who would not be a man in the animal sense of the word, and yet would not be the being properly called supramental, formed wholly outside animality; necessarily it would have an animal origin."¹ In short, on the one hand there would be the human supramentalised and on the other the supramental humanised—in the sense of assuming a man-like shape. The former would mark the evolutionary consummation, with the Mother being, as the leader of

¹ *Bulletin*, February 1963, p. 43.

the earth's "Yoga of supramental descent and transformation", its prime exemplar. The latter would be a non-evolutionary epiphany, an embodiment of the Supermind from its own level without the ordinary birth-process and without an earthly past of human as well as pre-human history: Sri Aurobindo returning to our world would be the prime exemplar of the direct divine self-expression.

In one of his final essays, Sri Aurobindo discussed the possibility of a materialisation of this sort in a time yet to come. He wrote: "A soul wishing to enter into a body or form for itself a body and take part in a divine life upon earth might be assisted to do so or even provided with such a form by this method of direct transmutation without passing through birth by the sex process or undergoing any degradation or any of the heavy limitations in the growth and development of its mind and material body inevitable to our present way of existence. It might then assume at once the structure and greater powers and functionings of the truly divine material body which must one day emerge in a progressive evolution to a totally transformed existence both of the life and form in a divinised earth-nature."¹ As Sri Aurobindo was still in his body, the vision he had delineated had no relation to himself. The Mother related it to him as well as made it depend on the event of the human supramentalised. The human supramentalised would develop and exercise the ability to effect a materialisation of beings from a higher plane, which would bypass the common phenomenon of birth by sexual means.

In view of Sri Aurobindo's occult information to the Mother after leaving his body that he would return to earth in a non-evolutionary supramental manner at some future date, we may adjudge the Mother's vision as having in general his private seal upon it.

In several talks she named the evolutionary aspect of supramentalisation the Intermediate Race or the Race of Superman. To quote her own words on the nature and function of the ultimate product of Yogic evolution: "This species may be considered as a species of transition, because it will discover, as it is to be foreseen, the means of creating new beings without passing through the old animal method, and it is these beings, having truly a spiritual birth, that will form the elements of the new race, the supramental race. One might thus name supermen those who still belong by their origin to the older method of generation, but who, by their achievement, are in conscious and active relation with the new world of supramental realisation."²

What the Mother calls "the new world of supramental realisation" is something unique in evolutionary history. Perhaps it is not correct to speak of evolution at all in this connection. When the life-world manifested, even when the more subtle and potent mind-world found its expression and that special superior race was once formed, there never were sheer beings of these planes precipitated durably upon earth in their own characteristic spirit and substance. For, the ability to bring about a lasting direct materialisation from any plane will arise only with the evolution of the Intermediate Race—and what is brought about will be an involution, in the

¹ Sri Aurobindo Centenary Vol 16, p. 33. ² *Bulletin*, August 1958, p. 85.

Mother's sense, of an utterly unprecedented nature.

Thus the Intermediate Race, even if transitional, has a crucial role. In one place the Mother has doubted its transitional fate: she has envisaged a continued side-by-side play of the Superman-body and the pure embodiment of the Supermind, as each would possess a beauty of its own and have its *raison d'être*.¹ To keep a sign of animal origin must not be understood as a radical imperfection. We must remember that "the truly divine body", of which Sri Aurobindo has spoken in his *Bulletin*-article, is said by him precisely to be the one emerging "in a progressive evolution"—the body of the Mother's Intermediate Race. The Mother herself, in 1931, enumerated the attributes of this body, which she then called "supramental" rather than "superhuman" since the two aspects of the fulfilment of her work and Sri Aurobindo's were not yet visualised. She said: "The supramental body which has to be brought into being has four main attributes: lightness, adaptability, plasticity and luminosity. When the physical body is thoroughly divinised, it will feel as if it were always walking on air, there will be no heaviness or *tamas* or unconsciousness in it. There will also be no end to its power of adaptability: in whatever conditions it is placed it will immediately be equal to the demands made upon it because its full consciousness will drive out all that inertia and incapacity which usually make Matter a drag on the Spirit. Supramental plasticity will enable it to stand the attack of every hostile force which strives to pierce it: it will present no dull resistance to the attack but will be, on the contrary, so pliant as to nullify the force by giving way to it to pass off. Thus it will suffer no harmful consequences and the most deadly attacks will leave it unscathed. Lastly, it will be turned into the stuff of light, each cell will radiate the supramental glory. Not only those who are developed enough to have their subtle sight open but the ordinary man too will be able to perceive this luminosity. It will be an evident fact to each and all, a permanent proof of the transformation which will convince even the most sceptical."²

Only in comparison with "the supramental body built in the supramental way" is the Intermediate Race's physical vehicle open to criticism. In itself it will be as if—in Shakespearean phrase—Heaven had made

another world
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite.

At the beginning of 1969—that is, about thirteen years after the subtle-physical manifestation of the Supermind—the Mother announced that the force to realise the Intermediate Race had come in its own right to the earth—evidently from the subtle-physical. She distinguished the occasion as the advent of the Superman Consciousness and mentioned some of its outstanding qualities. About the non-evolutionary aspect of her work—the supramental humanised from its own level,

¹ *Bulletin*, April 1963, p. 49

² The Mother's Centenary Volume 3, pp. 175-176.

the New Race, as she named it—she has not said much. But it is this race that, according to her, would really merit to be regarded as composed of Gnostic Beings and making the Gnostic Community.

Evidently her New Race and her Superman do not coincide as mostly did Sri Aurobindo's. Nor are her Gnostic Being and Gnostic Community the same as his. Doubtless, the description "New Race" is at a few places employed by her for the human supramentalised, as when she says: "We must not confuse a supramental transformation with the appearance of a new race."¹ Earlier, when she opened the All-India Convention held in Pondicherry on 24 April 1951, about four and a half months after Sri Aurobindo's departure, she gave a message which reflected in closing words his vision of the great time ahead: "...preparing the future humanity to receive the supramental light that will transform the elite of today into a new race manifesting upon earth the new light and force and life." By and large, however, the Mother distinctly reserves the "New-Race" title for the other phenomenon.

Thus, owing to altered circumstances, the Mother's terminology extended that of Sri Aurobindo in several respects, and the vision of the Supermind's revealed presence in the world changed in its final details—although both the extension and the change were along lines which could be recognised as having Sri Aurobindo's silent support.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *Questions and Answers* 1956, p. 281.

A NEW SONG

No more in outworn rhythms confined,
 A new song shall seize my mind
 And guide my pen to sing
 Of a lovelier unborn thing.
 That yet shall kiss this shore
 Of wandering time-wracked hours,
 With footsteps like the flowers
 That ancient foreheads wore,
 Vibrating in despite of time
 With laughter making their souls rhyme
 To harmonies of a coming age
 Our vagrant thoughts presage.

ROGER HARRIS

WITH MY SWEET MOTHER

REMINISCENCES BY LALITA

5

Love in the Mother

I ASKED the Mother once how I could write to others, specially when ending my letters, with love etc., when all my love was given only to the Divine. If I did not end my letters in this way, my friends and relatives felt offended and, if I did write it, then my heart was offended. So what should I do?

The Mother said, "You know how the Christians have a way of saying 'With love in Christ', so you can also say 'With love in the Mother'."

Thereafter there was no problem—and I commenced to feel something of the Divine's love, which is for everybody.

Good Friend

When I told the Mother that a certain person was a good friend of mine, always helping me and teaching me all sorts of things, She was not at all pleased with me. She said in a firm way, "Don't be under the illusion that any human being can be a *true* friend to you. The Divine is your only real friend. He alone can truly help, guide and protect you." At that time I could not understand this deeply, but later, throughout my life, I found that on whomsoever I relied, he or she always failed me. Only the Divine remained my true friend throughout.

My Birthdays

We all know that our birthday is a very happy day for us. Our sweet Mother showers Her special grace on us on that day.

On each of my birthdays I took to Her as an offering one hundred and one roses, specially ordered by me from a garden in Bangalore. They had been so well packed that they were quite fresh when I took them to the Mother, who was very pleased with them. Later, Chinmayi and I arranged them in different vases in the Mother's room.

Besides the roses, I offered with great joy a dozen saris, which were not expensive in those days. Knowing the Mother's tastes, I took care to choose the colours She liked best, and the texture also. They had come either from Japan or from France. I also offered one silk dhoti for Sri Aurobindo, but it was not always of the right sort, for in Bombay it was difficult to get such dhoties and I did not find them here either.

Elizabeth Arden's toilet preparations had been introduced by me to the Mother

some time earlier, so I also offered those among them which the Mother liked and used. At first they had to be ordered from England, but later I got them from Spencer & Co., Madras.

After seeing all my offerings one by one, the Mother would hold me close and we would meditate for a long while, as I am sure most of us have done with Her.

“I want to be completely *Yours*. Your child alone. Make me worthy of being Your true child in all the parts of my being,” I said to Her.

“A child does not know that it is a child,” the Mother answered.

After the meditation was over She would give me flowers and a little gift—something that She had used (even a pin-cusion). It made me very happy. Once She gave me a plastic toy in the shape of a peacock. All of Her gifts I have still got, carefully preserved.

My flowers were usually “Generosity” and “*Tendresse*” and on my birthdays a few others which I do not remember.

After accepting my “pranam” to Her and giving me Her blessings She would leave me, and Chinmayi would come to help me put away all the things. This was done in the Mother’s dressing-room.

In connection with Elizabeth Arden I must mention a certain thing. One day I received a letter from Spencer & Co., informing me that a lady who had been trained by Mrs. Arden in her beauty parlour in England was coming on a tour to India and so would visit me, as I had been their client for a long time. Because I had been ordering a lot of beauty preparations, they thought I was using them myself. I was very glad to get their offer and told the Mother about it with enthusiasm.

“Do you think that I am going to allow this woman to touch my face?” the Mother asked me in a stern way. I kept quiet for a while till I realised that the Mother was the *Divine*, and not just an ordinary client. “No, Mother,” I said softly, “I am sorry.”

After this, whenever I helped Her adjust Her sari or other things, even my hands became conscious that they were touching a divine body. It was a good lesson to me, and I wrote to Spencer & Co. that they did not need to send the lady here.

The Mother, by coming so close to us, often made us forget that She was the *Divine*, and such blows as I received at times were a Grace for me.

Fairies

There was a lot of talk about fairies at one time, specially because Miss Olive Maitland, an English lady visiting the Ashram, was said to be in communion with a fairy. I could not understand how fairies could actually live with certain people, so on one of my birthdays when the Mother spoke about it to me I told Her that since my early childhood I had felt the presence of fairies in the garden of the Town Hall of Bombay, where we had been living because my father had been its custodian. As I grew up I rejected the idea as childish imagination, but whenever I was alone

among trees and flowers, on hillsides or in woods, something in me became conscious of their presence, jumped out of me and danced with them. Yes, that is what I actually felt. If nobody was looking, I spent a long time in these surroundings, dancing and singing and playing with the flowers. But none of my friends or relatives understood me, least of all my parents who thought I was crazy, so I could not enjoy myself in this way when anybody was around.

When I joined the Ashram many years later, and was staying in the Macpheeters' house, one night I was suddenly awakened from my sleep by a soft knocking on my door. "Rat-a-tat-tat," it went.

I got up, opened the door and found that there was nobody. I went to sleep again and the noise returned. This time I saw in the subtle world some sweet-looking creatures like tiny children, knocking on the door. There were boys and girls, and the latter were very pretty, and the former a little mischievous. "Could these have been fairies, Mother dear?" I asked the Mother the next day.

"Yes," She said. "But they are of two kinds: playful and helpful. The latter can even arrange a drawer for you if you ask them. But it is not possible to have them with you unless your being is harmonious and your thoughts and feelings are beautiful. All kinds of vulgarity, ugliness, and discord will drive them away."

"Is everybody aware of their presence?" I asked.

"No, certainly not," the Mother replied. "You had an affinity with them from the very beginning. You see, these fairies do not have a psychic being, and so when they wish to approach the Divine, they keep close to human beings who are suitable to them, and will help them to come to the Divine."

I was very excited to learn this, so the Mother had to warn me not to tell everybody about it. Later on, when I had shifted to "Fenêtres" ("Windows") and was doing some stitching or embroidery, they would tease me by hiding my thread or needle or scissors. "They only put a veil of unconsciousness between us and the objects," the Mother said when I spoke to Her about these happenings. She continued, "The next time they do it you just say loudly, 'I shall tell the Mother about this,' and see what happens." I did as I was told, and immediately they stopped teasing me.

When I look back, it seems strange to me that the flowers which she usually gave me—the one to which She had given the significance—"Generosity"—and the small pink and white rose called "Tendresse" by Her—were the very flowers which had grown in abundance in our garden in Bombay, where from early childhood I used to feel the presence of fairies among them.

Champaklal

I have always admired our generous-hearted Champaklal. I do not know how many people he must have helped to see the Mother and to receive Her blessings. Even when the Mother (for some reason of Her own) was not willing or not keen to

see certain people, he would plead with Her, "Grace, Mother, Your Grace"—till She relented.

When I returned to settle in the Ashram after a long stay in Bombay, I was a nervous wreck, and the only thing that calmed my nerves was sitting in the Mother's long passage-room and meditating. When I spoke to Champaklal about it, he readily gave me the permission to sit there regularly.

I used to go very early those days when practically nobody was there (except Champaklal and Nirod) near Sri Aurobindo's room.

Once when I was sitting and meditating I distinctly heard a "swish, swish" sound as if somebody were walking in the passage. I opened my eyes and looked everywhere, but there was no one. I started meditating again, and once more I heard the same noise. I got up and looked everywhere, but there was nobody around. Then something told me from within, "Why, it is the Mother! She wants you to be aware that She is always present." I was very grateful for this experience, and to Champaklal for giving me the chance of meditating there, for it also cured me of my nervous trouble.

When there was no flushing system in the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's toilet, I used to daily see Champaklal taking the pots downstairs for cleaning, and later come up with two large buckets of hot water (four or five times) till the Mother's bath-tub was full. He had no fixed hours for sleep or for food, but slept and ate whenever it was possible for him to do so. Always present, at the service of the Lord and the Mother, he never cared or asked for anything for himself. Indeed a wonderful and true sadhak, even to this day.

Chinmayi, My Dear Friend

Chinmayi (originally Medhi Begum with "Bibbu" as petname) came from an aristocratic family related to the Nizam of Hyderabad. Her Ashram-name given by Sri Aurobindo means: "one who is full of, or made up of, the pure Spirit-consciousness." She came with her three brothers, Ibrahim, Ishak and Yakoob (renamed respectively Dara, Prashanta and René) along with her sister who was renamed Sudhira and her stepmother Tajdar who was only a few years older than Chinmayi.

The ladies and Prashanta were given the corner-house which now belongs to the Mother's grand-daughter Poornaprem (originally Françoise), whereas Dara lived in the building on the Ashram street, opposite this house—in the room under Abhaysingh's present flat, the room which later became the Mother's Store-Room and is still the same. Subsequently the ladies were shifted to the house at the corner next to Huta House.

At that time Chinmayi was given a thatched room on the first floor there. She never wanted personal comfort and was always absorbed in the Mother's work and her sadhana. She was a great Tapaswini and straight and sincere. I admired her always and wanted to be close to her, but it was not possible at first.

The only occasion I had of meeting her, and being in her company for a short while, was when the Mother took us for an outing in a car accompanying Her own to the Lake, or when we were both in the Mother's garage waiting for Her to go on her daily drive.

One day as we were walking towards the Lake, with the Mother in front talking to Pavitra, I saw some palm trees with pitchers hanging on them for collecting toddy. I asked Chinmayi if she had ever tasted toddy and she looked surprised and said in a stern way, "Certainly not—and never even wine." I had forgotten that she was a true Mohammedan. Later, she told me that she did not like meat either. She had had some pet dogs in her home in Hyderabad to whom she used to pass on the meat, under the table, when nobody was looking.

Chinmayi was usually a very quiet person in my time, and so were most of us. Even I hardly spoke to anybody, and later on even forgot their names or what they were doing.

At the Prosperity Store, where about twenty of us gathered daily to meet the Mother in the evening (before receiving soup from Her sacred hands downstairs) we sat in a semi-circle round Her, listening to Her illuminating talks. The people who most interested me there were Datta, Pavitra and Chinmayi. The last-named was usually very silent, and indrawn, sitting with her left hand over her raised knee, touching her heart.

The Mother asked us many questions to which mostly Nolini and Pavitra gave the best answers. Sometimes Amal put in some words. Whenever the Mother explained anything, I seemed to understand it only with my heart and not with my mind. I never put to Her any questions regarding matters like the Supermind, even when I was alone with Her in Her room, but always prayed to Her to help me keep my psychic being in front. Something in me said, "Where is the question of the Supermind (which is the final goal) when you have not even taken the first step towards it, by bringing your psychic being forward?"

Chinmayi never spoke to me of Krishna or any other God or Goddess, but she too, like myself, had been made in her early days to follow certain dogmas of her religion, such as placing her hands on some tombs and repeating certain prayers. This, she told me, she never enjoyed doing.

She also said that when she came here she did not even know the date of her birth, so the Mother fixed the 4th October for her birthday, which (as most of us already know) was the anniversary day of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of all animals. She was a true animal-lover and, when the Mother wanted to give her a cat, she told Her to give the ugliest one. "But why the ugliest?" I asked in surprise. She said, "It is because nobody else will take it and the poor animal will be made to suffer all its life".

Black Nose Comes Back to Me

After our Prosperity-meetings and the Soup-distribution, when the Mother went

back to Sri Aurobindo's room, Champaklal and Chinmayi usually went with Her, carrying a basket of flowers each, for the Mother to give to the sadhaks who had lined themselves all along the way. Sometimes, when one of them was not there, I too got this chance.

One day a strange thing happend. At that time when in the present Ashram courtyard some small buildings stood, joined by passages, the Ashram Kitchen was almost at the place where the Samadhi now stands, but a little to the south. As the Mother was passing that way, a small kitten suddenly appeared and fell at Her feet, rubbing itself against them as if imploring Her help and Grace. The Mother at once recognized it as the one She had asked me to leave in the fish-market. She picked it up and gave it to me saying, "You must keep it." That is how Black Nose came back to me. It was in a miserable condition and Chinmayi would have taken it gladly but the kitten would have returned to me. The Mother had explained to us once that cats have a wonderful instinct for finding their homes. They are not attached so much to their masters as to the houses where they have lived. What mystified us at that time (and even does today) is this—how did this kitten come straight to the Ashram? Did somebody bring it and place it along the Mother's route? Nobody could tell me—and I never found out.

I Get Permission to Work in the Mother's Room

Except for manicuring, I never entered any of the Mother's rooms, and manicuring was done in just one room. Standing at the staircase door, the Mother took everything I had cooked or prepared for Her and Sri Aurobindo, handed it over to Chinmayi, spoke to me, and let me go after I had made my "pranam" to Her.

One day I said to the Mother, "I like Chinmayi very much and I would be very happy if the Mother allowed me to work with her." "It is reciprocal," said the Mother. "She too likes you much, but as for the work we shall see later."

As we all know, the Mother's programme kept changing, so one day She told me to come up through Pavitra's office-room, with the olives, etc. for Sri Aurobindo, at a certain time. I was very happy and did as I had been told. Both the Mother and Chinmayi were there. The latter took the tray from my hands and the Mother gave me a glass of lime-juice to drink.

Seeing my reluctance to leave, She told me later to sit inside Her dressing-room and do my sewing-work there. I was very happy and Chinmayi too was glad.

From that day onwards I worked in the Mother's room and learnt any number of things from Her as well as from my dear friend Chinmayi.

The Mother taught me how to treat all material things with love and care, for they too have a consciousness of their own. She taught me the right way to use and handle them, not so much by telling me how it should be done as by doing it Herself in my presence. How wonderful it was to learn in that way by quietly watching Her!

Chinmayi too taught me many things, and corrected me when I did anything in

the ordinary manner. Then finally she gave up much of the work in the Mother's room to me, saying, "Now this is *your work*."

I was surprised to hear this, but later on I found that she wanted to be more and more with the Mother, and also to sit and read what Sri Aurobindo was writing at that time.

She was a poet, but, to my knowledge, she never showed her poems to anybody except the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

She loved Sri Aurobindo as much as she loved the Mother and, as far as I remember, she was the only sadhika at that time who was allowed to go for a few moments with the Mother to His room.

As for her attachment to the Mother—it was simply marvellous! She called the Mother "Petite Mère," and the Mother called her "Ma chérie" and "Ma petite mignonne". The Mother had taught her French as well as painting. She became a very good artist and even did my portrait. One day she wanted to paint a picture of the sea. As the only time she was free to do it was when the sun was high up—perhaps at 10 a.m.—she became dark brown with sun-burn on one side, but she did not care at all.

I too was very attached to the Mother, but not lucky enough to be so close to Her. However, I took every chance I had of seeing or watching Her. Every evening for some time She would sit on that cane-chair which is at the door leading to the landing from where one goes to Her room on the second floor, and Chinmayi would sit close by and learn French from Her. At that time the second floor was not constructed, so the chair was quite visible to me when I sat on the staircase leading to what is now Kamala's room.

Chinmayi often told me that she wanted to be an angel with wings so she could fly and help those she or the Mother wanted to help. "I could go to the hills or the rocks whenever I wanted and watch everything," she said, "I really wish I had wings." "But how will you wear your blouse if you have wings?" I asked. "Oh I will cut it in a special way," she answered. As she repeated this many times, I felt that probably she belonged to the world of Angels and had taken a human body to do the Mother's work.

One day I asked the Mother, "How is it, Mother dear, that You give me only these roses whose significance is 'Tendresse' and no other flowers like 'Faith' or 'Devotion' or 'Psychological Perfection'?"

"You want those flowers?" She asked me and told Chinmayi to bring Her some. The Mother gave them to me but without Her sweet love and smile, for She was not pleased. I realised then what a mistake I had made and begged Her pardon; for these other flowers seemed to have no meaning for me.

After "pranam" in the mornings when the Mother used to go upstairs, I too went with Her, carrying some flowers in a basket. After removing Her crown-band She would carefully arrange these flowers and keep them for Chinmayi and others. But if at that time I felt any desire for a particular flower She would throw it at

me in an annoyed manner, to teach me to be above such petty desires. Chinmayi and Champakal never had such desires, I am sure.

Sometimes the Mother was very stern both with Pavitra and with Chinmayi, but, as I have mentioned before, they both took it in the right spirit and smiled. She even once said to Chinmayi in my presence, “Ne soit pas idiot, chérie!” (Don’t be foolish, beloved.) and my dear friend only laughed.

The Significance of My Name

People in the Ashram and outside asked me several times what was the significance of my name “Lalita”, and I told them what Sri Aurobindo had written and sent to me: “Beauty of refinement and harmony.” He had added that the name was of one of the companions of Radha.

I told Chinmayi that when I had been a child of nine years, a friend of my father’s had first spoken to us about little Krishna, a wonderful God who would not only eat and sleep at night by your side but also play with you whenever you called him to do so. At once something in me had awakened and said that it was just the kind of God I wanted.

Thereafter I used to leave half of my meal for him and always keep a special pillow on my bed for his use. Chinmayi laughed and said, “How wonderful!” But my parents thought I was going mad, so I had to give it up.

“Did you ever see Sri Krishna in a vision or a dream?” Chinmayi asked me.

“No, not that I remember,” I said. “But my first guru, Thakur Haranath, was a great devotee of Sri Krishna and taught us all to love him. ‘Love Him—don’t forget Him,’ he used to tell us any number of times. He would also say, ‘Lay all the burden of your sins on my shoulders and go and roll in Krishna’s love.’”

“You were lucky to come into contact with such people from your childhood,” said Chinmayi. “I had no such chance. Sri Aurobindo is the only guru I have known and, as you know, we all love Him very much.”

So the days and years rolled by till I discovered that Chinmayi’s behaviour was changing from day to day. I could not understand what was the matter, for she hardly spoke to me. I felt very sad, but later on I was told that she had two different personalities in her, both equally strong. And when the other personality came in front, she became quite the opposite of what she usually was. I kept quiet and went on with my work, hoping that a day would surely come when she would be her old self again. But this was not to be.

Soon afterwards some trouble connected with my family cropped up and I had to go to Bombay for a long stay, and our friendship was interrupted.

Chinmayi lived on until Sri Aurobindo left his body. Not long after the Master’s departure she grew more and more indisposed and a few years later passed away.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1979)

5

Education Through Art and Culture

“THE test of an institution is,” says Charles E. Silberman in his book *Crisis in the Classroom*, “not whether it is improving, although such a test is relevant, but whether it is adequate to the needs of the present and the foreseeable future. Our educating institutions fail that test....Education is not synonymous with schooling. Children and adults learn outside as well as and perhaps more than in school....

“From Plato to Rousseau to Jefferson to the early John Dewey, almost everybody who wrote about education took it for granted that it is the community and the culture that educate.”

The true art of teaching consists in feeding the child on the subject of his interest. A little detail is called for with what patience the Mother moulded the flaming energies of the children to aesthetic sense.

After the passing of Sri Aurobindo, there came a time when it seemed as if the Mother had lost herself in the younger section of the Ashram. She gave them lessons, narrated stories, personally gave marks and attended even their dancing and dramatic rehearsals. There was nothing in which She did not take interest. Both to the teacher and the taught the guidance came from her. Everybody looked to her for inspiration. She became the guiding light for everything.

In the school anniversary of 1948, a dance by children—“*The Sleeping Beauty*”—was performed and in 1949 the *Radha and Krishna Dance*.

Once the Mother asked a girl¹ who was one among the four early comers to the Ashram school, to give a dance performance for the anniversary of the school, and She herself chose the subject. There were three words. One of them was Peace. This proved very difficult for the girl². How could she give a demonstration of Peace in action? All she had learnt so far was to give expression to human feelings and human emotions. Dancing outside is done for the pleasure of life, at best for religious beliefs. All stress was on the surface movements. “By nature,” said she, “I was very impatient and again and again expressed my inability to give the desired performance. It was a very hard task but the Mother put up with all my impatience and told me very softly, very sweetly: ‘Try, try again’, flooding my being with the sweetness of her smile. Her gentle words and comforting arms took away all sense of labour.”

The corner portion of a big building is now allotted for dance and music. It is called “The Dancing Hall”. The number of participants has now reached one hundred. In her own words, “I never took the position of a teacher. I gave my stu-

¹ The first drama in the Ashram was enacted under X’s supervision at Dortoir on January 15, 1945. It was called “Gopal Bhaya”.

² In three days’ practice X’s feet were full of blisters “It is unavoidable,” she was told, “you must not stop practice. After a time the skin of the sole will become hard ”

dents full freedom so that they might feel at ease and be as merry as they liked.”

She herself loved to laugh and made them laugh, jump at her, cling to her arms; thus she made the place beautiful by her loveliness.

Sri Aurobindo has said, “The outer singer must disappear, then only the inner singer will appear.”¹

She recalls with tears of gratitude that in the strenuous part of goddess Durga, Shiva-Parvati, etc. she forgot that she was dancing. Those were auspicious moments which made her realise dancing was part and parcel of her sadhana.

Another girl spoke in a similar vein, “The moment I stood on the stage I felt a pouring of the Force and it continued till the performance ended. At the time I could mark the shifting horizons of my consciousness.”

It was perhaps the inherent love of beauty that prompted her to turn to art. First she had come as a baby of six months with her mother. The next time when she was ten. Till the age of 16 she knew nothing about dancing.

News came that Uday Shankar was coming to Madras. It seemed to her a call of her soul to see him dance. His art of dancing captured her heart. She felt so thrilled by the beauty of his harmonious movements that she passed the whole night lost in excitement. It put her feet on the destined path. On return, she expressed her desire to her father to learn dancing. He wrote a number of letters to different places. A response came from Kalakshetra run by Rukmini Devi, in Adyar, Madras. X was called for an interview and was accepted. Thus started her career of dancing, playing the Veena, etc.

It was announced that Uday Shankar would give a summer course in dancing for two months. She applied and was admitted. But what could be learnt in two months? She made up her mind to undertake the full course of five years. Uday Shankar himself gave a training for two hours a day. After a stay of two years in Almora, X returned to the Ashram in 1942. At the time there was no scope for her art within the precincts of the Ashram. So she left the practice and forgot all about dancing.

The Mother roused her sleeping talent and in course of time she was entrusted with the work of teaching the lovers of dancing, which she still continues.

From ancient times dancing has been considered a celestial art. The purpose of dance has been to propitiate the gods. During meditation, an idea flashed into the mind of a girl teacher that “The Hour of God” by Sri Aurobindo would prove to be a fine subject for a dance performance. The Mother liked the idea so much that She breathed vibrant life and grace into the function of December 1, 1964 by reading the great piece herself.

In the words of a teacher of our school, dance constitutes the training of body-coordination from the eyebrows to the toes. This demands constant practice.

Look at the way the above mentioned teacher’s dancing began here. Her first

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome I, p. 657. Cf. also “To be a real artist one has to work hard, years together.” *Ibid.*, p. 681.

performance before the Mother was sometime in April 1953. Her first visit to the Ashram was in 1942 when she was only eight. She has been here since 1952. The very sight of dance refreshed her soul and made the cells of her body leap with joy. In dancing, she felt her whole body vibrate with the movements. The Mother liked her dance and wanted her to give a performance that very year on the school anniversary. The Mother said that She herself would choose the subject: "I would like you to dance on Devotion and Aspiration. The first part of your dance will be your devotion to the Divine and the second part will express aspiration. And you will have to compose it yourself."

This took her breath away. How was it to be done effectively? She had no idea of dance composition or its technique. She had never composed a dance before and was only used to perform as she was taught by her teachers of the Kathak and Manipuri school.

She tried and tried but nothing came. In the meantime she was granted another interview. When she said everything, the Mother replied:

"Keep on trying and it will come."

"But how long, Mother? December is approaching; I have to be ready."

Then the Mother concentrated on her for a long time and observed: "Why, devotion is not difficult for you." Pointing her finger towards Her heart She affirmed: "It is there."

We will tell the rest in the girl's own words:

"As for aspiration She kept quiet for a while and then what She said and did still rings in my ears and comes vividly to my eyes. This I will never forget. The Mother was dressed that day in white. She told me: 'Do some uplifting movements, something that uplifts you.' Then She postured quite a number of movements with Her own body. On parting She gave me a flower and again said in an assuring tone, 'Go on trying. It will come.'

"And it did come. The dance was composed by me. I don't know how! Her Grace and Guidance flowed through my limbs. While engrossed in executing the difficult subject I lost all sense of myself. I didn't feel it was 'I' who was doing it. The Mother was pleased and said, 'See, you have got it.' That was one of the richest experiences of my life."

Having explained all this the teacher added, "Looking back, I feel the Mother wanted to bring down something new through dance, which was once the medium of worship by devotees and has now deteriorated and become a means of entertainment or romance (sword dance, lamp dance). The Mother wanted me to completely break the old traditions but I did not prove to be a fit vehicle. At the time I was too young to understand all this."

Later the performances of subtle subjects like "Spiritual Destiny of India" were put under Mother's own direction.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

OBJECTIVISM AND SUBJECTIVISM IN MODERN POETRY

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1979)

MANY feel that the poetry of Eliot does represent an “endeavour to disengage the ultimate essence, the soul, of whatever exists and can be realised by the consciousness”. They genuinely admire its rhythm—one claiming that Winters’s dismissal of *The Waste Land* as nothing but “broken blank verse interspersed with bad free verse and rhymed doggerel” reveals in the noted poet and critic a “crippling... insensitivity to the texture and the rhythm of verse.”¹³ Others of course feel Eliot’s verse has nothing to do with poetry. Yeats’s judgment is especially interesting. “[Eliot] is an Alexander Pope, working without apparent imagination, producing his effects by a rejection of all rhythms and metaphors used by the more popular romantics rather than by the discovery of his own.”¹⁴ Not only has the ultimate essence been left untouched, but the unsuccessful methods used to dig it up or drag it down have been destructive of what is essential to poetry—magic of language and rhythm. Still, whatever one’s opinion of him, one must take Eliot seriously—in a way that Pound and most that have followed him need not be taken seriously. Eliot was trying to express something which he felt the traditional forms and rhythms of English verse could not embody. At the end of his effort, in the *Four Quartets*, we find him still trying, sincere, thoughtful, a little baffled:

I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant—
he muses

*Among other things—or one way of putting the same thing:
That the future is a faded song. A Royal Rose or a lavender spray
Of wistful regret*¹⁵

and so on, an old tired man who knows that there is somewhere something eternal which can meet our lives at

*The point of intersection of the timeless
With time*¹⁶

but which never met his, at least not forcefully enough to take hold of it, much less to transform. A glimpse was given and in that light the ordinary world quite naturally took on the appearance of a wasteland, the dwelling place of soulless “hollow men”.

*Their only monument the asphalt road
And a thousand lost golf balls.*¹⁷

The goal was half-seen, or at least its intellectual necessity was deduced; but the path was not opened, the unpaved, hardly traced-out road which the mind is not able to travel. Eliot remained to the end a wanderer in his desert. “Fare forward,” he seems to hear Krishna tell him, but he lapses back in this poem¹⁸ to a neo-Buddhistic soullessness, which, as the Isha Upanishad tells us, is more debilitating even than the

hollow variety: *bhūya va te tamaḥ*.

It is instructive to note to what different ends this failed mystic and Sri Aurobindo arrived, starting from similar assumptions. Both understood that the real thing, the thing to be given utterance, was beyond the reach of ordinary mind and word. Both used symbols in their attempt to express the inexpressible. But while the American, basing himself on Laforgue and other nineteenth-century Frenchmen, could only achieve the indistinct evocation that their technique permitted, the Indian, basing himself on the tradition of the Vedas and Upanishads, was able to give, to those who can hear, the concrete revelation which it is the power of the mantra to deliver. Take a passage from *The Waste Land*, one relatively free from recondite allusions, rhythmic dead ends and syntactic incoherencies:

*Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water.*¹⁹

And now take a passage from *Savitri* expressing a kindred sort of vision:

*In rejected heaps by a monotonous road
The old simple delights were left to lie
On the wasteland of life's descent to Night.*²⁰

Eliot's passage is not without rhythm; it has high evocative power. Although it occurs in a poem where one is often obliged to say, with one of the speakers,

*I can connect
Nothing with nothing,*²¹

it is not in itself obscure. Nor is *The Waste Land* devoid of structure. But the skilfully modulated metrical rhythm of Sri Aurobindo's lines uplifts the statement of something whose exoteric meaning is quite simple and straightforward and takes us beyond to the deeper, esoteric content with which the whole of *Savitri* is charged. Note, for example, the effect of the spondee following a pyrrhic in the third line quoted. After that opening, the line marches palpably into that Darkness through which Sri Aurobindo had to travel, but in which he was not obliged to remain.

Symbols are used when the thing to be expressed has no name. The mind sees precisions of form and significance, but, as the modern consciousness has begun to realise, in doing so it does not see truth. The speed, expansion and uncertainty which are the characteristics of this age, have made a *pat Weltanschauung* impossible. Things are not what they seem; a hidden significance lurks behind the surfaces—only apparently positive—of the most ordinary things. The French symbolist says, in a poem called *Correspondences*,

*La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles*

but the words are confused only because, having abandoned traditional patterns, we have not found the one veritable pattern which underlies all things. Baudelaire to

be sure could not find it; he fell always towards an excess of sensuality, "*des parfums... corrompus et riches, triomphants*" or else towards an opposite excess, the realist over-emphasis on the garish, crude and misformed. Nor could Mallarmé, whom Sri Aurobindo considered a supreme poet, truly discover it. His characteristic sign (*signe*) remains his *Cygne*, the swan of the sonnet so named, transfixed in

Le transparent glacier des vols qui n'ont pas fui.

However clear the walls of his icy prison, he was unable to escape them.

Symbolism in Europe was an attempt to render the shifting values of reality in terms of metaphors and signs whose significances declared themselves to the imagination of the poet—and sometimes to that alone. But a true symbolism must go beyond any merely personal collection of correspondences and find the concrete and eternal figures of reality, which, however much their forms might change according to their framework of place and time, are constant within this framework. Such were the symbols used by the Vedic and Vedantic poets. Within the system of the esoteric Veda, the cow is always a figure for the spiritual illumination, the sun always the symbol of the Truth-Consciousness above the mind. It was the failure to find such a system of real correspondences that led to the downfall of symbolism in English literature and to the enthronement of the objectivism of Pound and others.

To Pound "the proper and perfect symbol is the natural object";²² and it is certainly true that each form is its own symbol, the sign of the essence which is seeking expression through it. "Touch the universe anywhere—you touch it everywhere,"²³ cries a modern "abstract" poet, in a rare moment of coherence; but does this justify his offering us lines like these.

*yesterday (May 6) we drove up to Phil Booth's house
and there he was: his wife, Margaret, too, his youngest daughter,
three dogs (all different kinds) and one cat: what a great day.*²⁴

Does it mean one can write a running description of the day's activities, in the popular manner of modern "documentary" poets—"I did this, I did that"—and expect the resulting "poem" will be a revelation of the truth of existence, even of the poet's petty superficial existence? If the daily flow of life does not reveal its truth to us, why should we suppose that an unvarnished, though still unfaithful, verbal reproduction of it should be able to?

(To be continued)

PETER HEEHS

NOTES

13. Press, Op. cit. p. 78

15. *The Dry Salvages*, III

17. *Chorus from the Rock*, III.

19. *The Waste Land*, V *What the Thunder said*.

21. *The Waste Land*, III. *The Fire Sermon*.

22. Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (London Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 9

23. A.R. Ammons, Sphere *The Form of A Motion* (New York. W.W. Norton & Co., 1974), p. 72.

24. *Ibid*, p 51

14. *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, p. xxi

16. *Ibid*, V

18. *The Dry Salvages*, III.

20. *Savitri*, Book 2, Canto 7.

PONDICHERRY

THE town has contrasts
 swinging to extremes
Of old world beauty
 mixed with historical themes

Of incense and flowers
 colonial French and spices
Garlands of jasmine
 roses and perfumed ices,

Courtyards of silence
 gardens of meditation
Parks of politics
 speeches and agitation,

Cross and icon and deities
 shine through quaint shutters;
Black hogs and wild pigs
 search and roam through the gutters

For food thrown away
 by the beggars—a developing nation?—
Who grow rich by the affluence
 of the local population—

But worse than the foghorn threat
 of a Manhattan ferry
Are the agony cries of the bus horns
 in Pondicherry.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

THE END OF THE DARK AGE

SRI Aurobindo has said that we passed out of the Dark Age at about the year 1900. By the Dark Age is meant that period when the possibility of contact with the spiritual world was largely closed. The passing of the Dark Age is itself a phenomenon of the evolving consciousness.

It is said that after aeons of evolution the human consciousness has reached a point when a step towards the Divine Truth can be taken. Now with the advent of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, a higher consciousness has already descended upon earth. In every man's life there is a great scheme of God. Out of our desolation we discover the Truth that we are essentially one with the Divine.

Our present age can indeed be regarded as an Apocalyptic Age. Many seers and thinkers are born who prophesy that humanity is undergoing an utter transformation. We must allow ourselves to become channels through which the Supramental Light will shine.

But we have to guard ourselves from becoming too optimistic. We are living in a transitional period, in which materialistic absorption can very well drag us downwards into another more tenebrous Dark Age of bestiality. We have to wake up to our spiritual destiny and advance towards a universal divine consciousness.

We are masters of our own destiny, and we are confident that Higher Guides will give us the proper orientation. Inwardly we are free and divine, and outwardly also we can live divinely. A great human society is being formed upon the face of the earth and the unavoidable Spiritual Age is emerging with the strength of the Supramental Consciousness. Our hearts are filled with the stupendous hope that the mighty rays of the Supramental Sun will reach even the darkest corner of our mental chamber, and that we shall have a new birth in Light. Then our normal way of thinking will be in consonance with the universal process. We know in the innermost depths of our being that we are eternal, and that we are not in truth limited by our external forms.

This is the Age of the divine revelation when Avatars are born and miracles happen. We shall achieve nothing if we drive bargains with God, to buy our spiritual redemption and terrestrial transformation in the cheapest market, at the smallest possible price. If we acknowledge that a radical transformation of our human nature is our goal, then we must be prepared for the sacrifice. There is no room for compromise in spiritual life. Sufferings are there, and they will be there so long as we are not transformed. But sufferings only make us stronger to bring about the redemption of our souls. The deeper the suffering, the greater the glory, the more celestial the reward.

The silent waves of spirituality are spreading everywhere like a mighty fire which will illumine the whole world.

There cannot be a greater aim for the life of man than to grow by an inner and outer experience till he can live in God, realise his spirit, become divine in knowledge, in will and in the joy of his highest existence.

A seeker of spiritual Truth is like a pilgrim awakened in his wayside inn. He feels the urge of his inmost soul, and embarks boldly on his path. He finds a bond of love with all other spiritual seekers. Thus the Light of Truth flows from person to person and ultimately illumines the human race.

We aspired for the world of Delight and it descended into the hearts of those who were open to the inflow of universal divine Love. Those who are receptive can be surcharged with its light. Through the veil of the thickest darkness our world is being illumined by a supernal Joy.

However, the time is critical. The world can be smashed to pieces by a colossal blunder committed by a group of individuals. But we can fully collaborate with the Divine Force active upon earth, and stabilise the New Spiritual Age of Peace and Harmony. Once we allow the Supramental Light to permeate our mental-vital-physical sheaths, there will remain nothing unattainable by transformed human beings.

Our life is a great adventure. Every day, at every moment, we may have to face a crisis which we will have to meet by a decisive resolution to go forward and continue our spiritual ascension. There is no end to our progression. As we extend our consciousness we begin to live in higher worlds of perfect Beauty which we can bring down to our earthly consciousness and make our surroundings beautiful.

In fact, there is no room for despair. We may go out in the world with a heart full of Divine Love and Light, spreading hope and courage everywhere.

It is our sacred responsibility to establish the New World that is already born upon earth.

Why should we live as bond-slaves of the ignorant lower Nature, when intrinsically we are free and divine?

Spirituality is nothing else than going deeply within into the Inner Sanctuary and becoming free from all earthly burdens. Entering into deep meditation our mind becomes silent and no noise or confusion can then assail us. The Goddess of Love is guiding our steps and her splendours are radiating through our hearts.

The time has come when all miseries and sufferings must disappear from earth for ever. The God-Power is within us, why not unfold it? The Cosmic Spirit is never inactive; it is lifting humanity away to higher and higher stages.

Yes, we are full of golden expectations, and we are helping the process of super-humanising humanity. The deepest subconscious world is to be conquered now by the force of the Spirit. The inner peace has to manifest. Then we learn to live in the unalloyed psychic delight.

SAILLEN ROY

TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1979)

CHAPTER II

Sparks of Surrender

(3)

I RECALL a line from the Rigveda read sometime ago: "The well of honey is covered by the rock."¹ From time to time a prayer rose from deep within: "Shall I live to see the day when a stream like the Ganga will burst forth from the rock that blocks the cave?"

I had had so far only once experienced the vision of Ganga. It had been somewhere in the mid-thirties. Sri Aurobindo had remarked about it: "The Ganges is the symbol of the descent of the waters of the Truth and Light."

Three decades later, on the night of 28 July 1965, I had another vision-experience. "The iron doors that seemed to be ever closed"² opened and I felt myself going in and in, but before I could reach its depth the eyes opened.

It is difficult to convey, except to those who know, how hard one has to battle to get even a ray of light amid the universal darkness. The above and other experiences are mere fragments, hence difficult to present in their logical sequence. Furthermore, the present work is not for those whose strength is like a "tower to reach the heavenly heights." Those who are well advanced on the scale of evolution may not have to pass through such bitter struggle. From now on, while the soul asked for a deeper joy, the resistance grew more fierce.

I come to the most important aspect of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Whenever concentration in the heart was profound I tried hard to go in but it seemed a rock was there at its cave-entrance. All my attempts to get in with the help of the Mother's name proved futile as if I was trying to make a hole in the rock by constant strokes on the head of a nail. This too was not possible when the heart refused to bear the hammering.

Hence the insistence, in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, upon the working of the Divine Force. Darkness cannot be removed by darkness. Egoistic efforts however great cannot transform it, for their power is very limited. Every now and then one finds oneself spent or overpowered by black inertia. Mine is yet a call, a prayer and not a happy realisation. There can be no trace of transformation till the "tortured cells" are freed and make an offering of themselves.

¹ Rig Veda, 2.24 4.

² *Savitri*, Part II, B VII. C.2, p. 119.

The Yoga and Its Objects was the only book that was popular in the early thirties among us, the initiated.

The following lines that impressed me the most in those days are still fresh in my mind: "If this attitude of perfect self-surrender can be even imperfectly established, all necessity of yogic *Kriya* inevitably ceases."¹

Experiences by themselves were not a guarantee, an insurance, that they would lead to the Divine Fulfilment. They simply demonstrated that the *ādhāra* was getting ready for the reception of the Divine in its members. They "must culminate in an integral self-giving...absolute surrender."²

There are three well-marked stages of the transition period. In the first the individual prepares himself for the reception of the Divine.³ "In the second... there will supervene an increasing purified and vigilant passivity, a more and more luminous divine response to the Divine Force... In the last period there is no effort at all, no set method, no fixed sadhana; the place of endeavour and tapasya will be taken by a natural, simple, powerful and happy disclosing of the flower of the Divine out of the bud of a purified and perfected terrestrial nature."⁴

A keen eye can clearly mark the evolution of one's sadhana, the opening of the *ādhāra* petal by petal. This silent opening "is the unmistakable sign that the self-concentration has not only been accepted in principle but is fulfilled in act and power. The Supreme has laid his luminous hand upon a chosen human vessel."⁵

This stage is yet beyond my ken. I have been trying hard to have myself established in the second but the nature is not yet fully ripe for the turn-over. The second stage had begun almost from the start but there were long gaps, many ups and downs, I cannot claim the period of effort is over. The whole being has not yet been captured by the Divine. Not even the will has awakened for total conversion. The resistance is still stiff and stubborn

The following incident may give some idea about the nature of the resistance. Once, a little before dawn, I found myself swimming, as it were, in a sea of darkness. How long I do not remember. When I had the impression of night within, it was dawn and daylight outside. At another time when all was sunk in the darkness of the night there was illumination within.

I don't know to what extent this experience of mine has a link with the following sloka of the Gita (2.69):

Yā miśā sarvabhūtānām tasyām jāgarti sañyamī

In the night which is darkness to all creatures, the godward soul is awake...⁶

One dull monotonous night, by the power of the Mother's name I found myself climbing down and down, inch by inch as if into "a tunnel dug in a rock"⁷ In that deep darkness I found myself small like a fly.

Another instance. Since the beginning of the year 1979, from time to time I

¹ Cent. Edition, Vol 16, p. 413.

² *The Synthesis of Yoga*, 1965, p. 77

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p 78

⁷ Cent Vol 8, p 84

have been observing the passing of the Force from the forehead to the occiput and from the navel to the waist but the entire heart-centre remains untouched. There were occasions when I felt clearly the working of the Mother's Force in the rear part of the inner heart and in the frontal but nothing, absolutely nothing in between. There stood an impenetrable, an unsurmountable wall.

When something unexpected happens, it fills the heart with a new kind of joy. So was the case when a reference about the word "wall" was found in *The Life Divine* and in *On Yoga II, Tome II*. On May 8, 1979 I found myself reading *The Life Divine* at night in a dream and saying, "This is to be quoted, that is to be quoted", but not even one line could be retained next morning.

One has to be "delivered from the darkness and stubbornness of the tamasic inertia, the turbidities and turbulences and impurities of the rajasic passion...the enlightened rigidities and sattwic limitations of constructed equilibrium which are the character of the Ignorance."¹

"Most people live in their ordinary outer ignorant personality which does not easily open to the Divine, but there is an inner being within them of which they do not know, which can easily open to the Truth and the Light. But there is a wall which divides them from it, a wall of obscurity and unconsciousness."²

"A unification of the entire being by a breaking down of the wall between the inner and outer nature"³ is a 'must'.... "It would be chimerical to hope that the supreme truth-consciousness can establish itself in the narrow formulation of our surface mind and heart and life..." All the inner centres must have burst open and released into action...before (one) can be capable of a change."⁴

What can one hope to gain when the wall breaks? The answer is:

... "as the walls of the inner separation break down, the inner light gets through, the inner fire burns in the heart...the soul begins to unveil itself, the psychic personality reaches its full stature.... A guidance, a governance begins from within which exposes every movement to the light of Truth, repels what is false, obscure,every region of the being,...even the most concealed...is lighted up with the unerring psychic light.

"This is the first result, but the second is a free inflow of all kinds of spiritual experiences, experience of the Self, experience of the Ishwara and the Divine Shakti, experience of cosmic consciousness, a direct touch with cosmic forces...illuminations of the mind by knowledge, illuminations of the heart by love and devotion and spiritual joy and ecstasy, illuminations of the sense and body by higher experience...."⁵

"To be effective" says the Mother, "prayers must come from the heart, straight, without passing through the head." Once some prayer surged up from the adoring heart. But a contrary voice argued, "Where was the need for prayer? The Mother was doing all for you."

¹ *Savitri*, Part II, B. VII, C 5, p. 165.

³ *On Yoga II*, Tome II, p. 42.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 807-8.

² *The Life Divine*, American Ed., p. 807.

⁴ *The Life Divine*, p. 827.

A part of me felt sad and muttered, "Such a fine flow of devotion was disturbed. If there is no call from below, how can there be any response from above?" The mind got confounded.

Then the heart spoke direct to the Mother: "My whole wish is to do thy bidding. I entreat thee, show me the way, give me the strength to break down all inner resistances and overcome every obstacle. Reduce me to nothing so that nothing in me remains to claim for the ego." The more the earnestness in the prayer, the deeper grew the concentration in the heart. For a time it appeared that "there was no wall severing the mind from the soul,"¹ making me heave a sigh of relief. Then my sleeping body saw a luminous sky with no trace of my physical existence except a feeling of utter dedication. It may be noted here that though the barrier between the outer and inner was broken I was not allowed to enter the "rock-hewn door".²

Regarding the luminous sky, just for a moment let us shift our attention back to October 10, 1938. At the time I had written: "All of a sudden my consciousness rose tremendously high into the sky and there I saw a vastness full of white light. The outer sky seemed to be very limited in comparison to that vastness. This was followed by the luminous space and shining sky seen under different forms." In reply Sri Aurobindo remarked: "It was probably an ascent to one of the higher planes (spiritual mental)."

Once I heard distinctly this sentence: "You are possessed by the Mother's Force and it is her force that is doing the sadhana." When I referred this to Sri Aurobindo he observed: "Yes. It is certainly the Mother's Force that is doing the sadhana." I wrote: "In fact, I do nothing. I simply pray and aspire. No sooner do I feel the action of the Mother's Force than I leave myself entirely in its charge." "That is very good," was Sri Aurobindo's illuminating reply.

I have not yet reached the height when there is a spontaneous acceptance of the Divine Will in everything, in all happenings elevating or repulsive, so that I remain calm whether things happen this way or that way.

Something was done without allowing me to sense the least scent of it. I felt badly hurt—a great injustice was done to me. No part in me was willing to take it lying down. The Mother never imposed anything on us. There rose a storm of protest within me.

This made the spiritual part in me very unhappy: "the heart's questioning inner voice"³ asked: "Where is the difference between you and those who hunger for power? Is this the way of surrender?" I stood aghast.... It seemed impossible to make the part that kept me "bound to the chains of earthly ignorance"⁴ change its attitude. But I decided to side with the light and forced myself to submit. Harmony first. Personal prestige afterwards.

When the storm in the tea-cup subsided I felt I had needed this knock straight on my nose, or else the door of surrender would have remained barred by my

¹ *Savitri*, Part II, B. IV, C I.

² *Ibid.*, B. VII, C 5.

³ *Ibid.*, B. VII, C 4, p. 155.

⁴ *Ibid.*, B. VII, C. 5, p. 156.

vanity and would have never opened. Sri Aurobindo admonishes: "If you refuse to become a docile, surrendered servant of the Divine, it means that you will remain a slave of your egoism, your vanity..."¹

It was a blunt assault on my ego. But it prepared me for the day I lived for. Egoism must melt in surrender. It was from this day that there glittered the first ray of surrender. In order to understand the importance of this day I shall have to give some more details.

My seeking for surrender had begun in 1930—two years before my joining the Ashram. The one question that was on my lips was: "What is surrender? What does it signify? How to surrender oneself? What are the signs of feeling oneself surrendered?" No amount of reading quenched the thirst of the soul. I kept on the quest for forty-nine years. Its answer I found in 1979.

It was the eve of the April Darshan Day. I was seated in the open balcony enjoying my hours of leisure. After a hot day, the evening appeared cool and pleasant. The mind was under the spell of the shining words of the Mother regarding surrender. All of a sudden it turned out to be a living experience. My being remained no more in a state of yearning. I seemed to have achieved what I had hungered to know.

It filled the yearning heart with heaven's fire.² To think that with one experience all is achieved is to indulge in a day-dream. It was only a beginning, yet what was gained was very precious.

Touches, vibrations of surrender are still rare because there is no wholesale turning. Desires, cravings have not yet been replaced by a passion for the Divine—a seeker must be consumed by one passion. Till then "the pilgrim of the inner world"³ cannot reach a halting-place.

When there shines even a spark of surrender all sense of clash between effort and self-giving automatically drops. A bee goes on humming all round but the moment it finds a flower all quest ceases. When the heart is swayed by the sweet fragrance of surrender, whatever the situation one refuses to be unduly perturbed. There is no greater joy than to resign oneself to the Divine Will. No hankering for anything. No impatience. Utter reliance. One feels "freed from all afflictions". Suffering no more remains suffering.

For a real change this spirit of surrender has to be brought and maintained in the field of life. In this context one of the Mother's injunctions is: "The most important surrender is the surrender of your character, your way of being, so that it may change. If you do not surrender your very own nature, never will this nature change. It is this that is most important." Elaborating the point, the Mother exhorted: "... you have a special way of looking at life and expecting from it certain things—well, it is this you must surrender... your whole way of being you must offer—offer by opening it, making it as receptive as possible so that the divine consciousness which sees how you ought to be may act directly and change all these movements into movements

¹ *Practical Guide* (1965 ed.), p. 287.

² *Savitri*, II, B VII, C 4, p. 160.

³ *Ibid.*, B. VII, C. 3, p. 140.

more true, more in keeping with your real truth.”¹

This shows how difficult is detailed surrender and it is here that everybody stumbles. Once Sri Aurobindo wrote that one has to keep aside what one wants and do only what the Divine wants. But how to know the Divine Will? At every step one has to discriminate whether one is supported or contradicted. To put it in the Mother’s words: “If you are truly surrendered to the Divine, in the right manner and totally, then at every moment you will be what you ought to be, you will do what you ought to do, you will know what you ought to know. But for that you should have transcended all the limitations of the ego.”²

For various reasons I had stopped Pranayama and the gymnasium for more than two months. In order to keep the body fit I started sea-bathing and breathing exercises. On the very first day there came to the ear a voice: “Why insistence on personal effort again?” Wherefrom rang this warning bell? Says Sri Aurobindo: “Very often in the sadhana one feels the inner being speaking to the outer or the mind or higher vital speaking to the lower so as to enlighten it.”³

However, passive surrender must not be allowed to have the upper hand. I started Pranayama. I found that if I pumped out all air, expunged it from every part of the body, not only does holding out the breath (*Bahiya Kumbak*) become easy but also holding in the breath does not cause much strain. The very first day I succeeded in retaining the breath for twelve minutes and felt it fixed at the top of the body. There remained no sense of the head, only light existed instead. Next day it caused a burning sensation. But a new kind of strength was felt even in the lower parts of the body. Besides this, the head looked like an empty room. But I could not maintain this height during working hours.

Here I got myself into a bad fix. I was told the capacity to withhold breath to such a length of time indicated that the nerves and tissues were getting ready and that it would earn me a place among the *siddhas*. This frightened me. My life was for service, not *siddhi*. If for self-acquisition I depend entirely on personal effort, how can the faculty of surrender find a chance to develop?

According to the Mother: “There are two paths of Yoga, one of tapasya and the other of surrender. The path of tapasya is arduous. Here you rely solely upon yourself, you proceed by your own strength. You ascend and achieve according to the measure of your force. There is always the danger of falling down. And once you fall, you lie broken in the abyss and there is hardly a remedy. The other path, the path of surrender is safe and sure... And surrender means giving up all that.”

Personal effort might generate intensity but will entail too much reliance on oneself. Then how could I reach the third stage? How could there be the sunshine of surrender in my life? How could the onerous burden of sadhana pass into the Divine Hands? The secret of success in Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga lies in the gradual replacement of one’s effort by the Divine Force.

¹ The Mother Cent. Vol. IV, pp. 372-74

² *Practical Guide*, p. 173.

³ *On Yoga II*, Tome II, p. 137.

On Sunday May 13, 1979 the sky had poured its wealth upon the poor earth lavishly. Was it ordained that a precious jewel will be added to my spiritual wealth? Past habits die hard. There rose a desire to pray. Quick came a voice: "No prayer. The Divine has given you much more than you deserve." My whole being welcomed the idea. This roused a sweet feeling of surrender; gradually its vibration spread to all the members of the body. The portion above the neck remained adamant. Perhaps under the instigation of the ego it preferred to keep itself aloof. That day it was the body that dominated the scene. Every day something different is added. What was the highest peak on one day was excelled by something else on the next. Words fail to convey the correct picture of what was felt that day for a few hours. All along I remained fully conscious of this blissful state, which turned this earth into heaven for me.

(To be continued)

SPELLING REFORM

GEORGE Bernard Shaw, among others, urged spelling reform in English. He suggested that one letter be altered or deleted each year, thus giving the populace time to absorb the change. In a letter to *The Economist*, London, some time ago, M. J. Shields took up the idea of this progressive orthographical economy and wrote:

"For example in Year 1 that useless letter 'c' would be dropped to be replaced by either 'k' or 's', and likewise 'x' would no longer be part of the alphabet. The only case in which 'c' would be retained would be the 'ch' formation, which will be dealt with later. Year 2 might well reform 'w' spelling, so that 'which' and 'one' would take the same konsonant, while Year 3 might well abolish 'y' replacing it with 'i', and Year 4 might fix the 'g-j' anomaly once and for all.

"Generally, then, the improvement would continue year by year, with Year 5 doing away with useless double konsonants, and Years 6-12 modifying vowels and the remaining voiced and unvoiced konsonants. By Year 15 or so it would finally be possible to make use of the redundant letters 'c' 'y' and 'x'—by now just a memory in the main and would disappear—thus leaving 'ch' 'sh' and 'th' respectively.

"Finally, then, after some 20 years of orthographic reform, we would have a logical, coherent spelling in use throughout the English-speaking world. However, since we have, we have Airy, and we have Skots du not speak English, they would have to have a spelling suited to their own language. They would, however, be able to learn English as a second language et skool!—Jorz feixful, M. J. Yilz."

(Adapted from *Reader's Digest*, October 1971, p. 120)

SNAKE-BITES AND SUPERSTITIONS

**A TALK BROADCAST OVER AIR PONDICHERRY
ON 20 MAY 1979 AT 8 P.M.**

IN A country such as ours, steeped in superstition, the snake and its bite have a share of mystery. The snake is all the more worshipped because it is feared. In early times, the bite of a snake seemed the epitome of a sudden blow of fate, or anger of the gods. Even today, snake bites arouse a feeling of fatalism and superstitious fear in remote villages, where the people tend to surround that reptile with an aura of divinity, smearing its holes with saffron and vermilion, turning them into mini-temples, and offering them milk and eggs.

With such credulity prevailing, quack doctors and remedy-men have made their fame and fortune, catering to snake-bite cases with a variety of strange cures, and with varying degrees of success...or failure!

When one is actually bitten by a snake, whether venomous or not, the more sceptical heads immediately for the hospital or dispensary, but his superstition-bound counterpart in the village very often falls a victim to quack doctors.

We must nevertheless acknowledge that all country remedy-men are not quack doctors as we sometimes derisively call them, and they do have to their credit some miraculous cures.

More often, the miracle occurs with the early administration of the leaves of *Polygala Glabra* known in Tamil as Siriananguy; they have to be chewed until the juice tastes bitter, which indicates that the poison has been eliminated from the system. There is also another variety of the same plant known as Periananguy which is equally effective. As in the villages around Pondicherry this remedy is widely known, it would be a good plan to spread the cultivation of this most useful antidote in all these areas for immediate use whenever required.

We also have another powerful antidote known in Latin as *Crotalaria Laburnifolia*, in Sanskrit as Sukanasa, and as either Killimuku Konai or Pilli Neigham Konai in Tamil. This shrub grows at Pichavaram, in the vicinity of Chidambaram, and between 200 to 300 of its seeds are to be made into a paste; some of it is to be applied over the wound, and the rest diluted in water and taken in one or two doses. This seed also cures scorpion-sting almost instantly. I suggest the Agricultural Department should collect these seeds and offer them to the villagers who could grow them wherever possible, as Sukanasa is more powerful and more effective as an antidote than the locally known Siriananguy and Periananguy. It is said to be useful also in the treatment of eczema, piles and rat-bite, and it would be desirable to carry out investigation of its curative value.

Another very interesting remedy is the Snake Stone, widely used in Kerala, and prepared by the Reverend Father Antoninus who sells it. All that one has to do is to make a small incision at the seat of the bite, extract some blood, wash the wound,

and apply 2 or 3 stones over it. These have to be left in position until they fall off, when the poison is eliminated. These stones are also manufactured in Germany and Belgium.

In Homoeopathy, the same result is obtained with a few drops of Sizyrinchium in a glassful of water, taken at intervals, and the same drug applied over the wound. We also have the tincture of Euphorbia Polycarpa known in Homoeopathy as Golondrina which is an antidote to snake-poison. Besides, its use also renders the body immune to the influence of snake-venom, and thus acts as a prophylactic.

In Allopathy we have the most effective and widely used anti-venin injection, a vaccine prepared from snake-venom; this remedy ought to be widely stocked in all village hospitals and dispensaries in order to be immediately available in an emergency.

But, perhaps, the most controversial, yet also the most stupendous form of treatment is by mantra.

First, what is a mantra?

It is a rhythmic vibratory chant muttered audibly or inaudibly, and its faultless pronouncing results in producing the necessary cosmic vibrations, for marvellous good or evil, according to the intention of the operator.

The primary building blocks of solid matter being atoms, which are themselves complex bodies, it is evident that vibration is the life of the Universe, and therefore every single thing in the Universe is in perpetual vibratory motion. In Sanskrit, there is also a saying: "Amantram Aksharam Nastey", meaning: "There is not a single letter of the alphabet which is not a cosmic force".

This having been said, I must add that people have often questioned me, with an incredulous and sarcastic smile, whether I can really cure snake-bite only by mantra, and without any drugs.

To this query, I can give the most categorical and positive answer that such a thing is not only feasible, but is almost daily practised by me with the most brilliant and convincing results.

I have unimpeachable evidence in support of my contention, and my *modus operandi* is as follows:

When I receive information about a snake-bite case over Phone No. 426, I concentrate my mind and chant a Vedic mantra in a certain prescribed rhythm, and usually, within half an hour, the victim recovers, wherever he may be, and however serious his condition may have been.

Neither do I have to see the victim, his name alone being sufficient to direct the healing vibrations onto him; but, needless to say, the most elementary precaution required for the success of the operation is to communicate the name of the victim with the minimum delay. I have been informed by an eye-witness that once a victim in a very critical condition did recover after my intervention in spite of delay.

I have been practising snake-bite healing for the past several years with so much success that I am fully convinced that failure is virtually impossible when the practising is disinterested and follows certain set rigid rules, and also when one is informed

as early as possible after the accident.

I was initiated and trained into this science by the well-known snake-bite healer Sri Pamula Narasiah of Andhra Pradesh, who was a Station Master on the former Madras and Southern Murrathas Railways during the British Raj.

In those days, priority was given to telegrams to my guru, and the moment a messenger went to a Telegraph Office stating: "SNAKE BITE CASE", the standing order to the Department throughout India was that all transmission should cease, and priority given to the snake-bite telegram to Pamula Narasiah.

I met my guru in 1943 in strange but convincing circumstances. I was, at that time, residing in Bangalore with a relative, a telegraphist by profession, who was bitten by his own pet cobra. Within minutes, a telegraphic message was sent out to Sri Pamula Narasiah and, in a short time, my relative recovered from the frightful effects of cobra venom, without having received any physical form of treatment.

A few days later, as he wanted to thank Sri Pamula Narasiah in person, we both proceeded to Pole Reddipalayam Station on the Madras-Vijayavada Section of the M. & S. M. Railways.

We met the kindly gentleman there, who, apart from carrying out his Official Duties, attended to healing Jaundice and Diabetes also by mantra, besides advising simple remedies for other ailments to the numerous patients who crowded in the Third Class Waiting Hall just to see him.

As curing by mantra, from a distance and without drugs, is a proven fact, at least to those who have either benefitted by such intervention or have witnessed it, I must accept my guru's teachings that the utterance of Vedic mantras brings into play powerful cosmic forces, provided they are used without distortion and one follows certain rigid rules, failing which the result would be utter failure, and the operator would have only himself to blame in such an event.

I may add that my guru warned me against making an indiscriminate use of these forces for trivial purposes; they were to be used exclusively for the common good and to alleviate human suffering.

L. MONNIER

References and corroborative evidence for this talk were drawn from .

1. "The Science of Cosmic Ray Therapy or Teletherapy" by B Bhattacharya, available at the following address .

Dr A. K. Bhattacharya,
Shastri Villa,
Naihati-743 165 West Bengal.

2. "Traitement à distance par radiations",
3. "Premiers pas en radiesthésie thérapeutique",
4. "Radiation des formes et cancer" — by Enel

(By permission of AIR Pondicherry)

EXCERPTS FROM A KASHMIR DIARY

In the Gita when Sri Krishna said, "Amongst the luminous I am the Sun", and made other self-revelations, he forgot to say, "Amongst the hill-resorts, I am Kashmir."

*

I walk on the road lined by huge Chinar trees. The sun is shining and welcome. I am alone and wonderfully "not-alone". I smile at everyone and everything my eyes or ears or nostrils meet. I shout once in a while, like a child wanting to hear the echo of its voice. Most respond by returning the smile, especially the children—and all that seem to be in tune with them: the flowers, the trees, the birds. I think of the problem of communication and discover that the main problem is that one does not know what one wants to communicate.

The complexion of all the children and boys and girls around is not chalky white but like a peach, and the skin smooth. Somehow happiness is all about—even though the poor are really poor—the exploited—and everyone tries their best to exploit the tourist. There is fun in being knowingly exploited.

The school children from a nearby village are having a picnic. They are in maroon uniforms and have come with stoves and food baskets. Laughter and beauty are at play everywhere.

*

Pahelgaon is a small village in the Lidder valley with its tourist complex and barely 2000 population, and one street. The Lidder river is on one side, at the base of a mountain and is constantly gurgling and laughing and singing; there is the gleaming snow on the peaks and slopes of the mountains on all sides, and the grayish snow in the "nallas" and crevices of the mountains; there is music in the air, the river sings and so does the wind driving the fog and the clouds—therein is the sound of waterfalls, the beat of horses' hoofs and the chirps of mynahs, and much else I have not known. There is the green undulating curtain of pines on the mountainside and the queue of trees on the top.

I am sitting on the first floor veranda of Pahelgaon Club with the big bay-windows—without glass—opening out on all the vistas of the valley and the mountains beyond, with the river on my right. The chill breeze evokes a sweet shiver in the thighs and hands and the chest, the skin of my hands is shrunk with cold while the sun is peeping through the inverted triangle of clouds on the horizon in front with promises of the Divine Love, Light and Power descending. There are six lone birds in the mid-sky flying north-west, they come close to each other—realise that they are no more alone—and part again.

All of a sudden the wind is stilled and a veil of fog descends and pervades every-

thing. The beauty is enhanced and I sit with cold feet and colder hands warming my insides in the beauty—"Shivam-Sundaram."

*

We return from Pahelgaon. We leave at noon finding a taxi that is soon to return alone—providentially. We cross a quaint wooden bridge across the river and then the road climbs and twists and winds around the mountains as if caressing it—a small bee courting a giant flower. A Hindi song comes to my lips saying, "These valleys and greeneries are my upper cloth and these roads my arms; wherever you will go, you will find me there."

The beautiful panorama, the river far deep below, the mountain streams, the pine forests, the roads seen in the distance—to the left and right and below snaking around; and I soared—so softly, so easily that I did not know when; I soared into regions where everything is Ananda and love and there is a feeling of a huge oneness with simultaneous awareness of one's individual self immersed therein. I softly whisper to my companion "Do you feel it? Is this Ananda infectious?" She nods, "Yes." I do not know when I enter this realm and when I leave it—only that those moments have been wonderful and memorable. I want to recapture them again and again and I catch the tail, so to say; there is no regret that I can not relive "it" at will—there is a continuing quiet peace and a mellow Ananda even now as I put pen to paper.

While reclining in the Shikara I think of Wu Wei, this floating on the waters in the Shikara is full of peace and I do not want to leave. And part of that peace accompanies me. P.

"After all, what is God An eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden"

SRI AUROBINDO

A SECOND SEMINAR AT TAPOGIRI

September 28, 29, 30, 1979

Subject The Sadhana of Childlikeness

September is a beautiful month on the hills. This year is the International Year of the Child, and children are very much in our mind. Childlikeness is a spiritual ideal too. At the June Seminar of Tapogiri it was felt that it would be nice to have another Seminar in September connected with the child. Hence this invitation. All interested are welcome.

Papers in hand.

- (1) The Adorable Child—a Compilation from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother
- (2) Ah, to be a Child with the Children!—Indra Sen
- (3) The Child and the Future of Man—a Consensus accepted at a World Union session

P.N. Tapogiri
Tapogiri, Ramgarh Talla (N.T) 263 158

INDIAN LIFE IN ENGLISH WRITINGS

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1979)

PART I: Reliving the Days Gone By (contd.)

WE take a leap of about seventy years of immense change in both India and the world, and come to our next book—one about the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre at Amritsar on 13 April 1919.

The book in question, *An Error of Judgement* by Stanley Wolpert, was not a book in the line of Masters or Stuart, where there were many irrelevant topics and sometimes grossly erroneous material.

Wolpert had gone to the sources, namely the Report of the Commission of Enquiry by Lord Hunter as well as an independent commission instituted by Gandhi together with other writings. Except for minor points, the book was factual. The author apparently had taken great pains to produce it and himself had adopted an unbiased attitude, so foreign to the British character at the time. He wrote in the Preface: "The Amritsar "disturbances" described in the book are drawn as accurately as possible from the record of history, which is to say, that they actually happened. Amritsar itself is a real city in the Punjab, the name literally means "Nectar of Immortality". The Jallianwalla Bagh, since Indian independence from British rule a national shrine, is a real place. This book's major characters all actually lived in British India in Anno Domini 1919; and that April many of them died." (*An Error of Judgement* published by Peter Davies, London, 1971)

Dr. Satyapal, son of a humble carpenter who rose to eminence due to his own merit, securing a foreign medical degree, had for friend the barrister Saifuddin Kitchlew. He was a happy householder with wife and two young children. He had studied, amongst others, Rehill, one of the Deputy Commissioners of Amritsar. Satyapal and Kitchlew were extremely popular figures in the city—the living emblems of Hindu-Muslim unity. Dr. Satyapal was member of the Aryasamaj where he was reported to have delivered some inflammatory speeches.

Kitchlew was an ardent follower of Gandhi and Gandhian principles long before the Muslim League came into existence, fanned by the winds of British diplomacy, which was to generate hatred and mutual distrust.

This unity the authorities regarded as seditious, because it went against their plans.

On 9 April, these two friends organised a vast mass rally of one hundred thousand Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs on the occasion of *Ram Naumi*. It was a peaceful procession.

Next day both Dr. Satyapal and Kitchlew received two notes from Irving, the Commissioner of Amritsar, asking them to pay a visit to him at ten in the morning.

The two friends were deliberating if at all they should accept the appointment, when a couple of young friends, Maqbool and Hansraj, joined them. Maqbool was a lawyer, following his parental profession. Hansraj was the son of a woman of the red-light district, with father unknown. He was fair almost like a European. He was a dedicated social worker.

Hansraj was openly suspicious of Irving's request. It was a trap, he said. To which Maqbool added, referring to Irving and to the last evening's procession, 'I watched him there on the balcony of National Bank when the volunteers marched, clapping their hands and shouting "Victory to Gandhi! Victory to Kitchlew! Victory to Satyapal!" I will tell you something—his face looked blacker than mine.' (*Ibid.*, p. 27)

Kitchlew's was a credulous nature. His three years' stay at Cambridge had given him an insight into the British character. But he was yet to learn what species of men came to India as rulers.

Anyway, all the four friends went to the civil lines. But Hansraj and Maqbool had to wait in the foyer while the other two entered Irving's office.

Here Miles, the Commissioner of Police, his assistant and Irving were present. The Police chief read out a para from the Defence of India rules, enacted in 1912, concluding that the two friends would have to be transported out of Amritsar for what he called 'their own security'. This was the first error of judgement, which had a long and deadly reaction.

Both the friends protested against being whisked away by the back-door like this.

After some arguments, they were permitted to write a note in English to Maqbool stating that they were being transported outside Amritsar 'in the interest of public safety'.

Then they were led out by a side-entrance into a waiting car, which drove them to Dharmashala, about a hundred miles north-east of Amritsar.

On receiving the note, both Hansraj and Maqbool's worst apprehensions were confirmed. They were now certain that their friends were transported to be murdered.

And this they told to the crowd on their way back. Commotion took place, then pandemonium. Mrs. Kitchlew, distraught, considered herself a widow. Satyapal's old father was beside himself with grief.

Now a huge crowd surged out of the city bound for the civil lines to avenge the assumed murders of its two beloved leaders.

Already Miles, witnessing the large procession on 9 April, had planned out his course of action in case of emergency. He picketed the bridge between the city and the civil lines—this was step number one. The next was evacuating the British residents to the fort and the last proclaiming a curfew. Perhaps none of these would have been needed if Satyapal and Kitchlew had been transported secretly.

Seeing the large crowd surging towards the civil lines, Irving ordered his

mounted guards to rush to the spot and open fire.

The firing killed a number of persons including an old oilman and Hari, a waif brought up in the temple. Maqbool, present among the throng, waved his white handkerchief, as a request for cease-fire. This request was not heeded, and firing continued. The mob retreated. This was the third chain reaction of the first wrong move.

The mob, interrupted in the civil lines, rushed now towards the National Bank and the City Bank, controlled by the British. The National Bank was saved by the prompt action of Sub-Inspector Ashraf Khan. But the City Bank could not be saved. The mob smashed the panes and doors, killed the European Bank manager and his assistant. Then they looted the premises and set fire to the building. This act had nothing to do with Kitchlew or Satyapal's men but with some unsocial elements who took advantage of unsettled conditions and took recourse to murderous activities. The British, however, mistook these acts to be generating from one source.

Hansraj and his men were helping the wounded and they were searching for some place to administer medical care to the hapless men. The nearest was the Women's Hospital whose matron was Mrs. Easden. She not only refused help but abused the Indians to her heart's content.

Furious, Hansraj chased her to the roof, where the matron hid herself within an unused coffin and saved herself. Hansraj missed the trail and by mistake chased another missionary Miss Marcella Sherwood, who was cycling down the road. She got a heavy beating, but on recognition that she was not the quarry they abandoned her half-dead.

The number of Europeans killed was now six.

Now Miles's second course of action came into force. Colonel Henry Smith evacuated the European residents—the children from the school, the nursing sisters from the hospital and businessmen from their offices and took them to the fort. The number was about a hundred and fifty. There were not enough necessary amenities here: beds, food and toilets.

The telephone and telegraph lines between Amritsar and Lahore were cut. So an important officer was despatched to Lahore with information about Amritsar (the killing of six Europeans meant to the authorities a very grave situation). Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the governor, in turn conveyed the message to the Viceroy, then residing in Simla.

A trainful of Gurkhas, Baluchis and white soldiers arrived from Jullundar which revived hope in the authorities.

Maqbool approached Miles and Irving, requesting permission to bury the Muslim dead outside the city-gate. The permission was granted after a great deal of abuse.

In spite of the strong injunction, a large crowd followed the biers, without any untoward occurrences.

Ashraf Khan was rudely summoned and Irving demanded the list of suspects within twenty-four hours. The sub-inspector did maintain such a list; many names in it were of those he bore grudge against, or simply disliked. Among the suspects

were Bugga and one-armed Rutto, who bought off the officer by bribing him heavily.

Hansraj's mother he approached for information about Hansraj, who was among the suspects. The Sub-Inspector was informed that Hansraj had been absent for two days. The old woman pleaded with tears in her eyes to save her son, a request he kept in mind till the end.

In the city, which was in a state of strike, with all the business closed, opinion was divided. Dhuni Chand and Todar Mall, the merchants, were of the opinion that the *hartal* should terminate, while Maqbool and Hansraj maintained that, unless the Maulana (Kitchlew) was released along with Satyapal and safely returned to them, the strike should continue. Some, like Bashir Khan, the headmaster, considered the whole project a sheer folly on the part of the followers of Gandhi. Even Sir Kanhaiyalal, the doyen of the Amritsar bar, a respected and wealthy resident of the civil lines area, reprimanded Maqbool for all his actions.

The movement of unrest spread to Kasur and Taran as well. The authorities swore that all the Indians were savages who were unfit to rule themselves. They viewed the Indians' claim for freedom as seditious, because it was against British interest. They forgot the great Indians who in the past had made the country great.

Finding no other way to curb the people, Miles and Irving decided to cut off the water supply and electricity links.

In another part of the city, the people decided to hold a meeting on the 13th at Jallianwala Bagh to find a solution to the crisis. This was the day of the cattle-fair, the annual 'Baishakhi' day when thousands of villagers would flock to the city and gather in this garden.

Ashraf Khan, followed by a batch of soldiers announced that none was to go out of the city or come in after 8 p.m. Furthermore, the assembly of more than four persons was declared illegal.

People did not pay heed to the declaration, treating it as a joke, or ignoring it altogether. The major part of the citizens was not even aware of such a declaration.

As determined earlier, the electricity and water were cut. This gave rise to impossible rumours: the appearance of plague, the fall of Lahore or even of Delhi.

Next day was April 13. Villagers from all around Amritsar converged upon it, then poured into Jallianwala Bagh. Some of the villagers had come from a long way off, as far as twenty kilometres or more, bringing with them their day's supply of food. Two such were Sunderdas and his ten-year-old son Mohan.

Dyer, a Brigadier-General, who hated Indians like poison, now came to the fore. He was a frustrated man. His private life was unhappy. He was vindictive by nature. His frustration and private misfortune augmented his vindictiveness. He superseded Irving by force and had a hot exchange of words with Miles regarding the state of affairs. Although no state of emergency was formally declared, he as the military authority overstepped civil rights and illegally took charge of the situation.

He was hoping that the people would not heed his declarations so that he could wreak his vengeance on them. He considered Amritsar at war with the Crown, and

he acted accordingly.

He marched to Jallianwala Bagh with fifty armed and picked Baluchis and Gurkhas, carrying with him machine guns as well. Unfortunately for him and fortunately for the villagers in the Bagh, the armoured car could not pass the narrow gate, the only gate, to the park. He felt sorry for this omission, for apparently he had come prepared for a mass carnage, a real blood-bath for hundreds of innocent victims who were not even aware of the reason for this slaughter.

He stationed himself near the gate, with the intention that none should escape. With bitter animosity he saw a man (it was Hansraj) addressing the crowd with gesticulations.

Dyer barked the order to fire. Fifty guns roared at a time. "Reload and fire, reload and fire in the quickest succession," this was the order. There was instantaneous panic in the crowd. The people tried to dash for the exit only to be mowed down by the rain of lethal bullets.

Maqbool was in the crowd. He first thought it was fire-crackers. Then he considered that perhaps they were firing blank bullets to scare away the people. But he realised his mistake when he was hit in the stomach, then in the chest. He fell, clutched the dust with writhing hands and died, not knowing why he was killed. And, in fifteen minutes, over five hundred persons died with him and over one thousand five hundred wounded filled the green park with blood and fallen bodies.

Dyer was determined. 'He would teach them a moral lesson they would never forget.... It was an onerous duty, a difficult responsibility but one he would not shirk.' (*Ibid.*, p. 212)

He shouted at the soldiers, 'Keep firing! Make the bullets count.' (*Ibid.*, p. 214)

'He hated them. Yet he'd worked all his life to save and protect them.' (*Ibid.*, p. 215)

It was not certain how long the macabre and terrible drama would have continued had not the ammunition been exhausted. The soldiers had fired over one thousand six hundred and fifty rounds of bullets. Dyer gave the order of 'Cease fire!' and quickly sped amid the prostrate throng of dead bodies to his car, then left for Ram Bagh.

Hansraj, when the firing started, jumped into an unused well nearby, to cling to the inner side, till the thing was over.

The firing had changed the man. He realised that it was futile to fight so powerful an enemy. He rushed to the nearest Kotwali and informed Sub-Inspector Ashraf Khan that he would turn a government approver.

Anyway, this was not the end. Dyer inflicted greater punishment on the people of Amritsar. Next day curfew was imposed. There occurred public floggings of persons connected with the uprising. To cap the humiliation, the road where Miss Marcella Sherwood had been attacked was blocked at both ends and people crossing the way were made to move on all fours amid kicks and abuses.

In due course, because of public protest throughout the country a commission

of enquiry was ordered. There was a furious demand for the punishment of Dyer.

The Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, wrote a personal letter to the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Montagu, which ran as follows: 'Amritsar—It was Dyer's prompt action which saved the situation from being infinitely worse.... In these circumstances you will understand why it was that both the Commander-in-Chief and I feel very strongly that an error of judgement, transitory in its consequence, should not bring down upon him a penalty which would be out of proportion to the offence.' (*Ibid.*, frontispiece)

The murder of five hundred innocent and unarmed persons was a trivial and unimportant thing to the British authorities. But killing six Englishmen and attacking one Englishwoman were greater offences which necessitated this mass-carnage. The murders were only *an error of judgement*, whereas transporting secretly two popular leaders, which caused all the disturbance, was a thing *transitory in its consequence*. This was British justice!

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and Pandit Narayan cross-examined Dyer in a special hearing during the enquiry. Many of the questions Dyer failed to answer or evaded or bypassed. One thing came out, it was on the explicit orders of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the governor of the Punjab, that Dyer had dared to commit what he had done, led on by his spiteful nature and frustrated life. Actually Dyer should have been admitted into a mental institution, for such an outrageous act was possible only to an insane individual.

After the hearing, there was a formal dinner where these two eminent Indians were guests of honour. Naturally during dinner the topic came up. Plenty of resentment and ill-feeling ensued, for the Englishmen were supporters of Dyer's actions. They failed to see the terrible wrong done, and they condoned the mass-murders as most natural.

Then Setalvad commented, 'You invited me here this evening to ask our opinions of the testimony we heard to-day. Mine, quite simply, is that the Brigadier, by his own admission, stands convicted of the crime of murder against an unarmed, defenceless, overwhelmingly innocent population and the least we can do is to recommend his immediate dishonourable dismissal from service.' (*Ibid.*, p. 285)

Even Mr. Montagu agreed, 'I cannot admit that any services that Dyer has rendered anywhere can atone for an action of this kind.' (*Ibid.*, frontispiece)

END OF PART I

(*To be continued*)

ROMEN PALIT

TEARS TELL

A SHORT STORY

SUKHEN puffs out a breath of relief. At last the passenger train has come out of the half-darkness of a crowded and big junction. His eyes feast on the beauty of the blue sky and the bright sun and the panorama of gold and green of the paddy fields around.

Alone in a first-class compartment Sukhen craves for a companion, as it is his habit during travel. A short-lived and flitting friendship with a co-traveller is always inviting to him. But, as ill luck will have it, station after station passes by, and yet he gets none, though there is a regular rush in other compartments.

Sukhen gets disgusted at the slow pace and frequent halts of the train and the time it takes to move out. He shrugs his shoulders and leans back in despair. Suddenly a doubt crops up in him whether the train will reach Anantapur in time before dusk or not!

Anantapur, a newly developed township, is absolutely unknown to Sukhen. He has returned from abroad after a number of years, completing his course of study and treatment under a psychiatrist. He is now going to meet his widowed masima (maternal aunt).

He has not informed her about his coming. He wants to give her a pleasant surprise. But now it seems that he is caught in his own trap. To roam about at night in a new place in search of a house without number and street-name will surely not be a pleasant task. All he knows about his masima's address is 'Alok Shikha', Anantapur. The house is named after his cousins Alok and Shikha. 'Alok Shikha' is a fine name indeed for a house. As it means 'the flame of a light' it will surely show him light to reach there. Sukhen gets amused at the thought.

Suddenly a man from a small station steps into his compartment. Sukhen's longing is fulfilled after all, he becomes glad and is about to express his feelings but the man pretends not to see him, stoops down and starts arranging his belongings. Taken aback Sukhen finds nothing else to do than simply to observe the tall stature, the big bald pate and the milk-white silken robe of the stranger.

With a short sigh the man raises his head and wipes off sweat from his head, face, neck and hands. Sitting down opposite Sukhen he lights a cigarette and exhales clouds of smoke. He looks on at them meditatively.

To avoid smoke, forbidden to him by his doctor, Sukhen turns his face away and breathes in fresh air from outside. He remembers the thorough medical check-up with the most up-to-date equipment he underwent for his disease, but still it remains undiagnosed. During its attack he feels a suffocating pain in his stomach, chest and throat but cannot exactly locate the point of its origin. However, recently he was under the treatment of a psychiatrist who declared him cured and asked him to avoid certain things, specially smoke.

"Seem to be new on this route?" Startled, Sukhen looks at the man opposite

him. He is indifferent, as though he were mute and never uttered a word any time.

"Rightly guessed," Sukhen also remarks with the same air of indifference.

"Must be right, travelling on the route for the last ten years," the man's tone gets animated.

"If so, please tell me when the train is expected to reach Anantapur."

"God knows, perhaps He also doesn't know. It's running late already." He becomes meditative again, Sukhen does not know what to say; he remains silent.

"In fact the whim of this wild train is unpredictable."

"Wild?" Sukhen looks with wide open eyes.

"Yes, wild, what else? Listen then..." He tells incidents relating to the train and how once he escaped death only by the grace of God.

Kr-r-r-a-a-ng....., a tremendous jerk and a terrible sound, the train stops even before he can finish speaking. The man turns pale like death and takes some time to utter nervously, "Do you see how correct I am?"

To encourage and pacify him Sukhen observes calmly, "It's an old passenger train, perhaps that is why..."

"Passenger train, yes, but for heaven's sake why should it stop at odd places and in such a manner?" Why, Sukhen also does not know, but remembering the stray talks of his psychiatrist in America he infers that perhaps the man suffers from a death-psychosis.

"I am afraid for hundreds of lives, not only my own. A train accident is disastrous." Sukhen gets stupefied at the man's casual statement. He peeps through the window to ascertain the cause of the stoppage, but instead of ascertaining it he exclaims happily, "Oh, how beautiful! Please come this side and look at those buildings at the foot of the wooded hills."

"I have already seen, now mark that sky-coloured building nearby. Doesn't it express a simple but refined taste and sense of beauty?"

"Jewel, don't go, stop, listen, please let go that poor little thing..." A smart young girl comes out in the garden in front of the building following a big dog, which, in its turn, chases a cat. Her voice floats and her wave-like curly hair flutters in the air. But her renewed words of entreaty sink under the hussing of the locomotive and the rattling of wheels. The train starts.

Sukhen feels empty within, a prelude to an attack of his old malady. He strives to resist but then crumples in pain and covers his face with the newspaper in his hand.

"What's the matter with you? Have you got heart-trouble? Let me see..."

"No, it's nothing," Sukhen says with much difficulty.

"Then is it a sudden stomach-ache?"

"Don't know, it's beyond diagnosis. Some say it's something ghostly."

"Nonsense, come on, let me see." He is absolutely a different man now, agile, alert and full of vigour. While Sukhen groans with choking pain the man's dominating deep look pierces through his half-closed eyes. Consequently Sukhen feels better, as if the attack were gradually receding.

"Now, tell me, old boy, did you ever fall in love?"

"Me! fall in love? With whom, when? No, no, most probably not, I don't know..." Sukhen fumbles. The man's eyes come still closer to his and with more piercing pressure. "Now, try to remember again, old boy." The penetrating rays of the man's look disperse the dense mist of oblivion which has covered his consciousness for years. Losing his outer sense Sukhen wakes up within and recollects his first love and the events that went therewith.

The pretty white puppy with a pair of tender but naughty eyes enchanted him at first sight. Forgetting thirst, hunger and sleep he ran, jumped, whistled and played hide-and-seek with it throughout the whole day. At night his father, a strict disciplinarian, came to know about it and gave him a good thrashing. He also ordered his elder brother to send away the puppy next morning without fail.

Yearning and attachment for a dog lingered with him till, grown old enough to pass beyond his father's beating-rights, he brought another dog home. He loved Hector as much as he did himself, if not more. Hector also loved him no less. Hector saved him from dangers several times, but, pathetic as it was, he couldn't save Hector even once.

One night, at about two o'clock, hearing Hector's furious barking mixed up with a man's call for help the whole family hurried outside and saw a thief perched on the jack-fruit tree and Hector jumping high to attack and drag the fellow down. Immediately his father cautioned Sukhen not to meddle in the affair, as the man was not a mere thief but a murderer.

Sukhen called back Hector and chained it. The man jumped down and took to his heels without even a word of thanks. After two days or so Sukhen could not find Hector. However, after a long search it was found lying unconscious on the heap of ashes behind the kitchen. The vet came, examined it and declared coldly, "The dog has been poisoned."

Bereaved, Sukhen lost all joy, fervour and the zest for life and started getting emaciated. As a remedy his father suggested bringing a cat into the household, but no dog any more. Nonsense, Sukhen knew it was no remedy at all. He must have a dog anyhow, and a high-bred one at that.

He obtained one after all, a pitch-black puppy of a first-grade quality. Within a few months it not only grew in health, strength and stature but also developed superb inner qualities like love, courage, intelligence and an acute and exact power of perception. Even his father who never liked a dog remarked one day, "Your dog is coal-black in colour only; inwardly he is lustrous like a diamond." From that day Sukhen named his dog Diamond.

Everything was fine about Diamond and Sukhen got on very well with it. But one day all on a sudden his father ordered him to keep Diamond always on a chain as it was reported to have shown signs of abnormality. Sukhen had to obey even without testing the truth behind the complaint. Moreover, with tears in his eyes he brought a medicine for Diamond as a preventive measure.

After some days just as Sukhen unchained Diamond for a little respite to give it food mixed with the medicine the dog charged at him with bared fangs. Sukhen ran and took shelter on the jack-fruit tree nearby, the same one up which the murderer had climbed.

His mother's screaming and insistence from the kitchen to kill the dog and the dog's howling and jumping from below to bite him puzzled Sukhen. He took his father's gun, handed to him by the servant Srikant from the adjacent roof of their building, and aimed like an automaton. "Boom!" a sound and some smoke. Sukhen blinded and almost choked with smoke fell down and got hurt on the head and did not know what happened to his precious Diamond. He only saw, as if in a dream, that a red carpet was gradually being spread over the ground and a slab of black coal on it making a few restless movements and growing motionless forever....

Sukhen's memory fades, consciousness becomes misty again. He falls into a kind of swoon. "Your Diamond was not mad," the voice of his companion wakes him up. He opens his eyes, looks around but finds none in the compartment except his lone self. The strange man has got down none knows where. But the voice!

Sukhen jerks himself up with the voice still ringing in his ears. The train is running at full speed across a vast field washed with vanishing twilight. On the eastern horizon the full moon peeps from behind the coloured clouds. The sight makes Sukhen sit like a statue. He broods over the action of the man. Is he a man or a spirit incarnate or a yogi from the Himalayas with supernatural power? Sukhen's hair stands on end and he remembers his grandfather, long dead, who used to tell him stories about the saints, sadhus and yogis of India. He reflects upon the man's sudden disappearance.

The train slows down gradually and stops at a station. Oh, it is Anantapur! Sukhen is overjoyed at the splendid performance of the wild train in making up for the delay.

'Alok Shikha' is well known to the local people. At least a dozen rikshaw-pullers come forward to take Sukhen there. Naturally he has to eliminate and select only one. "Oh no, if it jerks by the short-cut route across the field, better follow the main road." Sukhen directs the rikshaw-man and sinks in the thought of his friend in the train and then it flashes on him: "What if the man went inside the toilet!" His thought takes a turn and follows reason, sense and reality and continues till the rikshaw stops in front of a big white building with 'Alok Shikha' written in red, with a neon light cast on it.

"Sukhen, you naughty boy, why didn't you inform me that you were coming?" asks masima.

"I wanted to give you a surprise. Where are my cousins Alok and Shikha, masima?"

"Gone to Devipur to meet one of their professors, will be back by tomorrow or the day after. Now tell me, Sukhen, how are you these days?"

"My physician declared me cured; still, surprisingly I had an attack in the train

after more than a year.”

“Attack! What do you mean? After such an expensive treatment!”

“Yes, masima, but a strange man in the train...”

“You met him? You are lucky indeed. He is a mysterious man, has cured many from apparently incurable diseases by his mere look.”

Back in the room which is meant for him, after dinner Sukhen finds a clean and cosy bed ready. Masima comes with a glass of water “About the man I shall say more tomorrow, Sukhen. You are tired, sleep now. I have still a bit more work to do.” She goes out keeping the tumbler on the bed-side table.

Sukhen changes into his night clothes, switches off the light and goes to bed. Stretching his hand from the bed he draws apart the window curtains. Oh, how wonderful! In the garden just beside the window there is a spectacular scene.

Many-coloured flowers, green plants, creepers and bushes are bathing in the silvery rays showered on them from the full moon above. On the central wide lawn a giant Bokul stands majestically spreading its blooming fragrant branches. The sight recalls to his memory his boyhood days. Instantly he feels like going out to run, jump and sing at the top of his voice and then, when tired, to sleep for the rest of the night on the bed of flowers spread over a soft green carpet....

Sukhen wakes up to see himself on the bed made by his masima herself. The scene outside is as charming as before, if not more. He feels an irresistible urge to go out when a shining black cycle beside the door draws his attention. Just the thing he needs at the moment. After a while he goes out with the cycle and takes with him the strong padlock of his big suitcase. He puts the padlock on the outside of the main door and, while riding on the cycle, marks that ‘Alok Shikha’ is written in white on the body of the vehicle too.

Anantapur is asleep and silent except for the occasional hooting of owls and the sound of friction of the cycle against the brick-way leading to the main road. Getting on to the highway Sukhen increases speed to have a morning exercise but a little ahead he finds the road blocked by a flock of sheep on their way to the grazing ground. He rings his bell. A narrow passage is made for him. He proceeds and as he has almost cleared out of the flock he hears a ferocious guttural sound. A dog chases him, magically metamorphosed from one of the sheep as it were.

Frightened, Sukhen increases his speed so as to compel the dog to lag behind and leave him. But no, it persists and is about to catch him. He paddles with all the strength his feet can muster, when a vague feeling overwhelms him—perhaps the apparition of his dead dog Diamond is following him to finish its unfinished attack. Abruptly his right foot slips off the paddle. His attempt to reach it fails. Has the chain got loose? He tries again but in the meantime the dog is just near his right foot, bow-wow...bow-wow...Sukhen raises the foot as high as possible. The dog also jumps up. Helpless, Sukhen hurls a tremendous kick at the dog’s head. Before he could know what actually has happened he finds himself rolling in the canal beside the road. The water is not very deep, he is not much hurt either. He stands up and looks around,

there is no trace of the dog.

Picking up the toppled-down cycle Sukhen turns back with full speed. There is nothing wrong with the chain, he must be back before maasima gets up. But nearing the house he prays like Sita, "O Earth, be parted and swallow me up", but the earth does not part. The age of the Ramayana has passed long since.

Masima's worried eyes are looking for Sukhen through the window. In front of the main door a healthy young man is pulling at the padlock with all his might. A pretty young girl from behind is telling him, "Dada, don't be impatient please, Natun-da will come back very soon."

"Yes, I have come already," Sukhen opens the padlock and smartly walks in.

"You look like a wet cat, what's the matter, Sukhen?" asks masima.

"It's nothing, I mean that road-side pond, the water is so inviting, I couldn't help having a dip in it."

"You whimsical boy, now change your clothes and come for tea. It's ready."

"Just coming, masima," and then he says to Alok and Shikha, "Oh, don't wait for me please, I shall join you in a few minutes." Alok and Shikha exchange glances and leave the place smiling...

At the door of the dining room Sukhen overhears Shikha speaking in a low voice, "Did we know then, Dada, that he was our Natun-da? You said, 'He is a novice, trying to learn how to cycle', hee...hee...hee..."

"Stop, Shikha, will you? You are precocious," is Alok's subdued rebuke.

Terribly enraged against the dog, Sukhen steps in and asks pointblank, "Do you know who has a big brown dog in this locality?"

"Why, what's the matter?" There is the startled voice of both brother and sister.

"I shall shoot the devil. Have you got your father's gun?"

"Devil! Gun! But let us know first what has happened? Our Jewel's colour is brown." Alok is somewhat nervous.

"We took the rikshaw across the field and Jewel ran away to play with the sheep, isn't that so, Dada?" Shikha's tone trembles.

Jewel, the name seems to be known. Oh yes, those entreating words from the sky-coloured building, Sukhen remembers and retorts forthwith, "Jewel, what a fine name for a murderer! Didn't it kill a cat yesterday?"

"No, it didn't, it simply wanted to play. I got frightened for nothing." Shikha is serious.

"Quite right, Jewel is uncommon, not at all like an ordinary dog," adds Alok.

"Uncommon! That's why, perhaps, it chased the rider of the cycle of Alok and Shikha." Suddenly Sukhen feels an uncanny sensation within, somewhere near the chest as if the vibration of another onset of his disease. He doesn't not know what to do. He tries to recall the influence of the mysterious man, the great healer. Just then enters a brown dog, restless, tired and excited...

"Jewel, what's the matter with you? Come this side," shouts Shikha.

Sukhen with a tremendous effort jumps up on the table toppling down a few

tea-cups along with his own and prepares for a kick this time with a surer footing.

The dog on the other hand stands still, looks upward, sniffs something in the air, and then nearing Sukhen's chair sits down quietly with its chin upon its paws. It is now calm, quiet, peaceful and poised.

Free from fear Sukhen returns to his seat and hears in a whisper the voice of the man in the train, "This is your Diamond." Impelled by an unknown force Sukhen touches the dog's head. Lo, what a miracle! Sukhen's body trembles, his hair bristles and a cool current of peace with a touch of nectarous sweetness passes through those affected parts of his body where he usually feels pain during the attack of his malady.

The dog raises its head with drops of diamond-like sparkling tears in its eyes telling of its infinite intimacy with Sukhen.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

TWO POEMS

KALI

SHE held the hail in her hair,
Frothy fire spilled from her eyes,
Demons shuddered at her blood-torn tongue!

As she left, blue waters
Filled her white foot-prints.

THE RACE

HALF the race is done,
The other not yet begun.
From whiskers to whiteness—
It's over;
now slow,
weighed down
by an encrusted soul...
The second journey done,
endless fields I shall run.
Not a race,
only to keep in pace
with the ascending Peace.

V. ANANDA REDDY

EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1979)

(28)

THE front façade of the British Museum is a huge colonnade with two wing-projections on either side. The middle block is crowned by a Greek style pediment. The ancient Montague House is no longer recognisable anywhere, about which Sir Hans Sloans commented lovingly, "A private cabinet of curiosities", and again, "A chamber of rarities." A chamber of rarities it can still be called, but not a private cabinet of curiosities. For the private cabinet has grown into a immense world of its own, before which one feels a certain awe and humility. The front hall is so huge and the ceiling so high that one is made to feel acutely one's diminutive proportions. It reminds one of the pictures (the artist's impressions) of the great halls of Thebes and Memphis and Persepolis.

An officer stationed there, took us to the Reading Room, which can hardly be called a room, it resembles a nave of an immense church. This place, once the inner courtyard of the Montague House, was reconstructed recently to form the new Reading Room. The dome too is new and they say that it is larger and higher than the dome of St. Peter's in Rome. In the middle, the seats are arranged in a clock-wise fashion. Then higher stages are built near the wall till the almiras at the back reach the glass panes of the descending dome. The whole atmosphere is very impressive. The books there are of course all reference-books. The officer was a sociable person, and when we told him that there was a time when Sanat was a regular visitor there and that he used to be the youngest reader, he became positively friendly. We went on chatting merrily.

The idea of founding libraries is not a modern one. Almost all the ancient kings had libraries. What names were given to these ancient libraries is not known. The modern word "library" comes from the Latin word *liber*, meaning a book, just as the prefix "biblio" meaning "of books or of the Bible" has come from the Greek word *biblos* for the papyrus bark on which the early books were written. Papyrus used to grow in the delta of the river Nile, and out of its reeds sheets were made for writing. When several were tied together to form a book it was called papyri.

King Ashurbanipal, the great Assyrian king, had his library in his palace at Nineveh. Modern libraries have books made out of paper. King Ashurbanipal's library in 668 B.C. consisted of clay tablets. Today a library may house not only books but magazines, newspapers, maps, prints, manuscripts, photographs, slides, music, gramophone records, films, radios and even televisions. In the large library at Nineveh all information was written on clay tablets. How many there were is not known, but when in 1853 the British archaeologists carried on an extensive excavation they found 25,000 tablets and most started with "Ashurbanipal's tablets, he who is

King of the world, King of Assyria, and trusts in the gods Ashur and Nimbil". After this introduction the information was given. In a modern library rules and regulations are laid down on how to borrow and when to return a book; if one is late in returning a book fines are imposed, and one has to pay if the book is damaged in any way. Likewise King Ashurbanipal's library contained tablets on which rules and regulations for the readers and the borrowers were laid down. For example, it was written on one that a curse was on any borrower who treated the tablets shabbily, or failed to replace them in their places or stole them. Even more amazing is the fact that the tablets were properly catalogued. This shows that the ancient world not only had vast libraries but enough care was taken to safeguard the tablets from damage and pilfering, and smooth running was ensured. All these 25,000 tablets of King Ashurbanipal have found their way to the British Museum.

King Eumenes II of Pergamun (197-159 B.C.) in Asia Minor had a library with 200,000 or more books. According to Plutarch, these books were carried off by Antony when he was prowling over Asia Minor, and he made a gift of them to Cleopatra. Research has revealed that ancient Egypt had many beautiful libraries. On the river Nile once stood the city of Thebes. Here in the 13th century B.C. King Ramses II (Ozymandias, King of Kings, in Shelley's famous sonnet) had a library, at the entrance of which were inscribed the words "Haven of the Soul."

Libraries abounded in ancient Greece both private and public. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) had a sizable library. Odd though it may seem, the greatest Greek library that ever existed was not on Greek soil but in Egypt. The library at Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C., was in ancient times the greatest library of Greek literature. Later patronised by the Ptolemies it grew quickly and a museum was soon added to it. It became something like a university and formed the main centre of Greek civilisation with several hundred thousand papyri.

These libraries preserved the priceless treasures of Greek and later Latin literature for six centuries. It seems the great poet Callimachus (310-240 B.C.) was once the librarian at Alexandria and so was the scientist Eratosthenes (275-196 B.C.). One thing is common to all libraries ancient or modern, they hand down from generation to generation the knowledge that man has acquired, the thought that he has essayed, his philosophy and ethics of life, the story of his struggle and bravery, and the story of his love.

Libraries have been my favourite haunts from my childhood days. In fact wherever I went I found a library. Apart from the big family library, my own grandfather had a library of his own, adjacent to his drawing-room. It was comparatively small yet it contained the Encyclopaedia Britannica and other very valuable books. There was a whole set bound in pure Morocco leather and gold. Some of these books and the two pure gold carpets, one that hung on the wall and the other covering his divan, are still with us. He was a very learned person, although a zamindar.

My maternal grandfather too had a library created by his father Jodugopal Chattopadhyay the poet who is still remembered lovingly by the older generation in

Bengal. This was at Calcutta, although his original home was in Kon-nagar. I was too small to remember what this library contained but this much I remember that we, the children of the family, used to sprawl on the snow-white *jajim* on the thick pile carpet, while grandfather reclining on a velvet bolster and smoking from a gold and silver hookka, with a pipe seven feet long, used to help us memorise some of his father's poems.

Every year we used to go to Allahabad to visit my father's maternal grandfather Sir P. C. Banerji. We called him Great Grand, and he was really grand. He had a sizable library. He used to sit in his huge leather arm-chair by the side of his equally huge Victorian writing-table, on which were strewn various silver writing things that fascinated us. These silver objects came from Asprey the jewellers in New Bond Street, Mayfair, London. Incidentally, when we were in London we found the Asprey shop still functioning. As the Indian Maharajas and Maharanis and Nabobs are no longer as rich as they used to be, Asprey now designs and creates new pieces of jewellery for the Oil Kings of the Middle East and the Oil Princesses of Kuwait. To come back to our story, Great Grand sat there majestically reading to us or telling us interesting tales. We learnt our A.B.C. from him. It was something like Einstein teaching addition and subtraction. He was thoroughly Europeanised but not a Christian. Yet he loved to repeat the Lord's Prayer. We learnt it from him when we were four or five. I could still hear Great Grand's resonant voice putting special intonation to the last line:

For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory. Amen.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

GAUTAMA

HE stirred suddenly
 In his lush clover of slumber
 When illusion slept a wink.
 His self's swilling term of pomp
 Expired as he came alive to the pounding
 Pathos that came rushing to unbar
 His heart and home and dropped
 Anchor in his being; and then
 A spell of deep delving
 Garnered his splintered spirit,
 Lifting it to its plenary peak,
 And quenching its fever of fission
 To pour its healing hush on hearts below.

G. VISWANATHAN