

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

OCTOBER 1980

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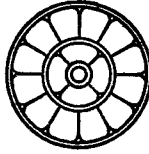
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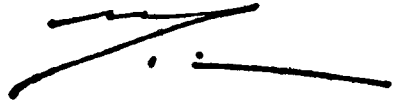


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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AN APPEAL TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

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

The scheme of Life-Membership is still in force. If attended to, it can also help.

Advertisements too can be a good contribution. Tariff cards can be had on application. Increase in the number of subscribers is always welcome.

We shall be grateful for help in any form, and particularly in the form of donations.

The donations will be tax-free if sent ear-marked for us through the Ashram Trust.

AN EXPLANATION TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

The good number of our advertisements must not be taken as a sign of great gain.

We pay a very large commission on several of them, and after deducting press-charges our profit is small on the whole.

APROPOS OF THE NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE OF 1967

THE MOTHER'S CLARIFICATION

The Message

Men, countries, continents!
The choice is imperative:
Truth or the abyss.

The Clarification

Q: What is the meaning of "abyss" in your New Year's Message or, put another way, what should a sadhak fear?

THE MOTHER: Right now there is a great tension. They have all taken positions as if to start war. It is the blind passion that men put into their international relations.

At the base of all there is fear, general distrust, and what they believe to be their "interests" (money, business)—a combination of these three things. When these three lowest passions of humanity are brought into play, that is what I call "the abyss".

When someone has decided to consecrate his life to the seeking for the Divine, if he is sincere, that is to say, if the resolution is sincere and carried out sincerely, there is absolutely nothing to fear, because all that happens or will happen to him will lead him by the shortest way to this realisation.

—That is the response of the Grace. People believe that the Grace means making everything smooth for all your life. It is not true.

The Grace works for the realisation of your aspiration and everything is arranged to gain the most prompt, the quickest realisation—so there is nothing to fear.

Fear comes with insincerity. If you want a comfortable life, agreeable circumstances, etc., you are putting conditions and restrictions, and then you can fear.

But it has no business in the sadhana!

26.5.1967

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

THE problem is not as simple as all that. The causes of suffering are innumerable and its quality also varies a great deal, although the origin of suffering is one and the same and comes from the initial action of the anti-divine will. To make this easier to understand, one can divide suffering into two distinct categories, although in practice they are very often mixed.

The first is purely egoistic and comes from a feeling that one's rights have been violated, that one has been deprived of one's needs, offended, despoiled, betrayed, injured, etc., etc.—this whole category of suffering is clearly the result of hostile action and it not only opens the door in the consciousness to the influence of the adversary but is also one of his most powerful ways of acting in the world, the most powerful of all if in addition there come its natural and spontaneous consequences: hatred and the desire for revenge in the strong, despair and the wish to die in the weak.

The other category of suffering, whose initial *cause* is the pain of separation created by the adversary, is totally opposite in nature: it is the suffering that comes from divine compassion, the suffering of love that feels compassion for the world's misery, whatever its origin, cause or effect. But this suffering, which is of a purely psychic character, contains no egoism, no self-pity; it is full of peace, strength, power of action, faith in the future, the will for victory; it does not pity but consoles, it does not identify itself with the ignorant movement in others but cures and illumines it.

It is obvious that in the purity of its essence, only that which is *perfectly divine* can feel that suffering; but partially, momentarily, like flashes of lightning behind the dark clouds of egoism, it appears in all who have a vast and generous heart. However, most often, in the individual consciousness, it is mixed with this mean and deplorable self-pity which is the cause of depression and weakness. Nevertheless, when one is vigilant enough to refuse this mixture or at least to reduce it to a minimum, one soon realises that this divine compassion is based on a sublime and eternal joy which alone has the strength and the power to deliver the world from its ignorance and misery.

And this suffering too will disappear from the universe only with a total disappearance of the adversary and all the effects of his action.

5 February 1956

SOME WORDS OF THE MOTHER ON DEATH

YOUR father died because it was his time to die. Circumstances can be an occasion but surely not a cause. The cause is in the Divine's will and nothing can alter it.

So grieve not and surrender your sorrow at the feet of the Divine. He will give you peace and freedom.

*

Q. What should we do to make the soul happy, so that it reincarnates in good conditions, for example in a spiritual environment?

Have no sorrow and remain very peaceful and quiet, while keeping an affectionate remembrance of the one who has departed.

*

Now you are no longer able to bend over this body and take care of it, you can no longer express through your acts your deep affection, and it is this which is painful. But you must overcome this sorrow and look within, look above, for it is only the material body that will be dissolved. All that you loved in her is in no way affected by the dissolution of the material envelope; and if, in the calm of a deep love, you concentrate your thought and your energy on her, you will see that she will remain close to you and that you can have a conscious contact with her, a contact more and more concrete.

*

...To enjoy a peaceful and eventless death you must prepare for it. And the only effective preparation is the abolition of desires.

So long as we have a body we have to act, to work, to do something: but if we do it simply because it has to be done, without seeking for the result or wanting it to be like this or like that, we get progressively detached and thus prepare ourselves for a restful death.

*

Instead of being upset and struggling, the best thing to do is to offer one's body to the Divine with the *sincere* prayer, "Let Thy Will be done." If there is any possibility of cure, it will establish the best conditions for it; and if cure is impossible, it will be the very best preparation for getting out of the body and the life without it.

In any case the first indispensable condition is a quiet surrender to the Divine's will.

THE MOTHER'S VISIT TO CHINA

REFERRING to certain types of temples, the Mother says in a talk: "I saw them in China and Japan" (*Birth-Centenary* Vol. 4, p. 258, line 9). Also in another taped talk which is not yet included in her collected works she has an equally passing allusion, although in connection with a different subject.

From these two brief texts it has been surmised that she must have paid a brief casual visit to China either on her way to Pondicherry from Japan or in the course of her voyage to Japan from France. In the former case, as my friend Peter Hees of the "Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library" put it in answer to a query from me, "She could have only walked around the pier at Shanghai because we know when she left Tokyo and she didn't have much time." Even alternatively, her visit is thought to have been a very short one—something like that to England in 1915 for changing ships.

However, the information recently received from Robi Das, a devotee of the Mother and a keen reader of *Mother India*, suggests by the detailed observation it involves on the Mother's part that she might have spent some time in China. He has posted a copy of some notes sent to him by Tinkari Mitra, one-time teacher in the Ashram school but now no more with us. Robi Das writes: "The Notes relate to the Mother's talks, held in private meetings (probably in Pavitra's room) in explanation and clarification of her *Prayers and Meditations*. Among those present I find the names of Pavitra, Gabriel, Toussaint, Chinmayi, Suvrata, Kanai Ganguly and Ali, the son of Sir Akbar Hydari, renowned Dewan of Hyderabad during the British regime. The Notes start on May 20, 1947 and end on October 26, 1947. In the entry dated October 17, 1947, I notice a reference to the Mother's going to China." With this introduction Robi Das enclosed the entry concerned:

17th October 1947

Re: Prayers dated 30th December 1916, 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th January 1917

In reply to a question by Toussaint, the Mother spoke of "The Man of Sorrows." The name belongs to a very old Chaldean tradition. "The Man of Sorrows" is one of the four powers that became perverted, *i.e.* 1) Love and Ananda turned into Hatred and Sorrow. He was dissolved in the Divine and remained Love and Ananda. 2) Light, after his reconversion, took on a vital-material form to remain in the terrestrial atmosphere. When he was going to China in the early part of the 20th century he met the Mother. The Mother was at the time trying to build a bridge for beings to cross from our world to the subtle world as the passage was difficult because in the transit they used to lose consciousness. Light offered his help in this work and then proceeded to China saying he was going there to work for a revolution that would lead to many other revolutions in the world, all of which would subsequently lead to the transformation of the world. When the Mother went to China she saw actually all the symbols he had mentioned, regarding the events and the dates and the men in connection with the revolution. He had said that the revolution would take place in five years' time and it so happened.

EDITOR

A CRUCIAL DREAM AND THE MOTHER'S COMMENT

14.6.70

Dearest Mother

Some time back I said to you that I would like to tell you something about my state of health and mind.

In 1956 or 1957 I had a dream. Some being was saying to me what my life would be like if I stayed here with you. I was shown everything. There was darkness, and big stones were ~~being~~ thrown from all sides on my body, completely breaking it. Then the being showing me this said: "If you live with the Mother, this is what she will do to you." I replied: "Never mind. Let the body break."

Then again the being said: "Not only your body but also your mind will break." And again I replied: "It doesn't matter. Let her do what she likes!"

Then I was shown the other side. If I left you, my body would be quite healthy and everything would be most pleasant. After seeing this, I still said: "I have chosen to live with the Mother."

So far, my eyes were shut during the dream. Then, in the dream itself, I opened them. Everything was quiet, and on the horizon I saw a band of light.

Mother, I want to know the meaning of all this. The dream has come true in regard to my body and mind. My body is becoming weaker and weaker. All my energy is going and I can't work even to occupy my mind. I feel as if I were being broken to pieces. And I get ideas which are not healthy. This condition is there not only in Pondi but more or less in Bombay too. The general feeling is as if you were breaking me in order to make from me something that you wish. Is that true?

And what about that band of light on the horizon? Is it something meant to be after this life or in this life itself?

Please let me know the truth?

with love
Sehra

T.O.

The eyes closed represent the ordinary consciousness which is blind to the truth. When you open your eyes you see the light of the truth towards which you are going. What is needed is the endurance and the patience to face the apparently unpleasant preparation that is making you ready to emerge in the light of the truth.

Keep your faith in the Divine and all will be well.

With love and blessings

(The eyes closed represent the ordinary consciousness which is blind to the truth.)

When you opened your eyes you saw the light of the truth towards which you are going. What is needed is the endurance and the patience to face the apparently unpleasant preparation that is making you ready to emerge in the light of the truth.

Keep your faith in the Divine and all will be well.)

THE REVISED EDITION OF *THE FUTURE POETRY*

NEWLY-WRITTEN OR CORRECTED MATTER

(Continued from the issue of September 1980)

(The first three paragraphs of this chapter received medium to heavy revision during the early period (late 1920s or 1930s), the rest is very lightly revised. The title and one or two phrases of the textual revision are the work of the later period (1950).

CHAPTER X

The Course of English Poetry—2

Elizabethan Drama

Shakespeare and the Poetry of the Life-Spirit

THE Elizabethan age, perhaps the era of most opulent output in the long history of English poetic genius is abundant, untrammelled and unbridled in its power, but not satisfying in its performance. Beautiful as are many of its productions, powerful as it is in the mass, if we look at it not in detail, not merely revelling in beauty of line and phrase and image, in snatches of song and outbursts of poetic richness and creative force, but as a whole, in its total artistic creation, it bears a certain stamp of defect and failure. It cannot be placed for a moment as a supreme force of excellence in literary culture by the side of the great ages of Greek and Roman poetry which started with an equal, if different creative impetus, but more self-knowledge. But, unhappily, it falls short too in aesthetic effect and virtue in comparison with other poetic periods less essentially vigorous and mobile in their plastic force; it has an inferior burden of meaning and, if a coursing of richer life-blood, no settled fullness of spirit and a less adequate body of forms. The great magician, Shakespeare, by his marvellous poetic rendering of life and the spell his poetry casts upon us, conceals this general inadequacy of the work of his time: the whole age which he embodies is magnified by his presence and the adjacent paler figures catch something of the light and kinship of his glory and appear in it more splendid than they are. But Shakespeare is an exception, a genius that transcends all laws, a miracle of poetic force; he survives untouched all adverse criticism, not because there are not plenty of fairly large spots in this sun, but because in any complete view of him they disappear in the greatness of his lustre. Spenser and Marlowe are poets of a high order, great in spite of an eventual failure. But the rest owe their stature to an uplifting power in the age and not chiefly to their own intrinsic height of genius; and that power had many vices, flaws and serious limitations which their work exaggerates

wilfully rather than avoids, so that it is only exceptionally free from glaring flaws. The gold of this golden age of English poetry is often very beautifully and richly wrought, but it is seldom worked into a perfect artistic whole; it disappears continually in masses of alloy, and there is on the whole more of a surface gold-dust than of the deeper yield of the human spirit.

The defect of this Elizabethan work is most characteristic and prominent in that part of it which has been vaunted as its chief title to greatness, its drama. Shakespeare and Marlowe can be looked at in their separate splendours; but the rest of Elizabethan dramatic work is a brilliantly smoky nebula, powerful in effort rather than sound and noble in performance. All its vigorous presentation of life has not been able to keep it alive; it is dead or keeps only "the dusty immortality of the libraries", and this in spite of the attention drawn to it in quite recent times by scholars and critics and the hyperbolic eulogies of two or three eminent writers. This is not to say that it has not merits and, in a way, very striking merits. The Elizabethan playwrights were men of a confident robust talent; some of them had real, if an intermittent genius. They had too the use of the language of an age in which the power of literary speech was a common possession and men were handling the language with delight as a quite new and rich instrument, lavishly and curiously, turning it this way and that, moulding and new-moulding it, exulting in its novel capacities of expression. The first elements of the dramatic form, the temper and some of the primary faculties which go to make dramatic creation possible were there in the literary spirit of the age, and all these writers in more or less degree possessed these things and could use them. A certain force of vital creation was common to them all, a vigorous turn for the half romantic, half realistic reproduction of life and manners. The faculty of producing very freely a mass or a stream of incident and movement was there, much power of exuberant dialogue, a knack of expression both in verse and prose, some skill in the trick of putting the language of the passions into the mouth of cleverly constructed human figures which walk actively about the stage, if not in a quite natural manner, yet with enough of it to give for the time the illusion of living creatures. Especially, it was a time in which there was a fresh and vivid interest in life and man and action, in the adventure and wonder and appeal of the mere vital phenomenon of living and feeling and thinking, and their work is full of this freshness and interest and intense spontaneous delight in living and acting. All this, it might be thought, is quite enough to build a great dramatic poetry; and certainly, if we require no more than this, we shall give a prominent place to the Elizabethan drama, higher perhaps than to the Greek or any other. But these things are enough only to produce plays which will live their time on the stage and in the library; they are not, by themselves, sufficient for great dramatic creation. Something else is needed for that, which we get in Shakespeare, in Racine, Corneille and Molière, in Calderón, in the great Greeks, in the leading Sanskrit dramatists; but these other Elizabethans show themselves in the bulk of their work to be rather powerful writers and playwrights than inspired dramatic poets and creators.

Dramatic poetry cannot live by the mere presentation of life and action and the passions, however truly they may be portrayed or however vigorously and abundantly pushed across the scene. Its object is something greater and its conditions of success much more onerous. It must have, to begin with, as the fount of its creation or in its heart an interpretative vision and in that vision an explicit or implicit seeing idea of life and the human being; and the vital presentation which is its outward instrument, must arise out of that deeper sight harmoniously, whether by a spontaneous creation, as in Shakespeare, or by the compulsion of an intuitive artistic will, as with the Greeks. This interpretative vision and seeing idea have in the presentation to seem to arise out of the inner life of a few vital types of the human soul or individual representatives of its enigma and to work themselves out through an evolution of speech leading to an evolution of action. And of these two speech in the drama is the first and more important instrument, because through it the poet reveals the action of the soul; outward action and event are only the second, important, but less essential, reducible even to an indispensable minimum, because the outward movements serve only to make visible and concrete to us the result of the inner action and have no other intrinsic purpose. In all very great drama the true movement and result is psychological; and the outward action, even when it is considerable, and the consummating event, even though loud and violent, are either its symbol or else its condition of culmination. All has to be cast into a close dramatic form, a successful weaving of interdependent relations, relations of soul to soul, of speech to speech, of action to action, the more close and inevitable the better, because so the truth of the whole evolution comes home to us. And if it is asked what in a word is the essential purpose of all this creation, I think we might possibly say that drama is the poet's vision of some part of the world-act in the life of the human soul, it is in a way his vision of Karma, in an extended and very flexible sense of the word; and at its highest point it becomes a poetic rendering or illustration of the Aeschylean *drasanti pathein*, "the doer shall feel the effect of his act," in an inner as well as an outer, a happy no less than an austere significance, whether that effect be represented as psychological or vital, whether it comes to its own through sorrow and calamity, ends in a judgment by laughter or finds an escape into beauty and joy, whether the presentation be tragic or comic or tragi-comic or idyllic. To satisfy these conditions is extremely difficult and the great dramatists are few in their number; the entire literature of the world has hardly given us more than a dozen. The difficult evolution of dramatic poetry is always more hard to lead than the lyric which is poetry's native expression, or than the narrative which is its simpler expansion.

The greatness of a period of dramatic poetry can be measured by the extent to which these complex conditions were understood in it or were intuitively practised. But in the mass of the Elizabethan drama the understanding is quite absent and the practice comes, if at all, only rarely, imperfectly and by a sort of accident. Shakespeare himself seems to have divined these conditions or contained them in the shaping flame of his genius rather than perceived them by the artistic intelligence. The rest have

ordinarily no light of interpretative vision, no dramatic idea. Their tragedy and comedy are both oppressively external; this drama presents, but does not at all interpret; it is an outward presentation of manners and passions and lives by vigour of action and a quite outward-going speech; it means absolutely nothing. The tragedy is irrational, the comedy has neither largeness nor subtlety of idea; they are mixed together too without any artistic connection such as Shakespeare manages to give to them so as to justify thoroughly their coexistence. The characters are not living beings working out their mutual Karma, but external figures of humanity jostling each other on a crowded stage, mere tossing drift of the waves of life. The form of the drama too is little more than a succession of speech and incident,¹ as in a story, with a culminating violent or happy ending, which comes not because psychologically it must, but because a story has to have a release of ending, or, if tragic, its point of loud detonation. To make up for their essential defects these poets have to heap up incident and situation and assail us with vehement and often grossly exaggerated speech and passion, frequently tearing the passion into glaringly coloured tatters, almost always overstraining or in some way making too much of it. They wish to pile on us the interest of life in whose presentation their strength lies, to accumulate in a mass, so as to carry us away, things attracting, things amusing, things striking, things horrible; they will get at us through the nerves and the lower emotional being,—and in this they succeed eminently,—since they cannot get at us through a higher intellectual and imaginative appeal. The evolution of the action is rather theatrically effective than poetic, the spirit and the psychology melodramatic rather than dramatic. Nor are these radical dramatic defects atoned for by any great wealth of poetry, for their verse has more often some formal merit and a great air of poetry than its essence,—though there are exceptions as in lines and passages of Peele and Webster. The presentation of life with some surface poetic touch but without any transforming vision or strongly suffusing power in the poetic temperament is the general character of their work. It is necessary to emphasize these defects because indiscriminate praise of these poets helps to falsify or quite exclude the just artistic view of the aim of sound dramatic creation, and imitation of the catching falsities of this model has been the real root of the inefficacy of subsequent attempts in the dramatic form even by poets of great gifts. It explains the failure of even a mind which had the true dramatic turn, a creator like Browning, to achieve drama of the first excellence.

Marlowe alone of the lesser Elizabethan dramatists stands apart from his fellows, not solely by his strong and magnificent vein of poetry, but because he knows what he is about; he alone has some clearly grasped dramatic idea. And not only is he conscious of his artistic aim, but it is a sound aim on the higher levels of the dramatic art. He knows that the human soul in action is his subject and Karma the power of the theme, and he attempts to create a drama of the human will throwing itself on life, the will egoistic and Asuric, conquering only to succumb to the great adversary Death or

¹ Ben Jonson is an exception. He has the idea of construction, but his execution is heavy and uninspired, the work of a robustly conscientious craftsman rather than a creative artist.

breaking itself against the forces its violence has brought into hostile play. This is certainly a high and fit subject for tragic creation and his boldly coloured and strongly out style and rhythm are well-suited for its expression. Unhappily, Marlowe had the conception, but not any real power of dramatic execution. He is unable to give the last awakening breath of life to his figures; in the external manner so common in English poetry and fiction he rather constructs than evolves, portrays than throws out into life, paints up or sculptures from outside than creates from within,—and yet it is this other inward way that is the sole true method of poetic or at least of dramatic creation. He has not, either, the indispensable art of construction: only in one of his tragedies does he vitally relate together his characters and their action throughout, and even that, though a strong work, falls far short of the greatness of a masterpiece. He had too, writing for the Elizabethan stage, to adopt a model which was too complex for the strong simplicity of his theme and the narrow intensity of his genius. And he had, working for that semi-barbarous public, to minister to tastes which were quite incongruous with his purpose and which he had not flexibility enough to bring within its scope or to elevate towards its level. In fact, Marlowe was not a born dramatist; his true genius was lyrical, narrative and epic. Limited by his inborn characteristics, he succeeds in bringing out his poetic motive only in strong detached scenes and passages or in great culminating moments in which the lyrical cry and the epic touch break out through the form of drama.

Shakespeare stands out alone, both in his own age when so many were drawn to the form and circumstances were favourable to this kind of genius, and in all English literature, as the one great and genuine dramatic poet; but this one is indeed equal to a host. He stands out too as quite unique in his spirit, method and quality. For his contemporaries resemble him only in externals; they have the same outward form and crude materials, but not the inner dramatic method by which he transformed and gave them a quite other meaning and value. Later romantic drama; not only in England but elsewhere, though it has tried hard to imitate the Shakespearian motive and touch, has been governed by another kind of poetic mind; its intrinsic as distinguished from its external method has been really different. Romantic drama, in Hugo and in others, takes hold of life, strings together its unusual effects and labours to make it out of the way, brilliant, coloured, conspicuous. Shakespeare does not do that, except rarely, in early imitative work or when he is uninspired. He does not need to lay violent hands on life and turn it into romantic pyrotechnics; for life itself has taken hold of him in order to recreate itself in his image, and he sits within himself at its heart and pours out from its impulse a throng of beings, as real in the world he creates as men are in this other world from which he takes his hints, a multitude, a riot of living images carried on a many-coloured sea of revealing speech and a never failing surge of movement. His dramatic method seems indeed to have usually no other intellectual purpose, aesthetic motive or spiritual secret: ordinarily it labours simply for the joy of a multiple poetic vision of life and vital creation with no centre except the life-power itself, no coordination except that thrown out spontaneously

by the unseizable workings of its energy, no unity but the one unity of man and the life-spirit in Nature working in him and before his eyes. It is this sheer creative *ānanda* of the life-spirit which is Shakespeare; abroad everywhere in that age, it incarnates itself in him for the pleasure of poetic self-vision.

All Shakespeare's powers and limitations—for it is now permissible to speak of his limitations—arise from this character of the force that moved him to poetic utterance. He is not primarily an artist, a poetic thinker or anything else of the kind, but a great vital creator and intensely, though within marked limits, a seer of life. His art itself is life arranging its forms in its own surge and excitement, not in any kind of symmetry,—for symmetry here there is none,—nor in fine harmonies, but still in its own way supremely and with a certain intimately metric arrangement of its many loose movements, in mobile perspectives, a succession of crowded but successful and satisfying vistas. While he has given a wonderful language to poetic thought, he yet does not think for the sake of thought, but for the sake of life. His way indeed is not so much the poet himself thinking about life, as life thinking itself out in him through many mouths, in many moods and moments, with a rich throng of fine thought-effects, but not for any clear sum of intellectual vision or to any high power of either ideal or spiritual result. His development of human character has a sovereign force within its bounds, but it is the soul of the human being as seen through outward character, passion, action,—the life-soul, and not either the thought-soul or the deeper psychic being, still less the profounder truth of the human spirit. Something of these things we may get, but only in shadow or as a partial reflection in a coloured glass, not in their own action. In his vision and therefore in his poetic motive Shakespeare never really either rises up above life or gets behind it; he neither sees what it reaches out to nor the great unseen powers that are active within it. At one time, in two or three of his tragedies, he seems to have been striving to do this, but all that he does see then is the action of certain tremendous life-forces, which he either sets in a living symbol or indicates behind the human action, as in *Macbeth*, or embodies, as in *King Lear*, in a tragically uncontrollable possession of his human characters. Nevertheless his is not a drama of mere externalised action, for it lives from within and more deeply than our external life. This is not Virat, the seer and creator of gross forms, but Hiranyagarbha, the luminous mind of dreams, looking through those forms to see his own images behind them. More than any other poet Shakespeare has accomplished mentally the legendary feat of the impetuous sage Viswamitra; his power of vision has created a Shakespearian world of his own, and it is, in spite of its realistic elements, a romantic world in a very true sense of the word, a world of the wonder and free power of life and not of its mere external realities, where what is here dulled and hampered finds a greater enlarged and intense breath of living, an ultra-natural play of beauty, curiosity and amplitude.

It is needful in any view of the evolution of poetry to note the limits within which Shakespeare did his work, so that we may fix the point reached; but still within the work itself his limitations do not matter. And even his positive defects and

lapses cannot lower him, because there is an unfailing divinity of power in his touch which makes them negligible. He has, however much toned down, his share of the Elizabethan crudities, violences, extravagances; but they are upborne on a stream of power and end by falling in into the general greatness of his scheme. He has deviations into stretches of half prosaic verse and vagaries of tortured and bad poetic expression, sometimes atrociously bad; but they are yet always very evidently not failures of power, but the wilful errors of a great poet, more careful of dramatic truth and carried on by his force of expression than bound to verbal perfection. We feel obliged to accept his defects, which in another poet our critical sense would be swift to condemn or reject, because they are part of his force, just as we accept the vigorous errors of a great personality. His limitations are very largely the condition of his powers. Certainly, he is no universal revealer, as his idolators would have him be,—for even in the life-soul of man there are a multitude of things beyond him; but to have given a form so wonderful, so varied, so immortally alive, in so great a surge of the intensest poetical expression, to a life-vision of this kind and this power, is a unique achievement of poetic genius. The future may find for us a higher and profounder, even a more deeply and finely vital aim for the dramatic form than any Shakespeare ever conceived; but until that has been done with an equal power, grasp and fullness of vision and an equal intensity of revealing speech, he keeps his sovereign station. The claim made for him that he is the greatest of poets may very well be challenged,—he is not quite that,—but that he is first among dramatic poets cannot well be questioned.

So far then the English poetic spirit had got in the drama, and it has never got any farther. And this is principally because it has allowed itself to be obsessed by the Elizabethan formula; for it has clung not merely to the Shakespearian form,—which might after due modification still be used for certain purposes, especially for a deeper life-thought expressing itself through the strong colours of a romantic interpretation,—but to the whole crude inartistic error of that age. Great poets, poets of noble subjective power, delicate artists, fine thinkers and singers, all directly they turn to the dramatic form, begin fatally to externalise; they become violent, they gesticulate, they press to the action and forget to have an informing thought, hold themselves bound to the idea of drama as a robust presentation of life and incident and passion. And because this is not a true idea and, in any case, it is quite inconsistent with the turn of their own genius, they fail inevitably. Dryden stumbling heavily through his rhymed plays, Wordsworth of all people, the least Elizabethan of poets, penning with a conscientious dullness his *Borderers*, Byron diffusing his elemental energy in bad blank verse and worse dramatic construction, Keats turning from his unfinished *Hyperion* to wild schoolboy imitations of the worst Elizabethan type, Shelley even, forgetting his discovery of a new and fine literary form for dramatic poetry to give us the Elizabethan violences of the *Cenci*, Tennyson, Swinburne, even after *Atalanta*, following the same ignis fatuus, a very flame of fatuity and utility, are all victims of the same hypnotism. Recently a new turn is

visible; but as yet it is doubtful whether the right conditions for a renovation of the dramatic form and a true use of the dramatic motive have come into being. At any rate the predestined creator, if he is to come, is not yet among us.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

INWARD-UPWARD

“MILLION the ways
To meet the Grace,”
Say the Master
And the Mother,
Unbound and free,
Yet willing to be
With you and me
In Love and Light,
And deepest union
Of mind and heart
On being's height.
The myriad Benign
Sends out one call
To life's endeavour:
“Dissolve the self
In the Divine
And merge your all
In Him forever!”

RATILAL S. SHAH

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of September 1980)

June 20, 1935

I have a headache at times—it is worse after pranam. Is it yogic in origin? Do you break resistances by giving pains and aches?

No, to make people ill in order to improve or perfect them is not Mother's method. But sometimes things like headache come because the brain either tries too much or does not want to receive or makes difficulties. But the Yogic headaches are of a special kind and after the brain has found out the way to receive or respond they don't come at all.

I seem to be making some excursions into the world of music, in my dreams. Last night I heard some professional female singer singing and playing. I thought it was lower vital enjoyment. The other day I heard some songs about yourself—a higher vital enjoyment, I believe.

Yes, these are excursions into the vital world (lower or higher) or rather worlds, for there are any number of dreams there. They are not really dreams—dreams proper belong to the subconscious and are usually a jumble.

June 21, 1935

On the 19th you asked me why the devil I opened to the Man of Sorrows. How can I help it when the atmosphere is thick with doubt and depression? Human as we are, it is not easy to be free from them. They are inevitable in the very nature of things, aren't they?

No, not in this exaggerated form—and not with the vital luxuriating and wallowing in its misery. Attacks and perturbations on the surface, yes; but in some they are slight, in others rare and there is a clear mind or clear soul that looks at them and says, "O, you asses!" Mark that only a minority have allowed up the Man of Sorrows on their backs, though others have dallied with him. I admit that recently this minority has increased in numbers—the subconscious. I suppose!

We hear that you also had to undergo a lot of suffering and despair—to the extent

of wanting to commit suicide!!!

What nonsense! Suicide! Who the devil told you that? Even if I knew that all was going to collapse tomorrow, I would not think of suicide, but go on to do what I still could for the future.

Give us some vision or flame of your 'Vishwarupa' to save us from being crushed by the Man of Sorrows. Let him be kicked into the dust-bin!

You indeed write very skilfully in the style of the Man of Sorrows! That is just his tone.

R has got back his headache! What do you say to my giving him some arsenic compound injection?

You can; but R has again become irregular—windows shut, breakfast shunned, evening meal shunned etc., etc. He is really the architect of his own headache. He speaks of sadness, but refuses to give the reason of his mysterious sadness. You will say "The Man of Sorrows", but medically we can't admit this gentleman.

June 24, 1935

Today I went to see a football match; tomorrow is the finals! Can I go to see it if I can arrange the dispensary work with Rajangam?

The Lord he knows.

June 27, 1935

All rosy things and poetry have died and the old Nirod-self is the master of the field!

Better turn it out again—it is not a place for it to graze in.

June 29, 1935

I objected to J having talks and discussions with another friend in the Dispensary. I said they could do it in my bedroom but J got upset and left the place. This has happened more than once. I am very much indebted to her for having brought me here and helping me in many other ways. What should I do?

You are perfectly *right* in your objection. It is extraordinary how people here make a personal matter of everything and extraordinary how they want to mix up

everything and make একাকার¹

As for the rest, well, gratitude is a good thing, but it is after all the Divine who brought you to the Divine and the best gratitude you can show to the instrument is to do what is best for your sadhana as well as hers. It is a little difficult to say what you should do in the case. A quiet friendliness without insistence on either side would be the best thing, if J agrees to it and follows it. Friendship in the big sense of the term is another —² matter; it is an exceedingly difficult affair and needs a gift for it on both sides. From what you say, you don't seem to fit into each other very well and, if so, the chances for it are not very hopeful. To break off altogether seems to be hard, to insist on old ties and make demands is obviously out of place—why not attempt by common agreement a middle way? J's over-sensitive vital? Well, she has to get over it, I suppose—for the sake of her own sadhana.

June 30, 1935

Shall I try to bear the knocks and shocks when they come, keeping a friendly feeling within for her? And how much of the letter you have written shall I show her?

I am rather doubtful about the letter. The other process is better—at the same time getting J to understand gradually (though as quickly as possible) that there must be a change in the spirit and nature of any relation between you.

Yes, it is after all the Divine who brought me here. But before all was it not her prayer and aspiration for me that was the cause?

As J did not pre-exist before the Divine and it is not she who is managing the affairs of the world, I prefer to believe that it was J who was the instrument of the Divine and not the Divine the instrument of J.

Was it predestined that she should be a link between you and me? Had I really no chance independently?

Predestination and chance are words—words that obscure the truth by their extreme rigidity of definition. All is done through a play of forces which seems to be a play of different possibles, but there is Something that looks and selects and uses without being either blindly arbitrary (predestination) or capriciously decisive (chance).

I heard from Jaswant that L and S are two most sincere sadhikas; this seems to have been your opinion.

I am exceedingly surprised to hear it. L, yes—since she had her conversion several

¹ a jumble. ² Illegible

years ago, has been single-pointed and single-hearted towards the Mother. But S? She has experiences, but her vital is as vagabond as a butterfly; that is why she does not arrive.

You know that I have not served or sought any god. Yoga and religion were a repulsion to me. I can't conceive of any Krishna, Shiva or even Buddha helping me—since I have not taken their name.

Perhaps Mahomed?

I have neither any great being nor power behind me which many have, I hear.

(Sri Aurobindo underlined 'great being nor power':) Hallo, hallo! What's that?

I know only you and none else. You may say, "What's the use if you don't keep true to me?" Will you also say, "No such sentiments without fulfilling the conditions"?

The sentiment is all right, but you must either trundle along yourself or allow yourself to be trundled along (excuse this simile) towards the goal—one of the two, what the blazes!

July 1, 1935

Take S's case—what suffering she went through for the Divine. Left her home, husband.etc...

Both J and S are made up of disparate elements which are not at all in harmony with each other—so are many others, it is a common case. Nothing to be surprised at in that, the man harmonised round something central in him is a rarity.

Now about predestination and chance. The ultimate responsibility then lies with this 'Something' on which the play of forces is dependent, and then—no free will, no chance?

There is no question of responsibility. The "Something" does not act arbitrarily, paying no heed to the play of forces or the man's nature. "Selects" does not mean "selects at random." If a man puts himself on the side of or into the hands of the hostile influences and says "This way I will go and no other. I want my ego, my greatness, my field of power and action"—has not the Something the right to say "I agree. Go and find it—if you can"? On the other hand, if the balance of forces is otherwise, less on one side, the selection may be the other way, the saving element being present,

to determine another orientation. But to understand the working of the Cosmic Something one must see not only the few outward factors seen by the human eye, but the whole working with all its multitudinous details—that one cannot do unless one is oneself in the Cosmic Consciousness and with some opening at least to the Overmind.

There is no such thing as free will, but there is the power of the Purusha to say “yes” or “no” to any particular pressure of Prakriti, and there is the power of the mind, vital etc. to echo feebly or strongly the Purusha’s “yes” or “no” or to resist it. A constant (not a momentary) Yes or No has its effect in the play of the forces and the selection by the Something.

July 2, 1935

I find that sincerity, openness etc. are good in theory but very difficult in practice.

It has got to be done all the same.

I said one thing that struck me very much—that I have been so fortunate in having your friendship and still I indulge in trifles.

Almost everybody is like that in one way or another.

July 5, 1935

Apropos of X's tactics you have said: "The eternal feminine? Terribly so—but that is not the Real Woman." Who is the Real Woman, please? Anyone here?

I was not referring to anyone in particular but to the element in Woman which is simple, straightforward, faithful, sympathetic—without the twist in it. I don't mean anything very high, but something straight and unspoiled and clear.

July 8, 1935

Somehow it seems the atmosphere is very heavy nowadays. How I suffered without any apparent cause—as if something had gripped me by the throat.

You should not allow yourself to be gripped by the throat—grip the other fellow's throat and fling him away.

It seems I am now the target of all depression. But why?

But why accept a depression which has no reason for its existence?

Is it, as our friend Jaswant says, the Ashram vital that affects me, or a personal one?

In Jaswant's case it is personal—in yours it looks like surrender to the "Ashram" or rather to the "Anti-Ashram" vital.

*They ... say that you are now handling the lower vital and so the general trouble.
True?*

Subconscious vital physical—the lower vital is irrational but not so utterly "without reason" as that.

July 9, 1935

J says he has no personal difficulties; he has to suffer for the sake of the Ashram.

Rubbish! His own vital has always been vehement and unstable.

You say his depression is personal, mine impersonal, while all the time I was cursing myself for my neuro-vital mechanism.

The form it has taken is not personal to you, it has all the sign of the "regulation lathi" attack. Of course it takes advantage of something in you, but that is a different matter.

Is it the time and circumstance that are at fault or the nature of the blessed instruments?

It is the nature of the human being. Whoever told you it was an easy job?

July 11, 1935

All on a sudden, N said, he felt giddy. I didn't find any apparent reason. Giddiness in old people is an important symptom. Let me predict that this old man will give you a lot of trouble.

I fear you are right. The only chance is that he has some responsiveness, but his physical self is too weak.

He is very nervous and afraid after S's death. I wish you had adopted a modified Spartan system in your school of training.

So do I. It would have saved a lot of bother.

July 13, 1935

N is slightly better. I came to know he had been taking a lot of mangoes. Won't it be better to tell him to rigorously keep to the Ashram diet for the sake of his health?

If he wants to be healthy and last he must certainly be careful about his diet. It is certainly important at his age.

My cold has given me the quick realisation that everything in this world—including the Divine—is Maya. What Shankara and Buddha realised by sadhana, I realise by a simple cold!

No need of sadhana for that—anybody with a fit of the blues can manage that. It is to get out of the Maya that sadhana is needed.

July 16, 1935

(Regarding a certain incident that had recently occurred): I was under the impression that Mother could at once know of such things. Some even say that she knows everything—all that is material or spiritual. Others maintain that she knows when the question of consciousness is involved, e.g. sex movements etc., but not so much about material things.

Good Lord! You don't expect her mind to be a factual encyclopaedia of all that is happening on all the planes and in all the universes? Or even on this earth, e.g. what Loyd George had for dinner yesterday?

Questions of consciousness, of course, she always knows even with her outermost physical mind. Material facts she can know but is not bound to do it. What would be true to say, is that she can know if she concentrates or if her attention is called to it and she decides to know. I often know from her what has happened before it is reported by anyone. But she does not care to do that on a general scale.

What is then the exact significance of your statement:

"Behave as if the Mother was looking at you, for indeed she is always present."?

It is the emanation of the Mother that is with each sadhak all the time. In former days when she was spending the night in a trance and not working in the Ashram, she brought back with her the knowledge of all that was happening to everybody. Nowadays she has no time for that.

All this is very interesting. I suppose you have an equal number of emanations yourself. Their object must be to give us protection.

I am not aware of any emanations of mine. As for the Mother's, they are not there for protection, but to support the personal relation or contact with the sadhak, and to act so far as he will allow them to act.

This question of Mother's knowledge became even more interesting for me today. She gave me the flower signifying "Discipline". I began to wonder why this particular flower was given; at last I remembered that yesterday I had not observed the right discipline in the matter of taking food with X and Y.

In this respect the Mother is guided by her intuitions which tell her which flower is needed at the moment or helpful. Sometimes it is accompanied by a perception of a particular state of consciousness, sometimes by that of a material fact; but only the bare fact, usually, e.g.—it would not specify that it was "that particular thing" that was done or how X or Y came in. Not that that is impossible, but it is unnecessary and does not happen unless needed.

July 19, 1935

Kindly enlighten us a little more regarding the emanations. How do they support the personal relation? I thought that all personal relations were with the Mother direct, not through a deputy! Then again, the different forms of the Mother that one sees in dreams—are they also her emanations?

(It is terribly difficult to write of these things, for you are all as ignorant as blazes about these things and misunderstand at every step. The Emanation is not a deputy, but the Mother herself. She is not bound to her body, but can put herself out (emanate) in any way she likes. What emanates, suits itself to the nature of the personal relation she has with the sadhak which is different with each, but that does not prevent it from being herself. Its presence with the sadhak is not dependent on his consciousness of it. If everything were dependent on the surface consciousness of the sadhak, there would be no possibility of the divine action anywhere; the human worm would remain the human worm and the human ass the human ass, for ever and ever. For if the Divine could not be there behind the veil, how could either ever become conscious of anything but their wormhood and asshood even throughout the ages?)

When X says that he feels the Mother's physical touch, with whom does he have the contact—the Mother or the emanation.

With the Mother—the emanation helping—which is its business.

By the way, are these brackets about emanations absolutely unbreakable or can they

be withdrawn in favour of a few?

You have already spoken to J, she says. That does not matter; but they are not to be thrown down for others. It would only create useless mental froth and bubbles.

July 20, 1935

In your letter on the emanation, do you mean by a "personal relation" the impersonal person that is the psychic?

The psychic is not impersonal. You must be thinking of the universal Atman. The psychic is always personal and individual.

Unfortunately, I don't feel any personal relation with the Mother. There lies the whole difficulty of the sadhana.

One has to become conscious by the awakening of the inner mind and vital—or best of all by the awakening of the psychic. It is quite possible for two persons to have a relation of which one is conscious and the other is not—his mental blindness or vital misunderstandings coming in the way. That is frequent even in ordinary life. Very often one becomes conscious of it only when he loses it (by the death of the other person or otherwise) and is then full of repinings for his blindness.

X writes in an article that through sorrow and suffering God leads us to immortality; that there is a glory, even a bliss, in their conquest. I am afraid my mystic vision and chicken heart do not see much in this theory. Conquest of sorrow and suffering is all right for brave hearts like Vivekananda's and X's, or even for poor hearts like mine when they have a Guru like Sri Aurobindo and a mother like our Mother here to do the sadhana for them; but what about the people outside who are wallowing under the weight of their crosses?

I suppose you have not read my "Riddle of this World", but it is a similar solution I put there. X's way of putting it is a trifle too "Vedantic-Theistic"—in my view it is a transaction between the One and the Many. In the beginning it was you (not the human you who is now complaining but the central being) which accepted or even invited the adventure of the Ignorance; sorrow and struggle are a necessary consequence of the plunge into the Inconscience and the evolutionary emergence out of it. The explanation is that it had an object, the eventual play of the Divine Consciousness and Ananda not in its original transcendence but under conditions for which the plunge into the Inconscience was necessary. It is fundamentally a cosmic problem and can be understood only from the cosmic consciousness. If you want a solution which will be agreeable to the human mind and feelings, I am afraid

there is none. No doubt if human beings had made the universe, they would have done much better; but they were not there to be consulted when they were made. Only your central being was there and that was much nearer in its temerarious foolhardiness to Vivekananda's or X's than to the repining prudence of your murmuring and trembling human mentality of the present moment—otherwise it would never have come down into the adventure. Or perhaps it did not realise what it was in for? It is the same with the wallowers under their cross. Even now they wallow because something in them likes the wallowing and bears the cross because something in them chooses to suffer. So?—

KINSHIP

IN Thy garden of clay
 A tiny bud of rose,
 I blossom ere the day
 Its red splendour shows.
 On Thy rock of Eternity
 A silver-white waterfall,
 I run to Thee, my vast Sea,
 To surrender my all.

A string of Thy mighty lyre,
 At Thy touch I thrill;
 A spark of Thy sacred fire
 Up do I fly at Thy Will.
 Thou, the Mother, I, a fledgling,
 Sun-visioned, young and bold;
 Thus, through ages unending,
 Our kinship has been told.

KAMALAKANTO

POETRY - YOGA - PHILOSOPHY - LIFE

SOME CORRESPONDENCE OF 1969

I

Dear Dilip,

I have taken nearly a month to reply and I apologise for the delay. Much of my correspondence has of late been neglected because I was deep in the problem of the Indus script which has again come up in the scholarly world with the attempt made by four Finns to read those enigmatic signs with the help of a computer. But I haven't neglected to pass your enclosed note on to Dyuman and the staggering photo to Kalyan. Your hirsute achievement outdoes anything I may have accomplished in my Christlike past: you look like Lord God Himself rather than any Incarnation of Him! The traditional Jehovah seems come to life but, except for Jehovah's Witnesses (quite a large crowd, I hear), frail faltering fumbling fallible man is not likely to rejoice at such an apparition. He cannot help echoing Arjuna's cry: "Show me again that other form of thine; turn thy heart to grace..."

Now to the line you quote from Sri Aurobindo. It's to be taken along with its successor, thus:

As rain-thrashed mire the marvel of the rose,
Earth waits that distant marvel to disclose.¹

The non-elliptic order in prose would be: "As rain-thrashed mire waits to disclose the marvel of the rose, Earth waits to disclose that distant marvel"—the last-named marvel being, of course, the divine existence to be realised by man in the future, as the three preceding stanzas tell us. This should make the meaning quite clear.

May I yield to the temptation to comment on the poetic quality of the lines? You must have noticed the massing of three consecutive stresses in the two opening feet of the first line, stresses reinforced by the quantitative lengths of the vowels concerned: "rain-thrashed mire." This massing and reinforcement bring out the heavy and continuous beating of the rain on the soil reducing it to mire and making it fertile under that relentless treatment by the heavenly rapture bent on awakening the dust to evolve and manifest the Divine Beauty hidden within it in tranced seed-form. Something of the packed condition, the dense shutting-up of the Divine Beauty in the apparent Inconscience, is also suggested by the special technique of stress, vowel-length and the accumulation of consonants (n-thr, sh'd-m). In the rest of the line you get a harmonious and loosened-out movement, echoing the free untroubled nature of the ultimate manifestation. But in the midst of the movement-contrast there are connective alliterations (rain-rose, mire-marvel) suggesting an organic continuity of the evolutionary process, the natural coming up of what was already and

¹ *Collected Poems* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1972) p. 157.

always there in what looked like an opposite phenomenon. Finally, I may mark the outstandingly rolling sound of the line—the multiplicity of the *r*'s, though all the *r*'s are not clearly vocalised. The total effect here recalls that of Shakespeare's

In cradle of the rude imperious surge

or Sri Aurobindo's own (from *Savitri*):

Never a rarer creature bore his shaft.

Possibly the rolling sound suggests the vibrant action of the fecundating rain.

The next line has a movement-contrast, but on a smaller scale. The first foot is a heavy spondee (two consecutive stresses over long vowel-sounds), the other four have their stresses spaced out and their quantities varied. The artistic device of "mire" alliterating with "marvel" in the preceding line has here a counterpart: the alliteration of "distant" with "disclose". The same end is served—the rapprochement and liaison of the involved with the evolved to be. Now, however, the general sound-effect is predominantly sibilant, gathering to a climax in "disclose". But, just as "thrashed" and "rose" in the first line anticipate this effect, so too "Earth" and "marvel" carry on and connect up with the one in that line. The repeated word "marvel", of course, forges the link between the two halves of the statement most obviously and perhaps hints that the rose of common experience is a fore-glimpse, as it were, of the terrestrial epiphany in the supramental future—a bright though limited reflex of the beatific Archetype, the brief yet recurrent promise of the phenomenon's transfiguration by a process undreamt-of by Plato. And indeed the marvel that is the rose fitly symbolises this transfiguration, for what is to be brought forth is visioned and pictured best in Sri Aurobindo's mantric *Rose of God*. There too the *grand finale* is a splendid play of expressive sibilance at the end of each line:

Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature's abyss:
Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life Beatitude's kiss.

What, we may lastly question, is the inner purpose of the sibilance? The suggestion, I believe, is of a secret whispered, a mystery let loose, a supreme peace spread forth, the sense of a divine love's ecstatic kiss created in the outer life.

*

I am sure you will see "beautifully" after you have recovered from your cataract-operation. But surely you did not need your surgeon to tell you this. If at all a poet sees, he always sees "beautifully". What he has to pray for is that he may also see "truthfully"—and things like cataract-operations, which are akin to what

Browning welcomes as

each rebuff
That makes life's smoothness rough,

can go some way towards effecting such a mode of sight. Then indeed cataracts become as heralds from on high and we can ingeniously turn into a great truth the great beauty of that line of Wordsworth's—

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep...

I am myself developing cataracts in both eyes. I hope the "steep" of my nose will become symbolic of truth's height in the course of time.

*

What the music-critic of the *Times of India* has written is a very penetrating report and recalls to me some of the best and happiest moments I have spent in your company in a super-Shelleyan

World far from ours
Where music and moonlight and feeling
Are one—

feeling of the deepest heart whose beats count the approaching footsteps of the ecstatic Unknown, moonlight falling from that Ether of Ananda which the Taittiriya Upanishad speaks of as the subtle supreme circumambience without whose secret presence no creature can breathe and live, music that comes at once from the farthest and the nearest and is the basic *chhanda* of the upward-moving universe's zig-zig through time and is the throb of intimate omnipotence, unfailing friend of the human soul, about whom Sri Aurobindo has written:

Ever we hear in the heart of the peril a flute go before us...

2

Dear Morwenna,

I was very glad to get your letter and would be grateful to receive any piece of writing from you. Choose anything you regard as helpful to "East-West understanding" (of course by East I don't mean Russia nor by West America!) or to the peace that passeth understanding. "Sport, the arts, politics or just life"—the themes are all welcome. But if you have listed them because they could be acceptable to *Mother*

India, why did you think *Mother India* wanted abstruse matter from you? We don't specialise in abstruse thought. Or do I strike you as always trying—like the Negro preacher—"to fathom the unfathomable and unscrew the Inscrutable"? Perhaps one or two essays in *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo* that came out last year were somewhat on the difficult side but my aim has always been to achieve clarity without sacrificing profundity and the difficulty lay merely in the look of the themes and in the many-pathedness necessary for the approach and exploration. Again, over and above clarity I wish always to keep in touch with the throb of desire and dream and deed: not only the vibrations of light but also the pulsations of life are what my writing seeks to capture. I hope I do not completely fail—even if I cannot succeed, as Sri Aurobindo does, in making the spiritual light itself come as pulsing life and mingle with our common day. Sri Aurobindo's success strikes me all the more because most attempts to expound his "philosophy" become what he himself never wanted to produce—namely, philosophy. That means that they are ponderous, abstruse, pedestrian. I find to my delight, whenever I open *The Life Divine*, that all of its massive multi-meaning sentences move in my mind with an extraordinary lightness for all their weight of sense and sound: they are like elephants with wings. Other people's expositions, as a rule, are dull and heavy—half-dead matter ground out by complicated thought and not a piece of organic grandeur capable of uplifting us because it is itself air-borne. I suppose the difference lies in the "overhead" thought making the brain-mind its medium in the one case and the brain-mind converting into its own terms the "overhead" thought in the other. But, of course, there are exceptions. And I am not just indulging in flattery when I say that all expositions of yours which I have come across have had some living movement in them. And so, if you have really given up philosophical writing, I feel sorry. Perhaps you can't help being—despite your own diffidence—

A thinker and toiler in the Ideal's air,

and whatever you write will have height and sweep and the stir of a thinking which also feels and sees. If, at the moment, you are inclined to pick up topics not directly philosophical, go ahead. I am sure you will not be just reporting things, however momentous they may be and however interestingly you may present them; they will have in some form or other the qualities I have found in you, and hence I am not afraid to give you the green signal. Do anything—but please do it.

You write: "I have often thought how incredibly ignorant (sorry to be blunt!) you all are about us here! I am sure that we are, too, about India. The press gives us a picture of abysmal corruption and fanatical religious intolerance, but, of course, never mentions positive contributions like the Ashram, and the whole picture is probably most lop-sided. It may be that you do not feel that it is important, or necessary, to understand the West, and indeed, I have heard people who have visited the Ashram say that it is quite out of touch and indifferent to what is going on here. I should be very sad to think that this was so. The opposites are certainly violently

constellated here, as elsewhere, but there is a tremendous contribution of creative thinking and doing too—and also beautiful and eventful things, both small and great, to enjoy.”

I for one am intensely interested in all that happens on your side. And many others too in the Ashram are the same. People from the West, who have visited the Ashram, come mostly in contact with those who are entrusted with showing people around or else those who try to get from everybody what they want and not what the visitors can give. Frequently we are so engrossed in wishing to impart something, that we forget we may have many things to learn. I am not much of a propagandist, I am afraid, even if I have turned out quite a lot of expository Aurobindonianism. In my meetings with people I am not eager to make revelations and epiphanies: in fact I fight shy of spiritual talk and come out with my little secrets only if somebody digs and digs and I feel that we are on intimate terms and I can talk of big things in a soft whisper, as it were. My interlocutors have themselves so many new matters to bring to my attention that I try my best to “milk” them. Just two days back, Dr. C.F. von Weizsäcker visited the Ashram. Some of us “intellectuals” were rallied round to help him see the inner work being done here. I happened to be the only person who, 20 years ago, had read one of his books. I knew him to be a really competent thinker and seeker in the field of scientific theory. When the conference took place I couldn’t help drawing out all that he had to give. In fact the conference turned out to be a talk between him and me—I asking questions, trying to plumb the subtleties of his thought and he appreciatively disclosing everything he had been lately trying to formulate to himself. I had a most exciting 2½ hours. I found Dr. Weizsäcker a really profound interpreter, and it was a treat to discuss with him Plato and Aristotle in relation to the newest concepts of theoretical physics. I am certain he felt very happy too—and he has presented me with a copy of one of his books he happened to have with him: *The History of Nature*, published in 1949—and promised to send me his latest books from Germany where he is Head of the Planck Institute. Unfortunately I couldn’t meet him again and I am sure my friends, in my absence, did get a chance to give him the inside dope about Yoga. I guess they have done their job well, for in the inscription to the book sent me before he left he has written: “To Amal Sethna from C.F. Weizsäcker who is leaving Sri Aurobindo Ashram with a thankful heart.” But I like to think that his heart is thankful also because he found somebody as fascinated by his specific problems as he himself.

AMAL KIRAN

SPEECH DELIVERED BY JAGANNATH KHANNA ON 28.2.1980

AT SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM, DELHI BRANCH

FRIENDS, specially my young friends, for I see a large number of young faces here, I am here today in your midst because Mr. Cheddi Lal and Mr. Nihal Chand Varma asked me to say something on Auroville some three or four weeks back to which I replied, "I will try."

Sir Winston Churchill speaking to Billy Graham once said, "Young man, perhaps you are right. Perhaps the ultimate solution of all our problems lies in the Word of God." This is absolutely true. We must know the entire mystery behind this universe. We must know the Will of God. We must know His intention in this vast evolutionary plethora of Life. Once we have known it, we can direct our steps systematically towards that goal. But this is not easy. A vast number of Rishis and Yogis and philosophers of all kinds and all lands have tried their hands at it but today it seems Sri Aurobindo tops them all. He has correctly unravelled the intention of the Most High. His whole life, His doings, His writings and those of His collaborator The Mother point out to us in no uncertain terms the direction in which we have to move in order to realise the completest fulfilment of life and the constant harmonious development in all the facets of human existence.

Spirituality means reversal of consciousness, going deep within our hearts and living there. All the sages have advised us to do this. If we are to talk of a seat of consciousness at all, or rather of the psyche which includes far more than what we know as consciousness, it is perfectly correct to place that seat in the heart. In the heart, whether anatomists have found it or not, is the deep Well, from which comes bubbling up the spring of Life, the Well which is also the Well of Truth, the Deep Abyss, hidden in which abides the Pramaeval Spirit of Light. Were it not for this inner Light there could be no light in the world at all. This Light has to work in darkness or semi-darkness on the regions in us that are still in the Night. But no matter in what way, we have to continue till the victory over falsehood and separateness has been achieved. There is the Ashram and there is Auroville and a large number of people are engaged in doing just this. We should have many such Ashrams and Aurovilles all over the world, so that the message of psychicisation, spiritualisation, and supramentalisation is scattered broadcast all over the globe for the greatest good of all and for the next step of development in the human race.

Sometime back, about a decade ago to be precise, I wrote a letter to Sri Satya Sai Baba in which I said: "You, Sir, say that you have come for Dharma-Sthapana, for Sanatana Dharma, for its propagation all round. What greater Dharma can there be than the Dharma to take man forward in his evolution? Self-conscious human being has emerged from conscious animal but is self-conscious human the last link in the chain of evolution? Clearly not. Such an imperfect being, if he were the last

link, would only prove that evolution has failed, nature has failed and God has failed. But God cannot fail and the divine intention is to surpass the human mentality and replace it with the supramental consciousness which would be a knot of the transcendent, the cosmic and the individual consciousness present in the waking state. Naturally therefore such a person would normally possess all the powers inherent in the transcendent absolute consciousness and the cosmic consciousness. Such a man must come forth from the scrappy and imperfect individual that a human being is today and there cannot be a better Dharma than to develop such a person." All this I say to you also. Let us bend our energies towards this desideratum.

With all the turmoils and defects and mistakes, we in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville are just trying to do this. As for the very evident lapses in Auroville today Sri Aurobindo had already predicted, "In the supramental gnostic nature there will therefore be no need of the mental rigid way and hard style of order, a limiting standardisation, an imposition of a fixed set of principles, the compulsion of life into one system or pattern which is alone valid because it is envisaged by mind as the one right truth of being and conduct. For such a standard cannot include and such a structure cannot take up into itself the whole of life, nor can it adapt itself freely to the pressure of the ALL-LIFE or to the needs of the evolutionary Force; it has to escape from itself or to escape from its self-constructed limits by its own death, by disintegration or by an intense conflict revolutionary disturbance."

And so through all conflicts and vicissitudes we are progressing towards supramentalisation because the Supramental Consciousness was brought down in the earth-atmosphere by the Mother on February 29, 1950 and it will not abate nor will it allow us to rest till we have realised the vision of Sri Aurobindo of ushering in the reign of Truth and Immortality in the very physical field of our existence.

We all can do Yoga in different ways in which it is available to us. We can with Raman Maharishi enquire into the nature of our Real Self and achieve it or we can sing and chant with Swami Ramdas, "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram" and fill our being with bliss or we can do the bidding of Sri Satya Sai Baba and try to achieve Satya, Dharma, Prem and Shanti and also succeed in some measure or we can with Sri Krishnaprem follow the Yoga of Kathopanishad and go very deep within, but all this, I may assure you, achieves just a bit of psychicisation and a bit of spiritualisation, never supramentalisation which is what we as Aurobindonians are seeking and trying for, through multifarious ways and we are right on the path of exploration and research. For all our doubts and for all our problems we have an incomparable book, *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo. We all ought to go through it over and over again. Even if at first we don't understand we must go on and on and we shall understand it, enjoy it and bring out all the shades of meaning that are there in its various chapters.

To usher in the Supramental Consciousness and the Supramental Body is no joke and yet we have to attempt just that. The Mother said once, referring to herself, "I don't say that this particular body will be divinised but that some day some-

body will definitely become luminous, invulnerable, flexible, plastic and light." Even to me personally She said something like this. So, my dear friends, it is decreed. Sri Aurobindo and The Mother are both present right upto the subtle-physical and we can contact them for help. They are leading the evolution with as much force as when they were in the body. The experiment is on. The research is on. We have to believe in it and participate in this marvellous adventure. The Ashram is the field of this adventure. Auroville is another field. Perhaps we need an Ashram and Auroville in every country, perhaps we need them in every province of India. All will come if we sincerely march towards the Light that Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have shown us.

EXPRESSION

EPIC brilliance forwarding and flooding the waiting air,
 Symbol caresses of argent Time
 Fill the space where once was Void.

A passage Beyond, an arching climb
 Can bring the thrust of a Word to be
 And life-laughter cadences, movements sublime,
 Come streaming like a white-woven sea.

Finding a meaning and a message to bring,
 Finding a sweetness, a bloom-burst to sing,
 The Heart breaks its mould and ravishes Space,
 The Soul casts its lot with the All-Beautiful's face.

PATTI

**"I CHERISH GOD THE FIRE, NOT GOD
THE DREAM"**

(Savitri)

BLAZE in us, Divine Fire!
Omnipotent God, arise within our breast!
Burn pure our dross and mire
Until each cell brims with Love's ardent zest.

Flare, tremendous Grace,
Out of Thy concentrated core's immense
Gold rock of consciousness—
A massive aureate flame like granite dense.

O self-embracing One
Whose passionate play is all this myriad-hurled
Prismatic, protean
Tornado of bliss unfolding world on world,

Kindle our souls! Outpour
Thy lightning-splendour! Dynamic Infinite,
The cosmos is Thy soar
From peak to greater peak of self-delight;

Time is Thy revelling:
Within the boundless nuptial chamber of space
Thy Light is ravishing
With ever-growing rapture its own rays;

Life is Thy holy oil
Upon the fateful altar of the earth;
O Fire, illuminate our soil
With the Sacrament Supreme—Thy veilless birth!

ALEXANDER BRODT

THE MAZE AND THE SUCCOUR

I COUNT with fingers of a million hands
But fail to keep pace
With the flow of countless forms
That tempt as I plod on
Through the fields of Life.

All transient affairs
Are like snaking paths and dead-end lanes
That complete the maze through which I pass.
I did touch the stars once and again
But too unoften
For that memory to be my guide.

Maybe
Those affairs with the stars
Pervade all the beings within
And hence they do not sign their names
In memory's register.
Their engrams are found
In regions different
Than the continents
Of grey cortex.

I await and aspire
For that calm joy, the warm unease
And the soft pain deep within,
The trio that heralds
Birth of the inner call,
Onrush of the lightning from the inner soul
Spews forth and through,
Illumining the dark nooks and corners
And collects all little prayers
From cells of body, mind and spirit
And forms a pyramid of light
Fetching Thy Grace
That succours and delivers
All my being from this maze.

DINKAR PALANDE

THE POET

I TAKE a dry twig from the ground
And paint it with a rainbow's gleams.
And sights and scenes so commonplace
I fashion into golden dreams.

I gather dew-drops from the grass
And set them in a string of pearls.
I touch a granite piece and lo!
A statue's wondrous charm unfurls.

A cake of charcoal at my touch
Gives out a glow of flaming gold.
A thousand beauteous forms I put
Into a little chalky mould.

Bring me mud-water from the street:
I'll make it taste like honeyed wine.
The raven's harsh discordant cries—
I change them into notes divine.

I scoop up earth to offer you;
It smells as sweet as sandal paste.
I change to ever-shining gold
The things you throw away as waste.

Give me your heart that rolls in slush,
I'll light it with a heavenly flame.
My songs of truth and love and joy
Shall make Infinity your aim!

M. L. THANGAPPA

POEMS BEFORE AND AFTER 1973

OFFERING VIII

OF THE LAST SEASON—1970

SPRING... and my flesh is bursting into bloom;
Nothing can bring this blossoming to seed.
Full leaf and flushed petal will fall...
Will fall on ground untouched of my renewing.

Summer... and my unfruiting limbs
In sun and rain will stand
And watch the sprouting seeds
Walk young green upon the land.

Autumn will pass, and I in winter parched,
My white a torch of fireless flame,
Who will speak my name when it has come to this,
That I am bared to bone... most beautiful and most alone.

OF THE NEW SEASON—AUGUST 1979

There has been the dropping of autumn leaves
And the bare branch and chill winds of winter.
The old tree withers and rots.

But from its true roots
Under Thy loving and sometimes painful urging,
Canticles of joy to Life.
New life, new growth surging,
Shoots bursting to branch for leaf
And flower and nesting
Reach to embrace the sky,
Refuge for petal and wing;
And I from the desolation of winter
Am come into eternal spring.

ELIZABETH STILLER

THE TIME OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

I

BIBLICAL scholars have been at variance as to when the New Testament visualises the return of Jesus Christ from heaven in glory to mark the end of the earth and establish the Kingdom of God. Among the representatives of one view the most prominent figure is Albert Schweitzer, author of the famous book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. In general terms Schweitzer's position is that Jesus pinned everything on the miraculous Kingdom of God coming or being made to come in the very near future. Another opinion, apparently favoured by the majority of commentators, is that, on the whole, we cannot derive any indication of the exact time. A third notion, urged by hot-gospellers, sees our own epoch as heading towards the apocalyptic event. According to the present writer, the dice is loaded definitely in favour of a Schweitzerian standpoint.

Let us begin with St. Paul, whose epistles are the earliest Christian documents.¹ In *I Thessalonians* 4.5 he has the phrase: "...we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." A little later, in the same epistle (5.23) he writes to his followers his prayer to God that their spirit, soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first phrase evidently expects the Second Coming to happen within Paul's own lifetime and the lifetime of those to whom he preached. The second statement brings a momentous precision by the mention of the body. William Barclay, a distinguished Bible scholar, comments that the obvious implication is that Paul expected the Thessalonians to be in the body when Christ came and that the coming of Christ would be within the span of their lives and his own.²

Paul makes a broad reference to the same situation in *Romans* 13.11: "...now is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed..." This is in accord with the more explicit assertion in *I Corinthians* 7.29: "But this I say, brethren, the time is short." Here Paul introduces a passage in which he not only believes in the imminence of the Second Coming but also advises all men to arrange and order their lives on the assumption that this event is going to happen at any moment. *I Corinthians* 16.22 sings the identical tune but with a more violent voice: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." "Anathema" is the Greek for "accursed", and "Maran-atha" the Aramaic for "The Lord is at hand" or "Come, Lord!"

Turning to the three Synoptic Gospels, we may quote what Mark, the author of the earliest, has to say apropos of the Pauline theme: "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the gospel" (1.15). One may ask what Mark means by "at hand". His answer is plain in the words he gives to Jesus:

¹ The text used everywhere in this article is the one originally published from Cambridge in 1899 as *The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, according to the received Greek text together with the English Authorised Version (Photographic Reprint, 1922).

² *The Mind of St. Paul* (Collins Fontana Books, London, 1972), p. 105.

"Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (9.1). Again, there is the same clarification: "this generation shall not pass till all these things be done" (13.30).

Mathew confirms Mark, altering only the manner of expression as fits his own editorial need: "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (16.28). Luke follows suit in his own style: "I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God" (9.17). Matthew has also put into the mouth of Jesus the words: "I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come" (10.23).

One group of the anti-Schweitzerians will fling against all this testimony another saying from Matthew, which is anticipated in Mark. Mark says of the Second Coming: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the Angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (13.32). Matthew's version runs: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (24.36). The inference drawn is that we are forbidden to speculate about the method, the date, the time of the Second Coming—in short, that the Second Coming is not to be fixed to the period immediately succeeding the death of Jesus: it might be then or it might be centuries or even millennia later.

The inference is fallacious. What is unknown, except to God, is simply the precise day of the End. There is no hint that the End would not come in the lifetime of Jesus's first followers. Within that period the End may arrive at any moment: the moment is hidden but the period, which is several times affirmed in the Gospels, remains unchanged thereby.

The full light on this point is shed by some words of Paul's. Paul held that the Day of Christ would come suddenly and without warning. *I Thessalomians* 5.2 informs us: "The Day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." As Barclay puts it: "That was not to say that it would not be preceded by signs (*II Thessalomians* 5.2). There would be a time of falling away, and a final contest with evil, but the actual moment of its coming would be shatteringly sudden."¹ The suddenness makes no odds to the fact of the imminence of the Second Coming according to Paul. It merely means that though the Second Coming would be at hand nobody could tell exactly when it would strike—at what instant of its quite early date. This explains what the Gospels signify by saying that none knows the date. The factor unknown except to the Father is the exact day of the End. But Jesus is clear that the End is very close.

It is notable that the uncertainty of knowledge of the exact day is mentioned by both Mark (13.32) and Matthew (24.36) in the very context which insists in Mark that "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done." (13.30) and in Matthew that "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (24.34). There is no cleavage of periods at all. The anti-Schweitzerian interpretation we have

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

cited is an argument in the void, with no roots in the actual *locus* of the words.

Further, Paul's thief-simile reappears in one form or another in both Mark and Matthew. Mark says: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crow, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping" (13.35). Matthew brings in even the word "thief" when he reports Jesus: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this that if the Goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (24.42-44).

Possibly, as a final shot against the cumulative evidence available, two other statements from Matthew will be pressed into service—and these in order to emphasise our own epoch when there is a very wide-spread activity of Christian missionaries. The first passage occurs in the parable of the tares of the field. It is the phrase: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man: the field is the world..." (13.37-38). The second is more direct in its bearing on the issue: "And the gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come" (24.14). The question will be raised: "How can the End be imminent for Matthew's Jesus if the world is to be the soil for his good seed and if the nations of the whole world are first to be acquainted with the Good News of God's Kingdom?"

The reference in the parable-context is really too general to be of any use. The word "world" indicates nothing more than the material setting of Jesus, which, no doubt, is larger than a mere field of the ordinary sower but need not cover the entire extent of the earth. The generality of the word becomes clear in the phrase almost immediately after it: "...the harvest is the end of the world and the reapers are the angels" (13.39). Here "world" is unmistakably a broad manner of denoting the physical milieu, with its living as well as its non-living objects, within which Jesus is at work.

What is meant by Matthew in the more direct statement becomes seizable from two great announcements by Paul. *Galatians* 3.26-29 runs: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. . . . There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ". . . . In *Colossians* 3. 11 Paul adds another pair of categories—"Barbarian, Scythian"—growing one, since "Christ is all, and in all." Men and women of all kinds and of all countries and races are covered by the passage. The implication is that Paul has met examples of them and converted them. As the Bible testifies, he has preached to Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians and Romans. We know also of the various travels he made to places far removed from one another. Thanks to him, the Gospel has been preached for such "a witness" as Matthew's words have in mind. And yet Paul unhesitatingly watches for the advent of Jesus the second time. What Matthew intends by his sweeping phrase is that not merely the Jews but the members of many other races—"all nations"—hail-

ing from many countries—"all the world" known to Jesus and his followers—shall be baptized as Christians before the End. This does not render the End distant.

The same holds for the command reported in *Acts* 1.8: "...and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Here an extra point of significance is that the mission is explicitly said to be not for future men but for the very companions of Jesus. So "the uttermost part" amounts to what they knew of the earth's extension and what was within reach of them during their remaining life-span and according to their capacity of movement. Taken thus, the hyperbolic expression loses its extremity and diminishes in no way the End's nearness.

Actually, Palestine itself cannot be regarded as exclusively Jewish rather than a melting-pot of prominent types from everywhere. I may quote some passages from the book, *The Man from Nazareth*, by the well-known American Bible-scholar Harry Emerson Fosdick:¹

"In Jesus' day Palestine was set in a matrix of Graeco-Roman cities. Syria to the north; the coast cities along the Mediterranean such as Jappa, Caesarea, Tyre and Sidon, Transjordan, as the ruins of temples and theatres in such towns as Jerash and Amman still show, were all predominantly influenced by Hellenistic culture.

"Moreover, within Palestine itself some areas apparently were so Gentile in population as to be out-of-bounds for stricter Jews. When Jesus, sending his disciples on their first mission, said, 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans' [*Matthew* 10.5], the implication seems plain that there were recognized Gentile districts in Palestine—Tiberias and Taricheae, for example, cities on the Sea of Galilee, Scythopolis south of the Sea, and Sepphoris just north of Nazareth.

"Galilee, thus surrounded by and infiltrated with Hellenistic influence, was certainly in some degree bilingual. Business could hardly have been carried on around the Sea of Galilee without the use of Greek....Moreover, Jerusalem too must have been bilingual. The most thorough study yet made of the use of Greek in ancient Palestine² concludes: 'The degree of a person's Hellenistic culture depended on his social standing. Probably the upper class knew Greek literature, the middle class was less conversant with it, while the knowledge of the lower class was limited to the vernacular only'...

"There was, indeed, at least one Greek-speaking synagogue in the holy city. 'The synagogue of the Freemen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia' [*Acts* 6.9]. The milieu in which Jesus worked was far more cosmopolitan than has generally been supposed.

"Even in its central citadel Judaism had never been impervious to foreign influence. The orthodox Jewish angelology and demonology of Jesus' time had come mainly from Persia, and, as for the Essenes, 'Pythagorism, Orphism, Chaldean astral religion, Parsiism and, apparently, even Buddhism all contributed ingredients much

¹ Pocket Books Inc., New York, 1953, pp. 163-4, 166, 167, 170, 171.

² Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, p. 21.

transformed on their way to the Jordan Valley.⁴¹ The idea of a capsulated Palestinian Judaism unaffected by the world's life and thought is a myth...

"The passage in John's Gospel where 'some Greeks,' pilgrims at the temple festival, come to Philip, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus' [*John* 12.20 f], has been usually interpreted as representing a later situation—the Gentile world becoming the object of Christianity's mission—read back into the days of Jesus. Such may well have been the motive of this passage in John's Gospel, but in the story itself there is nothing inconsistent with the known situation in Palestine.

"Jesus, while facing the narrower type of Palestinian Judaism, faced, as well, the wider outlook of Hellenistic Judaism, and to suppose, as some critics hold, that words such as 'The field is the world' [*Matthew* 13.38], could not have been his, seems unwarranted...

"At Pentecost, almost immediately after Jesus had gone, the audience which was reported to have heard the disciples preach in Jerusalem contained 'Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians' [*Acts* 2.9-11]."

The long and short of my contention is that there is nothing in the Matthew sentence to alter the expectation of a near-at-hand Second Coming. Jesus meant by "all the world" and "all the nations" the numerous types of non-Jews within Palestine and its environs, to whom the Gospel was to be preached. The shift of focus seen in Matthew shows, as Fosdick says, "that Jesus first offered his gospel to the Jews, that he thought of his mission as the preparation of his own people for the world-wide Kingdom's coming, and that only after their rejection of him did his movement turn to the Gentiles." The Gentiles are not to be understood in the sense in which we would understand them now—as far-scattered peoples to be reached by a global proselytising mission—nor even as the goals of the early Church's spreading activity to Christianise pagans: they are not to be taken as objects of operations entailing long periods of time. Jesus's work on the Gentiles no less than on the Jews concerned the representatives of the then-known world present in Palestine and in the matrix in which it was set. The work was such as never to contradict his clear-cut vision of a Second Coming very soon after his ministry.

Proof positive of his vision stares us in the face from the latest document (about 150 A.D.) to be included in the New Testament, known as the Second Letter from Peter. It says: "...knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of creation..." (3.3-4). Here is the confrontation of a keen crisis of faith. The period considered "the last days" is running to its close. The "fathers" of the first Christian

⁴¹ Salo Wittenayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (Columbia University), I, p. 156.

generation are dead. What should have happened while they were alive has not taken place. Everything is going on as usual. The cause of the crisis of faith is that the Second Coming which had been promised as an early event has failed to materialise.

To think of original Christianity as viewing the arrival of the world's End at any other time than in the immediate wake of Christ's life in the first century A.D. is to fly in the teeth of the New Testament's evidence.

2

As a corollary we may add a word of warning about the interpretation of whatever cryptic prophecies the New Testament contains. These prophecies relating to various powers and personalities and occurrences preceding the world's End cannot logically be applied to any epoch subsequent to the first Christian generation. As we have observed, there is a strong tendency among certain enthusiasts to read in our own times the signs set forth in vivid figure by the *Revelation* of St. John the Divine. No doubt, the look-forward to a wonderful consummation of human history is a legitimate one for all religious visionaries and can be said to hold true broadly in every epoch for believers in God's providence. But even for them the apocalyptic antecedents pictured in the New Testament should remain untransferable from the milieu in which the author of *Revelation* lived, inspired with the certitude of Christ's return within a short time to annihilate the evils of the contemporary world.

Revelation was written about 95 A.D. on the island of Patmos which at that time was used by Rome as a place of detention for prisoners whom the emperor ruling from his mighty city, built on seven hills, compelled to work in quarries to procure stone for his building projects. St. John the Divine must have been condemned to labour there, suffering a form of Christian martyrdom as part of the horrible persecutions by the Emperor Domitian who had come to the throne in 81 A.D. Domitian enforced on all his people the worship of himself as a god. Whoever refused to share in this gross official cult had either to die or be punished severely. Both Christians and Jews who found the royal religion a revolting sacrilege were the main victims. The persecutions reached their climax between 93 A.D. and the year 96 when the cruel emperor died. Especially dire were the tribulations of the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea in the Roman provinces of Asia, to whom John sent his message with the aim of encouragement in the midst of the horrors and plagues visiting the earth: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (1.3).

Once more we have the sense of the "last things" being round the corner—"the time is at hand"—and therefore of the exclusive applicableness of the described eventualities to the period concerned. Otto A. Piper, in his article "Antichrist" in *A Handbook of Christian Theology*¹, sketches well in a brief compass the semi-reli-

¹ Edited by Marvin Halverson and Arthur Cohen (Collins Fontana Books, London, 1962), p. 19.

gious semi-political significance of the writing: "The Beast that arises from the Abyss (Rev. 11:7; 13:1) symbolises the powers by which the Church is persecuted (13:7). In its second appearance the Beast is pictured with features of the Antichrist. It looks like a lamb, i.e., Christ (13:11), yet speaks like a dragon, i.e., a ruler (13:15). The second Beast is accompanied by the false prophet (16:13; 19:20; 20:10), and through him, i.e., under a false religious pretext, organises the nations of the earth for the final battle against God at Armageddon (16:16). The Beast and the false prophet are characterised as deceiving people (13:14; 19:20). For the Seer, the Beast is identical with Rome (cf. 17:9) and more generally with all the governments of the earth who follow its instigation." The identity with Rome emerges from the phraseology of the reference given about the seven-headed Beast: "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." Rome, as I have already mentioned, was built on seven hills. The woman symbolises the imperial power centred upon them. One of the most graphic passages of *Revelation* describes her and alludes to the destructive judgment passed on her in heaven. An angel tells the Seer: "Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (17.1-2). Then John continues: "So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus..." (17.3-6).

The vision of Rome's destruction follows: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen ... And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning..." (18.2, 9). Then "the merchants of the earth" are beheld mourning over the fall of "that great city Babylon, that mighty city", since no man any longer buys her merchandise of silk and ivory, cinnamon and ointments, frankincense and chariots, slaves and the souls of men (17.10-13). Finally, the magnificent disclosure of a new heaven and a new earth is made by the angel who is sent by God "to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done" and to tell them, "Behold, I come quickly..." (22.6,7). The book concludes with Jesus himself saying, "Surely I come quickly" and the Seer answering, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (22.20).

Abundantly the Second Coming is proved to have been fixed, by everything in the New Testament, round about the first century A.D. and connected only with the Christians face to face with ancient Rome.

THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of September 1980)

IN THE Veda again and again we find Dawn, the illuminated mentality with its continuous flow of divine knowledge, being invoked simultaneously with Night, the ignorance-shrouded mentality. This appears to be an enigma till we realise that the seer did so to ensure that "the Day-consciousness shall not dazzle him and make him forgetful of the Night in whose womb lies the Day"⁴⁴. This was a necessary alternation in the mystic discipline aiming at attainment of immortality by merging of the human consciousness in the divine. The Isha Upanishad emphasizes this inseparable unity of the apparently dichotomic twins, stating that this knowledge has been revealed by the *dhīrāḥ*, the wise men, the Vedic seers:

He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality. He who knows That as both in one, the Birth and the dissolution of Birth (Non-birth), by the dissolution crosses beyond death and by the Birth enjoys Immortality (sl. I I, 14).⁴⁵

Vidyā (Knowledge, the Dawn) is awareness that all is Brahman, while Āvidyā (Ignorance, the Night) is characterised by an awareness of the infinite multiplicity of creation. The latter, taken to the extreme, ends up in the individual becoming conscious that the Brahman resides within himself and is universally immanent. This is immortality. Again, by losing the consciousness of separate births in that of the Timeless Self, the same immortality is reached. Yet it is also achieved through itself because the realisation takes place in an individual birth which is a becoming within the universe, not outside it. In the ultimate analysis, "Life has to be transcended in order that it may be freely accepted; the works of the universe have to be overpassed in order that they may be divinely fulfilled. The soul even in apparent bondage is really free and only plays at being bound; but it has to go back to the consciousness of freedom and possess and enjoy universally not this or that but the Divine and the All."⁴⁶ This is the message of the Veda and the Upanishad.

Uttanka, therefore, is following the Vedic rishis in envisioning this alternation of darkness and light, although he addresses them as the Universal Prakriti (in I. 113.19 we find Dawn being addressed as "Mother of Gods, Aditi, force of the Infinite"). The link with the twelve spokes or the 360 spokes has been explained by Purani:⁴⁷ Dawn comes (the coming of the luminous godhead) with a constant alternation, thrice ten—the mystic number of our mentality—making the month, till some day (as in the past) when the dawns succeeded each other without the inter-

vention of any night... when the supramental consciousness shines out fulfilled in the mentality and we shall possess the yearlong day enjoyed by the Gods... (Dawn is also the) symbolic figure of the illuminations of divine knowledge as a series of dawns (Cows) of 12 months of the year and 12 periods of yajna. There are 10 to 12 lines to correspond to 10 sisters, powers of illumined mentality." But what is the significance of these temporal spans in the realm of the soul's journey towards the Divine? II.24.5 provides a clue:⁴⁸

Certain eternal worlds (states of existence) are these which have to come into being, their doors are shut to you (or, opened) by the months and the years; without effort one (world) moves in the other, and it is these that Brahmanaspati has made manifest to knowledge.

"These secret eternal worlds," writes Sri Aurobindo, "have been closed to us, says the Rishi, by the movement of Time, by the months and years; therefore naturally they have to be discovered, revealed, conquered, created in us by the movement of Time, yet in a sense against it. This development in an inner or psychological Time is, it seems to me, that which is symbolised by the sacrificial year and by the ten months that have to be spent before the revealing hymn of the soul (*brahma*) is able to discover the seven-headed, heaven-conquering thought which finally carries us beyond the harms of Vritra and the Panis."

Immediately following this invocation to the twin sisters, Day and Night, Utanka hymns Indra and then Agni. The epithets he uses are the key to the mystic symbolism:

*vajrasya bhartā bhuvanasya goptā vṛtrāsya hantā namuchermhantā
kṛṣṇe vasāno vasane mahātmā satyādṛte yo vṛvmakti loke.
yo vājīnām garbhamapāim purāṇam vaiśvānaram vāhanamabhyupatī
namo'stu tasmai jagadīśvarāya lokatrayeśāya purandarāya. (sl. 147-148)*

Indra, as we have seen, is the lord of the illumined mind whose function is to transform our ignorance-shrouded mentality by his thunderbolt of knowledge (*vajra*) which breaks down the clouds of inertia and darkness.⁴⁹ It is he who rives open Vritra, the Coverer preventing the waters of Truth and Bliss from flowing down on to the human consciousness. Indra's *vajra* uncovers the hold of Vala who, like Vritra and Takshaka, conceals the Light from the sacrificer (Utanka) (I.11.5). In I.4.8. he is hymned as slaying Vritra, "this blind force of the lower plane (which) does not allow the light of knowledge to dawn on the aspirant. Drinking the nectar of *soma*-delight Indra kills Vritra, i.e., the forces of pure intelligence become fiery, as well as acute and sharp, with the pure and intense Ananda by which is expelled the darkness of ignorance. The aspirant gets strength to fight against the attraction of the unregenerated nature and to climb up and move in the higher region. His conscious being

gets intoxicated with the nectar of delight, armoured with a hundred powers (*śata-kratu*). He surmounts all the obstacles of the spiritual adventure and makes the aspirant firmly established in all the glory of a fulfilled life".⁵⁰ Namuchi is also one of the enemies of the Aryan pilgrim. His name means "not letting go" (*na-muchi*) which indicates that like Vritra he is "the demon withholding the waters".⁵¹ Significantly, Namuchi is referred to as a *dāsa* in some passages, such as V.30.8. This word means "plunderer, destroyer" (*das* means "to divide, hurt, injure")⁵² so that Namuchi-dāsa would represent "the enemy, the thief, the false, the false or evil thinker who makes difficult the Path by his robberies and obstructions" by "placing falsely the thought" (VI.51.13).⁵²

Indra is frequently termed *purandara* ("shatterer of cities") along with "slayer of Vritra and Namuchi" in the Rigveda. Thus in VII.19.5 we find:

These were thy mighty powers that, Thunder-wielder, thou swiftly crushedst nine-and-ninety castles: Thou capturedst the hundredth in thine onslaught; thou slewest Namuchi, thou slewest Vṛtra.⁵³

These cities are the "pens" or "caves" in which the "cows" of Sūrya are hidden by the Panis. By destroying these strongholds Indra releases the divine illuminations for the aspirant. As the seer hymns in I.33.10:

Indra, the bull, made the lightning his helper, by the Light he milked the shining cows out of the darkness.⁵⁴

Ushā, Dawn, plays a crucial role in this release, for it is she who is spoken of quite often as having been penned up by the Panis in the nether darkness of the material inconscient, and released by Indra or Agni to be possessed by the Aryan (VII. 6.5):

He bent down the walls by his showering blows, he who has made the dawns wives of the Noble Ones.⁵⁵

Indra or Agni is said to be clothed in black because the Night holds within her the twin sister Dawn who is the "godhead of the opening out of the supreme illumination on the night of our human ignorance."⁵⁶ Moreover, this is most true of Agni because "the other gods awake with the Dawn but Agni wakes also in the Night; the flame of the divine will and knowledge is visible even in the densest obscurity of inconscient or half-conscient things".⁵⁷

Naturally, Indra/Agni is invoked by Uttanka as the revealer of Truth and untruth, for that is his basic function. Although he is cloaked in the materiality of Nature ("black-cloth wearer"), his emergence constitutes a purification of the baser impulses and vital desires as he proceeds to annihilate the Coverers, Deceivers and Traffickers in Ignorance (Vṛtras, Dasyus and Panis) who obstruct the Aryan's

progress.

The deity is now said to ride on the nectar-churned-out horse which is Agni-Vaisvanara. In Vedic imagery, the waters (*apah*) stand for the floods of Truth and Bliss flowing from the ocean of eternal existence which is also one of absolute sweetness i.e. of supernal Ananda (hence termed *kṣīrsāgar*). They are incarcerated by Vritra and released by Indra. Now, it is in the divine waters that Agni is born (III.1.3) and they labour over him as the mares (III.1.4). *Aśva* stands for the dynamic force of life, and as the child of the waters, Agni's task is "to give... its full form and extension and purity to the middle world, the vital or dynamic plane, *raja ātatanvān*. He purifies the nervous life in man pervading it with his own pure bright limbs, lifting upward its impulses and desires, its purified will in works (*kratum*) by the pure powers of the superconscious Truth and Wisdom".⁵⁸ Agni is also the child of the twin sisters Night and Day already invoked by Uttanka, as we find in V.1.4:

The minds of men who seek the godhead converge towards the flame of Will even as their seeings converge in the Sun that illumines. When two Dawns of different forms give birth to this Fire, he is born as the White Steed at the head of our forces.⁵⁹

And also in I.95.1 where he is the godly child of two mothers of different colours who suckle him alternately i.e. as Knowledge and Ignorance alternate in our consciousness. The word used by Uttanka is *vājman* which means "horse" in the sense that it is the eternal steed of life's plenitude (V.1.7), for *vāja* is "essentially substantiality of being attended with plenty—from which it came to signify full force, copiousness, strength"⁶⁰ whence it was an easy transition to the symbol of *aśvā* which also meant strength, force and speed. The identification with Agni was natural because the root *ag* or *amg* signified a "preeminent forceful state, feeling, action—in brilliancy, light, burning".⁶¹ Agni participates in all the acts of Indra: the slaying of the serpent Vritra, the recovery of the herds of light, the release of the supernal waters. Their close relationship is sought to be conveyed through the image of Indra accepting the horse as his vehicle: "As Agni is one pole of Force instinct with knowledge that sends its current upward from earth to heaven, so Indra is the other pole of Light instinct with force which descends from heaven to earth... with the shining horses and slays darkness and division with his lightnings, pours down the life-giving heavenly waters, finds in the trace of the hound Intuition, the lost or hidden illuminations, makes the Sun of Truth mount high in the heaven of our mentality".⁶² The first sukta of the fifth mandala of the Rīgveda uses the *vāji* image very clearly bringing out the function of Agni (V.1.7):

Men seek with their obeisances of submission this illumined Strength that achieves our perfection in the progressing sacrifices and is the priest of their

oblation, because he shapes in the power of the Truth both firmaments of our being. Him they press into brightness by the clarity (the clarified butter, yield of the Cow of Light and symbol of the rich clarity that comes to the mind visited by the Light), the eternal steed of life's plenitude.⁶³

The steed is called Vaisvānara because Agni is omnipresent in all the levels of existence-consciousness. First hidden within the darkness of material nature, he rises to burn, though obscurely, in the sphere of vital desires purifying this to gallop up to the highest levels of the pure mind to guard the herds of the Sun from the adversaries, to establish the world of Truth and Joy in the human consciousness.

Uttanka ends by saluting Indra as the lord of the three lokas (worlds), namely *bhūh* (the physical consciousness), *bhuvā* (the intermediate dynamic, vital and nervous consciousness) and *svā* (the luminous world of the splendours of the Truth, the special realm of Indra, lord of the pure, unobscured intelligence).⁶⁴ A *loka* is a formation of consciousness and only secondarily a physical formation, the seven types of which we have enumerated earlier.

(To be continued)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

NOTES

44. T.V. Kapali Sastry: *Further Lights on the Veda* (Pondicherry, 1971).
45. Sri Aurobindo: *The Upanishads*, p. 66.
46. *ibid.*, p. 117. The Rigveda III.55.15 is also significant. "Within a wondrous place the Twain are treasured the one is manifest, the other hidden. One common pathway leads in two directions." This clearly states that the two paths of Vidya and Avidya lead to the same goal though they apparently diverge.
47. Purani. *Vedic Glossary*, *op cit.*, 29-30.
48. Sri Aurobindo: *The Secret of the Veda*, *op. cit.*, p. 172.
49. Gilbert, *op. cit.*, pp. 95, 104 and Sri Aurobindo: *Mystic*, *op cit.* pp. 30-33.
50. N.K. Gupta: *Commentary on the Rigveda I.4* (*Mother India*, March 1963)
51. Macdonell: *Vedic Mythology* (Indological Book House, 1971), p. 162.
52. *The Secret of the Veda*, *op. cit.*, p. 230
53. Griffith *op. cit.* p. 344.
54. *The Secret of the Veda*, *op. cit.*, p. 228.
55. *Mystic Fire*, *op. cit.*, p. 301.
56. *The Secret of the Veda*, *op. cit.*, p. 429.
57. *ibid.*, p. 359.
58. *ibid.*, p. 115.
59. *ibid.*, p. 364.
60. Purani. *Vedic Glossary*, *op. cit.*, p. 82. 61. *ibid.*, p. 4.
62. *Mystic Fire*, *op. cit.*, p. 30. 63. *The Secret of the Veda*, *op. cit.*, p. 365.
64. Purani, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

THE CLOUD MESSENGER

A NEW TRANSLATION OF KALIDASA'S *MEGHADUTA*

(Continued from the issue of September 1980)

CHILL now the breeze with droplet-scatterings
To wake the lady with her dainty kin,
The white buds of the jasmine; as she brings

Her widened eyes to rest on thee within
The window, holding back thy lightning's leap
In mildest thunder-tones thy speech begin:

'Thy husband's friend—no widow thou to weep—
Know me, a cloud who come across the lands
With words which treasured in my heart I keep,

I who with mellow rumblings urge the bands
Of weary travellers on their way who long
To loose their weak ones' braids with happy hands.'

This uttered, as the Wind-born ape among
The leaves stole Sita's ear, so she—her face
Lifted and praising thee with eager tongue—

Shall hear intent; for, noblest of the race
Of clouds, to woman news one trusted bears
Is only lesser than her love's embrace.

Then win content and grant my humble prayers,
Addressing her: 'Unslain by grief survives
In groves of Rama's Mount thy mate who shares,

Lonely, thy plight; he asks, in health how thrives
His frail one—first concern of creatures this,
To whom mischance so readily arrives.

His flesh, affliction-worn, lives but to miss
Its like, assailed with such a yearning's fire
As thou endur'st; and yet, thy body's bliss

Barred by fate's wrath, in thought's strong-winged desire
 His sighing frame where hot tears daily flow
 Mingles with thine across the spaces dire.

He who before thy friends would whisper low,
 Close to thy ear, what well he might have said
 Aloud, to taste thy touch's honey so,

Passed from thy hearing's field and distant fled
 From cheerless sight, to thy forsaken breast
 He speaks, his longing thus through me conveyed:

(To be continued)

NOTES

Wind-born ape. Hanuman, the most heroic and devoted of the monkeys who helped Rama to recover Sita from Ravana. He derived his extraordinary strength and agility from his father, the god of Wind, who had become enamoured one day of the lovely she-monkey Anjana, a celestial nymph born as a monkey due to a curse, and caused her to conceive a son possessing his own qualities while at her request not violating her chastity.

When Ravana carried off Sita to his capital of Lanka, he was determined that Sita should yield to his desires of her own will. He accordingly gave her twelve months to satisfy him, at the end of which if she was still recalcitrant she would be cut up and served for the enjoyment of his palate. Meanwhile she was imprisoned in a small garden with a high wall, where Hanuman, when overleaping the sea he came to Lanka in search of her, at length found her pining for Rama. The descriptions of how Hanuman, seated on a branch of an Ashoka tree above the disconsolate woman, made himself known to her, her response and her praise of him when convinced of his genuineness, are famous passages in Valmiki's Ramayana, briefly alluded to here by Kalidasa.

RICHARD HARTZ

THE PROBLEM OF ARYAN ORIGINS

by K. D. SETHNA

Many of our pet ideas are shown to be baseless and the current anti-nomy of "Aryan" and "Dravidian" which has caused a good deal of bad blood is resolved with the help of history, archaeology, literature and linguistics forming a comprehensive framework for the insights and researches of India's greatest seer and thinker: Sri Aurobindo.

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WHAT INDIA MEANS TO ME

A FRENCHWOMAN'S IMPRESSIONS

(Continued from the issue of September 1980)

AFTER the war, when my discovery of new philosophies like Existentialism and new writers gave me the impression that Western thought had reached a dead end, and when I started to read books about Indian spirituality, I understood only what I could about things which were completely new for me. Nevertheless, I had a deep feeling that when the mind is confronted with serious problems—like why man is there, what his destiny is, why this universe exists—and reaches a blind alley, the answer could be found in another state of consciousness, in other “dimensions,” which have been reached by seers through yogic disciplines, without the interference of the intellect, which, as manifested in the books I was reading, proves to be more often an impediment than a help. As Sri Aurobindo says: “There is nothing man can do that cannot be better done in the mind’s immobility and thought-free stillness. When mind is still, then Truth gets her chance to be heard in the purity of the silence.” There are silences and silences, but the true silence, of which I had some glimpses many years afterwards, is a shock to the conscious mind: delightful, bewildering, it is a spiritual experience, and also a “happening” as the young generation would express it.

Later, when I visited India and met some of her yogis and sages, I discovered that western and eastern thought are not antagonistic, but complementary. Where the first one ends, the second begins.

In spite of all the changes India is going through, in spite of the numerous superstitions which have too often taken the place of true spirituality, and of the exploitations of the masses by the priests (a thing which unfortunately exists not only in the West), India through ages has been the only country in the world that has kept living up to now the deepest spiritual and occult knowledge about man and his destiny and the way to discover his real nature, his True Self. So many people come to India, very probably because they know, more or less consciously, that there they have something important to learn.

India, which emerges from a remote past, and is going through a lot of ordeals in order to become a modern and strong nation, is nevertheless keeping in her hands as the most precious gift for all mankind the priceless spiritual teachings of her old Scriptures, which have remained always far above the changing religions and creeds: the Sanatana Dharma, the Eternal way of Existence, transmitted through millennia by the uninterrupted chain of her sages and yogis.

India is the giver of Truth, the highest Truth, and in our epoch, when all over the world the old religions and the old social structures are falling into pieces, when there is a continual menace of wars and social conflicts, she remains, in spite of her own most serious social and economic problems, the only country on earth, who, far below

the tumultuous surface, still knows the way to imperishable peace and light. That is what India deeply means to me and, I am certain, to many others.

My first impression when I arrived in India was one of deep peace. I was struck to discover that even in the big and crowded cities like Bombay or Calcutta, a kind of subjacent calm pervaded the atmosphere in spite of the noise and the busy streets. Some friends of mine told me they also had the same feeling. That is something for which I always have a nostalgia, when I am away from India.

Of course during my stay in India, I intended to contact gurus and yogis, who are the embodiments of Indian spirituality, who keep it living, and who transmit it to others. At that time, Swami Ramdas was still living, and I stayed in his Ashram in Kanhangad. I visited the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, and received the Darshan of the Mother. When in the North, I remained for a while with Ma Anandamayee, following her in some of her journeys and staying with her in her ashram in Dehradun. Some years after, I met Pandit Nila Kantha Joshi in Rameshwaram. I also visited many ashrams and met many yogis and sadhus known only to a small number of people.

In the West before I visited India, I had the opportunity to meet several swamis from the Ramakrishna Mission, who ran centres in Europe and America, and also a disciple of the late Swami Shivananda from Rishikesh, who has an ashram in Switzerland, in Winterthur. I also spent many years in Zurich near an Indian Yogi: Selvarajan Yesudian, who with his helper, Mrs. Haich, a Hungarian lady, well versed in eastern and western religions and philosophies, has opened many centres in Switzerland.

I do not want to appear pretentious in quoting so many names and places, but it is only to say that all those contacts with "representatives" of Hinduism, afforded me opportunities not only to study eastern philosophy and to carry on an inner research but also to observe the penetration of Yoga and Eastern thought in the West and to see the ever increasing number of people who were attracted by it.

It would be too long to relate here all my impressions about the ashrams I visited, and the spiritual personalities I met in India as well as in Europe. It is also difficult to talk about encounters with those holy men or women, since the true contact, *the only one which really counts*, is an inner one, where a relationship is established between the master and the one who approaches him, through complete silence and stillness of the mind. But what I can say is that each time, I received something which has proved very important for my inner life, or I learned something interesting I did not know before.

But, most unfortunately, there also exist many yogis, swamis and so-called gurus, who claim they can teach and help people, but in reality are only charlatans abusing the credulity and ignorance of sincere seekers in order to satisfy their greed for fame, power or money. It happens also that some of them who were not sufficiently trained for their task, sometimes after many years during which they led a decent life and really helped people, succumbed suddenly to one temptation or another, and fell down completely. I will not quote any names, but I have met some of them and, in both

cases, it has too often been a catastrophe in the lives of their followers.

People ought to be very prudent, and use all their power of discrimination before they accept the teachings of a guru and surrender everything to him.

But India not only gave an entirely new orientation to my life, when I was a very young woman in quest of a *raison de vivre* in a decadent society, but she also brought me a lot of hospitable and charming friends, and a new zest and interest in existence through the circles acquainted with India, which I used to frequent when living in Paris. I had the opportunity to meet so many impressive people like Prof. Radhakrishnan, Aldous Huxley, Prof. T. D. Suzuki, Paul Brunton, etc... and also many other writers or artists, who each proved to be an interesting personality and through whom I always learned something worth while.

Many years ago, Professor Radhakrishnan spent a few weeks of rest in a centre of the Ramakrishna Mission near Paris. I was there and I had the opportunity to see him daily. To listen to the conversation of that most brilliant and cultured man was an enchantment. He is at the same time a writer, a philosopher, a politician, and in addition—what is typically Indian—a deeply spiritual person. I don't know if I made a mistake, but when I observed him, and listened to his conversations with the Swami, who was at the head of the centre I had the feeling that what interested him most, probably more than his political career, was the religious and philosophical thought of India. One also could feel he was deeply conscious of the importance—for the world—of the spiritual message of which his country is the guardian.

Prof. Radhakrishnan gave a lecture at the Musée Guimet in Paris. It was a most brilliant improvisation about Indian culture and philosophy, and during more than an hour the audience was *sous le charme*. I still remember that lecture, on account both of its thought and of the man who expressed it. One could appreciate his vast knowledge of Indian history and religion, but he had his own way of approaching such serious topics. He added gaiety and humour to his speech, and always avoided becoming dry or tiring.

He quoted several times an example from some Indian Scripture: "Whatever position a man occupies, he ought to go through life like the woman who bears on her head a jar full of water. She returns from the well to her house, and sometimes she stops on the way to chat with her friends, she has a child seated on her hips, and maybe some others hanging at her saree; she walks and talks and laughs, nevertheless her attention remains centred on the jar on her head, and not a drop of water is spilled over. Thus, whatever is the nature of our occupations in life, we ought to keep our mind always centred on the Lord, on the Atman within."

The way Prof. Radhakrishnan talked gave the audience the feeling that he expressed a deep personal conviction, and that in spite of his numerous occupations and responsibilities, he most probably tried to put those teachings into practice in his daily life.

During my first travel in India, I intended, as far as I could, to visit the country from South to North and West to East, and I did my best not to miss any opportunity

to see places of pilgrimage like Benares, Vrindavan, Puri, Rameshwaram, etc. I enjoyed the beauty of Kerala, the Nilgiris and the Himalayas. I tried to be in contact as much as possible with the old Indian religion and culture. My impression was that each one of those ancient places of pilgrimage, each old temple, has a spiritual atmosphere of its own, and they appeared to me as the diverse aspects of the same spirituality which pervades the whole country, and has helped to maintain her unity through centuries, in spite of the diversities of languages, foreign occupations and civil wars.

Amongst all those places, I keep a special remembrance of Benares, not because it is the most famous place of pilgrimage in the country, or on account of the beauty of its ghats, old palaces, and golden temples, picturesque glimpses of thousands of pilgrims bathing in the Ganges, but because it is in Benares that you can better feel the eternal spirit of India; it forms a direct contact with her soul, it is like a Darshan. At least this is my own impression.

At night I used to go to the ghats. I wore a saree of white cotton and used to bring a part of it over my head; so, in the dark I commingled with the rest of the pilgrims and was protected from the onslaught of beggars. I used to sit on the steps in a corner which at that hour was nearly deserted. From place to place, lanterns made spots of light in the obscurity. It was very silent, except for the rippling of the waters against the stones. Benares, in the stillness of the night, is something bewitching; the spiritual vibrations, which have pervaded the place for millennia, reach, especially during those peaceful and quiet hours, a density and a power that no words can render. It is the very heart of India which pulsates there, an immemorial past is still awake and in a subtle realm it seems that the souls of sages, kings and poets are singing an eternal melody, while the stream of millions of pilgrims of yore keep moving, worshipping and praying to Shiva, the great God.

Some passages from a poem used to come to my memory; I think they are from Tagore: "Reveal yourself, O Past without beginning! The ages, like murmuring waves, roll in your bosom. You are not dead, O Past, but you remain secret; and yet I feel in my being the gliding of your magic feet, and sometimes I divine your presence in the soul of certain hours. As you lose nothing of what has been, you trace again the history of our ancestors on the imponderable leaves of our lives. You remember the forgotten names, and the present speaks through your voice, on the threshold of the great silence."

Sometimes I stayed immobile at the same place for a very long time, listening to the murmur of the Ganges, absorbed in the great peace which surrounded me, and the holy city seemed to be floating between its river and the stars in the sky, beyond the world, immaterial like a vision in a dream.

(To be continued)

INDIAN LIFE IN ENGLISH WRITINGS

(Continued from the issue of May 1980)

Part III: India Looks at Itself (Man's View) (Contd.)

If Hori in Premchand's *Godan* was a typical North-Indian peasant, Murugan in *Murugan the Tiller* by Venkatramani was the typical farmer of South India. But Hori's tragedy came from his straightforwardness and his upright nature, which was a constant, unchanging feature with him. Murugan, too, was an upright peasant, falling into bad company and brought back to the path of righteousness by Ramu, his master.

It would be wrong to compare Venkatramani with Premchand, as an artist of human life. One of the early writers in English, Venkatramani's importance lay in an Indian's breaking the ice and opening the way for Indians to follow. Of course there had been early beginnings, but Venkatramani marks the major voice, after which other writers launched on the same adventure.

Venkatramani was a poet unlike Raja Rao, Premchand or Rakazhi Pillai. He brought the poet's sense of justice in the culmination as truth triumphing over falsehood. But he did not write to depict a particular section of humanity, nor to portray an ideal, nor again to display a facet of realism. His aim was to depict the poetic truth of sincerity, courage and integrity pitted against ambition, cowardice and the lower propensities of human nature. This could be regarded as Victorian in aspect or perhaps primitively Indian in its presentation; for Indian aesthetics, unlike its Hellenic brother, abhorred tragedy.

Again, the life-picture Venkatramani set forth was of an age gone by, when Indians, specially South Indians, were unspoiled by greed, were simple in outlook unlike the present post-independence generation aping Western habits and thought and scoffing at Indian life as something primitive to be discarded if not destroyed. That is, Indians then were truly Indians.

Although Murugan had been designated the hero, this role was subservient to Ramchandran, Murugan's master.

Murugan was the typical Tamil serving-class individual, who not only looked after his orphaned master and his land but devoted his entire life to them. While Ramu (Ramchandran) was studying in Madras, it was Murugan who tilled the soil, reaped the produce, and sent the money faithfully to his master.

But Ramu failed in his bachelor-of-arts examination, while his friend Kedri succeeded and entered the Law college. Kedri had ambition. As regards Ramu, he was a good friend to him. He also arranged Ramu's marriage to Janaki, the daughter of one of his relatives, Meenakshiamma.

After his marriage, Ramu returned home to the village Alavanthi, on the banks of the Cauvery. Kedri stayed on in Madras pursuing his studies. As Janaki had lost her father earlier, Meenakshiamma accompanied the wedded pair. Such an occur-

rence, or even the staying of the son-in-law with his in-laws, was not uncommon in Tamil Nadu. In Alavanthi, Janaki struck up friendship with Sita, her neighbour.

Ill-luck and disaster followed. A heavy flood ruined his crops and Ramu was left a destitute. In desperation, he had to seek the post of a Camp clerk under Cartell, the collector of Tinevelli. It was a hard life, with meagre pay and without any hope of improvement. Yet Ramu trudged on, and even the stone-hearted Cartell was pleased.

After three years, he lost patience. He went on leave. His mother-in-law now berated him and goaded him to take some action. He sold his land to Periswamy Iyer, the Zamindar and his garden to Murugan. He was about to move to Madras, when Meenakshamma suddenly died, and just at that moment he was appointed deputy Tahsildar, a thing almost undreamt of. This was due to his principal who had met Cartell and spoken highly of Ramu.

Overjoyed at the good job, and sorry to leave his ancestral plot, he joined his new post. He surveyed the land under his control and submitted a new plan for building a dam across the river, which would control the water, lessening the chances of floods.

After long and patient persuasion, the plan was accepted and, when executed, brought prosperity to the region.

On Kedri's side, Kedri had passed his law examination, securing a third class. His undaunted spirit pushed him on. He became a junior to the eminent lawyer Mr. Makarandan. He brought his wife, Kokilam, from her parental place and both settled down. Gradually he left his chief and opened his own establishment. He had a rising practice, equal to Marakandan's. He hired a large, well-furnished house, bought a car and began attending parties. Then he managed to get nominated in the legislative council. He would have superseded Makarandan and been the most eminent man in Madras, had not the latter played a foul trick and spoilt his entire career.

On Murugan's side, he fell into disreputable company. He and his bedfellows got drunk, created a riot and finally set fire to the toddy shop, the property of Periswami, the landlord. He was arrested and his case was defended by Kedri who lost it. Murugan and his party were sentenced to five years' penal servitude. But he and his three associates escaped and took refuge among the hills. He turned out to be a full-fledged bandit. This part of the narrative seemed rather unconvincing.

On Ramu's side, his project of the river-dam was a success, pleasing both the governor of Madras and Mr. Cadell. Just at that time, news came in of Murugan's (of course his name was not known) nefarious activities which had become a cause of terror among the villages of the area.

Cadell appointed Ramu to investigate and bring the culprit to book. It was strange why Ramu should have been entrusted with such a project which was a police-man's job and not one for the civil authorities. Anyway, Ramu traced Murugan, and after some resistance he was overpowered and captured by Murugan. Murugan

had not recognised him. Later, when he did so, he fell at Ramu's feet. He implored for mercy. He pleaded that if Ramu arrested him thirty families, associated with him, would starve. He promised to hand over the plundered goods and to settle down as a law-abiding citizen.

Ramu accepted the money. He interceded between Murugan and the Government. On Ramu's word, the culprits were released. Murugan's plundered goods helped to build another dam across the river, and he turned out to be an honourable member of society.

The two friends met at long last. Ramu was now a collector, and Kedri was a ruined man. They had a long talk. Ramu requested Kedri to settle down to a quieter mode of life.

The book ended with the engagement of Ramu's teenager son with Kedri's twelve-year-old daughter.

(To be continued)

ROMEN PALIT

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EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

(42)

PEOPLE who had enjoyed the physical nearness of the Mother cannot but remember Her at every moment one spends in Paris. That delicious atmosphere which hovered around Her, that sweet something that kept us happily numbed even when She was gone out of sight, invade us. It seems it was not just that She was born there, a strong vital connection is still felt between Her and Paris. A stream of questions comes and goes in our mind like a vitruvian scroll when in Paris. Did She like this, could She have seen this, was this there when She was living here, did She ever walk on this boulevard, did She buy things from this shop, what were the things She approved or did not like, so on and so forth. To many of these questions the Mother seems to give an immediate answer. Of course each one would interpret Her answer in his own way. Sitting in one of the gardens we had a wonderful time discussing what the Mother would have approved and what not, what She would say to this or that. Then we drove through Boulevard Haussemann trying to catch a glimpse of the house where once the Mother lived. Boulevard Haussemann will become immortal, having housed a super-Woman. Her presence can still be felt there.

July and August see a complete exodus of the rich Jet Set from Paris. It is too hot for them, they go away either to the hills or to the sea-side resorts on the Mediterranean sea-board, and the French Riviera, to Cannes. By September they are all back again and Paris recaptures its usual mood, its unmistakable tempo and gusto for life. A Parisian would say that Paris during the summer months is almost a provincial town.

To the tourists this is a most advantageous state of affairs. He is far less harassed by the deadly traffic speed, he can leisurely do a lot of window-shopping. This pastime in Paris is a delight and an education. He can move about the museums and Art galleries (as many as there are open at this time) in his own unhurried way without being shunted here and there by the movement of the crowd. Parks and gardens give ample scope for enjoying that peculiar charm of Paris, so unlike that of any other place in Europe. It is really a delicate feast for the mind and the senses to be able to wander about languidly and try to get in touch with the spirit of Paris. It is an exhilarating experience. They say the Parisian would much rather live like a pauper in Paris than like a millionaire elsewhere. Roaming about in Paris one can understand very well this attitude and the sentiment behind it. Gauguin once called Paris "this radiant conquest of the mind".

During the summer the city is a veritable Jamboree of another kind. People from all over the world at this time tour Europe and naturally London and Paris see the biggest crowd. Most people speak their own language. Some wear their

national dress. The tint of their skins, their typical characteristics and mannerisms all put together produce a most colourful and cosmopolitan picture. How the Parisians react to this tremendous summer invasion of their beloved city by foreigners is impossible to say. If asked point-blank I am sure they would be evasive and never give a straight answer. For the French are a people of good taste and good breeding.

André Malraux in one of his writings said, "Politically, I do not believe at all in outmoded nationalism, I think we are involved in an appalling historical misunderstanding. The 19th century considered that national was provincial, and that the 20th century world would be internationalist." How far the French aristocrat or even the common man subscribes to this idea is not known. However, I should like to say a few words about our own experience when, according to the Mother's wishes, Sanat got himself posted as the Indian Consul-General to the French Possessions in India. During this period we observed the workings of the French Government in Paris, and the relation of the French people with the people in the dependencies. First, the Possessions abroad were considered as France Beyond the Seas. This must have been extremely gratifying to the colonial peoples. Moreover, the French Government had no reservations in conferring the highest National Honours on a deserving person in the colonies. Every facility was given to go to Paris, for studies or research work. The pay and pension and other emolument granted to the officials were extremely praiseworthy. I do not want to go into too many details here but suffice it to say that if such treatment had been meted out to the colonial peoples by other great powers during the period when Imperialism was in vogue the world would surely have been a happier place to live in.

"Rapprochement is the word that pleases all in France," said Victor Hugo. Wandering about in Paris we were prone to believe it. Surrounded by three great waters, the Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea, and the Mediterranean, Western and Southern France is called Île de France. Naturally from time immemorial people have come and gone from the south and from the north, leaving behind them something of their ways and thoughts. Extremely gifted that the French are, this contact if nothing else must have been a help to reshuffle their own thoughts and perceptions. When the Crusaders returned from the East the sensitive French must have learnt quickly if there was anything to learn. So France was the leader of Europe through centuries, for inventions, new ideas, new creations, new ideologies, new fashions and the *joie de vivre*. Even in the comparatively new European hobby of exploration and excavation the French have taken a vigorous part. Great French names are there everywhere. The Suez Canal that we take for granted, which in reality is a wonder of the 19th century, was constructed by the Frenchman Ferdinand Lesseps. Any Francophile including England's King Edward VII would say, "Everything in France is glorious" and French history is the 'magnifique' story of a vibrant portion of humanity.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

CROSSWORD

Clues Across

1. The strangest of the soul's experiences is this, that it finds, when it ceases to care for the image and threat of troubles, then the troubles themselves are nowhere to be found in one's neighbourhood. It is then that we hear from behind those unreal clouds (3,8,2,2)
12. When . . . has the vision in the heart, everything, Nature and Thought and Action, ideas and occupations and tastes and objects become the Beloved and are a source of ecstasy. (3)
13. A healthy mind hates pain; for the desire of pain that men sometimes develop in their minds is morbid and contrary to Nature. But the . . . cares not for the mind and its sufferings any more than the iron-master for the pain of the ore in the furnace; it follows its own necessities and its own hunger. (4)
14. God has . . arranged life that the world is the soul's husband; Krishna its divine paramour. (2)
15. is not utterly fulfilled till it becomes action and knowledge. (8)
17. They explained the evil in the world by saying that Satan had prevailed against God; but I think more proudly of my Beloved. I believe that nothing is done but by His . . . in heaven or hell, on earth or on the waters. (4)
18. God justifies Himself in the . . even when He has masked Himself as a bully and a tyrant. (3)
20. Pron. (2)
22. The rejection of falsehood by the mind seeking truth is one of the chief causes why mind cannot attain to the settled, rounded and perfect truth; not to escape falsehood is the effort of divine mind, but to seize the truth which lies masked behind even the most grotesque or far-wandering error. (5)
23. Kali is Krishna as dreadful Power and wrathful Love. She slays with her furious blows the self in body, life and mind in order to liberate it as spirit eternal. (8)
26. What I cannot understand now, I shall some day master but if I lose faith and love, I fall utterly from the goal which God has set before . . . (2)
27. Pron. (3)
28. The philosophers who reject the world as Maya, are very wise and austere and holy, but I cannot help thinking sometimes that they are also just a little stupid and allow God to cheat them too (6)
29. Love of man, love of woman, love of things, love of thy neighbour, love of thy country, love of animals, love of humanity are . . the love of God reflected in these living images. (3)
30. Adj. (3)

Clues Down

1. There are two works that are perfectly pleasing to . . . in His servant; to sweep in silent adoration His temple-floors and to fight in the world's battlefield for His divine consummation in humanity. (3)
2. Adj. (3)
3. No doubt when the priest curses, he is crying to God; but it is the God of anger and darkness to whom he himself along with his enemy; for as he approaches God, so shall God receive him. (7)

4. all, when thou countest up thy long service to God, thou wilt find thy supreme work was the flawed and little good thou didst in love for humanity. (5)
5. This I have seen that whatever God has withheld from me, He withheld in His love and wisdom. Had I grasped it then, I would have turned some great into a great poison. (4)
6. What the soul utterly rejoices in, . . for thought the ultimate reality. (2)
7. Adv. (3)
8. Even the atheist ought now to be able to see that creation marches towards some infinite and mighty purpose which evolution in its very nature supposes. But infinite purpose and fulfilment presupposes an infinite wisdom that prepares, , shapes, protects and justifies. (6)
9. Indiscriminate compassion is the noblest gift of temperament; not to do even the least hurt to one living thing is the highest of . . . human virtues; but God practises neither. Is man therefore nobler and better than the All-loving? (3)
10. God drives . . out of every Eden that we may be forced to travel through the desert to a diviner Paradise. (2)
11. My soul is the captive of God, taken by Him in battle; it still remembers the war, though . . far from it, with delight and alarm and wonder. (2)
16. Prep. (2)
19. I hated the devil and was sick with his temptations and tortures; and I could not why the voice in his departing words was so sweet that when he returned often and offered himself to me, it was with sorrow I refused him. Then I discovered it was Krishna at His tricks and my hate was changed into laughter. (4)
20. Pron. (2)
21. To fear God really is to remove oneself to a distance from Him, but to fear Him in play gives an to utter delightfulness. (4)
22. What is the . . . of admiring Nature or worshipping her as a Power, a Presence and a goddess? (3)
24. Int. (2)
25. O Aristophanes of the universe, thou who watchest thy world and laughest sweetly to thyself, wilt thou not . . . me too see with divine eyes and share in thy world-wide laughters? (3)
26. Adj. (2)

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SOLUTION Refer *Thoughts and Aphorisms*—"Bhakti Section."

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Glimpses of The Mother's Life—Volume II. Compiled by *Nilima*. Edited by *K. D. Sethna*. Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, *Mother India*, Pondicherry-2. Price: Rs.35/- Pages: ii+335. Deluxe Edition, 1980.

IN this second volume compiled by Nilima Das, "we once again come into contact," says the editor, "with the Mother's varied activity, inward and outward, together with her divine reality in each passing moment as well as through the aeons of earthly evolution."

"The Mother and Sri Aurobindo! Who are they?" If there still exists an ignoramus to ask such a question, then K. D. Sethna's introduction to this volume provides the complete answer. If he is not aware that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have never left the earth since its formation and have carried on the evolution, he finds ample scope to correct himself in the two chapters—1. The Mother as the Leader of Evolution and 2. The Mother on Earth. This preliminary part of the book will acquaint him with the avatars.

The first of the three sections, that covers the period between 1927 and 1939, begins with a curious note—What happened on and after 24th November 1926. Indeed it was a great day, for "The Lord has descended...." The five chapters of this section deal with the many-sided personality of the Mother, her Ashram and the faithful followers. It enlightens us on the aura of white light around the Mother and her four great aspects, the four of her leading powers and personalities (Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati). And one remembers what Sri Aurobindo said of the Mother on 14-5-1933, "Behind the physical body there are many forms and powers and personalities of the Mother." A complete idea of the life led in the old Ashram is recorded here and we are surprised to mark that the inmates are not sannyasis. So who are they? And what do they do there? What are the Ashram precincts? How do they manage the institution financially? Do the Sadhaks and Sadhikas enjoy freedom? What are the things that are strictly forbidden? How and when did the Balcony Darshan begin? What are the daily programmes gone through? Are you not curious to know? Well! even a casual reading of the third chapter 'Life in the Ashram' is enough to get answers for all the above whos, hows, whens. This section has something more to tell us about the first Ashram garden, the paddy field, the dairy and the selection of heads by the Mother to manage the growing Ashram—the cradle of the New World. If the Divine Mother is known to you only as a spiritualist, then here is an opportunity to know that she was also a painter and musician and a dynamic organiser, for it was she who showed the world that Meditation is not the only way of doing sadhana. Sadhana is possible even through music. It is beauty that expresses best the Divine as knowledge, power and Ananda.

The second section that covers the period between 1939 and 1950 is appropriately titled, "Struggles and Misfortunes", for it has much to do with the Second

World War, India's Independence and above all the tragedy of Sri Aurobindo's accident and twelve years later his withdrawal from his body. Sri Aurobindo succeeded in warding off all the attacks of the hostile forces whose origin is not human and which generally elude human consciousness. But, occupied with guarding the Mother, he forgot himself and got exposed to the accident to his right leg. The event is dramatically narrated, and how the Divine Mother looked after Sri Aurobindo during his convalescence is minutely described. If we consider World War II as a fight between nations and governments, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother set us right by telling us that it was between two forces, the Divine and the Asuric. We are shown how the occult powers of falsehood play with and misguide men like Hitler, as a cat deals with a mouse. The message of Sri Aurobindo to Sir Stafford Cripps and the latter's telegram in reply are of vital importance to historians.

What is the exact indication of the message given by the Mother on each 1st January? Why does she give red roses to men, light-coloured roses to women and those of different colours to the little boys and girls? Have flowers a power in the occult world? Why were children, 'the very absorbing creatures', accepted in the Ashram? What is meant by the 'Spiritual Flag of India'? This section not only furnishes answers to the above questions but also gives enough food for thought. The picture of Sri Aurobindo's illness and of his passing is vividly painted in words. The Superman who came to tell us—"One need not leave the earth to find the Truth, one need not leave life to find his soul, one need not abandon the world or have only limited beliefs to enter into relation with the Divine. The Divine is everywhere, in everything and and if He is hidden it is because we do not take the trouble to discover Him"—has withdrawn from his body. But to grieve over the withdrawal of the Guru and Rishi is an insult to the Avatar of the New Era of the Dawn, who, as the Mother emphatically assures, is here with us, conscious and alive.

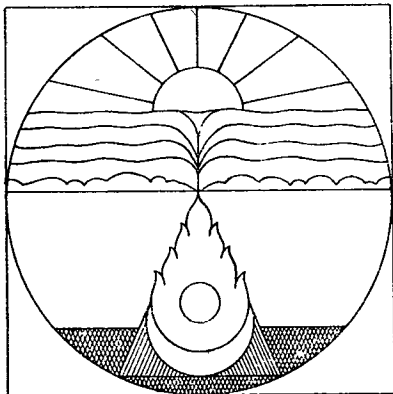
The period between 1950 and 1958 is covered in the third section. It has much to do with the Divine Mother's public life and her work with the school children. As a veritable lover of the games of skill, she taught the children of the Ashram many new games like 'Fiddlestix', 'Flying Hats' and 'Spillikins'. To satisfy the inquisitive reader, a few games are explained. The Mother's opinions on politicians, world politics, the value of literature and modern art are brought to light. Her messages to students who take a mischievous pleasure in preventing others from benefitting by the lessons and to the teachers about the responsibilities in educating the children are of universal value and the need of the hour too. Her blessings are not always for a smooth life, they are meant to help the soul and whatever happens by them will be for the best. Light is thrown on the significance of numbers, the graphic representation of her signature and the various meanings the different flowers express. The Mother's experience of the Supramental Manifestation on February 29, 1956 and her subsequent experiences on February 3, 1958 and on November 5, 1958 are all shown in a way that is both revealing and appealing. Culled profusely from various journals and books, this volume does not give the impression that it is a compilation. Nolini, Champaklal, Narayan

Prasad, K.D. Sethna and K.R.S. Iyengar have contributed a great share in enriching it, for the compiler quite often goes to their works for her material. Journals like *Mother India*, *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, *Advent* and *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo Ashram Department of Physical Education* are also utilized. Several photographs of the Mother depicting her various activities adorn the book.

A pernickety reader may point to one passage in the Mother's own words, regarding her and cats, which has already figured in Volume One. "Why the sheer repetition?" he may ask. But this passage seems to fit in so well and to be so necessary in the section concerned that the apparent defect might be excused as a special effect.

"If creative writing is like giving birth to a child, then compilation work is like bringing up the child in a proper way, which is an arduous task." Dr Johnson is said to have remarked so, on the day he finished compiling his famous dictionary. As we go through this volume, we understand what great Ordeals the compiler Nilima Das must have undergone and how many eye-burning nights she must have spent in the making of it. Her assistant Shraddhavan, an EdGLISHwoman, is also to be appreciated. This work certainly deserves our applause in all respects.

P. RAJA



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