

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

MARCH 1980

Price : Rs. 2.00

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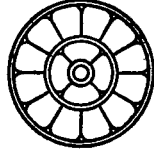
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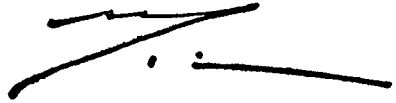


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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Editor's Phone: 782

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

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Published by: P. COUNUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY-605002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry-605002

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No. R. N. 8667/63

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXII

No. 3

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

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

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## OPENING TO THE UNIVERSAL FORCES

### WORDS OF THE MOTHER

I KNEW young people who had always lived in cities—in a city and in those little rooms one has in the big cities in which everyone is huddled. Now, they had come to spend their holidays in the countryside, in the south of France, and there the sun is hot, naturally not as here but all the same it is very hot (when we compare the sun of the Mediterranean coasts with that of Paris, for example, it truly makes a difference), and so, when they walked around the countryside the first few days they really began to get a terrible headache and to feel absolutely uneasy because of the sun; but they suddenly thought: “Why, if we make friends with the sun it won’t harm us any more!” And they began to make a kind of inner effort of friendship and trust in the sun, and when they were out in the sun, instead of trying to bend double and tell themselves, “Oh! how hot it is, how it burns!”, they said, “Oh, how full of force and joy and love the sun is!” etc., they opened themselves like this (*gesture*), and not only did they not suffer any longer but they felt so strong afterwards that they went round telling everyone who said “It is hot”—telling “Do as we do, you will see how good it is.” And they could remain for hours in the full sun, bare-headed and without feeling any discomfort...

They linked themselves to the universal vital force which is in the sun and received this force which took away all that was unpleasant to them.

When one is in the countryside, when one walks under the trees and feels so close to Nature, to the trees, the sky, all the leaves, all the branches, all the herbs, when one feels a great friendship with these things and breathes that air which is so good, perfumed with all the plants, then one opens oneself, and by opening oneself communes with the universal forces. And for all things it is like that.

*Can one do the same thing when it is cold?*

Yes, I think so. I think one can always do the same thing in all cases.

The sun is a very powerful symbol in the organisation of Nature. So it is not altogether the same thing; it possesses in itself an extraordinary condensation of energy. Cold seems to me a more negative thing: it is an absence of something. But in any case, if one knows how to enter the rhythm of the movements of Nature, one avoids many discomforts. What makes men suffer, what disturbs the balance of the body is a narrowness, it is always a narrowness. It happens because one is shut up in limits, and so there is, as Sri Aurobindo writes here, a force which presses too strongly for these limits—it upsets everything.

4 May 1955

## THE WHY AND HOW OF CREATION

A TALK BY THE MOTHER ON 19 NOVEMBER 1969

THIS morning about eight o'clock, I could have said many things.... Because there came a day when many problems had cropped up as a consequence of something that had happened, then this morning (towards the end of the night), I had the experience that was the explanation. And for two hours I lived in an absolutely clear perception (not a thought: a clear perception) of the why and how of creation. It was so luminous, so clear; it was irrefutable. It lasted at least for four or five hours and then it petered out; gradually the experience diminished in intensity and clarity.... I had just seen many people, then... it is difficult to explain now. But all had become so limp; all the contrary theories, everything was at the bottom (*Mother looks from above*), and all the explanations, all that Sri Aurobindo had said and also some things that Théon had said were seen as a consequence of the experience: each thing in its place and absolutely clear. At that time I could have said it, but now it will be a little difficult.

Is it not so? In spite of what one has read and all the theories and explanations, something was left (how to say it?) difficult to "explain" (it is not "explaining": that is quite trivial). For example, suffering and the will to inflict suffering, that side of the Manifestation. There has been, of course, as though a prevision of the original identity of hatred and love, because the thing was going to the extremes, but as for all the rest it was difficult. Today it is so luminously simple, yes, it is that, so obvious! ...(*Mother looks at a note which she has written.*) Words are nothing. And then I had scribbled with a pencil that wrote badly.... I don't know if you can see the words. To me they represented something very exact: now they are nothing but words. (*The disciple reads*):

*Stability and change*  
*Inertia and transformation...*

Yes, in the Lord they were evidently identical principles. And it was particularly that, the simplicity of this identity. And now they are nothing but words.

*Stability and change*  
*Inertia and transformation*  
*Eternity and progress*

Unity=... (*The disciple is not able to make out the words.*)

It was not I who wrote it, that is to say, not the ordinary consciousness, and the pen-

cil...I do not know any more what I have put down. (*Mother tries to read the words, but in vain.*) It was the vision of the creation—the vision, the understanding, the how, the why, the whither, everything was there, the whole of it together, and clear, clear, clear.... I tell you, I was in the midst of a golden glory—luminous, dazzling.

Well, the earth was there as the centre representing the creation, and then there was the identity of the inertia of the stone, of what is most inert, and then...(*Mother tries once more to read the words.*)

I do not know if it will come.

(*Mother goes into a long concentration.*)

One might say like that...for the convenience of expression, I would say: the "Supreme" and the "creation". In the Supreme, it is a unity that contains all the possibilities perfectly unified, without any differentiation; in creation, it is, so to say, the projection of all that makes up this unity by dividing the opposites, that is to say, by separating them (it is that which has been seized by someone who said that creation is separation): for example, night and day, black and white, good and evil, etc., etc.—all that, but it is our explanation. The whole of it, all together is a perfect unity, immutable and...indissoluble. Creation means separation of all that constitutes this unity—one might call it the division of consciousness. The division of consciousness starts from the unity conscious of its unity, in order to arrive at the unity conscious of its multiplicity *in the unity*. And then it is this path which, because of its fragments, is translated for us by space and time. For us, such as we are, it is possible for each point of this consciousness to be conscious of itself *and* conscious of the original Unity. And that is the work which is being done; that is to say, each infinitesimal element of this consciousness, while keeping this state of consciousness, is in the process of rediscovering the state of the total original consciousness—and the result is the original Consciousness conscious of its unity *and* conscious of the whole play, conscious of the innumerable elements of this Unity. This for us is translated into the sense of time: moving from the Inconscient up to this state of Consciousness. And the Inconscient is the projection of the first Unity (if one can say it; all these words are altogether senseless), of the essential unity which is only conscious of its unity—yes, that is the Inconscient. And this Inconscient becomes more and more conscious in beings who are conscious of their infinitesimal existence and *at the same time*, through what we call progress or evolution or transformation, become conscious of the original Unity. And that, as it was seen, explains everything.

Words are nothing.

Everything, everything from the most material to the most ethereal, *everything* finds its place there—clear, clear, clear, a vision.

And evil, what we call evil, has its *indispensable* place in the whole. It will not be felt as evil the moment one becomes conscious of That—necessarily. Evil is this infinitesimal element looking at its infinitesimal consciousness; but as consciousness

is essentially one, it resumes, regains the Consciousness of the Unity—the two together. It is that, yes, *it is that* which has to be realised. It is this wonderful thing, of this I had the vision at that moment.... And for the beginnings (are they the beginnings?), what is called in English the outskirts, what is farthest from the central realisation, that becomes the multiplicity of things, and the multiplicity also of sensations, of feelings, of all...the multiplicity of consciousness. It is this act of separation that has created, that is creating the world constantly and that is creating everything at the same time: suffering, happiness, everything, everything that is created through this... what might be called “diffusion”; but it is absurd, it is not a diffusion—we ourselves live in the sense of space, so we speak of diffusion and concentration, but it is nothing of the sort.

And I understood why Théon used to say that we were living at the time of “Equilibrium”; that is to say, it is through the equilibrium of all these innumerable points of consciousness and of all these opposites that the central Consciousness is rediscovered. And all that is said is stupid—at the same time as I say this, I see to what degree it is stupid. But one cannot do otherwise. It is something...something *so concrete*, so true, yes, so ab-so-lu-te-ly...*that*.

As long as I was living that, it was...But perhaps I could not have said it at that time. That (*Mother points to the note*), I was obliged to take up some paper and jot it down, and in such a way that I do not know any more what I jotted down.... The first thing written was this:

### *Stability and change*

It was the idea of the original Stability (one could say), which is translated in the Manifestation by inertia. And the growth is translated by change. Then came:

### *Inertia and transformation*

But it is gone, the sense is gone—the words had a sense.

### *Eternity and progress*

They were the opposites (these three things).

Then there was a gap (*Mother draws a line under the triple opposition*), and once again a Pressure, and then I wrote this:

### *Unity=...(three illegible words follow)*

And that was a much more true expression of the experience, but it is illegible—I think it was illegible deliberately. One must have the experience to be able to read it.



(The disciple tries to read the words:) *It seems to me that there is a word "rest"?*

Ah! It must be that. Rest and...

*(Mother goes into concentration.)*

Is it not "power"?

*Ah! yes, "Power and rest combined".*

Yes, that is it.

It was not I who chose the words, so they must have a special force—when I say "I", I mean the consciousness that is there (*gesture above the head*); it is not that consciousness; it was something that was pressing down that compelled me to write. (*Mother recopies her note*):

*Stability and change  
Inertia and transformation  
Eternity and progress*

*Unity=power and rest combined.*

The idea is that the two combined restored that state of consciousness which wanted to express itself.

It was on the universal scale—not on the individual scale.

I put a line between the two to mean that they had not come together.

*But already, often, when you speak of this supramental experience, you say that it is a staggering movement and at the same time it is as though completely immobile. You have said it often.*

But you know, most often I do not remember what I have once said.

*You say: the vibration is so rapid that it is imperceptible, it is as though coagulated and immobile.*

Yes. But this was really a Glory in which I lived for hours together this morning.

And then all, all, all notions, all of them, even the most intellectual, all became as...as though childishness. It was so obvious that one had the feeling: there is no need to speak of it!

All human reactions, even the highest, the purest, the noblest, appeared so childish!... There is a sentence written by Sri Aurobindo somewhere that was coming all the while to me. One day, I do not remember where, he had written something, a

rather long sentence in which there was this: "And when I feel jealous, I know that the old man is still there." It is now perhaps more than thirty years since I read it—yes, almost thirty years—and I remember, when I read "jealous", I said to myself: How can Sri Aurobindo be jealous? And so after thirty years I have understood what he meant by being "jealous"—it is not at all what men call "jealous", it was altogether another state of consciousness. I saw it clearly. And this morning it came back to me: "And when I feel jealous, I know that the old man is still there." To be "jealous" for him did not mean what we call "jealous".... It is this infinitesimal particle that we call the individual, this particle of infinitesimal consciousness which places itself at the centre, which is the centre of the perception, and which consequently perceives things coming like that (*gesture towards oneself*) or going like that (*gesture outward*) and all that does not come to it gives it a kind of perception that Sri Aurobindo called "jealous": the perception that things are going towards diffusion, instead of coming in towards centralisation; it was that which he called "jealous". So he said: When I feel jealous (this was what he meant to say), I know that the old man is still there; that is to say, this infinitesimal particle of consciousness can *still* be at the centre of itself; it is the centre of action, the centre of perception, the centre of sensation....

(Silence)

Yes, I could notice—it is the time when I do all my physical work—I could notice that the whole work could be done without any alteration in the consciousness. It was not that which altered my consciousness; what veiled my consciousness was seeing people: it is when I began to be here and to do what I have been doing every day: projecting the divine Consciousness upon people. But it came back... (how can one say it?) on the borders; that is to say, instead of *being* within, I began to perceive it, when you asked me. But that feeling is no longer there—there was nothing *but that* any more! That alone was there, and everything, everything had changed—appearance, meaning, etc.

That must be the supramental consciousness: I believe that this is the supramental consciousness.

*But one could conceive very well that for a consciousness wide and quick enough, if I may say so, capable of seeing not merely a bit of the path, but the whole path at the same time...*

Yes, yes.

*The whole would be a moving perfection.*

Yes.

*Evil is simply holding one's vision on one small angle; then one says, "It is evil", but if one sees the entire path... In a total consciousness, obviously there is no evil.*

There are no contraries. No *contraries*—not even contradictions; I say: no contraries. It is that Unity, it is *living* in that Unity. And that cannot be translated by thought or words. I am telling you, it is...a vastness without limits and a light...a light without movement, and at the same time an ease...an ease not recognised as such. Now I am convinced that it is that, the supramental consciousness.

And necessarily, necessarily that must change the appearances gradually.

(*Long silence*)

There are no words that can explain the magnificence of the Grace, how the whole is combined so that all may go as quickly as possible. And individuals are miserable to the extent to which they are not conscious of it and take a false position in regard to what is happening to them.

*But what is difficult to think is that at each moment it must be...it is the perfection.*

Yes, that is it.

*At each instant, it is the perfection.*

At *each* instant. There is no other thing... When I was there, there was no other thing. And yet, as I have told you, it was the time when I was physically extremely busy—all the work was being done, without disturbing *anything*; on the contrary, I believe I was doing things much better than usual...I do not know how to explain. It was not, as it were, a thing "added": it was quite natural.

Life as it is can be lived in that consciousness—but it is then lived quite well!... Nothing needs to be changed, what is to be changed changes itself quite naturally.

I am going to give you an example. For a few days, I had some difficulty with... I will not name him; pressure had to be put on him to correct some of his movements. Today he was conscious of it in quite a different way from the usual, and in the end he said that he was on the way to change (that is true), and all that not only without a word, but without any movement of the consciousness for putting pressure. There you are. That is a proof... All is done automatically, as an *imposition* of the Truth without any necessity of intervention: simply to remain in the true consciousness, that is all, that is sufficient.

But then, in spite of everything, the body kept just a little consciousness of its needs all the while (although it was not busy with itself; I was always saying: It is not busy with itself, it is not interested). But that is what Sri Aurobindo used to say: I feel I am still the old man. I understood that this morning, for it was no longer there.

Well, this sort of a very quiet perception of what is still not all right—a pain here, a difficulty there—very calm, very indifferent, but it is *perceived* (without its taking any importance), and even that gone, wholly swept away!... I hope it won't come back. It is really...this, I understand, it is a transformation. One is conscious in a golden vastness—my child, it is wonderful—luminous, golden, peaceful, eternal, all-powerful.

And how it is coming.... No word is there to express it indeed, this wonder regarding the Grace.... The Grace, the Grace is a thing that surpasses all comprehension, with its clear-seeing kindness.... Naturally the body had the experience. Something had happened that I will not tell you and it had the true reaction; it had not the old reaction, it had the true reaction—it smiled, with the Smile of the supreme Lord—it smiled. That was there for a whole day and a half. And it was this difficulty which enabled the body to make the last progress, enabled it to live in this Consciousness: if all had been harmonious, things could have lasted still for years—it is wonderful, wonderful!

And how stupid men are! When the Grace has come to them, they push it away, saying, "Oh! what horror!"... That I have known for a long time, but my experience is...dazzling.

*Yes, each thing is perfectly, wonderfully what it ought to be at every moment.*

Quite so.

*But it is our vision that is not attuned.*

Yes, it is our separated consciousness.

The whole has been brought with lightning rapidity towards the consciousness that will be the Consciousness of the point and of the all, at the same time.

*(Long silence)*

*(Mother finishes recopying her note.)* There, now I am writing today's date.

*It is the 19th.*

19 November 1969, supramental consciousness.

*(Silence)*

The first descent the supramental force was a 29, and this is a 19... The 9 is something to note... So many things there are which we do not know!

(Silence)

I have already had the experience, partially, that when one is in this state of inner harmony and no part of the attention is turned towards the body, the body works perfectly well. It is this...“Self-concentration” which upsets everything. And this I have observed many times, many times.... In reality one does *make* oneself ill. It is the narrowness of consciousness, the division. If you let it work, there is...everywhere there is a Consciousness and a Grace that do everything so that all may go well, and it is because of this imbecility that all goes wrong—it is strange! The ego-centric imbecility, it is that which Sri Aurobindo calls “the old man”.

It is truly interesting.

---

## SHE

SHE sleeps: a silence in the bosom of night,  
 Studded with reveries, twinkling with star-chime,  
 Flutters like a velvet of future's memory  
 And eternity moves on the wheels of Time.

She is awake: the birds of morning-glow, swift,  
 Winging through regions of calm in a dazzled sky,  
 Soar up like a vision from the womb of the Past  
 And reach the endless day of Solar Destiny.

Unseen she is everywhere and luminous,  
 The sweetness-all, a love at once near-far—  
 Her sleep, the ever-now, is our wonder's dream,  
 Her smile, the cause by which indeed we are!

Our song is a diamond of her silent might  
 Burning in the body of a dense-subtle height.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

# THE NUMBER 18—AND NUMBERS IN GENERAL

## SOME OBSERVATIONS BY THE MOTHER

*What is the significance of 18?*

OF the number 18?

It depends on how it is read.

It can be read as  $10+8$ ; it can be read as  $9+9$ ; it can be read as  $12+6$ . And each of these readings has a different meaning.

If we take  $10+8$ , it can indicate something quite immobile: because 10 indicates a static perfection, something which has reached its perfection and stops there; and 8 is a double enclosure, that is, something which is framed in, demarcated, and which naturally stops there. So if we put 10 and 8 together it truly makes something which can be an accomplishment but one that is terminated.

On the other hand, if we take  $9+9$ , 9 is the process of creation—not the creation itself but its process—and  $9+9$  is a process of creation which continues and follows another process of creation, that is, a creation which is dual and implies the idea that it continues indefinitely. This gives us two meanings which are almost contradictory.

And if we take 12 and 6, then it becomes something very good. 12, you know what it is, don't you? It is the number of perfection in conception and creation; and 6 is the number of the new creation. So if you put 12 and 6 together, you truly have something absolutely remarkable.

Now we can have other combinations. But it becomes a little more complicated.

18 itself—as 18—was the number of the consciousness in its effort for material realisation: the consciousness trying to realise itself materially, express itself materially.

So now you have something...

From the social point of view it is the first number for attaining majority, the first majority; that is, from eighteen onwards one has one's will, one has the right to have one's own will, from the social point of view, it is clearly a very interesting starting-point.

There, then.

*Sweet Mother, has each person's number a different significance for each one?*

If one wants to give it, yes.

If one does not think about it, it doesn't signify anything at all. It's the importance one gives it which counts.

Numbers are a way of speaking. It is a language, as all the sciences, all the arts, everything that man produces; it is always a way of speaking, it is a language. If one adopts this language it becomes living, expressive, useful. As we need words to make

ourselves understood usually—unfortunately it is liable to all kinds of confusions, but still we haven't yet reached the state where we can communicate in silence, which obviously would be a very much higher state—well, if you want to give numbers a meaning in your life, they can reveal to you quite a lot of things. But it's like that. It is like astrology: if one wants to study the relation between his life and the movement of the stars, one can find all kinds of useful information.

Fundamentally it is a way of knowing, nothing else—a process. True knowledge is beyond words, beyond systems, beyond languages; it is in a silent identity. It is in fact the only one which does not err.

16 November 1955

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## THE RACE GOES ON

ON the meandering, mazy paths  
They go scrambling.  
They smash into the shrubs and bushes  
Looking for wild berries  
Where wasps have their nests  
And wily serpents coil round the twigs.  
How madly, wildly  
They snatch at the lotus fruits  
And the hemlock roots  
And gobble them up in ravenous greed!  
Bruises and blisters  
And burning tongues  
Do not stop them.

Yet very close,  
In the lush green orchard  
With its grassy paths  
And love-birds' songs,  
The succulent, nourishing fruits abound,  
Their sweetness pervading the ages.  
But still the garden gates  
Rust unopened  
While on the outside,  
The race goes on.

M. L. THANGAPPA

# THE REVISED EDITION OF *THE FUTURE POETRY*

(The revision of Chapter III consists of small changes and additions scattered throughout the Chapter.)

## CHAPTER III

### Rhythm and Movement

THE Mantra, poetic expression of the deepest spiritual reality, is only possible when three highest intensities of poetic speech meet and become indissolubly one, a highest intensity of rhythmic movement, a highest intensity of interwoven verbal form and thought-substance, of style, and a highest intensity of the soul's vision of truth. All great poetry comes about by a unison of these three elements; it is the insufficiency of one or another which makes the inequalities in the work of even the greatest poets, and it is the failure of some one element which is the cause of their lapses, of the scoriae in their work, the spots in the sun. But it is only at a certain highest level of the fused intensities that the Mantra becomes possible.

It is from a certain point of view the rhythm, the poetic movement that is of primary importance; for that is the first fundamental and indispensable element without which all the rest, whatever its other value, remains unacceptable to the Muse of poetry. A perfect rhythm will often even give immortality to work which is slight in vision and very far from the higher intensities of style. But it is not merely metrical rhythm, even in a perfect technical excellence, which we mean when we speak of poetic movement; that perfection is only a first step, a physical basis. There must be a deeper and more subtle music, a rhythmical soul-movement entering into the metrical form and often overflowing it before the real poetic achievement begins. A mere metrical excellence, however subtle, rich or varied, however perfectly it satisfies the outer ear, does not meet the deeper aims of the creative spirit; for there is an inner hearing which makes its greater claim, and to reach and satisfy it is the true aim of the creator of melody and harmony.

Nevertheless metre, by which we mean a fixed and balanced system of the measures of sound, *mātrā*, is not only the traditional, but also surely the right physical basis for the poetic movement. A recent modern tendency,—that which has given us the poetry of Whitman and Carpenter and the experimentalists in *vers libre* in France and Italy,—denies this tradition and sets aside metre as a limiting bondage, perhaps even a frivolous artificiality or a falsification of true, free and natural poetic rhythm. That is, it seems to me, a point of view which cannot eventually prevail, because it does not deserve to prevail. It certainly cannot triumph, unless it justifies itself by supreme rhythmical achievements beside which the highest work of the great masters of poetic harmony in the past shall sink into a clear inferiority. That has not yet been done. On the contrary, *vers libre* has done its best when it has either limited its



aim in rhythm to a kind of chanting poetical prose or else based itself on a sort of irregular and complex metrical movement which in its inner law, though not in its form, recalls the idea of Greek choric poetry.

Milton disparaging rhyme, which he had himself used with so much skill in his earlier, less sublime, but more beautiful poetry, forgot or ignored the spiritual value of rhyme, its power to enforce and clinch the appeal of melodic or harmonic recurrence which is a principal element in the measured movement of poetry, its habit of opening sealed doors to the inspiration, its capacity to suggest and reveal beauty to that supra-intellectual something in us which music is missioned to awake. The Whitmanic technique falls into a similar, but wider error. When mankind found out the power of thought and feeling thrown into fixed and recurring measures of sound to move and take possession of the mind and soul, they were not discovering a mere artistic device, but a subtle truth of psychology, of which the conscious theory is preserved in the Vedic tradition. And when the ancient Indians chose more often than not to throw whatever they wished to endure, even philosophy, science and law, into metrical form, it was not merely to aid the memory,—they were able to memorise huge prose Brahmanas quite as accurately as the Vedic hymnal or the metrical Upanishads,—but because they perceived that metrical speech has in itself not only an easier durability, but a greater natural power than unmetrical, not only an intenser value of sound, but a force to compel language and sense to heighten themselves in order to fall fitly into this stricter mould. There is perhaps a truth in the Vedic idea that the Spirit of creation framed all the movements of the world by *chhandas*, in certain fixed rhythms of the formative Word, and it is because they are faithful to the cosmic metres that the basic world-movements unchangingly endure. A balanced harmony maintained by a system of subtle recurrences is the foundation of immortality in created things, and metrical movement is nothing else than creative sound grown conscious of this secret of its own powers.

Still there are all sorts of heights and gradations in the use of this power. General consent seems indeed to have sanctioned the name of poetry for any kind of effective language set in a vigorous or catching metrical form, and although the wideness of this definition is such that it has enabled even the Macaulays and Kiplings to mount their queer poetic thrones, I will not object: catholicity is always a virtue. Nevertheless, mere force of language tacked on to the trick of the metrical beat does not answer the higher description of poetry; it may have the form or its shadow, it has not the essence. There is a whole mass of poetry,—the French metrical romances and most of the mediaeval ballad poetry may be taken as examples,—which relies simply on the metrical beat for its rhythm and on an even level of just tolerable expression for its style; there is hardly a line whose rhythm floats home or where the expression strikes deep. Even in later European poetry, though the art of verse and language has been better learned, essentially the same method persists, and poets who use it have earned not only the popular suffrage, but the praise of the critical mind. Still the definitive verdict on their verse is that it is nothing more than an effective

jog-trot of Pegasus, a pleasing canter or a showy gallop. It has great staying-power, —indeed there seems no reason why, once begun, it should not go on for ever,—it carries the poet easily over his ground, but it does nothing more. Certainly, no real soul-movement can get easily into this mould. It has its merits and its powers; it is good for metrical romances of a sort, for war poetry and popular patriotic poetry, or perhaps any poetry which wants to be an “echo of life”; it may stir, not the soul, but the vital being in us like a trumpet or excite it like a drum. But after all the drum and the trumpet do not carry us far in the way of music.

But even high above this level we still do not get at once the greater sound-movement of which we are speaking. Poets of considerable power, sometimes even the greatest in their less exalted moments, are satisfied ordinarily with a set harmony or a set melody, which is very satisfying to the outward ear and carries the aesthetic sense along with it in a sort of even, indistinctive pleasure, and into this mould of easy melody or harmony they throw their teeming or flowing imaginations without difficulty or check, without any need of an intenser heightening, a deeper appeal. It is beautiful poetry; it satisfies the aesthetic sense, the imagination and the ear; but there the charm ends. Once we have heard its rhythm, we have nothing new to expect, no surprise for the inner ear, no danger of the soul being suddenly seized and carried away into unknown depths. It is sure of being floated along evenly as if upon a flowing stream. Or sometimes it is not so much a flowing stream as a steady march or other even movement: this comes oftenest in poets who appeal more to the thought than to the ear; they are concerned chiefly with the thing they have to say and satisfied to have found an adequate rhythmic mould into which they can throw it without any farther preoccupation.

But even a great attention and skill in the use of metrical possibilities, in the invention of rhythmical turns, devices, modulations, variations, strong to satisfy the intelligence, to seize the ear, to maintain its vigilant interest, will not bring us yet to the higher point we have in view. There are periods of literature in which this kind of skill is carried very far. The rhythms of Victorian poetry seem to me to be of this kind; they show sometimes the skill of the artist, sometimes of the classical or romantic technician, of the prestigious melodist or harmonist, sometimes the power of the vigorous craftsman or even the performer of robust metrical feats. All kinds of instrumental faculties have been active; but the one thing that is lacking, except in moments or brief periods of inspiration, is the soul behind creating and listening to its own greater movements.

Poetic rhythm begins to reach its highest levels, the greater poetic movements become possible when, using any of these powers but rising beyond them, the soul begins to make its direct demand and yearn for a profounder satisfaction: they awake when the inner ear begins to listen. Technically, we may say that this comes in when the poet becomes, in Keats' phrase, a miser of sound and syllable, economical of his means, not in the sense of a niggardly sparing, but of making the most of all its possibilities of sound. It is then that poetry gets farthest away from the method of

prose-rhythm. Prose-rhythm aims characteristically at a general harmony in which the parts are subdued to get the tone of a total effect; even the sounds which give the support or the relief, yet to a great extent seem to be trying to efface themselves in order not to disturb by a too striking particular effect the general harmony which is the whole aim. Poetry on the contrary makes much of its beats and measures; it seeks for a very definite and insistent rhythm. But still, where the greater rhythmical intensities are not pursued, it is only some total effect that predominates and the rest is subdued to it. But in these highest, intensest rhythms every sound is made the most of, whether in its suppression or in its swelling expansion, its narrowness or its open wideness, in order to get in the combined effect something which the ordinary harmonic flow of poetry cannot give us.

But this is only the technical side, the physical means by which the effect is produced. It is not the artistic intelligence or the listening physical ear that is most at work, but something within that is trying to bring out the echo of a hidden harmony, to discover a secret of rhythmic infinities within us. It is not a labour of the devising intellect or the aesthetic sense which the poet has achieved, but a labour of the spirit within itself to cast something out of the surge of the eternal depths. The other faculties are there in their place, but the conductor of the orchestral movement is the soul suddenly and potently coming forward to get its own work done by its own higher and unanalysable methods. The result is something as near to wordless music as word-music can get, and with the same power of soul-life, of soul-emotion, of profound supra-intellectual significance. In these higher harmonies and melodies the metrical rhythm is taken up by the spiritual; it is filled with or sometimes it seems rolled away and lost in a music that has really another unseizable and spiritual secret of movement.

This is the intensity of poetic movement out of which the greatest possibility of poetic expression arises. It is where the metrical movement remains as base, but either enshrines and contains or is itself contained and floats in an element of greater music which exceeds it and yet brings out all its possibilities, that the music fit for the Mantra makes itself audible. It is the triumph of the embodied spirit over the difficulties and limitations of the physical instrument. And the listener seems to be that other vaster and yet identical eternal spirit whom the Upanishad speaks of as the ear of the ear, he who listens to all hearings; "behind the instabilities of word and speech" it is the profound inevitable harmonies of his own thought and vision for which he is listening.

SRI AUROBINDO

## A LYRIC BY NIRODBARAN

### WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS

*Thy*  
(The) sky is a blue fire  
*A-glow* *night*;  
(That glows) in the (dark);  
What eternities are piled  
*On* *height!*  
(In) its starry (spark)!

Earth's clamour fails to reach  
Its tranquil shore;  
Only the billows of time  
*Circle*  
(Spin) ever more

*I can't make out for the life of  
me what are these wan shadows  
and why they poke their pale  
noses in here.*

*And world on world is cast*  
(Till the wan shadows are cast)  
From its sleepless whirl

*heart*  
And a lustre within its (f)rame) *A sea (billows of Time)*  
*Grows* *a* *has no "frame".*  
(Glows) like pearl

In a still secrecy  
Breathed by sun and moon  
*From the bright solitude*  
(And born from a wilderness)  
*the Timeless'*  
Of (timeless) swoon.

*Thy*  
(The) sky is a gold fire  
Of starry dust  
From heaven's immensities  
*lone and*  
Wrought, (lone-) hushed.

28.4.38

As you wrote it it is a dream poem. I have tried by a few alterations to wake it up—now I think it is truly excellent as a vision poem. It must be “thy sky”—for otherwise it is the ordinary sky and since Science has shown us that that does not exist—it is only a hallucination of blue colour or coloured by azotes or some other such chemical entity, anything written about the ordinary sky can only be either unconvincing or purely decorative. So! Repetition all right and very effective.

## O WHEN ?

O WHEN shall I frame  
The luminous word  
To catch, without caging,  
The bird

Whose glimmering wings  
Are the two  
Brave eyes which uplift  
The soul of you?

'Twere a gaudy waste  
To hold  
With bar on tinkling bar  
Of lifeless gold

The riches and rhythm  
You flutter abroad  
Whenever your dream  
Is a dawn of God.

O wide must I be,  
A freedom of skies,  
For words to image  
Those soaring eyes

And mar no quiver  
Of shadow or shine  
By which you journey  
To a trance divine!

AMAL KIRAN

# A DREAM ON 14 NOVEMBER 1979 MORNING

## RELATED BY CHAMPAKLAL

THERE was a huge tent. I went around it looking for an entrance to get in but could not find any. At last an idea came to me: why not try to lift up the bottom of the tent from one side, and see if it is possible to get in that way? I saw it was possible. I bent and put my head inside the tent. Then I heard a voice: "Cannot go inside the tent unless you write your name." He who said that was sitting nearby. I turned back thinking that this man perhaps did not know me. He brought a paper for me to write my name. I looked for my pen but he gave me his. I could not write on that paper. Seeing this, another man who was present there brought a bigger piece of paper. I wrote: 'Cha Chohtalal Purani.' After writing it, I noticed that what I had written was not correct. So I wrote again and again but my name was not coming correctly! I only knew that it was not as it should be. I went to keep the old paper in a cupboard and saw that it was my cupboard but someone had changed everything.

By this time, Amrita came towards me and said that he had come from the tent and that he had been with The Mother.

AMRITA - The book which you asked me to get for you, I could not bring.

MYSELF - Which book?

AMRITA - Your book—forgotten? Book for the journey to the New World.

MYSELF - Yes, yes, now I remember. What happened?

AMRITA - I must say it was a great opportunity to see this marvellous and magnificent book with beautiful pictures of the New World. When did you do it? I never knew!

Champaklal, you know, this man from whom you had asked me to get the book was very happy when he learned that I had come from you. He was much moved to see me. He told me that he had somehow managed to get that book from you. He remarked, "How sweet is the word 'Champaklal'! The Mother and Sri Aurobindo have said this name several times—so I say only 'Champaklal'. Perhaps you know that he is very generous but at times, I must say, he is very very miserly. For things like this, he says it is very difficult to part from them! Only if you see the expression on his face, you can know him and understand how he feels. But he must have felt my need. Truly I was anxious to get this book as I knew it would be very useful to me for going to the New World. He gave it to me with pleasure. You could see it so vividly on his face."

Champaklal, it was a pleasure to see such a man. While he was speaking to me thus, I saw tears flowing from his eyes. It is rare to see such a Sadhak. What humility! While talking to him, I gathered what knowledge he has—I found him very learned too! Again I say, Champaklal, you gave me a nice, a rare opportunity to see such a man. He has tremendous love and respect for you. When I mentioned to him

that I would inform you about it, he stated, "Champaklal knows this." He sends you grateful pranams.

What were you doing here?

MYSELF - I was trying to write my name to get into the tent but could not succeed.

AMRITA (*laughing*) - You have forgotten your name? But why were you writing it?

MYSELF - To get into the tent.

AMRITA - But—for you?

MYSELF - Yes—I was asked to write.

I related to him what had happened.

AMRITA (*laughing again*) - Now, not required. No name for you to write!

MYSELF - I would like to come to your tent.

AMRITA - What, my tent? (*Laughter*)

MYSELF - Some people came to see me. They were in difficulty in their journey towards the New World. They said that The Mother had directed them in their dreams to meet me. I saw that they were truly nice people. As you know well, I do not like to see people. But meeting such people really makes me very happy. That is why I became late for the tent.

AMRITA - Champaklal, do not be selfish!

I became serious.

AMRITA - Still you do not understand jokes! What I meant was—take me also with you to the New World. Now the Mother has gone up. But you know today you have not lost anything by not coming to the tent. The Mother was not very pleasant to see.

MYSELF - What do you mean? The Mother is always pleasant to see—anywhere—any time—in any mood.

AMRITA - What you say is very true but I am still Amrita, not Champaklal! Now I come to the point—X has lost his house-key which was given to him by the Mother. She never likes people to lose keys—you too know it well.

MYSELF - Why only key—She never likes losing things. Yes, it is true, losing the key is more serious, specially to lose the key received from the Mother!

AMRITA - The Mother has asked me to go and see what has happened to X and where he is now. The only difficulty is that I do not know where he lives at present. He has changed several houses.

MYSELF - He was living with us and then shifted to another house—that house I have visited to see if he is in it.

But I give you a very happy piece of news. I have the key and now I am going to the Mother. Both of us can go with the key!

AMRITA - Oh, Champaklal! How nice! Now I have a chance to see the Mother in a very happy mood. She will be pleased so much! Really, the Mother was very perturbed by his losing the key. Let us go.

I woke up.

# **SUPERMIND, OVERMIND, THE VICTORY DAY OF 24 NOVEMBER 1926 AND SOME OTHER ISSUES**

## **A SEQUEL TO "THE DEVELOPMENT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S SPIRITUAL SYSTEM AND THE MOTHER'S CONTRIBUTION TO IT"**

*(Apropos of Mother India of 24 November 1979)*

### I

WE have demonstrated that the distinction between Supermind and the World of the Gods had already been made by Sri Aurobindo before 24 November 1926, the Victory Day, the Siddhi Day, as well as that at least around the end of 1926 the term "Overmind" had been found for what had descended from the World of the Gods on this occasion into the body of Sri Aurobindo—"Krishna or the Divine Presence", as Sri Aurobindo put it in setting right Nirodbaran's conception that the Supermind had come down.

In the wake of our demonstration, one may legitimately ask: "How was 24 November 1926 designated the Day of Victory, the Day of Siddhi (Perfection, Fulfilment, Achievement of the Goal) if for Sri Aurobindo Victory and Siddhi could not but connote the descent of the Supermind?"

The reply can be given from more than one angle. Perhaps it is best implicit in a brief statement by Sri Aurobindo which has a special interest and importance because it was the very last thing he dictated on questions pertaining to his Yoga. He dictated it a few days before 5 December 1950, on which he withdrew from his body. The statement was made apropos of a disciple's note on the significance and consequence of the Overmind Divinity's descent twenty-four years earlier. The Master instructed the disciple to say:<sup>1</sup>

"It is only then that Sri Aurobindo started his Ashram, being sure that with the co-operation of the Gods the Supermind would descend upon the earth.

"What happened on the twenty-fourth of November prepared the possibility of this descent and on that day he retired into seclusion and entered into a deep dynamic meditation so that all the possibilities involved might be realised."

The operative phrase is: "being sure." Victory and Siddhi of the Supermind were seen to be a possibility not only theoretical but also inevitable in the future once the Overmind had been incarnated. Under the aspect of an unfulfilling promise, the incarnation was regarded as that Victory and Siddhi itself in seed-form.

The same impression we get from what is not the last explication of the Victory Day during Sri Aurobindo's life but is perhaps the earliest—this time from the Mother.

<sup>1</sup> *Mother India*, November 1975, p. 882.



In "A Sadhak's Diary by A.B.",<sup>1</sup> the entry for 21 November 1930 reads:

"Datta had declared the great victory on the 24th November 1926 thus: 'He (Sri Aurobindo) has conquered life, conquered death, conquered all. Lord Krishna has come.'

"Mother explained last night: 'It is not that Lord Krishna was not there, on the 24th he manifested in the most material consciousness and Sri Aurobindo said that he knew that now the time had come to take up the work of the new creation.'

"Speaking of those days Mother said that the atmosphere was intense because it was a psychic atmosphere. The Overmind, the plane of the Gods, was brought in touch with the physical plane; this touch was necessary, otherwise the Supramental Transformation would not be possible..."

From another angle we may view in the descent of Krishna a herald of the Supramental Transformation by insighting in it a meaning deeper than merely the coming down of the Overmind which is a plane fundamentally distinct from the Supermind by belonging to the summit of the Cosmic Lower Hemisphere whereas the Supermind belongs to the Transcendent Higher Hemisphere. When in 1933 a sadhak wrote to Sri Aurobindo of the struggle he was undergoing between devotion for Krishna and the sense of the Mother's divinity, the Master replied: "The struggle in you is quite unnecessary, for the two things are one and go perfectly together. It is he who has brought you to the Mother and it is by adoration of her that you will realise him. He is here in the Ashram and it is his work that is being done here."<sup>2</sup>

Again, referring to a sadhak's vision of blue light, Sri Aurobindo says: "Ordinary pale blue is usually the light of the Illumined Mind or something of the Intuition. Whitish blue is Sri Aurobindo's light or Krishna's light."<sup>3</sup> We are told the same thing in another letter: "Whitish blue Sri Krishna's Light (also called Sri Aurobindo's Light)."<sup>4</sup> Along with this esoteric information we may read the implication of "whitish" by glancing at two more letters: "The white light is the Mother's light and it is always around her."<sup>5</sup>—"The white light is her own characteristic power, that of the Divine Consciousness in its essence"<sup>6</sup>. Not only is a fusion of Sri Krishna and Sri Aurobindo indicated but also the Mother's presence is shown to be in it.

Elsewhere Sri Aurobindo, speaking of the various modes of Krishna's being, first mentions the many-sided Krishna of the Gita and then "the Godhead who was incarnate at Brindavan and Dwarka and Kurukshetra and who was the guide of my Yoga and with whom I realised identity".<sup>7</sup> Side by side with this "identity" we may observe how Sri Aurobindo concludes his explanation of the Mother's flag: "The blue of the flag is meant to be the colour of Krishna and so represents the spiritual or divine

<sup>1</sup> *Sri Aurobindo Circle Annual*, No. 33, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1952), p. 476.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 457.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

consciousness which it is her work to establish so that it may reign upon earth."<sup>1</sup> Once more the Master, the Mother and the Godhead incarnate at Brindavan, Dwarka and Kurukshetra merge.

From their personal oneness as well as the oneness of their work so repeatedly expressed, we should find it easy to recognise as a genuine presage of the Victory proper to Sri Aurobindo and to the Mother the Victory denoted by Krishna's descent into Matter on 24 November.

To see Krishna as no more than the Overmind Divinity is but to affirm a half-truth. Sri Aurobindo has called him also the preparer of "the descent of Supermind and Ananda" (Bliss) because he is "the Anandamaya" who "supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards his Ananda."<sup>2</sup> As the Anandamaya he is far beyond the Overmind and belongs to the same Transcendence as Sri Aurobindo whose mode of manifestation, the Supermind, is the creative aspect of the Ananda-plane itself taking the shape of a primal archetypal cosmos in the Transcendent Higher Hemisphere from where all universes originally derive and in which awaits the secret of earth-existence's total transformation. No wonder Sri Aurobindo accepted as in essence his own typical Siddhi the victorious advent of Krishna into his body.

## 2

Another question needing some reconsideration is connected with our conclusion that around the end of 1926 Sri Aurobindo was using the term "Overmind" but that we have no pointer to it earlier.

Before we take up the question directly, it may be of some interest to understand the type of terminology employed in the earliest extant Overmind-reference: "Many things have still to be done before the divine gnosis can manifest in the nature. It is the gnostic overmind in different forms that is now current there, it has to be transformed into the true supermind gnosis..."

What seems likely is a separation by Sri Aurobindo of "the divine gnosis" proper which is the Supermind from the Above-Mind planes below it which, by being a gradation of the Cosmic Knowledge and not of the Cosmic Ignorance, are in general entitled "gnostic", a gradation whose member nearest to "the true supermind gnosis" is named "the gnostic overmind". We have no information at this period about the precise names of the levels below the Overmind nor about any nomenclature for shades or strata within it. Confronted without prejudice from subsequent usage and placed in a framework of vision not distant from the epoch when the whole overhead consciousness in its several gradations was reckoned as supramental, the terminology has the look of being a recent broad classification with some demarcating lines in it but still carrying some vestige of the old common denominator.

Nor can the broad character we assign to the classification be deemed an arbi-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

rary choice on our part with no support at all from any later usage. Actually, this character can be shown to persist, among various other more preferred descriptions, right up to the final months of Sri Aurobindo's life. In the very last article he dictated in 1950 for the *Bulletin* we have the entire overhead range denoted as "gnostic" in general,<sup>1</sup> although in the background are all the detailed distinctions of this range<sup>2</sup> and in the years anterior to 1950 a particular division of the developing Yogic experience of the Overmind into three possible strata—first, that which takes up the Illumined Mind and Higher Mind and even the intellect to form a mental Overmind, next an uplifting of these lower movements and the Intuitive Mind together to constitute the Overmind Intuition, which is like the Intuitive Mind grown massive and widened, lastly the Gnostic Overmind or Overmind Gnosis bearing some colour of the Supermind and awaiting the supramental transformation.<sup>3</sup> Speaking of "the descending order of the gnostic mind", Sri Aurobindo goes on in the article to describe it:

"...Mind luminous and aware of its workings still lives in the Light and can be seen as a subordinate power of the Supermind; it is still an agent of the Truth-Consciousness, a gnostic power that has not descended into the mental ignorance; it is capable of a mental gnosis that preserves its connection with the superior Light and acts by its power. This is the character of Overmind on its own plane and of all the powers that are dependent on the Overmind..."

So our reading of the classification made around the end of 1926, when the later subtleties are not in evidence and may not be expected, is hardly unnatural. However, the note by Sri Aurobindo which falls within this classification, while suggestive of some time at its back because it assumes a certain system of viewing the overhead consciousness, does not by itself indicate how long ago that system emerged and the appellation "Overmind" came into existence. What the classification indicated is that their arrival could not have been too far away. If we are definitely to assert that the appellation was inexistent prior to the Victory Day and must have been absent even on that Day, we have to credit the arguments mustered apart from the note. All depends on whether their apparent strength is genuine.

We have been disposed to ascribe to a mere back-look the phrase "Krishna or the Overmind or something equivalent" in the letter to Nirodbaran. But actually it sounds as though it were just a variant of the other—"Krishna or the Divine Presence or whatever you like"—which we take to have been used on the Victory Day itself. The first term is common to both, the final locution in either has semantically the same ring: there seems no ground to differentiate the middle turn of speech—"the Divine Presence"—in the latter phrase from that in the former—"the Overmind"—as exclusively the *verba ipsissima* on the occasion. The two phrases mention with

<sup>1</sup> The Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Edition, Vol. 16, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-2.

<sup>3</sup> "Overhead Poetry". Poems with Sri Aurobindo's Comments, edited by K. D. Sethna (Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry 1972), pp. 11, 33.

equal explicitness the identical spiritual descent into the material. The word "Overmind" is quite conceivable as having been within access on 24 November. It too might very well have been employed.

Even if it was not employed, the fact that the Overmind-plane's distinction from the Supramental had already been discovered creates the near-certainty of the name's crystallisation for intellectual purposes. In the long essay on the Powers and Personalities of the Divine Mother, where the knowledge of the Overmind-plane as distinct from the Supermind is patent, do we not still mark the absence of the appellation in spite of the latter having occurred earlier in the private note? On the balance the odds are heavy that it crystallised before 24 November 1926.

The same inference can be drawn from a keener scrutiny of portions of the Mother's talk on 10 July 1957 than we have already given to them. In that talk she recounts the remarkable events following the Victory Day.<sup>1</sup> She begins thus: "Sri Aurobindo had given me the charge of the outer work because he wanted to withdraw into concentration in order to hasten the manifestation of the supramental consciousness..." These words strongly suggest that on 24 November itself Sri Aurobindo was aware of what he had to do beyond the great spiritual event of the day—namely, to bring about the descent of the Supermind which had remained still undescended. To seclude himself and concentrate for the purpose of effecting its manifestation as soon as possible means that something other than the supramental consciousness was known to have been manifested. Hence, at least on the 24th if not earlier, the crucial distinction between the Supermind and the plane of the Gods, the overhead level of Krishna-consciousness, was seen.

Taken straightforwardly the Mother's opening phrase can bear only this gloss. But one might urge that she may have expressed what was later recognised as the object to be attained and that on the very day the distinction had not been seen and the withdrawal into seclusion had for its aim the rapid working out of the full content of what had made a definitive commencement. In short, one might argue that the Supermind rather than the plane requiring to be set apart as Overmind was understood to have descended.

*Per se* this plea would be specious. Are there any independent reasons prompting such a negative answer? We have found that the whole structure of negation one might raise on the basis of certain reports of Sri Aurobindo's conversations prior to the Day of Siddhi is toppled by his correspondence with Nirodbaran in August 1935.<sup>2</sup> From this correspondence we clearly gathered: (1) Sri Aurobindo and the Mother never declared the Supermind to have descended on 24 November 1926; (2) Datta's proclamation suggesting that the supreme descent had taken place was not known to Sri Aurobindo and never had his support; (3) his retirement would not have come about if he had believed or proclaimed that the Supermind had made its descent into his body.

<sup>1</sup> The Mother's Centenary Edition, Vol. 9, pp. 147-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1954), pp. 89-92.

Our straightforward reading of the Mother is perfectly justified. The sole point on which we lack direct testimony from her talk is whether the designation "Overmind" for the plane whose Krishna-consciousness had come down into the body of Sri Aurobindo had been discovered at the time. But there is nothing to debar us from extrapolating to the day of the Siddhi the term Sri Aurobindo employed in the words he spoke to the Mother when she went to him and narrated the climax of the brilliant experiences that had occurred in the wake of 24 November: the imminent precipitation upon earth of a new divine creation. She quotes Sri Aurobindo as saying: "Yes, this is an Overmind creation. It is very interesting, very well done. You will perform miracles which will make you famous throughout the world, you will be able to turn all events on earth topsy-turvy, indeed... It will be a *great* success. But it is an Overmind creation. And it is not success that we want; we want to establish the Supermind on earth. One must know how to renounce immediate success in order to create the new world, the supramental world in its integrality." Since we have no evidence to the contrary we may validly incline to believe from the Mother's talk that the plane of Krishna-consciousness was known to Sri Aurobindo as "Overmind" when it actually got established in his bodily being.

*(To be continued)*

K. D. SETHNA

## TWO POEMS

### A DAY'S WORK

THE hours have passed in an uneven flow  
 Surging and retreating with an enigmatic tide.  
 Each event bore the stamp of Your guiding control,  
 But why did you not explain it, Lord,  
 That I might comprehend the whole?  
 The reasons lie with you protected.  
 Do I really need to know?

### THE MOONED LAKE

Over the serenity of water in abeyance  
 The moon-tide plays its melody of light.  
 Somewhere in me the same bliss-dance accords  
 And the inner being knows that God has visited His night.

PATTI

# FIGHT AGAINST DUALISM: THE LATER VEDANTINS AND SRI AUROBINDO

## 1. The Later Vedanta and Dualism

THE systems of later Vedanta, especially Advaita, Visistadvaita and Dvaita, do not consider that dualism in any form can offer a consistent account of the world. This is borne out by their adverse comments on the position of Sankhya which is a dualistic system. They all hold that Sankhya, by being a dualistic system, fails to give a true insight into the nature and constitution of the world. Even Dvaita does not favour dualism in spite of the fact that it is often described as a Vedantic dualism. Strictly speaking, Dvaita is not a dualism in the sense that Sankhya is a dualism nor does it uphold the doctrine of two independent principles. The name Dvaita merely implies that it is a theory expounding the *twofold* character of the world as the Independent supporting the Dependent. But it is ironical to note that none of the later Vedantic systems could totally succeed in rejecting dualism as a philosophical theory.

## 2. The later Vedantic Theories

The later Vedantins admit that a philosophical explanation of the world necessarily presupposes the existence of two fundamental principles—a principle of matter and a principle of consciousness. But they do not think that there is any real opposition between the two, even if they are fundamentally different.

Madhva affirms that Brahman and Prakriti are the two fundamental principles of the world. He says that since difference constitutes the very essence of a substance, Brahman and Prakriti are substantively different. While Prakriti is characterised by the qualities of sattva (equilibrium), rajas (movement) and tamas (inertia), Brahman does not have any of these qualities. One of his definitions of Brahman says that it is other than Prakriti, *aprākṛta*. To say that Brahman and Prakriti are substantively different is not to say that they are apart and do not relate to each other. While Brahman is free from limitations, limitations arising out of space, time and a fixed sum of qualities, Prakriti depends on Brahman for its existence, cognisability and activity. Unless Prakriti exists in Brahman, it can neither move nor produce its forms. Though it depends on Brahman for its existence, it does not mean that it derives its existence as a substance. It only means that it is supported by Brahman.

Though Ramanuja and Shankara do not establish the substantive difference between the two fundamental principles by an explicit definition such as Madhva's, they seem to approve of a similar definition by implication. Likewise, their definitions, though dissimilar to Madhva's, emphasise the one-sided relation between the two principles. As regards substantive difference, Ramanuja says that while Prakriti is qualified by the attributes of sattva, rajas and tamas, Brahman is other than Prakriti,

*aprākṛita*. For Shankara Brahman is a conscious and blissful substance, while Maya is an inconscient substance which is of the nature of pain. As for the one-sided relation, Ramanuja says that while Brahman is absolutely free and all-pervasive, Prakṛiti depends on Brahman for its existence, motion and creation of phenomenal forms. In Shankara's view Brahman is the only self-existent reality and Maya exists in it as a superimposition. It is called a superimposition because it is not derived from Brahman but imposed on Brahman as an underived substance.

Thus the later Vedantins commonly hold that though the two fundamental principles of the world are substantively different, a one-sided relation between the two is possible: while Brahman is independent, Matter exists in it as a dependent reality.

### 3. The Upanishads and Their Approach to Dualism

As the later Vedantins generally draw their support from the Upanishads, we shall see what the latter have to say on the problem of dualism.

There are a few important Upanishadic texts which help us to understand how they approach this problem.

- a) One only without a second (*Chhandogya*, 6-2-1).
- b) In It all the worlds rest (*Katha*, 2-3-1).
- c) This is the source of all (*Mandukya*, 6).
- d) All this is certainly Brahman (*Chhandogya*, 3-14-1).
- e) By one clod of clay all that is made of clay becomes known (*Ibid.*, 6-1-4).
- f) That being known all is known (*Shandilya*, 2-2).

Text (a) says that Brahman is the one besides whom there is nothing else existent. In other words, it says that Matter, out of which all the worlds arise, does not possess an independent existence like Brahman. Text (b) brings out the implication of the previous text. It affirms that all the worlds exist in Brahman. It means Matter exists as a dependent reality supported by Brahman. Text (c) brings out a further implication of the first text. It tells us that Brahman is the ultimate cause of Matter. That is to say, Matter is a substance derived from Brahman. Text (d) clarifies that the oneness of Brahman is not numerical but essential or substantive. Brahman is one not in the sense of number one which excludes other numerals but in the sense of the infinite One which is essentially identical with all things in the world or with Matter from which all things and all worlds arise. The word '*this*' in this text stands for the world or worlds which represent the manifest condition of Matter. Mark the word '*certainly*' in the same text. It indicates that the affirmation—the affirmation that Brahman and Matter are substantively one—is unconditionally true. Text (f) seeks to establish the truth of substantive oneness by an epistemological proof that by knowing Brahman everything can be known. The figures of clay and its products in text (e) stand respectively for Brahman and the principle of multiplicity which arises out of Brahman *viz.* Matter.

A reading of these texts clearly shows that there are two forms of dualism and that

a complete rejection of dualism is not possible unless both its forms are rejected. We shall now state what these two forms are. (1) If two things are apart and exist independently of each other, the situation may be called dualism of independent existence. (2) If two things are mutually irreducible, the situation may be called dualism of substantive irreducibility. While texts (a) and (b) deny the dualism of independent existence, texts (c) and (d) deny the other dualism *viz.* the dualism of substantive irreducibility. Texts (e) and (f) give a positive epistemological proof against substantive dualism both in figurative and plain language. A total rejection of dualism is therefore possible only when two conditions are fulfilled: (1) not only should Matter not be independent but (2) it should not be allowed to exist in Brahman if it is not reducible to the substance of Brahman.

#### 4. The Later Vedantins' Unsuccessful Attempt to Eliminate Dualism

If we examine how far the later Vedantins have succeeded in eliminating dualism, we shall find that they have just replaced one form of dualism by another.

From the scriptural point of view, they have eliminated the dualism of independent existence by making Matter an entity dependent on Brahman. This agrees with the teaching of the Upanishad. But they prefer to keep both Brahman and Matter as mutually irreducible entities on the ground that they are two entirely different substances having opposite qualities. This goes against the other teaching of the Upanishad that unless Brahman and Matter are reducible to each other, it is impossible to overcome substantive dualism. Perhaps they believe that substantive dualism is no dualism at all. Since this conflicts with their professed view that they are only bringing out the true import of the scripture, their metaphysics is bound to remain a dualism.

From the logical point of view also, they are unable to overcome dualism. If Brahman and Matter are apart and exist side by side, then Matter sets a limitation on Brahman's freedom by making it an other which is incapable of containing the material principle. In order to overcome this difficulty, the later Vedantins have made Matter an entity dependent on Brahman. But unfortunately this has carried the difficulty to the heart of Brahman. Since Matter is a substance other than the substance of Brahman, the original difficulty of external limitation is turned into a kind of aggressive limitation that works from within. In consequence, Brahman is reduced to the level of a conditioned reality. If Brahman creates the world out of Matter in accordance with its ideas, the creative ideas are determined by the nature and constitution of Matter rather than by Brahman's free will. Nor is Brahman free to assume or give up the role of the creator of the world independently of Matter. If Brahman is the impersonal support of Maya, the support is compulsory, for it is impossible for Brahman to extend or withdraw the support unilaterally.

With a view to overcome these difficulties the later Vedantins advance two arguments. (1) Madhva and Ramanuja argue that because Brahman is absolutely inde-



pendent, its qualities are self-determined and do not owe their existence to anything other than itself. (2) Shankara's argument is that since Maya is just a superimposition and, therefore, not continuous with Brahman, the question of Maya's compelling Brahman into a support does not arise.

A close examination of these arguments will show that none of them is tenable. As for the first, to say that Brahman cannot be limited by Prakriti because it is absolutely independent, is to convert a point of contention into a point for settling the contention. It is a logical error. The argument amounts to asserting the validity of a point which needs to be validated on rational grounds. And so the objection that the presence of Prakriti sets a limitation on Brahman's independence is left unanswered. As for the second argument, if Maya is not continuous with Brahman, there is no reason why it should be superimposed on the latter. If it is a fact that Maya cannot exist by itself and can exist only in Brahman, then there must be something, however imperceptible it may be, in the latter which permits a certain continuity between itself and the former. From this we have to conclude that Maya is not discontinuous with Brahman. Even the example of rope-snake, which is often used to show that there is no continuity between the substrate and the appearance, can tell the other way. It is the "form-resemblance"<sup>1</sup> of the rope to the snake that makes possible the superimposition of the snake on the rope, otherwise it is difficult to explain why the snake should be seen in the rope or rope-like objects and not in any other objects. It clearly indicates that Brahman and Maya are not discontinuous. If they are continuous, then the presence of Maya as an underived substance should impose a limitation on Brahman.

### 5. Misinterpretations of the Scripture

Before proceeding further we have to clarify one important point. We have to explain how the later Vedantins can disregard the authority of the scripture, especially in regard to the texts that teach substantive oneness of Matter and Brahman, while claiming that its authority in metaphysics is infallible.

We shall concentrate on the texts pertaining to the idea of substantive oneness and note how the later Vedantins interpret them. First of all, we shall take the Mandukya text, *This is the source of all*. It says that Brahman is the source of the all-constituting principle of Matter. Explaining the text, the later Vedantins say that Brahman is called the source because Matter owes its existence, etc. to Brahman. It means that Brahman is called the source because it is the ultimate support of Matter.

Let us now take the Chhandogya text, *All this is certainly Brahman*. It is interpreted in three ways: (1) *The creator of all this is certainly Brahman* (Madhva); (2) *The inner controller of all this is certainly Brahman* (Ramanuja); (3) *The ultimate ground of all this is certainly Brahman* (Shankara). In each case the sense of the text

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), p. 430.

is said to be brought out by adding a prefix to the subject of the statement *viz. all this*

We shall now consider the Shandilya text, *That being known all is known*. It says that through Brahman everything else becomes known. Two explanations are offered to show how this is possible (1) As the products of Matter answer to the ideas of Brahman, they may be regarded as being identical in form. Through this identity a thing that resembles Brahman becomes known (Madhava) (2) As Matter resides in Brahman they may be regarded as being in close proximity to each other or as being identical in position. Through this identity all the products of Matter that reside in Brahman become known (Ramanuja and Shankara). It is through the identity of form or position that knowledge of Brahman leads to the knowledge of everything else.

We shall now examine the interpretations and find out how far they are faithful to the sense of the Upanishads. As for the Mandukya text, the word "source" is made to convey the sense of "support". By "source" we mean that from which something originates, whereas the word "support" means that which serves as a basis for something to subsist in it. To argue that Brahman is the source only in the sense of being the support is to twist the original sense of the text. Regarding the Chhandogya text, the prefix to the phrase "all this" in each interpretation does not explicate the implicit sense of the latter. On the contrary, it puts into the phrase a sense not intended by the latter. Evidently, this amounts to distorting the natural sense of the text. As regards the Shandilya text, the interpretations point out that knowledge of Brahman yields the knowledge of all other things through the identity of form or position. But this does not reflect the true sense of the text. The analogy in the Chhandogya Upanishad (6-1-4)—of which the Shandilya text is but a plain statement—clearly indicates that the passage from Brahman to other things in knowledge is effected through the identity of *substance* rather than through the identity of *form* or *position*. It is needless to say that the original sense of the text is suppressed by the later Vedantins.

Thus we note two things about the interpretations of the Upanishadic texts (1) the linguistic form of the texts is left intact, (2) their original sense is modified according to the convenience of the commentator. By clinging to the outer form of the texts the later Vedantins defend themselves against the charge of disregarding the authority of the scripture. In point of fact, their defence is self-defeating and void of truth.

There is a reason why the later Vedantins seek to modify the original sense of the Upanishadic texts. The texts openly affirm that Brahman and Matter are substantively identical. But they do not indicate how the two could be identical in substance in spite of their opposite qualities. Brahman is one, unchanging, infinite, conscious and blissful, whereas Matter is a principle of multiplicity, change, limitation, inconscience, and pain and suffering. Yet the scripture says that they are substantively one. Naturally the declarations of the scripture do not seem to carry any sense unless they are suitably reinterpreted. This explains why the later Vedantins have sought to change the original sense of the scriptural statements. But, as we have found earlier

), they have fallen out of the frying-pan into the fire, for they are now con-  
with serious metaphysical difficulties which none of them was able to resolve.

*(To be continued)*

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

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### **TO KEEP MY HEAD BOWED...**

To keep my head bowed ever at Thy Lotus Feet  
Is all the wisdom I seek: the mind's whole thought  
And the heart's each passionate beat turned towards Thee,  
My being a floating spark of Thy ecstasy.

I question not the straight or twisted ways of this world.  
The Mother sees and saves however inept a child.  
As through a shuttered window she peeps through every face  
But till a light is lit in the touch of things one never knows.

To know is to grow wider than the Universe, O Soul!  
Consumed by the fire of love in the embrace of God-Thrill.

A. VENKATARANGA

# THE CLOUD MESSENGER

## A NEW TRANSLATION OF KALIDASA'S *MEGHADUTA*

*(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1980)*

As simple hermit maids their faces turn  
Aloft in awe that wind should break away  
That mighty peak, rising from thy sojourn

In this lush home of reeds, thy mass convey  
Northwards—but of the jealous trunks beware  
Of huge sky-elephants that have proud sway

Over the ends of Space! Staining the air  
With quivering jewel-hues, against thee springs  
From this great ant-hill's mouth a fragment far

Of Indra's radiant bow; its beauty brings  
To thy dark shape the charm surpassing speech  
Of Vishnu's cowherd form when to it clings

The feather of a peacock. Climb now, reach  
The fertile plain, fragrant of fresh-ploughed soil,  
Where Mala's rustic women will beseech

Thy stay with gentle eyes devoid of guile  
Glistening in affection, for they know  
Thee as the giver of all fruit of toil—

Yet longer tarry not than to bestow  
The bounty of thy drops, then drift again  
More lightly on the winds that northward blow.

Soon, travel-worn, a pleasant rest obtain  
On Mango Peak, whose plagues of forest-fire  
Thou oft hast boldly quenched with sudden rain

On thy arrival: therefore with joy entire  
He shall sustain thee—even the mean would not  
Refuse a friend approached in just desire

Of refuge; could one so exalted, sought  
 By right of favours past, thee then deny?  
 The mountain gleams with newly ripened fruit

Crowding its mango trees; as thou dost lie  
 Upon its top, in colour like some braid  
 Of glossy hair, it seems—viewed from the sky

By divine couples—a sweet breast betrayed  
 Of the young mother Earth, its centre dark,  
 And golden the expanse thereround displayed.

Thus linger on awhile, where thou mayst mark  
 The woodmen's wives savouring delicious bowers  
 Cool from thy rain; but hasten now, embark

For Reva's stream, that where the Vindhya towers  
 Spreads broken at its feet like brilliant lines  
 Gracing a festive elephant. Thy showers

Depleted, stoop to draw from those ravines  
 Water with pungent taste of ichor blent  
 From rutting forest giants, as it careens

Down the steep slopes, delayed in its descent  
 By dense rose-apple thickets: so restored,  
 No wind shall trifle with thee, insolent

In pride of strength—to riches all accord  
 Reverence, while poverty with scorn is met.  
 Black bees in many a melodious horde

To green-gold blossoms drawn with stamens yet  
 Half-folded; spotted antelope along  
 Lush stream-banks, lured by ruby buds that whet

Expectant hunger; elephants that throng  
 Burnt woodlands, crazed with fragrance exquisite  
 Of rain-soaked earth: the course where thou hast flung

Thy gifts these will reveal. Though it befit  
 Thy nature, noble friend, that thou wouldst haste

For my sake, I foresee thy heart submit

To many a fair hill, its flowers placed  
 In greeting at thy feet; lifting bright eyes  
 Bedewed with tears that to their zeal attest,

As rapturous peacocks cast their piercing cries  
 Of welcome, thou must yet resolve somehow  
 To travel onward. Soon, before thee lies

The Land of the Ten Citadels, where now  
 Each garden-hedge will suddenly grow white  
 With blooming cactus; all at once each bough

Of holy fig-trees will become the site  
 Of crows' loud nesting; while on every pond  
 Will float the royal swans that in thy flight

Surround thee; and the Jambu groves beyond  
 The town-walls will assume a darker hue  
 As to thy rain their ripening fruits respond.

Amid this realm will come into thy view  
 Its capital, famed seat of princes proud,  
 Where perfect lover's bliss thou wilt pursue

And clasp: for thou shalt taste, O amorous cloud,  
 Sweet Vetravati's liquid lips, her face  
 At thy approaching thunder's voice arch-browed

With charming waves. Take here thy resting-place  
 Atop Kadamba Hill, whom thou shalt feel  
 Bristle with blossoms at thy moist embrace,

And all the wanton revelry reveal  
 Of city youth as from his caves rich scents  
 Of courtesans' seductive perfume steal.

Journeying on, thy gentle rain dispense  
 To jasmine vines whose tender buds adorn  
 Parks on each river's edge; thy shade presents

Brief comfort to flower-girls, whose lilies worn  
 As earrings wilt with wiping from their cheeks  
 Warm sweat of sun and arduous labour born.

*(To be continued)*

RICHARD HARTZ

NOTES

Ant-hill (line 9): The poet has in mind a particular notion concerning the formation of the rainbow, the "bow" of Indra, lord of Heaven. Rainbows were sometimes said to be constituted from the rays emitted by jewels in the hoods of huge cobras whom the rains cause to emerge from their ant-hill lairs. A more scientific theory, positing a dispersal of the multicoloured rays of the sun as the explanation of this phenomenon, was also current in Kalidasa's time.

Reva (p. 4, line 13): another name for the river Narmada.

The Land of the Ten Citadels (p. 4, line 40): Dasharna.

Its capital (p. 5, line 5): Vidisha.

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## YANTRA

GETTING it together,  
 Using words to see;  
 Universe of discourse:  
 One reality.

Million constellations  
 Pattern perfect points:  
 Artificial structures,  
 Arbitrary joints.

Still the stars are perfect,  
 Still the central pole;  
 All around the infinite  
 Undivided whole.

PETER HEEHS

# CHILD-EDUCATION IN THE SPIRITUAL LIGHT

## I

### THE CHILD AS A SPIRITUAL FACT

THE very young child, the new-born and the infant is predominantly a biological fact of psycho-physical facets, which is yet simple and true in its natural expression, not sophisticated by social encrustations good, bad or indifferent. In that presophistication state the soul has a chance of expression, which constitutes the moments of rare beauty at that stage of life. In some cases childhood and early boyhood or girlhood display this beauty as a steady phenomenon for a length of time and it disappears as the social consciousness becomes dominant and external preoccupations become engrossing.

The expressions of the soul are to be recognised by the presence of an intense sweetness and delight, an exceptional charm and attractiveness, which stand out uniquely among other states. And when this expression occurs as a relatively steady phenomenon, the child concerned stands marked off from other children.

If we are able to recognise such an expression of child-nature, then our conception of the child will need a clear appreciation that he is really an evolving soul with a body and a mind for its manifestation. And that will give us a fine new approach to him, enabling us incidentally to discover ourselves as evolving souls at a different stage.

The soul is a conscious active agent intent on self-manifestation and self-expression. It is unitary in its constitution and spontaneously devoted to Truth, Beauty and Goodness. It possesses a superb refinement, tenderness and effectivity of action too. It is essentially delightful and a self-complete existent fact. The ordinary nature of man is externally oriented, environmentally involved, superficial and fragmentary. Its impulses are extremely varied, of opposite tendencies and self-assertive. It is, therefore, fairly wild and impetuous in action, partially ignorant and conceited in perceptions and emotionally, in likes and dislikes, limited, divided and insistent. In the child this nature of men can be seen in its naked form. Later it becomes much camouflaged by social prohibitions and inhibitions and outwardly adjusted in life, but inwardly it remains full of conflicts and contradictions. Ordinarily, education adopts external methods and looks upon the child as a sort of raw stuff of body and mind to be moulded into a socially acceptable form. But inwardly man remains raw and fragmented. The rise of psychology has much modified the external approach and the inner dynamics of personality are now availed of more and more. Yet an integrated personality is only a conception, an ultimate necessity. Even its conception is a loose summative idea and the methodology is not yet a serious proposition.

The best psychological idea in this connection so far made available is that of



the Centre of personality as affirmed and characterised by the eminent Western psychologist C.G. Jung. The Centre is something besides the ego and its polarities and it exercises a unifying and harmonising influence on the disparate material of personality. Jung's *Integration of Personality* gives an elaborate exposition of what the Centre is, how and on what evidence of dream analysis and religious history he affirms it and what its significance is for personality.

It is extremely interesting that Jung on purely empirical grounds comes to affirm besides the ego a 'Centre' and ascribes to it the functions which make it parallel and equal to the 'Psychic Being' or the evolving spiritual principle of personality as affirmed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in their expositions of Integral Yoga, Integral Psychology and Integral Education.

There is, however, one difference of capital importance, which must be observed here. Jung affirms the Centre as a fact, but does not inquire whether it is possible to activate it and make it utilisable for purposes of mental health and of education. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, on the other hand, make of the Psychic Being the pivot, the primary means for all modifications, refinements, harmonisation and transformation of personality. They have elaborated methods and techniques for activating this secret spiritual fact and making it an overt dominant fact in personality.

The Psychic Being as a unitary conscious agent is by its nature the most potent force for harmonising and refining personality and the right and effective means to make integration of personality a practical proposition.

It is evident that the Psychic Being and its activation open up a new prospect for education. We feel we have here a marvellous educative agency and are now keen to explore the ways and means of being able to avail ourselves of it.

Let us first fully appreciate the inner psychological situation. We are by our ordinary constitution of life practically all the time attending to and concentrating on external things and social conditions, responding to them and adjusting ourselves to them. The external things and social conditions thus become primary and life an adjustment to them. This creates a strong conventional encrustation, which becomes a powerful suppressive factor for the deeper spiritual fact of life. As we get more and more entrenched in our conventions, we get further removed from our inner fact.

Now, if our inner creativity has to be tapped and developed, then the child should grow up with increasing awareness of the inner fact and also with the aspiration that this inner fact may be the central and essential fact of his life. He would then attend to the external things in a subordinate way. What now happens is that an almost exclusive and all-important emphasis is placed on things external so that he loses whatever appreciation he had for his inner being. Thus education really causes a loss of contact with the soul even where it existed in a degree. It is so sad to contemplate it, but this happens.

We must, therefore, heartily appreciate and recognise the fact of a crust in personality and the process of encrustation. Next, we must then appreciate and recognise the need and the value of the ever deeper initiative and of an increasing exer-

cise of it. Thus really could the external control be minimised and self-creativity stimulated.

The crust is not only a matter of the individual's experience and formation, but also a racial fact. And the spiritual fact, being basic, is beyond all formations of character.

All education will then have to become an evocative process rather than a method of external instruction. It will in the first instance be a matter of attitude and faith in the teacher and the parents, which admits the fact of an evolving soul in the child and vivifies it in their dealings with the child. This will create the basic atmosphere of life, which will be a constant influence for right education.

This attitude, this faith and this atmosphere will involve an appreciation, an adoration of the spiritual values of unity, harmony, peace, joy and love above the strife and struggle, the narrowness and pettiness of the ordinary egoistic impulses of life. Such adoration of the Higher and the enjoyment of the more Beautiful is by itself a powerful educative factor, which also much facilitates the emergence and activation of the psychic centre of life.

All physical, vital and mental education within this setting of attitude, faith and atmosphere will acquire a new orientation. Our body, our impulses and desires, our ideational activity are full of restlessness, waywardness, violence, rigidity, fragmentation, division, narrowness, superficiality and everywhere self-assertion and egoism. The spirit in us is calm, unitary, joyous and peaceful. In order that the body, the vital and the mind may become useful instruments of the spirit they have to be widened, deepened and heightened. Thus are they made large, calm and raised to a higher level. All training of the body and formation of habits, control and regulation of the impulses and desires and training of thinking have to be done with this end in view that they may respond suitably to the calm, illumined, joyous, integral spirit in us. This orientation of the education of our personality's ordinary parts is very different from the one usually pursued.

Such spirit-oriented education will pave the way, for the emergence of new faculties, over and above the faculties of the soul. These faculties are those of intuition, inspiration, seeing things in their wholes, peace, unity and joy.

Our present-day world is a conflict-torn world, the creation of a divided personality. Collaboration, unity, peace, integration have become our acute needs. But how is a split personality to achieve a unified world? Psychic-Centre-oriented education shows the possibility of achieving an integrated personality and an integrated personality will easily achieve outer integration and create a world appropriate to its quality.

Is it not obvious that integration in personality can be created only by a fact like Jung's 'Centre' or Sri Aurobindo's 'Psychic Being', which possesses integrality in its nature and constitution? Reason can only check and control impulses in a limited degree. It easily becomes their accomplice. It also acts aggressively and creates suppressions and repressions. It cannot transform nature, and transformation is really

the problem of education and of civilisation. This 'Centre' and the 'Psychic Being' hold out the great prospect of transformation of life. One must begin with the child and attempt a new approach and give a chance to the blissful soul within us to work out a blissful change in nature and character and that in the best possible blissful manner.

Sri Aurobindo says, "Formerly, education was merely a mechanical forcing of the child's nature into arbitrary grooves of training and knowledge in which his individual subjectivity was the last thing considered, and his family upbringing was a constant repression and compulsory shaping of his habits, his thoughts, his character into the mould fixed for them by the conventional ideas or individual interests and ideal of the teachers and parents. The discovery that education must be a bringing out of the child's own intellectual and moral capacities to their highest possible value and must be based on the psychology of the child-nature was a step forward towards a more healthy because a more subjective system; but it still fell short because it still regarded him as an object to be handled and moulded by the teacher, to be educated. But at least there was a glimmering of the realisation that each human being is a self-developing soul and that the business of both parents and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material. It is not yet realised what this soul is or that the true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call it into the foreground as 'the leader of the march set in our front', will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realisation of its potentialities, of which our present mechanical view of life and man and external routine methods of dealing with them prevent us from having any experience or forming any conception. These new educational methods are on the straight way to this truer dealing. The closer touch attempted with the psychical entity behind the vital and physical mentality and an increasing reliance on its possibilities must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine and that the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life if it would find and live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being."

*(To be continued)*

INDRA SEN

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#### NOTE

By oversight we failed to mention under "A Prayer" in the February issue that it was a literal translation of a Bengali poem by Anilbaran. The translator's name is unknown.

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# TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of December 1979)

## CHAPTER IV

### On the Threshold of a New Life

“Banish all thoughts from thee and be God’s void.”<sup>1</sup>

THIS phrase left a lasting impression on my mind. Among the others that captured my head and heart, there are

“The power to do nothing...is a great power and a great mastery.”<sup>2</sup>

“Nothing in all creation is so like God as stillness.”<sup>3</sup>

“To be full of things is to be empty of God, to be empty of things is to be full of God.”<sup>4</sup>

The sense of emptiness, vivid experience of the “nameless void”, the “hueless vacuum” encourages me to move with calm and collected assurance towards the “shaping hours”. Experiences, according to Sri Aurobindo, begin when barriers are broken, they shed some light on what is going on in the system and what is in store. Though a new rhythm seems to have been established I do not appear to have reached the last lap of the journey. There can be no spiritual dawn as long as the least traces of the Night of obscurity remain.

I am drawing this rosy picture after weighing everything fully and studying my nature as carefully as possible. Till 1979 I had the feeling that there was no flowering of any divine quality. When I learnt to stop the inner machine at will and switch on to the state of void, I felt the “life-tree” may not bear fruit in the near future but it has begun to flower. I became doubly sure when I acquired the capacity to station the consciousness at the top of the head. Was it “a faint inextinguishable gleam”<sup>5</sup> of the first ray of the Sun of Fulfilment in the horizon of my spiritual destiny?

With the ending of the year, will there be an end of the stubborn resistance that does not allow light to permeate my mental and vital sheaths?

However, “life grew marvellous with transfiguring hope”<sup>6</sup> that 1980 will set my feet firmly on the threshold of a New Life.

Two experiences about the void deserve special mention. The last one instead of uplifting had a depressing influence.

Once I seemed lost in the vast expanse of an empty space. All that remained was a void. The “hushed heart heard a voice”: “I am in the lap of the Infinite.” Another day I found myself within a circuit in which there was nothing. The feeling arose: “I have created a world of my own in which I am all alone.” After an instant’s pause

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*, B. VII, C. 6, p. 175.    <sup>2</sup> *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 321.    <sup>3</sup> Meister Eckhart.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*    <sup>5</sup> *Savitri*, B. IX, C. 2, p. 219.    <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, B. VII, C. 6, 177.

there came another feeling, a queer one: "How shall I live alone here? There is none to give me company." I appeared to be devoured by that emptiness. But Sri Aurobindo consoles: "Fear not to be nothing that thou mayest be all."<sup>1</sup> To him who is endowed with this divine attribute Sri Aurobindo gives a good certificate: "The emptiness and wideness in the brain is a very good sign. It is a condition for the opening...into the cosmic consciousness."<sup>2</sup>

I have visioned a number of times the mind turning into an empty room and the heart into a glass house, a marble temple. But the "mind's bright light" could not reflect the self. How to keep off the waves of thoughts and make the mind empty even for one minute? I fumbled in the dark and groped for more than twenty years!

When is one expected to reach the state of void? "When mind and vital fall quiet and their restless movements, thoughts and desires cease then one feels empty."<sup>3</sup> And it is a "necessary transition from one state to another."<sup>4</sup> In between I had to pass through a no-man's-land. There was nothing either depressing or refreshing. The roots of the old existence were shaken, not plucked out, hence the new could not find a firm grip. "All was suppressed but nothing yet expunged."<sup>5</sup>

It was the peace in the vital that gave the impression of my becoming an empty vessel. That the peace born of the heart is by virtue of its sweetness different from the descent of peace became clear to me in 1964. A more vivid experience of peace I had on January 16, 1967. There is yet another aspect of peace which one can experience when the consciousness enters the inner mind.

What entails peace in the physical is something beyond the orbit of speculation. Just picture a man finding a place to lay his head after being roasted in the sun, walking barefooted, bareheaded, for months.

As the mental enjoys the state of stillness and the vital the sweetness of the depth, so the body yearns to be the temple of God. The bliss I enjoy is a boon of purity, not of the psychic presence which is yet a cry for the moon.

How to describe those fateful days when Sri Aurobindo went through our dull and dry letters, keeping awake all through the night? Grace was, as it were, raining from his pen and each of us filled his jar with as much as it could contain. Our luck has always been

A memory that wished to live again.<sup>6</sup>

The impact of the descent of peace which I had in 1937 lasted almost the whole day. And such an experience is still a rare phenomenon. But there is a difference. It was like a snow-fall which made all look white, hiding dirt and debris in the "inconscient pit".

It took me long to mark the difference between a quiet mind and a calm mind as elaborated in *Bases of Yoga*: "When the mind is free from the waves of disturbing

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*, B. VII, C. 6, p. 174.    <sup>2</sup> *On Yoga* II, Tome II, p. 261.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.    <sup>5</sup> *Savitri*, B. VIII, C. 6, p. 180.    <sup>6</sup> *Savitri*, B. IX, C. 2, p. 219.

thoughts and there is no clamour of the vital, the mind falls quiet...In a calm mind ripples of thought may go on arising but one does not feel disturbed."

It was the descent of peace that made me catch a glimpse of what is meant by spiritual living. It often begins with a cooling sensation and when there is a pouring, one feels drowned in himself. It

Much sweeter seemed than any rapture known.

Silence augurs the arrival of realisation.

Once at midnight there was the first downpour of the season. In the midnight meditation, the consciousness got fixed at the crown. All of a sudden the skull turned into a half-opened lotus, illuminated by *divyajyoti* (Divine Light) at the centre. It elicited a thrilling remark from my friend who is well acquainted with *yogic kriyās*: "That is the seat of the guru. You were blessed with *guruujyotidarśan* (Light-Vision). Now the guru will lead you to *ātmadarśan* (Soul-Vision)."

The Mother has done everything for me. It was her grace that helped me to untie the knots which take ages to loosen. She has revolutionised the whole system of Yoga. She does not compel us to follow one formula, one way of life nor does she bind us to one scripture. No japa, no waving of lamps before the deity, chanting hymns in praise of God. But she insists: "Be a Yogi: Fight the battle of life with a calm mind. Raise a call and wait for a response. Allow the Divine to work in you. Feel the current of the Higher Consciousness passing in your limbs, and it will do all that is necessary for your spiritual development."

Feel yourself carried as the waggon is carried by the engine. Get your berth booked in a train that has for its destination "the United Kingdom of earth and Heaven."<sup>1</sup>

I had nothing in my pocket when I launched on this perilous journey, except a call, "a cry in the blood", for a Higher Life, and this served as a ticket. Those who are in quest of an oasis of spiritual peace in the burning desert of modern life are invited to give a trial and see for themselves where lies the charm in this new venture!

I must put myself on guard against being too optimistic; at the same time I need not dwell much on the negative aspects of the sadhana. I seem to be moving cheerfully and confidently. Sadhana appears quite natural, a smooth sailing. What does it denote? "When the psychic being comes forward all is happiness," sadhana becomes natural and easy.<sup>2</sup>

It took forty years for the psychic to open its eyes. The one longing that I cherish in my heart of hearts is to feel the Divine Presence in my day-to-day activities. Such a consummation is yet a distant dream.

Never mind, if the progress is not rapid: "The important thing is to keep what

<sup>1</sup> The phrase is reproduced from an article in *Bhavan's Journal*, May 1979, by Prof Sisir Kumar Ghose.

<sup>2</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome II, p. 218.

you have and let it grow.”<sup>1</sup>

If I am asked: what was the best part of my life, I would hazard to declare: “After 75.” If, further questioned as to what prompted me to go to that extreme, my deliberate answer would be: “Life was never so peaceful, blissful and beautiful. It was after crossing the border of seventy that I found myself on the verge of a new life.”

If I cast my mind back to my Calcutta life, the revolutionary changes that I find in me make me think I am already transformed! The difference is between hell and heaven.

To keep oneself poised, free from dejection and depression, is itself a boon. The first release was from the grip of fear, especially when I learnt to nestle in the arms of the Mother Divine. The next release came when I got freedom from frequent fits of depression which at times made me so gloomy that I felt almost strangled. No persuasion made the mind change its mood. It never allowed me to remain in one state. When freed from the clutches of lust, greed, jealousy, hatred, dishonesty, the pernicious habit of telling lies, the free air that I came to breathe beggars description.

This impossibility became possible not by resorting to bone-breaking tapasya or ascetic austerities but by the clearance of obscurities in the inconscient.

All this provided a fertile ground for the sprouting of the seed of ‘void’. It is such a joy to lose one’s identity in the void which the heart now hails as God’s greatest gift.

Today at 79 I do not feel myself a spent force. Never does there arise the feeling that nothing more can be done with this body. But when the vitality touches the lowest ebb I find myself aging fast. On the other hand, signs of new vigour, new energy are not lacking. The rejuvenating changes in the cells are well maintained; rather they acquire a new momentum. The descent of peace is felt even in the most material part of the body: I mean in the sole of the right foot (surprisingly not in the left, 22.II.1979). And this is not the first instance. Cooling sensations I have been feeling there for long with big gaps now and then. Sometimes it is very prominent and it usually happens after the morning exercise.

Another very promising experience. While offering Pranam before the Mother’s couch (20.II.1979) I felt a descent of peace in the lower part of the spinal cord; by and by it reached the crown of the head. From there it descended to the eyes, the stomach (bypassing the heart centre). Soon it looked as if I had become a block of peace. When fully withdrawn I found myself wrapped in bright white light. It became difficult to keep count of time. When I lifted up my head I found one hour had passed unnoticed.

I may not live to see a new Dawn, a new Day, for I know what I seek will take time. But I shall die with a cheer on my lips even if nothing more is granted.

*(To be continued)*

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 224.

# THE STUPID GURU AND THE FOOLISH DISCIPLES

## A FREE TRANSLATION OF VEERAMA MUNIVAR'S TAMIL STORY OF GURU PARAMARTHA

### *Translator's Note*

*To the world of Tamil Literature the author is known as Veerama Munivar. But he was born as Josepho Constantio Beschio, son of Count Don Gondolfo Beschio and Elizabeth Beschio, on November 8, 1680 in Italy. He joined the Society of Jesus when he was just eighteen. To preach the doctrines of Christ and thereby spread Christianity, Josepho Constantio reached India in 1710 and settled in Tamilnadu the next year, where he spent the rest of his life (37 years), devoting himself to Christian religion and Tamil literature until he died on 4 February 1747.*

*Well versed in Italian, Latin, Greek, Portuguese and Hebrew, he added more feathers to his cap by learning Sanskrit, Telugu, Urdu and Tamil after he reached India. Fascinated by the sweet tongue—Tamil—he mastered it under many teachers, Subratheepa Kavirayar of Palani having been the chief of them all.*

*As Beschio's love for this language developed, he started contributing his mite for the growth of its literature. The Tamils remember him as grammarian, poet, prose-writer, humourist and the first lexicographer of their language. In fact his Dictionary, entitled Saduragarathi, is the fountain-head of all the present-day Tamil Dictionaries. Apart from compiling the three famous Dictionaries (1. Tamil-Tamil; 2. Tamil-Latin; 3. Portuguese-Tamil-Latin), he translated the great Classic Thirukkural into Latin. His Thonnool Vilakkam (on Grammar), Theimbhavanu (a religious epic poem) and Paramartha Guruvin Kathai are the best known of his works.*

*Veerama Munivar wrote his Paramartha Guruvin Kathai (The Story of Guru Paramartha) both in Latin and Tamil. The great literary works of the 18th Century were all in verse. Scholars found them highly enjoyable. But the common folk were unable to follow. Veerama Munivar wrote The Story of Guru Paramartha in prose just to enlighten the common folk. He took the plot of a well-known and hence worn-out tale, patched it up with the interesting fables, legends and satires of Aesop, Juvenal and others. The result is a Tamil comic-epic in prose. Nowhere in Tamil Literature, right from the Chankam Age to the present day, can one find such a hilarious piece.*

*For printing and publishing the Tamil version of this widely known story for the first time (1859) Pondicherry gets the credit.*

THERE once lived a guru named Paramartha. He had five disciples—Matti, Madayan, Peithai, Mileichan and Moodan—at his beck and call. The disciples were as foolish as their master.

Almost in every surrounding village the guru had a handful of followers. It was



his custom to visit a village a day and preach his idiotic ideas there. His followers were all very anxious to hear every word that fell from his mouth and they faithfully practised what he had preached. Wherever the guru went his loyal disciples escorted him.

### I. Crossing the River

Once the guru and his disciples were returning from a distant village to their hermitage. By the time they reached the river bank the sun had already set and the place was completely dark. To reach their place of rest they had no other go but to cross the river. Guru Paramartha was afraid of crossing the river in the dark, for he was of the opinion that the ferocious river always slept during the day and woke up at dusk. He staunchly believed that the river was always hungry in the night and devoured all those who rashly crossed it.

So he told his disciples, "O, my pupils! The sun has set. The place is dark. First let one of you go and test the river. If it is awake, let us rest here under the trees and resume our journey at daybreak. If the river is still asleep, let us cross it silently and continue the journey. But whoever goes to study the nature of the river, let him be very careful. I hate the very thought of losing even one of my erudite disciples."

Mileichan, the bold, had guts enough to go near the river and study its nature. It was one of his duties to carry a fire-brand in his hand. Paramartha whenever he felt tired or bored smoked a cheroot to enliven himself. Mileichan, affectionately called the 'fire-bearer', lighted the cheroots. He stood beside the river and thought of a plan to test its nature. He remembered his master's golden saying, "All things in the world respond to fire." The fire-brand he had in his hand came to his timely help. He poked it into the river and the water extinguished the glowing embers, thereby producing a hissing sound. Mileichan turned with a start and went leaping towards his master.

He panted out his message, "Master, O Master! This is not the right time to cross the river. It is awake. The moment I touched it, the river hissed like an infuriated cobra and would have swallowed me, had I not taken to my heels. If we cross it now, the enlightened world, no doubt, will greatly miss us."

Paramartha listened to his disciple's words. Then heaving a sigh of relief he said, "Look, my disciples! How we have escaped from the impending danger! God helps those who are always prudent. Now, let us take rest under that bushy tree till the dangerous river goes to sleep."

The guru sat under the banyan tree, leaned his back on the trunk and stretched his legs. The disciples sat surrounding him.

Matti suggested, "Let none of us sleep. At any time, we may be attacked by some poisonous insects or snakes that lie hiding in those nearby thorny shrubs. So we will kill time by narrating some anecdotes."

"Begin then," commanded the guru.

Matti was very happy, for it was the first time in his life that he got a chance to

speak of the miraculous escape of his grandfather from the fangs of the river. He began, "You know, my grandfather was a wealthy businessman. He was a salt-vendor and no one else in the village was affluent enough to buy salt in sacks. He employed his two donkeys to transport sack-loads of salt from the salt-works. Once my grandfather and his assistant were returning with the donkeys from the salt-works. A heavy sack full of salt, its mouth closely stitched, was tied tightly to the back of each donkey. On their way they happened to cross this river. Since they had waited for a long time in the salt-works, they had an urge to wash themselves clean. 'Let us take a dip in this river and clean ourselves,' said my grandfather to his assistant. The assistant nodded his head in approval and suggested, 'Sir! These donkeys too stink. It's months since they took a bath. Let us wash them too.'

"My grandfather praised his duty-conscious assistant and encouraged his suggestion. They stood chest-deep in water. The donkeys with their heavy loads of salt stood neck-deep and were happy to have the privilege of getting washed by their masters. All of them enjoyed a long and deep bath. After an hour of delight they reached the other bank. The men dried themselves up with towels. Then they turned to rub their donkeys.

"To their great astonishment the donkeys stood relieved of their loads. They saw only the sacks without salt lying flat like blown-out balloons. They carefully scrutinized the sacks. The mouths remained stitched. The ropes that tied the sacks to the backs of the donkeys were slightly loosened. They were taken aback.

"My grandpa exclaimed, 'Look! This roguish river tried to steal away our salt by untying the knots. Since the knots were tight, the river managed to gulp the salt by black magic.'

"His assistant declared, 'Sir! It is really a blessing in disguise. The river must have been very hungry. If it had not swallowed the salt, it would have eaten us. We should be grateful to this thirsty river for leaving us alive.'

"So they saluted the river, thanked it and walked home safely."

Peithai who was awaiting his chance started narrating his tale. "This river is a notorious cheat. I will let you know how it played pranks on a poor dog. A cur once crossed the river holding a big piece of mutton in his mouth. The greedy river wanted to test what mutton tasted like, and tried to grab the piece. As the dog swam neck-deep in water, the river cunningly exhibited a bigger piece of mutton. The dog carried away by the illusive image stretched his jaws to grab it. The moment he opened his mouth, his piece of mutton fell into the river and the river had a nice dinner. The poor dog made a thorough search but had to go empty-mouthed."

As the disciples continued talking, they saw someone crossing the river on horseback. The river was shallow and the rider found no difficulty.

"Look there! That man on horseback. See how he crosses the river without the least sign of fear!" exclaimed Moodan.

"From this what do you infer?" asked Peithai. "The river is terribly frightened of riders on horseback. That is why it keeps quiet. Don't you remember our mas-

ter's words: 'A good man is easy to bully. A bold man can never be bullied?'

Matti in his turn suggested, "Our guru should have a horse like that one. If we had possessed it, we would have reached our hermitage a long time back."

The disciples represented the matter to their guru. He said he would consider it.

It was dawn. The rays of the sun drove away the darkness of the place. Mileichan at his guru's command went to study the river once again. He took with him the dead fire-brand. As done earlier, he poked it into the water. Hearing no sound, Mileichan shouted, "Master! My friends! Come now. This is the right time. The river is fast asleep. Let us rush."

The guru and his disciples rushed to Mileichan. Paramartha advised, "You should not make the least sound. The river might wake up at any time if it is disturbed. Who knows? Cross the river as quickly as possible, and all of us should keep our mouths tightly shut." The six idiots with their hearts going pit-a-pat waddled their way and reached the opposite bank.

They all heaved great sighs of relief. But Moodan suspected some foul play. "Hei! Did all of us arrive safely? Let me count," he cried. Then he counted, not taking himself into account. "O, God! We were six in number. But we are only five now. That means this cruel river has swallowed one of us," Moodan sobbed and burst into tears.

His friends were terror-struck. Everyone in a hurry counted only the others. All of them wept over the death of their unseen fellowman. Then they cursed the river. "You merciless, pitiless, barbarous, brutal, inhuman and inexorable river! Let the scorching sun dry you up and bake your sand. Let your pits be filled up with thistles and nettles. Let the venomous vipers take shelter in them and sting you endlessly...." They went on abusing the river, but none had taken any step to find out who the missing figure was.

A wayfarer heard their cryings and howlings, took pity on them and inquired into the matter. Paramartha narrated the story. The wayfarer heard the foolish narration and planned to have some more fun at their expense. So he said, "Do not worry. I can bring the missing person back to life. You know, I am a necromancer. Goddess Kali is my servant. But, you see, I don't believe in free labour."

The guru and his disciples were immensely pleased. In his anxiety the guru said, "If you can bring back my missing disciple, I will give you the entire money I have."

"All right then. All of you should stand in a queue. I will pat one fellow after another with my magic wand. The moment I pat one of you, he should shout his name at the top of his voice and I will count the numbers. If you do so, then in the end you will find that you are six in all."

Everyone agreed to the plan and stood in a queue. The wayfarer raised his wand and gave a sharp blow on the back of the guru. The guru howled in pain and shouted, "I'm Paramartha." The magician said, "One." Then the same process was repeated on the other five. The last to receive the blow was Moodan. He shouted his name

and the magician said, "Six."

The very utterance of the word "six" surprised them. They praised the magician, called his act one of the wonders of the world and gave away the entire money they had.

The fake necromancer went on his way very jubilant.

*(End of chapter I)*

P. RAJA

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## INDIAN LIFE IN ENGLISH WRITINGS

(Continued from the issue of January 1980)

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

If Raja Rao was a pedantic, steeped in a false idealism, and wrote in order to prove a theory, Khuswant Singh was perhaps his antipode. His books had a journalistic flair, a flamboyant and care-free regard and bore on the whole the typical hedonistic attitude. He brought in no religious or moral motives (although he had taught philosophy in the States) but on the contrary suffused his work with bawdy humour and a strong predilection for sex. In fact sex seemed to be his chief preoccupation, and in his worst moments he was pornographic. This brought down the level of his work.

*I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* was no exception to his basic stand or theme, in spite of the poetic title. Sex in various ways, manners, sometimes pronounced sometimes suggestive ran as an undercurrent in this book.

The author found eroticism everywhere, even in Indian songs. He remarked, 'The commonest theme in Indian songs is longing of lovers for each other, when the rains are in full swing. There is no joy fuller than union during monsoon time; there is no sorrow deeper than separation during the season of rains.' (*Ibid.*, p.103)

Yet this was true only of one small section of Hindi verse. In the mass of poetry by Mirabai, Surdas, Kabir and the Vaishnava poets of Bengal, the poetry of Andal, the Alwars, the Maharastrian saints, and in fact in every province in India the theme was devotion and Godward longing. Khuswant Singh as a lecturer on Indian philosophy and religion should have had better sense than to make such a sweeping statement. India was a large country. The Indian mind was complex and many-sided and its preoccupation with devotion was more lasting than harping on sex.

The book itself dealt with conflicts in three spheres—conflict between the British and the Indians (the period of the book was the pre-independence days), conflict between the loyal Sikh and the anarchists and conflict of youth with senility.

Two households were described. One was that of Buta Singh, the magistrate; with his wife Shebrai, their son Sher Singh, the president of the college union, Sher Singh's wife, Champak, a voluptuous and over-sexed girl and Sher Singh's school-going sister Bina. Sher Singh had definite terrorist leanings and was secretly participating in violent anti-British activities, while Buta Singh was a staunch follower of the British Raj, the descendant of those Sikhs who made the Sepoy mutiny a failure and consolidated the British hold in the Punjab. The other household was also of a magistrate, Wazir Chand, the typical Punjabi Hindu. It consisted of his wife, his daughter Sita, the class-friend of Bina, Madan, the sportsman, who did not progress much in his studies but had 'more than compensated for that' shortcoming by his achievement in sports...[and] had played for his province against a visiting English

side. His performance at this match made him a legend in the Punjab.' (*Ibid.*, p. 31)

Through a complex chequer of incident and character and reaction this book gave a vivid picture of the Sikh milieu and way of life.

Another way of life was that of the Parsis. The Parsis were a minority in India, but their culture had a distinct role to play in the kaleidoscopic many-sidedness of India as a whole. While the Sikhs owed everything to Hinduism, except its image-worship, the Parsis had nothing apparently in common with the Hindus except a remote past of Aryanism. As Sri Aurobindo remarked: 'the scriptures of the Zoroastrians, our ancient neighbours and kindred, proceeded probably from a common original discipline of the Aryan culture.' (*Sri Aurobindo Birth-Cent.*, Vol. 10, p. 44)

Anyway, B. K. Karanjia was not concerned with the affinities with the Hindus, but pointed out the similarities between Islam and Christianity in his book, *More of an Indian*, which dealt with one Hindu and two Parsi families.

Karanjia's religious opinions were open to dispute, but as we are regarding the book not as a treatise on religion, but as a portrait of existence, we can ignore them.

But it would appear that he brought his religious opinions in, in order to point out Zoroastrianism's superiority to other religions, especially to Hinduism, which tolerated its existence on the Indian soil for over twelve hundred years, fostered its adherents and did nothing to impede or hinder either the culture or the religion of the Parsis.

This book introduces an issue of love between a Hindu boy Ashok Zhaveri and a Parsi girl Shirin Mody, and their subsequent marriage amid great hurdles of religious superstition. That is, the purity of blood of the Parsis had never been contaminated by an alien admixture, which the Parsis so bravely fought against for many centuries. But the idols of religion were being crushed under the unitary pressure of the time—the iconoclast of a greater becoming.

Shirin Mody's household consisted of her father Kersasp Mody, an authority on Zoroastrianism, a writer of several treatises on this subject; her mother, Piroja, a typical Parsi lady; her brother Jamshed who was preparing for his marriage and for going abroad to Germany for higher studies in Chemical Engineering.

Shirin herself had just obtained her Bachelor's degree. She was deeply in love with Ashok Jhaveri and harboured the secret hope to marry him. As it was, the plan was in an embryonic stage.

Connected with the Modys were Mancherjee and his family. He was radically different from Kersasp, flamboyant, given to swearing, garrulous, noisy. He was a director of motion-pictures. His daughter Dina was engaged to Jamshed Mody. It was Mancherjee who intended to send Jamshed, his future son-in-law, to Germany.

Ashok's family consisted of Ranchordbhai, the typical Gujarati *baniya* businessman. Ashok's mother Ushaben was a simple woman, who did not oppose her son's idea of marrying Shirin. Ashok had no other brothers or sisters.

He was invited by the Modys on Shirin's twenty-first birthday; this was due to her own manipulation. Although neither the Modys nor the Mancherjees ill-

treated him, he felt that he was trespassing on forbidden ground.

By now Shirin had almost made up her mind that she would marry Ashok, who studied with her in the same class at college. This long association fostered mutual attraction and then love. But she was scared as to how she would place the matter before her parents, who were orthodox Parsis.

Ashok was next invited to the Modys' place on the occasion of Jamshed's betrothal to Dina. The whole sequence was filmed under the direction of Mancherjee by his cameraman Raman. It was a lengthy ceremony, which tired everyone.

After the formal betrothal, Jamshed left for Germany. One day Ashok went along with Shirin to witness the filming of some outdoor scenes on the sea-beach on the outskirts of Bombay. The heroine arrived late, she was in a vile temper and the scene had to be shot several times.

During the mid-day siesta and recess, Shirin led Ashok to a thick bush where they lay down side by side.

Shirin now confessed to her father that she was in love with Ashok, a thing her father, a shrewd man of the world, had surmised already. But he did not lose his temper; on the contrary, he advised her in a cool-headed manner about the folly of such an action. 'It is an infatuation,' he declared after a long tirade on religion, tradition and the rest.

He did not reprimand her. But that he was deeply hurt was quite evident.

Next month Shirin discovered to her dismay that she was with child. This did not worry her, for she knew that this fact alone would solve her problem. She confessed to her parents now about her pregnancy. We are left to surmise what upheaval and unrest might have resulted, but at this point a letter arrived from Jamshed which upset the mental balance of the Modys.

Jamshed wrote that he had met a German girl, whom he intended to marry. Hence his engagement to Dina was cancelled.

The Modys were put in a very delicate position as to how they could present the case before Mancherjee, who had borne all the expenses of Jamshed. In this distressing condition, the Modys had to agree to Shirin's marriage to Ashok, as there was no alternative.

Shirin and Ashok got married a month later according to civil rights.

*More of an Indian* gave us a glimpse of Parsi characters and their life-ways. But this and the previous work examined were reflections of the Indian elite, the educated Indian. India consisted of 75 per cent villages and a study of the rural life would offer us a closer picture of India as she truly was without the trappings of foreign education and sophisticated glamour.

*Chemeen* was such a novel. Written originally in Malayalam, *Chemeen* brought to us a glimpse into the simple existence of the fishermen of Kerala, living on the sea-front. This book was a candid portrait of their superstitions, fears, loves, ambitions, sympathies and way of life. It was indeed a hard life; the struggle was bitter, the poverty was gnawing and the moral values very exacting. Here life

was centred on one occupation, fishing and fishing trade—fish was their wealth, their hope and solace, the sea was their god and the sky and the winds their governing deities. Perhaps the fishermen all over India shared a similar fate, led a similar life and carried kindred hopes, be it in Bengal, on the Coromandel coast or the coast of Western India. They were backward in living standards, but as men and women they were more honest, sincere and hard-working than their brethren in the cities.

*(To be continued)*

ROMEN PALIT

## POEMS BEFORE AND AFTER 1973

### OFFERING III: PRAYER 1976

I WHO, oh Lord, am nothing, unto Thee  
 Pray that I may be  
 Straw in Thy wind, leaf on Thy tree,  
 Flame of Thy flame,  
 Thy bright sword and the sweet sound of Thy name.

ELIZABETH STILLER

## THE SILENT SYMPHONY

ACROSS the spaces of the soul  
 My heart leaps to the unbounded whole:  
 Afloat in an ocean of Oneness Supreme  
 Glimmer the splendours of the Infinite's dream.

Beyond the reach of mortal sense,  
 Surreal sweetnesss intense—  
 A symphony of unheard melodies  
 Cradled the silence of the inner seas.

SATADAL



# EUROPE 1974

## A TRAVELOGUE

(37)

If you want to commune with nature when it is all lakes, and hills, and wind-tossed clouds, blue sky, and cool invigorating mountain air, come to the Lakeland of England.

It is known as the Lakeland or the Lake District, but actually there are more hills than lakes and the English people love to call it a, "Miniature Switzerland". Situated on the north-east of England, this area is directly south of Hadrian's Wall, built by a Roman Emperor in 120 A.D., that separates England from Scotland. A small area covering not more than thirty-five square miles, the Lakeland is one of the most enchanting districts of England. One is really amazed at the diversity of the English countryside. For directly to the east of the Lakeland is the Yorkshire moors, made famous by the Brontë family. The West Riding of Yorkshire is a most bleak and desolate tract.

The hills, as is natural on an island, are not very high. The highest point is Great Gable with an elevation of three thousand feet. Out of the innumerable lakes only fourteen are worth mentioning. Rounded hills, soft wooded valleys, green slopes sweeping down to the lakes and small hill-streams meandering among narrow vales make the whole area delightful. And more surprising is the play of lights. From morn till sunset the sunlight seems to play tricks with the hills and lakes. Every hour they look different. A smiling sparkling lake in the morning may suddenly look dark and ominous in the afternoon. A hill which may be seen welcoming one laughingly may suddenly discourage the climbers with a dark forbidding countenance. Everything seems to have a mercurial character.

It is not possible to see the whole area in a few days or even one season. If one has seen one place one can imagine the rest. When the hills are bare and rocky they are given names with 'fell' as the suffix, such as Scafell, Kirkfell and Herterfell. There are some names that sound very musical such as Blancathra and Helvellyn. Impressed by the heights of these hills someone wrote on the window-pane of a little church in the valley those fine phrases from the Psalms:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills  
From whence cometh my strength."

The Lakeland gives tremendous scope to the rock-climbers. And when during the winter the peaks are covered with snow a sort of Alpine condition is created and the climbers scale the heights with ropes, axes and hammers. The Lakeland then becomes a preparatory school for the future mountaneers who would brave the Alps of Switzerland. Great Gable, the Sphinx, the Pillar Rock and Coniston Old Man are some of the hills they try.

\*

When reading Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* one wonders if there really is a place called Windermere. The longest and the most beautiful lake in the Lakeland is called Windermere and a township very near the lake is also known by that name. The lake is about ten miles long, and at places one mile broad. A little to the north of Windermere is Grasmere. It is a smaller lake but it has very Romantic associations. Thomas de Quincey and William Wordsworth lived near it for a long time. Further north is Derwent-Water known as the Queen of the Lakes. Almost on the shores of this lake is the township of Reswick, made famous by Coleridge and Southey and volatile Shelley. Buttermere is another beautiful lake close by. In this wonderland created by nature man has done a good job of work by opening up the place to all. Every inch of the Lakeland has been surveyed, mapped, and names have been given to all the peaks, and all the lakes and valleys. There are roads in many places. Railroads run up to the nearest Townships. For the rest, one has to walk and climb:

Down the rushy glen,  
Up the airy mountain.

\*

The desolated tracts of Yorkshire moors on the East coast are the reverse of the Lakeland. Among the grim grandeur of the moors is the small village of Haworth where once lived the Brontës. Their father Patrick Brontë was the Pastor of the little church at Haworth. Their house known as the Parsonage is converted into the Brontë museum. While Stratford-On-Avon has become the Mecca of all Shakespeare-lovers, Haworth sees very few visitors. Perhaps the wilderness discourages them. But the Brontës were not overawed by the bleak and savage hills; rather they were able to capture the fearful and ruthless moods of the stark hills and their grim grandeur and put them down in their writings. The bleak moors of the West Riding of Yorkshire with their bitter cutting winds are a weird place. Withens Farm, a small place, is still there perched on the side of a cliff. This was really Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, the dwelling of Heathcliff. In the churchyard at Haworth can be seen the grave of Charlotte Brontë. There is also a beautiful window dedicated to her. Emily Brontë's spirit is well caught in her lines:

No coward soul is mine,  
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:  
I see Heaven's glories shine  
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

*(To be continued)*

## GOING A-PICNIC TO KANCHIPURAM—THE GOLDEN CITY

*(At the end of every strenuous year picnics are arranged by the Department of Physical Education for the different groups. They are meant to be recreative as well as instructive.)*

At a first glance it would seem very odd that we should select for our picnic a place like Kanchipuram, about 90 miles from Pondicherry!

After much deliberation our eldest group came to this decision, a medley group consisting of members ranging from 40 years of age to septuagenarians. They certainly showed some wisdom, for though the picnic was the main occasion, a visit to the holy city was no less attractive. Thus it combined sensuous and suprasensuous enjoyment at the same time; as is said in Bengali, "we shall sell bananas and see the Ratha-yatra festival too." So when the group captain invited me and Maharaj Champaklal to the trip, we at once grasped the extended hand of pleasure.

We were to start at 4 a.m. 'before the Gods awake'. Doing our pranams to our sleeping God, we forged ahead. The bus was waiting, and after a short concentration we were on the move. We were supposed to reach the golden city of temples by 9 a.m. Pranab, Director of Physical Education, was with us to guide us through the long dark distance, since the way had become very familiar to him by many visits. It was a real blessing, for he, being also a historian, knew all about the history of the temple-city, as we shall see later on.

It was dark, and a cold wind was blowing. The bus rushed through the 'unlit temple' of the Night towards the temple-city of Light. Many small booths on the way-side dimly lighted against the vast black inert mass and the denizens moving about gave us the impression of an infra-physical world through which lay our track.

The Gods soon woke up. Usha, the Dawn, built her aura of golden hues, and the lovely landscape of green paddy fields, tall trees, bare hills and rippling waters gladdened our view. Breaking our journey by the side of a lake, we had our ready-made breakfast. It was about 8 a.m. In one hour's time we had to reach the place so that we might have 3 hours to see the temples. "All of them will close their doors at 12 noon," declared Pranab our guide. "Even with our start," he added, "we can see only a few major ones."

We arrived at the scheduled time. Pranab gave an introductory talk on the historical background before we visited the temples. I reproduce the talk to enlighten our modern readers on the glory that was India in ancient times. He said:

"Kanchipuram is a very old city of ancient India. It was a city of culture and learning and the seat of various religions. It has seen many kings, many dynasties, many wars and political upheavals. Many names of famous people are also associated with this city.

"Kanchipuram, earlier known as Kanchanapuram, is one of the seven sacred

cities of the Hindus in India. The other six cities are (1) Ayodhya (2) Mathura (3) Maya (4) Kashi (5) Avantika and (6) Puri.

“The first historical record that mentions it is the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Sumudra Gupta (A.D. c. 335-80), which records the submission of its King Vishnugopa to the Gupta Emperor.

“Kanchi, now called Conjeeveram, was the capital of the Pallavas. It was visited by Hiuen-Tsang, the Chinese traveller in about 640 A.D. when the Pallava power reached its zenith during the rule of Nara Singhavaraman. He found Kanchi a large city, 5 or 6 miles in circumference in which Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina temples abounded.

“After the Pallavas, Kanchipuram was occupied successively by the Cholas, the Vijayanagar Kings, the Mohammedans and the Maratthas. During the Anglo-French wars Kanchipuram went into the hands of the Moghuls from the earlier Mohammedans.

“Kanchi was the birth-place of the famous Buddhist metaphysician Dharmapala; Kautilya or Chanakya, author of *Arthasāstra*, was also born here. Ramanuja received his education and lived at this place for many years. It was the seat of the Kamakoti Peetham established by Shankara. Dandi and Bharavi, the poets who adorned the court of the Pallavas, lived here. Shyama Shastri, the famous composer and one of the Trinity of Karnatic music, was born in this city. Poet Kamban lived in it. Robert Clive presented a jewel to a deity here.

“Kanchi suffered a great deal on account of the perennial conflict between the Pallavas and Chalukyas. Both, however, beautified it with many temples of which the most distinguished is the temple of Kailasnath.

“Conjeeveram has been famous for its hand-loom industry. Silk-weaving has been a traditional skill handed down from generation to generation. The Kanchipuram sari has been a magnificent obsession with every housewife and has fascinated even foreigners. The Kanchipuram lungi is also celebrated and is being exported to other countries.

“Kanchipuram is divided into Shiva Kanchi and Vishnu Kanchi. We are told that there are not less than 1008 Shiva shrines and 108 Vishnu shrines in Kanchipuram. Shiva transcends the five elements—Kshiti, Ap, Tej, Marut, Vyom. His representation within them at specific places may be noted:

- (1) Kshitilingam at Kanchipuram as Ekambaranath
- (2) Aplingam at Trichinapalli as Jambukeshwar
- (3) Tejlingam at Tiruvannamalai as Arunachala
- (4) Marutlingam at Kalahasti
- (5) Vyomlingam at Chidambaram as Nataraj.”

As I have said, since in our limited time we could not see more than five or six major temples, we began in this order, Pranab giving us a short talk on each one of them.

- (1) Vaikuntha Perumal Temple (Vishnu Temple).

It is an important Pallava temple having a pyramidal tower and columns carved with a network of figures called Yali columns. The temple is replete with sculptures depicting the life and history of the Pallavas. It was built by Nandivarman II in the beginning of the 8th Century.

(2) Ulagalanda Perumal Temple (Vishnu Temple—Dwarf Avatar).

It is dedicated to Lord Vishnu in his manifestation of Trivikrama. The Deity in the Sanctum Sanctorum is in a majestic relief rising to a height of nearly 25 feet, supposed to be a pre-Pallava image.

We had to enter into this narrow dark chamber in small groups. The guardian-priest was a young man. He lighted the tip of a long torch and lifting it high up moved it in front of the face of the Deity so that we might have a glimpse of it. We had to pay for this moment's darshan and we could see a second time only on a further payment. Even so, the face was remarkably impressive. The right foot resting on the floor seemed to be huge compared to the face.

(3) Kamakshi Amman Temple.

The deity is supposed to be made of gold, but, placed as it is in a dark cave-like room, a good view was not possible.

Shankara established Kamakshi Peetham here and it contains his shrine. Against the wall in a panel are depicted in stone the famous incidents of his life.

The golden image was taken to Tanjore for safety during the Moghul invasion.

(4) Ekambaranath Temple (Shiva Temple).

1) A 192-foot tower built by Krishnadevasaya, the connoisseur king of Vijayanagar. This is one of the 4 tallest towers of South India.

2) This temple is Prithwisthalam (Kshitilingam). The lingam is supposed to be made of sand. The legend goes that Goddess Parvati, Shiva's spouse, closing Shiva's eyes in a playful mood, incurs the wrath of Shiva. For the act resulted in a total darkness enveloping the world. Parvati comes to Kanchi and performs penance on the banks of the Kamba river to appease Shiva. She makes a lingam out of sand and performs puja. Shiva sends floods to test her bhakti. Parvati embraces the lingam and the rushing river stops at a safe distance. Thereupon Shiva takes her back. The goddess in the temple is called Elavarkuzali.

3) A mango tree supposed to be 3500 years old. It has four branches symbolising the four Vedas. The four branches give fruits of four different tastes.

It was a strange tree, indeed. There was no doubt that it was very old. The huge trunk almost like hard fossil stone, with the dark grey bark like the skin of an old man with cracks and wrinkles but very hard, was protected by a concrete ring around it. The branches also had their peculiarity. They were neither very big nor very high, and the leaves were smaller than the usual ones. The tree certainly gave the impression of its antiquity and was on its way to slow and gradual decay.

4) Kailasnath Temple (Shiva Temple).

It was built by the Pallava king Narasinghavarman II in the 7th Century. It was the first-ever stone temple built out of sand-stone in South India. There are in-

numerable carvings in the courtyard depicting Shiva, Vishnu and Durga in various forms.

This temple was in an open space isolated from the rest of the town and had a fine front view with the carvings shining in the sunlight. But as we entered inside, we saw the image of Shiva confined in a very small dark chamber where hardly two persons could stand shoulder to shoulder. Around the image a narrow space was kept to enable Pradakshina (going round). We heard an amusing story from Pranab about the Pradakshina. He said, "The way goes from left to right. Near the end there are two ways—one goes from below, a difficult one; the other goes from above, the easier one. One has to crawl on the difficult road and it is said that if one goes out through this path, he will not be reborn." So the choice was left to us. But the path was dark, the floor stony; one had to crawl and, as if that were not enough, one had to pay a few coins to obtain this great chance. Pranab dissuaded us from trying the crawling way of getting Mukti, even if we craved for it. But our Maharaj Champaklal was insistent. He made Pranab pay the price and went both the ways through, posing to Shiva the problem of deciding the re-birth or its cessation. We had a good laugh.

As we came out of the chamber, another sweet story awaited us. Near-about was a small room kept under lock and key. Pranab said that it contained the image of Shiva and Parvati. The story was that once Shiva and Parvati held a dancing competition between them. After a keen exciting contest, Parvati was defeated, the reason being that in one dancing pose Shiva raised one of his legs so very high that Parvati cast her eyes down; quite abashed she acknowledged her defeat.

We could see the images only on paying a small sum. Pranab was liberal and encouraged us to see them and to observe specially how the face of Parvati expressed her modesty and shyness. We were filled with a great curiosity and entered one by one into the dark cell. In the candle-light we saw Shiva in front reared up and a small Parvati in the corner by his left side. It was amazing to note how the artist had given life to the small figure and had made her eyes, nose, lips express womanly shyness. We were given just a twinkling of a moment and yet I bear the memory even now.

The last temple that remained to be visited was the Varadaraja Temple (a Vishnu Temple), a little far and inside the town. This temple, according to Pranab, was an illustration of Vijayanagar art. He drew our attention to the thick granite chains carved out of a single stone adorning the four corners of the hundred-pillared hall with beautiful carvings. It had been for some time under the management of the East India Company and used as a garrison during the Anglo-French wars. Lord Clive had presented valuable jewels to Lord Varadaraja. A flight of 24 steps leads to Athigiri, the abode of the Deity. The Deity is a majestic figure in a standing posture. There is a golden lizard in a side-temple whose touch gives good luck!

Pranab gave us a choice between the hundred-pillared hall and the lizard, as we had no time to see both.

Out of all these temples, the one that impressed me most was this Varadaraja

Temple. As soon as we stepped into it, I felt as if I had entered into another world. All around was quiet. Its large area, vast open compound with a green lawn and the lofty Gopurams in front and on the sides aspiring high up towards the clear blue Heaven, breathed a grand majesty. From the unconscious darkness in which the former deities dwelt we had emerged into the super-conscious Daylight comparable to our present yogic condition. As we proceeded onwards, more and more came into view as if an inner country of the soul were being revealed: courtyards, temples, halls, arches, carvings, a large tank—all under the open sunlight—there was no time even to take a complete round. One felt like an American tourist making the best of his short trip. The hundred-pillared hall took up almost all our time. Its exquisite carvings on each monolithic stone-pillar kept us spell-bound; the carvings depicting the worlds of the gods, demons, men and subhuman species, brought into an instant focus the cosmic vision of the Indian sculptors.

As one stands before this vision, a mood of reverie falls upon the mind and, waking into a dream-world, the pilgrim-soul sees and hears the chantings of the priests, the many other souls bringing their heart-offerings and laying them at the feet of the Lord. One breathes an atmosphere suffused with the presence of the Gods and is cradled in the calm bliss of Eternity. But, alas, time presses and the 'integrity of fancy' is broken. Seated in the bus, we journey back home. For a while, it becomes hard to believe which is the real world.

As the mind regains its normal poise, it marvels at the architectural and sculptural beauty in all these temples, and wonders how in those early centuries such stupendous works had been accomplished, with fabulous wealth and gigantic labour lavished through a long chain of years! Since I am not an artist I forbear dwelling upon the artistic excellence of the monuments. I simply gaze, dumbfounded like a child by such inarticulate grandeur! But I may quote some lines from Sri Aurobindo who, among other things, had been a mighty spokesman of our Indian culture:

"These sacred buildings are the signs, the architectural self-expression of an ancient spiritual and religious culture.... An Indian temple, to whatever godhead it may be built, is in its inmost reality an altar raised to the divine Self, a house of the Cosmic Spirit, an appeal and aspiration to the Infinite... Indian sacred architecture constantly represents the greatest oneness of the self, the cosmic, the infinite in the immensity of its world-design, the multitude of its features of self-expression, *lakṣaṇa*...

"The wealth of ornament, detail, circumstance in Indian temples represents the infinite variety and repetition of the worlds,—not our world only, but all the planes,—suggests the infinite multiplicity in the infinite oneness. It is a matter of our own experience and fullness of vision how much we leave out or bring in, whether we express so much or so little, or attempt as in the Dravidian style to give the impression of a teeming inexhaustible plenitude."<sup>1</sup>

"Overpassing lines that please the outward eyes

1. *The Foundations of Indian Culture.*

But hide the sight of that which lives within  
 Sculpture and painting concentrated sense  
 Upon an inner vision's motionless verge,  
 Revealed a figure of the invisible,  
 Unveiled all Nature's meaning in a form  
 Or caught into a body the Divine.  
 The architecture of the Infinite  
 Discovered here its inward-musing shapes  
 Captured into wide breadths of soaring stone."<sup>1</sup>

These verses catch in a sublime manner what I have tried to do in a child's babble—the spirit of Indian art. I cannot help feeling that we have forgotten our luminous heritage and it would be worthwhile for our children, particularly the children of our Centre of Education, to visit these holy shrines and come in living contact with the foundations of Indian culture. The decadence that has set in in our entire life has to be arrested. It has eroded even these timeless carvings: so many statues disfigured and discoloured that one cries in pain to see them. Let us hope that it is the lower curve of the spiral in the ascending evolution and there will be a resurgence of the Indian spirit in a fuller and richer abundance.

The meditation came to an end as the reality of hunger stirred the comrades to action. It was past 2 p.m. A suitable place for our lunching, had to be found. As very often one is pestered by the urchins of the village and their half-famished animals, a secluded shelter with water nearby for vessels to be washed had to be carefully chosen. Luckily we did find such a place. It was a shady vale on the bank of a very wide river which had become almost dry except for two thin streams flowing along the sides. The sandy bed was sparkling in the noonday sun. Growing pine-trees across the street swaying gently in the breeze framed the river with a lovely patch of green. Our intuition hailed it as the ideal spot. We got down from the bus, all our 'flesh-pots' were arranged in order under the spreading tamarind tree. The spicy aroma set a keener edge to the appetite. While some of us stretched ourselves in cool repose, Maharaj and myself felt a child-like attraction towards the shining stream. As we dipped our feet, what a sweet and cool sensation climbed up the spine and reached the Sahasradal (thousand-petalled) centre on the head! We plunged into the water, which though only knee-deep was fresh, clear and delicious. We tried to swim like fishes but our fins touched the sand-bottom at every stroke. Maharaj was in his element, kicking, splashing and floating like a strange merman with hair, beard and soft flesh-form. Lunch had been served, call-bells were ringing; he waved his hand from the water to say that his bath was more delectable. Finally we had to come up. A bath in fresh and pure river-water in almost half a century! Wonderful! It seemed no less a wonder than the wonder of the temples; only, the one is sensuous, the other spiritual—both a memorable acquisition.

1. *Savitri*, Book IV, Canto II.



After a sumptuous meal and a luxurious siesta in the primitive setting, we resumed our long homeward journey. At about 5 p.m. we reached a place called Bandivasi (Wandewash) where, in the historical battle between the English and the French, the French had got beaten. It was flanked by a high hill and on its top stood a tiny white temple, known as Dhavalgiri—a beauty spot with the gaunt hill above, green paddy fields below and a stream of water flowing down a concrete drain from the hill. We decided to have our tea there. The young enthusiasts could not resist the pull of the high-seated temple. A stone-paved zigzag path ending in a steep ascent led them to the summit. Champaklal was not to be left behind though his knees had not the adequate strength to cope with the hazards of the uphill climb. I followed his footsteps with my athletic knees and pilgrim staff. But it was not his knees that gave way. The upper part of his body, being completely bare (that is his habit, be it cold or hot), was fully exposed to the piercing arrows of the Western sun. The body was flushed with a crimson glow. Though he looked beautiful like a Rose of God, his human lungs failed to rise to the occasion. I saw the danger and cried, “Maharaj, you have to stop now.” For once he became sensible and sat down under a shade smiling sadly, “Yes, the heat and not the knees.” Thus the final assault had to be abandoned. After some rest we climbed down, Maharaj almost hopping like a rabbit.

At the foot of the hill, we had our dear cup of tea,

“The cup that cheers but not inebriates”,

and started “homeward to habitual self”.

One of the loveliest picnics came to an end with a charming unbroken sleep at night in the sanctum of the Lord.

NIRODBARAN

## The Mother : Past—Present—Future

by

**K. D. Sethna**

Price : Rs. 8/-

Published & printed by

Kamal Gambhir

at Kamal Printers, 365 Raja Park,

Jaipur-302004

Available from

SABDA Pondicherry-605002

and

*Mother India* office, 6 Lal Bahadur Sastry Street, Pondicherry-605 001

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

1. **The Bhagavad Gita with the Commentary of Sri Sankaracharya.** Crown IV, Pages 540. Price Rs. 35/-. 2. **Dakshinamurthi Stotra** by Sri Sankaracharya. Crown IV, Pages XVI + 223. Price Rs. 25/-. Both books translated into English by Alladi Mahadeva Sastry. Published by Samata Books, 10-Kamaraj Bhavan, Madras - 600 006.

THE Bhagavad Gita, that formed a part of the original Mahabarata, comprises eighteen divisions, each of about forty or fifty verses. These 700 verses called Gitas are the secret doctrines delivered by the exalted Lord. Probably no religious book under the sun other than the Holy Bible and the Koran has attained such wide popularity as the Gita. The earliest extant commentary on it is by a pundit called Adi Sankara (A.D. 788-820)

Gita-Sastra is an epitome of the essentials of the whole Vedic teaching; and its meaning is very difficult to decipher. Though several commentaries (now extinct) had critically examined its import, Adi Sankara's commentary was written with a view 'to determine its precise meaning'. The purpose of the commentary is made clear by the commentator himself in his introduction:

The aim of this famous Gita-Sastra is, briefly, the supreme bliss, a complete cessation of Samsara or transmigratory life and of its causes....It treats of a specific object and bears a specific relation (to the subject, and object). A knowledge of its teaching leads to the realisation of all human aspirations. Hence my attempt to explain it.

The book under review contains the original Sanskrit text of the Gita in Devanagari followed by its translation as also the translation of Sankara's Gita Bhashya in English. The commentator does not tax the reader with an overload of explications. To be brief and to the point seems to be his motto. A few of the many hundred verses are left without any commentary and in certain such cases the verses comment for themselves.

The eight different kinds of Yogas (Sankhya-yoga, Karma-yoga, Jnana-yoga, Sannyasa-yoga, Dhyana-yoga, Vijnana-yoga, Abhyasa-yoga and Bhakti-yoga), the three Gunas (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) and the triple designation of Brahman (OM, TAT, SAT) are excellently made clear. The conundrum "Action in inaction, inaction in action", gets solved by the magic touch of Sankaracharya.

This book is a valuable possession for two reasons: 1. It is the earliest extant commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, and 2. It is the only available English translation of Sri Sankaracharya's commentary.

The second book opens with the admirable translator's scholarly introductory essay: The Vedanta Doctrine of Sankaracharya. It is of immense help to the reader to understand and appreciate the philosophy that lies behind the teachings of Sri

Sankaracharya. This book comprises three divisions.

Sri Sankaracharya's *Dakshinamurti Stotra*, an ode to the divinity conceived as the Guru of Gurus, consists of ten stanzas, each stanza followed by the commentary of Sri Suresvaracharya (Sri Sankaracharya's immediate disciple and literary collaborator), called *Manasollasa*, "Brilliant play of thought", which aims at rendering explicit all that stands implicit in the hymn.

The Veda, which literally means Wisdom, is intended to help man attain the highest end, that is, the securing of eternal happiness for himself. It is the Veda that tells him that there is a world beyond the visible earth; that man, after the body dies, continues to live in other regions subject to pleasure and pain. This life of pain and pleasure is at best temporary, and freedom from it can be obtained by knowing things as they are in their true relations. This is the basic principle stressed stanza after stanza.

Sri Suresvaracharya's *Pranava-Vartika* forms the second division in the book. The purpose of this tract is to show those who wish for liberation how to receive balance of mind. The way in which the five Bhutas (Ether, Air, Fire, Water and Earth) and the significance of the great Sutra or Linga ensouling all are treated is superb.

Last in the list is Sri Sankaracharya's *Dakshinamurti-Upanishad*. It is said to belong to the Black Yajurveda. Sanaka and other mighty sages who gathered for a great sacrifice at the foot of a mighty bhandira fig tree, approached the long-lived Markan-deya and asked: "Will you please tell us the secret behind your long blissful life?". The immortal mortal answered, "It is by knowledge of the highest secret, of Siva, the Reality." Curiosity made the sages pose another question: "What is it which constitutes knowledge of the highest secret?" And there follows, as answer, the five mantras that give a beautiful picture of Dakshinamurti, the Gracious Lord, who is brought before the mind's eye of the reader as the description goes on. In short this division is an encomium on the Lord.

P. RAJA