

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE : APRIL 24, 1980

Price : Rs. 2.25

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The enormous rise in the cost of paper, production and distribution and the change in some other factors have forced us to raise by a small margin our subscription from 1980. We have kept the margin as small as possible because the cost of living is everywhere on the increase. In passing, we may state that the cost to us of each copy of *Mother India* is more than Rs. 3/-. It is only the donations and advertisements that help us out to a great extent.

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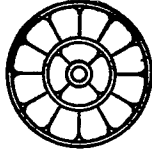
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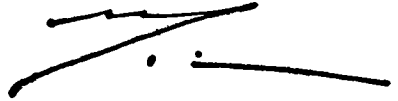


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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

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Published by: P. COUNOUMA

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. 4

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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APRIL 24

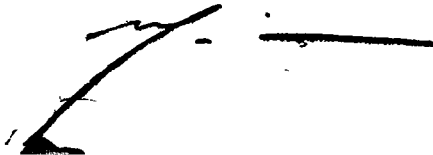
A PERSONAL MESSAGE

24-4-39.

Amal, my dear child,
blessings of the day
just received your letter of 21st;
it came to me directly (without
the written words) three days ago,
probably when you were writing
it, and my silent answer
was categorical: remain there
until the necessity of being
here will become so imperative
that all else will completely
lose all value for you.

My answer now is exactly
the same. I want only to
assure you that we are
not abandoning you and
that you will always have
our help and protection.

With our love and blessings

A handwritten signature, possibly "J. —", written in dark ink at the bottom of the page.

TOWARDS THE SUPERMIND

THE MOTHER ANSWERS SOME QUESTIONS

(1980 is a leap-year and witnesses on 29 February one of the "anniversaries" of the day in 1956 when there took place what the Mother called "the Manifestation of the Supermind." This manifestation marked the pervasion of the earth's subtle-physical atmosphere by the supreme Truth-Consciousness as a power working out gradually a new evolution beyond the mental status reached so far in the world. To help us take an evolutionary leap during this leap-year we cannot do better than try to live out the spiritual message of the following talk by the Mother to the Ashram children soon after the second "anniversary" of the great event.)

SINCE the end of February [1964] I have been receiving a considerable number of questions: "How is the Supermind going to act, what must we do to receive it, under what form will it manifest?"

...It happens that in the book, *On the Veda*, by Sri Aurobindo, there is a footnote on a certain page and in this note he has given his answer to the questions. I always tell people, "If you take a little trouble and read what Sri Aurobindo has written, many of your questions will become useless, because he has already answered them." However, it is possible they have neither the time nor the patience nor the will nor anything necessary; they do not read. Books appear, they are even, I believe, generously distributed, but very few people read them. Let it be; here is Sri Aurobindo's answer. Try to think over it and if you have a special question to put, I will answer. Listen:

"The supramental world has to be formed or created in us by the Divine Will as the result of a constant expansion and self-perfecting."

(On the Veda, p. 463, footnote 2)

That is to say, for you to hope to receive, utilise and form in you a supramental being and consequently a supramental world, there must be in you first of all an expansion of the consciousness and a constant self-perfection, not to have impulsions, a little aspiration, a little effort, then fall back again into somnolence—it must be the constant idea of the being, the constant will of the being, the constant effort of the being, the constant preoccupation of the being.

If you happen to remember for five minutes per day that there is something in the universe like the supramental force and that "after all it would be good if it manifested in me," then for the rest of the time you think of something else, there is not much chance for it to come and work seriously in you. Sri Aurobindo says it very clearly and precisely. He does not say that you will do it, he says it is the Divine Will. So don't come and say, "Ah, I cannot do it myself." You are not asked to do it, but you must have in your being a sufficient aspiration and adhesion for the expansion of the being, the expansion of the consciousness to be possible.

Because, to tell the truth, everybody is small, small, small, so small that there is

no room to put the Supramental in. It is so small that it is already filled up with all the small ordinary human movements. You must get it to a large extent in order to make room for the movements of the Supramental.

And then there must be an aspiration for progress, not to be satisfied with what one is, as one is, with what one does, with what one knows or believes that one knows, but to have a constant aspiration towards something more, something better, towards a greater light, a wider consciousness, a truth more true, a good more universal. And, over and above that, a goodwill that never fails.

This cannot be done in a few days.

Besides, I believe I took, from this point of view, my precautions and when I announced that now it was given to earth to receive the Supramental Force for manifesting it, it did not mean that the manifestation would be evident instantaneously and that everybody would find himself suddenly transported to the peak of light and possibility and realisation, without any effort. I said at the very moment that it would not be like that; I even said that it would take quite a long time. However, people complained that its coming had not made things easier and that even in certain cases it became more difficult. I am very sorry, but I am helpless. Because it is not the fault of the Supramental Force. It is the fault of the way in which it is received. For I know cases where the aspiration was truly sincere and the collaboration complete and where many things that had appeared before very difficult became at once infinitely more easy.

But there is a great difference always between a kind of mental curiosity which plays with ideas and words and a true aspiration of the being, which is the cause why truly it is that that counts essentially and nothing else—this aspiration, this inner will which is the cause why nothing has any value except *that*, that realisation, nothing counts except that and you have no other reason for existing, no other reason for living than that.

And yet it is that which you must have, if you want the Supramental to show itself to the naked eye. Note that I am not speaking of a physical transformation, for you all know that you do not expect to become overnight luminous, plastic, to lose your weight, freely move from place to place, to appear at a dozen places at the same time and so on.... No, I believe you are reasonable enough not to expect all that to happen immediately—that will take some time.

After all, it is simply the working of the consciousness, simply a certain self-mastery, a control over the body, a direct knowledge of things, a capacity for identification and a clear vision instead of this cloudy and hazy vision which sees only the appearance which is so deceptive, so unreal, so fossilised. A more direct perception, an inner perception, this must come; it will come soon if you are prepared.

Simply to have this sensation that the air one breathes is more living, that the force one has is more durable; and, instead of groping always like one blind to know what is to be done, to have a precise, clear inner intimation: it is this, not that, this. These are the things that can be acquired immediately, if one is prepared.

ASPIRATION AND TRUST

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

To aspire is indispensable. But some people aspire with such a conflict inside them between faith and absence of faith, trust and distrust, between optimism which is sure of victory and a pessimism which asks itself when the catastrophe will come. Now if this is in the being, you may aspire but you don't get anything. And you say, "I aspired but didn't get anything." It is because you demolish your aspiration all the time by your lack of confidence. But if you truly have trust... Children when left to themselves and not deformed by older people have such a great trust that all will be well! For example, when they have a small accident, they never think that this is going to be something serious: they are spontaneously convinced that it will soon be over, and this helps so powerfully in putting an end to it.

Well, when one aspires for the Force, when one asks the Divine for help, if one asks with the unshakable certitude that it will come, that it is impossible that it won't, then it is sure to come. It is this kind... yes, this is truly an inner opening, this is trustfulness. And some people are constantly in this state. When there is something to be received, they are always there to receive it. There are others, when there is something to have, a force descends, they are always absent, they are always closed at that moment; while those who have this childlike trust are always there at the right time.

And it is strange, isn't it, outwardly there is no difference. They may have exactly the same goodwill, the same aspiration, the same wish to do good, but those who have this smiling confidence within them, do not question, do not ask themselves whether they will have it or not have it, whether the Divine will answer or not—the question does not arise, it is something understood... "What I need will be given to me; if I pray I shall have an answer; if I am in a difficulty and ask for help, the help will come—and not only will it come but it will manage everything." If the trust is there, spontaneous, candid, unquestioning, it works better than anything else, and the results are marvellous. It is with the contradictions and doubts of the mind that one spoils everything, with this kind of notion which comes when one is in difficulties: "Oh, it is impossible! I shall never manage it. And if it is going to be aggravated, if this condition I am in, which I don't want, is going to grow still worse, if I continue to slide down farther and farther, if, if, if, if..." like that, and one builds a wall between oneself and the force one wants to receive. The psychic being has this trust, has it wonderfully, without a shadow, without an argument, without a contradiction. And when it is like that, there is not a prayer which does not get an answer, no aspiration which is not realised.

17 November 1954

DEFECTS—AND OPENING TO THE DIVINE FORCE

AN ANSWER BY THE MOTHER

*Mother, last time we read: "It does not matter what defects you may have in your nature. The one thing that matters is your keeping yourself open to the Force."
Mother, if one has defects, how can one open to the Force?*

I THINK everyone has defects. So if it were necessary not to have any defects in order to be open, nobody could be open. One always has defects, to begin with. One is not made of a single piece. This is the main reason. There are many different parts in the being which sometimes are quite independent of one another and take hold of the consciousness almost in turn and sometimes even in an altogether regular order. So, when a part of the being has goodwill and already a kind of perception of what the divine force is, you see, this opens the being and puts it into contact with this force. But it is not always there. There are other parts which come to the front, which have defects, bad habits, and which can veil the consciousness completely. But if one keeps the memory of the part which was open, one can keep the opening all the same, though outwardly the part that is active is not particularly interested and not even able to understand. But the other part can continue to be open and receive the force.

10 November 1954

O MYSTERY

RUNNING rivulets of errant blue,
Crystalline streams of glowing water flow down
To a depth beyond our view.

In that unfathomable abyss
Our longing hearts can run
And discover wonders of untrodden bliss.

O Mystery! Open your secrets to our sight!
May we find in you the source of all Light!

PATTI

THE RIGHT USE OF THINGS

FROM A TALK OF THE MOTHER

... FIRST, to use things with an understanding of their true utility, the knowledge of their real use, with the utmost care so that they do not get spoilt and with the least confusion.

I am going to give you an example: you have a pair of scissors. There are scissors of all kinds, there are scissors for cutting paper, and there are scissors for cutting thread... Now if you have the pair of scissors which you need, use it for the thing it is made for. But I know people who, when they have a pair of scissors, use it without any discernment to cut anything at all, to cut small silk threads, and they try to cut a wire also with it or else they use it as a tool to open tins, you see; for anything whatever, where they need an instrument they get hold of their scissors and use them. So naturally, after quite a short while they come to me again and say, "Oh, my pair of scissors is spoilt, I would like to have another." And they are very much surprised when I tell them "No, you won't have another, because you have spoilt this one, because you have used it badly." This is just one example. I could give many others.

People use something which gets dirty and is spoilt in becoming dirty, or they forget to clean it or neglect it, because all this takes time.

There is a kind of respect for the object one has, which must make one treat it with much consideration and try to preserve it as long as possible, not because one is attached to it and desires it, but because an object is something respectable which has sometimes cost a lot of effort and labour in producing and so must as a result be considered with the respect due to the work and effort put into it.

There are people who have nothing, who don't even have the things which are absolutely indispensable, and who are compelled to make them in some way for their personal use. I have seen people of this kind who, with much effort and ingenuity, had managed to make for themselves certain things which are more or less indispensable from the practical point of view. But the way they treated them, because they were aware of the effort they had put in to make them, was remarkable—the care, that kind of respect for the object they had produced, because they knew how much labour it had cost them. But people who have plenty of money in their pockets, and when they need something turn the knob of a shop-door, enter and put down the money and take the thing, they treat it like that. They harm themselves and give a very bad example.

Many a time I say, "No, use what you have. Try to make the best possible use of it, don't throw away things uselessly, don't ask uselessly. Try to do with what you have, putting into it all the care, all the order, all the necessary method, and avoiding confusion."

Here, you know, we have a small chit-pad¹, and people write every month what

¹ The Ashramites take from what Mother called "Prosperity" their clothes, toilet articles, and

they want; and then it happens that we were compelled to ration things because otherwise it was becoming something excessive. But this rationing often turned against its purpose.

I remember visiting a sadhak in his room, it is now some twenty-five years ago or so. It is an old story. I remember it still. There was a rack hanging from the wall, a rack with five shelves; the rack was as big as this, and there were five shelves one above another and they were all... all these shelves were full. Over-full of tiny soap pieces. So I asked him, "But for heaven's sake, what are you doing with all these pieces of soap? Why do you have all these pieces of soap there? Why don't you use them?" He said to me, "Ah, we have the right to one cake of soap per month, so every month I ask for soap. It happens that I don't finish it in that month, I keep the pieces."

And he continued to take it?

It was like that, he made a collection; because he had the right to a cake of soap, he wanted to take the soap, and to take the soap he put the former piece aside. It is an authentic story, I am not inventing it.

Many people here are like that. I won't tell you their names but I know them well. There are many like that. They have a right to something, they will ask for it even if they don't need it, because they have the right. This indeed is... well, in fact it is...an attitude...we won't qualify it.

There is also the miser who fills his chest with pieces of gold and never uses them. Gold does not rot, otherwise truly it rots morally, because something that does not circulate becomes very ill. Now, no conclusions!

16 February 1955

other requirements. They write out their needs on a page of their Prosperity Book and give in the list a few days before the distribution, which takes place on the first of each month.

MODERN PAINTING— THE PRESENT CHAOS AND THE TRUE CREATIVE SPIRIT BEHIND

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

What kind of reason guides the realistic and surrealist artists who are so gross?

What kind of reason! But why do you suppose that it is reason? Unless reason is just an explanation we give of what they do! But otherwise why do you suppose that it is reason?

No, because Sri Aurobindo has said in this paragraph that it is here that reason guides.

But perhaps it is just because it does not guide them that they do what they do and as they do it, isn't that so?

But how does it happen that after having reached so high the art of painting becomes so ugly and childish?

But have you ever seen that the human ascent is like that, a funicular ascent, quite straight? It turns all the time. So if you assume that there are vertical lines which are lines of a kind of human progress, then when things come there, they progress, but when they go further away they degenerate.

I shall tell you perhaps in ten years... I don't know, perhaps in ten years I shall tell you whether there is something in modern painting. Because I am going to tell you something curious: for the moment I find it downright ugly, not only ugly but stupid; but what is frightening is that it makes you completely sick of all other pictures. When one sees painting as it is done today...for we receive all the time art reviews in which, with much intelligence, are put reproductions of both ancient and modern pictures, and they are put side by side, which makes the thing very interesting, you can see both and compare. I can't manage to have yet a very clear notion of beauty in what modern painters do, I confess this, I haven't yet understood; but what is curious is that they have succeeded in taking away from me all the taste for the painting of old; except some very rare things, the rest seems to me pompous, artificial, ridiculous, unbearable.

Now this means that behind this incoherence and chaos there certainly is, there must be a creative spirit which is trying to manifest.

We have passed from a particular world which had reached its perfection and was declining, this is absolutely obvious. And so to pass from that creation to a new creation (because...well, suppose that it is the forces of ordinary Nature which are acting), instead of passing through a continuous ascent, there was evidently a fall into a chaos, that is, the chaos is necessary for a new creation.

The methods of Nature are like that. Before our solar system could exist, there was chaos. Well, in passing from this artistic construction which had reached a kind of summit, before passing from this to a new creation, it seems to me still the same thing, evidently a chaos. And the impression I have when I look at these things is that they are not sincere, and that's what is annoying. It is not sincere: either it is someone who has amused himself by being as mad as possible or perhaps it is someone who wanted to deceive others or maybe deceive himself, or again, a kind of incoherent fantasy in which one puts a blot of paint in one place and then says immediately, "Why, it would be funny to put it there, and if one put it here, like this, and again if one put this like that, and again..." There, for the moment this is the impression it gives me, and I don't feel that it is something sincere.

But there is a sincere creative spirit behind, which is trying to manifest, which, for the moment, does not manifest, but is strong enough to destroy the past. That is, there was a time when I used to look at the pictures of Rembrandt, of Titian, of Tintoretto, the pictures of R noir and Monet, I felt a great aesthetic joy. This aesthetic joy I don't feel any more. I have progressed because I follow the whole movement of terrestrial evolution; therefore, I have had to overpass this cycle, I have arrived at another; and this one seems to me empty of aesthetic joy. From the point of view of reason one may dispute this, speak of all the beautiful and good things which have been done, all that is a different affair. But this subtle something, precisely, which is the true aesthetic joy, is gone. I don't feel it any longer. Of course I am a hundred miles away from having it when I look at things they are now doing. But still it is something which is behind this that has made the other disappear. So perhaps by making just a little effort towards the future we are going to be able to find the formula of the new beauty. That would be interesting. It is quite recently that this impression came to me; it is not old. I have tried with the most perfect goodwill, by abolishing all kinds of preferences, preconceived ideas, habits, past tastes, all that; all that eliminated, I look at their pictures and I don't succeed in getting any pleasure; it doesn't give me any, sometimes it gives me a disgust, but above all the impression of something that's not true, a painful impression of insincerity.

But then quite recently, I suddenly felt this, this sensation of something very new, something of the future pushing, pushing, trying to manifest, trying to express itself and not succeeding, but something which will be a terrific progress over all that has been felt and expressed before; and then, at the same time is born the movement of consciousness which turns to this new thing and wants to grasp it. This will perhaps be interesting. That is why I told you: ten years. Perhaps in ten years there will be people who have found a new expression. A great progress would be necessary, an immense progress in the technique; the old technique seems barbarous. And now with the new scientific discoveries perhaps the technique of execution will change and one could find a new technique which would then express this new beauty which wants to manifest. We shall speak about it in ten years' time.

4 June 1955

“A DREAM” OF THE MOTHER—AND ITS RIGHT REFERENCE

(In view of a frequent misunderstanding due to the omission of the final paragraph, we are reproducing in full this well-known declaration by the Mother, first published in the Bulletin of August 1954.)

THERE should be somewhere upon earth a place that no nation could claim as its sole property; a place where all human beings of goodwill, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the Supreme Truth; a place of peace, concord, harmony, where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weakness and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the care for progress would get precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the seeking for material pleasures and enjoyment. In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their soul. Education would be given not with a view to passing examinations and getting certificates and posts but for enriching the existing faculty and bringing forth new ones. In this place titles and positions would be supplanted by opportunities to serve and organise. The needs of the body will be provided for equally in the case of each and every one. In the general organisation intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority will find expression not in the enhancement of the pleasures and powers of life but in the increase of duties and responsibilities. Artistic beauty in all forms, painting, sculpture, music, literature, will be available equally to all, the opportunity to share in the joys they give being limited solely by one's capacities and not by social or financial position. For in this ideal place money would be no more the sovereign lord. Individual value would have a greater importance than the value due to material wealth and social position. Work would not be there as the means for gaining one's livelihood, it would be the means whereby to express oneself, develop one's capacities and possibilities, while doing at the same time service to the whole group, which on its side would provide for each one's subsistence and for the field of his work. In brief, it would be a place where the relations among human beings usually based almost exclusively upon competition and strife would be replaced by relations of emulation for doing better, for collaboration, relations of real brotherhood.

The earth is certainly not ready to realise such an ideal, for mankind does not yet possess the necessary knowledge to understand and accept it nor the indispensable conscious force to execute it. That is why I call it a dream.

Yet, this dream is on the way to becoming a reality. That is exactly what we are seeking to do at the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo on a small scale, in proportion to our modest means. The achievement is indeed far from being perfect but it is progressive; little by little we advance towards our goal, which, we hope, one day we shall be able to hold before the world as a practical and effective means of coming out of the present chaos in order to be born into a more true, more harmonious new life.

TOWARDS THE REALISATION OF "A DREAM"

THE MOTHER ON OUR PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION

IN human life the cause of all difficulties, all discords, all moral sufferings, is the presence in everyone of the ego with its desires, its likes and dislikes. Even in a disinterested work which consists in helping others, until one has learned to overcome the ego and its demands, until one can force it to keep calm and quiet in one corner, the ego reacts to everything that displeases it, starts an inner storm that rises to the surface and spoils all the work.

This work of overcoming the ego is long, slow and difficult; it demands constant alertness and sustained effort. This effort is easier for some and more difficult for others.

We are here in the Ashram to do this work together with the help of Sri Aurobindo's knowledge and force, in an attempt to realise a community that is more harmonious, more united, and consequently much more effective in life.

26 August 1969

MOTHER OF THE WORLDS

IF in your terrible strength
You but leaned on a moment,
Time would shatter like glass,
Become litter of days.

When shall we ever be still enough,
Small enough to endure it—
Weight of the hurtling worlds
And your mighty ways?

SONIA DYNE

THE REVISED EDITION OF *THE FUTURE POETRY*

(Continued from the issue of March 1980)

(The revision of Chapter 4 consists of small additions and changes scattered throughout the chapter.)

CHAPTER IV

Style and Substance

RHYTHM is the premier necessity of poetical expression because it is the sound-movement which carries on its wave the thought-movement in the word; and it is the musical sound-image which most helps to fill in, to extend, subtilise and deepen the thought impression or the emotional or vital impression and to carry the sense beyond itself into an expression of the intellectually inexpressible,—always the peculiar power of music. This truth was better understood on the whole or at least more consistently felt by the ancients than by the modern mind and ear, perhaps because they were more in the habit of singing, chanting or intoning their poetry while we are content to read ours, a habit which brings out the intellectual and emotional element, but unduly depresses the rhythmic value. On the other hand modern poetry has achieved a far greater subtlety, minute fineness and curious depth of suggestion in style and thought than was possible to the ancients,—at the price perhaps of some loss in power, height and simple largeness. The ancients would not so easily as the moderns have admitted into the rank of great poets writers of poor rhythmic faculty or condoned, ignored or praised in really great poets rhythmic lapses, roughnesses and crudities for the sake of their power of style and substance.

In regard to poetic style we have to make, for the purpose of the idea we have in view, the starting-point of the Mantra, precisely the same distinctions as in regard to poetic rhythm,—since here too we find actually everything admitted as poetry which has some power of style and is cast into some kind of rhythmical form. But the question is, what kind of power and in that kind what intensity of achievement? There is plenty of poetry signed by poets of present reputation or lasting fame which one is obliged to consign to a border region of half-poetry, because its principle of expression has not got far enough away from the principle of prose expression. It seems to forget that while the first aim of prose style is to define and fix an object, fact, feeling, thought before the appreciating intelligence with whatever clearness, power, richness or other beauty of presentation may be added to that essential aim, the first aim of poetic style is to make the thing presented living to the imaginative vision, the responsive inner emotion, the spiritual sense, the soul-feeling and soul-sight. Where the failure is to express at all with any sufficient power, to get home in any way, the distinction becomes palpable enough, and we readily say of such writings that this is verse but not poetry. But where there is some thought-power or other worth of substance attended with some power of expression, false values more easily become current and even a

whole literary age may dwell on this borderland or be misled into an undue exaltation and cult for this half-poetry.

Poetry, like the kindred arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, appeals to the spirit of man through significant images, and it makes no essential difference that in this case the image is mental and verbal and not material. The essential power of the poetic word is to make us see, not to make us think or feel; thought and feeling¹ must arise out of the sight or be included in it, but sight is the primary consequence and power of poetic speech. For the poet has to make us live in the soul and in the inner mind and heart what is ordinarily lived in the outer mind and the senses, and for that he must first make us see by the soul, in its light and with its deeper vision, what we ordinarily see in a more limited and halting fashion by the sense and the intelligence. He is, as the ancients knew, a seer and not merely a maker of rhymes, not merely a jongleur, rhapsodist or troubadour, and not merely a thinker in lines and stanzas. He sees beyond the sight of the surface mind and finds the revealing word, not merely the adequate and effective, but the illumined and illuminating, the inspired and inevitable word, which compels us to see also. To arrive at that word is the whole endeavour of poetic style.

The modern distinction is that the poet appeals to the imagination and not to the intellect. But there are many kinds of imagination; the objective imagination which visualises strongly the outward aspects of life and things; the subjective imagination which visualises strongly the mental and emotional impressions they have the power to start in the mind; the imagination which deals in the play of mental fictions and to which we give the name of poetic fancy; the aesthetic imagination which delights in the beauty of words and images for their own sake and sees no farther. All these have their place in poetry, but they only give the poet his material, they are only the first instruments in the creation of poetic style. The essential poetic imagination does not stop short with even the most subtle reproductions of things external or internal, with the richest or delicatest play of fancy or with the most beautiful colouring of word or image. It is creative, not of either the actual or the fictitious, but of the more and the most real; it sees the spiritual truth of things,—of this truth too there are many gradations,—which may take either the actual or the ideal for its starting-point. The aim of poetry, as of all true art, is neither a photographic or otherwise realistic imitation of Nature, nor a romantic furbishing and painting or idealistic improvement of her image, but an interpretation by the images she herself affords us, not on one but on many planes of her creation, of that which she conceals from us, but is ready, when rightly approached, to reveal.

This is the true, because the highest and essential aim of poetry; but the human mind arrives at it only by a succession of steps, the first of which seems far enough from its object. It begins by stringing its most obvious and external ideas, feelings and sensations of things on a thread of verse in a sufficient language of no very high

¹ I speak here of the outer emotional or sensational feeling, not of the spiritual sense and soul-stir which is the invariable concomitant of the soul's sight.

quality. But even when it gets to a greater adequacy and effectiveness, it is often no more than a vital, an emotional or an intellectual adequacy and effectiveness. There is a strong vital poetry which powerfully appeals to our sensations and our sense of life, like much of Byron or the less inspired mass of the Elizabethan drama; a strong emotional poetry which stirs our feelings and gives us the sense and active image of the passions; a strong intellectual poetry which satisfies our curiosity about life and its mechanism, or deals with its psychological and other "problems", or shapes for us our thoughts in an effective, striking and often quite resistlessly quotable fashion. All this has its pleasures for the mind and the surface soul in us, and it is certainly quite legitimate to enjoy them and to enjoy them strongly and vividly on our way upward; but if we rest content with these only, we shall never get very high up the hill of the Muses.

The style of such poetry corresponds usually to its substance; for between the word and the vision there tends to be, though there is not by any means perfectly or invariably, a certain equation. There is a force of vital style, a force of emotional style, a force of intellectual style which we meet constantly in poetry and which it is essential to distinguish from the language of the higher spiritual imagination. The forceful expression of thought and sentiment is not enough for this higher language. To take some examples, it is not enough for it to express its sense of world-sorrow in a line of cheap sentimental force like Byron's

There's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,

or to voice an opposite truth in the sprightly-forcible manner of Browning's

God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world,

or to strike the balance in a sense of equality with the pointed and ever quotable intellectuality of Pope's

Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish or a sparrow fall.

This may be the poetical or half-poetical language of thought and sentiment; it is not the language of real poetic vision. Note that all three brush the skirts of ideas whose deeper expression from the vision of a great poet might touch the very heights of poetic revelation. Byron's line is the starting-point in the emotional sensations for that high world-pessimism and its spiritual release which finds expression in the Gita's

*Anityam asukham lokam imam prāpya bhajasva mām;*¹

¹ "Thou who hast come to this transient and unhappy world, love and turn to Me."

and one has only to compare the manner of the two in style and rhythm, even leaving the substance aside, to see the difference between the lesser and the greater poetry. Browning's language rises from a robust cheerfulness of temperament, it does not touch the deeper fountain-heads of truth in us; an opposite temperament may well smile at it as vigorous optimistic fustian. Pope's actually falsifies by its poetical inadequacy that great truth of the Gita's teaching, the truth of the divine equality, because he has not seen and therefore cannot make us see; his significant images of the truth are, like his perception of it, intellectual and rhetorical, not poetic figures.

There is a higher style of poetry than this which yet falls below the level to which we have to climb. It is no longer poetical language of a merely intellectual, vital or emotional force, but instead or in addition a genuinely imaginative style, with a certain, often a great beauty of vision in it, whether objective or subjective, or with a certain, often a great but indefinite soul-power bearing up its movement of word and rhythm. It varies in intensity, for the lower intensity we can get plenty of examples from Chaucer, when he is indulging his imagination rather than his observation, and at a higher pitch from Spenser; for the loftier intensity we can cite at will for one kind from Milton's early poetry, for another from poets who have a real spiritual vision like Keats and Shelley. English poetry runs, indeed, ordinarily in this mould. But this too is not that highest intensity of the revelatory poetic word from which the Mantra starts. It has a certain power of revelation in it, but the deeper vision is still coated up in something more external; sometimes the poetic intention of decorative beauty, sometimes some other deliberate intention of the poetic mind overlays with the more outward beauty, beauty of image, beauty of thought, beauty of emotion, the deeper intention of the spirit within, so that we have still to look for that beyond the image rather than are seized by it through the image. A high pleasure is there, not unspiritual in its nature, but still it is not that point where pleasure passes into or is rather drowned in the pure spiritual Ananda, the ecstasy of the creative, poetic revelation.

That intensity comes where everything else may be present, but all is powerfully carried on the surge of a spiritual vision which has found its inspired and inevitable speech. All or any of the other elements may be there, but they are at once subordinated and transfigured to their highest capacity for poetic light and rapture. This intensity belongs to no particular style, depends on no conceivable formula of diction. It may be the height of the decorative imaged style as often we find it in Kalidasa or Shakespeare; it may be that height of bare and direct expression where language seems to be used as a scarcely felt vaulting-board for a leap into the infinite; it may be the packed intensity of language which uses either the bare or the imaged form at will, but fills every word with its utmost possible rhythmic and thought suggestion. But in itself it depends on none of these things; it is not a style, but poetic style itself, the Word; it creates and carries with it its elements rather than is created by them. Whatever its outward forms, it is always the one fit style for the Mantra.

THE MOTHER'S WAY OF TEACHING US HER WORK

SOME RECOLLECTIONS BY LALITA

THE Mother had Her own sweet way of teaching us our work. In all the years that I worked in Her room, not even once did She say, "Lalita, this must be done in this way, and not in any other." She always did the work Herself in front of me and, as I was a very keen and interested observer, I learnt it directly from Her. The deep peace and marvellous patience with which She handled everything could not be imitated by anybody. Chinmayi, who was with Her day and night, had learnt a lot, but even she could not manage things in the same way.

If the Mother opened a drawer of Her dressing table when I was sitting on the carpet near Her chair, I observed how gently She arranged everything inside, each article set in its proper place.

On a lower shelf of an almirah on the right hand, as we entered Her dressing room, there were bottles of hair-lotion for Sri Aurobindo, which came from France.

Two different bottles had to be mixed to prepare the lotion for Him, and the Mother did this work Herself. It was a pleasure to watch Her, as She did everything, sitting on a low stool near the almirah, with Chinmayi and myself by Her side. Not a drop was spilt or wasted. And even if Champaklal or Pavitra came to call Her, or to say something, She never became impatient or left Her work half done. She could do things quickly too, but even Her speed was full of a deep calm. On rare occasions, She gave me a bottle of this hair lotion to use, for which I was very grateful to Her.

As the Mother did not like talking uselessly, I had made it a habit to speak to Her only about the work. I kept everything ready for Her to see and advise at the time when She was expected to come. But sometimes She Herself lingered to lavish Her Grace on us. She liked doing physical work as much as She liked Her spiritual work. In the former, Her Mahasaraswati aspect manifested itself, which was a pleasure to watch. She would sometimes arrange the shelf of one of Her almirahs, with Chinmayi or myself or Dyumanbhai (according to the things to be handled) to help Her. She always spoke to Chinmayi and Pavitra in French, and at times I used to wonder whether I should remain there when She was talking, or move away. Later, She Herself told me that if there was anything private in what She was saying She would put an occult veil in between, so that others might not hear Her. And this was so true, that even when She was standing close to us, we could not make out what She was saying in private to somebody.

Chinmayi always ran to pick up anything that the Mother happened to drop on the floor. This the Mother did not like, and She explained to us that if She was all the time prevented from bending Her body, it would become quite stiff.

When the Mother had something urgent to say to Pavitra, She walked very fast all along the passage leading to his room, and it amused me a great deal to see Chinmayi (a young girl) actually running by Her side, to keep up with Her.

The Mother never wasted even a moment of Her life: either inwardly or outwardly, She was constantly working.

In the deep peace and silence of Her room when She was alone with me I could almost feel that though outwardly She was busy arranging Her hair, etc., inwardly She was deeply absorbed in Her divine work.

When She had finished, She would look at me in the mirror of Her dressing-table and get up and slowly leave the room, after giving me Her charming smile.

Quite often, after handling flowers, She would wipe Her wet fingers on my sari, if I happened to be standing near Her chair, before She left. It was a grace which lingered with me all through the day like a heavenly perfume.

The Mother's Hair

When I went to work in the Mother's room I was surprised to find that the beautiful golden-brown hairs which came off when She combed Herself were not preserved. She used to make a ball of them and throw them into the waste-paper basket I think. I suggested that they should be kept somewhere in a neat way. I asked for a long box to keep them. She had it made, and when it was ready, every day I straightened them, and, then holding them by the roots, I glued them there, and kept them straight in the box. The glue was given to me by the Mother. When quite a lot of these hairs were collected, it was a joy to look at them. It seemed as if a part of my sweet Mother was there and before closing the box I caressed them daily.

I do not know what became of them after I left, for nobody has told me. I only hope that many more were added, and they are still kept as something very precious and sacred.

THE SWANS

WITH the parting kiss of the setting sun
 Incarnadine, heavy-winged, faltering they return,
 After the day's pilgrimage to an ethereal Rome,
 To their sombre earthly home.

They are the swans of the Psychic Fire,
 The white congregation of a sublime desire.
 Back and forth along the aeonic coil,
 Undaunted they dare the eternal toil.

SATADAL

A VISION ON MAHASAMADHI DAY

RELATED BY CHAMPAKLAL

It was on 9th December (1979), one of our unique, elevating and auspicious days. I saw the Samadhi courtyard a little bigger than what it is at present. The Rosary house (building on the southern side of the Samadhi) was not there. I remember The Mother telling me once, 'We shall build a big Meditation Hall there.' Incidentally, the present main building of Sri Aurobindo Ashram actually consists of four houses. It is interesting and very symbolic as The Mother has given the significance of number 4 as 'Manifestation'.

People were meditating in the Samadhi courtyard. Our dear little children were also sitting there on one side. I noticed that some children were getting up and moving very quietly in order to change their places. They walked in such a way as if they were guided by some unseen Force. There was no disturbance at all due to their movements. The atmosphere was extremely peaceful.

A little later I saw that our beloved Service Tree was standing just in front of the western side of the Samadhi. It moved very gradually all round the Samadhi. Its movement was so slow that one could hardly notice that the tree was moving. After giving one Pradakshina (round) of the Samadhi, it went back to its present place on the northern side. It then started growing higher and higher and its branches began to extend far and very far and wide on all the sides until they covered the whole universe! Yes, the whole universe! I saw it with my own eyes! I could see that the branches had extended but I could not perceive how; the movement of expansion was not visible. Then the tree was fully studded with huge, luminous, transparent golden Service flowers. I could not see the branches or leaves or trunk but only flowers and flowers. It was a wonderful, magnificent and unimaginable sight which gave me inexpressible joy and Ananda. A little later, the tree gradually assumed its original form and size. This time also its movement of contraction was not at all discernible.

All the people who were meditating were seen sitting upon those luminous Service Tree flowers as on a royal, golden, velvet carpet of beautiful flowers. But the tree was also full of these magnificent flowers as before; the quantity of flowers had not diminished at all!

Then a unique sight was perceived. I saw fire coming out from each person sitting there. In some cases, it emerged from their foreheads, in some from their hearts, in some others from their navels and so on. Each fire was of a different colour—some were milky white, some snow-white, some red, green, yellow, blue, silver, pink, golden, and some of mixed colours and some, in very few cases, even of ash colour. These fires appeared like यज्ञवेदि (Yagnavedi—Sacrificial Fire) in front of each and every one. Their flames were rising up and up. Some mounted very high—each one was different. This also was a marvellous sight to see.

All of a sudden, I saw in the middle of the Samadhi courtyard, in space, a very tall Asura. His colour was a shining brown but slowly he began to change his colour

which became very dark and turned into black like coal-tar. His eyeballs were big and round and frightful. His very long nose was thrust in front and he was blowing from it some ash-coloured substance which spread everywhere. He had no ears but two big and deep hollows. His mouth was very big and round and unshapely and something was jutting out of it, too. His whole form was hideous, horrid and terrible. He began to dance in a most ugly manner and started flinging his legs up and down with tremendous force in all directions. Gradually he expanded his body and became very fat like a big balloon and grew gigantic in stature. He began to laugh in a horrible way, looking on all the sides; his laughter resounded with a terrifying echo. His ferocious eyes turned red like fire-flames. He clasped his both hands and made some vigorous motions in all directions in terrific anger, as if he were throwing something in space. Just then I saw innumerable tiny queer creatures in space, moving about here and there and everywhere. They were very ugly and had no ears, no nose and some of them had no eyes and no hands even. The ones with eyes looked extremely cruel. They all rushed in a cyclonic motion and turned to the यज्ञवेदि (Yagnavedi) in front of each person and started destroying the sacrificial fires. Some fires were extinguished while some could not be blown off.

This Asura turned his ferocious gaze all round and looked horrible. At this time the atmosphere became very gloomy and disturbed. But none of the persons stirred from their places, not even our little children; they all continued their meditation. The Asura was gloating over the tiny creatures and was evidently very happy with their work of destruction. He laughed aloud in a hideous way and rushed towards the Samadhi. Instantaneously, brilliant, snow-white Light descended with great velocity and filled the whole courtyard with the result that the Asura was stuck then and there and could not even budge from the place where he was standing. I saw him struggling very hard to move but he could not go to the Samadhi. Perhaps he wanted to destroy it. It appeared like that from his look. As the Light descended, the Asura's body became milky white up to his chest. The rest of his body remained brown. The tiny innumerable creatures were no more there—they were all dissolved in the white Light.

When my eyes glanced up, they met with an indescribable and magnificent sight. I saw descending slowly, from high above, a two-in-one, majestic, captivating, transparent, luminous and scintillating golden Body radiating brilliant golden Light in all directions. The being paused in space just a little above the ground. His lustrous eyes shone with a sweet magnetic and beatific expression. In His compassionate gaze He held each and every single person meditating there and with His beautiful lotus-like hands in Blessings मुद्रा (Mudra-posture) showered Grace on all.

Each one was meditating in refulgent golden Light. Now, in front of them, their sacrificial fires were seen as before. They were mounting up and up with great intensity, some of them soaring very high up. The atmosphere became very calm, peaceful and elevating. It was a marvellous, enchanting and unparalleled sight to see! The Asura was no more there!

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

I

LONE sailor on the world's oceanic Soul,
You searched for shores secret in the unviewed
Horizon's far mysterious vacancy,
As if by a magnet irresistibly drawn
To leave behind all brilliant waters known
And reach beyond all silver-crested seas...
Suddenly apocalyptic sight laid bare
A wonder-world massed out of luminous gold—

Hail to You, undescribable Divine
Discoverer of a new world of Light!
The first to circumnavigate the Soul,
Revealing its full periphery you showed
Its boundless vast is but a silver front—
Behind lies a gold dimension's fathomless depths.

2

Time-traveller hailing from future fields,
You came from vistas yet invisible,
Death's decomposing chemistry to end
And free the secret Godhead locked in clay
That deathless hidden lies in dying cells,
O Superalchemist who turn life to gold
With mystic formulas of immortality
And your magical white fire's absolute Force—

One-pointed Ray that focusses all suns,
The concentrated laser-will of God
Penetrates into matter's ultimate core
And tireless bombards the atomic night,
Hammering prospector at work to release
From inmost nuclear mine pure Spirit-gold.

ALEXANDER BRODT

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"

(Continued from the issue of March 1980)

3

IN connection with Sri Aurobindo's discernment of the demarcating line between Supermind and Overmind, some remarks will be in order as regards the period when the sadhana of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother advanced from the higher regions into the vital. For, Sri Aurobindo has said in his letter of 20 November 1933 that as long as the sadhana was in the mind what he came to distinguish as "Overmind" could be taken to be an inferior province of Supermind but that its true defect, the limitation in it which ultimately gave rise to a world of Ignorance, is perceived when we deal with the vital and still more when we deal with the physical and that the full difficulty is felt only when we look at the Overmind from the physical consciousness.¹ It would be helpful to arrive with some precision at the time the vital sadhana started. Although the complete recognition of the Overmind's insufficiency for integral transformation depends on the coming down of the sadhana into the physical, Sri Aurobindo implies that the initial base for recognising that what was accepted as the Supermind at a lower level of itself was something very different and quite inadequate for such a transformation lies in the trials that result from facing the vital sadhana's process under the Overmind's light.

In our article in the issue of last November we concluded that the vital sadhana did not begin before January 1921, the last month in the career of Sri Aurobindo's monthly periodical *Arya*. We went by his answer, in the letter to which we have just referred, to the query why the Overmind was not clearly distinguished from the Supermind in the *Arya*: "The distinction has not been made... because at that time what I now call the Overmind was supposed to be an inferior plane of the Supermind. But that was because I was seeing them from the Mind..." We proceeded further and quoted both Purani's and Chidanandam's reports² of Sri Aurobindo declaring the *Arya* to have been written at the time of sadhana in the mind and how activities like that had to be stopped when he came to the vital plane. We commented that the *Arya*'s stoppage might have had more than one cause but that the vital sadhana could be taken as having started between January 1921 and the Day of Siddhi in 1926, by which day

¹ The Centenary Edition, Vol. 26, pp. 369-70

² *Evening Talks*, Second Series (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1961), p. 269 and "Sri Aurobindo at Evening Talk", *Mother India*, July 1970, p. 333.

the Overmind was already known and after which occasion the sadhana in the vital continued, forming "the brightest period in the Ashram's history", until at some time in late 1927 the sadhana came down into the physical.

Now we have caught hold of a broad clue to the general situation from the Mother's talk of 25 August 1954. There she says:

"... when I began with Sri Aurobindo to descend, for the yoga,... from the mind into the vital... I was forty at that time. I didn't look old, I looked younger than forty but still I was forty—and after a month's yoga I looked exactly eighteen. And someone who had seen me before, who had lived with me in Japan and came here, found it difficult to recognise me. He asked me, 'But, really, is it you?' I said, 'Obviously!' Only when we descended from the vital into the physical, then it was gone, for in the physical the work is much harder. It was because there were many more things to change..."¹

If we take the Mother's chronology literally, we should have 1918 as the date for the shift of Yoga to the vital plane, for in that year the Mother, who was born in 1878, would have been forty. But in 1918 she was still in Japan. Only on 24 April 1920 she returned to Pondicherry after a little more than five years' absence. The joint Yogic shift is most likely to have taken place subsequent to this date. The Mother was often rather vague in chronological matters. In the very talk from which we have quoted, she admitted as much when she said that she could not tell exactly in what year had arrived on earth temporarily the power and personality of Ananda which, unlike her four great powers and personalities—Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati—had never appeared in the manifestation so far: she could only declare that it had arrived before Sri Aurobindo left his body (5 December 1950). When a disciple mentioned 1946 she felt he was right, and answered: "Yes." What we can affirm with certainty in the present case is in reference to "someone" whom she had known well in Japan and who later visited her in Pondicherry. The person concerned was W.W. Pearson who had been with Tagore in Japan in 1916 when the Mother too had been in that country. He visited Pondicherry on 17 April 1923.² His surprise at finding the Mother looking like an eighteen-year-old although in fact she was forty-five proves the shift with Sri Aurobindo to the vital to have been made earlier. Thus we have positively the *terminus ad quem*, the lower limit. The upper limit, the *terminus a quo*, seems in all probability on the evidence available to fall between 24 April 1920 and the month of the *Arya's* last issue.

But surely we do not have here "the difficulty" which Sri Aurobindo speaks of in dealing with the vital. Up to 1923 no particular difficulty seems present. Again, immediately following the Overmind's descent there was no difficulty as such: the descent brought a tremendous spurt of glory on the vital plane. Between 1923 and 1926 the obstacles leading to awareness of the Overmind's insufficiency for transfor-

¹ The Mother's Centenary Edition, Vol 6, p. 303.

² Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, Fourth Edition, fully revised (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1978), p. 185

ation must have reared their heads.

So, in that interval of three years, the real nature of the Overmind as being no part of the Supreme Truth-Consciousness was gradually disclosed and the specific name for it struck upon. Some aspects of the process are hinted at in the reports kept by Purani and Chidanandam. But we can draw no complete picture of it from them. Several of their elements leave us in a blur. We might have been helped if there had been unpublished writings of Sri Aurobindo himself on his experiences in the period 1920-1926. Unfortunately no such documents exist. All we are left with is just the sense of the time-span within which the process must have taken place.

4

We may round off this "Sequel" by a brief return to the theme with which we started: Overmind *vis-à-vis* Supermind. Here we may hark back to the extract from *Savitri* with which we capped the several other lines cited from the same epic in our "Supplement" to illustrate Sri Aurobindo's final separation of *parārdha*, the Higher Hemisphere of existence, from the Lower, *aparārdha*:

As if a torch held by a power of God,
The radiant world of the everlasting Truth
Glimmered like a faint star bordering the night
Above the Golden Overmind's shimmering ridge.¹

This picture is unique in Sri Aurobindo's writings—and more than anything else from his pen it can serve as the packed nucleus of a whole revolution in spiritual philosophy, an astonishing reversal in the Yogic vision of Reality. For, it posits a "night" between the Overmind and the Supramental Truth-World, and so vast, so deep is that chasm that the latter appears beyond the former as no more than a tiny cintillation at the remotest end of the darkness. The only parallel to such a view is to be found in a talk by the Mother in 1931 to some of us who used to gather in the "Prosperity"-room before the evening's Soup-distribution. Let me quote a recollection I put into a talk I myself gave to the students of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education on 20 October 1971:²

"When we usually talk of Supermind and Overmind, we do draw a marked distinction between them, but we do not go beyond saying that the latter is only the delegate of the former and therefore an inferior power by comparison and not capable of achieving the ultimate victory of the Divine. All the same, compared to mind, it is a mighty splendour and we couple it with the Supermind whereas we mental creatures stand dwarfed below. The Mother shook us up by saying that the gap we feel between our mind and Overmind is less than the gap existing between Overmind and Supermind. Her words put things quite topsyturvy. But if we think clearly they would strike us as quite natural. The Supermind is the Divine self-experienced in

¹ *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1971), p. 41.

² *Light and Laughter: Some Talks at Pondicherry* by Amal Kiran and Nirodbaran (All India Press, Pondicherry 1974), p. 77.

His creative movement, directly, immediately. The Overmind is the Divine projecting Himself into the highest mental formulation of His nature. The Divine there self-aware at one remove. Because of this the Overmind is, according to Sri Aurobindo the top of the Lower Hemisphere: the Higher Hemisphere starts beyond it. Yet we are always impressed by its proximity to the Supermind and forget the radical the colossal difference between the two. The Mother threw this difference into remarkable relief."

However, the difference, though never to be forgotten, must not be counted as the single last word. Another word has to pair with it; else the Overmind would hardly be what Sri Aurobindo makes it out: a passage to the supreme Truth-Consciousness by its delegated power no less than an obstruction to that Ultimate by its own immensity and grandeur. The definitive formula for it must be the paradoxical "a protective double, a screen of dissimilar similarity", as Sri Aurobindo¹ puts it, Siddhi and Victory which is indispensable as an aid and anticipation in order to be itself renounced and surpassed, where

In the realm of the immortal Supermind
Truth who hides here her head in mystery,
Her riddle deemed by reason impossible
In the stark structure of material form,
Unenigmaed lives, unmasked her face and there
Is Nature and the common law of things.²

(Concluded)

K. D. SETHN

¹ *The Life Divine* (American Edition, 1949), p. 255.

² *Savitri*, pp. 661-2.

RIGHT AGAINST DUALISM: THE LATER VEDANTINS AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of March 1980)

6. Sri Aurobindo and the Problem of Dualism

Sri Aurobindo points out that dualism can only be a stage in philosophical reflection and that if we persist in going beyond it, it may lead to the discovery of a sovereign truth disguised in irreconcilable opposition. He says: "All antinomies confront each other in order to recognise one Truth in their opposed aspects and embrace by the way of conflict their mutual Unity."¹ He therefore concludes that by itself dualism cannot be a valid philosophical theory.

The following two quotations from Sri Aurobindo clearly show how he tackles the issue of dualism.

- 1) We cannot suppose that the sole Entity (i.e. Brahman) is compelled by something outside or other than Itself... Nor can we suppose that It submits unwillingly to something partial within Itself which is hostile to Its whole Being, denied by It and yet too strong for It; for this would be only to erect in other language the same contradiction of an All and something other than the All.²
- 2) Any basis of creation (i.e. Prakriti or Maya) seeming to be other than itself (i.e. Brahman) must be still really *in itself* and *of itself* and could not be something foreign to its existence (italics mine).³

According to Sri Aurobindo, there are two essential conditions for the elimination of dualism. First, if Brahman is independent, then it must be free from all external determination by anything not itself. In other words, Matter cannot be an independent principle existing alongside of Brahman, for it would set a limitation by converting the latter into an other; it can only exist in Brahman and supported by Brahman. Second, it is not enough that Brahman is free from external limitations; it is also necessary that it must be free from limitations imposed from within by something other than itself, for the presence of this something brings back dualism in another but very powerful form which is worse than the previous one. Stated in clear terms, not only should Matter be supported by Brahman but it should also be something not other than Brahman. On the fulfilment of these two conditions, a total elimination of dualism becomes possible and a valid philosophical theory can easily emerge.

Sri Aurobindo's total elimination of dualism accords well with the teachings of the Upanishads. Apart from this he takes the Upanishadic texts as they are in regard

to both form and sense. He does not believe that there is any need to modify the original sense of the texts, for he does not regard that some texts are more or less authoritative than other texts. Speaking about the traditional approach to the key-texts in the Upanishads, he says that "the great Vedantic formula, 'One without a second' has not been read sufficiently in the light of that other formula equally imperative, 'All this is the Brahman'".⁴ The later Vedantins took their exclusive stand on the first and regarded the second as less authoritative. Therefore they thought that they were less obliged to adhere to the original sense of the second. The right approach would be to accept both as equally authoritative and read them in the light of each other. This is the manner in which Sri Aurobindo himself understood all the Upanishadic texts

7. Reconciliation of Brahman and Matter

It is true that Sri Aurobindo has succeeded in totally eliminating dualism as a philosophical theory and also that he does not contradict the teachings of the Upanishads. But unless he shows how Brahman and Matter could be identical in substance despite their contradictory qualities, it is difficult to maintain that a complete rejection of dualism is possible or that the texts bearing on substantive identity really make sense and do not require their original sense to be changed. We shall therefore endeavour to show how Sri Aurobindo has accomplished this task.

If Brahman is infinite and infinity means absolute freedom, then Brahman without power is inconceivable—a power of self-limitation by which it can become finite in space and time. Sri Aurobindo argues that "the Infinite would not be the Infinite if it could not assume a manifold finiteness; the Absolute would not be the Absolute if it were denied in knowledge and power and will and manifestation of being a boundless capacity of self-determination".⁵ Hence we shall say that this power of self-limitation is necessarily inherent in Brahman. An extreme possibility of this conscious power would be a sort of self-absorption in a subordinate movement or phenomenal variation which sets all forms one against another. Through this act the original power of Brahman modifies itself into an inconscient Energy which we call Matter. Thus Matter proceeds out of the very substance and power of Brahman and exists in it as the immediate source of the world. Now we shall note two things about Matter. First, as Matter comes into existence by Brahman's self-absorption in form it is not absolutely inconscient; the inconscience is merely a mask behind which the all-conscient Brahman remains in its original form. It follows from this that Matter is essentially one with Brahman even though it appears to be something other than the latter. Second, as Matter is a result of the self-limitation of Brahman, its presence in Brahman does not constitute a real limitation which it cannot surpass, for all self-limitation is a power and not a weakness.⁶

If we grasp the full implications of the principle of infinite freedom, all contradictions become contrary aspects of Brahman. In consequence, the opposition between Matter and Brahman vanishes. Here five points have to be made:

(1) Brahman is one, yet it is the source of multiplicity. To say that Brahman is one is to say that it is an infinite Oneness which contains "the hundred and the thousand and the million and billion and trillion". In other words, the capacity for an endless multiplicity must be inherent in the infinite Oneness, otherwise it would not be a boundless Reality. But it does not mean that the One is a sum of the multiplicity. On the contrary, it can be the infinite multiplicity because "it exceeds all limitation or description by multiplicity and exceeds at the same time all limitation by finite conceptual oneness."⁷

(2) Brahman is changeless, yet it is the source of all changes. It is changeless because it is not affected by the innumerable differences of form and movement that it assumes. Its unchangeableness consists in not being destroyed or impaired or diminished by its capacity for endless formation of being. It does not mean that Brahman is "a monotone of changeless sameness incapable of variation". As an infinite being Brahman is limited neither by change nor by unchangeableness.

(3) Brahman is infinite, yet it is the source of all finite realities. It is infinite because it is not bound by its capacity to become the finite. It does not mean that Brahman is an infinite reality incapable of becoming the finite. It is more than the finite and, in virtue of this, becomes the very source of the finite.

(4) Brahman is pure consciousness, yet it is the source of inconscience. When we say that it is pure consciousness, we mean that it is an infinite consciousness not bound by any of its powers, even by the power to become a non-perceiving principle which we call inconscience. Inconscience is infinite consciousness exclusively concentrating on its own subordinate movement and identifying itself with the movement in such a way that it is lost in a sort of self-oblivion. It represents one of the powers inherent in Brahman's consciousness. Hence there is no real opposition between consciousness and inconscience.

(5) Brahman is pure delight, yet it is the source of all pain and suffering. As is Brahman's consciousness so is its delight. In other words, pure delight is infinite delight. Brahman is called infinite delight because it is not conditioned even by its capacity to impose on itself pain and suffering as contrary expressions of its original nature and to compel them to serve its universal purpose. It does not imply that Brahman cannot admit into its nature the forces of pain and suffering. In fact they are not a sign or proof of weakness but of an absolute omnipotence. As they are not consequences of an original impurity and, on the contrary, proceed out of pure delight, there is no real contradiction between them and Brahman.

The reason why the later Vedantins could not succeed in overcoming the dualism of Brahman and Matter is that they started from wrong premises. According to them, Brahman is conceived as an infinite either incapable of the power of self-limitation (Shankara) or capable of self-limitation only in non-contrary directions (Ramanuja and Madhva). Likewise, they believe that Matter is an original principle not derived from anything other than itself, as well as a substance absolutely inconscient. In Sri Aurobindo's view Brahman is absolutely infinite, and incapacity of any description is

inconceivable; if Matter exists, it can only exist as a derived substance depending on Brahman; its inconscience is relative and not absolute. So, dualism in any form becomes impossible. But as the later Vedantins did not grasp the full significance of Brahman's infinity, they had to believe that a total elimination of dualism was not possible.

There is one more point which needs to be clarified. The later Vedantins suppose that as the Upanishads do not indicate how two entities with contradictory qualities could be identical in substance, their affirmation that Brahman and Matter are substantively one cannot be meaningful unless their original sense is suitably modified. In fact, the Upanishads do indicate how two contrary substances could be identical. As Sri Aurobindo points out, their mode of reasoning is usually suggested by words and not expressly stated. They dispense with "expressed transitions of thought and the development of implied or subordinate notions"⁸ in the reasoning. Hence we have to search carefully for the clue that would supply the necessary transitions and bring out the implicit reasoning. When the Upanishads speak of Brahman both positively and negatively, *iti iti neti neti*, they clearly indicate that Brahman is absolutely and integrally free, limited by neither manifestation nor non-manifestation. This implies that there must exist, as part of the power of manifestation, a power by which Brahman can descend into an apparently opposite condition of inconscience. The Taittiriya Upanishad clearly says that by entering into form Brahman became the inconscient (2-6-1). Once this step in thought is brought out, it is easy to understand how Brahman and Matter could be identical. There is no need, therefore, to disregard the original sense of the Upanishadic texts or to resort to undesirable practices of text-torture. As the later Vedantins were given to certain prejudices about the supremacy of the scriptural authority, they could not find the clue in the Upanishads and develop out of it the reasoning which would reconcile all apparently contradictory statements.

(Concluded)

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

NOTES

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), p 33. Hereafter LD

² LD, p. 31

³ LD, p. 313.

⁴ LD, p. 24.

⁵ LD., p. 267.

⁶ LD., p. 594.

⁷ LD, p. 336

⁸ Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, (Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), p 71.

THE FLASH OF A TRUTH

IN the year 1934-35, my friend and I used to go for a walk in the evening. We would go to a particular place, sit there for 1/2 or 3/4 of an hour. We discussed many things, religion and spirituality included. One day my friend D told me in a talk, "We have to recite a sloka thrice a day." So saying he recited the sloka, which translated into English means, "Whatever I do with my body, speech, mind and intellect, I offer to Narayana."

When I heard this my first reaction was a hearty laugh. I said to my friend, "Well, D, your religion seems to be a very good religion. I commit murder, I offer it to Narayana; I commit debauchery, I offer the same to Narayana; I gamble, I offer it to Narayana; I tell a lie, I offer it to Narayana and so on. And after thus offering these things to the Divine, I get a license to do them again." My friend kept mum.

A month or two passed. I was sitting before the photographs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I was meditating. Suddenly, unexpectedly, there was a flash and I understood the truth of the sloka which my friend had told me.

At that time, I was practising in the District Court. I said to myself, "Suppose you have to give something to your District Judge. Of what quality would the present be?" The answer was, "Good." Then again I said, "Suppose you have to give something to the Chief Justice. What would be the quality of the present?" The answer was, "Very good." For the third time the question arose, "Suppose you have to give something to the King. What quality would the present have?" The answer was, "The best." And I would even borrow money if I had no sufficient means to buy the present of the best quality. Then I asked myself, "If you had to give something to the King, you would go to the length of borrowing money to purchase the gift of the best quality; then what should be the quality of the gift to be given to Narayana, the King of Kings?" The answer was, "A-I".

If this idea that one has to offer all that one does to Narayana is before one's eye every second, naturally one will be alert to see that one does nothing with one's body, speech, mind or intellect which is not of A-I quality and which is not acceptable to Narayana. One would keenly seek to avert things like lying, gambling, debauchery and murder. They would be incompatible with the movement of offering everything to the Divine.

This is how one would be able to put in practice the message of Sri Aurobindo, which says: "Live always as if you were under the very eyes of the Supreme and of the Divine Mother. Do nothing, try to think and feel nothing that would be unworthy of the Divine Presence."

VALLABH SHETH

THE CLOUD MESSENGER

A NEW TRANSLATION OF KALIDASA'S *MEGHADUTA*

(Continued from the issue of March 1980)

THE straight path to Himalay's sovereign peaks
Lies northward; yet veer west: scorn not the call
Of fair Ujjain—there, startled by lightning-streaks

Loosed from thy perch upon a palace wall,
The large and lustrous dancing-cornered eyes
Of loveliest women will thy sight enthrall.

Midway, Nirvindhya River will entice,
Artfully shy, thy amorous gaze upon
Her navel's eddying depth, and means devise

To snare thy ear, tossing her clamorous zone
Of geese as trippingly her currents glide
Before thee; her sweet substance with thy own

Mingled, pass on. Shortly thy cloudy stride
Will reach the Sindhu, one whose wan disease
Cries for a cure thou only canst provide:

Pallid with the parched leaves her pining trees
Have shed, she seems her shrivelled stream to wear
In a harsh, lonely braid—her pain to ease

Must be thy privilege. At last there near
Fields of Avanti, where old village folk
Draw tireless crowds the ancient tale to hear

Of a bold princess who her king's stern yoke
Defied for love. Close at thy feet regard
The radiant city now, a fragment broke

From Heaven that happy souls their high reward
Of virtue might in earthly frames fulfil.
Here at dawn, limbs love-wearied are restored

By Shipra's breezes, which prolong the shrill
 Exultant whoop of cranes, and waft a tart
 Sweet scent from new-blown lotus-blooms, and thrill

Through every nerve as through a woman's heart
 A lover's flatteries. Take here delight
 And rest, for soon shall thy fatigue depart:

Arriving on some mansion's pleasant height
 Fragrant with flowers and marked with rosy dye
 From ornamented feet, thou wilt incite

Pet peacocks with a dance to treat thine eye
 While through the lattice-work from drying hair
 Float incense fumes thy bulk to fortify.

A spot of timeless sanctity lies here
 Thou must not miss, where spirit-hosts obey
 Time's mystic Lord and in thy hue revere

The darkened throat of him that drank away
 The primal poison. He they serve abides
 On Gandhavati's shore, whose gardens sway

To perfumed winds in which the pollen rides
 Of water-lilies mixed with odorous mist
 From maidens' sportive bathing in the tides.

Though earlier come, thy restlessness resist
 Till the resplendent sun has ceased to blaze
 On vision's verge, then as a drum assist

The twilight sacrifice—so winning praise
 From all as thou thy rumbling thunderous art
 To pitch of divine fruitfulness dost raise.

As thy first cooling drops transmute the smart
 Of nail-prints, temple girls whose girdles ring
 To each foot's measured fall will at thee dart

Glances like a long row of bees that sting
 With bliss; while gracefully they toil below

With jewelled chowries, thy brief comforts bring.

Then blooming rose-like in the twilight glow
 And on the forest of uplifted hands
 Settling as he, who slew the demon-foe

Elephant-shaped, begins his solemn dance
 Of victory, remove his need to don
 That grisly hide; so will the scene entrance

The Mother of the Gods and she look on
 With an untroubled gaze—a richer prize
 Of pure devotion in the worlds is none.

When thickened shadows seal off from all eyes
 The king's road, soft as on the touchstone gleams
 A streak of gold thy lightning-flash supplies

A torch to show the ground in night it seems
 A needle's point might prick; but silent hold
 Thy thunder's roar and thy torrential streams:

So tender beauties, timid but ensouled
 With passion, to their lovers' secret arms
 May make their way with fearless hearts and bold.

Thy wife the lightning's scintillating charms
 Enjoy until she tires: the dim hours left
 Pass on a dove-filled rooftop; but as warms

The sun-awakened air, resume with swift
 Firm pace thy journey—they whose labours serve
 A friend from their sworn task will never drift.

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

NOTES

Princess (line 22): Vasavadatta, daughter of King Chandamahāsena of Ujjain. She eloped with her father's arch-enemy Udayana, the young king of the Vatsas.

• Time's mystic Lord 2, line 3): Shiva as Mahakala.

LOVE'S PRAYER

BECAUSE the Hour is near as the world grows dark
the all saving Light comes close,
Because all that's asleep needs to be roused
that which is wrong made good—
Because all would be lost if rescue would be far
the brave, the ready perish, if not uplifted at last,
Because cries fill the void, which was made for joy, and
all that suffers, withers and dies, have asked
for eternal Life—
Sealed be forever the terrible Pit, and Darkness
return to Light!
Oh Maker of Worlds, Destroying Might, All-Knowing Delight!
give to man of your strength
for his tired heart your hope,
to fill the dreadful hour when all will be dark
and Light conceals its face.
Let the redeeming stroke be swift, merciful—
the healing balm not slow to come,
Let all tears and cries turn to a smile—
misery to Bliss, I pray!
I too am Man, knower of desolate times, large ordeals,
multitude of pains—
I too am God, one and many; ever returning, ever sent forth,
my prayers uttered from the lotus of the heart—
render my arms quick to strike, tender to save.
I bow to the Plan, the Will and the Deed
and offer my triple-twined garland
at Your feet.

GEORGETTE COTY

THE ONLY SONG

THERE is one song and only one
Still worth the singing:
To say that everything is done
Is to forget
The real work has just begun,
The work of bringing
The song of consciousness to birth
That never yet
Was sung until its end on earth,
Although brief snatches
Have been attempted and were worth
Whatever pain
It cost to bear its seed of fire;
Whoever catches
Its faintest echo must aspire
To sing again:
Extending wider, mounting higher,
Somehow clinging
To cliff crags lit by a gnostic sun—
But not for long
Can he do what no one here has done,
Continued singing
Until its perfect close the one
And only song.

PETER HEER

SELECTIONS

from

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POEMS BEFORE AND AFTER 1973

OFFERING IV: MOTHER, I HAVE SEEN THE LIGHT—1976-79

MOTHER, I have seen the Light;
It is *Your* Light,
But that is not enough.
I want to *be* Your Light
And I am only a little candle
In the night of a closed and wintry room.

Is that Your Will for me?
Is that *all* I am to be?

Mother, make Your Light to grow in me
So that this small, small candle-flame
Will burn with such intensity
That the containing walls cannot withstand
And like a holocaust, a fiery "Paeon of Praise To You",
This, Your Light in me, will flare into a conflagration
And the world will blaze in the white
And passionate glory of Your Truth.

Mother, if this is not Your Will for me,
Teach me to love so that I may become
One with Your great Flame of Love
To warm a child, to be a loving light
For those who suffer so, being cut off from You,
And do not know that they *are* You
In one of Your many guises and disguises.

And if, Mother, that is not Your Will,
And a candle-flame can light and nourish Your Fire,
Let me *be* Mother in this,
That those near and dear to me
Grow in Your Power and Understanding.

Can a tiny flame reach Your highest Heaven?
Then, Mother, incandesce me into a star to be
In Your Constellation.

And if, Mother, Your Will is
That I am to be extinguished,
You be the wind that blows me out;
Or burn me, like incense, to grey and powdery ash,
My fragrance rose, and I consumed
In offering to You.

Whatever is Your Will for me,
Only that I may *know* and *be* Your Will.

If it is that this tiny light become Your Star,
May it light others on the way;
If a flame, may it burn eternally with Your Love;
If a small fire, may it be Your Fire,
If to remain a candle, may it light the dark
Where You are not;
If to be extinguished, blow me into Your Heart;
And if I am to be ashes, My Loved Mother,
How my ashes, each grain of dust dispersing
Through all eternity will sing
Your Glory and Your Name.

ELIZABETH STILLI

A MESSENGER

ON the 3rd of January this year I saw with my bare eyes what I have never seen before in my life either in a dream or otherwise.

I was in my flat, helping an Afghani-Austrian to read correctly Sri Aurobindo poems which had been translated into German on the right-hand page of a book. Suddenly, at about 5.30 p.m. I looked up from the book and saw a strange kite-like bird of exquisite colour, much more beautiful than even a rainbow. The wings, on their under-side, as much as one could see, were of an unearthly hue.

I drew the attention of my pupil, but he could see nothing extraordinary and said, "It is a vulture." Probably he does not know that vultures do not usually frequent the living population. Besides, they are not black like the kites we find in Pondicherry. There was not a spot of black on my bird. So it could not be a kite. Stranger still, the bird came very close to our heads and circled round us for a few minutes.

I had ample time to rub my eyes and look again to make sure I was not dreaming. Then it struck me that it was a sign of the Mother's love at the end of a very hard day that I had gone through. At this age of 73, with all the chores of the house to do myself, on top of taking my classes at the school, I had felt quite tired and worn out. But now my heart sang forth: "Oh sweet Mother of mine, have You not brought me relief by showing me that our ordinary life of toil is not everything and that a truer, finer reality is there, in tune with Your Presence."

MOUMT

INDIA AND HER CULTURE

A REVIEW-ARTICLE

IN 1939 *The Legacy of India*, edited by G. I. Garratt, was a big event for all Indophiles, academic as well as lay. After 36 years—that is, in 1975—there was an even bigger event: the publication of *A Cultural History of India* under the editorship of A. L. Basham—with artistic format and lay-out, thirty-nine written features, supplemented by chronological tables, eleven full-page maps and twenty pages of plates over and above the frontispiece.¹ It was planned as a second edition of Garratt's work and it is indeed an admirable sequel "to explain India's heritage from the past, and the world's heritage from India", as Basham succinctly puts the aim of the book. But it is not merely a revised version. A whole team of specialists has been mustered to write with a fresh mind no less than enlarged knowledge. Out of its numerous articles no more than four are the book's "heritage" from the old compilation—and even these have been either substantially updated or purged of discussions which were once topical but are now superfluous. So everything has acquired a new look.

Basham himself has to his credit not only a fine "Preface" and "Notes on the Pronunciation of Indian words" but also an illuminative "Introduction", a competent piece on "Mediaeval Hindu India" and a judicious "Conclusion". Besides, he has rounded off a couple of the carry-overs from the past—Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's "Hinduism" and S. N. Das Gupta's "Philosophy"—as well as inserted a passage of great interest into "India and the Modern West" which is a joint product of Friedrich Wilhelm and H. G. Rawlinson except for paragraphs on music contributed by Dr. N. Jairazbhoy who elsewhere in the volume has an independent article, "Music", running to thirty-one pages.

I have been an enthusiastic student of the comprehensive survey which Basham brought out on his own in the 'fifties and which has since been reprinted more than once: *The Wonder that was India*.² No better book on our country's achievement down the ages has seen the light. Two of the reasons for the survey's excellence may be focused with some words of the author from the present volume: "the close contacts" he has had "with the region of South Asia for many years" and his "deep affection for the people of that region and for their culture". Basham writes now with the same warmth and insight as before but has also been broad-minded enough to give each member of his team his head so that there is no pre-fixed framework forcing the presentation. This leads to what may seem a bit of inconsistency in the general outlook but is actually a fair balancing of possibilities in issues that cannot yet be considered finally settled. The reader is left to form his own judgment with the help of the "Conclusion" which attempts to draw the various threads as close together as possible.

¹ Clarendon Press, Oxford, Rs. 100.

² Sidgwick and Jackson, London

At the very start we may note with approval the editor's decision to retain the name "India" in spite of the fact that the area this blanket-term denoted when the original *Legacy* was published consists now "of five completely independent states, of which the Republic of India is unquestionably the largest in size and population" (p. vii). Basham explains: "I recognize the force of national feeling, and I do not wish to give offence to citizens of the other countries of South Asia, but here inevitably 'India' must be understood at times in its broadest historical sense... Europe and Western Asia have applied the word India to the whole of mainland South Asia irrespective of political boundaries for over 2000 years. In contexts such as this one, circumlocutions like 'the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent' are quite impossible. We are compelled to retain 'India', even if we go beyond the bounds of the present Indian Republic" (*ibid*).

The "Preface", by its right attitude as well as its modesty, spurs one to go ahead with the book. The only defect I could spot in this preliminary piece is that in one instance the writer does not follow the practice of citing a person's name as that person himself formulated it. Thus, referring to the scholar who first drafted a plan for a new edition of the *Legacy* and who supplied the basis of the material now set before us, Basham speaks of "Dr. Rāghavan Iyer" or simply "Dr. Iyer" (pp. v, vii). The scholar concerned invariably identified himself in the academic world as "Dr. V. Rāghavan".

It is gratifying to record that in the course of over 499 pages with 48 lines per page and nearly 12 words per line, there are only a small handful of misprints or oversights. Out of these no more than one is worth marking for its gaucherie. On p. 485, in lines 11-12, we read: "...are said to been influenced."...

Quite an amount of fascinating out-of-the-way information is packed in the volume. In the two paragraphs added by Basham to Wilhelm and Rawlinson's article we hear of the earliest European novel on India written from first-hand experience: *Hartley House Calcutta*, the work of an anonymous author, apparently a lady, published in London in 1789. In it we find the Hindus called "the Gentoos"—a designation derived, as Basham's footnote tells us, from the Portuguese *gentio*, "gentile" (p. 473). One is surprised at the sympathy displayed by the heroine, Sophia Goldborne, for the dominated race in the time of Warren Hastings. She confesses in one place: "Ashamed of the manners of modern Christianity...I am become a convert to the Gentoo faith..." At another, after expressing her admiration for native dancing and music, she writes about the Hindus: "They live...the most inoffensively and happily of all created beings—their Pythagorean tenets teaching them, from their earliest infancy, the lesson of kindness and benevolence."

Evidently, Sophia's impression of the "Gentoos" must have been shared by many foreigners: otherwise J. Duncan M. Derrett in his "Social and Political Thought and Institutions" could not have spotlighted a literary fact which few of us have ever dreamt of. He writes apropos of typical Indian conditions: "There was no such thing as a conflict between the individual and the state, at least before foreign govern-

ments became established, just as there was no concept of state 'sovereignty' or of any church-and-state dichotomy. Modern Indian 'secularism' has an admittedly peculiar feature: it requires the state to make a fair distribution of attention and support amongst all religions. These blessed aspects of India's famed tolerance (Indian kings so rarely persecuted religious groups that the exceptions prove the rule) at once struck Portuguese and other European visitors to the west coast of India in the sixteenth century, and the impression made upon them in this and other ways gave rise, at one remove, to the basic constitution of Thomas More's *Utopia*. There is little about modern India that strikes one at once as Utopian: but the insistence upon the inculcation of norms, and the absence of bigotry and institutionalized exploitation of human or natural resources, are two very different features which link the realities of India and her tradition with the essence of all Utopias" (p. 125).

On a less idealistic level we have another eye-opener in "The Portuguese" by J.B. Harrison. He cites the contribution the Portuguese traders made to India's flora: "Tobacco was one of their earliest introductions—carried to the Deccan by 1508, it reached north India in Akbar's day and was denounced by Jahāngīr as a pernicious weed. Another, less noxious gift from South America, was the pineapple, brought to Europe by Cortez in 1513, carried by the Portuguese to India, and sufficiently established there in the same century for the Mughal emperor to have one on his table daily. The arrival of another fruit which today is fully at home in India was recorded in the 1580s by Linschoten: 'There is another fruit which came from the Spanish Indies, brought thence by way of the Philippines or Luzon to Malacca and so to India: it is called papaya and much resembles a melon.' The Muslim name for the cashew nut—*bādām-i-farangi*—reveals that this tree, now naturalized in the Konkan and the Chittagong hills, was also a Portuguese introduction. There has been much argument about whether maize was really brought to India by the Portuguese, but that they introduced the peanut from Africa, the mandioca from which tapioca is made, and the sweet potato seems certain enough. Even the familiar Indian *lāl mirich* or red pepper turns out to have been brought by them from Pernambuco. They also did much to spread Asian plants within Asia itself—the durian and mangosteen from Malaya, *smilax glabra*, the drug 'China root', lichees, and the sweet orange among them. Since their physicians were always on the look out for new specifics, they also introduced a number of medicinal drugs, while even a number of decorative garden plants were carried with them—of which *mirabilis jalapa*, or the Marvel of Peru, may stand as an example. With such a list of introductions to their credit, the high praise given by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, who travelled widely in seventeenth-century India, that 'the Portuguese, wherever they came, make the place better for those that come after them', may seem fully deserved" (p. 341). Perhaps the only super-delectable fruit India does not owe to the Portuguese is the mango, although even there the best variety "Affonso", takes its name from one of them, and the general word is a Portuguese version of the Tamil *man* (tree) and *kay* (fruit). How well—or rather how piquantly—India has appreciated this king of fruits we gather from A.K. Warder's "Classical

Literature” in the present book when we are told in connection with fifteenth-century writers: “Gopāla’s comic *campū* describes the eleventh *avatāra* of Viṣṇu—as a mango” (p. 194).

On the contribution of the British we have some comments worth taking to heart in these days of ultranationalism. At the end of a long list of characteristics of the British as a people and as a government, characteristics which had a great impact on the Indian consciousness, we read in Sir Percival Spear’s article “The Mughals and the British”: “Along with parliamentary government we must link nationalism. This is perhaps one of the most remarkable examples of the British impact, for the British neither designed nor formally introduced, nor advocated it. Nationalism was ‘caught’ by the new Indian intellectuals, especially in Bengal, by the joint effect of observing the habits of the British and studying their literature. Mother India, a new secular goddess, was created. The feeling was recruited on the intellectual plane by the study of Continental as well as English writers, especially Mazzini, and on the emotional by its linkage with religion. To Mahātmā Gāndhī belongs the credit of bringing it to the people at large, and presenting it as a religious but not a sectarian cult. Indian nationalism has a distinctive ethos of its own, but it is a fact of the present day and it owes its existence to the British impact” (p. 361). This is excellent information—except for one item which is lopsided: the attribution of nationalism as a popular religious cult to Gāndhī. “Mother India” is a cry pre-eminently from the day of Sri Aurobindo in Bengal where, as the author himself acknowledges, nationalism was initially “caught”. That cry is inseparable from the song “Bande Mataram” composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterji and spread far and wide by Sri Aurobindo’s group of Extremists. Sir Percival speaks of “intellectuals”, but in historical fact the whole of Bengal was a-flame: the common people were at one with the intellectuals because of the basically emotional appeal of the song and its deeply religious fervour. As J.T.F. Jordens, in his “Hindu Religious and Social Reform in British India”, reminds us, one of the main objections of the Extremists against the Moderates—the two contenders for control of the Indian Congress—was that the Moderates “did not reach down to the mass of the people” (p. 377). The Extremists not only “advocated a militancy based on national and religious identification” but also “wanted involvement of the masses”. Jordens makes it a point to tell us “how these two aspects of religious nationalism and concern for the people...became the distinguishing characteristics of some of the most influential leaders”, among whom he puts first “Aurobindo Ghose” (*Ibid*).

Gandhi rather overlaid the popular religious side by his moralistic fad of indiscriminate Non-violence—that is, even against a Hitler—and Marital Celibacy alone for birth-control, as well as by his obsession with Khaddar (cotton-cloth made on the Charkha, spinning-wheel). The original soul-sense of a great spiritual Presence moving the whole country’s millions was reduced to a fastidious ethical frame of mind wedded to a few favourite principles. Gandhi’s share in the struggle for freedom from the British does not get underrated by such a remark—he sustained the effort

for over thirty years and he did sway the common people by his simple life of loin-cloth asceticism; but the socio-ethical shift from the religio-spiritual level is well revealed in both its passion and its prejudice, its humanitarian enthusiasm and its narrow purblind exclusiveness by that famous credo of his: "I would rather that Hinduism perished than Untouchability survived."

Apropos of the British contribution, it is very pleasant to see an Indian writer—Krishna Kripalani—appreciating in "Modern Literature" the constructive role played by the English language which he himself wields with considerable force and finesse: "The fact that Jawāharlāl Nehrū when he was the Prime Minister of India and Dr. S. Rādhākṛishnan the then President of India could converse with each other in English only and employed it as their main literary vehicle, as also the fact that the collected works of Mahātmā Gāndhī are being published (under the auspices of the Government of India) in English are themselves a commentary on the current usefulness of this language in India as 'a link language', to quote Jawāharlāl Nehrū's description of it in the Indian Parliament. It may also be noted that more books continue to be published in English than in any Indian language in India. But apart from its utilitarian value as a language of higher education in the sciences and as a 'link language', a fair number of Indian writers, including such eminent thinkers steeped in Indian thought as Vivekānanda, Rānade, Gokhale, Sri Aurobindo, and Rādhākṛishnan, have voluntarily adopted it as their literary medium. Even the bulk of Mahātmā Gāndhī's writings are in English. This phenomenon is as old as modern Indian literature itself. There has been, from Derozio in the 1820s to R.K. Nārāyan today, an unbroken tradition of some gifted Indians choosing to write in English. Many of them...have achieved distinction" (pp. 419-20). Kripalani is also dead right in saying that "a writer should be judged by the quality of his writing, irrespective of the medium he adopts" and that "some novels of R.K. Nārāyan, a born story-teller with an eye for observation and the gift of gentle irony, are superior in intrinsic literary merit to a great deal of mediocre stuff that passes for literature in some Indian languages" (p. 420). But the percipient author slips up when he adds: "On the other hand, it cannot be denied that, as far as creative writing is concerned, no Indian writer in English has reached anywhere near the heights attained by some of the great writers in the Indian languages" (*ibid*). The judgment here, while applicable to the field of fiction, is inept elsewhere, ignoring as it does the magnificent and massive corpus of English work by Sri Aurobindo in both prose and poetry—*e.g.* *The Life Divine* and *The Human Cycle, Savitri* and *Iliad*.

Kripalani's reflections on Sanskrit are also very wise: "Deemed a 'dead' language because it is no longer a spoken tongue, it is nevertheless not only a very vital source-language on which almost all Indian languages, except Ūrdu, draw for their vocabulary, but also a living fount of literary inspiration to Indian writers, an honour rivalled only by English...But even apart from its significant role in the development of modern Indian literature Sanskrit continues to be used as a literary vehicle, both for scholarly research and for creative writing, as can be testified by a large number of books and

journals published in Sanskrit annually. Not only many modern Indian writers like Bankim, Tāgore, and Sarat Chandra have been translated into Sanskrit but Shakespeare and Goethe also" (p. 419). Even more striking is the deliverance of Warder on the subject in the essay on which we have already drawn: "Sanskrit is the only truly national language India has ever had, linking all regions and all classes with the immortal springs of Indian thought. If it disappears, with its cultural heritage, India will never be a nation and will surely break up into a series of European-type states. The decision still lies in the future; meanwhile the semi-underground classical tradition conserves its vigour and the twentieth century has produced several hundred Sanskrit plays, whilst the theatre of Bhāsa is being revived in Kerala. India's cultural unity may yet be saved and through it her political unity" (p. 196). Although perhaps Warder overdoes the prophet of doom by dwelling too much on the traditional form the cultural consciousness has taken and not sufficiently on the true India which is a subtle inner indefeasible oneness of spirit amidst a profuse multiplicity of diverse motifs constituting its natural creative expression, his views are essentially in tune with the attitude of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother *vis-à-vis* the problem of an all-India language. They have suggested that, while English should remain as India's link with the world and even as a convenient common factor within the country as well as the right medium for those to whom it is a living force, the organic development of a language for all India would be in the direction of a simplified Sanskrit.

While we are on topics relating to a country-wide plane, we may sound a note of scepticism about Aziz Ahmad's picture of events leading to the partition of India in his article "Islamic Reform Movements". He puts the whole blame on what he dubs "the ambivalence and lack of political foresight on the part of the Congress leadership" (p. 390) face to face with the claims of Jinnah on behalf of the Muslims. In conclusion he wants us to believe that "first Sardār Patel, then Nehrū, and finally Gāndhī were convinced by Lord Mountbatten that Pakistan was the only solution of the political problems of India" (*ibid.*). He forgets that Jinnah, when he was yet free of his later megalomania and vaulting personal ambition, had rejected as utterly unrealistic the slogan of "Pakistan" raised by Chaudhari Rahmat Ali heading a group of Indian Muslim students. Nor is it true that the Indian leaders named above accepted Pakistan as final: they all took it to be a provisional solution struck upon in a time of communal excitement and eligible as such if its rejection meant a continuance of foreign rule. No sober political thinker could rest satisfied with Jinnah's theory of two nations on the basis of religion, particularly when the overwhelming majority of India's Muslims have derived from converted Hindus. And the incongruity of the result of partition, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the two-nation theory, stares at us in one aspect from H. F. Owen's observation in "The Nationalist Movement": "That Pakistan was a romantic and impractical solution to the Muslims' very real fears and problems—at least for many Muslims in the subcontinent—is indicated by the fact that half as many Muslims remained in post-independence India as in Pakistan before the breakaway of Bānglādesh" (p. 400). The last five words here suggest that now,

with the change of the erstwhile East Pakistan into an independent "Bānglādesh", there may be almost an equal number of Muslims in present-day India as in Jinnah's separate creation, and indeed Jinnah himself, in flagrant contradiction of his own theory, dissuaded them from migrating! Owen's words also contain the irony that the Muslims of East Pakistan, instead of feeling a solidarity with those of West Pakistan because of a common religion, have violently broken away from the latter as from tyrannical exploiters. From Basham's "Conclusion" too we draw an idea of the highly dubious character of the Pakistan-solution. Basham touches on Pakistan's undemocratic career and on the instability it has shown in consequence: the eastern wing had to fall off since its "Bengali inhabitants... saw no prospect of legitimately redressing their grievances" (p. 488). From some further remarks of Basham we may intuit his sense of the deplorable effect of the anti-Indian animosity in which Pakistan was born and by which it is sustained: "The material, and to some extent the cultural, progress of both India and Pakistan has been set back by the armed confrontation of the two states, occasionally boiling over into brief hostilities. The loss, both human and material, incurred by the two countries as a result of this confrontation has been very considerable, and stable peace and co-operation between India and Pakistan are absolutely essential before real prosperity can be achieved" (*ibid.*). The implication is unavoidable that the division of the country was a great mistake.

Aziz Ahmad errs also in stating that "the concept of Pakistan... was conceded... by a British Cabinet delegation led by Sir Stafford Cripps in 1942..." (p. 390). In fact, the voice of Sri Aurobindo was raised in unequivocal support of Sir Stafford's proposals amidst a babel of confused counsel precisely because they promised the substance of swaraj in an undivided India. But we have honestly to admit that although Ahmad is wrong here his criticism of the Congress policy has force in the instance of the latter's short-sighted and trivial-minded rejection of an offer which Sri Aurobindo recognised as having come on a wave of profound inspiration. Jinnah was waiting on the Congress decision: if the Hindu leaders had accepted Sri Aurobindo's advice Jinnah would have followed suit and the prospect of Pakistan would most probably have faded for good.

In this context a curious comment of Basham referring to the Cabinet Mission which came to India four years after Cripps may be cited:

"Shortly before independence, when the Cabinet Mission of 1946 was vainly attempting to bring Hindus and Muslims together in a last effort to avoid partition, a number of fairly important Indians put forward a suggestion that received very little publicity and no support whatever. This was to the effect that, when the British withdrew from India, power should lawfully rest with the Mughal Empire, in the person of the closest surviving relative of the last emperor, Bāhādur Shāh II, who died in exile in 1862. This man, it was suggested, should become the constitutional emperor of a free India.

"Such a suggestion had no hope of acceptance by the political leaders in the atmosphere of the times. It was, however, in keeping with India's traditions, and it had

the advantage that it would have effectively prevented the partition of the country, for a restored Mughal emperor, ruling from Delhi, would surely have won enough Muslim support to undermine the movement for Pakistan. From the point of view of strict legality, it may have been the right thing to do. One wonders how India would have fared if this suggestion had been adopted..." (p. 491).

Two other bits of startling information may be culled from the same author. After calling astrology a "traditional science of India" and observing how rampant it is all over the country today, Basham tells us: "This pseudo-science, incidentally, is a comparative late-comer on the Indian scene. No Indian astrological text is earlier than the Gupta period [starting c. 320 A.D. by the current chronology], before which time prognostication was carried out mainly by the study of physiognomy, birth-marks, and portents. Astrology came to India from the West, probably in the wake of the trade with the Roman Empire" (p. 494). Astrology's late date—even if correct—makes, of course, no odds to the question of astronomy's antiquity in India. Winter's article, "Science", draws our attention to the *Jyotisha Vedāṅga*, "perhaps the earliest source dealing exclusively with astronomy", which, according to the author, "may date from 500 B.C." (p. 143) but which, on the evidence of an astronomical observation contained in it, several Indian scholars take back to nearly 1200 B.C., if not before. Winter adds: "An earlier statement on the *nakshatras*¹ in the *Taittirīya Samhitā* (of the same period as the *Brāhmanas* or priests' books of ritual) gives a complete list of their names..." (*ibid.*). Our second startler from Basham brings us to a phenomenon of our own time. Illustrating "the vitality of India's religious life" he writes: "Even the myth-making capacity of Hinduism, so vigorous in earlier centuries, is still alive. This is proved by the appearance of a wholly new divinity, the goddess Santoshī Mātā, who was unheard of in 1960, but is now worshipped widely throughout the Gangā plain as a bringer of good luck and material advantage, and has been equipped with a mythology and legend of her own. Another divinity, of somewhat earlier origin..., is Bhārat Mātā, Mother India, who has shrines here and there, and in Vārānasī is worshipped in a special temple where a large map of India replaces the sacred image. But though evidence of patriotic fervour is not lacking in modern India, Bhārat Mātā has never achieved the popularity of Santoshī" (*Ibid.*).

As between the two new goddesses, Basham may be right if we have in view particular functions and the daily needs of private personal life. Bhārat Mātā, however, is a deity on a supra-personal plane—and she is not limited by patriotic aspiration, either. She is felt as a face and front of a universal Being, the Supreme Creatrix, the World-Mother emanating a special form of Herself to preside over the fortunes of a land that has sought the Infinite, the Eternal, the Divine as no other has done. As such an emanation, Bhārat Mātā covers a much wider field of the Indian mind and harks back to the remote antiquity of the Rigveda's Aditi, the illimitable Goddess who is everywhere and from whom everything has come, even the greatest male celes-

¹ "the lunar mansions, i.e. the 27 or 28 positions occupied by the moon in one sidereal rotation" (*Ibid.*).

tials like Varuna, Mitra, Agni, Surya and Indra, and who in a general national shape has constituted down the ages the background unity of cultural consciousness felt whenever and wherever the religious Indian invoked at the time of his ablutions the names of the sacred rivers of the north and south and east and west of the large triangular territory bordered by the Himalayas and two oceans.

Basham is well aware of this true Spirit that is India. That is why towards the end of his "Conclusion" he chooses to say: "The influence of India on the rest of the world has always been most strongly felt in the fields of religion and philosophy, and this is still the case.... Already before the original *Legacy of India* was published, the percipient philosopher Dr. C.E.M. Joad, with his eye mainly on Professor Rādhākrishnan, could write about a cultural 'counter-attack from the East'. Since those days the counter-attack has intensified, especially after the Second World War, when many people in the Western world have lost faith in their traditional religious values. The widespread psychological insecurity of an age without belief, the lonely inner agony of individuals who feel isolated in a cold and unfriendly cosmos immeasurable in its vacuities, have led many to turn to India in search of solace and strength. The 'counter-attack from the East' has generally been inspired by intellectual Vedānta and has had most impact upon the well educated. It appealed to philosophers and literary men, such as Schopenhauer, Emerson, and Aldous Huxley. Some of the most impressive recent developments, however, are making a wider appeal, and are affecting other classes and categories of the people of the West" (pp. 496-7).

So much for the fine relevance of the admirable *Cultural History of India* to our own day and for a few examples of its fund of fascinating facts. We shall close with some discussion of old historical topics picked out from its absorbing pages.

(To be continued)

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The Mother : Past—Present—Future

by

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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

CHILD-EDUCATION IN THE SPIRITUAL LIGHT

(Continued from the issue of March 1980)

2

OTHER CONCEPTIONS OF CHILD-NATURE

THE child with a soul strong enough to be expressive, commands our attention, admiration, adoration. He gives us a deep thrill in the heart and we look on and on and enjoy his beauty, his simplicity, his peace and relaxation, his joy. And it all becomes an unforgettable experience.

Apart from this, which carries a clear sense of inwardness, an effusion of joy from within, the external joyfulness and playfulness too, which is natural to ordinary child-nature, is extremely attractive. A crowd of young children going to school—excited, jubilant, laughing and shouting—is a most pleasant sight. This is the normal vital nature of the child, which affords so much joy to the parents at home, to the public on the roadside and the teachers at school. But it has also the other side, of crying, of quarrelling, of fighting, of anger and long listlessness.

The child lacks mentalisation, the capacity to seek and give reasons for things even though it may feel a person and a situation rightly and react to it correctly. Many women do the same. Their feelings are a wonderful guidance for them with, of course, a more general consciousness.

The child is not yet mature in brain-development for mental consciousness, whereas the adult's prepossession with his mentalisations is strong and the result is that the child comes to be looked upon as ignorant, as not knowing anything, and then handled as such.

When he is in a playful and loving state, we enjoy him, but otherwise treat him as an object to be treated as we think right and proper. When we come up against his obstinacy and persistence in some behaviour, then we submit to him or deal with him in a different manner. But we do not recognise that he has an urge to grow and to learn and that there is in him a will discovering its world and attempting to organise it and that we should do well to assist the child in this beautiful task of discovery, invention and organisation. The adult's prepossession with his thinking no less than his dominant position becomes a bar to his being able to see what the child seeks and to be helpful to him. Such an attitude accompanied by the impatience and impetuosity common to human nature leads to beating the child for non-compliance. And this beating had, at one time, become an educational principle, *i.e.*, "Spare the rod and spoil the child."

The rise of biology and psychology and general evolutionary thinking in the West gave birth to new approaches to life in general as also to the child. Organicism, recognising a principle of inner growth and of a consciousness with initiative and

will and of general progress in life, has been a wonderful new idea.

Froebel was the founder of the 'Kindergarten' movement in child-education. 'Kindergarten' literally means children's garden. His essential perception was the self-activity of the child and the child's interest in play as educational motivations. He gave the largest scope to them and provided a lot of relevant material for their exercise.

Montessori too laid a strong emphasis on the freedom of the child, individual attention, spontaneous discipline and a lot of standardised play-material for the cultivation of sensory discriminations and intellectual functions.

Froebel and Montessori have been combined, modified and elaborated variously, but the basic concepts abide and the child is accepted as a fact existing in his own right and to be attended to as such.

But is the child only a biological or psychological fact? Or is there also a deep-laid spiritual element present in him? That is the issue at the present state of educational thinking, research and growth.

As shown in the previous article, Jung's 'Centre' of personality and Sri Aurobindo's 'Psychic Being' are principles of existence distinct from the 'mind' and they now need to be accepted definitely and educational thinking modified accordingly. The experience of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education at Pondicherry, now stretched over more than three decades, affords much confirmatory evidence. And we see a positive approach and a solution to the problem of the integration of personality.

It will be useful here to ask: What are the kinds and the qualities of growth that Froebel's and Montessori's methods and other nursery education practices, more recently developed, aim at and achieve? A clearer and a more self-reliant individuality and a better cultivated personality in the sensory and intellectual functions, no doubt: but not so on the volitional and the emotional sides. And the deeper unity of life is not in view at all. A cultivation of the superficial personality is all that is intended and achieved. An integrated personality as a whole and the true principle of integration are not even the issues here. More freedom, more respect for the child and a better individuality are all the inspiring ideals. But much time has passed since Froebel and Montessori gave their messages. The contemporary times call for integration of personality as the ideal demanding urgent thought and research. And that makes our quest for the 'Centre' of personality and the 'Psychic Being' the real issue of education.

3

EXPERIENCE OF CHILD-NATURE AND CHILD-EDUCATION

Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future of mankind consists in a new status of consciousness, a consciousness unified and integrated, capable of seeing things as they are, feeling the full joy of such clear-sighted perception and acting whole-heartedly with

effectivity on the situation. Our present position is that our perceptions are limited to appearances and to parts and, as a result, we are not sure that we see things clearly enough. Our perceptions are superficial and partial and vacillating. Our emotions too, our likes and dislikes, our joys and sorrows, are divided and a steady and firm joy in life is not possible. Our will also is, therefore, divided and we cannot single-mindedly pursue things. In consequence, our effectivity is poor. This is the normal status of the present human consciousness.

It is, however, immensely superior to the animal consciousness, which largely consists of responses and reactions to the limited situations of the present moment lacking in variability and a command of wide space and time.

Yet the human consciousness is an extremely limited phenomenon and clearly indicates the future possibility of an integrated and an integral consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo saw that the evolutionary process had, as it were, in the offing a consciousness higher than the present mental consciousness of man and he called this "supermind" in contrast to "mind". And he affirmed that the advent of this higher evolutionary level could be facilitated and expedited if man saw its possibility and put in his best effort to realise it. Education was to Sri Aurobindo a means to do it. The Mother undertook to implement the great possibility visioned by Sri Aurobindo and the result has been the founding and the growth of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

The Mother believed in taking in hand the education of children as early as possible and hence the pre-primary and primary stages of education acquired special significance. She wanted the right environment, the right atmosphere, the right teacher, the right children, *i.e.* children with living souls, and she let the children grow up on their own inner initiative more and more, with as little external suppressive influences as possible. The right environment consisted in abundant and varied play-material which could evoke in them wholesome impulses and afford good occupation. The right atmosphere meant the subtle higher presence of Truth, Beauty, Goodness and the Supreme Divine Himself as the inspiring ideals of life through the best means available. The right teacher was the teacher who loved children, felt happy in their company, enjoyed their initiatives and could through his aspiration move their souls to increasing activity. Evidently he himself was one who cared for his soul and enjoyed its play and activity in himself and wanted the same in the children. The right children, for the Mother, were also the children who had souls active enough for further growth and manifestation. She did not care for children bright in mind but intensely possessive and aggressive.

Such a setting of education was needed to implement Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future. The present-day situation imposes heavy limitations as to the selection of teachers and children in particular. Yet the Mother sought to create as good a set-up as could be done.

And under such a set-up, as years rolled by, indeed much useful experience of child-nature and child-education grew up and slowly a tradition began to be formed.

The most important experience of child-nature, as stands out clearly in the tradition of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education just is that there are children with a distinctive soul-quality, as there are those marked in intelligence or those notable for the energy of life. Brightness of intelligence and plentiful energy of life are easy to recognise. However, the soul-quality and its expressions too are recognisable if we are duly on the watch for them. A sense of inner joyfulness, a general peacefulness and harmony and an unusual attractiveness are fine indications to look for and appreciate. But the ordinary impulses and external demands made on a 'good boy' and a 'good girl' soon create veils of prohibitions and inhibitions and the deeper indicators tend to disappear.

There are also cases of children where such a manifestation is present as a steady phenomenon for a length of time. And that is indeed a great experience.

The soul-quality of life is unmistakably marked by integrality, a wholeness, a unity, peace and harmony. If we seek unity, collaboration, common good and integration then the cultivation of the soul-quality is indispensable. Mind by its nature is a divided agent: conflict, suppression and repression are necessary to its working. Our education which aims at "a sound mind in a sound body" can at best achieve a split personality not an integrated one though it can conceive of it as an ideal. In order that an integrated personality may become a reality it is necessary to intend and pursue the soul-quality and cultivate mind and body within the integrality of the soul-quality of life. Then would integration and collaboration become practical propositions in life.

The pursuit of education at the Pondicherry Centre of Education seeks exactly to do this. To pursue physical education, vital education and mental education not as ends in themselves serving the purposes of an egoistic acquisitive personality but as large wide adjustable instruments for the all-embracing purpose of the spirit. Mind and body as also the vital nature of desires will then have to be widened, deepened and heightened so that they may become responsive to the infinitely variable calls of the spirit. The educational methods with them have to be differently conceived and formulated. Ordinarily we aim at certain set patterns of thinking, feeling and acting, which are in fact limitations on the capabilities of personality. In this connection, it can be interesting to recall Rousseau's doctrine of habitlessness, which was never much appreciated. But our ordinary education can only create a conventional personality, which flounders in a crisis when conventions themselves collapse.

The educational methods progressively built up at the Centre of Education are most varied and variable. Here we have stated the general rationale of these methods. But given a proper appreciation of the approach of the soul-quality of life, mind, life's impulses and the body can be handled with freedom.

Here in this essay, as far as child-nature is concerned, we have stressed in particular the central soul-quality. We have said practically nothing of mind, the varied impulses of life and the body. But these parts have their own natures and qualities and to harmonise them all under the soul-quality is a large educational psychology.

Similarly of child-education we have stressed the need and the rationale of a new approach, that of treating mind, life and body as instruments of the spirit and making them wide, large and variable enough to be responsive to all possible demands of the unlimited situations of our existence.

The contemporary phase of human history clearly shows that the precedents of the past are an unsatisfactory guidance. We are vaguely looking into the future and are ever surprised by new situations. Can a patterned personality be equal to such situations or do we need a personality which can confidently rise equal to any situation of life that may occur? The qualities of wholeness, integrality and infinite variability are needed today as they were perhaps never before.

(Concluded)

INDRA SEN

A CAT-STORY

A LETTER FROM A READER

LALITA has been writing her recollections in recent issues of *Mother India*. She has written a lot about cats. I think she and her readers will be interested in an excerpt from p. 185 of Madeleine Slade's book, *The Spirit's Pilgrimage*.¹

Miss Slade was the daughter of a British Admiral. She had an idealistic bent of mind. She came to India, joined Mahatma Gandhi and changed her name to Mira Behn. When "Bapu"—as she and others used to call Gandhi—visited England, she accompanied him. He had a meeting with Lloyd George, the ex-Prime Minister of England. Mira Behn met the latter afterwards. She recounts her talk with him:

After we had talked for a time about India, he took me to the drawing room for tea. Looking at the sofa by the fire-place, Lloyd George said, "That's where Mr. Gandhi sat." Then he proceeded to relate how a little cat had come to his house a day or two before Bapu's visit. "She seemed to be someone's pet cat," he said, "because she had on a collar. So I tried to persuade her to go away. But she absolutely refused. Then on the evening when Mr. Gandhi arrived she went straight to him, as he sat down on that sofa, and settled herself in his lap, where she remained till he got up to leave. And what do you think! The next morning she had gone and I have never seen her again."

CHANDRAVADAN C. BHATT

¹ Published by Orient Longmans. First edition 1960.

TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of March 1980)

CHAPTER IV (Contd.)

On the Threshold of a New Life

SRI Aurobindo wants us to look upon illness as an imperfection of the body to be got rid of as we try to get rid of vital imperfections or mental errors. He considers disease a habit and in *The Synthesis of Yoga* he goes on to say that the habit of disease can be minimised and gradually eliminated.

My body is a home of illness, subjected to six chronic diseases: rheumatism, diabetes, iritis, eczema, nervous trouble and constipation. Four of them are still there but not in an aggressive form. Had I not found asylum at the Mother's feet, I shudder to think what my fate would have been! Certainly I would have remained cruelly crippled for life. Picture to yourself a person free from life-problems, life-worries and dreaming a day will come when life will become a song, a poem.

Here I am reminded of the soul-stirring words that were uttered by Earl Mountbatten—a friend of India—the moment a nine-inch sandalwood carving of Sri Krishna playing a flute was presented to him by the Editor of *Bhavan's Journal* while seeking an interview:

“There is music in life. If only we know how to harmonise the various rhythmic notes, life would be joyous and melodious like the sweet music flowing from the divine flute.”

I do not know what will happen the next hour let alone the coming years! Health is happiness. To keep myself fit I take a lot of precautions. Thus I spare myself from running to the doctor.¹ Further, by keeping myself active I do not fall an easy prey to inertia.

Just on rising from bed I take three glasses of cold water in order to wash the kidneys. A raw bitter gourd to check diabetes. In day-time, lemon or mousambi juice to avoid nervous trouble. Guava is very helpful in moving the bowels. Once a habit is formed it does not appear tedious. At bed-time I take some garlic to avoid back-pain. It serves as a tonic. I adopted these means one by one, stimulated by encouraging results. They are mere aids to keep myself fortified.

To sum up:

Life became beautiful when I freed myself from the torture of the physical mind, life became peaceful when I got rid of the tyranny of the vital, divine action in the unconscious brought beauty to the body by making the cells wake up. The average man is apt to feel amused and may point an accusing finger on reading such

¹ During the annual check-up the doctor remarked: “You look so young. Your vitality instead of deteriorating has improved”; which is something unusual at my age.

contradictory statements as that I never felt so happy as after 75 and that 'My body is a home of illness'.

These contradictions cannot be avoided till sadhana is crowned with success. Normally peace reigns these days in the inner being but it is not allowed to settle permanently. When serenity prevails, a curb is put on the temper but that is not a conquest. For in trying times I fail miserably. Then with eyes filled with wonder I ask myself: "What makes me fly into a temper, get perplexed over trifles? Must all the spiritual wealth remain deposited in the Bank?"

"Then looking to know whence the intruder came"¹ that stands in the way of the development of the higher personality Sri Aurobindo came to my rescue. He has left no spiritual problem untackled:

"The descents of the Force have become more or less continuous or rather frequent, but the difficulty now arises from the outer nature."² Thus I was led to find a loophole in my nature. Likewise once I could not make out how thought could peep in when I was in a state of absolute tranquillity, how both thought and silence live at the same time. Can two swords enter into one sheath? The dense mist was dispersed by a line in Savitri: "Even now some thoughts could cross her solitude."

Thus *Savitri* is a manual of sadhana for us aspirants.

To pursue our study further. After a constant labour and endeavour it seems a discipline has been well established in my life. The Mother has spoken many a time about its efficacy:

"To discipline oneself is to hasten the arrival of a new life."³ "Any discipline that is followed rigorously, sincerely, deliberately, is a considerable help, for it enables life on earth to attain its goal more rapidly and prepares it to receive the new life."⁴

She has also said:

"Physical culture is the best way of developing the consciousness of the body and the more the body is conscious the more it is capable of receiving the divine forces that are at work to transform it and give birth to the new race."⁵

I have come to regard physical culture as sadhana of the body. As the mind draws spiritual food from contemplation and the vital pulsates by the soundless chanting of the Names, so the "yearning cells"⁶ draw nourishment by physical culture. The silent changes are perceptible even to the naked eye.

My feeling finds support in the Mother's words:

"Physical Culture is the process of infusing consciousness into the cells of the body. One may or may not know it, but it is a fact. When we concentrate to make our muscles move according to our will, when we endeavour to make our limbs more supple,...we infuse into the cells of the body a consciousness which was not there before...This is the primary importance of physical culture....

"...Therefore we can say without fear of being mistaken that physical culture is

¹ *Savitri* B. VII, C. 6, p. 181. ² *On Yoga* II, Tome II, p. 245.

³ *Health and Healing in Yoga*, p. 213. ⁴ *Ibid.* ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁶ *Savitri*, B X, C. 2, p. 241.

the sadhana of the body.”¹

The energy spent in movements goes on, replenished and recuperated imperceptibly. One hour of heavy exercise does not leave me exhausted or spent—rather I get home not only elated but a bit elevated.

This I speak after close observation. What bewildered me the most was the disappearance of wrinkles in the legs, frequent changes even in the cells of the soles.

Almost every time during the ‘rising’ on the parallel bars a heating sensation was felt in the cells of the soles and curiously enough in no other part. It went on while the movement continued. Likewise a cooling sensation often occurred in the knees during leg press or hand press.

Another amusing factor: On December 1, 1979 the soles appeared pale, lifeless, hueless as those of a dying man. On the 4th they looked soft, tender, fleshy as those of a young man. But the buoyancy could not be maintained long.

If one wants to do something lasting, one must pay the price. One more aphorism of the Mother:

“Become master of your body, this will lead you to freedom.”²

In my earnestness to free the body from utter dependence on solid food I carried out an extreme experiment, availing myself of an opportunity of five days’ freedom owing to the Deepawali festival. I need not go over the ground already covered. The self-absorption was so great that there remained no thought of food, drink or the needs of the body. Five days passed almost in the same mood. (On Sundays I often skip lunch, for it is distracting). But it sounds strange that at no time during these five days the body or the vital rushed for food — even to fruits. The stomach felt as one feels at 3 p.m. after lunch. It suffered from no sense of appetite.

Prompted by the suggestion—the body must not be allowed to grow weak, that when I took some fruit reluctantly I felt I had made a mistake by forced feeding.

The weight, of course, got reduced by two kilograms but there was no apparent weakness; so I did not abstain from my usual bodily exercise and it caused no strain.

Till by chance I came across this lucid interpretation of the Mother I had been wondering whether the body had learnt to draw sustenance from some higher source! —

“It is not by abstaining from food that you can make a spiritual progress. It is by *being free*, not only from all attachment and all desire and preoccupation with food, but even from all need for it; by being in the state in which all these things are so foreign to your consciousness that they have no place there.

“Only then, as a spontaneous, natural result, can one usefully stop eating. It could be said that the essential condition is to forget to eat—forget, because all the energies of the being...are turned towards a more total, more true inner realisation, towards this constant, imperative preoccupation with the union of the whole being including the bodily cells...”³

I would be a hypocrite if I claimed or said I have become free from all earthly

¹ *Health and Healing in Yoga*, p. 211.

² *Ibid.*, p. 213.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

desires and thrown off all earthly burdens. I have been regulating my food habits for long and it does not appear the fancy of a fool. The importance of the move I came to realise when I happened to read some passages in the Mother's Centenary Volume 6 (pp. 36-37) which came out long after in 1979.

Every day—say before every meal—I weigh whether the stomach needs anything: light diet or something solid. Often I am put into a dilemma: stomach does not feel the need to have anything but the mind does not fail from sermonizing: "Would you attend to days' duty with an empty stomach? Will not that tell on your health?" This brings fear and I succumb. Very difficult to ascertain what is the right course. The Mother herself raises the question:

"...Would you be able to tell exactly, at every meal, the amount of food and kind of food your body needs?...how much should be taken?..." and answers: "... There is a time when one knows it very well. But it asks for years of labour, and above all years of work almost without any mental control just with a consciousness that's subtle enough to establish a connection with the elements of transformation.

"And to know also how to determine for one's body exactly the amount of physical effort, of material activity, of expenditure and recuperation of energy,...to make the cells which are lagging behind progress, to build conditions, the possibility of higher progress, etc....it is a formidable task. And it is this which must be done if one hopes to transform one's body."

All this by way of explanation of how a secret hand helped me to move on little by little, step by step inspiring a "vast hope". I consider it one of the many boons that the Grace has showered on me; for it roused a sense of deliverance.

The Mother goes on:

"Why do people rush to a doctor?

"Because they are under the illusion that the doctor knows better than they, how to look inside their body and find out what is going on there, which is not very reasonable... Look inside and know exactly what is out of order.... And all this is a simple work of observation....

"And this is the A.B.C. of the transformation of the body."¹

What is expected of a transformed body?

"The transparent, luminous, strong, light, elastic body won't need any material things to subsist on...It will be a true being, perfect in proportion, very, very beautiful with extraordinary capacities and able to do everything; a body without age, a creation of the New Consciousness."²

Forty seven years of Ashram life is long enough to destroy the patience and perseverance of anyone, but my heart harbours no such feeling. Years sit lightly on my bosom. I feel so fresh—as if I had just joined the Ashram.

One word about perseverance:

It was the Winter morning of January 1st. The year was perhaps 1970. Who

¹ *Health and Healing in Yoga*, pp. 192-3

² *Sweet Mother*, Part II, p. 19 (Mona Sarkar).

would not like to have the joy of the Mother's touch on the New Year's day? Many of us formed a queue to go up. I too was one of them. But a hesitation arose since I had not sought permission.

Imagine my joy when the Mother inquired upstairs whether N.P. had come. On hearing a negative reply she sent me a packet through Dyuman which contained a card with: "Persevere" written in red characters.

Time has not come to write the last Chapter, the last Act of the drama of my life.

I do not know what the future holds for me but this I know that the Divine has laid his luminous Hand on this frail human clay, and that the whole of me, including the most crude part of my being, has consented to give Him free play. Let Him weave the fabric of my destiny as He chooses. May I be His Dream Child!

It must have been in answer to a prayer from birth to birth that I was born at the time when the earth was blessed with the touch of the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's feet. The one longing that I cherish in my "still heart" is : "May I deserve to be called their true disciple!"

This was the prayer which I had written to the Mother in 1951 after the passing of Sri Aurobindo, in my first approach to Her.

(Concluded)

M. S. SUBBULAKSHMI IN MADRAS

SHE sang the city to silence
With a voice that moved majestically through us,
Ringing bright mantric resonance
That dimmed the manic rush.

In a dingy hall we found,
Through her, a way to singing's source,
Cradled by invulnerable sound,
Whorled in devotional force

That carried us lovingly through the night
While the city snarled outside;
As we entered again its hollow light
Rasping shadows screeched, cried,

And pounced upon us with terrible claws
That tore us quickly along;
We are swept away into its grimy jaws,
Clutching deep within her lingering song.

GORDON

THE GOLDEN DAWN

THE mighty ocean was dreaming; some sparkling waves leaped in joy like babies on a mother's lap. Heaven blushed at the sight of the rising sun, its beloved. The cool gentle breeze softly glided over the surface of the sea as though wishing not to disturb the slumbering ocean. Birds started singing and piping to the glorious dawn. This enchanting beauty and the silence around me were a glimpse of a glowing freshness and peace in the depth of the being. It was like a vision painted by the great artist of the cosmos. Beauty always gives birth to delight and when we are in delight beautiful things are created.

Yet there are some moments when we feel sad. Gloom and distress come sometimes as blessings in disguise. Every time we feel sad a window opens within us. We discover luminous horizons, fresh vistas stretching into eternity are revealed to us. Thus, though Nature's living book of wonderful hues and forms lay open before me, my eyes drooped with despair. I do not know why but my mind was thronged with gloomy thoughts. Moroseness and loneliness were my only companions. My weary heart cried out, "Oh! Mother dear, please teach me never to be sad. Help me to conquer the encumbrances, sufferings and illnesses that crop up in my journey through life. Lead me towards the golden dawn that will manifest on this half-illuminated and suffering earth. My gloomy heart yearns for infinite delight and the eternal dawn."

Suddenly like the twinkle of a star in a dark night, a voice whispered in my sorrow-laden heart, "Look forward, look ahead." In these apparently insignificant words, a world of joyous meaning was revealed to me. The veiled smile beamed again on my face like the sun from behind a shroud of clouds. I felt myself again a traveller on the path of life. Once a traveller begins his journey, does he turn back to see how much he has trudged or look ahead to mark how much more remains to reach his destination? Life is a long and arduous path. Then what is the use of brooding and shedding tears by looking behind? Of what help is it to keep bending under the load of past failures, sorrows and pains? Nothing can be gained. The glorious future is ours to win. This reminds me of the Mother's powerful and encouraging words:

"Courage! Harken to the lesson that the rising sun brings to the earth with its first rays each morning. It is a lesson of hope, a message of solace. You who weep, who suffer and tremble, who dare not expect an end to your ills, an issue to your pangs, behold: there is no night without dawn and the day is about to break when darkness is thickest; there is no mist that the sun does not dispel, no cloud that it does not gild, no tear that it will not dry one day, no storm that is not followed by its shining triumphant bow, there is no snow that it does not melt, nor winter that it does not change into radiant spring..."

"If an ordeal or fault has cast you down, if you have sunk into the nether depths of suffering, do not grieve—for there indeed the divine love and the supreme blessing can reach you! Because you have passed through the crucible of purifying sorrows, the glorious ascents are yours."

Yes, so much can be seen and known but only if we have eyes to see and ears to hear! So much can be learnt from dawn, life and everything around us. All speak in silence and bring a message for the world and for us. If we close our ears against the storm and the din of the world we can listen to the sweet hidden melodies of delight behind everything in creation. A flame smiles in every corner.

Thus like every other thing each year brings a message of delight. There abides something in the atmosphere that wishes to express itself on the earth. This year too is a special year, for it brings a message of the Golden Dawn for the whole world.

Oh! Mother dear, grant that this Golden Dawn may reign eternally on the earth, may this earth be called the land of Eternal Golden Dawn. Let the flaming aspiration and sincere love rise in every heart to hasten the manifestation of this dream-reality.

UMA JOSHI

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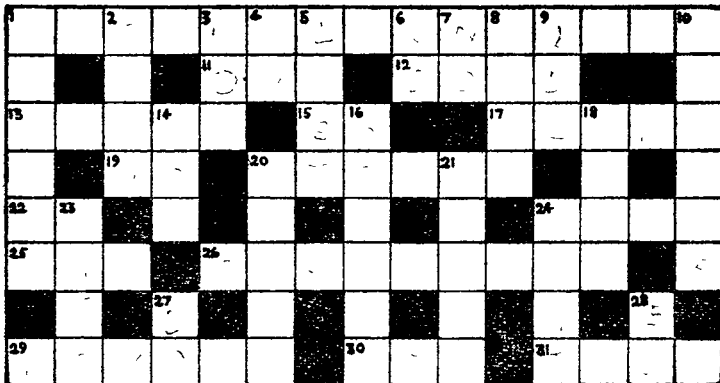
Clues Across

1. The Vedanta is God's lamp to lead thee out of this night of bondage and egoism; but when the light of Veda has dawned in thy soul, then even that divine lamp thou needest not, for now thou canst walk freely and surely in the (7, 8)
11. So long as a Cause has on its side . . . soul that is intangible in faith, it cannot perish. (3)
12. That which the liberated sees in his on its mountain-tops, heroes and prophets spring up in the material world to proclaim and accomplish. (4)
13. As the light of a star reaches the earth hundreds of years after the star has ceased to exist, so the already accomplished in Brahman at the beginning manifests itself now in our material experience. (5)
15. Adv. (2)
17. God leads man while man is misleading himself; the higher nature watches over the stumblings of the lower morality; this is the tangle and contradiction out of which we have to escape into a knowledge, the self-unity to which alone is possible a faultless action. (5)
19. What thou art within, that outside thee thou shalt enjoy; . . machinery can rescue thee from the law of thy being. (2)
20. Drugs cure the body when they do not merely trouble or poison it, but only if their physical on the disease is supported by the force of the spirit; if that force can be made to work freely, drugs are superfluous. (6)
22. Men are false to their country for their own profit; yet they . . on thinking they have a right to turn in horror from the matricide. (2)
24. O soldier and of God, where for thee is sorrow or shame or suffering? For thy life is a glory, thy deeds a consecration, victory thy apotheosis, defeat thy triumph. (4)
25. Believe that the Mother will ere the . . . have done her work and made the very earth of thy being a joy and a purity. (3)
26. With the present morality of the human race a sound and durable human unity is not yet possible; but there is no reason why a temporary approximation to it should not be the reward of aspiration and untiring effort. (9)
29. Hatred is a sword of power, but its edge is always double. It is like the Kriya of the ancient magicians which, if balked of its prey, returned in fury to its sender. (6)
30. Men talk of enemies, but where are they? I only . . . wrestlers of one party or the other in the great arena of the universe. (3)
31. Plan not with the intellect, but let thy divine sight arrange thy plans for (4)

Clues Down

1. Be not repelled by the world's crookedness; the world is a wounded and venomous snake wriggling towards a destined off-sloughing and perfection. Wait, for it is a divine wager, and out of this baseness, God will brilliant and triumphant. (6)
2. Courage and love are the only indispensable virtues; if all the others are eclipsed or fall asleep, these two will save the soul alive. (4)
3. Leap . . . too quickly at all voices, for there are lying spirits ready to deceive thee, but let thy heart be pure and afterwards listen. (3)

4. Adj. (2)
5. Honour the garb of the ascetic, but look also at the wearer, hypocrisy occupy the holy places and inward saintliness become a legend. (4)
6. Pron. (2)
7. Break the moulds of the past, but keep safe its genius and its spirit, or else thou hast . . future. (2)
8. When thou hast the command, care only to fulfil it. The rest is God's will and arrangement which men call chance and and fortune. (4)
9. He who acquires for himself alone, acquires . . . though he may call it heaven and virtue. (3)
10. Why dost thou recoil from a mask? Behind its odious, grotesque or terrible seemings Krishna laughs at thy foolish anger, thy more foolish scorn or loathing and thy most foolish (6)
14. Adv. (3)
16. Meanness and selfishness are the only sins that I find it difficult to pardon; yet they alone are almost universal. Therefore these also must not be hated in , but in ourselves annihilated. (6)
18. The Law is for the bound and those whose are sealed; if they walk not by it, they will stumble; but thou who art free in Krishna or hast seen his living light, walk holding the hand of thy Friend and by the lamp of eternal Veda. (4)
20. Accept the world as God's theatre; be thou the mask of the and let Him act through thee. (5)
21. All is not settled when a is humanly lost and hopeless; all is settled only when the soul renounces its effort. (5)
23. Adv. (4)
24. Men after petty successes and trivial masteries from which they fall back into exhaustion and weakness; meanwhile all the infinite force of God in the universe waits vainly to place itself at their disposal. (4)
27. Not to cull the praises of men has God made thee His own, but to . . fearlessly His bidding. (2)
28. If thy aim . . great and thy means small, still act; for by action alone these can increase to thee. (2)



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

THE STUPID GURU AND THE FOOLISH DISCIPLES

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

(Continued from the issue of March 1980)

2. Purchasing A Horse's Egg

GURU Paramartha and his disciples reached their hermitage. The disciples started pestering their master to buy a horse, so as to avoid all future obstacles to their journey. On enquiry the guru found that the purchase of a horse was beyond his reach, for the cost was not less than Rs. 1000.

Disappointed, Paramartha said, "My God! Is it possible for a poor guru to pay such a heavy price? We cannot afford to."

The loyal disciples, from then onwards, thought deeply of the ways and means to buy a horse. One day a cow from their cattleshed was found missing. She was the guru's favourite. He never drank the milk of any other cow and never allowed others to share the milk of his favourite. The disciples ran in various directions to trace the 'guru's cow'. All of them came back empty-handed. But Matti had some news to tell. He spoke without a stop:

"Do not worry about the lost animal. A cow after all is a cheap one. Now I have got some glad news. Rejoice, all of you. While hunting for the missing cow, I found a place where they sell horses at a cheaper rate. Some four or five miles away there is a very big unguarded fertile field. I found there some horses grazing. Very close to them, I found a good number of eggs, very big in size, lying pell-mell. Each of those eggs is twenty times bigger than the biggest coconut. I enquired of the horse-tendor, 'What egg is this?' He replied, 'These huge eggs are laid by those horses. After a few months when they are hatched, the young ones come out.' On further enquiry I found that the eggs are sold at a very cheap price. You can't believe your ears—it's just Rs. 50. Don't you think that this is a golden opportunity? Goddess Luck knocks at our door. Let us hurry to buy a horse's egg."

"A future horse for Rs. 50!" exclaimed everyone. The guru gave Matti the amount required and bade him go and buy the egg without any delay. Accompanied by Madayan, Matti gleefully started on his journey.

After their departure, Moodan raised a doubt. "Let us take for granted that the egg reaches home safely. But someone has to hatch it. Then only can we have the young horse. As the matter stands, even ten hens won't be sufficient to have the egg hatched, for it is some twenty times bigger than the biggest coconut. Moreover, the hens may not sit on a giant-sized egg. Now a new idea is a 'must' to settle this matter."

The guru thought for sometime and suggested, "Human bodies are warmer

than the rest of God's creations. Why not one of us sit on the egg to hatch it? Thus the egg will burst open 'before time'."

The disciples welcomed the suggestion but no one was ready to take up the task of hatching the egg. They found some excuse to wash their hands of the hatching business. At last the guru said, "All your excuses are reasonable. Matti and Madaiyan too, being the active members, may not find time. So I have decided to hatch the egg myself, since I have little work to do. I will without any break sit on the horse's egg till the colt peeps out and makes our hearts gallop in joy."

In the meantime, Matti and Madaiyan had reached the field, where pumpkins were grown. They rushed to the spot and Matti showed them to Madaiyan and said, "See how big and lovely the horses' eggs are! Our horse, I expect, is somewhere inside one of these eggs." The grazer who was standing there heard their conversation and laughed in his sleeves.

The two fools approached the grazer and haggled for the price. "No, No. Rs. 50 is not a price at all for a high-bred horse's egg. I am giving it to you at the cheapest rate possible, because you seem to be nice people. But on no account should you reveal the cost of the egg to anyone. I will be at a great loss if I sell the eggs at this rate."

"We'll keep our mouths tightly shut. You need not fear at all," said Madaiyan in a muffled voice.

The grazer gave them the biggest and fattest of pumpkins. Madaiyan placed it on Matti's head and said, "Now better be careful. This gentleman is indeed kind enough to give us the biggest egg at the cheapest rate. Hold it tightly so that it may not slip and fall down. You know it is very fragile."

Matti held the egg tightly as if it were the greatest treasure in the world likely to be stolen away.

He walked fast with eagerness to show the egg to his master and earn his praise. Madaiyan followed him with his eyes rivetted to the egg. They never spoke a word nor did they turn sideways, but ran and ran till Matti dashed the 'biggest egg' on a strong, low-grown curved branch of a big tree. The smashed pumpkin fell down with a thud and scattered on the bushy plants. The noise scared a white rabbit that had so far taken shelter underneath the bushy plants. It took to its heels.

Madaiyan took the white rabbit for a colt and cried at the highest pitch of his voice, "A young horse! A young white horse! A colt! It came out of the broken egg. I saw it coming out with my own eyes. O, lovely young white horse! Catch it. Catch it. Chase, chase."

Matti believed his friend's words and both ran after the racing rabbit. It was a real chase. Like bandits running for their lives, they ran through bushes and thorny shrubs, stepped on stones, lost their balance, fell down, rose up but continued their chase. They panted for breath, felt giddy and tired. They stopped running but the white rabbit ran without a stop. And within seconds it disappeared.

Matti and Madaiyan took rest on the grass-bed and then bare-handed they reached their abode limping all the way. At the threshold of the hermitage they

beat their chests and cried. Tears rolled down their cheeks. The guru came out rushing and inquired into the matter.

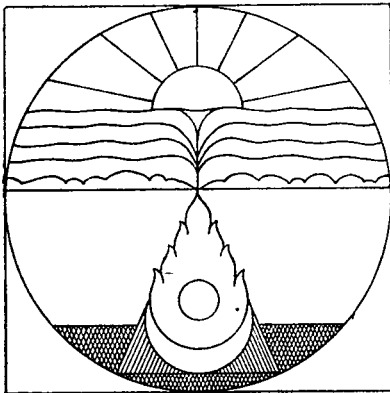
“Never in my life have I seen such a beautiful young horse, darting like a shot arrow. It was indeed a wonderful high-bred colt. But curse our fate! We are not lucky enough to have him,” sobbed Matti.

Madaiyan narrated the birth of the white horse under unexpected circumstances and the chase that followed. He heaved a sigh and then ended his story saying, “For just Rs. 50 a high-bred horse—very cheap—the cheapest rate possible under the sun. But too many a slip between the cup and the lip.”

The guru heard the story and then with a strange relief in his voice pacified them, “Thank God you have not brought that wild horse. If he runs so fast at this young and tender stage, how fast he will be when he grows up! It is quite unimaginable. Then who is to tame him? God has saved me from the disaster of getting killed by a brute. God is always great. Do not worry about the lost money. Such a horse I would not like to possess, even if it is given free of cost. God is great. I am saved.”

(End of Chapter Two)

P. RAJA



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BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Man who Lifted the Mountain and Other Fantasies by Manoj Das. Illustrations by John Grandfield. Published by Spectre Press, 61, Abbey Road, Fareham, Hampshire, United Kingdom. Pages: 22. Price: 60 p; \$1.50. U.S.A.

PROFESSOR Manoj Das is among the few gifted writers of India who can wield the pen both in the mother tongue and in English with equal poise. A recipient of the Central Sahitya Akademi Award and many other prizes he has more than twenty-five books to his credit. This lovely slim volume adds one more colourful feather to his prestigious turban.

Set up in the good old days of kings and queens, these tales are embellished with original humour, sardonic undertones and inimitable metaphors. The book is a sheer delight to the young, and the author has something more to give to the grown-ups. In short, this quartet of enchanting tales, like Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, gives different meanings to different readers at different times. Moreover, the fantasies are not written without a purpose. As the reader comes to the end of every tale, he is left to draw his own moral from it.

Plastic surgery can, no doubt, make a wood-cutter's daughter a perfect bride for a sighing prince. But too many specialists and experts aiming at perfection—which is an impossibility—distort a fairy and thereby create a bride sans soul—'that little old thing which is in every creature'. Modern Science can do wonders and at the same time it's capable of creating havocs too. This is what Prof. Manoj Das subtly stresses in his highly humorous piece 'The Perfect Bride'—the first story in the book that carries many a dig at the surgeons and officials. In the second tale, 'He Who Rides A Tiger', we encounter two types of men. Men of Words who never act and Men of Action who act but foolishly. The world abounds in men like *malis*, *kotwals*, *rotwals* and *huzoors* who are none but imposters. They know the art of making others think highly of them but when the matter switches to action they know the knack of escaping. Well! Here is a blow to all those who assume a superior air towards their inferiors. And let them not forget that superiors are only inferiors before their own superiors. The king, a man of action, acts foolishly. The only successor to the throne becomes a prey to the hungry tiger because of the king's foolishness. The tiger symbolizes the opportunist who makes the best use of the situation. Thieffou, the chief character in the title story, is a symbol of greed and exploitation. Desirous of taking personal vengeance on all officers and later the king himself, he is levelled and buried by the kind-hearted mountain itself. 'The Princess and the Story Teller', last of the four tales, tells how a hut-dweller (the story-teller) with his diligence and wit tamed a shrew, the princess, who finds delight in fooling men aspiring after her hand. No one can go on fooling people endlessly, for once in a while the superman strikes.

Every tale gives a concrete message and every line is tinged with humour. Similes, metaphors and hyperboles teem and they show the full-fledged poet in Manoj

Das. An example in each of these figures of speech will suffice:

- a) The minister and his commander, both shaking *like blades of grass in the teeth of the wind*.
- b) the *star-eyed and apple-cheeked* princess.
- c) shed several *tear-drops as large as grapes*.

When any other writer would have said 'pin-drop silence' or, 'graveyard silence', Manoj Das who has his own way of expressing things writes, "Such was the silence that even a spider could have been heard spinning its web." Such is his descriptive skill.

John Grandfield's oriental illustrations are very apt and the artist certainly deserves high praise. In fact, this book is a mini treasure-house not only of short stories but of paintings too.

P. RAJA

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