

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SEPTEMBER 1980

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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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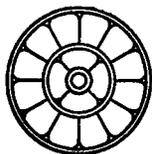
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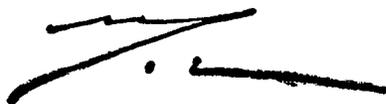


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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Vol. XXXII

No. 9

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

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### AN APPEAL TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

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

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

Advertisements too can be a good contribution. Tariff cards can be had on application.

Increase in the number of subscribers is always welcome.

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

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

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

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# THE SOUL (THE PSYCHIC)

## SOME LIGHTS FROM THE MOTHER

THE soul is that which comes out of the Divine without ever leaving Him and goes back to Him without ever ceasing from manifestation.

The soul is the Divine made individual without ceasing to be divine. In the soul the individual and the Divine are eternally one.

Thus to find one's soul is to be united with the Divine.

It can therefore be said that the role of the soul is to make of man a true being.

\*

Theories differ according to schools and sects, and each one puts forth excellent reasons to support what it asserts.

There is certainly truth in whatever one affirms and any case is not only possible but has existed in the history of the earth.

The only thing I can speak of is my own experience: the soul is divine, an eternal portion of the Supreme Divine and therefore cannot be limited or bound by any law whatever, other than its own.

These souls are emanated by the Lord to do His work in the world and each one comes upon earth with a special purpose, for a special action and with a special destiny, carrying in itself its own law which is imperative for itself alone and cannot be a general law.

Thus, in the eternity of becoming, any case imaginable or unimaginable must evidently exist.

\*

The soul is eternal and universal, and all these incapacities and impossibilities have no reality for it.

23 September 1941

\*

The soul cannot think the Divine but knows Him with certitude.

26 December 1954

\*

*What is soul and in what form does it exist in us?*

The first form of the soul is a spark of light from the Divine.

By evolution it becomes an individualised being and then it can take the form it wants.

August 1966

\*

The centre of the human being is the psychic which is the dwelling place of the immanent Divine. Unification means organisation and harmonisation of all the parts of the being (mental, vital and physical) around this centre, so that all the activities of the being may be the correct expression of the will of the Divine Presence.

\*

Nothing is permanent in a terrestrial being except the psychic.

## THE MOTHER'S CONDITIONS FOR OUR LOWER NATURE'S CHANGE

- 1) to be *convinced* that you can *change*.
- 2) to will to change without accepting the excuses of the lower nature.
- 3) to persist in the will in spite of every fall.
- 4) to have an unshakable faith in the help you receive.

7 April 1969

## THE MOTHER ON PERSEVERANCE

PERSEVERE in your aspiration and effort, do not allow yourself to be discouraged by setbacks. This always happens in the beginning. But if you continue to fight without paying any attention to them, a day will come when the resistances give way and the difficulties vanish. My help is always with you, but you must learn to use it and to rely on it rather than on your own resources.

29 May 1956

## EGO, QUARRELS, FAULTS, MISBEHAVIOUR

### WORDS OF THE MOTHER

THE ego thinks of what it wants and has not. This is its constant preoccupation. The soul is aware of what it is given and lives in endless gratitude.

You must never forget that I disapprove of quarrels and always consider that both sides are equally wrong. To surmount one's feelings, preferences, dislikes and impulses, is an indispensable discipline here.

1 October 1943

That one feels sad for one's own faults,—this may, if necessary, be useful to strengthen one's resolution to correct them.

But that one can be offended by another's bad conduct, this has truly nothing to do with the spiritual life and the service of the Divine.

To be above offence or insult makes one truly great.

## A NOTICE BY THE MOTHER

*This Notice is reproduced for its historical interest as marking a certain stage in the outer relationship between the Mother and the Ashram from day to day.*

### MY NEW PROGRAMME FROM THE 7TH SEPTEMBER 1954

FOR all those who wish to have a look at me before their day's work, I shall go to the balcony at 6-15 a. m.

The rest of the morning I shall keep free for my own work and see nobody, except on Darshan days the blessings in the hall upstairs at 9-30 as usual, and other general blessings which will be announced the previous day; these include the Sunday before Darshan for Sari Distribution and some special occasions.

The afternoon programme remains practically the same, but I shall not receive flowers when going out. (Tennis, interview or lesson, match-past, distribution, Wednesday class and Friday reading.)

All inmates and visitors who wish to come for the evening distribution in the play-ground can do so. And birthday person or persons will come at the end of the distribution to receive from me their flowers.

I shall see nobody when I come from the play-ground in the evening.

All those who were in the habit of meditating in the hall downstairs during the time of blessings, the mornings when I was coming down, will be able, now, to meditate every evening during the distribution, with the advantage that there will be ample space for everybody.

In consequence, I request all those who will be present in the play-ground to *be absolutely quiet and silent* during all the time of the distribution. I expect everybody, from the youngest to the oldest, from the smallest to the biggest, to comply with this request and thus have the full benefit of my blessings.

6-9-54

(Sd.) THE MOTHER

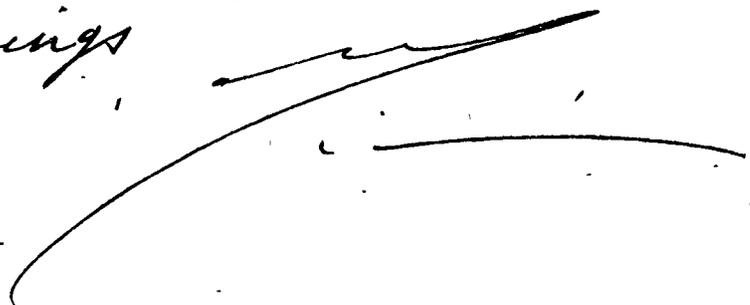
## THE MOTHER'S PROGRAMME FOR A DEVOTEE

à Sehra  
bonne fête

programme for the year 1956

- 1) love me more and more perfectly
- 2) Be more and more happy through that love, knowing that I love you.
- 3) Be always in good health so that your body never prevents you from coming to me —

With all my love and  
blessings



9.9.56

# THE REVISED EDITION OF *THE FUTURE POETRY*

## NEWLY-WRITTEN OR CORRECTED MATTER

*(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1980)*

*(Each paragraph of this chapter received alterations and additions during the early period of revision (1930s). A few of the new passages are of some length, although none of this addition changes the essential structure of the chapter. The adding of the chapter's subtitle is the most important contribution of the later revision (1950); otherwise only a few words here and there were added then.)*

### CHAPTER IX

#### The Course of English Poetry—I

#### Chaucer and the Poetry of External Life

THE spirit and temper that have stood behind the creative force and come to the front in a literature are the one essential thing that we must discern, for it is these that predestine the course the poetry of a people will take and the turn it gives to its forms. For if the field which poetry covers is common ground and its large general lines the same everywhere, yet each nation has its own characteristic spirit and creative quality which determine the province in which it will best succeed, the turn or angle of its vision and the shape of its work. The genius of English poetry was evidently predestined by the complexity of its spirit and its union of opposite powers to an adventurous consecutive seeking over the whole field, and this is in fact the first character of it that strikes the eye, a series of bold and powerful creative adventures, each quite different in spirit from its predecessor. But in its first natural potentiality certain pronounced limitations point to a facile and vigorous success in a forcefully accurate or imaginative presentation of life and a more difficult and incomplete success in the intellectual or spiritual interpretation of life; most difficult for it would be a direct presentation of the things beyond, a concrete image of mystic realities, a poetic approach to the higher truths of the spirit. Yet on the other hand if this difficulty could once be overcome, then because of the profounder intensity of the power of poetical speech which this literature has developed, the very highest and most penetrating expression of these profoundest things would be possible. A nearer significant imaging of them would be close to the hand here than could easily be achieved without much new fashioning of language in the Latin tongues whose speech has been cast in the mould of a clear or high intellectuality rather than into the native utterance of imaginative vision adventuring beyond the normal bounds of a high poetic intelli-

gence. We see in modern French creation a constant struggle with this limitation: even we find a poet like Mallarmé driven to break the mould of French speech in his desperate effort to force it to utter what is to its natural clear lucidity almost unutterable. No such difficulty presents itself in English poetry; the depths, the vistas of suggestion, the power to open the doors of the infinite are already there, ready to hand for the mind rightly gifted to evoke them, waiting and almost asking to be used for the highest purposes. Much less naturally fitted for fine prose utterance, this language has developed all the close lights and shades, the heights and depths, the recesses of fathomless sense needed by the poet.

It has to be seen how this has come about; for it has not been accomplished at all easily, but only by much seeking and effort. We observe first that English poetry has covered the rising field that lies before the genius of poetry by strictly successive steps, and these steps have followed the natural ascending order of our developing perceptions as the human consciousness rises from the first physical view of things through the more inward life-vision, through the constructing and pondering intellect and last through a vivid or a brooding intuition to the gateways of the spirit. The English creative genius began by a quite external, a clear and superficial substance and utterance. It proceeded to a deeper vital poetry, a poetry of the power and beauty and wonder and spontaneous thought, the joy and passion and pain, the colour and music of Life, in which the external presentation of life and things was taken up, but heightened, exceeded and given its full dynamic and imaginative content. From that it turned to an attempt at mastering the secret of the Latins, the secret of a clear measured and intellectual dealing with life, things and ideas. Then came an attempt, a brilliant and beautiful attempt to get through Nature and thought and the veiled mind in life and Nature and its profounder aesthetic suggestions to some large and deep spiritual truth behind these things. This attempt did not come to perfect fruition; it stopped short partly because there had not been the right intellectual preparation or a sufficient basis of spiritual knowledge and experience; only so much could be given as the solitary individual intuition of the poet could attain by a difficult groping or a sudden sovereign effort. But partly also it failed because after the lapse into an age of reason the spontaneous or the intense language of spiritual poetry could not easily be found or, if found at times, could not be securely kept. So we get a deviation into a second age of intellectualism, an aesthetic or reflective poetry with a much wider range, but much less profound in its roots, much less high in its growth, the creation of a more informed, but less inspired intelligence. And partly out of this increasing wideness of the observing intelligence, partly by a dissatisfaction and recoil from these limitations has come the trend of a recent and contemporary poetry which seems at last to be approaching in some of its lines and in spite of many mistakes and divagations the secret of the utterance of profounder truth and the right magic of a speech and rhythm which will be the apt body and motion of its spirit.

The first definite starting-point of this long movement is the poetry of Chaucer. Then first the rough poverty of the Anglo-Saxon mind succeeded in assimilating

the French influence and refined and clarified by it its own rude speech and crude aesthetic sense. It is characteristic of the difficulty of the movement that as in its beginning, so at each important turn, or at least on the three first occasions of a new orientation, it has had thus to go to school, to make almost a fresh start under the influences of a foreign culture and foreign poetic forms and motives. It has needed each time in spite of so much poetic originality and energy and genius a strong light of suggestion from outside to set it upon its way. All modern literatures have had indeed at one time or another to open out to this kind of external help and stimulus; but, once formed and in possession of themselves, they adopt these impresses more or less lightly and only as a secondary assistance. But here we have a remodelling of the whole plan under foreign teaching. Chaucer gives English poetry a first shape by the help of French romance models and the work of Italian masters; the Elizabethans start anew in dependence on Renaissance influences from France and Italy and a side wind from Spain; Milton goes direct to classical models; the Restoration and the eighteenth century take pliantly the pseudo-classical form from the contemporary French poets and critics. Still this dependence is only in externals; in the essential things of poetry some native character prevails, a new turn is rapidly given, an original power and method emerges; the dynamic vitality of the race was too great not to arrive at an immediate transmutation of the invading force.

The first early motive and style of this poetry as it emerges in Chaucer strikes at once an English note. The motive is a direct and concrete poetic observation of ordinary human life and character. There is no preoccupying idea, no ulterior design; life, the external figure and surface of things is reflected as near as possible to its native form in the individual mind and temperament of the poet. Chaucer has his eye fixed on the object, and that object is the visible action of life as it passes before him throwing its figures on his mind and stirring it to a kindly satisfaction in the movement and its interest, a blithe sense of humour or a light and easy pathos. He does not seek to add anything to it or to see anything below it or behind its outsides. He is not concerned to look at all into the souls or deeply into the minds of the men and women whose appearance, action and easily apparent traits of character he describes with so apt and observant a fidelity. There is no call on the poet yet to ask himself what is the meaning of all this movement of life or the power in it or draw any large poetic idea from its vivid scheme and structure. He is not moved to interpret life; a clear and happy presentation is his business. It is there simply in the sunlight with its familiar lines and normal colours, sufficiently interesting in itself, by its external action, and he has to record it, to give it a shape in lucid poetic speech and rhythm; for to turn it into stuff of poetry that and the sunlight of his own happy poetic temperament in which he bathes it is all he needs. The form he gives to it is within its limits and for its work admirably apt, sufficient and satisfying,—altogether and excellently satisfying if we ask from it nothing more than it has to offer. Chaucer had captured the secret of ease, grace and lucidity from French romance poetry and has learned from the great Italians more force and compactness of expression than

French verse had yet attained, a force diluted and a compactness lightened for his purpose. But neither his poetic speech nor his rhythm has anything of the plastic greatness and high beauty of the Italians. It is an easy, limpid and flowing movement, a well-spring of natural English utterance without depths in it, but limpid and clear and pure. It is a form just fitted for the clear and pleasing poetic presentation of external life as if in an unsoiled mirror. At times it rises into an apt and pointed expression, but for the most part is satisfied with a first primitive power of poetic speech; a subdued and well-tempered even adequacy is its constant gift. Only once or twice does Chaucer, as if by accident, strike out a really memorable line of poetry; yet Dante and Petrarch were among his masters.

No other great poetical literature has had quite such a beginning. Others also started with a poetry of external life, Greek with the poetry of Homer, Latin with the historical epic of Ennius, French with the feudal romances of the Charlemagne cycle and the Arthurian cycle. But in none of these was the artistic aim simply the observant accurate presentation of Greek or Roman or feudal life. Homer gives us the life of man always at a high intensity of impulse and action and without subjecting it to any other change he casts it in lines of beauty and in divine proportions; he deals with it as Phidias dealt with the human form when he wished to create a god in marble. When we read the Iliad and the Odyssey, we are not really upon this earth, but on the earth lifted into some plane of a greater dynamis of life, and so long as we remain there we have a greater vision in a more lustrous air and we feel ourselves raised to a semi-divine stature. Ennius' object was to cast into poetical utterance the masculine and imperial spirit of Rome. So the spirit of catholic and feudal Europe transmutes life in the French romances and gives in its own way an ideal presentation of it which only misses greatness by the inadequacy of its speech and rhythmic movement and the diffuse prolixity of its form. Chaucer's poetic method has no such great conscious idea or natural uplifting motive or spirit. Whether the colour he gives happens to be realistic or romantic, it falls within the same formula. It is the clear and vivid reflection of external life, with sometimes just a first tinge of romantic illumination, in an observing mind that makes itself a shining poetic mirror.

The spirit of English poetry thus struck its first strong note, a characteristic English note, got as far as the Anglo-Saxon mind refined by French and Italian influence could go in its own proper way and unchanged nature, and then came suddenly to a pause. Many outward reasons might be given for that abrupt cessation, but none sufficient: for the cause lay deeper in the inner destiny of this spirit. The real cause was that to have developed upon this line would have been to wander up and down in a cul-de-sac; it would have been to anticipate in a way in poetry the self-imprisonment of Dutch art in a strong externalism, of a fairer kind indeed, but still too physical and outward in its motive. English poetry had greater things to do and it waited for some new light and more powerful impulse to come. Still this external motive and method are native to the English mind and with many modifica-

tions have put their strong impress upon the literature. It is the ostensible method of English fiction from Richardson to Dickens; it got into the Elizabethan drama and prevented it, except in Shakespeare, from equalling the nobler work of other great periods of dramatic poetry. It throws its limiting shade over English narrative poetry, which after its fresh start in the symbolism of the *Faery Queen* and the vital intensity of Marlowe ought either to have got clear away from this first motive or at least to have transmuted it by the infusion of much higher artistic motives. To give only one instance in many, it got sadly in the way of Tennyson, who yet had no real turn for the reproduction of life, and prevented him from working out the fine subjective and mystic vein which his first natural intuitions had discovered in such work as the *Lady of Shalott* and the *Morte d'Arthur*. Instead of any deepening of this new original note we have to put up with the *Princess* and *Enoch Arden* and the picturesque triviality of the *Idylls of the King* which give us the impression of gentlemen and ladies of Victorian drawing-rooms masquerading as Celtic-mediaeval knights and dames. If there is a meaning of some kind in it all, that does not come home to us because it is lost in a falsetto mimicking of the external strains of life. Certainly, it is useless to quarrel with national tendencies and characteristics which must show themselves in poetry as elsewhere; but English poetry had opened the gates of other powers and if it could always have lifted up the forms of external life by these powers, the substance of its work might then have meant much more to the world and the strength of its vision of things might constantly have equalled the power and beauty of its utterance. As it is, even poets of great power have been constantly drawn away by this tendency from the fulfilment of their more characteristic potentialities or misled into throwing them into inapt forms, and to this day there continues this confusion and waste of poetic virtue.

The new light and impulse that set free the silence of the poetic spirit in England for its first abundant and sovereign utterance, came from the Renaissance in Italy and Spain and France. The Renaissance meant many things and it meant too different things in different countries, but one thing above all everywhere, the discovery of beauty and joy in every energy of life. The Middle Ages had lived strongly and with a sort of deep and sombre force, but, as it were, always under the shadow of death and under the burden of an obligation to aspire through suffering to a beyond; their life is bordered on one side by the cross and on the other by the sword. The Renaissance brings in the sense of a liberation from the burden and the obligation; it looks at life and loves it in excess; it is carried away by the beauty of the body and the senses and the intellect, the beauty of sensation and action and speech and thought,—but of thought hardly at all for its own sake, but thought as a power of life. It is Hellenism returning with its strong sense of humanity and things human,  *nihil humani alienum*,<sup>1</sup> but at first a barbarised Hellenism, unbridled and extravagant, riotous in its vitalistic energy, too much overjoyed for restraint and measure.

Elizabethan poetry is an expression of this energy, passion and wonder of life,

<sup>1</sup> Nothing human is alien to me.

and it is much more powerful, disorderly and unrestrained than the corresponding poetry in other countries; for it has neither a past traditional culture nor an innate taste to restrain its extravagances. It springs up in a chaos of power and of beauty in which forms emerge and shape themselves by a stress within it for which there is no clear guiding knowledge except such as the instinctive genius of the age and the individual can give. It is constantly shot through with brilliant threads of intellectual energy, but is not at all intellectual in its innate spirit and dominant character. It is too vital for that, too much moved and excited; for its mood is passionate, sensuous, loose of rein; its speech sometimes liquid with sweetness, sometimes vehement and inordinate in pitch, enamoured of the variety of its own notes, revelling in image and phrase, a tissue of sweet or violent colours, of many-hued fire, of threads of golden and silver light.

It bestowed on the nation a new English speech, rich in capacity, gifted with an extraordinary poetic intensity and wealth and copiousness, but full also of the excesses of new formation and its disorder. A drama exultant in action and character and passion and incident and movement, a lyric and romantic poetry of marvellous sweetness, richness and force are its strong fruits. The two sides of the national mind threw themselves out for the first time, each with its full energy, but within the limits of a vital, sensuous and imaginative mould, fusing into each other and separating and alternating in outbursts of an unrestrained joy of self-expression, an admirable confusion of their autonomous steps, an exhilarating and stimulating license. The beauty and colour of one was dominant in its pure poetry, the vigour of the other took the lead in its drama, but both in Shakespeare were welded into a supreme phenomenon of poetic and dramatic genius. It is on the whole the greatest age of utterance, though not of highest spirit and aim, through which the genius of English poetry has yet travelled, unsurpassed in its spontaneous force and energy, unsurpassed in its brilliance of the expressive word and the creative image.

*(To be continued)*

SRI AUROBINDO

## NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

### THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1980)

June 5, 1935

*Another Bengali poem. Please cast a glance at it.*

I like your poem very much. The poet seems to have come out after all. So the pains of labour and even the forceps were useful. It is the turn of the Yogi to come out next, what? Even with a forceps!

*C says that dal and cucumber curry give her asthmatic attacks; so she wants double milk instead.*

Mother says you should not believe everything these women say—they are all hysteric or semi-hysteric and these are hysteric or at least nervous imaginations. If you start believing and acting on all of them, there will be no end. That is why Mother did not agree to the “more milk”!

June 7, 1935

*I was happy to know that you liked my poem, but I accept with much reservation your other statement that the poet has come out, for after a long labour I could not even complete a sonnet. If the poet has come out I think it is a sort of Krishna's afternoon visit to Chaitanya! As for the Yogi, I submit myself to anything.*

Well, at any rate it proves that he is there—for these poems were true poetry—and can come out even if he has still to be dragged out by the hair of his head. In time he will surely become less shy and difficult. As for the Yogi—well, we will see.

June 8, 1935

*I can't resist the temptation of disturbing your Sabbath, Sir; here is a poem. The forceps were indispensable, but I hope it will be an 'Angel'!*

It is not bad at all—can be accorded the “order of merit”. Traces of the forceps are visible. But if you go on, probably the forceps will not be indispensable.

*One point, is there any truth in this 'white flame' of the Purusha? The psychic being is supposed to be a flame, but it's also called the Secret Purusha. The image is then correct?*

Of course the image is quite legitimate for the psychic being. The psychic being is a Purusha, not a flame—the psychic fire is not the being, it is something proper to it.

*June 9, 1935*

*We had a discussion on Divine Love yesterday at D's place. Can we say the Divine may love one more than another? The expression would then be a little misleading because it will bring in human comparisons.*

Not only a "little", but very misleading.

*I would like to ask something about it. It is said that the Divine loves all equally; yet it is a fact that some are dearer to Him than others. I believe, you too say the same thing!*

I don't say; it is the Gita that says it—or rather there are two separate slokas; one says that the Divine makes no differences—the other says that Arjuna is especially dear to him.

*There are many instances to show that some persons are dearer to the Divine than others. Besides Krishna and Arjuna, we have the instance of Buddha and Ananda.*

There is also St. John, the beloved disciple.

*Then again, Vivekananda was dearer to Ramakrishna than other disciples. Chaitanya showered his grace on Madhai and Jagai, but were they closer to him than Nitai?*

But he had love for them (shouldn't I love them for that reason?).<sup>1</sup>

*What is it that determines this—I really don't know?*

Of course you don't—nor does anybody. Is love a creation of the reason? Or dealt out by this or that scale? Or does the Divine calculate, "This fellow has so much of this or that quality? I will give him just so much more love than to that other."

*This question is not only of theoretical interest to us, but also of practical importance,*

<sup>1</sup> The well-known words of Chaitanya put in brackets here were written by Sri Aurobindo in Bengali.

*since in our stumblings and gropings the Divine here may have a soft corner for some, and not perhaps for others to the same extent.*

All that is rather beside the point. There is a universal divine love that is given equally to all—but also there is a *special relation* with each man—it is not a question of more or less, though it may appear so. But even that less or more cannot be judged by human standards. The man who gets a blow may, if he has a certain relation, feel it as a divine caress; he may even say, erecting his own standard, “She loves me more than others, because to others she would not give that blow, to me she felt she could give it,” and it would be quite as good a standard as the kind treatment one—as standards go. But no standards apply. For in each case it is according to the relation. The cause of the relation? It differs in each case.

*Sometimes I feel that if the Divine loves all equally, even then D and myself, for example, transgressing some vital rules of the Ashram, will not be equally treated. In my saner moments I have tried to look at it more rationally.*

That does not stand. Sometimes you might get nothing except perhaps an invisible stare; sometimes I might say, “Now, look here, Nirod, don’t make an immortal ass of yourself—that is not the transformation wanted.” Still another time I might shout “Now! now! What the hell! What the blazes!” So it would depend on the occasion, not only on the person.

*As usual, in a discussion X lost his temper and hit out at Y and made her terribly upset. He remarked to me, “Today I have hit her deliberately. Always she thinks that we know nothing.” You must have been given a report of the incident.*

Obviously, there was the intention to strike. That is the worst of these discussions that people can’t keep their temper or avoid bringing in their ego.

*Maybe you will have to write my version of the affair to D. Whatever be the consequences, I will take them with a true attitude.*

I don’t propose to do so.

*June 11, 1935*

*If I may make a personal allusion—. I have all of a sudden been the recipient of your jokes and humour denoting an intimacy. What can be the reason for it?*

Cast your plummet into the deep and perhaps you shall find it—or perhaps you will hit something that has nothing at all to do with it.

*S has got some boils. What about giving him vaccine injections?*

Yes. Have you not got a counter-smoking injection for him also?

*In your letter to Z you speak of a special relation with the Mother. Is this determined by the need and temperament of the sadhak?*

The need and temperament are one element only. It is the relation as a whole from which everything flows. These things are not arranged by some mental reason or calculated intuition. The source is deeper and it is a reality behind that acts.

*Some say that the Divine Love is like a rose; those who come nearer to it, that is, open themselves more, necessarily get more of it.*

Of course—but those who don't open themselves get it too—without knowing it often. Unfortunately many don't recognise or appreciate their good luck and may even go grumbling and bumbling off into the darkness.

*But I say that the Divine Love is a rose which is impersonal as well as personal.*

Of course.

*Some people are of the opinion that those in whom the psychic has evolved through many births will come nearer to the Divine, and will, therefore, be dearer to Him than others whose psychic is still a child.*

The psychic is always a child—*bālavat*—only it can be a very wise child.

*Is it because my psychic development needs it? Is it because I have to be handled only in this way?*

All these wise reasonings are rubbish. You are *x* and therefore you get *yz*, that is all.

*You asked me to cast my plummet in the deep to find out the reason. But the "deep" is too deep for my plummet.*

For any mental plummet. It is not the mind that can discover these things.

*I don't want to know the cause of the relationship. All I say is that personal relationship does exist with some which is different from the impersonal relationship of Love*

That is of course quite true. Why not leave it there?

June 12, 1935

S has again pain and relapse of previous symptoms. (I may add in strict privacy that this has happened after a quarrel in D.R.), a revolt of feelings against the Mother and a day and a half hunger strike; but as this is yogic or rather unyogic and not medical, you should pretend not to know anything about it.

*We feel that your Force gives us the necessary inspiration for poetry, but I often wonder if you send it in a continuous current.*

Of course not. Why should I? It is not necessary. I put my Force from time to time and let it work out what has to be worked out. It is true that with some I have to put it often to prevent too long stretches of unproductivity, but even there I don't put a continuous current. I haven't time for such things.

*If the current were continuous, we would not write just 15 to 20 lines at a stretch and then go on for days together producing only 3 or 4 lines.*

That depends on the mental instrument. Some people write freely—others do so only when in a special condition.

*We should be able to feel the inspiration as soon as we sit down with pen and paper, shouldn't we?*

No, at least I myself don't have continuous inspiration at command like that in poetry.

*I don't think a latent faculty brought out by Yogic Force would achieve the same result as a faculty which manifests in the natural way.*

Of course not, so long as it is latent or not fully emerged. But once it is manifested and settled there is no reason why it should not achieve equal perfection. All depends on the quality of the inspiration that comes and the response of the instrument.

June 13, 1935

*While I was having my afternoon nap, I felt some rays of the sun were trying to pierce my brow. It means something, I suppose.*

It simply means that some rays of the light of Truth were trying to get inside your skull. As you say "trying", I won't commit myself further than that. Strictly speaking, as it was the brow, it means trying to get into the inner mind and light it up a little.

*You said on the previous day that the quick emerging of a faculty depends on a favourable ādhār. But on what does this favourableness depend?*

How can one say on what it depends? It depends on all the past and all the future and on what is behind the present also!! The mental instrument is what has been formed for the present life—naturally if it has by present nature a marked beginning of capacity in a certain direction it will be more easy for something that is pressing to manifest, to develop through it than it will be for an instrument not so naturally responsive. But “more easy” is all one can say. It does not follow that the facile instrument will do more than the difficult one. There are poets who produce with no difficulty; there are poets who produce with difficulty; there are poets who produce with occasional facility and customary difficulty. All kinds go into the cosmic hotch-potch.

*R says he is well today, free from his headache.*

Perhaps that is why he proclaims that he is sad. He evidently means to become “artistic” in temperament. It is well known that you can’t be an artist unless you are a prey to fits of romantic and meaningless sadness.

*June 15, 1935*

*I am at the end of a long poem; have been working at it for many hours, but could not extract anything.*

But what did you extract? Not even words? What a constipation!

*I thought what a waste of time! Should one sit down to write without any inspiration seeming to drop?*

I suppose you have to go on sitting down until the inspiration gets converted and drops as soon as you sit.

*You can’t say that there is no application. But is it the right method, I ask?*

Try, try again—as the spider said to Bruce.

*Previously I was sleeping like a dog and now I am working like a bull.*

The bull is the mother animal.

*A flood of energy is there, but to what purpose?*

*O Force, Force,*

*Can you ever break this course  
Tough stuff?*

Well, if you can achieve poetry like that in English, what may you not do in Bengali?

*June 17, 1935*

*Can you stretch your hand, Sir, and help me out of this mud of the subconscious, inconscient, universal nature or God knows what?*

I am quite willing to stretch out any number of hands for the purpose. Hold on and you will get out.

*June 18, 1935*

*Where is the joy of the creator? I don't find or feel any!*

It is the medical man with his forceps that comes in the way of the Ananda, I suppose,—too much occupied with the doubt and difficulty of delivery. But the poet is there beyond a doubt now. So buck up, kick off the man of sorrows from your shoulders and go cheerfully ahead.

*June 19, 1935*

*You have often spoken of the Man of Sorrows in connection with me. But I was a cheerful fellow at school and college. So I am afraid he is a contribution, partly at least, of your Yoga.*

Not of my Yoga, but of the blasted atmosphere that has been created here by the theory that revolt, doubt and resultant shout and struggle and all that rot are the best way to progress. The Ashram has never been able to get out of it, but only some people have escaped. The others have opened themselves to the confounded Man of Sorrows and got the natural consequence. But why the devil did you do it? The Man of Sorrows is a fellow who is always making a row in himself and covering himself with a sevenfold overcoat of tragedy and gloom and he would not feel his existence justified if he couldn't be colossally miserable—when he gets on people's backs he puts the same thing on them. Yoga on the other hand tells you even if you have all sorts of unpleasantnesses to live in the inner sunlight—your own or God's. At least most Yogas do except the Vaishnava—but the Yoga here is not a Vaishnava Yoga.

*(To be continued)*

## **A DREAM OF CHAMPAKLAL ON THE MORNING OF 11TH MAY 1980**

**RELATED BY HIMSELF**

SOMEWHERE on top of a high mountain, a priest approached me and asked me to do some ceremony. I was not keen on doing it. But the priest said, "Just have an experience of this also. I know from where you come and I know that about you which you yourself even do not know."

Kamalaben was with me. She told me, "As you say, you are not particular about either doing it or not doing it. You say both are equal for you. So there is no harm in doing. Have an experience, as Baba says." The priest smiled and told Kamalaben, "I know he will do it. I know that these things are not necessary for him at all. But for you, it is better you do it."

Both of us performed the ceremony with some leaves and flowers, as he instructed. There were no deities whatever. Some persons present there also wanted to perform the ceremony and asked the priest if they could do it. But the priest refused and did not even look at them. They remarked, "Maharaj, we shall give whatever Dakshina is needed for it." The priest did not answer. These people persisted very much, and pleaded again and again. The priest questioned, "What can you give? Do you know how and what to give?" Some persons were annoyed at this reply of the priest; they were vexed and went away. But some remained and very humbly submitted to the priest, "Please tell us what you mean." The priest explained, "Here you do not have to give external things but offer everything from within. Come after you have lost all interest in what you are doing at your place. Then surely I shall receive you very joyfully." They enquired, "Can we remain here for some time?" The priest replied, "If it pleases you."

Our ceremony was over. The priest paid more attention to Kamalaben than to me. He then instructed me, "Now take all these flowers and leaves and follow me." Kamalaben said that she was not coming. It was more than enough for her. She stated that her whole body had become quiet and something was going on in her. She wanted to be very quiet and did not wish to move from there. The priest told me, "Yes, she cannot come. It is better for her to remain here." The priest asked me to carry my flowers and leaves as well as hers and we started.

The path was sandy and uneven. We went up and down. There were some hillocks on the way. There was sand everywhere but, while we walked, our legs did not at all sink into it. We felt as if we were walking on a concrete road but as we looked down, it was all sand. The place was like a desert. I have heard about deserts and seen them in my visions too. But this place was totally different.

As we proceeded, we came across a very wide, an endless range of mountains on the right side. They were magnificent and of varied hues, aspiring to touch the skies. On the left was a vast expanse of glittering sand. I then saw a small pool full

of golden beautiful water. I learnt that it was very deep. The priest asked me to sit down. He said, "Put all you have, in this water," and repeated again and again, "Put all you have. I know you will be able to do so." I offered in the water all that I had carried along with the flowers and leaves. I then noticed something dark in colour emerging from me though I could not perceive where it came from. That too went into the water. The priest chanted: "Om Shanti Om Shanti Om Shanti Jaya Ho." I experienced something new which I am unable to describe. The priest looked very happy. I told him, "I request you to please wait here. I am coming back. This place is so enchanting, and the atmosphere is absolutely unique." We had visited many lovely places but this was incomparable!

I wished Kamalaben also could share the joy of this experience. The priest smiled and said, "Try if you can." I went to Kamalaben. She refused to come. But I pleaded, "You must come. You know well that generally I do not insist on anything you do not want or do not like to do, but now come for me". Kamalaben relented: "All right, let us go."

We walked and walked. Kamalaben remarked, "Really, the place is exceptional. We have seen many places but this is unparalleled. No words to match it! Now I realise why you wanted me to come. Oh, what an atmosphere! One does not wish to move from here." We went a little further when she declared, "Now I can go no further." I too observed that it was not possible for her to continue any more. I submitted, "Well then, next time we both will go surely."

I went back alone to the priest. He smiled and said, "Are you satisfied now? I knew Kamalaben would not be able to come. Time is not yet right for her. But if I had told this to you before, you would not have believed me." I replied, "Next time I want to come with her and with some other persons." The priest confirmed, "Yes, next time Kamalaben will surely be able to come." I told him about Bansidhar bhai. He said, "Yes, I know everything about him." The priest enquired if I would like to go further. I replied, "Indeed, your offer is very tempting but I think it will be better if I come next time. Kamalaben is also waiting there. Of course, she has told me not to worry about her and that The Mother is with her."

Just then I heard a sound and woke up. I realised that I had been nicely dreaming! There was a knock again and I got up and opened the door. Birenda was there. I was surprised to see him at that time. Generally he comes in the morning. I thought perhaps he did not want to disturb me in the morning. He was with me for some time. After he left, I noticed that the curtain between Sri Aurobindo's Room and His bathroom was down. I thought that perhaps it had opened by itself. But the right side of the curtain's flap was fixed on to the hook. So it seemed that the curtain was purposely let down. I conjectured that some special visitor had come to see Sri Aurobindo's Room.

When Birenda had left me, it was ten minutes to six. I waited for fifteen minutes. There was some sound and it became quiet again. The curtain remained down. Time passed but no one came to fix it up. I thought that Bansidhar

bhai might have gone to bring the photograph for me and so Janardhan bhai must have come for Sri Aurobindo's Room. He seemed to have forgotten to lift up the curtain and must have left by this time. It was ten minutes past six—time for Bansidhar bhai to come. I thought of going towards the curtain. Just then Kamalaben came. I enquired why the curtain was down. She could not understand me. I saw that she was preparing for my bath. This puzzled me very much. I could not comprehend this preparation for my bath at that time! I enquired, "What is the time?" I was surprised to learn it was morning while all along I was thinking it was evening! Nirod-da also came.

Still I could not find a link in the time-gap. It has never happened like that in my life—this discrepancy about the time. The Mother alone knows the reason. Each one will explain it in his own way. Only The Mother knows the reality. On one side, externally I was so much puzzled about the time while, on the other, there was an inner pull of the experience—which was a dream!

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## MY POETRY

ALWAYS I leave  
 Holes in my poetry  
 That only Thou mayst drop Thyself  
 Some seed of Thee.

Often in a word  
 Time's drama has outshone—  
 Thy music through  
 Each syllable has blown.

For, not at all  
 Our outer world shall be viewed,  
 But a softness, a mission,  
 A moving mystical mood,

A poised precision,  
 A well so lucid, tender—  
 Thy Love alone;  
 It calls my pen's surrender.

ASTRID

## AN EXPERIENCE RECOLLECTED

It was in 1963. Sehra was ill. I informed the Mother. Having acted as usual with her spiritual force she expected a result. But somehow the attack of asthma continued. Then a strange incident took place. I wrote to the Mother about it.

On the night of January 13, racked by a terrible asthmatic spasm, Sehra was sitting on her bed with her legs hanging to the floor. She felt her feet were getting cold; so she wanted to put on her sandals. When she bent towards them she became aware of something at once very soothing and very energising. To her great surprise she saw the Mother's bare feet putting on her own sandals as if getting ready to go out. Immediately Sehra touched those feet and exclaimed: "Oh, the Mother is here!" Soon afterwards, she lay down in her bed and went to sleep. When she woke up, she was completely cured.

The Mother confirmed later that Sehra had not indulged her imagination. The Mother's feet had been really there—rather something of her that took the form of her feet in order to become perceptible to Sehra.

I have learnt on reliable authority that when the Mother recounted this whole incident to a French disciple she gave it as an example of what could happen by way of an automatic response on her part and introduced it with the words: "quelqu'un qui m'aime vraiment, c'est Sehra, la femme d'Amal..." ("someone who loves me truly, it is Sehra, the wife of Amal...")

AMAL KIRAN

## A DREAM-VISION ON 14 JUNE 1956

### A LETTER TO THE MOTHER

AFTER the Distribution at the Playground, instead of going into your room you are sitting in a broad gold chair with red plush, which is like a throne. Nobody is there except Amiyo standing near you. There is no electric light. The effect in the atmosphere is as of very faint moonlight. Your dress is also gold and red, both in a different shade from that of the chair, a lighter shade.

I come towards you, hesitatingly, uncertainly. I am wondering what you are doing. You call me. When I go close, you pull me to yourself. I kneel at your side. As I can't understand what you want to do, I look at you. You catch me by the shoulders and pull me so that my head is in your lap. The feeling is as if I were pulled inside you. You ask me: "Don't you want it? You have asked for it so many times!" Then I say: "Mother, are you really going to give it to me?" You laugh and reply: "Certainly." Then you separate me from my body and say: "Now you will never feel separate from me."

SEHRA

## A LITTLE BREATH OF GRACE

### A REMINISCENCE

FROM my childhood, whenever I travelled, I used to gather nice pebbles or leaves of strange trees and flowers in memory of the holidays. When I was in Pondicherry in February 1972—a very sacred time—the same habit was bothering me anew. Every time I was at the Ashram, I anxiously looked for a leaf of the famous Service-Tree. But nothing! The courtyard was always extremely clean, and while I was sitting there the tree did not lose a single leaf. A friend in the Guest House proposed that I should pluck a leaf—but this I never would have done.

After about four weeks there came the day of departure. I went to the Ashram to bid goodbye and sat, as time and again, on the staircase behind Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi, the elbows not extremely lady-like on the knees, the hands joined and the thumbs pressed against each other. This I remember exactly, for while dreaming with closed eyes and praying to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for their blessings I suddenly felt a very slight touch at the inside of the circle formed by the folded fingers and the thumbs. I looked upward—nobody! I looked below—*voilà*—between my feet there was a wonderful fresh leaf of the Service-Tree—the only one far and wide! In that moment, my heart seemed to burst with happiness. This not only because of the leaf but also for the clear proof of our Mother's visible love.

BRIGITTE SCHELLINGER

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### IN MEMORY OF THE MISHAP ON 24. 4. 1980

IN the love of the Mother you lived, so near to Her, O blessed soul!  
Free and undivided, giving your heart's rich whole.  
Though rash and reckless was your fatal decision, but then  
The date and the time and the miracled perfection of the plan  
Make it clear that with you She plunged too, invoking our great  
Master,

And held you close to Her breast, safe from disaster.  
Your peaceful look and slightly parted lips in calm delight  
Bear a shining seal of the Saviour Force, the Mother's All-might.  
Even in your death was revealed the unexpected God-face.  
O rest in peace, dear Sehra, in the splendid lap of Grace.

A. VENKATARANGA

# SIDELIGHTS ON THE AUROBINDONIAN TRUTH

## A LETTER FROM KRISHNA PREM (RONALD NIXON) AND A COMMENT BY K. D. SETHNA

### The Letter

Dear Mr. Koske,

September 1946

“Whom should I believe?” You can cut Bradley, Bergson, Hegel, etc., out of the list as admittedly their views are mere speculations. They do not even claim to have reached the other shore. How, then, will they guide us? It is useless to reach one unique and final philosophical system. All such systems are relative. The Buddha described his teachings as like a raft—useful to cross the river but to be left behind on the further bank. Though not admitted by all others, this is true of all systems. Each is useful and helpful to certain types of aspirants. None is absolute or finally true but all contain truths of a relative sort useful to people in a certain position. A great Western Mystic—Eckhart—wrote: “Why dost thou prate of God? Whatever thou sayest of Him is untrue.” And another: “Neither God nor Heaven nor Hell nor the World can be otherwise honourable in you or by you except by their own existence and manifestation in you.” All pretended knowledge of these things without this self-evident perception of their birth within you is only such knowledge as the blind man has of the light he had never seen. Which one to choose then? Whichever most stirs your heart and clarifies your ideas will be most helpful to you but if you think it is absolutely true you are asking for trouble. All statements are true from one point of view—false from another. Where to get the final Unmistakable Truth? In your heart. Nowhere else. Yes, books are a help—if not taken too seriously. Characteristic signs of such a man? See Gita II verse 53 onwards and XII verses 13-20. And many other places elsewhere. How to know that a man has these qualities? That is the difficulty and all of us are liable to make mistakes of judgement there. The purer one’s heart the freer from desires, the truer becomes our judgement.

“Relative and Absolute; Finite and Infinite: where do these meet?” Nowhere; but also in Sri Krishna; and your own heart. These three answers are the same.

“Whose interpretation of symbols shall I take as correct?” Whichever one helps you most—till you find a better one.

“The fully liberated man is beyond all progress and time. He dwells in Eternity. But there are many stages on the road and some of them are so high above us that we often think of them as the End. The actual final transformation is, I believe, sudden but it is certainly prepared for by ways that are gradual—the various Yogas. All that the imagination can imagine and the reason conceive is not and cannot be a proximate (*i.e.*, direct, immediate) means of union with God.” But all things can be indirect means, *i.e.*, they can help us to get to that place from which we can see for ourselves—which we can do suddenly.

“When this is attained, what next?” There is no next. Do not ask me whether so and so is such a man. How do I know?

“We are free to act either for Krishna or for self. It is like a fork in a road; you can go either way freely but, having chosen, what happens is determined.” But this fork occurs at each point in the road; we have to choose each moment. Most people act only for self and hence their lives can be largely foretold by palmistry, astrology, etc. It is well known that such sciences fail with Mahatmas, *i.e.*, those who serve Sri Krishna.

As for the foreseeing by “supermind”—if it were intelligible to the mind it would not be supramental.

I don’t think I can have said, “Mind, evolution and supermind are not important at all.” If I did, it was a slip. I should have said, “Theories and views about mind, etc., are not important.” If you surrender to God you will come to know about the realities that are referred to by all such descriptions.

Because certain Mahatmas do not use the word “supermind” proves nothing about the thing. All the great seers have taught that there are divine levels of being ‘lower’ than the Ultimate Transcendent Reality but beyond or above the mind. What does Supermind mean except just that—above the mind. Why worry about the absence of the Latin word “super”? Not all, however, have thought it fit to emphasise these divine levels. That was their business and for them to judge. Some have desired their pupils to fix their thoughts only on the Ultimate Eternal. Times and needs vary.

“If sorrows, etc., are ordained by God, why seek to interfere?” But supposing it is God Himself in your heart who urges you to “interfere” or transmute? After all, the game is His game and He plays it from His Seat in all beings (Gita VIII. 61). Especially if a heart is surrendered to Him He uses it to bring about His masterpieces. If your argument was true, then what to say of transmuting? None of the great Teachers and Avatars would have taught it at all but would just have said: “All things are equal to *my* vision—let others do what they please.” The Lila will never be complete as long as there is a spot anywhere that is resistant to the Divine Light. That means transmutation.

Sri Krishna and Buddha had doubtless destroyed their egos (or never had them), and yet they undoubtedly talked and acted “in terms of individual being”. Note that I am neither supporting nor attacking Sri Aurobindo’s special Yoga. I merely say that the divine levels beyond the mind are certainly a fact. It is said that “earth consciousness” will be transmuted. When, where and how and “by whom” I neither know nor care.

I cannot tell you what Sri Aurobindo means by “central being”. There is that within us which is the ray, or image, of Krishna Himself. It is in the very centre of one’s being and in our inmost Self. It is untouched by all sorrow, pain, etc. It is divine in origin because it has no origin. If I spoke of “central being”, that is what I should mean. What others mean by it they must explain.

No, the man who has attained the state does not "take part in worldly activities". But he may easily appear to do so to worldly men.

"Beliefs turning to realities." No. What happens is that the reality which the belief partly referred to and described comes to be seen as it really is. The belief is always partly true partly false. Certainly beliefs lead to experiences. So do maps—but the map cannot become the countryside, can it?

"Is Sri Aurobindo's supramental a reality for him?" I imagine so, but how should I know?

Your question about the terrible sufferings of men. I certainly believe them all to be *Karma Phala*.

"Two things provoke horror when one contemplates them: (1) the sufferings of men, (2) the evil in men's hearts." These two things are the same things.

"How do you expect me to trust myself in God's hands?" I don't expect. I merely say that if you do you will find peace. The choice is yours and I expect nothing. Yes, the multitude of conflicting views is certainly perplexing—Buddha referred to the saint as "liberated from the jungle of views, the tangle of views, the labyrinth of views". Yet, after all, each man on his own house-top in Bombay would give a different description of what he saw. Ignore everyone who you think has used words unscrupulously for some end of his own. But, if you think him sincere, then try and understand why he has used just those words to describe his vision.

Sri Aurobindo's words have helped many. My own (which you refer to) have perhaps assisted a few. If words help you then use them. If not look elsewhere.

"My second fear is whether I have the complete freedom to choose." No. I don't suppose you (or anyone) has complete freedom. But we have some and anyhow if you give way to all these "fears" you will get nowhere at all.

"There may be a lion round the corner." Yes, there may be—and there may not. Anyhow, get on.

"How to end this long series of contradictions?" Contradictions are inherent in all finite things. All contradictions are resolved in Him. If you seek the Truth beyond the world you must not fear contradictions and paradoxes.

My principal objection as to the fact that all this so-called "knowledge" is passively received often through an entranced medium and where or who it comes from no one knows. The psychic realm is full of illusions and all such communications are a mixture. I don't say there is never any truth in them but it is hard to sift it from the error, and the practice of such spiritistic communications is harmful to medium, sitter and to the "spirit" of the dead when any such is present which is by no means always so. That is why I think all great Teachers have condemned it. A celebrated Buddhist scholar became a spiritualist towards the end of her life. She re-wrote many of her books in the light of what the spirits told her of Buddha. Unfortunately they also told her some things about contemporary events which proved to be incorrect. Quite apart from that, however, the whole method seems to me harmful.

What you quote from Romain Rolland is excellent. I entirely agree. I, at least,

cannot give you the ultimate Secret. I am myself but a wayfarer. My experience is that all the great mystics have said the same thing. Only they have naturally used different words on account of the different types of people they were addressing. If you read Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy* (Harper and Co.), you will see from his extensive and wide-spread quotations how great an agreement there has always been among them. But difference in presentation and emphasis there will always be because of different needs of the different types of men.

Try to give up this craving for the one unique point of view. It was for this reason that the Buddha abstained from all such and merely emphasised the conditions we must develop in ourselves to see the truth for ourselves. But human nature craves a "view" of some kind and so views are forthcoming—but, naturally, they are all relative. The absolute Truth must be found and experienced by each seeker for himself. There is no other way. All the seers have said it cannot be expressed.

The fact is that that Reality is already within you. Various impurities (which all reduce to egoism) prevent its shining forth. Nevertheless some degree of shining forth does occur and that is what we term "faith". Therefore follow this light of your faith and you will come to the Reality. The various types of faith are due to various types of impurity. Therefore do not seek one faith for all but follow what you yourself have. Perhaps you will say that your faith goes out to things that seem contradictory. Very likely. In that case do not attempt to deny either but hold both as it were in solution (even in defiance of logic). Sooner or later, as you advance, the position will clear and you will see that what were two contradictory views are merely two aspects of one truth. The North Pole of a magnet is not contradictory of the South. The great thing is to get a move on—any direction is better than none. You will find "the one unwavering voice" you seek in your own heart. It is there always, but we confuse it with the other voices (desire) that are also sounding there. As we learn to turn away from them we hear the one Voice more and more clearly.

Sorry I have to be brief with many of your questions. To answer them properly would require a book not a letter. Good luck to you. We must not hesitate to stake our lives. They are of no real value anyhow unless they are united with Krishna. And everything else goes down the drain eventually anyhow.

P.S. When I suggested that "Gurus" could make mistakes it referred to them as general expounders—not as personal teachers of their disciples. For the disciple his Guru's teachings are and must be absolute, so if you seek absolute truth find your Guru and abandon everything at his feet.

### The Comment

Dear Mr. Koske,

January 1947

Krishna Prem's letter has several beautiful and luminous hints. Coming from a heart of true spirituality they cannot but prove of living use to a sincere aspirant.

However, a few points he does not seem to touch with sufficient clarity—at least in my view.

When he says that no philosophical system is absolute and finally true, he is not wrong if he means that times and needs change and philosophical expression must keep pace with them and constantly change, so that no absoluteness and finality can be considered possible. He is not wrong either if he means that no intellectual formulation is such as would satisfy every intellect. Some sort of non-conviction every system will carry to some minds. This is because logic is an instrument adaptable to various possibilities: minds are made differently and different lines of argument occur and appeal to them.

Krishna Prem is, again, not wrong if he means that no matter how perfect-seeming and complete-appearing a system of philosophy may be, there is always something that it cannot bring out, a mystery that eludes its statements, a subtlety that transcends its expository terms. The precise stance, so to speak, of the final and absolute truth is not imageable in philosophical language: another kind of speech comes nearer to it—the speech of intuitive and symbolic poetry derived from the highest available range of inspiration. But we may say that even this *mantra* of poetry will not convey the *totum simul* of truth's multitudinous stance, because the time-consciousness through which it must come to us and the time-conditions under which it must get embodied by us bring in a succession of revelatory masses and can never directly present the simultaneous whole of the divine reality. In any case, philosophical language falls short somewhere.

Still, I feel that so far as a particular period of human evolution is concerned and so far as the nature and scope of philosophical language permit we can speak of absoluteness and finality. At the present moment, for instance, there is a certain stretch of possibility of human evolution into the Divine: with reference to this stretch, that system is final and absolute which reflects, however shadowily, its main implications. These implications will be caught if the right sort of light is behind the philosopher's intellect and if that light is held by it in the right position. Whether everybody will find convincing the system concatenating these implications is a different matter: it need not affect the correctness of the conclusions, the broad conformity of the argument to the disposition of the full spiritual reality today. The correctness and the conformity would be all the less impugnable if Krishna Prem believes not that spiritual possibilities vary with the times but that there is at all times the possibility of our attaining by Yoga the absolute and final truth; for, if an absolute and final truth one and the same for all times is attainable, why should there not be as far as the intellect is illuminable an absolute and final system of philosophy? A system may not give every colour and contour of truth, yet it can be accurate in general outline and general proportion. Of course, as Krishna Prem writes, mere speculators like Bradley, Bergson, Hegel, etc., can never give us the ultimate philosophy. Only those who philosophise *through* but not *with* the intellect can be said to be in the running, since they speak out of a light beyond the human.

I should like also to comment on Krishna Prem's words: "Theories and views about mind, evolution, supermind are not important and you should not worry about these things but trust yourself in the hands of God." This is excellent advice for whoever is being obstructed by theories and views from plunging into spiritual practice. But two facts are slurred over. There is a type of mind which requires some sort of intellectual support for taking the plunge into Yoga wholly. All are not able to give themselves into the Guru's charge with an all-absorbing heart-movement and with no appeal by the intellect for philosophical guidance. No doubt, we must approach a Yogi primarily as spiritual Guru if even his philosophy is to mean all it can to us, but the perfect Guru takes into account the intellectual type and does his best to answer its appeal. He would certainly warn against getting caught in theories and views instead of living the mystical life, but he would not deny importance altogether to them. The intellect is a legitimate part of us and, if properly used, has an undeniable importance. That is my first point.

The second is that it is too easily assumed that if one puts oneself into the hands of God under the Guruship of any Yogi one would attain the utter divine truth: in other words, there is no need to bother about what the Guru has to say about things like mind, evolution, supermind, for all his theories and views boil down ultimately to the same thing as those of any other teacher. I think that all Yogis do not realise the identical range of truth and that in choosing one's Guru one cannot easily afford to ignore his views about the goal of life and the destiny of man. These views are an index to his realisation and also a pointer—generally speaking—to what one will be heading for in spiritual attainment. Of course one cannot go on for ever chopping logic and discussing the philosophical expressions of various teachers: one must make up one's mind as soon as possible and take the actual yogic leap—and if one is unable to choose mentally, it is best to follow one's heart and select some Guru or other rather than remain whirling in endless debate. As Krishna Prem says, "the great thing is to get a move on, any direction is better than none"; but provided one does not get into an interminable whirl, the theories and views such as Krishna Prem relegates to the background may well have, if one is inclined to mental reflection, a hand in determining the Guru one throws in one's lot with. For, as I have said, there are Gurus and Gurus and they give us different realisations in spite of a certain glorious common factor arising from the One that is differently realised. You are quite right in thinking that what is called the Supermind is Sri Aurobindo's speciality and that it is not compassed by Masters of the Silent Self like Raman Maharshi or even by the more catholic Vivekananda: the synthetic genius of Ramakrishna himself has not embraced its basic implications. Krishna Prem seems to me mistaken in saying that if you surrender to God under any Guru you will come to know the reality that is referred to by the term "Supermind".

"Supermind" does not, as he imagines, mean only "above the mind" and does not coincide simply with what other seers have discovered to be divine levels of being, above the mind yet lower than the "Ultimate Transcendent Reality". The Latin

word “super”, as used by Sri Aurobindo, has a particular significance which emerges with unique force once we look at his table of what is above the mind. He speaks of the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuition, the Overmind and then the Supermind. The word “super” does not indiscriminately cover all these levels. It acquires, as distinguished from the word “over”, a shade of utter supremacy, and in his expositions the Supermind does not stand for merely the highest level of being below the “Ultimate Transcendent Reality” but for a part and parcel of that very Reality: only, it is the part that is turned towards creation, towards the bringing forth and harmonisation of the truths implicit in the Transcendent for world-play. I agree with you that in the Aurobindonian scheme it points to Yogic obligations which are not present in the schemes of other Masters or Mahatmas.

I am afraid Krishna Prem has somehow missed these obligations in his reading of Sri Aurobindo—and the central obligation is the integral transformation of human nature. All Yogis talk of transformation or, to employ Krishna Prem’s version, “transmutation”, but they do not mean what Sri Aurobindo means, and to show what he means he has spent the last forty years in doing Yoga and still declares that he has not completed his realisation. Could one think that Sri Aurobindo had to spend forty years in nearly attaining what Buddha attained in five years, Ramakrishna in almost as few and Raman Maharshi in about the same or even less? Sri Aurobindo would then be not the greatest Yogi of our day but the greatest dunce of the divine life! Surely it is clear that he is at a mighty unparalleled job and is trying to compass and establish on earth a truth which has not been known so far. If, as Krishna Prem declares, the final unmistakable truth is to be found in the heart and if by surrendering to God one gets it no matter who one’s Guru is and what theories and views are held by the Guru, then Sri Aurobindo’s Supermind would have been common property and anybody now can find it and there is no need to see any point in his long Yoga and in the explanations he has time and again supplied of the distinct special nature and function of the Supermind. I shall not here enter into a description of the supramental goal or into the *rationale* of it: suffice it to say that there is an obvious case for considering that goal new and momentous and that therefore theories and views about it have an illuminative and directive role to play in leading at least some minds to recognise the uniqueness of Sri Aurobindo’s Guruship.

There is one difficulty of yours which Krishna Prem hasn’t dealt with, though he has made some remarks on matters allied to it. You have said, in effect: “If I accept Sri Aurobindo as my Guru and take him to stand for the Divine and to share the Divine’s qualities of omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence, then what about the fact that Sri Aurobindo is sometimes doubtful, vague, uncertain and unable to give his final opinion on certain subjects in authoritative words? How am I to account for sentences like: ‘I am totally unacquainted with McTaggart’s thought and his writings; so it is a little difficult for me to answer you with any certainty’ or ‘I don’t quite seize what is his conception of the Absolute’? If Sri Aurobindo represents the Divine, as a Guru must, why should he be unable to say confidently and

unmistakably, for instance, what happened a thousand years back or what will happen a thousand years hence? Why shouldn't he solve all the problems of science with the help of his cosmic knowledge?"

Well, I fear your idea of God-realisation by a Guru does not take into consideration the terms of the world-play and the terms of individual nature and the terms of true Guruship. There are certain limitations of procedure which are part of the world-play: the world-play is carried on under certain rules and conditions and one of these is that a Guru has to be the vital centre of a great and luminous activity but not himself assume every kind of activity. His own particular individual nature has a certain mould and though he may at times change this mould to fit special occasions he keeps on the whole to what its functions are. Thus Sri Aurobindo has a wide and vari-aspected mould, he is a poet, literary critic, philosopher, politician, social thinker besides being a spiritual teacher; but even his mould does not include the functions, say, of a painter, a musician, a scientist. I dare say that if he put himself to the task he could bring out of the cosmic potential the qualities of a painter or a musician or a scientist. But they are not exactly according to the lines, overt or covert, of his own individual nature in this birth. At the same time, the spiritual light that he holds and that he imparts contains the source of all possible activities and he can make a man who has a musician in his nature create grand symphonies, a painter in his nature produce masterpieces of colour, a scientist in his nature become a Niels Böhr or a Jagadish Chandra Bose. He can give illuminating inspiration along any line of individual nature in his disciples, but he does not himself assume the functions of all individual natures. It is not necessary for his work: in fact, it is contrary to his mission, for then the God-realizations of other men who follow him would be superfluous and inutile so far as world-work is concerned.

Even in poetry, literary criticism, philosophy, politics and social thought he does not exhaust all trends: he leaves quite an amount of individuality, originality and uniqueness to be achieved by others. Also, he accepts limitations in the domain of brain-knowledge—he does not know in the outer mind's manner all the details of what is written or done: he has to read McTaggart's books to ascertain precisely what that thinker is driving at and he has to read newspapers to get informed of events in the world at large or even in Pondicherry, though he is never misled by false reports and has an intuition as to what is true news and what is mere fabrication. This does not deny his inner acquaintance with the currents of world-forces or the possibility of his getting by inner concentration the essential substance of any trend of thought. What is denied is the necessity of his knowing, automatically and invariably, in the external sense what is written or said or done here, there and everywhere.

At the same time, it is not denied that even knowledge, in an external sense, of small matters may be acquired straight away by Yogic force when the call for it comes with a divine drive. Yes, such a call is required—and the mention of it leads me to stress another thing to be remembered. The one whom we regard as Sri Aurobindo is the manifestation of a divine power and all that the instrumental side of him does

is done by that power and in consonance with the vision and the purpose of that power: if that power chooses not to act as you imagine a Guru should, then there can be no questioning its right, and the best you can do is to alter your ideas of Guruship. Every Guru has a particular field and mission and, if he does not do what you think he must, he is not rendered less a Guru. You are attempting to chalk out and determine with the mere mind matters which far exceed it, you are trying to judge actions which are guided by the aim and method of a consciousness beyond the human. Your fashion of arguing should prompt us also to ask: "Why has the Divine to take so many years for making a spiritual Guru out of anybody? The Divine is omnipotent and so He can turn a man a Guru with one all-sufficing illumination: why the long labour of sadhana? Again, why does the Divine who manifests Himself in the Guru fail to give God-realisation to the disciples in a single flash? If omnipotence is there, how to explain the slow and devious process of training them up and especially the occasional set-backs if not complete failures? When the disciples are in front of the Guru all the while to be studied and 'insighted', isn't this a greater disproof of the Guru being God incarnate than his inability to know exactly McTaggart's conception of the Absolute without going through that Scots philosopher's books carefully?"

You forget we are in an evolutionary world and a world of evolution along a myriad lines, with numberless differentiations of capacity and personality: God Himself often acts apparently in a non-omniscient, non-omnipotent, non-omnipresent manner and He takes a multitude of shapes and instruments and adopts a large variety of processes and follows a thousand diverse tempos: you should expect some resemblance to this mode of God's behaviour in the behaviour of a Guru who is God's medium. Of course, through the Guru, God manifests Himself more directly, more concentratedly, more abundantly, but He still observes a set of conditions and, though He does many marvellous things in order to establish His truth and beauty and goodness and force on earth, He does not act the all-round miracle-man, nor does His refrainings from thus acting diminish the Godliness of the Guru or interfere with the spiritual work the Guru has to accomplish.

One further subtlety. What do we mean by the Guru's Godliness? God is indeed "omni" in an infinitude of senses, and yet it would be untrue to declare that He is realised in His total capacity by all the Gurus. When there is God-realisation, there is generally a union with some one aspect or at most some few aspects of the Divine: the Silent Self, for example, is certainly an aspect of the Divine, but it is as certainly not omniscient or omnipotent in itself—it is too absorbed in peaceful bliss and light to have either the dynamic ecstasy or the dynamic knowledge—it is omnipresent, but God's omnipresence is multiple, He is everywhere in all His aspects while the Silent Self is ubiquitous in one aspect alone. Similarly those who live only in the Inner Heart-centre have an intense divine sweetness and radiance, yet there is wanting the vast cosmic sweep and the pouring transcendent solar splendour. Even the complete cosmic consciousness will not exhaust the Divine: at least the kinetic as distinguished

from the static Self of it is a reduced formulation from above of a perfect and integral truth in which not the slightest discrepancy exists between status and kinesis and the latter is as absolute as the former. That perfect and integral truth is the top-range of what is above—the range of the Supermind. Only the Supermind is the full divinity, it has not only the absoluteness of immutable Existence, Consciousness and Bliss spoken of by those who leap towards the Transcendent without keeping a wholly aware hold on the cosmic and the individual, but also an active and creative absoluteness in the palm of whose heavenly hand, as it were, rests the individual and the cosmic. In the Supermind and nowhere else are all the “omni”’s of the Divine. God when He acts through a Guru has the Supermind, but unless the Guru is supramentalised and not only Inner-Heart-centred or Silent-Selfed or Cosmic-Consciousnessed what will function in him will not be the perfect and integral Divine. I am not saying the supramentalised Guru will act always with a clear indication to the disciples of his omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. Such action is not required by Guruship. But even the possibility of it comes solely with supramentalisation.

It would really be a pity if, because the rigid and superficial yardstick constructed by your doubting brain did not succeed in measuring Sri Aurobindo to your satisfaction, you remained away from so wonderfully many-sided, so immensely far-reaching and so intimately deep-delving a Guru. The feats you expect from him are nothing compared to the actual miracles he does perform—in the soul and heart and mind and even body of his disciples. Get in contact with the divine freedom that is aglow in him and you will see not only the divinity of his undeniable powers but also the divinity of his so-called limitations. For then you will not just sit reasoning and arguing about a Guru: you will know a supramentalised Guru’s beautiful and beatific being, his comprehensive and creative consciousness, and in the light of this being and consciousness you will understand how and why he even elects at times to fall short of the demand that he should act God in the way we want him to act.

## SELECTIONS

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## THE CLOUD MESSENGER

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

*(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1980)*

THE moonbeams gliding through the lattice, cool  
With nectar, which allure her gaze to stray  
Toward old delight, will now with fire seem cruel;

With lashes where unhappy waters weigh  
She shields her eyes, half-shut like lotuses  
That wake nor slumber on a drizzly day.

The lonely woman, weak and comfortless,  
Her slight limbs' scanty load no jewelry decks  
Faints to support; the sight of her distress

Thy large and generous heart will surely vex,  
Drawing great tears of rain—the moist of soul  
Feel ever the woes that other lives perplex.

I know her mind's affection given whole  
To me, her lord, whence justly I infer  
The piteous state thy message must console;

No vanity has made my fancy err  
Or tongue to prate: what shortly thou wilt see  
With all my words, O brother, shall concur.

Though baffled of its sidelong liberty  
By rude locks, of the lids' dark glossy dye  
Bereft, and the brows' wine-taught coquetry

Forgotten, at thy fair approach her eye,  
Trembling, in beauty vigorous and fresh  
With lilies stirred by sudden fish will vie.

The prints my keen nails carved in its smooth flesh  
Vanished, and in the adverse course of fate  
Robbed of its long-familiar soothing mesh

Of pearls, her pale thigh too will intimate  
 Her good with tremors such as at the end  
 Of rapture my firm hands would dissipate.

But should she have received the solace, friend,  
 Of healing sleep, not rousing yet the air  
 A hushed watch of the night on her attend;

Lest when in dream is won the union rare  
 She seeks, her clasp as of a vine that clings  
 To its strong tree abruptly thou shouldst tear.

## NOTES

Eye, thigh: The left eye and left thigh are meant. Throbbing on this side of the body would be considered auspicious for a woman, on the right side for a man.

*(To be continued)*

RICHARD HARTZ

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**FRIENDSHIP**

A TRACK unused which leads  
 Into an ancient world of stones  
 And scrub and untouched sky  
 Led also through a purifying  
 Stress of primitive ascent.  
 Physical and slow, the body wondered why.

“Horses pulled wagons here,”  
 As we look up, steeply, unbelieving.  
 “Contentment is possible”, sweat pouring.  
 A Rhododendron, red and reaching.  
 A stream, cool, falling to its source.  
 Wholeness comprehended, spirit soaring:

The beauty of a perfect day  
 Enshrining glory on its Godward way.

DHRUVA

# THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

## AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1980)

To continue with Uttanka's pilgrim's progress, the next signpost is the peculiar request made to him by the women of his guru's household. They want him to ensure that the fertile period of his guru's wife does not go fruitless. Uttanka refuses to oblige. It is immediately hereafter that he sets out on his journey. This incident seems to constitute the typical test or trial which the novice had to face and successfully pass before he could be initiated into the esoteric mysteries of the cult. In almost all such cases, the first test was one of sexual temptation, the idea being that unless and until the sexual energy could be diverted from its normal animal release to become "food for the gods"—from *retas* become *ojas*—the aspirant's endeavours were doomed to failure. This overwhelming emphasis on chastity as the basic prerequisite of the novice continued right up to the knighthood ceremony of keeping vigil before being awarded the spurs. Uttanka's quest begins only after he has refused to succumb to sexual temptation and has remained a true *brahmachari*.

In the occult lore of the Ancient Mysteries the snake occupies a position of crucial importance. He is not merely a symbol of the bonds of Ignorance (*nāga-pāśa*) but also the jealous guardian of wealth (the gold-producing ear-rings of Saudasa's queen in Pausya) which cannot be won from it unless the seeker has conquered sex.<sup>34</sup> In the Uttanka story, the snake Takshaka appears to represent Deception, for he comes disguised as a beggar (bereft of the wealth taken by Uttanka), appearing and disappearing intermittently. It is significant that the ear-rings can be stolen only in an unguarded moment, when Uttanka's concentration has wavered: he is either engrossed in plucking fruit to satisfy his hunger, or answering the call of nature. In both cases, it is an absorption in the most crudely physical of man's wants which leads to the ornaments being kept carelessly or falling on the ground, whence the snake steals them. This is, in effect, to say that any lapse from the pin-pointed spiritual concentration on the part of the sādhak into responding to the purely physical demands of the body can result in the hard-won treasure being secreted away by the hostile forces.

Where does Takshaka flee with the ear-rings? He goes underground, into the nether reaches of the subconscious, and in this he assumes the role of the Vedic Vala, the "encloser or circumscriber" who is the chief of the Panis, "the powers who preside over the unilluminated sense-activities of life whose roots lie in the dark, subconscious, physical being and not in the divine mind (Indra)... They steal from us the rays of the illumined consciousness, the brilliant herds of the sun and pen them up in the caverns of the subconscious in the dense hill of matter."<sup>35</sup> Takshaka, in disappearing into a hole in the ground, parallels Vala who "dwells in a lair, a hole

(*bila*) in the mountains; Indra and the Angirasa Rishis have to pursue him there and force him to give up his wealth"<sup>36</sup>, which is precisely what Uttanka does with the help of Indra's *vajra* and Agni's horse.

Initially, Uttanka finds it impossible to dig through the hard earth to the subterranean world of the serpent. Indra, moved by his determination and persistence, sends down his *vajra* to open up a path into *pātāla*. Thus, without a descent of Knowledge (*vajra*) from the realm of Pure Intelligence (Indra), the individual consciousness is unable to break through the hard crust of the physical being into the realm of the subconscious in his search for the inner Self. This process of going-inside-one-self has been detailed in *Savitri*, I.3.p.36 and it is remarkable how closely it parallels the symbolic version of Vyāsa:

Inspired by silence and the closed eyes' sight  
 His force could work with a new luminous art  
 On the crude material from which all is made  
 And the refusal of Inertia's mass  
 And the grey front of the world's Ignorance  
 And nescient Matter and the huge error of life.  
 As a sculptor chisels a deity out of stone  
 He slowly chipped off the dark envelope,  
 Line of defence of Nature's ignorance  
 The illusion and mystery of the Inconscient  
 In whose black pall the Eternal wraps his head  
 That he may act unknown in cosmic Time...  
 Even on the struggling Nature left below  
 Strong periods of illumination came:  
 Lightnings of glory after glory burned...  
 Splendours of insight filled the blank of thought,  
 Knowledge spoke to the inconscient stillnesses,  
 Rivers poured down of bliss and luminous force,  
 Visits of beauty, storm-sweeps of delight  
 Rained from the all-powerful Mystery above.

This experience is basically a Vedic concept, and in the Rigveda VI.6.5 we find Agni being identified with *vajra*, darting down on the earth:

Then doubly (in earth and heaven) thy tongue leaps forward like the lightning  
 loosed of the Bull that wars for the cows.

In other words, "The divine flame kindled by the sacrifice supplies also to Indra the material of the lightning, the weapon, the heavenly stone, *svarya asmā*, by which he destroys the powers of darkness and wins the cows, the solar illuminations."<sup>37</sup>

The significance of the blow of the thunderbolt on the rock-like earth becomes clearer when we recall that in the Vedic symbol-structure the hill or the rock stands for physical matter and the body. Soma the nectar of delight, and the cow-rays of supernal knowledge are hidden within this hill and are exposed by Indra with the blows of the thunderbolt, also called *grāvā*, the "stone above", the stone used to crush the Soma creeper in the ritual for extracting the juice. Kapali Sastry, in *Further Lights on Veda* (pp. 125-127) brings out the spiritual significance of this ritual:

by the blow dealt by the *vajra* even as Vritra, the darkened cloud of adverse forces and ignorance and inertia, vanishes so also the hard matter of body loses its hardness, becomes plastic, free from *tamas*, inertia and its brood of adverse conditions and forces that oppose the release of *Rasa*, the delight of all experiences to be offered to the Gods, the Cosmic Powers of the Godhead... (it is) not the gross thunderbolt... but the *Vāk*, the Word wide-based in the Vast above... of the higher consciousness and when it functions, its vibrations rush forth and blow off the din and dust of the lower triple body of mind, life and matter. It illumines the mind, energises the life-force, drives out inertia from the physical body and softens it so that it releases the *rasa* of all experiences it earned through the life and hēart and mind.

This is the inner sense of Uttanka's experience and of the pregnant third rik of the twenty-fourth sukta in the second mandala of the Rigveda: "Indra broke the unbroken hill level of Vala, by the words he fought the Paṇis."

Another interesting point found in the Aurobindonian account of the descent into the subconscious in *Savitri* is the image of the serpent-guarded door, which tallies with Uttanka's entry into *nāga*-land:

Lifting the heavy curtain of the flesh  
He stood upon a threshold serpent-watched... (I.3,p.28)

...covered from mind's view and life's approach,  
The mystic cavern in the sacred hill...  
An awful dimness wrapped the great rock-doors  
Carved in the massive stone of Matter's trance.  
Two golden serpents round the lintel curled... (VII.5, p.523-4)

At the dim portal of the inner life  
That bars out from our depths the body's mind  
And all that lives but by the body's breath,  
She knocked and pressed against the ebony gate.  
The living portal groaned with sullen hinge:  
Heavily reluctant it complained inert

Against the tyranny of the spirit's touch....  
 The Serpent of the threshold hissing rose,  
 A fatal guardian hood with monstrous coils...  
 Into a dense of subtle Matter packed,  
 A cavity filled with a blind mass of power,  
 An opposition of misleading gleams,  
 A heavy barrier of unseeing sight...  
 ... a perilous border line...  
 Where life dips into the subconscious dusk...  
 Aswarm with elemental entities... (VII.3, p.489)

On entering this world of serpents, Uttanka finds

hundreds of palaces and beautiful mansions with balconies, domes and gateways  
 and splendid arenas for games and entertainments. (Sl. 134)

In the *Asvamedhika Parva* version, he is stupefied by the dazzling splendour of the walls encrusted with gems and set with golden bricks and marble colonnades. Once again we see in this a re-garbing of the *Angirasa* myth of the *Rigveda* where the seizing of the light of Truth by the python powers of the subconscious is imaged as treasures held by the dragon:

Vala's body is made of the light, *govapšo valasya* (X.68.9), his hold or cave is a city full of treasures; that body has to be broken up, that city rent open, those treasures seized.<sup>38</sup>

The treasure was found of a supernal Day.  
 In the deep subconscious glowed her jewel-lamp;  
 Lifted, it showed the riches of the Cave  
 Where, by the miser traffickers of sense  
 Unused, guarded beneath Night's dragon paws,  
 In folds of velvet darkness draped they sleep  
 Whose priceless value could have saved the world.<sup>39</sup>

These "miser traffickers of sense" are the *Pañis* of the *Rigveda* who spirit away the ray-cows, just as *Takshaka* here has stolen the magical ear-rings from Uttanka:

Uttanka's first attempt is a flattering invocation which bears no fruit, for the traffickers in Ignorance do not respond to persuasion. To enable him to win back the supernal treasure a more profound experience is necessary. This takes the shape of the mystic vision which he is granted of the working of Time in Eternity. In an extraordinarily vivid passage *Vyāsa* describes the entire mystic process in concrete images, as a seer would see spiritual verities in the form of symbols:

...two women working a loom with a fine shuttle, weaving a piece of cloth; the loom held black and white threads. He saw six boys revolving a twelve-spoked wheel. He saw a man on a lovely horse. (sl. 144).

Uttanka proceeds to invoke them in highly symbolic mantric hymns which set forth the identity of the figures he sees without any doubt in his mind as had occurred in the previous encounter with the Bull:

This Wheel	Worlds.
Has twenty-four parts	Thunder-wielder!
On its circumference.	World-saviour!
Twenty-four moon changes.	Vṛtra-slayer!
This Wheel	Namuchi-slayer!
Has three hundred spokes	O Shining
Six boys	Black-cloth
Revolve endlessly	Wearer!
This Wheel	Truth and untruth
These girls	Revealer!
Are Nature,	Rider of the
Weaving weaving	Nectar-born
Endlessly	Hor.e
A cloth	Ocean-churned,
With black and white	The horse
Threads,	That is Vaishvanara
Creating	Different-formed!
Worlds, millions	Lord of the three worlds,
Of them, millions	O Purandara,
Of men, who live	O Supreme Being,
On these	I bow to you! (sl. 145-148)

The first portion of Uttanka's invocation is a fairly simple allegory of the Wheel of Time revolved through the cosmos by the six seasons through 24 lunar cycles and 360 days. We are reminded here of Upamanyu's paean to the Ashvins:—

Poets of the Sun!  
 Makers of the tapestries of the years,  
 Black-threaded night and white-threaded day!...  
 There are three hundred and sixty cows  
 Who are three hundred and sixty days.  
 They produce one calf,  
     which is one year.  
 This calf—

it creates!  
 it destroys!...  
 There is a wheel.  
 It has seven hundred and twenty spokes,  
 Which are days and nights.  
 Its hub is one year.  
 Its circumference is unending....  
 Time is a wheel, is a year  
     whose hub is six seasons.  
 It has twelve spokes,  
     for the twelve signs of the Zodiac.  
 Time is a wheel,  
     Spinning fruits of Karma  
 Time is a wheel,  
     Obeyed by the Gods. (slokas 63-66)

Uttanka, like Upamanyu in the later portions of his invocation, goes beyond this temporal allegory to a metaphysical concept. The Ashvins and the two women are not just a moralistic symbol of the Nornae weaving the web of human life out of the mingled yarn of good and ill together. In both cases Vyāsa is figuring forth a mystic vision of Creation on a dual level. In the macrocosm it is Prakriti, Nature, endlessly involved in the 'game' of creating innumerable worlds with their countless inhabitants. At the microcosmic level it becomes a symbol of the progress of man's psyche towards the Supreme Consciousness through a succession of exposures to the Divine afflatus interspersed with periods of 'darkness' or 'night' during which these experiences of supernal illumination are absorbed by the human consciousness.

The two women weaving cloth with black-and-white threads offer the clue which links up Uttanka's hymn with the Rigveda's repeated invocations of two goddesses: Dawn or Day and Night. It will be necessary to take a quick look at some of these *suktas* in the Rigveda to comprehend the symbol Vyāsa is using here. The first sukta is I.62.7:

In the highest sky, like Bhaga, he (Indra) the doer of marvels set both Dames and earth and heaven. Still born afresh, young Dames, each in her manner, unlike in hue, the Pair in alternation round heaven and earth from ancient time have travelled, Night with her dark limbs, Dawn with limbs of splendour.<sup>40</sup>

The second is I.113. 1-4 and 16, where it is stressed that the dichotomy is only apparent and that there is no clash between the two 'sisters':

This light is come, amid all lights the fairest; born is the brilliant, far-extending brightness. Night, sent away for Savitar's uprising, hath yielded up a birth-place

for the morning.

The Fair, the Bright is come with her white offspring; to her the Dark One hath resigned her dwelling. Akin, immortal, following each other, changing their colours both the heavens move onward.

Common, unending is the Sisters' pathway; taught by the Gods, alternately they travel. Fair-formed, of different hues and yet one-minded, Night and Dawn clash not, neither do they tarry.

Bright leader of glad sounds, our eyes behold her; splendid in hue she hath unclosed the portals. She, stirring up the world, hath shown us riches: Dawn hath awakened every living creature...

Arise! the breath, the life, again hath reached us: darkness hath passed away and light approacheth. She for the Sun hath left a path to travel: we have arrived where men prolong existence.<sup>40</sup>

Dawn and Night are almost invariably associated with the opening of the doors to the realms of the higher Gods, offering an ever-increasing vision of Truth to the sacrificer, as in II.3.5-6:

May the divine Doors swing open, wide to our call, easy of approach with our prostrations of surrender; may they stretch wide opening into vastnesses, the imperishable Doors purifying the glorious and heroic kind.

Milch-cows, good milkers, pouring out on us may Night and Dawn, the eternal and equal sisters, come like weaving women full of gladness, weaving out the weft that is spun, the weft of our perfected works into a shape of sacrifice.<sup>41</sup>

In this sukta the particular weaving symbol used by Vyāsa is explicated quite clearly. V.5.5-6 carries this further:

Swing open, O ye Doors divine. And give us easy passage for our expanding; farther, farther lead and fill our sacrifice.

Darkness and Dawn we desire, two mighty Mothers of the Truth, fairly fronting us, increasers of our spacious being.<sup>42</sup>

“Man's sacrifice”, as Sri Aurobindo explains,<sup>43</sup> “is his labour and aspiration Godwards and is represented as travelling through the opening doors of the concealed heavenly realms, kingdoms conquered in succession by the expanding soul. Night and Day, symbols of the alternation of the divine and human consciousness in us. The Night of our ordinary consciousness holds and prepares all that the Dawn brings out into conscious being.” In other words, “this life of our ignorance taught by the Gods in their veiled human working prepares the birth of the divine Dawn so that, sped forth, she may manifest the supreme creation of the luminous Creator. For the divine Dawn is the force or face of Aditi; she is the mother of the Gods; she gives

them birth into our humanity in their true forms no longer compressed into our littleness and veiled to our vision". The alternation is necessary since the aspirant is unable to hold the divine light uninterruptedly. By the periods of withdrawal of the light the human vessel is gradually conditioned into a proper receptacle of the Truth Consciousness.

(To be continued)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

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## DIVINE ADDICTION

INSATIATE, longing for Your honied laugh,  
 I have become an addict with one goal—  
 To drink delight from Your ambrosia-bowl!  
 Yet cannot name You—words are not enough,  
 With arms cannot embrace You—whom I love.  
 Nothing has ever moved so deep my soul  
 And nowhere do I find myself so whole  
 As when Your nectar fills me from above.

Alone quenches my thirst Your grape's sweet gold  
 Whose wine of rainbow-coloured ecstasies  
 Is held in a cup of white intensities.  
 Nameless! to love You I was born of old  
 And ever with new births I will pursue  
 Time's endless run to drink endless of You.

ALEXANDER BRODT

## WHAT INDIA MEANS TO ME

*(Several years ago a distinguished Frenchwoman, on a long visit to the Ashram, left an autobiographical—or rather autopsychographical—document with the editor of Mother India for possible correction of its English. Owing to many circumstances it got snowed under. Now it has surfaced again and been found worth serialising, with a few corrective touches needed. Unfortunately the author's name is missing.)*

I BELONG to a generation which has been deeply shaken by the Second World War. Those like myself who were around 20 at that time were old enough to live fully the events which were occurring everywhere, and to feel the horrors of a war which for us plunged what is generally considered as the best years of life in a nightmare, surrounded as we were by the Nazi occupation all over Europe with its escort of starvation, terrors, brutalities and death.

When the war was over, some of us chose to return to the past, hoping to find once more a shelter in the comfortable and “bourgeois” life they used to have before, feeling secure and at home amongst the old family traditions, the church's teachings, believing in caste and race prejudices, and convinced that colonialism was a great thing. They did not realise or they refused to realise that those ways of living or thinking belonged to a past which was already finished or on the point of disappearing forever.

Still, some of us did feel strongly that the past was over or at death's door, and that it was useless to cling to it. Nowadays, the number of people, young and old, who are aware that we are on the eve of a new epoch, witnessing the birth of a new age, is daily increasing, but in my time, the majority of people were still far from admitting those facts, and it was only a bunch of young men and women in each country who had an entirely new outlook on life. Things were sometimes very difficult for us and we felt very isolated in a surrounding of people who used to cling to the past all the more that every day political events or scientific discoveries or new tendencies in philosophy and art gave them ample proofs that the old ethical values and social structures were shaken and on the verge of collapse. But the formation they had received, handed down from one generation to another for centuries, was so strong, that it completely impeded them not only from accepting but even from acknowledging that things were changing.

Many amongst the young people, who had decided to turn toward the future, often felt all kinds of doubt and anguish, as they realised, generally surrounded as they were by the misunderstanding or even the hostility of their elders, that the old values did not respond any more to the needs either of their intellect or of their hearts and souls, and that they had nothing to rely upon. Had Hippies existed at that time, I would have certainly joined them, as Hippies represent a new generation, turned from the dead past toward the living future and, as it has been the case for

me when I was twenty, a future they know *intuitively*, not intellectually. But young people had not yet learned to understand one other and to gather together, Europe was still in a chaos, trying to rise again from the ruins of the war, and what would come out of the struggle was still a note of interrogation, and for us the future was only a big unknown.

One day I read this sentence from the Surrealist poet André Breton "Who are we, from where do we come, where are we going? this is indeed the real enigma." I thought that was exactly the epitome of the questions I had been asking myself more or less clearly for a long time and, with me, many others who also felt dissatisfied and puzzled when confronted with the apparent absurdity of life and destiny. But of course André Breton and the Surrealists had not found the solution to the enigma.

Many young people turned towards Sartre and Existentialism, or followed philosophers and writers belonging more or less to that same school: Camus, Heidegger, Jasper, Kafka, etc. That's what I myself did in the hope to find an answer to the problem of the epoch, as well as a meaning and goal to my life and destiny, beyond the old dogmas of religions which did not convince us any more, and the hypocrisy and superficiality of a dying society, whose moral and social values were based mostly on materialism and sheer selfishness.

But neither Sartre nor Camus succeeded in satisfying me. No doubt the first one played a very useful part, in pointing out, with as much conviction as talent, to the old "bourgeois" society its deep hypocrisy and its ridiculousness, but his philosophy was after all only a new system added to the numerous ones which we already had met with in the past, and which had never solved anything. Camus has a too desperate approach to life to really convince me. I found that a certain dimension was missing in both of them, a new air that we could breathe consciously and freely, and a release into a higher and finer altitude, some refreshing joy from spheres less limited than the one we were living in, some nourishment for the mind and spirit, not to be found in the commercialism of our day, something spiritual also, but at that time I did not call it by that name, as I was not yet aware of the existence of such things.

Anyhow Sartre and Camus were not the voices I expected to hear at the eve of the great changes and transformations which I confusedly perceived would be the future, we would have to witness and live. But still something very useful resulted from my reading of the philosophers of Existentialism, and that was the discovery of the limitations of the human intellect. These writers in possession of a deep and vast culture, who unquestionably were honest and intelligent, found no solution to such important problems as why we were on earth, why this fabulous universe, what was the destiny of mankind. They raised the question, but gave no answer, they only proposed to people to become aware of the fundamental absurdity of the human condition and to accept it, and to follow in life an ethic of despair. I could not help finding such statements a big failure of human intelligence, and I was deeply surprised. It appeared to me that the western mind was in front of a dead wall, and only something entirely

new, entirely "different", like that "emergence" in some other dimension, which I have previously mentioned, could give us the answer we were searching for.

At that time, I knew very little about India. As a memory from childhood, I remembered the name of the Maharaja of Indore, who used to come to France before the war, and owned an estate near Paris, in Saint Germain en Laye, the place where I lived with my family. The Maharaja's estate was situated outside the town, already in the country on a road where I often used to go for a walk with my governess. There was a big iron gate at the entrance, and a long wall surrounded the estate. I never saw the house which was hidden in the garden amongst tall trees. But I remember to have been dreaming about it, imagining a prince dressed in silk clothes, wearing day and night the most precious jewellery, eating off golden plates, and living in a castle like the ones described in fairy tales.

I also added to the picture some elephants and tigers, and I was very disappointed not to see anyone of them when we passed in front of the gates.

Later on, reality proved to be different, but no less fascinating, when I discovered the existence of Maharajas and Maharanis of the spirit, like Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Anandamayee and, above all, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

In Europe we often think that religions and eastern philosophies are of recent discovery. It is true that the great diffusion they know now all over the world started only after the Second World War. But Indian religious Scriptures were already known as far back as during the 17th century. Dr. Dopper, a Dutch traveller who visited India around the year 1681, was one of the first to attract the attention of the Occident to Indian Mythology. Subsequently, around the year 1801, a French scholar, Anquetil-Duperron, translated into Latin fifty Upanishads. That was a big event in the cultural circles in Europe, and like a revelation for the Occident. In Germany, Schlegel, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and of course Schopenhauer had read about Indian philosophy and religion, and had been more or less influenced by them.

In America, Thoreau, whose writings have become a kind of Bible for the Hippie generation, was influenced by eastern philosophy, Chinese and Indian, and very often in his books made quotations from both of them.

In the 19th century in France, Sanskrit was taught in the universities, and scholars like Burnouf, Sylvain Lévi, Groussard, etc. translated sacred texts. Three hundred years ago, a current was established which has continued uninterruptedly until now, and become more and more important with the passing of the years.

During the war I used to attend lessons in Indian culture and philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris. We had an old professor: Masson-Oursel, who loved India and the subject he was dealing with. I remember he used to talk for weeks about one or two words like *nāma* and *rūpa*, name and form, explaining all the different meanings contained in those words. We discovered how subtle was the Sanskrit language, and how numerous the implications taken by a word according to its place in the context, or whether it was employed to express abstract thoughts or concrete things. Sanskrit started to fascinate me. I never learned it because I found it too difficult, and

also I had no time, but, in India, each time I had an opportunity to hear a recitation in Sanskrit I never missed it. Though I cannot understand the meaning, the sounds are so beautiful and so powerful, and the language possesses such a rhythm, that I enjoy it as I would enjoy listening to beautiful music. Each word when properly pronounced contains a dynamism and a strength which are unique, and which you never meet in any western language.

During those classes I was once more dreaming about India, but not only about its culture and philosophy. The winter was very cold, and we were positively freezing in the class-room which was not heated, as during the German occupation the fuel had disappeared. I used to look with both amusement and melancholy at the big woollen scarf our teacher had wrapped around his neck, and the straw he used to put in his shoes, as the peasants do in their sabots to keep their feet warm. I wondered if I should ever be able to see the blue sky of India, and feel the warm rays of its sun.

When the war was over, I had often the opportunity to be in contact with people with whom I could share the same problems. They could not find a truly and deeply satisfying nourishment for mind or spirit in the western religions and philosophies and a purely materialistic way of living did not appeal to them any more. On account of the difficult and sometimes tragic circumstances many of them had been through, during the years of Nazi occupation, they were drawn to call everything in question.

We started reading the books of Prof. T.D. Suzuki about Zen Buddhism, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Upanishads, the works of Shankaracharya, and all the literature about India and Yoga which was available at that time.

I often noticed that for many people, as it has been for me, the first result of an approach to Indian thought from the very beginning, is the healthy sense of breathing in open air, of being in contact with a higher level of consciousness, and with endless possibilities of fresh and beneficial discoveries in the realm of spirit and mind. It is like a door which suddenly opens on a landscape full of light and clear air, for someone who has been confined in a dark room for years. Who would like to return to the dark room of the church's dogmas and religious fanaticism, and sterile or negative philosophies again?

Since I started being interested in Indian culture and spirituality, which is now more than 25 years ago, I have had the opportunity to meet a considerable number of persons who were also attracted by India. But even those who had not immediately "the healthy sense of breathing in open air", and to whom the reason of the attraction they felt could not be clearly explained, who often had no possibility of going to India but only read at home books about Indian philosophy or visited the country for a very short period only, felt nevertheless in a more or less obscure manner the influence of their readings or their journeys. Afterwards, nothing was ever the same as before.

India has a kind of spell, a magic of her own, that you can hardly escape. I

often pondered about it, as I have myself been deeply sensitive to it. What is that impact that India has, and is having more and more on an ever increasing number of people coming to visit the country, or else approaching her spiritual teachings through readings?

For many people I talked to in Europe, one of the main reasons why they were disappointed by our religions and philosophies was because, as far as religions were concerned, they had the feeling that they gave only a limited aspect of the Truth, only glimpses of the ultimate reality, but never something which could deeply satisfy or convince them, that it was always a partial approach, and also that the teachings had been more or less distorted in the course of centuries by the interpretations of churches and scholars.

And for the philosophers, they felt that each one had his own system, which contradicted more or less the theories of the predecessors or of the ones who came after, and that most of them claimed to be independent and seldom referred to a universal tradition, especially in modern times. They lacked a solid background, their works were constructions of the mind, often most brilliant and attractive, but also fragile and subject to many controversies, as always are theories concerning essential problems like the existence of God, or human destiny, when they are the product of intellectual reasoning and conjectures, and do not have their source in a higher knowledge.

For the Indians, the highest Truth, call it Brahman or Spiritual Principle or the Divine, is non-material, and is the source of all manifestation, as well as the Self in man, his true Nature. It remains far above religions and philosophies, which are only considered as ways of approach suiting certain types of humanity at certain epochs of its evolution. Indian Scriptures teach you that man can realise Brahman, or his true Self, through spiritual quest and inner discipline, and you don't need to belong to a Church or adhere to any system of philosophy.

A young man, who was reading books about Indian spirituality for the first time, confessed he was far from understanding everything but had a deep intuition that "those teachings could show you the possibility to find the origin of all that exists". A feeling he never had before, he added.

But proceeding from spiritual knowledge, India also possesses, closely connected with it, a wonderful knowledge of inner human laws and structures. All the intricacies of man's subconscious, all the forces at work in his body and mind, all the reactions provoked by the energies existing in and around us, and their interactions with one another, have been studied minutely, as by a scientist in his laboratory, by generations of yogis, and our western psychoanalysis appears like stammering compared to what they have discovered.

There is in India something contagious, something you cannot remain indifferent to. Either you hate it or, in spite of the inconveniences of the climate or sometimes of lack of creature-comfort and privacy, you feel attracted by a kind of magical charm. So many places like the Himalayas, Benares, Rameshwaram, are still bathing

in such a unique spiritual atmosphere, that many visitors remain fascinated, sometimes not knowing by what exactly, but nevertheless their stay there remains for them an unforgettable memory.

When people feel attracted by India, at the beginning not knowing why, it is because far behind their external personality, their intellect, their creeds or opinions, independently of their nationality or social level, they have suddenly been awakened to the Truth in them, whether through reading or, if they visit the country, by "something spiritual in the atmosphere", which they are not even aware of but which still has touched a deep level in their inner being. It is the Truth in them answering to the call of the Truth absolute and eternal.

*(To be continued)*

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## LOVE

AN immaculate grandeur, far and free,  
 Surpassing the heart of mortal man,  
 Love lives pure in a high encompassing air,  
 Seeking a way to express itself in earth-bound splendour.

What form can it find, what sanctity sublime  
 If lust would spoil and plunder?  
 Yet in the midst of darkness's veil  
 The Light beams on, to render  
 All goodness where the ash was high and deep.

And Love is saved from the Fate of Death,  
 Of bondage to error and pain.  
 The Goal is strong, the passage steep—  
 She is stalwart to conquer and gain.

PATTI

# EUROPE, 1974

## A TRAVELOGUE

(41)

*(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1980)*

"WE were the first to build a skyscraper", chimed our very charming French guide, as we stood before the famous Eiffel Tower. We were taken aback. Nevertheless it is true. For long before the Americans started building skyscrapers, it was Gustave Eiffel, a Frenchman who designed the Eiffel Tower for the Paris Exhibition of 1889. It cost 8,000,000 francs. Although the Eiffel Tower is not a multi-storied mansion that houses thousands of people, the tower 955 feet tall scrapes the sky all the same.

In 1889, all the influential people protested violently. "It is hideous," they said, "a monstrosity, it would ruin Paris." Yet within six months the Tower had paid for itself. People who invested in the construction became rich. Today the net income per year is 30,000 pound sterling and it goes to the committee called the "City of Paris". The Tower has elevators that can take one right up to the top. There are several stages and at every stage the charges to go further up are higher. At 400 feet, that is on the first stage, there is a restaurant where one may relish French cuisine and enjoy the superb view of Paris spread out on all sides. Soft breeze comes to caress the diners from the river Seine, laden with the fragrance of unknown flowers and leaves.

Some people climb the Tower girder by girder; these are akin to the Night Climbers of Cambridge. It is a sort of a challenge, they want to prove to themselves that they could do the most unearthly things. No one stops them, not even gendarmes. When France was occupied the Nazi soldiers ran up the Tower to haul down the Tricolour since the French refused to work the lifts. Up there the Nazis put the Swastika and painted the Tower orange. Now it is again grey and the Tricolour flutters gaily, bright in the morning sun.

Here perhaps I may indulge in a small anecdote. A famous writer was seen spending whole mornings on the Eiffel Tower. He had his breakfast there, and then worked on his files and papers, looking up now and then to enjoy the wonderful view that met his eyes. Did he love the Tower so much as to want to spend so many hours a day there? This was the natural enquiry of one of his friends one day. The answer was flabbergasting. He told his friend that wherever he went, as soon as he looked out of the window he saw the Eiffel Tower and that the Tower was the only place in Paris from where the blessed Eiffel Tower could not be seen!

The French are a very polite people with a quick understanding and an active enterprising disposition. They do not like tourists asking them too many silly questions. They seem to say, "Go ahead, find out things for yourself, show some spirit and resourcefulness." The story runs that a tourist who obviously had never seen the Eiffel

Tower even in pictures, asked a Parisian where the Tower was while all the while he was standing very near the Tower. The Frenchman only smiled and answered shrugging his shoulders, "Je ne sais pas."

Most people in India have seen the Eiffel Tower in pictures; if not in anything else at least on the blue scent bottle known as "Evening in Paris". So I need not describe how it looks. Whether one likes it or not depends on one's own taste and reaction to things. But it cannot be denied that it is a unique construction and in the nineteenth century it was something the like of which the world had never seen before. Looking up and up one tries to see the top which appears like a pinpoint from below. One comes in contact with an energy trying to reach some higher existence, gathering in itself the essence of the earth. Leaving the humdrum of mundane life one feels the breath of a rarefied atmosphere.

The Mother was in Paris when the Tower was being built. She was then a little girl of eleven, but half-way to realising the Divinity within Herself. With the super-consciousness in which She lived She must have formed a definite opinion of the Tower. What a pity we could no longer run to Her and ask Her what She thought of this very controversial structure!

Our Panorama sightseeing over, Sanat and I decided to explore the Royal Gardens known as the Tuileries. Perhaps it had been several times re-planned and newly created since its first lay-out. What we see today is the work of Monsieur Le Notre, the gardener of Louis XIV, the Roi Soleil. The garden at Versailles is also the work of Monsieur Le Notre. The Tuileries are very near the Louvre, the ancient Palace of the French Kings. The gardens are the most fascinating we have ever seen, and reveal a very interesting side of the national character. Travelling all over western Europe we were really amazed at the different styles in garden planning and garden lay-out all over Europe. The most characteristic feature of an English garden is its naturalness. Man may have brought in many innovations yet the touch of nature is always perceptible. Italy specialises in fountains and waterworks.

The Tuileries have the effect of a perfect picture. Every inch of the ground has been cut, measured, harmonised, chiselled. Meticulous care has been taken of the colour scheme. Full of dainty devices and surprises it is a most dazzlingly beautiful tapestry. Consciously adorned, decorated, at every turn, it amazes and delights one. The mason has brought all the skill and cunning of his art. The Pantheon is a building very much like St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Here repose the mortal remains of the great sons of France, those who have glorified her name. The cupola is decorated in a very extraordinary way. And, if you wish, the official verger in cocked hat and epaulettes will take you to the crypt. Two rooms there are devoted to Voltaire and two to Jean Jacques Rousseau. In some place, I do not remember, where exactly there is a wall from which if a blow is administered a tremendous sound of booming guns comes out. One can also get to the top which is 480 feet high if one's calf-muscles allow.

Then out again among stately avenues and ivy-bordered terraces and wooded

gardens, one may inhale the faint perfumes of sweet-smelling flowers. No wonder the French have created CHANEL and other perfumes with exotic fragrance and "elusive sweetness."

(To be continued)

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**Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta.** Volume Eight. IX+282 pp; Pic; 14×22; 1st imp. 1979; Rs. 25/= bd. Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry.

To complete the set, the eighth volume of the collected works of Nolini Kanta Gupta has come out. Though divided in volumes, the set, on the whole, forms an indivisible single book—and an excellent one at that. Yes, it is “the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.”

The first of the six sections of the present publication, named after the title of the volume, ‘Vedic Hymns’, contains some of Nolini’s Vedic writings, originally composed in Bengali. And to quench the thirst of the intellectuals who are illiterate in Bengali they are admirably translated into English by Sanat K. Banerji and Chinmoy Ghose. Here are hymns to Gods, Mental-Being, Earth, Peace and Power. The hymns do not stop with them. They are extended to Dawn and the river Sindhu. Quite a surprise—there is a hymn even to a Pillar! “To a Pillar?” you seem to exclaim, don’t you? But, remember, this ‘Pillar’ is the Brahman, the Supreme Reality, the support of all things. The ‘Hymn to Forest Range’ is an outstanding piece, for it is highly poetic. To get it by heart and sing it aloud would be sheer joy.

The second section, ‘Other Hymns and Prayers’, comprises translations of the famous hymns by Ballavacharya and Sankaracharya and some much loved and recited prayers. To travel through this section is to add a new dimension to our ordinary conception of daily life.

In the first chapter of the third section, ‘On the Veda’, the author introduces to his readers the Veda—the perennial fount of Indian Culture and education, the foundation of Hinduism and the basis of the Aryan civilization. This essay is something more than an introduction, for it studies the various aspects of the Veda. The mere mention of the word ‘Veda’ is enough to make us give ‘wide berth to it with reverential awe.’ But Nolini drives away that fear and teaches the art of approaching it intimately. Dismissing its early commentators as men groping in the dark, he devises new ways and apt methods for a better understanding of it. “Proceed from the known to the unknown,” is his principal principle. He argues and asserts that the Veda is no human creation. He exterminates the notions of the Westerners who dismiss it as nothing but nursery rhymes. By making a comparative analysis of the Veda and the Upanishad he furnishes an answer to the enigmatic question, ‘Why is the Upanishad studied much more than the Veda in India and abroad?’

Who was the first to sing the famous *Gayatri Mantra*? What is the root meaning of the term ‘Brahmin’? Who mustered courage to delve into the text of the Vedas that ‘looked like the peak of the mountain that could hardly be reached’? What is the significance of sacrifice? What are the three distinct forms of Truth and how are they different from one another? How do the four divisions of the Veda correspond with the four stages of human life? Why is the Veda called ‘shruti’? To solve these pro-

blems that have baffled many, the author plunges into the ocean of the Veda and comes out with a vast load of gems of dazzling brilliance.

This erudite essay on the Veda is followed by a lively commentary on the first six suktas of the Rigveda. These suktas (a sukta being a series of mantras) are dissected and probed into. The author takes the reader by the hand to show the mysterious realm of the Rigveda. The different aspects of Fire and Vayu and the Ashwins, those twin riders who drive away disease, the significance of Saraswati and Lord Indra's other names make a very interesting study. Nolini is at his best in explicating religious literature.

The fourth section, entitled 'On Upanishadic Thought', has some humorous episodes and enlivening stories from the Upanishads, mostly from the Chhandogya. They are narrated in a lucid style and the author, without much effort, drives home the moral. True, he is a fabulist with a difference. Here in these seven pleasant chapters he limns a good number of memorable characters. And the reader is highly pleased to encounter Lord Yama who finds himself at his wits' end before Nachiketa the stubborn; Jabala Satyakama to whom wisdom was not denied although he was the illegitimate son of a servant girl; Upakoshala, the disciple who undertakes a fast; Rishi Yajnavalkya who has enough confidence that there is none to equal him in the matter of learning or wisdom; Sakalya, very fond of argument, meeting his tragic death; Narada with the guidance of Sanatkumara attaining the status of a Rishi; Prajapati initiating Indra into the last secret; and Ushasti Chakrayana sermonizing on *Prāṇa*, the Life Force. From the stories narrated in this section, we get a glimpse of ancient Indian Education; we understand that the fires are three in number, and that the *Sūtrātman* is the one existent above the sky and below the earth and in between the earth and sky; finally we grasp the significance of the number hundred and one.

To do homage to the great seer and master Sri Aurobindo, the author has translated two essays and five long poems of his from the Bengali. This fifth section, 'Bengali Essays and Poems of Sri Aurobindo', never in the least reads like a translation, thanks to the meticulous care taken by Nolini. These Mantric poems, though highly allusive, never deter our interest. And the last section, 'Modern Bengali Poems', contains the translations of four poems, each serving as a sampler of the four poets dealt with.

Then there follow the two appendices. In Appendix I, Nolini recounts from memory the event of Sri Aurobindo's retirement and the appearance of the Mother for the evening talks. The author's talk to the students of the two chains (gold and iron) of the Mother that are eternal companions prove that the Mother is all-pervading. The Second Appendix consists of the original texts of the translations from Bengali. As promised in the previous volume, the publishers have kept their word by giving the index for both the seventh and the eighth volumes.

"If a book comes from the heart it will contrive to reach other hearts." It was Thomas Carlyle who wrote so. Surely, this book, like the rest of the set, is of that type.

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