

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE

21 FEBRUARY 1981 : THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE
MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

Price : Rs. 2.25

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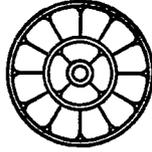
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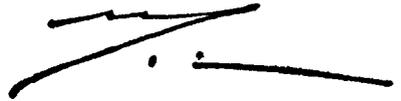


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR

Published by: P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY - 605 002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry - 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

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

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Vol. XXXIII

No. 2

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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A BIRTHDAY MEDITATION BY THE MOTHER

21 FEBRUARY 1914

EACH day, each moment, must be an occasion for a new and completer consecration; and not one of those enthusiastic and trepidant consecrations, over-active, full of the illusion of the work, but a profound and silent consecration which need not be apparent, but which penetrates and transfigures every action. Our mind, solitary and at peace, must rest always in Thee, and from this pure summit it must have the exact perception of realities, of the sole and eternal Reality, behind unstable and fugitive appearances.

O Lord, my heart is purified from trouble and anguish; it is firm and calm, and it sees Thee in everything; and whatever the outer actions, whatever the circumstances the future has in store for us, I know that Thou alone livest, that Thou alone art real in Thy immutable permanence, and it is in Thee that we live.

May there be peace upon all the earth.

DISCOVERY OF THE DIVINE

TWO BIRTHDAY STATEMENTS OF THE MOTHER

EVERYTHING can be made into a means of finding the Divine. What matters is the spirit in which things are done.

21 February 1933

No material organisation, whatever its degree of preparation, is capable of bringing a solution to the miseries of man.

Man must rise to a higher level of consciousness and get rid of his ignorance, limitation and selfishness in order to get rid also of his sufferings.

21 February 1953

A HINT BY SRI AUROBINDO ABOUT THE MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

How should I prepare myself for the descent intended for the Mother's birthday?

LET the descent come when it can, 20th or 22nd or any other day of the month or year. On the 21st only offer yourself to the Divine Mother and consecrate everything.

17.2.1936

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SUPRAMENTAL

SOME ILLUMINATIONS FROM THE MOTHER

The supramental has descended upon earth, it is said, it has manifested itself. I have read all that has been written on the subject, but I am among the ignorant who see nothing and feel nothing. Couldn't someone who has a more trained perception tell me by what signs I can recognise that a person is in relation with the supramental?

Two irrefutable signs prove that one is in relation with the supramental:

1. a perfect and constant equality.
2. an absolute certainty in the knowledge.

To be perfect, the equality must be invariable and spontaneous, effortless towards all circumstances, all happenings, all contacts, material or psychological, irrespective of their character and impact.

The absolute and indisputable certainty of an infallible knowledge through identity.

February 1961

*

Is this not the first time that the Supramental has come down upon earth?

It is certainly the first time that the Supramental has come down as a general force of transformation for the whole earth. It is a new starting-point in the terrestrial creation.

But it may be that once before the supramental force has manifested partially and momentarily in an individual as a promise and an example.

26 October 1964

*

Man must understand that in spite of all his intellectual achievements he is as incapable of perceiving the supramental vibrations as the animal was incapable of perceiving the mental vibrations when they pervaded the earth before the appearance of the human species.

*

Realisation: the establishment of the supramental Truth upon earth.

*

The supramental is not only Truth itself, but also the very negation of falsehood. The supramental will never come down, settle and manifest in a consciousness harbouring falsehood.

Naturally the first condition for conquering falsehood is to stop telling lies, though this is only a preliminary step. An absolute, integral sincerity must finally be established in the being and all its movements if the goal is at all to be attained.

18 April 1932

PROGRESS THROUGH WORK

HINTS BY THE MOTHER

ONE can progress through meditation, but through work provided it is done in the right spirit, one can progress ten times more.

6 April 1954

There must be order and harmony in work. Even what is apparently the most insignificant thing must be done with perfect perfection, with a sense of cleanliness, beauty, harmony and order.

23 August 1955

THE MOTHER AND HER DISCIPLES

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

WITH those whom I have accepted as disciples, to whom I have said Yes, there is more than a tie, there is an emanation of me. This emanation warns me whenever it is necessary and tells me what is happening. Indeed I receive intimations constantly, but not all are recorded in my active memory, I would be flooded; the physical consciousness acts like a filter. Things are recorded on a subtle plane, they are there in a latent state, something like a piece of music that is recorded without being played, and when I need to know with my physical consciousness, I make contact with this subtle physical plane and the disc begins to turn. Then I see how things are, their development in time, the actual result.

And if for some reason you write to me asking for my help and I answer "I am with you", it means that the communication with you becomes active, you come into my active consciousness for a time, for the time necessary.

And this tie between you and me is never cut. There are people who have long ago left the Ashram, in a state of revolt, and yet I keep myself informed of them, I attend to them. You are never abandoned.

In truth, I hold myself responsible for everyone, even for those whom I have met only for one second in my life.

Now remember one thing. Sri Aurobindo and myself are one and the same consciousness, one and the same person. Only, when this force or this presence, which is the same, passes through your individual consciousness, it puts on a form, an appearance which differs according to your temperament, your aspiration, your need, the particular turn of your being. Your individual consciousness is like a filter, a pointer, if I may say so; it makes a choice and fixes one possibility out of the infinity of divine possibilities. In reality, the Divine gives to each individual exactly what he expects of Him. If you believe that the Divine is far away and cruel, He will be far away and cruel, because it will be necessary for your ultimate good that you feel the wrath of God; He will be Kali for the worshippers of Kali and Beatitude for the Bhakta. And He will be the All-knowledge of the seeker of Knowledge, the transcendent Impersonal of the illusionist; He will be atheist with the atheist and the love of the lover. He will be brotherly and close, a friend always faithful, always ready to succour, for those who feel Him as the inner guide of each movement, at every moment. And if you believe that He can wipe away everything, He will wipe away all your faults, all your errors, tirelessly, and at every moment you can feel His infinite Grace. The Divine is indeed what you expect of Him in your deepest aspiration.

And when you enter into this consciousness where you see all things in a look, the infinite multitude of relations between the Divine and men, you see how wonderful all that is, in all details. You can look at the history of mankind and see how much the Divine has evolved according to what men have understood, desired, hoped, dreamed

and how He was materialist with materialists and how He grows every day and becomes nearer, more luminous according as human consciousness widens itself. Each one is free to choose. The perfection of this endless variety of relations of man with God throughout the history of the world is an ineffable marvel. And all that together is only one second of the total manifestation of the Divine.

The Divine is with you according to your aspiration. Naturally that does not mean that He bends to the caprices of your outer nature,—I speak here of the truth of your being. And yet, sometimes he does fashion himself according to your outer aspirations, like the devotees you live alternately in separation and union, ecstasy and despair, the Divine also will separate from you and unite with you, according as you believe. The attitude is thus very important, even the outer attitude. People do not know how important is faith, how faith is miracle, creator of miracles. If you expect at every moment to be lifted up and pulled towards the Divine, He will come to lift you and He will be there, quite close, closer, ever closer.

Questions & Answers Vol. 13. Pp. 76,77,78

GRAVEYARD

WHEN I went to see the Mother as usual, She started saying:

“You see, I get scores of letters from people saying that ‘I am seventy’, ‘I am past seventy-five’, ‘I am nearing eighty’. ‘I am now free from all encumbrances. My wife has passed away. My sons are well-settled. My daughters are married and are settled in their homes. I now wish to join the Ashram and serve the Divine.’”

I said, “Mother, what reply do you give to such applications?”

Mother said, “I write to them that you have applied to the wrong place. You should have applied to the Graveyard authorities.”

I laughed and laughed and thought how true it was.

SURENDRANATH JAUHAR

(The Call Beyond, March 1980, p. 9)

AN ATTACK ON THE MOTHER—AND OUR LOVE

A LETTER TO SEHRA

29-12-58

my dear child

The true way of helping me is to keep quiet and strong, with a confident love and the cheerful feeling of my response.

The attack has come because it had to come, it will go when it is time for it to go and all is always the effect of the Supreme Grace.

It is your love itself, in its sincerity, that helps and nothing external or material.

I am always with you.

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of January 1981)

September 4, 1935

R and self are invited for tea to the oculist's place—there's some function. I suppose it'll be rude not to go. Again social consciousness?—you may say. But say it again then, Sir!

OF course, social consciousness—according to S.C., it is certainly rude not to go. What it may be from another S.C. (spiritual consciousness), is another matter.

September 5, 1935

A's pleurisy is much better. The remaining few signs are of no importance, only he must not expose himself to cold, neither smoke much nor take wine.

Jehovah! you are recommending him a little smoke and wine? What next? All right—except for the last ominous touch.

September 6, 1935

When we go to the origin of creation we find you saying that the soul or the central being came down into evolution for the sake of experience, call of the Unknown and through the depth of the abyss to establish the possibilities of the Divine in the Ignorance and Inconscience.

As you put it, this is not at all my statement of things. One cannot establish the possibilities of the Divine through the depths of the abyss. It is only by the ceasing of the Ignorance and the Inconscience that the possibilities can be established. I have never said that the object of the creation is to keep up Ignorance and Inconscience perpetually and realise the possibilities of the Divine in that tenebrous amalgam (its possibilities of being more and more abysmally ignorant and inconscient).

If this theory were true, one can say that failures in sadhāna, revolt etc.,—or worldly men's running after petty pleasures for that matter,—are there because the Soul has still further experiences to acquire and wants to be fully rich and satisfied with chequered experiences before it can finally turn towards its ultimate purpose.

That is only another way of putting the revolt of the lower nature. For it is not the soul, the psychic being, but the vital and the physical consciousness that refuses to go farther. How can petty pleasures be rich? Chequered is all right. But it is not when the soul is satisfied, but when it is dissatisfied that it turns towards its ultimate purpose. Of course when the soul no more wants the Ignorance, it will turn to the Light. Till then it can't. That is what I have always said is the reason why I reject the idea of converting the whole of mankind—because they don't want it.

It can also be said that people really don't know that a greater Ananda, Bliss etc. can be had, and if they are told this, they don't believe it or, even if they do, they are not ready to pay the price.

Of course they don't but even if they did, it does not follow that they would prefer to follow it rather than their accustomed round of pain and pleasure. Many deliberately prefer that and say the other thing is too high for human nature—which is true, because you have to want to grow out of human nature before you can have the Ananda. Many struggle towards the Ananda but cannot reach it because though the soul and even the thinking mind and the higher vital want it the lower vital and physical want something else and are too animal and strong in them for control. Or the ego wants something that is not that or wants to misuse the Power for its own satisfaction.

Perhaps they are not ready to pay the price because the soul clings to the Ignorance for the sake of experience, if what you say about the origin of creation is true.

What has the origin of creation to do with it? We are concerned with the growth of the soul out of the Ignorance, not its plunge into it. The lower nature is the nature of the Ignorance, what we seek is to grow into the nature of the Truth. How do you make out that when the soul has looked towards the Truth and is moving towards it, a pull back by the vital and the ego towards the Ignorance is a glorious action of the soul and not a revolt of the lower nature? I suppose you are floundering about in the confusion of the idea that the "desire-soul" in the vital is the true psyche of man. If you like—but that is not part of my explanation of things; I make a clear distinction between the two, so I refuse to sanctify the revolt of the lower nature by calling it the sanction of the soul. If it is the soul that wants to fail, why is there any struggle or sorrow over the business? It would be a perfectly smooth affair.

The soul would lift its hat to me and say "Hallo! you've taught me a lot, I'm quite pleased but now I want a little more fun in the mud. Good-bye." And I too would have to say, "O.K. I quite agree. I was glad to see you come, I am equally glad to see you go. All is divine and A.I.—the soul's sanction, go and mud away to your soul's content."

You remember once you made a prophecy that X would turn out a spiritual poet.

Has it been fulfilled? Now that he has left the Ashram, what becomes of your prophecy? I am asking as a perplexed man, not as a 'broken spiritual pot.'

As a spiritual poet he is not a failure, it is as a spiritual pot that he is a failure.

You told him also that you would never leave him. Well? How shall we then interpret the promises you have made to others, to me for instance?

I don't propose to leave him, any more than I have left R...

September 7, 1935

I send the poem at last, as your Sunday exercise! Dilipda says that it is good; but it is still incomplete.

From what I have seen of it (first page), Dilip is probably right. However let's gulp the whole whale before pronouncing on the quality of its oil.

What does the abbreviation "A.I." mean in your letter of yesterday?

I'm hanged if I know. I was referring to something that had cropped up in the course of the debate, but I must have put wrong initials and probably also failed to finish the sentence. I think I had meant to write "I.I.¹ (Ignorance and Inconscience) is the law" or something to that effect. But it is better to drop it.

September 8, 1935

A strange incident has occurred today. Dr. Becharlal and I worked as usual in the dispensary. After the day's work we shut the doors and went out—Dr. Becharlal to the pier for his habitual walk, and I to a friend's place. J, another friend of mine, who often used to come to the dispensary to help me, also went to the pier at this time. But this particular evening he somehow did not enjoy his stroll and instead had what he called "a very repulsive feeling" when he arrived at the pier, and distinctly felt that he should go back to the dispensary. When he went there, he found a number of people collected near the entrance, knocking at the door; they were waiting for me. J inquired what had happened, and was told that a sadhak, B.P., had been bitten by a scorpion and required immediate medical help. He at once hastened to fetch me. I asked him to find Dr. Becharlal, and bring him also to the dispensary. He went towards the pier looking for the doctor. After going a little distance he met Dr. Becharlal, who was returning without finishing his walk; he said that somehow he did not feel like going to the pier that day. I am a little baffled by the whole inci-

¹ Did Sri Aurobindo mean to write AI, intending "first-rate"? (Editor)

dent. Was there some Force working behind which drew all of us to the required spot at the right time to save an ashramite, or was the whole thing just an incident like other such incidents?

No, of course not. But they seem so to all who live in their outward vision only. "Coincidence the scientists do them call." But anyone with some intelligence and power of observation who lives more in an inward consciousness can see the play of invisible forces at every step which act on men and bring about events without their knowing about the instrumentation. The difference created by Yoga or by an inner consciousness—for there are people like Socrates who develop or have some inner consciousness without Yoga—is that one becomes conscious of these invisible forces and can also consciously profit by them or use and direct them. That is all.

These things manifest differently, in a different form or transcription in different people. If it had been Socrates and not Becharlal who was there,—which would have been useless as he was no doctor and highly inconvenient to you as he would have certainly turned the tables on you and avenged me by cross-examining you every day and passing you through a mill of philosophical conundrums and unanswerable questions—but still if he had been there, he would have felt it as an intimation from his daemon, "Turn back, Socrates; it is at the Ashram that you ought to be now." Another might have felt an intuition that something was up at the Ashram. Yet another would have heard a voice or suggestion saying "If you went back at once it would be useful"—or simply "Go back, back; quick, quick!" without any reason. A fourth would have seen a scorpion wriggling about with its sting ready. A fifth would have seen the agonised face of B.P. and wondered whether he had a toothache or a stomach-ache. In Becharlal's case it was simply an unfelt force that changed his mind in a way that seemed casual but was purposeful, and this obscure way is the one in which it acts most often with most people. So that's thus.

Have you had time and enough appetite to gulp the little whale? If you had I hope it wasn't nauseating!

The whale taken as a whole tasted very well; its oil was strong and fattening, its flesh firm and full and compact and whalish. Not quite so exquisite as the sonnet minnows, but the quality of a whale can't be that of a minnow. As a whale, it deserves all respect and approbation.

Krishna Ayyar has a cold and slight fever. Given aspirin. Requires Divine Help.

One tablet of aspirin and another of aspiration might do.

September 9, 1935

C has developed some ringworm. He wants me to inform you. I hesitate to report

these small things, but the general belief is that once they reach your ears they'll be quickly done with. Am I then making a mistake in my refusal?

No. For small things the general force (+ or—the doctor) ought to be sufficient since it is always there. If it is something serious or if it is something obstinate, then it is another matter. Of course if they insist, you can drop a word in passing.

I have three letters of yours before me, and all three require some elucidation. I think and think, but can't get anywhere. Perhaps you will say, "Make the mind silent"! But Descartes says, "Je pense, donc je suis."

Descartes was talking nonsense. There are plenty of things that don't think but still are—from the stone to the Yogi in samadhi.¹ If he had simply meant that the fact of his thinking showed that he wasn't dead, that of course would have been quite right and scientific.

You know, I suppose, that X has been sending a paltry sum every month. He doesn't apparently take any other interest in the Ashram. Should I correspond with him?

I don't know. Some people say that everything one does in this world is of some use or other known or unknown. Otherwise it wouldn't be done. But it is doubtful. That by the way would apply both to X's lack of interest and Y's inconclusive ferocities.

September 10, 1935

I was not at all "floundering about" between "desire-soul" and the true "psyche".

Well, if you were not why did you represent the experience of the lower nature as such a rich and glorious thing? It is the desire-soul or the life-being that finds it (sometimes) like that.

If failures are due to the revolt of the lower nature, why should that revolt occur in A's case and not in B's? Past Karma? And by what is this Karma decided?

Because A is not B and B is not A. Why do you expect all to be alike and fare alike and run abreast all the way and all arrive together?

It is Prakriti and Karma, so long as the Ignorance is there. The hen lays an egg and the egg produces a hen and that hen another egg and so on ad infinitum—till you turn to the Light and get it.

¹ When I was reading the Correspondence to the Mother, She smiled here, hearing Sri Aurobindo's comment.

And this Karma has its past and this past its own past and so on till we come to a state where there is no Karma and only the central being. This central being, it seems, chooses its particular sheath—mental, vital etc.—and upon that choice depend the evolutionary consequences. Is that correct?

What is this central being you are speaking of—the Jivatman or the psychic being? Or an amalgam of both?—I don't quite understand. The psychic being is supposed not to choose, but rather to form in accordance with its past and future evolution a new mental, vital and physical sheath each time it is born. But the placid or tacit observation does not seem to apply to the psychic being, but to the Jivatman. Moreover you seem to say this is done at the beginning of the evolution and determines the whole evolution. But that has no meaning since it is through the evolution that the psychic does it. It has not got one fixed mental, vital, physical which remains the same in all lives.

My question then is that because the chicken-hearted central being—I suppose there is a hierarchy of these beings, some lion-hearted, some worm and some chicken—selected or had to select according to its own standard, that I have my own failures.

These words don't apply to the members of the hierarchy.

Since the soul descended into Ignorance through a process of devolution, it has to go back through evolution.

What is this devolution? Let me hear more about it, for it is new to me. I know of an involution and an evolution, but not of a devolution.

You have said that the soul takes birth each time according to its past evolution and its need for the future, that it takes up with it as much of its Karma as is useful for farther experience. Now, since the soul can't at once take a leap like the prodigal son into the Kingdom of Light, I can say that the soul has failed this time because it "took up with it so much of its Karma" and requires further evolutionary experience.

A leap, no! But if it has got thoroughly disgusted, it can try its chance at Nirvana.

Again the soul gathers the essential elements of its experiences in life and takes up with the sheaths as much of its Karma as is useful for further experience in a new life.

This time it is all right, but what the deuce has that got to do with the original sin?

Excuse me,—if it goes on with its Karma, then it does not get liberation. If it wants only farther experience, it can just stay there in the ordinary nature. The aim

of Yoga is to transcend Karma. Karma means subjection to Nature; through Yoga the soul goes towards freedom.

It seems to me that the soul is searching, experimenting, analysing, and thus proceeding by steps and stages. It will move towards the Light and retrace its steps again and by a series of ups and downs finally arrive at its Home. And so the revolts are only steps and stages on the way. This is how I look at it. Is that all rot? No grain of truth in it?

You are describing the action of the ordinary existence, not the Yoga. Yoga is a seeking (not a mental searching), it is not an experimenting in contraries and contradictions. It is the mind that does that and the mind that analyses. The soul does not search, analyse, experiment—it seeks, feels, experiences.

Logical rot! The only grain of truth is that the Yoga is very usually a series of ups and downs till you get to a certain height. But there is a quite different reason for that—not the vagaries of the soul. On the contrary when the psychic being gets in front and becomes master, there comes in a fundamentally smooth action and although there are difficulties and undulations of movement, these are no longer of an abrupt or dramatic character.

You say that when the soul no more wants the Ignorance, it will turn to the Light; till then it can't. This is very significant because, if so, I should say that the soul is the Master of the House and if it says categorically—"No more of Ignorance, vitals and mentals have no go"—it can refuse to go further.

Perhaps the better phrase would be "consents to" the Ignorance. The soul is the witness, upholder, experiencer, but it is the master only in theory, in fact it is not-master, *aniś*, so long as it consents to the Ignorance. For that is a general consent which implies that the Prakriti gambols about with the Purusha and does pretty well what she darn well likes with him. When he wants to get back his mastery, make the theoretical practical, he needs a lot of tapasya to do it.

Because the soul wants more "fun" in the mud of Ignorance, people follow their "round of pleasure and pain," and their lack of faith etc. is due to their soul still wanting Ignorance.

That is contrary to experience. The psychic has always been veiled, consenting to the play of mind, physical and vital, experiencing everything through them in the ignorant mental, vital and physical way. How then can it be that they are bound to change at once when it just takes the trouble to whisper or say "Let there be Light"? They have a tremendous go and can refuse and do refuse point-blank. The mind resists with an obstinate persistency in argument and a constant confusion of ideas,

the vital with a fury of bad will aided by the mind's obliging reasonings on its side, the physical resists with an obstinate inertia and crass fidelity to old habit, and when they have done, the general Nature comes in and says "What, you are going to get free from me so easily? Not if I know it," and it besieges and throws back the old nature on you again and again as long as it can. Yet you say it is the soul that wants all this "fun" and goes off laughing and prancing to get some more. You are funny. If the poor soul heard you, I think it would say "Sir, methinks you are a jester" and look about for a hammer and break your head with it.

Due to the soul's sense of fun? It seems to me more probable that it is due to the obstinacy of mental and vital sanskaras. Perhaps that is why the Buddhists insisted on breaking all sanskaras as the seeker of liberation's first duty.

But if you ask me, as you do, "Why then is there so much struggle and sorrow?" well, I am floundered, unless one can say that though the soul has given up, still a longing, lingering look is bound to be there.

You call that a mere look! I suppose that if you saw an Irish row or a Nazi mob in action, you would say "These people are making slight perceptible gestures and I think I hear faint sounds in the air."

My dear Sir, be less narrowly logical (with a very deficient logic even as logic,) take a wider sweep; swim out of your bathing pool into the open sea and waltz round the horizons! For anything that happens, there are a hundred factors at work and not only the one just under your nose; but to perceive that you have to become cosmic and intuitive or overmental and what not. So, alas!

September 11, 1935

Shall I continue attending the hospital? I think I have learned enough about the common eye diseases.

The Mother wants you to go on; she thinks it important.

With great difficulty I have deciphered your Supramental writing. Now it requires to be metabolised. But one point remains to be clarified.

Which diabolical point was that? Some point of a pin on which the whole universe can stand?

September 12, 1935

I'm thinking why it is so important to go on attending the hospital. When R asked, you replied, "If you feel the need." Why a different decision for me? For my personal profit? For my sadhana or an impersonal play behind?

That was before circumstances took a certain shape. At that time the forces had not so arranged themselves as to make it important. Afterwards when things came to the necessary point, then Mother told R he must continue and it is for the same reason that she wishes you to continue. When I say important I don't mean that is a big thing, but it is a small point in the game (play of forces) and small points, like pawns in chess, can be important, even very important.

It appears the Mother is turning towards manifestation viz. the Town Hall decoration, A.P. House, Art Exhibition in Paris etc. I heartily like it, Sir. Many, many valuable years have passed by!

Why valuable years? Are some years valuable and others non-valuable? There is no question of Art Exhibition in Paris before 1937 which may be a valuable year but is still far off.

During the hospital work, I feel myself submerged in Inconscience. No remembrance of the Mother at all.

It does not matter. This is not the supramental manifestation—it is simply a little game on the way.

Do you work on those people also and can your Force be invoked in aid of that suffering populace?

What people? Which suffering populace? Mother is not taking up A.P.H. or decorating Town Hall for the sake of any suffering populace.

Apropos of that scorpion incident on the 8th, you explained Dr. B's case, but avoided mentioning J; yet he was an important link. And if the incident could have manifested in so many ways, then surely the whole thing must have appeared before your vision as soon as it happened.

What is this logic? There is no connection between the premiss and the conclusion.

Did you not have a presentiment of what was going to happen? If so, you must have acted through the three of us!

I was not speaking of any personal action but of the play of forces which happens everywhere, but is of course more mastered here because of our presence and the work done.

Then it means that there is no such thing as accident, chance, or coincidence; all is predetermined—all is a play of forces.

I have not said that everything is rigidly predetermined. Play of forces does not mean that. What I said was that behind visible events in the world there is always a mass of invisible forces at work unknown to the outward minds of men, and by Yoga (by going inward and establishing a conscious connection with the Cosmic Self and Force and forces) one can become conscious of these forces, intervene consciously in the play, to some extent at least determine the result of the play. All that has nothing to do with predetermination. On the contrary one watches how things develop and gives a push here and a push there when possible or when needed. There is nothing in all that to contradict the great Sir C.V. Raman.¹ Only when he says these things are games of chance, he is merely saying that human beings don't know how it works out. It is not rigid predetermination, but it is not a blind inconscient Chance either. It is a play in which there is a working out of possibilities in time.

From the falling down of the bottle — Simpson's discovery of chloroform — to the Irish Sweepstake everything seems to be this blessed play of forces, but not Chance! The bottle had to fall for the great discovery!

Why shouldn't it fall? Something had to happen so that human stupidity might be enlightened, so why not the agency of a bottle?

Your old colleague B says that if there were such a thing as "accident", then one can no longer say that there is a perfectly uninterrupted order in this world. Order means a regular sequence. An accident can only happen by disturbing this sequence.

That's nineteenth century mechanised determinism. It is not like that. Things can be changed without destroying the universe.

I am afraid I am once again knocking my head against a cosmic problem.

Very much so, sir.

¹ I had written to Sri Aurobindo that once Sir C.V. Raman had declared that scientific discoveries were only games of chance.

THE REVISED EDITION OF *THE FUTURE POETRY*

NEWLY-WRITTEN OR CORRECTED MATTER

(Continued from the issue of January 1981)

(Only the first paragraph of Chapter XIV was revised during the earlier period. This revision is fairly heavy. The rest of the chapter received only light touching up, extending in one place to a passage of several lines, in the later period.)

CHAPTER XIV

The Movement of Modern Literature—I

MODERN poetry carrying in it the fullness of imaginative self-expression of the entirely modernised mind begins with the writers of the later eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. Here are the free, impetuous but often narrow sources of these wider flowings. Here we see the initial tendencies which have undergone a rapid growth of meaning and changes of form in the subsequent decades, until now all their sense and seeking have reached in the early twentieth a quite unprecedented subtle intensity, refinement and variety of motives and even a tense straining on many lines to find in everything some last occult truth and hitherto unimagined utterance, to go beyond all that poetry has ever done. This is in its very nature an effort which must end either in a lingering, a hectic extravagant or dull exhausted decadence or in a luminous and satisfied self-exceeding. At the very beginning and still more and increasingly afterwards this modern movement, in literature as in thought and science, takes the form of an ever widening and deepening intellectual and imaginative curiosity, an insatiable passion for knowledge, an eager lust of finding, a seeking eye of intelligence awakened to all the multiform possibilities of an endless new truth and discovery. The Renaissance was an awakening of the life spirit to wonder and curiosity and reflection and the stirred discovery of all that is brilliant and curious in the things of the life and the mind on their surface; but the fullness of the modern age has been a much larger comprehensive awakening of the informed and clarified intellect to a wider curiosity, a much more extensive adventure of discovery and an insistent need to penetrate deeper and know and possess the truth of Nature and man and the universe, — both their outer truth and process and whatever deeper mystery may lie hidden behind their first appearances and suggestions. And now it is culminating in something that promises to go beyond it, to bring about a new futurist rather than modernist age in which the leader of the march shall be intuition rather than the reasoning and critical intelligence. The long intellectual search for truth that went probing always deeper into the physical, the vital and the subjective, into the action of body and life, into the yet ill-grasped motions of mind and emotion and sensation and

thought, is now beginning to reach beyond these things or rather through their subtlest and strongest intensities of sight and feeling towards the truths of the Spirit. The soul of the Renaissance was a lover of life and an amateur of knowledge; but the modern spirit has been drawn rather by the cult of a clear, broad and minute intellectual and practical Truth: the dominating necessity of its being is a straining after knowledge and a power of life founded on the power of knowledge. Poetry in the modern age has followed intellectually and imaginatively the curve of this great impulse.

Continental literature displays the mass of this movement with a much more central completeness and in a stronger and more consistent body and outline than English poetry. In the Teutonic countries the intellectual and romantic literature of the Germans at the beginning with its background of transcendental philosophy, at the end the work of the Scandinavian and Belgian writers with their only apparently opposite sides of an intellectual or a sensuous realism and a sentimental or a psychological mysticism, the two strands sometimes separate, sometimes mingled, among the Latins the like commencement in the work of Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Chénier, Hugo, the intermediate artistic development of most of the main influences by the Parnassians, the like later turn towards the poetry of Mallarmé, Verlaine, D'Annunzio, stigmatised by some as the beginning of a decadence, give us a distinct view of the curve. In English poetry the threads are more confused, the work has on the whole a less clear and definite inspiration and there is in spite of the greatness of individual poets an inferior total effectivity; but at the beginning and the end it has one higher note, a lifting of sight beyond the stress of the intellect and the senses, which is reached either not at all or much less directly realised with a less pure vision in the more artistically sound and sufficient poetry of the Continent. Still the principal identical elements are distinguishable, sometimes very strongly pronounced and helped to some fullest expression by the great individual energy of imagination and force of character which are the most distinct powers of the English poetic mind. Often they thus stand out all the more remarkable by the magnificent narrowness of their self-concentrated isolation.

Earliest among these many new forces to emerge with distinctness is an awakening of the eye to a changed vision of Nature, of the imagination to a more perfect and intimate visualisation, of the soul to a closer spiritual communion. An imaginative, scrutinising, artistic or sympathetic dwelling on the details of Nature, her sights, sounds, objects, sensible impressions is a persistent characteristic of modern art and poetry; it is the poetic side of the same tendency which upon the intellectual has led to the immeasurable development of the observing and analysing eye of Science. The poetry of older times directed an occasional objective eye on Nature, turning a side glance from life or thought to get some colouring or decorative effect or a natural border or background for life or something that illustrated, ministered to or enriched the human thought or mood of the moment, at most for a casual indulgence of the imagination and senses in natural beauty. But the intimate subjective treatment of

Nature, the penetrated human response to her is mostly absent or comes only in rare and brief touches. On the larger scale her subjective life is realised not with an immediate communion, but through myth and the image of divine personalities that govern her powers. In all these directions modern poetry represents a great change of our mentality and a swift and vast extension of our imaginative experience. Nature now lives for the poet as an independent presence, a greater or equal power dwelling side by side with him or embracing and dominating his existence. Even the objective vision and interpretation of her has developed, where it continues at all the older poetic method, a much more minute and delicate eye and touch in place of the large, strong and simply beautiful or telling effects which satisfied an earlier imagination. But where it goes beyond that fine outwardness, it has brought us a whole world of new vision; working sometimes by a vividly suggestive presentation, sometimes by a separation of effects and an imaginative reconstruction which reveals aspects the first outward view had hidden in, sometimes by a penetrating impressionism which in its finest subtleties seems to be coming back by a detour to a sensuously mystical treatment, it goes within through the outward and now not so much presents as recreates physical Nature for us through the imaginative vision.¹ By that new creation it penetrates through the form nearer to the inner truth of her being.

But the direct subjective approach to Nature is the most distinctly striking characteristic turn of the modern mentality. The approach proceeds from two sides which constantly meet each other and create between them a nexus of experience between man and Nature which is the modern way of responding to the universal Spirit. On one side there is the subjective sense of Nature herself as a great life, a being, a Presence, with impressions, moods, emotions of her own expressed in her many symbols of life and stressing her objective manifestations. In the poets in whom this turn first disengages itself, that is a living conscious view of her to which they are constantly striving to give expression whether in a large sense of her presence or in a rendering of its particular impressions. On the other side there is a sensitive human response, moved in emotion or thrilling in sensation or stirred by sheer beauty or responsive in mood, a response of satisfaction and possession or of dissatisfied yearning and seeking, in the whole an attempt to relate or harmonise the soul and mind and sensational and vital being or the human individual with the soul and mind and life and body of the visible and sensible universe. Ordinarily it is through the imagination and the intellect and the soul of sensibility that this approach is made; but there is also a certain endeavour to get through these instruments to a closer spiritual relation and, if not yet to embrace Nature by the Spirit in man, to harmonise and unite the spiritual soul of man with the spiritual Presence in Nature.

Another widening of experience which modern poetry renders much more universally and with a constant power and insistence is a greater awakening of man to himself, to man in this warp and weft of Space and Time and in the stress of the uni-

¹ I am speaking here of Western literature. Oriental art and poetry at any rate in the far East had already in a different way anticipated this more intimate and imaginative seeing.

verse, to all that is meant by his present, his past and his future. Here too we have a parallel imaginative movement in poetry to the intellectual movement of thought and science with its large and its minute enquiry into the origins and antiquity and history of the race, into the sources of its present development, into all its physical, psychological, sociological being and the many ideal speculations and practical aspirations of its future which have arisen from this new knowledge of the human being and his possibilities. Formerly, the human mind in its generality did not go very far in these directions. Its philosophy was speculative and metaphysical, but with little actuality except for the intellectual and spiritual life of the individual, its science explorative of superficial phenomenon rather than opulent both in detail and fruitful generalisation; its view of the past was mythological, traditional and national, not universal and embracing; its view of the present was limited in objective scope and, with certain exceptions, of no very great subjective profundity; an outlook on the future was remarkable by its absence. The constant self-expansion of the modern mind has broken down many limiting barriers; a vast objective knowledge, an increasingly subtle subjectivity, a vivid living in the past, present and future, a universal view of man as of Nature are its strong innovations. This change has found inevitably its vivid reflections in the wider many-sided interests, the delicate refinements, fine searchings, large and varied outlook and profound inlook of modern poetry.

The first widening breadth of this universal interest in man, not solely the man of today and our own country and type or of the past tradition of our own culture, but man in himself in all his ever-changing history and variety, came in the form of an eager poetic and romantic valuing of all that had been ignored and put aside as uncouth and barbarous by the older classical or otherwise limited type of mentality. It sought out rather all that was unfamiliar and attractive by its unlikeness to the present; its imagination was drawn towards the primitive, the savage, to mediaeval man and his vivid life and brilliant setting, to the Orient very artificially seen through a heavily coloured glamour, to the ruins of the past, to the life of the peasant or the solitary, the outlaw, to man near to Nature undisguised by conventions and uncorrupted by an artificial culture or man in revolt against conventions: there is a willed preference for these strange and interesting aspects of humanity, as in Nature for her wild and grand, savage and lonely scenes or her rich and tropical haunts or her retired spots of self-communion. On one side a sentimental or a philosophic naturalism, on the other a flamboyant or many-hued romanticism, superficial mediaevalism, romanticised Hellenism, an interest in the fantastic and the supernatural, tendencies of an intellectual or an ideal transcendentalism, are the salient constituting characters. They make up that brilliant and confusedly complex, but often crude and unfinished literature, stretching from Rousseau and Chateaubriand to Hugo and taking on its way Goethe, Schiller and Heine, Wordsworth, Byron, Keats and Shelley, which forms a hasty transition from the Renaissance and its after-fruits to the modernism of today which is already becoming the modernism of yesterday. Much

of it we can now see to have been ill-grasped, superficial and tentative; much, as in Chateaubriand and in Byron, was artificial, a pose and affectation; much, as in the French Romanticists, merely bizarre, overstrained and overcoloured; a later criticism condemned in it a tendency to inartistic excitement, looseness of form, an unintellectual shallowness or emptiness, an ill-balanced imagination. It laid itself open certainly in some of its more exaggerated turns to the reproach,—not justly to be alleged against the true romantic element in poetry,—that the stumbling-block of romanticism is falsity. Nevertheless behind this often defective frontage was the activity of a considerable force of new truth and power, much exceedingly great work was done, the view of the imagination was immensely widened and an extraordinary number of new motives brought in which the later nineteenth century developed with a greater care and finish and conscientious accuracy, but with crudities of its own and perhaps with a less fine gust of self-confident genius and large inspiration.

The recoil from these primary tendencies took at first the aspect of a stress upon artistic execution, on form, on balance and design, on meticulous beauty of language and a minute care and finished invention in rhythm. An unimpassioned or only artistically impassioned portraiture and sculpture of scene and object and idea and feeling, man and Nature was the idea that governed this artistic and intellectual effort. A wide, calm and impartial interest in all subjects for the sake of art and a poetically intellectual satisfaction,—this poise had already been anticipated by Goethe,—is the atmosphere which it attempts to create around it. There is here a certain imaginative reflection of the contemporary scientific, historic and critical interest in man, in his past and present, his creations and surroundings, a cognate effort to be unimpassioned, impersonal, scrupulous, sceptically interested and reflective. In poetry, however, it loses the cold accuracy of the critical intellect and assumes the artistic colour, emphasis, warmth of the constructive imagination: but even here there is the same tendency to a critical observation of man and things and world tendencies and a reflective judgment sometimes overweighting the natural tendency of poetry to the living and creative presentation which is its native power. There is amidst a wide atmosphere of sceptical or positive thinking an attempt to enter into the psychology of barbaric and civilised, antique, mediaeval, and modern, occidental and oriental humanity, to reproduce in artistic form the spirit of the inner truth and outer form of its religions, philosophic notions, societies, arts, monuments, constructions, to reflect its past inner and outer history and present frames and mentalities. This movement too was brief in duration and soon passed away into other forms which arose out of it, though they seemed a revolt against its principles. This apparent paradox of a development draped in the colours of revolt is a constant psychological feature of all human evolution.

In this turn we are struck by its most glaring feature, the vehement waving of the revolutionary red flag of realism. Realism is in its essence an attempt to see man and his world as they really are without veils and pretences; it is imagination turning upon itself and trying to get rid of its native tendency to give a personal turn or an

enhanced colouring to the object, art trying to figure as a selective process of scientific observation and synthesised analysis. Necessarily, whenever it is art at all, it betrays itself in the process. Its natural movement is away from the vistas of the past to a preoccupation with the immediate present, although it began with a double effort, to represent the past with a certain vividness of hard and often brutal truth, not in the colours in which the ideally constructive imagination sees it through the haze of distance, and to represent the present too with the same harsh and violent actuality. But success in this kind of representation of the past is impossible; it carries in it always a sense of artificiality and willed construction. Realism tends naturally to take the present as its field; for that alone can be brought under an accurate because an immediate observation. Scientific in its inspiration, it subjects man's life and psychology to the scalpel and the microscope, exaggerates all that strikes the first outward view of him, his littlenesses, imperfections, uglinesses, morbidities, and comes easily to regard these things as the whole or the greater part of him and to treat life as if it were a psychological and physiological disease, a fungoid growth upon material Nature: it ends, indeed almost begins, by an exaggeration and overstressing which betrays its true character, the posthumous child of romanticism perverted by a pseudo-scientific preoccupation. Romanticism also laid a constant stress on the grotesque, diseased, abnormal, but for the sake of artistic effect, to add another tone to its other glaring colours. Realism professes to render the same facts in the proportions of truth and science, but being art and not science, it inevitably seeks for pronounced effects by an evocative stress which falsifies the disposition and shades of natural truth in order to arrive at a conspicuous vividness. In the same movement it falsifies the true measure of the ideal, which is a part of the totality of human life and nature, by bringing the idealism in man down to the level of his normal daily littlenesses; in attempting to show it as one strand in his average humanity, it reduces it to a pretension and figment; it ignores the justification of the idealistic element in art which is that the truth of the ideal consists essentially in its aspiration beyond the limitations of immediate actuality, in what our strain towards self-exceeding figures and not in the moment's failure to accomplish. Realism on both those sides, in what it ignores and what it attempts, lies open to the reproach aimed at romanticism; its stumbling-block is a falsity which pursues both its idea and its method. Nevertheless this movement too behind its crudities has brought in new elements and motives. It has done very considerable work in fiction and prose drama; in poetry, even, it has brought in some new strains and greater powers, but here it cannot dominate without risking to bring about the death of the very spirit of poetry whose breath of life is the exceeding of outward reality. Realism is still with us, but has already evolved out of itself another creative power whose advent announces its own passing.

SRI AUROBINDO

“REALISE WHO THIS HE IS”

AN INSIGHT FROM SRI AUROBINDO

LIFT your eyes towards the Sun; He is there in that wonderful heart of life and light and splendour. Watch at night the innumerable constellations glittering like so many solemn watchfires of the Eternal in the limitless silence which is no void but throbs with the presence of a single calm and tremendous existence; see there Orion with his sword and belt shining as he shone to the Aryan fathers ten thousand years ago at the beginning of the Aryan era; Sirius in his splendour, Lyra sailing billions of miles away in the ocean of space. Remember that these innumerable worlds, most of them mightier than our own, are whirling with indescribable speed at the beck of that Ancient of Days whither none but He knoweth, and yet that they are a million times more ancient than your Himalaya, more steady than the roots of your hills and shall so remain until He at His will shakes them off like withered leaves from the eternal tree of the Universe. Imagine the endlessness of Time, realise the boundlessness of Space; and then remember that when these worlds were not, He was, the Same as now, and when these are not, He shall be, still the Same; perceive that beyond Lyra He is and, far away in Space where the stars of the Southern Cross cannot be seen, still He is there. And then come back to the Earth and realise who this He is. He is quite near to you. See yonder old man who passes near you crouching and bent, with his stick. Do you realise that it is God who is passing? There a child runs laughing in the sunlight. Can you hear Him in that laughter? Nay, He is nearer still to you. He is in you, He is you. It is yourself that burns yonder millions of miles away in the infinite reaches of Space, that walks with confident steps on the tumbling billows of the ethereal sea; it is you who have set the stars in their places and woven the necklace of the suns not with hands but by that Yoga, that silent actionless impersonal Will which has set you here today listening to yourself in me. Look up, O child of the ancient Yoga, and be no longer a trembler and a doubter; fear not, doubt not, grieve not; for in your apparent body is One who can create and destroy worlds with a breath.

Yes, He is within all this as a limitless ocean of spiritual force; for if He were not, neither the outer you nor this outer I nor this Sun nor all these worlds could last for even a millionth part of the time that is taken by a falling eyelid. But He is outside it too. Even in His manifestation, He is outside it in the sense of exceeding it, वत्यतिष्ठद्दशागुडलम्, in His unmanifestation, He is utterly apart from it. This truth is more difficult to grasp than the other, but it is necessary to grasp it. There is a kind of Pantheism which sees the Universe as God and not God as the Universe; but if the Universe is God, then is God material, divisible, changeable, the mere flux and reflux of things; but all these are not God in Himself, but God in His shadows and appearances...

The Upanishads, Cent. Ed., Vol 12, pp. 475-76.

AT THE SAMADHI

A GLORY You've made my days,
Because Your feet
Have let me count their steps
With each heart-beat.

Though pain on pain has struck,
I'll not blaspheme,
Calling death's sleep to drown
Life's shipwrecked dream.

Forever Yours until
The appointed close,
Only in eyes of light
I seek repose

My days You've made a glory.
Abysms I'll cross
Yet reach the Immense, the Full
And lose all loss.

AMAL KIRAN

STILL

IN this world of forgotten dreams
Where a silence hovers over all,
In this fluctuant formidable Night
Where change can come to dissolve our fate,
Thou art still a forbear of great abiding things,
A nuance of the Invincible's Might.
Carry me, O Lord of the inward Sight,
My harboured soul set free!

PATTI

ART - YOGA - LIFE

FROM LETTERS TO FLORENCE RUSSELL

YOUR gift for June [1976] cheered up both the 27-year old *Mother India* and its 72-year young editor "Amal Kiran" (according to Sri Aurobindo's renaming of K.D. Sethna), "the Clear Ray", who, while appreciating Anatole France's advice to writers, "Clarity first, clarity again and clarity always", has in his role as poet preferred in consonance with Sri Aurobindo's own insight the injunction of Havelock Ellis: "Be clear, be clear, be not too clear." For, in poetry there must be around a core of distinct brightness a halo of radiant mystery extending far into the depths of the ineffable. To play a variation on the metaphor: one must be like a clear-cut star but all a-twinkle, all a-quiver as if charged with an unknown message, as if

Tingling with rumours of the infinite.

Forgive this little side-track. Let me come to your letter. One point in it makes my "side-track" not quite irrelevant. It is your reference to Sanskrit words. These words, especially when plucked from the Veda, the Upanishads or the Gita, carry the double aspect which I have spoken of, for they have what Sri Aurobindo calls "undertones" of the inner being and "overtones" of the higher, or, as a line from *Savitri* about the Mantra puts it in a Mantric way:

Sight's sound-waves breaking from the soul's great deeps.

The unfathomable suggestions, the "rumours of the infinite", are so strong that even if one does not know the meaning of the words they invade one's consciousness and reverberate there with a sense of revelation. As you have yourself said, one can "grasp some meaning without any vocal interpretation".

I must one day get together all my poems and send them to you. The immediate packet due to you is, of course, the coming July issue of *Mother India*: "Spiritual India and Bicentennial America"—which will be out in a few days and wing its way to you so as to reach you by the fourth of the month, the date of the great occasion.

I had a mind to include in it some tidbits about the War of Independence and Washington. Perhaps the most interesting is the following. When King George realized the ghastly mistake he was making, he instructed Lord Howe to take a letter to George Washington, granting pardon for the revolt and desiring complete reconciliation. But the British did not recognise Washington as the American General, the rebel Commander-in-Chief. So Lord Howe addressed the letter to Mr. Washington. The American army sent it back, saying, "There is no such person here." Later, Lord Howe tried again, this time addressing George Washington Esq. Again, the

letter was returned with the same comment. Then Lord Howe gave up, because British prestige would be injured if he changed the tune of the address. Thus the war was allowed to continue for many more miserable months, proving the truth of Einstein's remark at a later date: "There are only two things that are limitless—the universe and human stupidity."

*

Your mention of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony brings back to me the feeling I have always had about all art. I find art to divide roughly into two kinds—the one that humanly ascends in a way that makes us sing paeans of praise and the one that divinely descends to leave us absolutely dumbfounded. The first kind admirably embodies the life-force heroically striving towards the heights, the dreamer mind winging luminously to the empyrean, the soul of idealistic love rising in fire and frankincense in answer to some eternal noonday. Here is an inspired effort to seize what St. Augustine calls the Beauty of Ancient Days that is forever new. The other kind is not an act of seizing but an act of being seized. No inspired effort meets us now: we are face to face with the condition which Sri Aurobindo once put before me as the prerequisite of the Mantra: "the hushed intense receptivity of the seer." There is a waiting and watching in the wideness of the life-force or on the pinnacles of the mind or amid "the soul's great deeps". Responding to this visionary vigil a glory comes down from the Unknown, an utterance of the Supreme in the tongue proper to it and not in a translation in terms of the human. No doubt, mingling with the human consciousness at the other end, it has a touch not quite alien to us; but the quiet with open arms, that receives it, allows the divine tone to keep ringing over every other note. Both types of art are precious, yet this is indeed a *rara avis*—Sri Aurobindo's

Swan of the supreme and spaceless ether wandering winged through the universe,
Spirit immortal!

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is an example of the second type of art and what you have described as "the final outburst of inexplicable joy" is one of the world's master-movements of it. Among European achievements I would incline to couple with it the whole last canto of "Paradiso" in Dante's *Divina Commedia*, closing on that unforgettable note which one may venture to English, a little freely, thus:

Then vigour failed the towering fantasy;
Yet, like a wheel whose speed no tremble mars,
Desire rushed on, its spur unceasingly
The love that moves the sun and all the stars.

*

Reading your latest letter I remembered Sri Aurobindo's line to Ahana, the Dawn Goddess—

Trailing behind thee the purple of thy soul and the dawn-moment's glamour...

What a magical world, at once inner and outer, you have conjured up with that violet script on special paper! This line of Sri Aurobindo's is indeed a vision of the real Florence—I mean you, not the city, though I am sure the city anticipating your name had in times past all the wonder our imagination wraps it in.

When I look at the soul your letter unveils, I see in a single unifying flesh the three goddesses I have always worshipped: Beauty, Generosity, Courage. To me Beauty is a Platonic presence, the fugitive yet unforgettable reflection of Eternal Forms in the flux of time—thrilled super-realities which I have tried to echo in a couplet much appreciated by Sri Aurobindo:

Bodies of fire and ecstasies of line
Where passion's mortal music grows divine.

And Beauty is not only an outward marvel: it is also the mind's exalted attitude, the heart's exquisite gesture. With this inwardness of enchantment, Beauty merges in those two other goddesses. For, Generosity and Courage are a high and wide, intense and powerful as well as sweet and radiant self-giving of a mind that seeks to lose its being in the Infinite, a heart that yearns to contain the whole world and warm it with its deepest life, two movements that are fearless barrier-breakers, two laughing enemies of all that twists the large lines of existence into ugly imprisoning fences of the small and the self-centred. It is this Beauty, outward-inward and never separated from Generosity and Courage, which evokes immortal music from the true poet. It is this Beauty which is the fount of all great art. It is this Beauty which stirred within Florence to make that city memorable—and it is this Beauty which I see in you when you kindle up in response to my letter about Florence.

"The dawn-moment's glamour"—that also is to be remembered together with the soul's purple which is the innermost being's royalty of grace and graciousness. What is that glamour? Every day there is a moment between darkness and brightness when some mysterious perfect world seems to peep out and our world appears to tremble delicately on the verge of a miraculous new-birth, a psychic "renaissance", as if some everlasting glory of colour and shape were about to be revealed as the truth of the on-going time-process. The opening Canto of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is an enchanting hint or glint of this phenomenon. The ineffable moment passes and we have again common daylight. But that moment is a promise and a presage: its transitory touch is the seed repeatedly sown in earth-life, serving as the secret source of all its evolutionary aspiration and endeavour. I have a clear sense of this seed stirring within your words.

I am a little late in replying. Quite a heap of work suddenly descended upon me, submerging the letter-writer out of sight. The work sometimes becomes a heap just because, like you, I am a variety of beings—and that too not in succession as with most people but simultaneously. So a great number of things lure me at the same time and it's a job dealing with all of them almost together. One of the results in the past of this multitude of me's is that I have 23 unpublished books on subjects fairly wide apart: poetry, literary criticism, philosophical thought, scientific perspectives, history, archaeology, scriptural exegesis, translation from the French. On top of all the author-characters jostling one another, there is the sheer human diversity such as you speak of, a collection of contradictory pieces: "some say yes—some say no—do this or do that." The consolation that manifold people like us can take from our present perplexity is that the greater the crowd to be organised the greater the ultimate richness of unified being! To get to this richness we have to practise assiduously the Aurobindonian command: "All life is Yoga."

The command does not, of course, mean that everything constituting what passes for life, in the world as it is, can be accepted straight away as Yoga. What is meant is: nothing in life should be considered as lacking a spiritual possibility, a spiritual truth hiding behind or within it. The old ascetic habit of cutting out whole chunks of common existence and confining oneself to a few bare necessities—preferably in a forest or a cave—has now to be itself cut out on the whole, though now and then a bit of withdrawing in order to leap forward better will not be quite out of place. But, by and large, we must live in the midst of the teeming vicissitudes of the world and, rejecting the spurious shape of things, try to evoke the authentic one.

This does not always imply a mere refining of habitual movements: it occasionally implies a complete substitution of them by the Divine Originals—the Archetypal Truth, Force, Bliss that may have got distorted and not simply diminished here. A re-creation may be needed through the pure light and strength and sweetness that reside in our inmost soul.

You have raised the question: "What is life?" Arthur Symons, with a dignified Stoic-pessimism, says:

Life is a long preparedness for death.

Shakespeare, in the role of a disgruntled Macbeth, cries out, as everybody knows:

Life's but a poor player
Who struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more...

Shelley, idealistic visionary that he was, declares as also most people are aware:

Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,

Stains the white radiance of eternity,
Until death tramples it to fragments...

A French poet, with a resigned attitude of humble yet happy faith sings:

La vie est telle
Qu'elle Dieu l'a fit,
Et, telle-quelle,
Elle suffit.

The lines may be freely rendered in English:

Life is such
As God devises,
And, little or much,
Life suffices.

A deeper sense of the Divine in the vibrant beauty of time's passage comes home to us in Vaughan's intuition of life:

A quickness that my God hath kissed.

This is one of my two favourite definitions. It suggests at the same time the fleeting, fast-vanishing character of human existence and the blessedness which it can still carry because it is a gift from God, because it can feel constantly the warm presence of the Divine's care and because the Supreme Himself, out of His deep affection and compassion for man, became incarnate, took on the brevity of the human condition and filled it forever with His undying love.

The co-favourite definition is my friend Nirodbaran's phrase, a fusion of the simple with the subtle in word as well as rhythm :

Life that is deep and wonder-vast.

Here we are not only given the glimpse of a rich meaning behind the surface, a meaning opening up happy surprises. We get also the sense of a more-than-earthly truth silently at work within the many-motioned vital force to reveal through the play of this force a secret splendour whose power of transfiguring earth overpasses our largest dreams.

*

Your reference to horse-racing has stirred me a great deal. Did I ever tell you that I am a horse-worshipper? I rode horses for 20 years before I joined the Ashram,

but I had to do it with certain limitations because of a bad left leg, legacy of infantile paralysis. The Mother once told me that one day she hoped to cure it. Do you know the first thought that flashed across my mind? It was: "I'll get hold of a grand big horse and start riding it all over Pondicherry!"

Yes, I have looked adoringly at the great Secretariat's picture. He was indeed an extraordinary racer—well suited to the traditional Persian hero Rustom, under whose weight the legs of every horse buckled except those of the one named Ruksh. "Ruksh" is the later Persian form of the ancient Aryan word "Rakshasa", meaning "Giant" and denoting a type of what Sri Aurobindo would call a Vital Being. The Rakshasa is the violent devourer as distinguished from the Asura who is the cold-blooded scheming destroyer and dictator, as well as from the Pishacha who is the foul-minded perverted filth-fiend and torturer. Ruksh in the Rustom-legend would represent the gigantic power of self-assertive vitality coming under the control of the mind in its heroic ventures.

I have always regarded Sri Aurobindo as Kalki, the last Avatar of Hindu tradition, who has been figured as coming to the world riding a white horse. Perhaps the same symbolic horse arrives at the end of India's spiritual history as that which at its beginning the Vedic Rishis visioned as galloping ever towards the Dawn—Dadhikravan, image of the purified and mastered Life-Force moving with the Immortal Light of Truth in his heart and eyes.

In connection with Sri Aurobindo, there is an interesting fact to note in his *Savitri*. The achievement of the heroine's father—the long manifold Yoga and detailed exploration of the various ascending planes right up to the highest, from which the Divine Mother emerges to meet him—represents the long spiritual labour of Sri Aurobindo himself. The name of this Aurobindonian "thinker and toiler in the Ideal's air" is Aswapathy, "Lord of the Horse".

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN

THE BLACK HOLE

A DENSE absorbing greed resides
Within the gift in alchemy of space —
A sun-filled leadened death
Which buries glare without a trace.
We strain to see a denseness unimagined
By the darkest, stonemost gods
But sight is lost. A blotted implication
Sucks at search, drinks our prods.

The black within me stirs at symbol
Recognition of a death-stunned sky,
At lightless suns embraced by graveness
Darkened deeper by a clenched sigh:
Withered, mute love. Wonder-forces
Trapped imperial in ruthless round
Of searing circumstance. Wintered joy.
The sunken word which has no sound.

*

A blinded grain is deathly planted
In the splendour-field of gazing night.
Hoed by cunning turn of Matter's
Pressed necessity, the law of light,
The sullen spots are fertilized by living
Stars, by glaring inner need
To love again, to be transformed by golden
Fall into a Godward, flaming seed.

DHRUVA

JYOTIPRIYA (DR. JUDITH M. TYBERG)

MAY 16, 1902 — OCTOBER 3, 1980

*“By heaven’s illuminings one perceives
her to be a bearer of the Truth.”*

Rig Veda

ONCE Jyotipriya asked the great Sanskrit pandit Kapāli Śāstri if she could study chanting with him during the few months she would be at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1949. Śāstri replied that it was usual to first study with him for fifteen years before beginning to learn to chant. “Well,” she said, “I know music and I know Sanskrit somewhat.” So, the pandit referred the matter to Sri Aurobindo. The Master’s reply: “Teach her anything she wants to know, she’s going to do good work in America.” And, for the past thirty years—as the founder and life-spirit of the East-West Cultural Center, as an inspired and devoted teacher of Indian languages and philosophy, as a noted Sanskrit scholar and author, and as a blazing guide on the path of the Integral Yoga—Jyotipriya lived the truth of Sri Aurobindo’s words. Jyotipriya was a beacon to all she met, her life an example of consecrated service to the Divine. She left her body this past October at the age of 78. This article is offered in gratitude to her, the one Sri Aurobindo had named “The Lover of Light.”

Jyotipriya loved to talk about the course and events of her life, not from any sense of ego, for she was an extremely modest person, but because it was a way to illustrate the workings of the Grace, and the presence of the guidance that was with her from the start. Born in California in 1902, of Danish parents who were Theosophists, she grew up in a spiritual atmosphere altogether rare in the West, and especially unique for its time. The place was Point Loma, called “The California Utopia”—the newly founded world headquarters of the Theosophical Society, begun by Katherine Tingley, then leader of the society. There, on rolling, wild-flowered hills, set against the Pacific Ocean majesty, twenty-six nationalities gathered to share the religious and intellectual heritage of all continents and ages. Her parents were serious students of Oriental philosophy, and the Upanishads and Bhagavad-Gita were major influences in their lives. All throughout the nine months of Jyotipriya’s gestation in the womb, her mother chanted a Vedic hymn to the newly embodied soul. At an early age, Jyoti could recite sections of the Gita by heart.

Within this atmosphere that taught first and foremost that “Life is Joy”, it was Jyotipriya, or Judith as she was then called, who stood out as the happiest child. Her zest for life was such that she was nicknamed, in anticipation of Sri Aurobindo, “Judy Sunbeam.” But hers was also a serious nature, so she had another name as well, “The Little Philosopher.” While other children played on the beach, Jyoti could be seen engrossed in a book on Lao Tse, borrowed from her teacher. Other times she was found reciting her own compilation of uplifting quotations to her dolls. There, in the

heyday of the Point Loma experience, she found sweet nectar for her aspiring soul. Throughout her life she would often recall precious moments of inspiration from those early years: the dawn assemblies of young and old in the open-air Isis Theatre where they would gather to recite from the sacred scriptures, "Light on the Path" and the Bhagavad-Gita ... the march together in silence to the dining hall where the passwords were "Truth, Justice, Wisdom" ... and against the chime of seven bells, the children's bedtime prayer that invoked, "Let us seek more power of thought for self-conquest; let us seek more knowledge, more light." From the beginning, Jyoti and the other Point Loma children were taught about the higher and lower natures, karma and reincarnation. And when Madame Tingley spoke on these "higher lines", Jyotipriya would be moved to "great heights of inspiration."

Jyotipriya's upbringing had many parallels to that which the Mother envisaged as ideals for childhood education. The children grew largely apart from their parents, among young companions from all parts of the globe. There was attention placed on self-discipline and team-work. They were taught that theirs was the responsibility for their own unfoldment. And their days were filled with a host of intellectual, dramatic and fine arts activities. At the Point Loma Raja Yoga school, Jyoti became accomplished in piano, violin, viola, pipe organ, played in the orchestra and sang in the chorus. "The meaning of Raja Yoga was always made very clear to us," Jyoti later recalled. "Madame Tingley interpreted it as the balance of the mental, moral and spiritual faculties. And in that balance, there was a great emphasis on physical education." That is partly why Jyotipriya immediately felt so at home in the Ashram when she first arrived in 1947: "The similarities of our training and the memories came to the fore", but "the spiritual life in the Ashram was much loftier. Ours had been more ethical and service-oriented."

From the beginning, Jyotipriya knew that she was going to teach and help others. She described her life aspiration, as early on as she could remember, as one of "Long service, in search of truth, beauty and joy to share with all." The idea of brotherhood, that "we were all one", fascinated her. "There was such a sense of separateness around and I wanted to understand it, to really work it out. I loved being united with people, creating something beautiful." All of her being was moved to a vision of "an education that could inspire one to unfold the higher nature, to express the noble and brotherly acts to produce harmony in life." As a child, she was always observing her teachers and making mental notes as to what she would or would not do when she became a teacher herself. A born leader, Jyoti had charge of tutoring backward classmates in their studies and the responsibility for introducing new students from abroad to Point Loma life. While still a teenager, she began to formally teach in the Raja Yoga School. Later, she taught in the High School and the Theosophical University. As Hostess of that institution, she planned the educational events for the constant stream of international visitors to whom Point Loma had become a spiritual magnet. She was Assistant Principal of the Raja Yoga School from 1932-1935 and held the post of Dean of Studies of the Theosophical University from 1935-1945.

As a teacher, Jyotipriya brought an intellectual background of scope and brilliance that matched the intensity of her soul's call to serve. She received a B.A. from the Theosophical University in Higher Mathematics and Languages, having studied French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, Swedish, Danish, Spanish and Dutch. Then, from the same university, an M.A. in Religion and Philosophy, with a specialization in Oriental Thought. After research in Sacred Scriptures and Ancient Civilisations, she received the religious degrees of B.Th. and M.Th. In 1930 she began the study of Sanskrit under Dr. Gottfried de Purucker and was granted the Theosophical University's Ph.D. in Sanskrit Studies. Largely as a result of her Sanskrit correspondence courses, Jyoti was invited to lecture at Theosophical centres throughout Europe and Scandinavia in the years 1935-1936. It was during a public lecture on this tour, that a British blue-collar worker, dazzled by Jyotipriya's intellect and breadth of knowledge, was prompted to ask: "For such a young kid, how can you have so much wisdom?"

Long before Jyotipriya knew of Sri Aurobindo or had made his saying "the Knowledge that unites is the true Knowledge" the foundation stone of the East-West Cultural Center, she had an inherent belief in that great teaching. It was while lecturing in Europe in 1935 that her travelling companions disclosed that they were working with Hitler and tried to enlist Jyotipriya in their cause. "I was interested in brotherhood and when they proposed that Nazi stuff to me I had no use for it at all," she later said. And reflecting on that and other incidents in her life she continued, "People were always trying to lead me to this or that, but nobody could lead me. Nobody could get me off my interests along the higher lines and my spiritual goal."

In America, together with Dr. Purucker, Jyotipriya and a select group of scholars committed to print the meanings of all the Sanskrit, Greek, Hebrew, Tibetan, Zoroastrian and scientific terms used in Theosophy for a proposed Encyclopedia of Theosophy. Through all the learned discussions in her midst, Jyoti received an invaluable education in spiritual literature and terminology. Her contribution in return was the exposition of over 2,000 terms. Then, she began an intensive study of the Bible in the original and the Kabbalah. But it was Sanskrit that became her passion and life's work. In 1940, Jyotipriya was appointed Head of the Sanskrit and Oriental Division of the Theosophical University. She became a member of the American Oriental Society, and in 1941 her first Sanskrit textbook, *Sanskrit Keys to the Wisdom Religion*, was published, climaxing eleven years of concentrated study.

Sanskrit Keys to the Wisdom Religion, which presented the meanings of over 500 Sanskrit terms used in religious and occult literature, as well as a practical pronunciation guide to and history of the language, was a "first" in its field by virtue of both its content and the technology involved in getting it to print. Set in *Devanāgarī*, it was the first occasion for that ancient script to be printed by linotype. Even in India it was only the contemporary version of Sanskrit script that was available in a linotype keyboard. By adapting a modern Indian Sanskrit keyboard, Jyotipriya and Geoffrey Barborcka of Point Loma designed a special *Devanāgarī* linotype, composed of

dozens of matrices. The Los Angeles Times and other U.S. newspapers covered the story. Featured in the Times was a photograph of a page from Jyotipriya's book, accompanied by the caption: "INTRICATE—PAGE OF 30,000 YEAR-OLD SANSKRIT LANGUAGE". It was likely the first time the American public had ever had a glimpse of the language—or had even heard of it. The average American of the day might probably have thought, as someone actually said, "What is Sanskrit, some kind of war work?"

The Los Angeles Times quoted Jyotipriya's enthusiasm for Sanskrit: "Not only are the languages used on the European and American continents deficient in words dealing with spirit, but many of the English words that do have spiritual connotations are 'so weighty with false and dogmatic beliefs' that it is difficult to use them with any hopes of conveying an exact meaning to all...while Sanskrit, expresses the 'inner mysteries of the soul and spirit, the many after-death states, the origin and destiny of worlds and men and human psychology.'" The article ended with Jyotipriya's assertion that Sanskrit is "as alive today as it was at the birth of thinking man on this planet." Thus concluded Jyotipriya's introductory lesson to the American people on the treasures of Sanskrit, the first of many in the course of her forty years as a pioneer and champion of the language. It is worth noting that *Sanskrit Keys to the Wisdom Religion* and Jyotipriya's *First Lessons in Sanskrit Grammar* (a revised edition of Ballantyne's 19th Century grammar which she prepared in collaboration with Dr. Lawrence A. Ware) were the only books on Sanskrit to be found in 1940's America in the central research library of a city the size of Los Angeles!

1945—The Point Loma experience came to a close, for reasons foreseen and unforeseen. Enrollment in the schools had begun to decline some years earlier,...and the presence of an international community near the strategic San Diego naval base outside of Point Loma caused suspicion during wartime. Jyotipriya and other Point Loma-ites moved north to Los Angeles to continue their work. There, Jyotipriya taught for a brief period at the prestigious University of Southern California. A character reference of the time lauded Jyotipriya with these words: "I have known Judith Tyberg since her birth. I have observed in her the growth, ever clearly brought forth in action, of an unselfish and noble character. Combined with this she is an unusual and brilliant teacher." And from another: "Miss Tyberg's lectures were distinguished by wide reading and research; and even more than this, she imparted to her students and hearers the spiritual aroma and inspiration of the great philosophical schools of the East."

Jyotipriya then began what was called by friends "a daring adventure", and opened a Sanskrit Center and bookshop where she taught Indian philosophy, religion, languages and culture. Through this she developed a large network of associations with other Orientalists and a unique, esteemed reputation. She lectured at colleges, churches and clubs and, on a more intimate level, continued two study circles that had become an integral part of her life since long before—a "Lotus Circle" that taught children about the lives of great people of the different nations through story and song,

and for adults a Saturday evening "Get-Together" where people brought their sewing or knitting or whatever they had to work on, while Jyoti presented the teachings of the great sages of all time. She continued her own individual studies in comparative religion and myth, in Hindu astrology and, though hampered by a poverty of research resources, plunged into an even more intense pursuit of the wisdom contained in Sanskrit scriptures.

V.K. Gokak once characterized Jyotipriya's life as one of "a ceaseless search for Truth." Her quest took a crucial turn at a 1946 lecture given by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Vice-Chancellor of Benares Hindu University, sponsored by the University of Southern California. And as if to initiate the new year, in January 1947 Jyotipriya addressed a letter to the President and Officers of Benares Hindu University:

"Dear Gentlemen:

I would like to enter the Oriental Department of your University for research work and help from your Sanskrit professors and pandits. I have decided to give my life to the spreading of the beautiful teachings and religious-philosophy as found in Sanskrit scriptures. One of my projects is to make a good English rendering of the complete Yoga *Vāsiṣṭa* for the West. Only portions of it have found their way here, and those bits kindle in me a sympathetic note and I would have the West illumined by its perfect philosophy..."

Then, in a letter to J.K. Birla inquiring about financial assistance she explained the situation in America:

"...Spiritual and Oriental work of the higher kind, especially along my line, do not bring in the big sums that material lines of work do here in America. In my little Sanskrit Center here which is not too fortunately placed due to my small means, I have just covered my expenses for my simple way of living with the little income that comes from my classes and lectures and from the little I make on the sale of books. But I am so happy to have at least made a go (as they say here) of my little Sanskrit Center...When one dares and goes ahead with an unselfish heart and is convinced the work is for the progress of humanity help does come. My pupils are devoted to me and have helped me out of awkward situations and the older ones with much worldly experience give me legal help free."

J.K. Birla wrote to Jyotipriya in reply:

"It has given me great pleasure to learn how sincerely devoted you are to...Sanskrit learning. We are reminded of the learned Gargi of Ancient India, when we think of you, spreading the message of Arya (Hindu) Dharma and philosophy, with a missionary zeal among your countrymen. For this we offer you our sincerest appreciation and deepest gratitude...I assure you of all that I can do for

your laudable ambition.”

The final letter in the series of correspondences was addressed to all the friends and associates of Jyotirpriya’s Sanskrit Center:

“I am happy to let you know that I have accepted a three year scholarship for Sanskrit research at Benares Hindu University...I would like to thank each and all of you for the privilege of sharing our mutual experiences in the search for Truth and for all the help you have given me.”

Dr. Judith Tyberg, soon to be named Jyotipriya, left for India in June 1947 as a Seth Jugal Kishore Birla Scholar and an honorary member of the Arya Dharma Sewa Sangha, an association that “advanced the spiritual laws and self-directed evolution and ultimate liberation of the Soul.” At the age of 45, Jyotipriya would find the answers to her lifelong quest when a few months later she would find her way to Pondicherry.

(To be continued)

MANDAKINI
(MADELEINE SHAW)

HER UNSEEN HAND

ANGUISH, pain, inner turmoil,
All words till one day
They enter and live within us—
Yes, live on us, drinking our sap
Exhaust and overrule
All thrills and habits, joys and aches.
Buzzing maddening sounds low-repeated
Fill the ears, the sight dims,
All other inputs cease.

Her unseen hand wipes the brow
Gently, Her perfume glides past
And barely brushes the olfactory fibres.
Low soft waves of Her love
Soothing the agony of nerves travel
And reach the cells and sweep and wipe
The ghastly colours of anguish,
The odours of depression and
Unremembered nightmare visions.
The now clean mind mirror reflects
The calm of deep blue sea.
Words disappear—all except Her name.
Light fills the being once again.
A prayer rises from all the parts—
Never let me stop and forget
To thank you, my love, my beloved,
My sweet Mother.

DINKAR

POEMS BEFORE AND AFTER 1973

OFFERING X

OF THE LAST SEASON—1970

SPRING... and my flesh is bursting into bloom.
No one can bring this blossoming to seed.
Full leaf and flushed petal will fall...
Will fall on ground untouched by my renewing.

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

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

OF THE NEW SEASON—AUGUST 1979

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

But from its true roots
Under Thy loving and sometimes painful urging,
Canticles of joy to life.

New life, new growth surges;
Shoots bursting to branch for leaf
And flower and nesting
Reach to embrace the sky,
Refuge for petal and wing.

And I from the desolation of winter
Am come into eternal spring.

ELIZABETH STILLER

THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of January 1981)

It is fascinating to observe how closely Upamanyu's story follows Vāmadeva's celebration of the working of the Aśvins in the Ṛigveda IV.45. I give below Sri Aurobindo's explication of the second and seventh ṛiks along with the corresponding incidents from Vyāsa's story in parantheses:¹¹⁷

Our conscious existence is a hill (*adri*) with many successive levels and elevations, *sānuni*; the cave of the subconscious (the *kūpa* into which Upamanyu falls) is below; we climb upwards towards the godhead of the Truth and Bliss where are the seats of Immortality (Upamanyu prays for freedom from the world of five elements through knowledge and meditation, ślokas 60, 67).

By this upward movement of the chariot of the Aśvins with its burden of uplifted and transformed satisfactions the veil of night that encompasses the worlds of being in us (Upamanyu's blindness) is rolled away. All these worlds, mind, life, body, are opened to the rays of the Sun of Truth (he gets out of the Pit). This lower world in us, *rajas*, is extended and shaped by this ascending movement of all its powers and satisfactions into the very brightness of the luminous intuitive mind, Swar, which receives directly the higher Light (his sight is restored). The mind, the act, the vital, emotional, substantial existence, all becomes full of the glory and the intuition, the power and the light of the divine Sun,—*tat savitur varenyam bhargo devasya*. The lower mental existence is transformed into an image and reflection of the higher Divine (his teeth turn golden).

With Uddālaka Vyāsa introduced the Indra function of riving asunder the inconscient inertia to let through the waters of knowledge. In the Upamanyu myth he brings in the Aśvins and the concept of Bliss transforming the consciousness. With Uttanka he ushers in Agni, the flame of aspiration, the most important of the deities in the *yajña*.

These three stories concerning the three disciples of Dhaumya and Veda-Gotama can be seen to constitute a distinct pattern emerging from the Ṛigvedic matrix. The presiding deities of the three "movements" are Indra, the Aśvins, and Indra-Agni.

In the first story, that of Uddālaka, Vyāsa merely hints at the Indra-function of cleaving the hill to release the divine waters (Ṛigveda VII.49.1-4) without mentioning the deity even once. There is, however, considerable significance in the renaming of Āruni as Uddālaka. The former signifies identification with the Dawn,

the Vedic Ūṣā who, along with Saramā, guides Indra to the hidden lair of the Dasyus who have stolen the ray-cows of the Sun-Truth. This is, therefore, the approach, for the revelation of the apocalypse, the harbinger of which is Indra-Uddālaka-Purandara, the shatterer-of-cities, of dams, of all that hems in and restricts the glorious outflow of the divine afflatus within.

With Upamanyu Vyāsa stresses the Bliss aspect in the spiritual ascension. He reinforces this in chapter 14 of the Anuśāsana Parva where Upamanyu is said to invoke Śiva for the boon of an unfailing supply of milk, "For the sweet milk (itself a Vedic image) has, evidently, a sense not essentially different from the *madhu*, honey or sweetness, of Vāmadeva's hymn (IV.58) (to the Aśvins)"¹¹⁸. It is this all-prevailing joy inhering in all existence which the Aśvins gift to Upamanyu. Vyāsa, however, carefully retains the knowledge from the earlier story, by having the Aśvins also restore Upamanyu's sight. For they are the golden-winged birds, "the eagles of Omniscience"¹¹⁹ lifting Upamanyu from the pit of Ignorance to the light of a supernal day where, as Dhaumya tells him, the Vedas shine in him.

The last part of this trilogy is Vyāsa's *tour de force*. In the Uttanka myth he provides a detailed exposition of the Aryan aspirant's journey to win the hidden wealth of the Sun's Truth from the cave of the subconscious guarded by the rakshasa and the naga. In this he receives assistance first from Parjanya-Indra who gives the amrita which is the counterpart of the Aśvin-function in the Upamanyu myth. Once the human vessel is strengthened and made maleable by the satisfaction of the physical, vital and mental levels of consciousness, it is then ready for the descent of the unadulterated Truth-illumination from the world of Svar. Here it is Indra, again, fulfilling the Pūṣān-function of opening up a path in the hard physical crust by his luminous goad of supernal knowledge to descend into the inner, the nether darkness of Ignorance. At that inmost level the aspirant's aspiration makes manifest Agni as *dadhikravan*, the Vedic horse,

Dadhikravan who is the truth in his running,—yea, he gallops and he flies,—brings into being the impulsion, the abundant force, the heavenly light.

This is the swan that dwells in the purity, the lord of substance in the middle world, the Priest of the offering whose seat is upon the altar, the guest in the gated house. He dwells in the wide Ether; he is born of the Waters, he is born of the Light, he is born of the Law, he is born of the Hill of Substance, he is the Law of the Truth. (Ṛigveda IV. 402, 5)¹²⁰

This celebration of Agni is linked to the Bhṛigu fire-cult, Uttanka being the only Bhārgava among the three disciples. Vyāsa's pre-occupation with Agni continues into the immediately succeeding Parva, where Bhṛigu himself is featured, and it is reiterated at the close of the Ādi Parva in the Khāṇḍava forest conflagration with clear borrowings from Rigvedic hymns to the Mystic Fire.¹²¹

What place, however, does the basic guru-śiṣya, teacher-taught relationship

have within this symbol-structure? Why do Dhaumya and Veda impose such ordeals on their beloved pupils? The answer lies in the vast abyss which separates the spiritual from the secular, the novice from the apprentice. An aspirant to poethood may well try repeatedly and fail and only be condemned to poetasterdom, but the pilgrim on the spiritual path has no such consolation. As he proceeds, he has to come into contact with occult forces which can well prove to be his doom if he is not properly groomed for the battle. The Vedic seers used to speak of this as baking the vessel soundly for holding the soma, for if the ādhāra, the receptacle, has not been purified and reinforced, it may be shattered by the impact of these non-earthly powers, and "if you undertake the spiritual life and fail", points out Nolini Kanta Gupta, "then you lose both here and hereafter."¹²²

Hence the imperative need for rigorous preparation through a strict regimen which tested the fitness of the novice, varying from crude physical labour to tests of inner vigilance. Nolini Kanta Gupta interprets the oft-recurring task of grazing cows for years on end as a test of obedience and endurance, for "These two are fundamental and indispensable conditions in sadhana; without them there is no spiritual practice, one cannot advance a step. It is absolutely necessary that one should carry out the directions of the Guru without question or complaint, with full happiness and alacrity: even if there comes no immediate gain one must continue with the same zeal not giving way to impatience or depression."¹²² This is precisely what the three disciples are put through.

The role of the guru remains crucial because he is one who has trod this path already (as Uttanka and Upamanyu are told by Indra, Agni and the Āsvins) and he possesses the ability to communicate that realisation to the sincere aspirant. On his part, the pupil has the obligation to "cease to belong to the gross life of ignorance and subject himself to a strenuous discipline involving a purification of his outer and inner being, a steady and increasing exposure of his feeling, thinking and other activities to the light of the Knowledge he is gaining.... He has to be patient, industrious and learn to separate his true self from the body with which he is habituated to identify himself."¹²³ This is the intention of the physical ordeals to which Āruni and Upamanyu are put as also Uttanka by Gotama (in the Āsvamedhika Parva account). Such an aspirant, who is devoted to the Truth, is steadfast and obedient to this guru, is favoured by the gods; as is Nachiketas, son of Āruni-Uddālaka:

This wisdom is not to be had by reasoning, O beloved Nachiketas; only when told thee by another it brings real knowledge,—the wisdom which thou hast gotten. Truly thou art steadfast in the Truth! Even such a questioner as thou may I meet with always.
(Kāṭha Upaniṣad, 1.2.9)¹²⁴

Besides the profound aspiration with which he starts, the constancy and unshakable faith and the Guru's guidance, the aspirant also needs the touch of Divine Grace to cut the "pythonic coils of our sempiternal Ignorance which bind the being

to the body... Even the seer who is devoted to Truth alone must needs appeal to Puṣān, the Sun-God, to unveil the face of Truth hidden by the golden orb (Īśa, 15) or to Agni to wear down the devious sin of (his) soul' (Īśa, 18)... the Ātman, state the seers, is attainable by him whom it chooses—to him the Atman reveals its own body (Munḍaka III.2.2; Kaṭha 1.2.23)".¹²⁶ It is this touch of Grace which is shown in the story of Uttanka in the unsolicited appearance of Indra and his gifting of amṛita to the aspirant:

The Self is not to be won by eloquent teaching, nor by brain power, nor by much learning: but only he whom this Being chooses can win Him; for to him this Self bares His body. (Kaṭha, 1.2.23)¹²⁶

The Pauṣya Parva, therefore, is Vyāsa's restatement, in terms of simple and apparently grotesque or fanciful tales, of the central idea of the Veda "that the sub-conscious darkness and the ordinary life of ignorance held concealed in it all that belongs to the divine life and that these secret riches must be recovered first by destroying the impenitent powers of ignorance and then by possessing the lower life subjected to the higher."¹²⁷

(To be continued)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

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¹¹⁷ *The Secret of the Veda, op. cit.*, p. 319

¹¹⁸ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire, op. cit.*, p. 197

¹¹⁹ *Savitri* I. 3, p. 37.

¹²⁰ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire, op. cit.*, p. 197-8.

¹²¹ cf. Rīgveda X. 142, chapter 242 of the Adī Parva.

¹²² Nolini Kanta Gupta *Collected Works*, vol 3 (SAI-E) p. 70; also *Mother India*, Feb '79, p.97 "The Guru serves as an absolute check leaving little room for the myriad self-deception for the sake of self-convenience to which man's nature is prone".

¹²³ M.P. Pandit: *Mystic Approach to Veda & Upanishad*, pp. 122-123.

¹²⁴ *The Upanishads, op. cit.*, p. 246.

¹²⁵ Pandit, *op. cit.*

¹²⁶ *The Upanishads op. cit.*, p. 249.

¹²⁷ *The Secrets of the Veda, op. cit.*, p. 230.

THE JEALOUS KING AND THE SCAVENGER PRIEST

A SHORT STORY

LONG long ago there lived a king, who was very cruel to his countrymen. Everyone feared but no one respected him. In that same country a priest who preached peace and piety also lived. His radiant face and his noble behaviour attracted the people. They thronged to see him and hear his words at his residence both in the mornings and evenings.

The news of the gatherings and mass-prayers reached the ears of the king. The jealous king ordered his guards to bring the priest to the court. The priest came and with him many of his followers. Their very sight infuriated the king and in his fury he shouted, "You mean, base priest! What makes you gather the mob both in the mornings and evenings? And what is this mass-prayer for? I suspect treason."

The priest, trembling in his shoes, replied, "My Lord! I am innocent and ignorant of any treason. I preach nothing but peace and piety to the commons. And I am not that much base or mean as to plot against my sovereign Lord."

The king, very much displeased with the words of the priest, said, "You liar! You can't cheat me as you do the brainless commonfolk. Treason is the worst of crimes. You are accused of it. And here are three questions. If you fail to answer even one, your head will be axed."

To which the priest retaliated, "My liege! You are prejudiced against me. Your power-drunk mind will no longer listen to whatever I say. So go on with your questions. Whatever my fate wills, so let it be."

The jealous king poured out the questions. "To begin with, tell me what is my worth! Secondly, how many days will it take for me to travel round the world? Finally, what am I thinking now?"

The priest's face turned red with ignorance and fear. He scratched his head, tapped his forehead and gulped the water collected in his mouth. Yet he could not get an answer for one. He bent down his head and said to the king, "My Lord! These are posers for my poor brain. Yet if you could give me a three-weeks' time, I may be able to find the answers. I beg you to grant this favour."

The king roared with laughter and said, "Poor priest! You like to live for three more weeks? All right! I will treat this request as your death-wish. Go and come back after three full weeks are over. Your fate awaits your answers. Go."

In his plight, the priest consulted all the scholars, his friends and disciples. He pestered every passer-by on the roads. All of them listened to his story with sympathetic ears but, when asked for a solution, they disappeared.

It was the fag-end of the third week. The priest lost hope and sat gloomily in his beautiful garden. At that time his scavenger came to clean his garden. He saw the sad face of the priest and inquired into the matter. The priest, just to solace himself, spoke of his worries and of the impending danger. The illiterate scavenger heard

the story with the utmost sincerity and cheered up the priest. "Worry no more, Sir. Lend me your horse, your gown and a few of your disciples and buy me a false beard that resembles your natural one. And that puts an end to the matter."

His heart going pit-a-pat, the priest fulfilled the scavenger's demands. On the appointed day the scavenger in the disguise of the priest stood in the court facing the king.

"Welcome, good priest, welcome. I hope you are ready with answers. Remember, if you fail, your head becomes mine," the king said with glee.

The priest replied, "Go on, good king. I am here to answer your questions."

The king asked, "Well, then. What is my worth, old priest?"

Pat came the answer, "Twenty-nine gold pieces."

The king got wild, and said, "Look at my crown, blind fool. Look at my throne if you have eyes. Count if you can the priceless stones studded therein. And my worth is just twenty-nine gold pieces, you say."

"Suppress your anger, my Lord," interrupted the priest. "Jesus, our Saviour, was betrayed for a meagre amount of thirty gold pieces. So that was his worth. You are one piece worse than the Lord, for you are only a mortal being."

The king smiled and said to himself, "I never thought that I would be worth so little."

"How many days will it take for me to travel round the world?" asked the king, cursing the priest for his success in the first question.

"My Lord! If you rise with the sun and ride with the same until he rises again the next morning, you can be very sure that you have travelled round the world in twenty-four hours."

The king laughed and said, "O God! I can only do that if it is humanly possible." Thinking that he could trap him in the last question, the king praised the priest for his quick wit. He continued, "Well! The last in the list is going to determine your fate. Be careful while you answer. Ready? What am I thinking now?"

"My Lord!", the priest replied within not a second; "you are thinking that I am the priest. But I am his scavenger. I beg pardon for him and for me."

The king struck with awe and amusement embraced the scavenger and said, "Your wit and wisdom is an asset to our land. From this day on, you will be my chief minister."

But the scavenger shrugged his shoulders and said, "My Lord! I can neither read nor write. Do not burden an illiterate with such a responsible and respectable post. If you are really pleased with me, kindly pardon the good priest who plots no treason but preaches peace and piety."

The king nodded his head in approval and said, "A hundred gold pieces a month you will receive for your courage and merry jest. And your quick wit saves the old priest."

P. RAJA

(Courtesy: "Chandamama")

THE LORD OF HORSES

A NOVELLA

I

THEY compared me to lightning. They compared me to fire. To the noblest of animals they compared me. My head is large as the wild boar's. My eyes are long as the gazelle's and my neck is supple like the hare's. I am gay as the antelope, strong and enduring as the camel. And the swallow is my sister. I fly faster than the partridge and the eagle I defy: "Come down or I shall come up to you."

My father's name was Drinker of Air and he was the most sought-after in the tribe of Ouled Naeel. His coat was white like the camel's milk. And his cloud-coloured mane floated upon the wind, a mane which on days of rejoicing was braided with threads of gold. And his tail flowed to the ground.

My mother's name was Daughter of the Wind and it seemed her hair was woven with night. She was sober. She was strong. And she was without malice. And our Master Mohammed-bin-Moktar called her also his Black Pearl.

I am the third child of Drinker of Air and Daughter of the Wind. My brother, they said, was a portrait of my father. They named him Safi which means "The Pure One." My sister's name was Leila which means "Night" and she was dark and lovely like my mother. I have known neither Safi nor Leila since Mohammed-bin-Moktar, our Master, offered them as gifts to the chiefs of those tribes whose friendship and alliance he had sought. He never thought of giving me away to anyone.

I was to be born one April morning. My Master's caravan was to stop for a few days in an oasis and I would have discovered daylight at the same time as would have darkness. And my tiny eyes would have first rested on the softly swaying palm-trees in the sky. But Kismet had reserved something else. I was born in the heart of a desert and at dead of night.

My mother, Daughter of the Wind, felt the first pains as the sun sank beneath, the sky-line. She lay in the Master's tent on a rich carpet while Mohammed-bin-Moktar lay stretched over cushions and dined on grilled meat of lamb. He sent away the women who served him food. He wanted to be alone to witness his beautiful mare deliver, his adorable, quiet Black Pearl.

He also wanted to be the first to set his eyes on me. He had had a foreboding that I would be a very special-horse. Too many favourable signs accompanied my birth. Firstly, I was born at the prime of his prosperity. He had never been more esteemed by the other chieftains. And in the months that preceded my birth, twenty-two more camels were added to his caravan. And one of his allies had offered him an exceedingly beautiful saddle, made of leather, studded with enamel. And it had solid silver stirrups and a bridle made out of fine golden threads. And some months back, Meryem, the favourite among his wives, had borne him a son at last. Until then he had had only daughters from his three marriages.

I was to be Mehhi's first horse. And we were to grow up together.

Moreover, on this night of spring that was cold like the swish of a sword, the moon had risen like a crystal sphere, round and full, the moon had risen like the eye of God. And in a silence full of poise Daughter of the Wind put me forth into the world. There was not a single sound anywhere. The whole camp held its breath in anxious waiting. Then at one o'clock in the morning, Mohammed-bin-Moktar raised the fly of the tent.

"Come and see," he called. "Come and see the marvel."

In waves they entered the tent: the intendant and the warriors dressed in jel-lababs of varied colours, the Sudanese servitors with their turbans. And Meryem came behind them. One could see only her eyes and the little Mehhi she held close to her bosom. Following her came the seven daughters of Mohammed in their embroidered caftans. And finally the Master's other two wives bedecked with all their jewels.

Daughter of the Wind had now started to lick me. On my Master's order a woman was blowing into my nostrils to remove the foam. Another was beating eggs in a calabash. This was to be my first meal before I could suck my mother's milk.

The people saw me and a chorus of praise went up:

"He is grey like the untamed pigeon."

"He is grey like the pebbles on the river-side."

"Grey like the blade of a dagger."

"Grey like the sky on a day of storm."

"He is like the moon tonight."

Mohammed-bin-Moktar leaned on me and took me up in his arms and raising me above his audience sang aloud in his grave and beautiful voice:

"This horse is the Lord of Horses.

"He is blue-grey like the pigeon under a cloud.

"His mane will ripple with the wind.

"He will endure hunger as he will endure thirst.

"He will outstrip his rivals in a wink.

"Son of Drinker of Air

"And of Daughter of the Wind,

"He will blacken the hearts of our enemies."

Shouts of joy rent the sky, and while the musicians went to fetch their flutes, cymbals and drums, the three eldest daughters of Mohammed-bin-Moktar danced ecstatically.

Thus, from the very first hour of my birth, I was entitled to shouts and to clamour. Later when the enemy would charge at me I would have lost all fear, fear of the rattle of arms, the battle-cries of the warriors and even the fear of bullets that whizzed past me.

Then Meryem asked in her soft gentle voice:

"And how shall we call him, the son of Drinker of Air and Daughter of the Wind?"

"Let's call him Mansur, the Victor," someone answered.

"No, Kamil, the Perfect," another suggested.

"Mubarak, the Blessed."

"Messaoud, the Ever-cheerful."

"Naji, the Persevering."

"Aatik, the Noble."

"No," said Mohammed. "No, he is far too beautiful. We would need to have all these names. We shall call him simply Saïd. Saïd, the Lord. The Lord of Horses. No other name would do him justice."

*

The following day, a new ceremony took place. The woman who had blown into my nostrils to purge them of the foam of birth had now prepared a potion made of resin, red pepper and hot butter. This potion was to whet my appetite. A whole day had passed since I had been given the beaten eggs. It was now time to put me on my mother's milk. I sniffed at the peppered butter and began snorting. I was dribbling and frantically moving my head. But my Master would not stop. He himself made me swallow the potion by taking the potion in his palm and spreading it over my gums and on my tongue. When he had finished he slipped into my mouth a salted date. And avidly I started sucking it.

Now the time had come. Daughter of the Wind gave a slightly raucous neigh. Mohammed-bin-Moktar caressed her neck and shoulders and called her his Black Beauty, his Black Pearl, the fortunate mother blessed with a son who was the Lord of Horses. And as the people quietened down to a rapt silence, he solemnly put her breast into my mouth. The mare's flank quivered. And I started sucking at my mother's breast with all the energy of a robust and well-formed colt.

Loud cheers rose up again. Then my Master took little Mehhi in his arms and held him for some time on my back. And with a solemn voice he said:

"I unite you forever, Mehhi, my son and Saïd, the Lord of Horses."

And saying this he split my right ear with a quick and yet gentle slash of his combat dagger. The pain was great but I mastered it. I felt Mohammed pat me on the back. Then a collar made of camel hair and braided by Meryem was put around my neck. This collar is called a "goulada"; it replaces the halter and protects from wounds and diseases. Amulets were attached to my goulada, a heart-shaped talisman on which were engraved the following words:

"Love horses and take good care of them, for in them lives honour and beauty."

On the third day of my birth, the caravan started off again in the direction of the oasis. Mohammed-bin-Moktar was at its head. He rode a horse whose name was Khuskhus the Torrent. Two camels followed the Master. Or rather two she-camels. The one in front bore a palanquin in which sat Meryem and Mehhi. The other carried me, Lord of Horses.

Cozily coddled up in a nest of carpets and silk and the cadenced step of Ourida

the Rose gently rocking me, I was beginning my acquaintance with the world. It was smooth and it was luminous. It was sun and it was desert. It was also Mehhi, the nursling to whom I had been forever bound by an oath and by this mark on my ear that would always remain.

The sun was all red when we reached the oasis. Surging up from the sands, luxuriant in palm-trees that soared to the sky, and in date-trees whose branches were overladen with dates, the oasis was truly a magnificent sight. And the water sang sweetly and discreetly as from its source it rose and became a sheet and the cool shade of trees refreshed it and made it more sweet.

Mohammed let me taste the water here. He cupped some water in his hands and I sucked it to the last drop. But as I had my mother's milk for my food and drink, I left the water for the others: for the combat-horses who quenched their thirst only twice a day and for the camels who were even more sober about their thirst.

I have kept a pleasant memory of this beginning of life in the oasis. I was hobbled with ropes made of wool: this was to prevent me from running away to the neighbouring tents. A little Sudanese boy whose name was Akibu was asked to watch over me. Twice a day, he would undo my hobbles and tickle me with a long stick. At first I protested in my way: I kicked and snorted. But then I understood that Akibu wanted to forge my character. So I started trying not to be provoked by his teasings.

One morning, while I was toddling around Mohammed's tent in spite of my hobbles, I saw appear in front of me a drove of animals whose beauty struck me as sublime. They had horns like lyres, their coat was the colour of honey and their eyes were long and tender, tender like the eyes of Daughter of the Wind.

It was a drove of gazelles. Mohammed ordered his men not to disturb them from drinking. Then he undid the woollen ropes from my legs and allowed me to go and play with Gezala, a gazelle of my age. At the same time he asked Akibu to watch me more carefully. "Gazelles are known to lure horses away sometimes," he said and went on to narrate how once a colt had been stolen away by these beauties of the desert. The colt had been spotted amongst them, his mane floating in the forest of their lyre-shaped horns.

Akibu made us fight each other, Gezala and me, front against front. But as I was stronger than she, I feigned defeat for the sheer joy of seeing her golden eyes brighten up in triumph.

But one day in May just as dawn was breaking on the horizon, I had to bid farewell to Gezala and all the other gazelles as well. I said good-bye to all the palm- and date-trees as we left the oasis. The caravan was moving northward. This time they did not perch me atop a camel's hump in a bed of silk and wool. I was made to walk beside Daughter of the Wind and of Ourida the Rose, the pink she-camel. And as I walked it dawned on me that I would one day be a traveller.

We crossed all kinds of landscapes. After the desert we came to the steppes, where we walked through tall luxuriant grass and alfalfa and diss and pistachio-trees whose trunks were brown and veined like the wings of butterflies. Then leaving the

steppes we reached the high plateaus of the mountains.

When the climb became for me a little painful, I was raised onto Ourida's back. From there I would watch the snow on the summits and surly mouflons with horns which, instead of soaring upwards as did the gazelles', recurved towards the ground like the blades of scimitars.

Rocking on my perch I laughed at their cantankerous airs and their scimitar-like horns. And Ourida the Rose enjoyed it as much as I.

We reached the littoral. The grass of the steppes and the rocks of the mountains were now replaced by olive- and cork-trees, jujube and prickly bushes where goats got entangled.

The jujube-tree was my favourite because of its red wood and its red fruits that were so refreshing. When I had been good for a whole day, when I had calmly endured Akibu's tickles and proddings, he would lay a branch of the jujube-tree on the carpet where I slept beside Daughter of the Wind, under Mohammed-bin-Moktar's own tent. And at night if I had a bad dream, I had only to think of my jujube branch to reassure myself. I would nibble at the red stalk, the red fruits and the green leaves. And rebukingly Mohammed would pat me on the forehead.

"Eat," he would tell me. "Eat, my beautiful colt, son of my sober Black Pearl. One day you too will acquire poise and you too will seek adventure with an empty stomach. And then you will thirst only for air and you will hunger only for space."

I was growing up very well, very rapidly and in great harmony. They decided to wean me from my mother's milk well before the usual time.

Daughter of the Wind bowed to the will of the Master even though she loved me much and her milk was delicious and aplenty. In any case she had a more serious role to play than just being my nurse. She would have to train herself for combat and for fantasia.

So, a goat-skin full of camel's milk was placed in front of me but I refused to drink that milk. Daughter of the Wind was my mother. I was ready to nourish myself like the other horses who were my elders: eat barley, alfalfa and crushed mulberry-twigs. I was even willing to confine my diet to mashed dates. But I would never drink camel's milk.

Mohammed-bin-Moktar, however, was firm. He tried to explain to me that in times of drought a horse accustomed to milk does not suffer thirst or hunger, he can forgo barley and water. I understood what he meant but I continued to sulk. And I too was resolved. Daughter of the Wind was taken away from me. I did not yield still. My tummy had started to cave in, my flank was pulled up like a young wolf's. But I kept resisting. The hunger-strike went on. One day passed. Then two. Then three.

On the fourth day, light dawned on an unrecognizable colt. My heart was full of melancholy and my beautiful coat that had been compared to "pigeon's wing" and to "colour of moonlight" was turning into a colour that the coat of donkeys takes

when they labour under too heavy a burden.

So, Mohammed blew into the skin of the goat, tied it like a balloon and then, while Meryem held my head, fanned my nostrils with an air that was perfumed with camel's milk. I inhaled the air with lusty pleasure and in that moment the taste of life entered me. And I drank the milk to the last drop. Mohammed now smiled and told me that the milk I had drunk was Ourida's and that henceforth she would be my nurse.

I was happy. And I started to recuperate my strength. In less than a day, my hair got back its sheen and my eye its gaiety. I had always loved life and this fast had made me love it doubly more.

For a long time I thought of nothing else but fun and frolic. Under Meryem's tent I entertained everyone. And that did not merely include Meryem, Mehhi, his sisters and their servants. The audience consisted also of all sorts of animals: greyhounds with sand-coloured coats and sharp muzzles, a gazelle who had been picked up to console me for the parting with Gezala, an antelope who had lost a horn in God-alone-knows what sort of a fight, hunter falcons with short curving beaks and striped wings.

I was trotting in their midst, pushing them onto the carpet, jumping over a rampart of cushions. I held a kid by its skin and shook him unmindful of his bleating. Or else I would feign death and all my limbs would become stiff. And then when someone would lean over me I would jump up with a start as if a fire had broken out. And standing on my hindlegs, I would place my forelegs on Meryem's shoulders. And Meryem would be the happiest then.

Meryem kept spoiling me. She would wake up at dawn to go and collect juicy grasses from the meadows. And upon her return I would see her walking back dressed in veils paler than the sky, and on her head a basket of grass like a huge crown. And I would go galloping to meet her. Then she would put her basket down and tell me:

"Feast yourself, Saïd, my gentle lord. These grasses will quicken your blood and purify your entrails."

She would also give me bread and delicious grains and she would treat me to dried slices of meat finer than paper. Thanks to this diet I waxed even more elegant in beauty.

When I was a year old they shaved the tufts of my hair: my mane and my tail. Meryem and Akibu rubbed my skin with droppings of sheep soaked in milk.

When I was 18 months old my training began. The training was in time and I was told that a horse whose training begins late can turn out stupid or even insane.

I was saddled first and then bridled. It was the lightest of saddles, made out of an antelope skin. And the bridle was the softest of bridles, a strand of soft wool.

Akibu was my first rider because he was very light. And my first jaunt was the straight route from the tent to the trough. To amuse myself, I raised my hind-quarters, cut capers and leaped like sheep. Akibu clung on to my neck where the mane was growing again. He gripped me by the ears but I continued my kicks and my

saraband. Akibu, however, withstood all my pranks. His loins were supple and his nature sporting. And then hadn't I too been sporting when he prodded me in my more youthful days? It was now his turn to give proof of his good-humoured disposition. Without tugging at the bridle, he let me play with him as with a ball.

Around us everybody enjoyed the fun. Behind her veil Meryem had bursts of uncontrollable laughter. And Mehhi clapped his soft babyish hands. And the other animals never had a better time. Ourida the Rose bleated away happily. And the falcons shrieked with joy. And the gazelle and the antelope softly chuckled.

Just then Mohammed-bin-Mokhtar appeared, riding Daughter of the Wind. He was returning from a course with his cavaliers and his face looked tired beneath his soiled turban. The coat of Daughter of the Wind resembled that of a horse who has galloped a lot.

Silence swept the last remnants of laughter away. I stopped my buffooneries and Akibu found back his balance. Then my Master declared:

"From to-morrow, I will take up the responsibility of training Saïd."

And the following day I had my first lesson from Mohammed. My spine was not yet strong enough to carry him and so Akibu remained my rider. But Mohammed obliged him to lower my nose, to bend my neck and to change my gait and direction as he wished. In short, I was taught obedience. And when I snorted or turned in the wrong direction, I was ruled by the rod. To stop me from rearing, a ring was attached to my ear and a rope passed through it. Every time I reared, the rope was pulled. It did not take me long to get out of that painful habit.

When I was thirty months old, Mohammed decided to mount me. I realised then that he was as good a horseman as he was a master. Even before dawn came I would quiver with impatience and my blood would throb in glad anticipation under my stormgrey coat.

Mohammed wanted me to be straight and frank and light. He taught me the trot, the gallop, the slow and fast pick-ups, the dashes and the sudden halts in front of ravines or obstructing trees. But my most important lesson was how to course.

I defied Khuskhus the Torrent and I defied Daughter of the Wind and I lost to both. But then one day I beat them once and for all. Henceforth I was truly the Lord of Horses.

I learnt also to jump over whatever obstruction came in my way. I learnt to ascend sharp slopes and to come down steep tracks. I finally learnt to caracol and to jump in the air with all four without kicking. To caracol I walked on my hindlegs. But to leave the ground with all four was more difficult.

At the age of three there was not a horse around to outclass me in fantasia. And when I went down on my knees the people cried out with joy.

(To be continued)

ARCHAKA & CHRISTINE

(Translated by Maurice from the French Original)

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Mysticism in English Poetry by *Visvanath Chatterjee*. Published by Progressive Publishers, 37-A, College St, Calcutta-700 073. Pp: X+136. Bound, Price: Rs.25/-

MYSTICISM, like many other 'isms', cannot be defined accurately. The Encyclopaedia Britannica, while defining mysticism, points out, "A phase of thought, or perhaps of feelings, which from its very nature is hardly susceptible of exact definition. It appears in connection with the endeavour of the human mind to grasp the divine essence or the ultimate reality of things, and the blessedness of actual communion with the Highest." On the other hand, Mysticism is not an altogether-impossible-to-decipher abstract thing. It can be easily understood by means of examples that are concrete.

The book under review attempts to help us by tracing the mystical notes found in English poetry. And this time-consuming effort, in which one has to sweat even under a whirling fan, proves to be a success.

The highly informative study begins with the 14th-Century poet Richard Rolle of Hampole, described as the Father of English Mysticism, and ends with Dylan Thomas, a 20th-Century maker of verse. The theme is presented in four main chapters: 1. The Medieval and Metaphysical Poets, 2. The Romantic Poets, 3. The Victorian Poets and 4. The Modern Poets. Like a busy-bee that flies to various gardens in search of flowers to gather honey from them, Visvanath Chatterjee travels in the realms of poetry and serves to the readers the passages marked by mystical intensity and explicates them. While doing his job with dexterity, he analyses the works, compares and contrasts poets with one another, cites aptly the critics and finally weighs them in his own balance. The author seems to be a specialist in the poems of Rabindranath Tagore, for every now and then almost all the poets selected for study are compared with the Indian Nobel Prize Laureate.

The light thrown on the three successive versions of the alliterative poem 'Piers the Plowman' of William Langland; the various definitions of 'Poetry' offered by the Romantic poets; Blake's technique of 'illuminated printing' (copperplate engraving coloured manually); the letter of John Donne that speaks of his cruel father-in-law ("John Donne—Anne Donne—Un-done") and many other such pieces of information will be of great interest to the common reader, but subject-crazy readers and scholars may wrinkle up their noses at the seemingly unnecessary deviations, otherwise known as elucidative associations. Further, in dealing with the works of the poets, the author quite often forgets the title of the book he has undertaken to write and speaks of the literary achievements of the poets rather than of the mystical elements found in their poetry. One thing more. The Latin phrase 'Quia Amore Languedo' serving as the refrain of a poem means literally 'Because I languish with love' and not 'Take me for thy wife' as the author has made it out to mean. Actually it is a phrase from the Old Testament's Song of Solomon (2:5) and is rendered by the modern

Jerusalem Bible as part of the verse: "Feed me with raisin cakes, restore me with apples, for I am sick with love."

But these trivial defects of Chatterjee need not be taken much cognizance of, for here is a book, a complete one, on mysticism, as far as poetry by English writers is concerned.

P. RAJA

“SRI” IN THE NAME “SRI AUROBINDO”

A LETTER

(After the whole of the present issue was printed the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library came across this letter of Nolini Kanta Gupta. It deals with a point which is frequently misunderstood, a point with a deeper significance than mere linguistic usage. We are adding it to our special issue even if we cannot give it a more prominent place.

Although its opening (Soeurette : Little Sister) and part of its closing (grand frère : big brother) are in French, the letter itself was written in English. It is being published with the author's permission.)

30 November 1961

Soeurette,

Mother has shown me the letter you wrote to her about the problem of “Sri” that is troubling you. She wishes me to communicate to you my view of the matter. Well, I shall be frank and forthright. It is an error to think that Sri is only an honorific prefix to Aurobindo which is the real name. It is not so. Sri here does not mean Mr. or Monsieur or Sir, etc. It is part of the name. Sri Aurobindo forms one indivisible word. This is the final form Sri Aurobindo himself gave to his name. And I may tell you that the mantric effect resides in that form.

Sri is no more difficult to pronounce than many other Indian or Euro-American syllables. And I think it is not always healthy either to come down to the level of the average European or American under the plea that that is the best way to approach and convert the many. I am afraid it is a vain illusion; better rather to oblige the average to make an effort to rise up and grapple with the truth as it is.

Mother has seen this admonition of mine to you and fully approves of it.

Begging to be excused for perhaps a highbrow tone in my letter, I remain

Your very sincere and affectionate *grand frère*,
Nolini Kanta Gupta