

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

MARCH 1981

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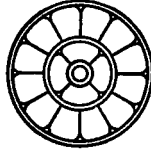
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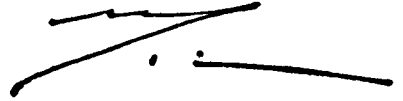


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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

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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. 3

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail.”

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A MESSAGE OF THE MOTHER

BE always kind, come out of all bitter criticism, see no more evil in everything, obstinately force yourself to see nothing but the kind Presence of the divine Grace and you will see not only within you but also around you an atmosphere of quiet joy, peaceful trust, luminous hope spreading more and more and not only you will feel happy and quiet yourself but the major part of your bodily disorders will also disappear.

OCCULT PRACTICE

ADVICE BY THE MOTHER

I USED to know a woman who was absolutely wonderful from the occult point of view. She was absolutely conscious of herself, of all the regions of her being, she could go from one region to another—in short, she was marvellous. Well, she had an accident in the vital world. She was fighting some beings from the vital world in order to save someone whom she was very fond of, and she got a blow on the eye. And when I met her, she had lost an eye. Many people have these accidents in the vital world, and they keep traces of these accidents for hours after they wake up. That is why you can't tell just anyone, "Learn to get out of your body", for there are many requirements before you can do it safely. If you have any affinities with the forces of falsehood and violence, it is better to stay in your physical body.

THE PROBLEM OF THE BODY

A TALK OF THE MOTHER ON 24 MARCH 1965

I am harassed. And my body does not help me much either.

AH, no, the body never helps; now I am convinced of it. You can to a certain extent help your body—not very much, but still to an extent you can help your body. But the body does not help you. Always its vibration is on the ground.

Yes, it is heavy.

Without exception. Without exception it is a lowering and, above all that, it is something that makes you dull, dull—it does not vibrate.

It is heavy.

But with this sadhana that I am following, there are some leading strings, which one can pursue. I have some phrases of Sri Aurobindo.... For the other sadhanas I had the method: whatever he said was clear; that showed the way, one had not to search. But here he has not done it; only he has said or made some remarks from time to time and these remarks are useful to me (also there is the night when I meet him, but I do not want to count too much upon that, for...you become too anxious to have this contact and that spoils everything). There are a few remarks that have been so retained by me and they are, yes, like leading strings; for example, “Endure...endure.”

Suppose you have a pain somewhere; the instinct (the instinct of the cell) is to shrink and to seek to reject—that is the worst thing, that increases it invariably. Therefore, the first thing to teach the body is to remain immobile, to have no reaction; above all, no shrinking, not even a movement of rejection—a perfect immobility. That is bodily equality.

A perfect immobility.

After the perfect immobility comes the movements of inner aspiration (I speak always of the aspiration of the cells—I use words for what has no word, but there is no other way of expressing it), the surrender, that is to say, the spontaneous and total acceptance of the supreme Will (which one does not know). Does the All-Will want things to go this way or that way, that is to say, towards the disintegration of some elements or towards...? And there also, there are infinite shades: there is the passage between heights (I speak of cellular realisations, do not forget that); I mean one has a certain inner poise, a poise of movement, of life, and it is understood that while passing from one movement to a higher movement almost always there occurs a descent and then an ascent—it is a transition. Then, does the shock you receive push you down—

wards to make you rise again or does it push you downwards to abandon the old movements?—for there are cellular ways of being that should disappear in order to give place to other ways. There are others that tend to rise upwards again with a higher harmony and organisation. This is the second point. And one must wait and see *without postulating in advance what should be*. Above all, there is the desire—the desire to be at ease, the desire to be in peace, all that—which must absolutely cease, disappear. One must be absolutely without reaction, like this (*gesture with palms open, of motionless offering upward*). And then, when one is like that (“one” means the cells), after a time comes the perception of the category to which the movement belongs, and one has only to follow in order to see whether it is something that has to disappear and be replaced by another thing (which is not known for the moment) or it is something that has to be transformed.

And so on. All the while it is like that.

All this to tell you that the thought is absolutely immobile; everything happens directly; a matter of vibration. Well, it is only in this way that one can know what one should do. If the thing passes through the mind, especially this physical thinking which is absolutely imbecile, absolutely, you cannot know; so long as it is working you are always led to what you should not do, to have particularly the bad reaction—the reaction that helps the forces of disorder and obscurity instead of counteracting them. And I am not speaking of anxiety, because for a very long time now there has been no anxiety in my body—a long time, many years—but anxiety is like swallowing a cup of poison.

This is what is called physical yoga.

One must overcome all that. And the only way to do it: at every second all the cells must be (*gesture of motionless offering upward*) in an adoration, in an aspiration—an adoration, an aspiration, an adoration...and nothing else. Then after a time there is also delight, then that ends in blissful trust. When this trust is established all will be well. But...it is easy to say, it is much more difficult to do. Only, for the moment I am convinced that this is the only means, there is no other.

THE DIVINE, SELF-GIVING AND THE WORLD

GUIDANCE BY SRI AUROBINDO

ONE who has given himself to the Divine has no longer any other duty than to make that consecration more and more perfect. The world and those who live in it have always wanted to put human—social and family—duty before duty to the Divine, which they have stigmatised as egoism. How indeed could they judge otherwise, they who have no experience of the reality of the Divine ? But for the divine regard their opinion has no value, their will has no force. These are movements of ignorance, nothing more. You should not attempt to convince; above all, you should not let yourself be touched or shaken. You must shut yourself carefully within your ivory tower of consecration and await from the Divine alone help, protection, guidance and *approbation*. To be condemned by the whole world is nothing to him who knows that he has the approval of the Divine and his support.

Besides, has not mankind proved its utter incompetence in the organisation of its own existence? Governments succeed governments, regimes follow regimes, centuries pass after centuries, but human misery remains lamentably the same. It will always be so, as long as man remains what he is, blind and ignorant, closed to all spiritual reality. A transformation, an illumination of the human consciousness alone can bring about a real amelioration in the condition of humanity. Thus even from the standpoint of human life, it follows logically that the first duty of man is to seek and possess the divine consciousness.

13 June 1937

THE MOTHER'S WORK IN A DREADFUL PLACE

AN EXPERIENCE OF SEHRA

PERHAPS the most frightening peep into the unknown which Sehra ever had was recounted by her to the Mother in a letter sometime in the 1960's. The letter is not available, but I who typed it can recollect its gist as well as the Mother's comment on it.

Sehra found herself in a very dark place as if deep underground. There were long shelves on both sides of her, like beds heaped high one upon another. In each "bed" was a corpse-like being who was yet alive. The "corpses" were bleeding. Between the two heaps of shelves strange ghoulis creatures were busy. They were pulling out some of the bodies from the beds and attempting to tear them and eat them. Blood-stained pieces were lying all around, a torn hand or foot or some other part of the human body.

The atmosphere was most foul. Sehra felt utterly sick—and for over a fortnight after the experience she was unwell. While visiting the dark den she said to herself: "This is where at present our Mother is working."

When she told the Mother of what she had seen, the Mother said in effect: "You have seen correctly. I am now working in the subconscious. It is a very terrible region and even worse than what you have described. The 'corpses' are the human beings in their subconscious aspect. They are in a horrible state and are subject to the evil forces who are trying to make use of them. My job is to take them out of the subconscious. It is very difficult and full of danger. I am not surprised that you are feeling unwell. But be calm and call my protection and light. You will recover. There is something written by Sri Aurobindo on the subject. I shall tell Nolini to show it to you."

What exactly Nolini showed Sehra—or whether he could find anything quite to the point—is not within recollection. But I do remember Sehra and me thinking: "How little we realise what a stupendous labour of love the Mother has undertaken for us all!"

AMAL KIRAN

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1981)

September 13, 1935

Instead of saying "shut up" you have devised a very nice trick of evasion, Sir! for everything 'a play of forces'. Therefore no more questions. Long live the play of forces!

It is the truth. Why get wild with the truth? It is like knocking your nose against one of Epstein's statues in the hope that it might turn out to be curved or change into a fairy beauty.

What I am writing now is not about play of forces, but about confusion, conflict and despair in me.

O Lord God! again despair!

The confusion and despair are because I don't seem to have any go at all.

Pshaw! Pooh! Rubbish!

Not a day has gone when I could say I have aspired strongly for anything.

Well then, aspire weakly and phantasmally but anyhow aspire!

Of course, I find that after this Darshan the desires and impulses aren't as acute as before, but that's not enough.

Well, well, that's an admission. It is not enough, but it is something.

I am as unconscious as before about the Force and its working.

Doesn't matter. Let the force work anyhow — in time it will have its result.

What most upsets me at present is that there is no current of aspiration.

Low current of electricity? Well, well, let us see to the dynamo.

Is that a very satisfying state or is there any future ray of hope?

Any number of rays—a whole sun.

What I would like to have is something stabilised: peace, force, purity or Presence.

So would I, so would anybody. It is not enough to like, you must get the thing done and peg on till it is done.

Neither can I fix my aspiration on any particular aspect. Now I want peace, now force, now Ananda...

That's the confounded wobbling mobility of your mind.

Isn't it a confusion and isn't it despairing?

It may be a confusion, but it is not *désespérant*; (Despairing in this sense is bad English, by the way.) Plenty of people have had that before you and yet arrived all right.

Once you gave me the formula of Peace, Force and Presence. Shall I try to stick to it?

For mercy's sake do. Peace first, Force tumbling into the Peace, the Presence at any stage.

But really, Sir, how long to stagnate in this passive pool of the Immobile? Is there no chance of being as dynamic as a flood?

Not so long as you merely ratiocinate and wobble—unless the dynamo begins to work in sheer exasperation at your foolishness—which is quite possible.

When a sincere aspirant like K took so many years to draw in all his limbs into his shell and do what may be called real sadhana, our expectation and hankering is sheer madness.

And who did that feat in a few days, weeks or months, I should like to know? I am sure I didn't.

Real sadhana, he has been doing for a long time. That is why he is now able to draw in his limbs.

Well, expecting to do it in a record time or shouting sorrowfully because that doesn't happen is rather windy.

I suppose we have to go on dreaming that one day we shall also come to such a blissful

height. Till then, Man of Sorrows is my companion, alas!

No need at all! Call in the Man of Mirth and dismiss the other applicant.

Another confusion about poetry. I haven't been able to find out any "dissolvent" and I take it that the Muse is treating me in the same way as the Yogi is doing.

Well, it seems to me that the Muse has done a good deal¹ for you already, considering that you did not start with the vocation. O favoured unappreciative!

Since there is no inspiration, the call of the moon, the sky, the sea and the Unknown takes me away to the pier at night.

Absorb the moon, sky, sea and the Unknown and trust to the inner alchemy to turn them into poetry.

I am so tired with this 'play' of yours, Sir, that sometimes I have a longing to jump into the silence of Nirvana.

Not so easy to do it as to write it.

However, what shall I hear from the mighty pen as a remedy to my chronic despair and impatience?

Now look here, as to the yoga etc. if I can be patient with you and your despairs, why can't you be patient with the forces? Let me give you a "concrete" instance. X is a sadhak of whom it might be said that if anyone could be said to be incapable of any least progress in yoga, X was the very person, blockhead absolute and unique in that respect. Mulish, revolted, abusive. No capacity of any kind, no experience, not a shadow, little or blessed pinpoint of it anyhow, anywhere or at any time for years and more years and still more years. Finally some while ago X begins to fancy or feel that X wants Mother and nothing and nobody else. (That was the result of my ceaseless and futile hammering for years.) X makes sanguinary row after row because X can't get Mother, not a trace, speck or hint anywhere of Mother. Threats of departure and suicide very frequent. I sit mercilessly and severely upon X, not jocularly as I do on you. X still weeps copiously, because Mother does not love X. I sit on X still more furiously but go on pumping force and things into X. X stops that but weeps copiously because X has no faith, does not love Mother (all this goes on for months and months). Finally one day after deciding to stop weeping for good and all X suddenly finds X was living in barriers, barriers broken down, vast oceanic wideness inside X, love, peace etc. rushing in, or pressing to rush; can't understand what on

¹ Uncertain reading.

earth all this is—or what to do—writes for guidance. Now, sir, if my yugalike persistence could work a miracle like that with such a one, why can't you expect an earlier result with you, O Nirod of little faith and less patience? Stand and answer.

September 14, 1935

Herewith I send you a typescript of the letter on the mysterious X. From what I could make out of your mysterious handwriting about this X is that she must be a plucky girl.

But why type for the story of X? I hope you realise it is secret history.

With that thrashing—if you are really capable of it—and the Mother's 'hard looks' to boot, if she had stuck to you, I must say that she is exceptionally enduring.

I suppose X was able to stick because X had no brains. It is the confounded reasoning brain that is the ruin of you. For instead of taking the lesson of things it begins reasoning about them in this futile—shall I say asinine—way. My idea however is that X stuck because X had nowhere else to go. Of course that is the outer reason, the real one being that something unknown pinned X down here.

One word about this 'patience', Sir. I am afraid there is a big fallacy in that. You can take 50 years to make me at least a supramental ass. And this would still be a short period for you, since in the supramental time-scale 50 years will be 50 days of ours.

If that is so, then you will become a Supramental ass in 50 days—since my years are supramental, that follows. So what's the row about? With this glowing prospect before you!

So I have stood and answered. But no amount of standing and answering will serve the purpose. I shall now learn to "stand and wait" as "they also serve who only stand and wait", says Milton.

Thank God! a most comforting resolution—for me at any rate.

September 15, 1935

P hasn't turned up. She doesn't seem to have much faith in medicine.

This is not a question of faith, but of fact.

I seize the golden opportunity to ask you to deliver about the Supermind that you

had promised. I hope you remember it; if not, the question was: what is exactly the significance of 24th November? Overmental, supramental realisation or what? You say that it was something like the descent of Krishna in the material.—Some say that the descent took place in you. But you are not matter, are you?

Why not? Why can't I be matter? Or represent it at least? At least you will admit that I have got some matter in me and you will hardly deny that the matter in me is connected or even continuous (in spite of the Quantum theory) with matter in general? Well, if Krishna or the Overmind or something equivalent descended into my matter with an inevitable extension into connected general Matter, what is the lack of clarity in the statement of a descent into the material? What does logic say?

By your "trying to bring down the Supermind", we understand that the ascent is done and now the descent has to be made. Something like one going up to you at Darshan and getting all the bliss, joy etc. and trying to bring it down and not lose it as soon as one steps out. And what is this again? You say you are in contact with it and then again that you are very near the tail of it, sounds queer! Contact and no contact?

But, supposing I reached supermind in that way, then under such conditions would it be possible that I should come down again at the risk of losing it? Do you realise that I went upstairs and have not come down again? So it was better to be in contact with it until I had made the path clear between S and M. As for the tail, can't you approach the tail of an animal without achieving the animal? I am in the physical, in matter—there is no doubt of it. If I threw a rope up from Matter, noose or lasso the Supermind and pull it down, the first part of [it] that will come near me is its tail dangling down as it descends, and that I can seize first and pull down the rest of it by tail-twists. As for being in contact with it, well, I can be in contact with you by correspondence without actually touching you or taking hold even of your tail, can't I? So there is nothing funny about it—perfectly rational, coherent and clear.

Another point: Have you written anywhere what would be the nature of the physical transformation?

I have not, I carefully avoided that ticklish subject.

What would it be like? Change of pigment? Mongolian features into Aryo-Greco? Bald head into luxuriant growth? Old men into gods of eternal youth?

Why not seven tails with an eighth on the head—everybody different colours, blue, magenta, indigo, green, scarlet etc.; hair luxuriant but vermilion and flying erect skywards; other details to match! Amen.

Now you can't say surely that all your points have not been cleared?

September 16, 1935

By the way, vomiting seems to be a very common complaint at present.

I notice that these things come by epidemics in the Ashram. One starts, others follow suit.

H is having vomiting too. Yogic force on the brain?

Jehoshaphat! What has the brain got to do with vomiting? Throwing up excess of Yogic knowledge? That might be with H the philosopher, but it does not fit the others.

I propose, if you approve, to take the three ladies P, K and Sh to the hospital for a screen-examination.

Not advisable. I believe if you could give these people (P, Sh etc.) some nervous balance, their ailments would walk off into blazes.

Now, lend your ears, Sir, to my ailment! I was disappointed by your answer yesterday about the Supermind, for it is far from what you had in your mind when you made the promise.

I am disappointed that you could not appreciate the splendidly coloured prospects held out there. But what had I in mind and what was the promise? Apart from these colours my two other answers were, though figurative, yet very much to the "point".

Today I caught sight of an atrocious incident in the paper, at Rajshahi in Bengal. I am sure you have read it.

Didn't. Have no time to read Bengali papers.

You know very well that it is the confounded Raj that is behind and has fomented this communal incident.

It looks as if it were going to be like that everywhere. In Europe also.

With the coming of Independence I hope such things will stop. Now I would like to ask you something. In your scheme of things do you definitely see a free India? You have stated that for the spreading of spirituality in the world India must be free. I

suppose you must be working for it ! You are the only one who can do something really effective by the use of your spiritual Force.

That is all settled. It is a question of working out only. The question is what is India going to do with her Independence? The above kind of affair? Bolshevism? Goonda-raj? Things look ominous.

Supposing you were able to create a race of Supermen, then there would be two strata: Supermen and men.

There will also be cats Look at the Ashram!

Then the Supermen will no longer concern themselves with the lives and histories of men just as men are at present indifferent to the lives of animals?

Men are not indifferent to lives of animals—at least not in Europe. Look at the open-air zoos—hospitals for animals—refuges for unwanted cats and dogs—live-farms etc., etc.!

But what will happen when the supramental comes down is a matter for the supramental to decide—no use laying down laws for it beforehand with the mind. It is the Truth-consciousness, sir—it will act according to the divine Truth behind things.

THE REVISED EDITION OF *THE FUTURE POETRY*

NEWLY-WRITTEN OR CORRECTED MATTER

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1981)

Chapter XIV of The Future Poetry is the last chapter that was revised throughout. Seven of the remaining eighteen chapters were not revised at all. Of the eleven that were, only one, Chapter XIX, has changes or additions as extensive as in any of the earlier chapters, and these are mostly confined to the beginning and the end.

No purpose would be served by printing here the complete text of a chapter whose revised version differs very little from the text as printed in the Centenary Library. Only the portions affected by the revision will be presented. In this issue of Mother India five lightly revised chapters, viz. Chapters XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII and XXI, are dealt with. In the next issue altered and additional passages of the nineteenth chapter will appear, and in the issue of May revised portions of five chapters, all of which form part of what was designated by Sri Aurobindo as Part II of the book, will be presented.

When the revised edition of The Future Poetry is printed in the form of a book all the chapters will, of course, be printed in full.

CHAPTER XV

The Movement of Modern Literature—2

In the fifth sentence of the last paragraph of this chapter (Centenary Edition, p. 109, line 15) Sri Aurobindo deleted “for” after “compensated”, making the sentence read:

At first this ebb of positive faith was to some extent compensated by the ideal element of a philosophic transcendentalism [. . .]

In the seventh sentence of the same paragraph (p. 109, l.23), he inserted “Nature” after “this”, making the sentence read:

To Science this Nature is only an inconscient Force [. . .]

CHAPTER XVI

The Poets of the Dawn—1

Unlike the rest of the chapters presented in this issue, the revision in this chapter dates from the earlier period. In the third to last sentence of the second to last paragraph, which speaks of the “basic kinship” of paired examples of Elizabethan and

classical Sanskrit poetry (p. 113, ll. 10-11), Sri Aurobindo deleted "and the Birth of the War-God" and made the sentence end as follows:

[. . .] the romantically vivid and descriptive narrative method of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and the more intellectually romantic vividness and descriptive elaborateness of the *Line of Raghu*, the tone and manner of Drayton and that of the much greater work of Bharavi.¹

CHAPTER XVII

The Poets of the Dawn—2

Sri Aurobindo gave this chapter the subtitle "Byron and Wordsworth", and made significant alterations to the second and fifth paragraphs, and slight changes to the third and fourth paragraphs.

We give the revised version of the second paragraph (pp. 115-16) in full:

But these earlier poets came in an age of imperfect, unenriched and uncompleted intellectuality. The language which they inherited was admirable for clear and balanced prose speech, but in poetry had been used only for adequate or vigorous statement, rhetorical reasoning, superficial sentimentalising or ornate thought, narrative, description in the manner of a concentrated, elevated and eloquent prose. The forms and rhythmical movements were unsuitable for any imaginative, flexible or subtly feeling poetry. The new writers dealt with the forms of the preceding literary age by a clear and complete rejection; they swept them aside and created new forms or took old ones from the earlier masters or from song and ballad moulds modified or developed to serve a more fluid and intellectualised mind and imagination. But the language was a more difficult problem and could not be entirely solved by such short cuts as Wordsworth's recipe of a resort to the straightforward force of the simplest speech dependent on the weight of the substance and thought for its one sufficient source of power. We find the tongue of this period floating between various possibilities. On its lower levels it is weighted down by some remnant of the character of the eighteenth century and proceeds by a stream of eloquence, no longer artificial, but facile, fluid, helped by a greater force of thought and imagination. This turn sometimes rises to a higher level of inspired and imaginative poetic eloquence. But beyond this pitch we have a fuller and richer style packed with thought and imaginative substance, the substitute of this new intellectualised poetic mind for the more spontaneous Elizabethan richness and curiosity; but imaginative thought is the secret of its power, no longer the exuberance of the life-soul in its vision. On the other side we have a quite different note, a sheer poetical directness, which sometimes sinks below itself to poverty and insufficiency or at least to thinness, as in much of the work of Words-

¹ A translation by Sri Aurobindo of two *ślokas* of Bharavi's *Kirātārjunīya* has recently been found. See the next article (Editor)

worth and Byron, but, when better supported and rhythmized, rises to quite new authenticities of great or perfect utterance, and out of this there comes in some absolute moments a native voice of the spirit, in Wordsworth revelations of the spiritual presence in Nature and its scenes and peoples, in Byron's rare forceful sincerities, in the luminous simplicities of Blake, in the faery melodies of Coleridge, most of all perhaps in the lyrical cry and ethereal light of Shelley. But these are comparatively rare moments, the mass of their work is less certain and unequal in expression and significance. Finally we get in Keats a turning away to a rich, artistic and sensuous poetical speech marvellous in its perfection of opulence, resource and colour which prepares us for the more various but lower fullnesses of the intellectual and aesthetic epoch that had to intervene. The greatest intuitive and revealing poetry has yet to come.

The third and second from last sentences of the third paragraph (p. 117) were altered as follows:

[...]—always an advantage, if one knows how to make use of it, for a poet's largeness and ease of execution, succeeds more amply on the inferior levels of his genius, but fails more in giving an adequate voice to his highest possibility. Wordsworth, meditative, inward, concentrated in his thought, is more often able by force of brooding to bring out the voice of his greater self, but flags constantly, brings in a heavier music surrounding his few great clear tones, drowns his genius at last in a desolate sea of platitude.

The third sentence of the fifth paragraph (p. 119, ll. 8 ff), concerning Byron, was altered to read as follows:

One feels oneself as if in the presence of a Titan striving to be born, a Titanism of the spirit of man awake in its soul of desire, in a passion of seeking without conquest of finding, in revolt, not in self-possession, man the fallen archangel, not man returning to godhead [...]

The middle of the seventh paragraph (from p. 121, l. 23) concerning Wordsworth was altered to read:

A certain number of his shorter poems rank among the greatest things in poetry and this number is not inconsiderable. But elsewhere he rises high, sometimes astonishingly high, for a few lines but cannot keep long to the high poetic expression and sometimes can sink low and sometimes astonishingly low, even to bathos and triviality, especially when he strains towards an excessive simplicity which can become puerile or worse. He intellectualises his poetic statement overmuch and in fact states too much and sings too little, has a dangerous turn for a too obvious sermonising, pushes too far his reliance on the worth of his substance and is not jealously careful to give it a form of beauty.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Poets of the Dawn—3

Following the example of the previous chapter, the eighteenth chapter might be subtitled "Blake and Coleridge, Keats and Shelley". Sri Aurobindo has significantly altered the third paragraph (on Blake) and also touched in his revision the second, fourth and eighth paragraphs.

In the seventh sentence of the second paragraph (p. 124, ll. 17-18), Sri Aurobindo struck out "and coloured lucidities of speech", and made the sentence on Blake read: [...] the speech caught strange subtleties and marvellous lights and hues and the ear the melodies of other realms.

The third paragraph (pp. 124-25) was revised as follows:

Blake lives ordinarily far up in this middle world of which Coleridge only catches some glimpses or at most stands occasionally just over its border. Blake's seeing teems with images of this other world, he hears around him the echoes of its sounds and voices. He is not only a seer, but almost an inhabitant of other planes, another domain of being; or at least this second subtle sight is his normal sight. His power of expression is akin in its strangeness to his eye of vision. His speech like his seeing has a singular other-world clarity and sheerness of expression in it, the light of supernature. When he prophesies as in some of his more ambitious efforts, he mentalises too much the mystic and misses the marvel and the magic. It is when he casts into some echo of the language of the luminous children of those shores the songs of their childhood and their innocence, that he becomes limpid to us and sheds upon our earth some clear charm, felicity, wonder of a half divine elsewhere. Here again we have something unique, a voice of things which had not been heard before nor has it been heard since; for the Celtic poets who sometimes give us something that is in its source akin, bring a ripe reflective knowledge and a colour of intellectuality into their speech and vision, but Blake seeks to put away from him as much as possible the intellectual mind, to see only and sing. By this effort and his singularity and absorption he stands apart solitary and remote, a unique voice among the poets of the time; he occupies indeed a place unique in the poetry of the English language, for there is no other singer of the beyond who is like him or equals him in the strangeness, supernatural lucidity, power and directness of vision of the beyond and the rhythmic clarity and beauty of his singing.

The fifth sentence of the fourth paragraph (p. 126, ll. 2ff) on Coleridge and on "his own celestial worlds" was altered to read as follows:

As a poet his intellect is suffused with their light and his imagination bathed in it; they are steeped in the brilliances of a communion with a higher law, another order of existence, [...]

In the third to last sentence of the eighth (last) paragraph (p. 131, l. 28) the phrase "Blake obscured in his own remoteness," was altered to:
 [...] Blake isolated in his own splendour of remoteness, [...]

CHAPTER XXI

Recent English Poetry

As noted above, the nineteenth chapter, which received extensive revision, will be presented separately in the next issue of Mother India. The twentieth chapter, as well as the twenty-second to twenty-fourth, were not revised at all. In the twenty-first there are three small additions.

The phrase "this we find in" was inserted before "a novel use of" in the first sentence of the third paragraph (p. 158, l. 26) on recent English poets:
 One thing that comes home to us [...] is a certain common element behind their differences; this we find in a novel use of rhythmic movement [...]

In the third sentence of the fourth paragraph (p. 159, l. 23) on the same poets "but which" was inserted before "offers":
 The manner and yield of poetry vary according to the depth we penetrate into that inner something which is hidden by layer upon layer of many an intervening medium, but which offers and gives itself wonderfully in all of them, yet seems to retreat always and invites to a profounder pursuit and discovery [...]

Finally, in the fifth paragraph, after the first citation from Wordsworth (p. 162, l. 10), "instance" was changed to "insistence". This is apparently the correction of a typographical error.

KIRĀTĀRJUNIYA

TEXT AND TRANSLATION BY SRI AUROBINDO OF THE FIRST TWO SLOKAS

BHARAVI, the author of the Kirātārjuniya, flourished probably in the sixth century of the Christian era. By A.D. 734 he was considered on the strength of this single *kāvya* or classical poem to be the peer, even if the smaller peer, of Kalidasa.

Sri Aurobindo seems to have read Bharavi's poem during his earliest years at Pondicherry (1910-1914). At this time he was reading the works of a number of classical poets and prose writers, such as Kalidasa, Banabhatta (author of the Kadambari), Somadevabhatta (author or compiler of the Kathāsaritsāgara) and Magha, whose Shishupalavadha is often compared to the Kirātārjuniya.

Sri Aurobindo's text of the Kirātārjuniya, a copy of the Bombay edition of 1907, has markings almost throughout. There is also a handwritten translation of the first two slokas on the top margin of the first page of text. This translation was evidently done by Sri Aurobindo as an aid to his understanding of the lines. It follows the syntax of the Sanskrit, and so does not read very idiomatically in English. We offer it here not as an example of Sri Aurobindo's genius in translation (of which enough examples are available), but as a glimpse of his interests and activities during the early years of his sadhana in Pondicherry.

श्रिय कुरूणामधिपस्य पालनी प्रजासु वर्त्ति यमयुङ्क्त वेदितुम् ।
स वर्णलिङ्गी विदित. समाययौ युधिष्ठिर द्वैतवने वनेचरः ॥१॥
कृतप्रणामस्य मही महीभुजे जिता सपत्नेन निवेदयिष्यत ।
न विव्यथे तस्य मनो नहि प्रियं प्रवक्तुमिच्छन्ति मृषा हितैषिणः ॥२॥

1. Appointed to know the dealings of the Kurus' lord with his people, conduct guardian of his fortune, the forest ranger garbed with the marks of the Brahma-charin came to Yudhisthira in Dwaita wood.
2. Having made his salutation he turned to declare—and his heart hurt him not—to the enjoyer of the earth, earth conquered by his rival, for well-wishers desire not to speak pleasant falsehood.

AN UNFORGETTABLE WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE OF CHAMPAKLAL IN KOTTAKAL: 14-9-1980

AS RELATED BY HIMSELF

THERE was a feeling of unusual joy from the morning. I looked at the calendar and noticed it was Rishi Panchami day. I remembered my native place Sidhpur Pattan in North Gujarat. On this day, according to the custom of our Moddh Chaturvedi Brahmin caste, we have the ceremony of changing our sacred thread. I recollected everything. Early morning we all used to go together to bathe in the Saraswati river for changing our Yognopavit (sacred thread). The river was very broad. It was in an open area with small shrubs here and there adorning the place. There were small small heaps of beautiful shining sand. There was gold in the sand, but to separate it from the sand was very costly. The river was not deep. The water was waist-deep and even less at several places. But the force of the flowing water was so much that it was difficult to cross it. But when one stood on the sandy bed, the feet sank down and down as the sand slipped and moved. In a particular season, there were some cases when the whole body had sunk inside the sand. During the monsoon, the river was deeper and in summer there was no river at all: it dried up.

During the ceremony, we purified our clothes (dhoti and chaddar) in the river, dried them on the bank taking care that no one touched them, and, after bath, we put them on.

The priest performed the ceremony and made us bathe in different postures, sitting and standing at times, with different aims. All these religious rites are based on hygienic principles but we did them without understanding anything. We, however, enjoyed ourselves and used to wait for this day even though we understood nothing. It is only by The Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's Grace and by the experience given by them that I understand the real meaning of all these rites now. It is very clear to me now that these rituals are a prayer for living a higher life and are an expression of inner experiences, and the stuti (glory) and prayer to different gods.

After the ceremony, we all brought from our houses our Ishta Devas (personal deities) along with their thrones, small or big. Some thrones were made of metal, some of wood but some of them were very beautiful and artistic. Generally on this day, the Shaligram is worshipped. The Shaligram is black and round and comes in different sizes. Usually it has a very small dimple but the one which is perfectly round in shape and has no dimple is considered very auspicious and rare. My father had a small, beautiful and perfectly round Shaligram. So we were very happy about it and some of us even proud as no other family had such a beautiful Shaligram. Our caste had a special little temple with a small courtyard. All of us used to gather there with our Ishta Devas. We used to sit in two long rows keeping our Ishta Devas in front of us. Then the priest would utter the mantras in Sanskrit and make us perform

the ceremony and each one would do the puja of his own Ishta Deva. It was a long ceremony of many rites. Towards the evening, after the puja was over, we used to change our dhotis and chaddar and put on colourful pitamber of various types—coarse, woollen, silk, etc. We all took our food together there. At the time of serving, we would chant in chorus the Mahimna stotra and when half the meal (consisting of laddu, dal and vegetable) was finished, each individual would recite a verse. Some had beautiful, sweet, sonorous voices pleasing to the ears. My father had a unique voice. Even small children used to recite in their sweet lisping manner. There was great laughter. We all used to take part in the recitation and enjoyed it very much. Can the present generation imagine such occasions and such a wonderful atmosphere?

Experience

A very clear, commanding but at the same time compassionate voice is heard—‘Come with me, come with me, don’t fear at all ! come without any expectation and watch whatever happens.’ I replied, ‘I do not keep any hope now, but what you say is correct.’ Before returning here, I expected that I would be able to walk just as before. After returning, that hope is no more. That means, I feel I may not get cured. However, this is not due to despair but because of the trust that the Divine will do what is best for me. My faith is becoming more and more firm day by day. The Mother has given me this experience in every moment of my life. In Pondicherry, when anyone asked me, ‘How are you?’, my usual answer was, ‘The Compassionate Mother, by Her Infinite Grace, has made me walk just as much as is required. The most important thing is my inner condition which is very fine. What more, then, is needed? Every day, all the time, the Compassionate Mother’s Infinite Grace is being experienced.’

The one whose voice was heard, spoke again, remaining invisible. This voice was not The Mother’s nor Sri Aurobindo’s but it was full of compassion and very sweet and charming.

During the massage time, I am lying on the Dhara Patthi (long wooden slab used during the time of massage in Malabar). I feel as if the whole Patthi is lifted up. Simultaneously I experience uneasiness and fear. The Patthi tilts and becomes unstable. When it rises to a certain height, suddenly four lamps appear burning on its four corners. In the beginning, the Patthi goes up very slowly. After a while, it takes me up at an aeroplane’s speed and shoots high and high above in space.

From realms light-dark, it passes into deep deep dark realms. I have never seen such pitch darkness before. As the Patthi shoots ahead, the darkness turns fainter and fainter. Now space is filled with ash colour. From this also I pass on, rising higher and higher. Now I see absolutely white light—nothing but white light all around. The special feature of this light is that it is vibrant and living. It is very very difficult to explain. I proceed up into higher and higher regions. After a certain distance, far, very far, a brilliant bright-red, very beautiful, lustrous sun is seen. Its

radiant glowing flames burn my body even from a great distance and make me feel suffocated.

Just then, the same commanding yet compassionate voice is heard again. It reassures me: 'Don't be afraid, don't be afraid, don't be afraid in the least! Remember what I told you at the very outset!' Immediately I sense that these illumined flames have taken off something from all over my body which became extremely light like a flower! I was advancing closer and closer to this red sun. Now the light of its dazzling flames filled me with bliss. The body did not burn at all! It penetrated through this blazing sun and forged ahead higher and higher. One after another, at great distances, I shot through each of the beautiful, brilliant, splendid, innumerable suns of various bright hues. They were at a very far far distance from each other. Now I experienced a feeling of newness in the body, both within and without. I felt it to be a totally different stuff.

I was lying on the same Patthi but now I felt as if I was in space—a little above the Patthi, and this time beautiful, bright, lustrous, sparkling lights of different colours started entering into my body. This process continued for a long time. From that also the body began to go still higher and higher. After reaching a certain height, I saw a wonderful, unique, extremely luminous, shimmering golden sun. It was limitless and endless, i.e., from top to bottom and also on all the sides, there was no end! Its golden light was seen covering the whole 'brahmanda' (universe) and everything was saturated with this golden light. My whole body also became blissful and lustrous, as if made only of that light. As I was approaching nearer and nearer to this golden sun, I was getting new and totally different experiences which are impossible to put in words.

Again the voice of the invisible man is heard: 'Be on your guard, be on your guard, always, constantly, be on your guard! Your real time is just coming now.' Reaching very near, these bright, shimmering luminous lights gave me an unimaginable coolness and in no time I entered into that wonderful resplendent golden sun. At the same time I heard the voice of the massage man calling out, 'Ulta, ulta!' (Turn, turn!) I got a little jolt and looked at him with great surprise. But what could he understand? An unforgettable wonderful experience remains unfinished but leaves me with a definite inner change. And there is a strong, vibrant feeling now that I have nothing to do. They will do everything—whatever is needed.

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

I

A STORY of long, long ago. It is half a century since I came to Sri Aurobindo, Pondicherry. Thenceforth I have been living in this hallowed place, the pilgrim-home of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

I arrived here on 22nd November 1928. Till then many warring thoughts and feelings had crowded into my mind. But when I stepped into the Ashram, I saw that the mind had become quiet, free from fears and anxieties and was prepared to accept. I found myself gradually at home in the sacred precincts of the Ashram, though everything was still unfamiliar and strange. But the distance soon vanished and by the Grace of the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's touch, a new world came to light which was reflected in the lives of the inmates. I perceived that a new consciousness was seeking an opportunity to be born at every instant.

Inspired by the unique teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, my journey started leading through an unaccustomed path to an unknown world, gathering on the way various rich experiences and insights, as the consciousness opened itself to new horizons of mystic beauty and wonder. I could perceive clearly that many veils were being lifted, what had been obscure became lucid and an awareness of many things hidden before took shape.

On my arrival I thought there were altogether 60-70 inmates, the number of women being about 12 to 14. There were no children; but I noticed one or two teen-age girls, one of whom lived for some time in the same house where I had been given a room when I had first come. The great devotion I once saw in this small girl gave me a thrilled experience which I shall now narrate.

A few days after I had come, I obtained two photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in order to keep them in my room. I had a very beautiful photo frame with me; the Mother's picture did not fit it, while Sri Aurobindo's was all right in every way except that it was slightly taller. So without any qualms I cut off some portion of the lower part of it and fitted it into the frame. We often take such liberties in the case of friends and relatives and do not feel at all uneasy about it, but I did not realise that to put these friends' and relatives' photos on the same level as those of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo was a big error of inner perception. That is why I could pare off and throw into the dust-bin the image of the very feet we had come to adore! It was a photo, no doubt, but the photo of the Avatar's feet!

That small girl came one day to my room and was very pleased to see Sri Aurobindo's picture in that frame, but when she heard what I had done, she was startled and tears began to roll down her cheeks. With an anguished voice, she said,

“How could you cut and throw away Sri Aurobindo’s feet?” I was stunned, gazed at her face and saw what love and devotion were shining there. I fathomed the gulf of difference between her and me. She opened my eyes that day.

All the inmates seemed to be preoccupied with their sadhana. There was a sincere awakening in them to prepare themselves for practising Sri Aurobindo’s yoga and an earnest effort was evident. Sadhana did not mean only meditation and concentration or the following of some special method. Work, activity, studies, etc., whatever one was doing, was done as a part of sadhana. Therefore each one pursued his own way in accord with his inner need and particular urge. There were no external rites and ceremonies to be observed in this sadhana and it did not depend on any fixed rules and methods. What it depended on was something else. When one came from outside, what one particularly felt at first was the atmosphere of the Ashram. It indicated the way in which the Ashram-life should proceed.

I had never before entered into such a concentrated hushed surrounding, nor had I experienced any touch of it. But it takes very little time to understand that the foundation of this life rests upon One who not only influences, penetrates and pervades the atmosphere, but even pulsates in the bosom of stillness. The entire rhythm of life flows in a single-pointed direction. All mind and life tend towards it: hardly any chatting or gossip, nor any sensational movement, no visits from people except on business. Silent consecration of oneself to the work in order to make it a flawless and harmonious achievement was evident in each one’s sincere effort.

Each member’s work was indeed a marvel. Could one work in this manner unless one deeply loved the Divine? The girl about whom I spoke was barely 14 years old and with what joy and ardour she was embroidering one sari after another for the Mother! Her perseverance was as endless as her fervour. Not only at saris did I see her doing this, but also at many other things. What she sewed with subtle artistry is a thing that even now is an object of admiration; even now people say, “No, it isn’t work, it is adoration of the Divine.”

As I am speaking of the early days of the Ashram, when I was a newcomer, and as I am painting the memory of those past days of my Ashram-life, let me first of all offer my heartfelt gratitude to one whose contact and companionship was at the root of my acceptance of the spiritual life. From him I received ever fresh inspiration, inner sympathy and encouragement to take up this life. Above all it was he who brought me to this life, and through him I got the supreme opportunity of accepting the Mother and Sri Aurobindo as my Gurus. To him, therefore, my whole life’s sincere pranam.

By “Ashram” is meant the building in which the Mother and Sri Aurobindo lived. This building consisted of four small and big houses. They were at first separate; when the Ashram was formed they were one by one bought and, after they had been broken, repaired, their parts joined here and there or doors made, they were welded into one large building. These houses occupying the four corners in a rectangular fashion were constituted into one whole structure, which we call the Ashram.

More correctly, it is the main building of the Ashram.

When one enters here through the main gate, the two-storey building that first catches the eye, was the origin of what we call the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. In 1922 Sri Aurobindo and the Mother came to this house with some disciples. The Mother founded the Ashram while living in this house. Sri Aurobindo used to live on the first floor in the south-west part. On 24th November 1926, he attained the Realisation known as the Descent of the Overmind¹ and, leaving the entire charge to the Mother, he retired from that day into seclusion "obviously to work things out" as he wrote to Nirodbaran.

Later, when the house situated on the north-east corner of the Ashram was bought, they came to live there (somewhere at the beginning of February 1927). I saw them already installed there when I arrived. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo lived on the first floor and they gave darshan from a small room on the south-east side. The interviews with the Mother used to take place in this room.

Below, on the ground floor, Nolini² lived in one room, by the side of which was the room of Amrita³. Ambalal Purani⁴ had a room on the left side of the outer courtyard. Purani was once leader of the Gujerat youth movement. Pavitra⁵ (name given by Sri Aurobindo) lived in the upper story of a building which was joined with the western side of the main building. His French name was Philippe Barbier de Saint-Hilaire. In one room below lived the Ashram engineer Chandulal⁶. There was a gate on the northern side through which the Mother used to go out for a motor drive for about 1½ hours every evening. Pavitra was her driver. Most of the inmates used to gather at the gate to have the Mother's Darshan. That house was later demolished and the present new one erected.

The "Library House" was the name given to the building in front of the main gate. I saw Anilbaran living in the room which Sri Aurobindo had once occupied. The Mother's room on the north was now Champaklal's. Since then we have been seeing Champaklal as the most devoted servant of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

¹ "24th (November 1926) was the descent of Krishna into the physical. Krishna is not the Supramental Light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards his Ananda." (29.10.1935)

(*Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, ed. 1953, p. 208)

² Nolini Kanta Gupta: from his eighteenth year since the time he was in Bengal, he has been Sri Aurobindo's companion. He was arrested along with Sri Aurobindo in the Bengal bomb case.

³ Tamil Brahmin of Pondicherry. From the age of 14, even before seeing Sri Aurobindo, he became a great devotee and follower of Sri Aurobindo and began to frequent his house without meeting him. He first met Sri Aurobindo in 1914 and left his home to become his disciple in the same year. He departed from his body on 31st January 1969.

⁴ In 1914 Purani began to correspond with Sri Aurobindo. In 1918, he came to Pondicherry and had his first darshan of Sri Aurobindo. On October, 1923 he came away finally to settle in the Ashram. He left his body on 11th December 1965.

⁵ He joined the Ashram and became Sri Aurobindo's disciple on 28th December 1925. In 1969 he passed away.

⁶ He came in 1928, 19th February and passed away on 5th November, 1945.

The library was set up on the ground-floor, and in the adjacent room were kept newspapers spread on mats. It was named "Reading Room" and visited by the sadhaks in their leisure hours.

The front courtyard had a kind of shed where the milkmen brought their cows to be milked after the udders had been washed with potassium permanganate. The sadhak-supervisor of this work used to filter this frothy milk through a clean piece of cloth (one cannot but wonder at the meticulous cleanliness and tidiness observed here in everything). The sadhak was named Dara by Sri Aurobindo. The affluent Muslim family of Hyderabad to which he belonged had settled here a few months before me. There were three brothers, two sisters and their step-mother. They were very handsome people.

At the end of the large courtyard of the Library House was another house called by the Mother "Rosary House". You crossed a small yard to enter this house and on its left side was a thatched cottage—the Ashram kitchen. The maid-servants did the cooking and the sadhaks served the dishes. The sadhikas took up the cooking job a year or two after my arrival and I used to cook twice a week. The entire cooking work had to be done by oneself. No servants were available to help us. As I was a little liberal in the use of oil and ghee, Sri Aurobindo once jokingly said, "If Sahana were to cook, the Ashram would turn insolvent in three months."

The sadhak who had the sole charge of the cooking and the Dining Room was named "Dyuman" by Sri Aurobindo, his former name having been Chunibhai. The marketing and other supplies were in his hand. He lived on the top floor of the Rosary House from where began the building which lodged the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

I had my first Darshan in this house and all the Darshans were given in the same room where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo used to take their seat side by side. It would be futile to describe to a layman what Darshan was—what the Two gave and what we received. The last joint Darshan was on the 24th November 1950.

At the end of many changes, the present picture of the Ashram is something like this—a huge building with a large courtyard. At the centre of the courtyard and serving as the luminous heart of it is the Samadhi of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, the source of our very life-breath, a fountain of Shakti and inspiration. Their sacred relics, remnants of their earthly embodiments, are lying there.

There will they remain—

Soil one with the soil touching the earth
Bearing its burden as an act of benediction
So long as piercing the inmost armour
Of the darkest night,
Enters not the Light.

Years before the Mother was laid in the Samadhi, the nearby house in which she lived

had one more storey erected for her own use.

At the time when I came, most of the houses were rented and very few bought. All of them were known by the names given by the Mother. The inmates lived distributed in them.

Three meals were served; in the morning, one big bowl of 'phoscao'—it tasted like 'cocoa' but more savoury, some pieces of toast and one banana. The Dining Room was a long thatched hall on the north-west of the Ashram building. Nolini was among those inmates who used to serve; he gave 'phoscao' and toast. At noon, we had rice, two curries or one curry and dal, sometimes khicheri with fritters, one big bowl of curd and two bananas, and bread, if wanted. For dinner, which was served early in the evening, we had bread, curry or dal and a big bowl of milk. Two or three days a week, a big bowl of 'payesh' (a kind of pudding) was given. Those who did not eat in the Dining Room had their meals sent with maid-servants to their respective rooms in an enamel dish covered with another dish. All the sadhikas ate at home.

On the first of every month, the Mother would distribute the necessary requirements of the inmates, such as soap, towel, gamcha, etc. Of course, a quantity or quota was fixed for each individual. Things were distributed from the same hall as is done now. The Mother would come in the afternoon and, after she had seated herself, the function started. The requirements of each individual were prettily arranged in a cardboard box. The inmates, proceeding in a file towards the Mother, would stand before her and accept their boxes. She would give Rs.2 as our pocket money. Thus we received whatever we needed from the Mother herself.

Flowers have a unique place in the Ashram and the way of dealing with them is something new and excites our wonder. There is deep intimacy between them and our life. We have almost forgotten their common names and what we know is the name given by the Mother to each flower according to its inner vibration—its spiritual meaning. For instance, the meaning of *tulsi* is "devotion" and we know it as such and have offered it to the Mother as "devotion"; we have forgotten the other name. Similarly with *shephali*. To the Mother it is "aspiration" and to us it is the same. Thus all flowers are known to us by their inner significances. In all countries the flower is a part of religious ceremonies and offered in worship to God. But here it is much more, it has been the language of our inner communication with the Mother. How often have we not intimated our heart's yearning through the flowers and received her blessings and directions through them!

Every morning our life began with pranam to the Mother and her blessings. She came down at about 6 a.m. to give blessings and took her seat in the room now occupied by Bula, head of the Electric Department. A slightly elevated wooden pedestal, covered with a velvet cushion formed her seat, and by her side stood a large dish containing various flowers. We waited outside and when she had sat down we entered one by one and bowed at her feet. She placed her right hand on our heads and then gave flowers, after which we came away. All this giving and receiving took place in utter

but eloquent silence. Some people meditated in the room as long as the Mother stayed there.

At that time we lived always in an atmosphere in which we felt as if life were an integral part of something which never allowed us to forget why we had come here. The taste, the touch it brought, opened as it were a new horizon, gave a new turn and changed our outlook on life. Everything was bathed in a new light. Life had awakened in a new dream, an inner springtide.

(To be continued)

(Translated by Nirodbaran from the Bengali)

ARDHANARISHWARA

A HAND for giving and a hand for taking,
 And neither to be cut off. Oh, to stand,
 Like Hara-Gauri, with one graceful hand
 Placed lightly on the hip (one round breast aching
 To give suck to all creatures) and one making
 The sign, Do not fear, and one, with a grand
 Detachment, wielding the staff of world-command
 And another to the dance of the world-breaking
 Passionless rapture turned; the left foot raised,
 The right foot planted fixedly. To live
 Illimitably, to embrace and be embraced
 By all in a million-armed reciprocation ...
 But I have only two hands, one to give
 And one to take — or receive your dispensation.

PETER HEEHS

ART - YOGA - LIFE

FROM LETTERS TO FLORENCE RUSSELL

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1981)

You are right in seeing a clear sign of the luminously unexpected—that is, of the “Hour of God”—in certain world-events where parties that had looked absolutely irreconcilable have come together to create a new harmony. But much in the world still remains untouched by the breath of the Spirit blowing from—to quote a Wordsworthian expression—

An ampler ether, a diviner air,

which betoken the subtle presence of Sri Aurobindo within our gross-physical space. The Hour of God has indeed struck—in fact it struck quite a time ago—but the ears of most men are closed. The only thing that somehow has sounded on their dull tympanums is that there should be no third world war. But it needed the terrific blasts of the Atom Bomb to get this message in. I suppose the Divine could only be declared by such blasts which represent the utmost of sound matching the utmost of silence that is the natural atmosphere of the Supreme Reality. Has not Sri Aurobindo in his *Savitri* that mantric line?—

The riven invisible atom’s omnipotent force.

The word “omnipotent” is deeply significant here, pointing to the spiritual depth of warning that has lain behind the outbreak of the threat haunting the world with its “mushroom cloud”.

You have written : “I wish you would tell me what you call surrender of the ego.” I would answer that there are four phases of it.

First, a calm has to be cultivated so that the usual outleaping reactions gradually diminish until they hardly take place—the reactions of strong like and dislike, pleasure and pain, desire and disgust, self-exaltation and self-abasement. Secondly, these reactions whenever they occur have to be inwardly offered to the Divine: the cultivation of the calm and the offering of the reaction to the Divine have to go on side by side. Thirdly, a call has to go forth to the Supreme to bring His presence into you in answer to the offering. This presence would consolidate the calm you have cultivated and slowly convert it into the spontaneous self-existent peace that belongs to the inmost soul and to the highest spirit. Fourthly, in place of the non-reaction that got rid of the old outleapings of the limited ego positively or negatively, there will come a new activity of the nature. This activity will be one of varicoloured delight: every occasion that once caused a positive or negative play of the limited ego will now

become an interplay of the Divine with Himself. There will be no disturbance of any sort in the being but a smiling search for the Divine's progressive purpose in whatever situation stands before you. The outward aspects of the situation would not seem all in all: they would be merely the channels through which the Divine would work upon your inner self instead of upon your surface ego. Nothing will disturb you—what caused “irritations” and “disappointments” will be the Divine's strange touches—paradoxical happinesses, because your whole attitude, your entire posture of confrontation has changed. Most probably, even those forces that attempted to irritate and disappoint you will give up their game and change their dealings with you.

*

What a question to ask—whether you should humbly bow to me or humbly bow out! I have never desired to assume the guru's grandeur nor aspired to stand in any sort of unique splendour. You are always welcome to be by my side on an admired equal footing and if you wish to bring in anything like “bow”, you can exercise the right to “bow-wow” at me whenever I myself seem a little dog-matic.

Your Catholic friend who read my letter to you and was astonished that a heathen from India could write like a Catholic—your friend is not to be blamed too much as an ignoramus. The usual impression people get of India is as of a land where all kinds of funny or weird creatures are taken as deities—say, an elephant-headed pot-bellied Ganesh riding on a mouse or a hanging-tongued fierce-eyed Kali with a necklace of skulls or a Hanuman with a monkey's face and tail. At a little less fantastic-seeming level, there is a Shiva with matted hair and a bull for his mount or else an Ardhanarishwara whose body is male on one side and female on the other.

Of course there is a symbolic imagination at play in these figures, not to speak of subtle actualities inspiring that imagination to perceive a many-sidedness in the unitary Divine Being who is at the same time an impersonal infinity of omnipotent peace self-multiplied endlessly and a super-personal eternity of omniscient love with innumerable soul-forms of his own to be interrelated. The experience of this Divine Being, even the vivid concept of it, give not only a proper meaning to the diversity of religious modes in India but also a true sense to the variety of religions in the world. One comes to see Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in their specific qualities as well as in their combinations, in a way that none of them by itself can see its own attributes. For, here is an all-inclusive harmonising vision instead of an outlook which sees itself in opposition to other outlooks.

I would expect none of these single-truth religions to even arrive at an adequate idea of the Indian spiritual phenomenon—except where a particular facet of the latter's complex Kohinoor corresponds to its own slanted seizure of the inner light. What I wrote struck a sympathetic chord in your friend's mind. If I had dilated on the six-armed dancing Nataraja or on Vishnu reclining upon the Snake Ananta and watching a blue lotus springing out of his navel, the good chap would have goggled.

Perhaps you'll say that I am so enthusiastic about the Indian spiritual phenomenon because I am an Indian born to it. Actually I am not such a dyed-in-the-wool Indian: I was born a Parsi Zoroastrian, brought up in a single-truth religion like any Christian or Muslim. I arrived at the Indian synthesis by a partly natural and partly willed process. And, having been single-truthed for nearly 20 years, I am not oblivious of the several fine attributes of an early creed like mine. Each of the non-Indian religions develops to an exquisite point one or another aspect of the Universal Reality. These points are worth appreciating but their essence can be caught without being limited to them. To go beyond them is not to run them down. To run them down would signify that one has not genuinely gone beyond them, since running down any religious outlook is precisely a defect of the single-truth creeds. All the less would I be out of tune with a western creed like Christianity. I have been enormously westernised and my whole education took place in a Roman Catholic school and college run by European Jesuits.

More and more people are being "Indianised" in the higher sense of the word—I say the higher sense because everything in the outer India is not desirable, nor has it been desirable at all periods of the past.

*

We have heard of the Fall of Rome starting the Dark Ages, and the Fall of Constantinople beginning the Renaissance, and the Fall of Paris commencing the horror of the Hitlerite *Festung Europa*. But nothing has moved me so much as the Fall of Florence initiating God-knows-what new era of inner history and soul-development. It needs a never-forgetting Florentine like Dante to plumb with triple rhymes the profound cadence of this unexpected movement from vertical through slanting to horizontal. Corresponding to his *terza rima*, there is his threefold adventure in the Beyond: Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso. Face to face with the recent catastrophe in Chicago, perhaps he would pen a *Divina Tragedia* and trace not an ascent but a descent from Florence's paradisaical straight posture to a purgatorial downward bending and then the infernal nuisance of a thump on *terra firma*.

Not being as open to inspiration, whether soaring or plummeting, I can only mumble in plain as well as pained prose my grief at the thought of a most valued friend suffering "a sprained left ankle and a long gash in the right leg". But your saying that you imitated me makes my heart less sore, for a great feeling of being near and dear to you sweeps over me. And when you write that you are "happier over things" as a result, I mark the Divine's Hand using every fall in life to carry us higher than before—by a short cut through "a long gash" and by a sudden turn of the path through the surprise of a sprain.

I am not such a big Yogi as you think, but Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have lifted me a wee bit above the deceptive exteriors of life. Sri Aurobindo has put a little light into my mind so that I may see beyond the surface of things and catch an ec-

static glimpse of the Divine's subtle significances and symbols. The Mother has instilled into my heart a little sense of secret sounds enabling me to seize enchanted whispers of the Mantras that lie behind people's lives and seek expression through their hopes and reveries and loves. That is why I could recognise in you from almost the start a dreaming and a daring which were affined to my own inner self.

I might say that while Sri Aurobindo and the Mother aimed at making a great Yogi out of a budding poet they succeeded only in making a wide-eyed poet out of a tyro Yogi. But this success, though falling short of what should have been, was sufficient to clap a pair of pinions, small yet sure-beating, onto my far-from-Atlantean shoulders—and it has freed me from the superficial as well as from the humdrum.

You need not feel sorry for having written to me of your Catholic friend's comment. I have not misjudged his intentions at all. Perhaps my analysis sounded as if I had suspected a condescending attitude in him. But I can well believe that there was no such thing and he was merely happy to find a clear Christian note in my Indian utterances.

*

Your gift is most welcome at the moment, though I'm not yet *en route* to the gloriously tragic stage of which Wordsworth speaks—

And mighty poets in their misery dead.

Maybe I have escaped that fate because of not being "mighty" enough—and thank God for that, for our aim is not to be mighty in the traditional way but to be a channel for—to quote Wordsworth again—

The light that never was on sea or land.

To attempt a paradox, I may say that in however obscure a manner we are meant to be mirrors of a luminosity that has not yet established its reign on earth, a supreme radiance that has never come down so far and whose one spark would be more precious, more potent than the most wide-spreading fame and name and flame the world has known. What I speak of is the transcendent Truth of things the Mundaka Upanishad dazingly glimpses in the Mantra as rendered by Sri Aurobindo :

There the sun shines not and the moon has no splendour and the stars are blind;
there these lightnings flash not nor any earthly fire. For all that is bright is but a
shadow of that brightness and by its shining all this shineth.

If one can catch even in a single short poem the full force of this unmanifest grandeur, one would be more loyal to one's soul than if one out-Shakespeared Shakespeare and knocked Homer into a cocked hat.

I'm sorry I have been somewhat carried away into a bit of highfalutin'. Old Bill of Stratford, from whatever heaven to which his "poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling" may have carried him, will send Amalward a sceptical smile, and the "blind bard of Scio's rocky isle" may thunder down from his empyrean a peal of Jovian laughter on my upstart head.

Your fantasy of striding life's stage—which the author of the famous speech beginning "All the world's a stage" would have read with interest—made exhilarating matter for me also. Both my mind and heart accompany your various roles: that's the artist in me speaking. But my soul is there too—and it is there to tell you that the rift you imagine between Yoga and the life you would like to lead through so many characters ranging from Brunhilde to L'Aiglon doesn't really exist. I mean the Aurobindonian Yoga of the Supermind. Don't you know that Supermind is Super-Brunhilde, Super-Duse, Super-Bernhardt, Super-l'Aiglon, Super-Mozart and—what is most vitally important—Super-Florence? It is not the denial of passion and colour and music, but, as some Super-Amal hidden within this poor aspirant has written in lines which I have already quoted to you once and which Sri Aurobindo considered revelatory,

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

This is what Sri Aurobindo calls us to, for the goal he sets before us is not Divine Indifference but the kind of divinisation my couplet sings out. And remember that it is a couplet—it is no lonely line, it is two rhyming and chiming dancers, a pair of inseparable inspired companions across whose being there is the play of a heat that is heavenly. Yes, a "play" which does not cast away the stage over which you would stride with "fury and fervor" but lifts it to a height where Godhead is just the last stage of Man being truly himself.

*

The two cheques to *Mother India* which you had to cancel are still wanderers like Demeter searching for the lost Persephonè—the latter's role in this case being played by a less gorgeous personage, though one may not go so far as to dub this personage Parsi-phoney, a sheer contrast to that gatherer of flowers, herself, as Milton says,

the fairest flower, by gloomy Dis
Gathered.

Yes, I am a Parsi, as you already know, but not too much of a phoney—except in the sense that my ancestors have been in India for the last 1200 years and so may be said to have got their origin from the Iranian province of Parsa fairly rubbed off. Actually, barring distinctly Indian signs like the women's sari and a certain degree of browning of the men's skin, the Parsis of India, while never being stand-offish from

the rest of the country's population, have retained their communal individuality more markedly than any other ingredient of India's multifarious inhabitants. I am tempted to write at some length on this fast-disappearing little group of a bare 100,000 members, but I shan't let myself go at the moment. Let me touch on some matters you have alluded to.

"Dante Gabriel Rossetti"—I was delighted to see that name blaze out of your letter. Like his greater Florentine namesake, he and his work have attracted me ever since my late school-days. I have conned his *House of Life* as devotedly as *La Vita Nuova* and relished that peculiar blend of earthly and ethereal in it which would illustrate in a special manner the definition the Mother once gave of Poetry: "the sensuality of the spirit." I have enjoyed also in his verse the quest of unusual verbal artistry in the service of a happy ingenuity of impassioned idea. The sonnet to which you refer is an apt example of what I mean. In the early stage of my own poetic development I often found myself so kindred to some phases of his pictorial poetry and poetic painting that I occasionally wondered whether he and I were not emanations of the same soul. A strange light was shed on my wondering when Sri Aurobindo remarked apropos of an early poem by my sister Minnie that she was surely a born poet, although here and there were some gleams from Heine and Christina Rossetti. Minnie had not read either of these poets. But I made an astonishing discovery. I came upon a portrait of Christina done by her brother Dante Gabriel, which bore an extraordinary resemblance in facial feature, mood-expression and head-posture to a photograph of Minnie at the time this poem had been written. I made a copy of Dante Gabriel's sketch and sent it along with that photograph of Minnie to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. They too were extremely struck. The likeness seemed certainly past all coincidence—and I, who had in early life asked myself whether I should concentrate on poetry or on painting, the two arts to which I had been naturally drawn by my own abilities, suddenly felt as though that pair of brother and sister, shining in the art-world of the later nineteenth-century England and never quite discovering the true form of the Ideal after which they had strained, had entered earth-life again in the fulfilling time of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Maybe you too belonged to that same England and shared in the soulful aestheticism which came to what I may call flaming flower in the vision and work of the two Rossettis as well as Walter Pater, William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones.

*

I feel rather worried about the condition of your eyes. I can't quite make out what exactly is wrong. It seems sometimes you can read and sometimes you can't. Why this fluctuation? Cannot some expert ophthalmologist handle your peculiarity and give you the type of glasses you need? Surely, being a sexagenarian doesn't make your case hopeless?

You speak of a "vision-problem" which does not appear to refer altogether to

your physical eyes. But surely, as far as I can see into you, your inner vision is absolutely unblurred. It is more clear than that of most people connected with the Ashram. In all that you write I can feel your love for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and your soul's sight of them as the Incarnate Divine. You are a wonderful and inspiring individual. It is great luck to be in touch with you. At the moment you are in a bit of the blues because all around you is so much ignorance, so much preoccupation with sheer Matter. But you have sufficient strength inside you not to let this darkness sweep over you. It can never put out the light within, but even the outer mind need not get depressed because of the encroachment of these shadows. Really they are shadows and not substances, however solid they may look. And if you glow with the conviction that the Mother's Grace is operative all the time, not only will you withstand the clutching approaches of ignorance but you will also suffuse the surrounding blindness with a scatter of stars lit from the sun that is your soul. Just think that you are in the midst of all this gloom because this gloom requires your presence. Once you feel that destiny, the gloom itself will start feeling the real You. And remember that all of us here with whom you share the eternal sense of the Mother are with you in the in-world. You are never alone and can never be defeated. I am reminded of a stanza in a poem of mine entitled "Triumph is All". The lines run:

Forever in my heart I hear
 A time-beat of eternal bliss.
 White Omnipresence! where is fear?
 The mouth of hell can be thy kiss.

The "immovable rock" within you of which you speak has two faces: one is a reflection of the inertia of matter, the other a reflection of the Spirit's changeless eternity. Within the former the latter is latent. When the latent becomes manifest you'll be able to say what a poem of mine on the Himalaya makes that mountain say:

I have caught the Eternal in a rock of trance.

Sri Aurobindo considered this line "superlative". Brood on it, let it live within you, evoke in yourself the truth of it, and soon you will feel not that you "can't budge" but that the Himalayan Sri Aurobindo will never budge from you.

K. D. SETHNA

O AGNI

(“Do thou, O Fire, for thou knowest, labour away from us the wrath of divine Varuna...”

Mandala Four, Gautama Vamadeva, 1, 4.)

O AGNI, Helper and Friend
Drive away Varuna or hide
By your love and effulgence
The uncleared muck and its dread
That lessens your aureate glow.

O Protector, fetch the gold laser
From peaks high and burn the deep dark
That covering all nooks and corners
Shelters and shields the ungodly.

Fear of Varuna’s wrath
Clouds and cools the fire
Of my aspiration, cinders smoulder
And await your waking breath.

Let my blue beseeching flame
Brighten and become one
With your diamond white
Taking all my self as sacrifice.

DINKAR

FLOWERS

THE flowers you gather
From the scented woods of letters,
The rainbow-tinted beauties
From gardens of varied thoughts
And the roses and jasmines
You pluck from the fairy-tale lands —
They make very good garlands,
Woven deftly
With your nimble fingers.

But keep them for the king's reception halls,
Bring them not
For the Muse's altar.

Offer flowers
That bloom within.
Let the fragrance come
From Psyche's bowers,
A distilled sweetness
From the source of Truth.

For poetry lies
Not in gathered splendour,
But in songs of love
From the soul's surrender.

M. L. THANGAPPA

JYOTIPRIYA (DR. JUDITH M. TYBERG)

MAY 16, 1902—OCTOBER 3, 1980

II

“Our life is a horse, that, neighing and galloping, bears us onward and upward... we seek for the shining gold of the Truth; we lust after a heavenly treasure.”

SRI AUROBINDO

ONE of Jyotipriya's favourite stories had to do with the time she met a yogi at the home of a friend of the American Consul, not long after her arrival in India in July 1947. When the others stepped out of the room for a moment, the yogi asked to see Jyotipriya's palm, and surprised her by saying, "I see you were born on 16 May 1902." Then, remarking on how rare it was to meet anyone with so much written in the aura as had Jyotipriya, he proceeded to make a number of predictions about her life. First, he said that all her training had been in preparation for a great future work—and that she would "teach and teach and teach". And he told her he could see people streaming in and out of a large building she would have, a building surrounded by seven trees. "But how can that be?" she replied in astonishment, "I don't have a penny to my name!" At this point, the Consul and his wife who had returned to the room joined in the conversation with the question—"Will she ever have any money of her own?"—for they were greatly impressed with how much Jyoti could do with the little she had. The yogi concentrated before giving his answer: "She will always have money for her spiritual work, but not for any other needs." He then continued by forecasting some problems she would have with her health, but concluded that they would never stop her—and that Jyotipriya's life would just grow fuller and richer right up till the end.

All of the yogi's predictions were fulfilled: the present home of the East-West Cultural Center came landscaped with seven trees, and was a spiritual haven for the thousands it welcomed through its doors... there was money always and only for the Center's work... and, despite a series of extremely painful illnesses, Jyotipriya continued to teach until the final days of her life. Her last Thursday evening satsangs were said to be luminous, and plunged sadhaks and seekers even deeper within than ever. But back in 1947, that yogi had made one more disclosure—this one about Jyotipriya's immediate past as well as her future. He stated that she had already found her guru and guide for life. And again, the yogi proved correct—for she had just returned from Pondicherry and her first darshan with Sri Aurobindo.

Ostensibly, Jyotipriya came to India to work towards an M.A. degree in Indian

Religion and Philosophy at Benares Hindu University (B.H.U.), on a three-year scholarship from the Arya Dharma Sewa Sangha. She arrived at the holy city at an auspicious time—one month before India's Independence was achieved. But Jyoti had a deeper purpose than that of adding another academic degree to her already full roster of achievements. She had come to India on a spiritual search. After twenty-five years of intensive research into the world's sacred scriptures—and seventeen years of Sanskrit study—Jyotipriya was convinced that there was an inner meaning to the Veda that no one could teach her in the West. For, as she explained at her first meeting with the University's Philosophy Department, if all of India's spiritual culture was indeed based on the Veda, then what she had learned in America could only be called "nonsense". But the scholars of the time were in debate as to whether there was a secret to the Veda at all. No pandit yet had been able to decode the obscure language and unravel a consistent thread of spiritual sense. In the prevailing view, the Veda was but "an interesting remnant of barbarism". Jyotipriya was advised to choose another Sanskrit research topic.

It happened that a young philosophy lecturer, by the name of Arabinda Basu, was in the Teachers Room at the time, and he followed the dismayed Dr. Tyberg out into the hallway. "I couldn't help but overhear your conversation," she recalled him to say, "But I do think I know of someone who can help you. Have you ever heard of Sri Aurobindo?" The next day, he brought her a copy of *Bases of Yoga*—and a typescript of the not-yet published *Secret of the Veda*. Jyotipriya stayed awake reading until dawn, for, in her hands, she discovered, were the answers she had been so long seeking. That morning, she told Arabinda Basu she had found what she had come to India for.

Along with Arabinda Basu's letter of introduction, Jyotipriya sent a letter to Sri Aurobindo describing her life-long quest for Truth, and requesting permission for His darshan. Then, after two days, a strange thing happened—Jyotipriya began to smell jasmine flowers everywhere she went, though there were none anywhere to be seen. And even more curious, the fragrance would grow more intense whenever Arabinda Basu would speak about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. With her logic at a fail, Jyoti at last cycled over to ask Basu if there could be some possible explanation for such a curious phenomenon. His reply: "You've contacted Sri Aurobindo, haven't you? Well, now he has contacted you. Soon you'll be receiving a letter." And in the correspondence that did soon follow, Jyotipriya was informed that she was welcome to visit the Ashram at any time.

Her first opportunity came with the Rama holidays of October 1947. She wrote in her diary, "This is considered one of the most propitious seasons of the year for spiritual conquests. Very auspicious me arriving just at this time I think." And so it was—she reached the Sri Aurobindo Ashram on the evening of Lakshmi-puja—just as the Mother was about to give blessings to all. At the touch of the Mother's hands on Jyotipriya's head, "electric forces" went right through her being; her hands were "sizzling". Jyoti walked away wondering what had happened to her. In the days to

come, she was to recognize in the Mother “a goddess friend of old” and a very deep love for the Mother filled her heart. The affection was mutual. Purity was very dear to the Mother and, of all Jyotipriya’s qualities, it was her purity that was most outstanding. Indeed, it was appropriate that Sri Aurobindo used the fragrance of jasmine as His way of communicating with her in Benares—for jasmine, as the Mother has said, is the flower of purity. At Jyotipriya’s first private darshan with the Mother they talked for an hour, and among other things the Mother explained to her the significance of the flowers. Deeply moved, Jyotipriya expressed her longing to give her life to all that was Beauty and Truth. The Mother, silent for a moment in reflection, replied, “Yes, you chose long ago to serve.” Then She told Jyoti that She and Sri Aurobindo had been waiting for her to arrive for a very long time. It was then that the seeker still known as Judith Tyberg asked the Mother for a spiritual name. At the next morning’s pranam, the Mother handed her a chit written in Sri Aurobindo’s script. Inside were the words—“Jyotipriya, the lover of light.”

Darshan of 24 November 1947 at last arrived. Tall in stature, Jyotipriya could see over most people’s heads while waiting in the queue, so she had her first and sustained view of Sri Aurobindo long in advance of her own pranam. Standing before Sri Aurobindo, she felt she was being “stretched out to infinity”—“I just felt God, a marvellous feeling of expansion. I was out of myself, it was so beautiful, it was with me for days. He did something to me, because all down my spine there was this electric current and whirling movement.” And as she told one Los Angeles devotee, “He made me so aware of the soul within me. Even though I had all these aspirations which were in the soul, I became aware of something so different that was alive in me. I really knew what was my soul.” Henceforth, Jyotipriya always was to refer to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as “Devaguru and Devamātā”—or Divine Father and Divine Mother. For from that indeed propitious Rama holidays season on, Jyotipriya’s “soul-doors” were opened, and “a new consciousness directed” her life ever after.

Back in Benares for her studies Jyoti brought that new consciousness to bear on everything she did. As the University student most advanced in years, she proved to be the most distinguished. She learned Hindi and Pali, and deepened her knowledge of Sanskrit through detailed studies of the Gita, the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. She studied the Vedantic systems of Philosophy, and modern Indian thought. And after the March 1949 examinations for the M.A. standard, Jyotipriya had this to write to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother:

“Yesterday my thoughts were very close to you both when I received the news that I had passed First Class in the M.A. examinations in Indian Religion and Philosophy and had made a record for the University. This I know was because of the divine channels of help I was able to open by my love of you and the path of life you offer.... The question: ‘State clearly and briefly the philosophical and religious views of Sri Aurobindo...’—I answered fully and enjoyed pouring out my soul in it.”

At the age of 48, Jyotipriya took up the study of Indian Classical Music, learning sitar and sangit so she could "sing bhajans to the Divine". As Hostess of the International Guest House planning activities for a weekly group of 40, and as the first President of the International Students' Union, founded by Dr. Radhakrishnan, Jyotipriya was "a real force in international understanding", to use the then Vice-Chancellor's own words. But her real satisfaction came from the hope that in those capacities she might be a "divine channel" and make the walls of those assemblies "ring with reverberations of eternal things".

Many eminent people of the day were impressed with Jyotipriya's Sanskrit scholarship and her sincere appreciation of Indian culture. It was her great privilege to meet with Gandhiji, Maulana Azad, Rajagopalacharya, Santoshkumar Basu, V.K. Gokak, and pandit Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj. She served as India's representative to the World University Round Table in the august company of Swami Sivananda, who was to become a revered friend for life. Perhaps Professor B.L. Atreya of Benares Hindu University spoke for them all when he praised Jyotipriya's close study and admiration for the vast and profound aspects of Hinduism, and for living "like an Indian" in full participation in Varanasi life. But such an interest and enthusiasm was only natural for Jyotipriya, for she loved meeting all kinds of people. And, as a lifelong friend commented,—when inquiring in a letter to what degree Jyoti's outward behavior had become Indianized—the "insides" had been "always of that character". Because of Jyotipriya's knowledge of Hindi and Pali, she was able to visit many holy places ordinarily not accessible to visitors from the West. It was the then Education Minister Maulana Azad who "challenged" her to bring to the West her deep understanding of Indian culture, while B.H.U.'s Professor T.R.V. Murti predicted: "I am convinced that you are destined to play an important role in bringing the West and the East together on a spiritual plane."

Jyotipriya lived to fulfill the prediction and the challenge. In the thirty years that passed from the time she had left India in 1950, until her death in 1980, she brought to seekers of all races and ages in the West her stories of spiritual experiences and contacts with the holy people of India. These anecdotes were her most enjoyable—and effective—way of opening hearts and minds to the existence of a spiritual reality. She delighted in telling of her many hours in the company of Ma Anandamayee, whom Jyotipriya with her own joyous nature liked very much and regarded as an "incarnation of happiness". She would sit alongside as Anandamayee Ma would sing to the Divine in her Bhavan by the Ganges. And there were Jyoti's descriptions of the ashrams of Rishikesh—of the Sivananda Ashram, and her time with Krishna Prem (Ronald Nixon) in particular. But two stories deserve special mention. One was from the time Jyotipriya first visited Sarnath during a Philosophers' Congress held in Benares at Christmas. After touring this holy site where Buddha had first preached, the group entered the museum. And there, before one of the statues of the Buddha, Jyotipriya was held spellbound and could not move. The others went on, but she stood transfixed for a long time, alive with the Buddha and he with her. From

that time of gripping memory, Jyotipriya was convinced that she had lived a past life in the blessed company of Siddhartha Buddha. Then, there was the week that she spent with Sri Ramana Maharshi—he, lying on his bench, Jyotipriya and many others gathered around. As for most, Jyotipriya found it very easy to meditate in the pure atmosphere of that sage. Her diary is filled with the record of her questions to him and his replies. But one exchange especially stood out. Jyotipriya asked Ramana Maharshi what she would do when all of her spiritual teachers would depart from this life. He assured her with these words—“We’ll never leave you. None of your teachers will ever leave you.” Then he added, “You’re already realized, you just don’t know it.” And in the library of the East-West Cultural Center, to the side of a large and radiant portrait of Sri Aurobindo, is a smaller framed composite of Ramana Maharshi, Anandamayee Ma, and the other saints of India who helped lead Jyotipriya to her spiritual goal.

But as Jyoti wrote to the Mother in the summer of 1949: “In all my travels I am seeing all the many religions, and devoted followers of Krishna, Rama...but none of these have had the wondrous effect that you and Sri Aurobindo have made on me. I have been able to prove this by first hand experience.” After the Darshan of 15 August 1949, Jyoti was convinced that her place was with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. She wrote in a letter to her friends: “At this darśan I came to know without doubt that I belonged to Him and His work in the world.” But still she felt bound to her many responsibilities in Benares, though her studies themselves were completed. In deep turmoil, she called on the Divine for a definitive answer. And there, in the railway station in Calcutta—and again with no possible logical source—the fragrance of jasmine came upon her, just as it had done two years earlier in Benares.

Those of us who have come to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram through Jyotipriya and her East-West Cultural Center—and who have received such a warm and immediate welcome just by virtue of our association with her—have felt the living regard and affection which the Ashram held for Jyotipriya. She is remembered for discussing the wonders of Sanskrit on the Ashram verandah till late into the night...for her deep study of *Savitri* at a time when it was read by few...for her practical and loving advice to a teenage Ashramite...for her respect for Indian customs and for “everything Indian”. To quote one young Ashramite’s letter to the Mother about Jyotipriya, a letter which Jyoti kept and cherished: “When I was introduced to Jyotipriya, I felt a kind of warmth deep within that provoked in me a feeling of confidence. Every time, in her nearness, this happy feeling persists. I like to see her, to listen to her; it does something to me.”

And for Jyotipriya, there just were not enough accolades to describe the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. It was her “spiritual home”...it was where she found the answer to her “deepest heart’s longings since childhood” it was “bustling with all the things” she loved...the spiritual atmosphere was “dazzling, harmonious”...the physical education programme was “fine training, and so united in spirit”...and in the Ashramites, and close friends like Nolini Kanta Gupta, A.B. Purani, Indra

Sen, Sisir Mitra, and Prithvi Singh, Jyotipriya saw “the cream of Hindu culture”. She treasured the honor of spending so many morning hours in questions and dialogues with the great Sanskrit pandit, Kapāli Śāstri—and always thrilled to the memory of the words “*Bilkul theek*”—“Perfect”—he pronounced when she first chanted the *gayatri* for him after just a few days of practice. Proudly, she would point out to us in Los Angeles the album photograph of her white-shortened participation in March Past. And her heart would fill with joy to recall the Mother’s pleasure at a concert given for Her at Golconde by Jyotipriya’s three music students, or at the Christmas carols sung to Jyoti’s organ accompaniment for the Mother in the playground.

In whatever Jyotipriya did, she brought others along with her. If there was music to be practiced, she infused in the student her own joy and love in the learning. It was through her many contacts that the Ashram came to know of Johannes Hohlenberg’s 1915 portrait painting of Sri Aurobindo. Jyotipriya’s annual Christmas letter from India, of 22 single-spaced typed pages to over 400 friends, once caused someone at the Ashram to suggest that her time would be better spent in the pursuit of her own sadhana. In a quandary, Jyoti went to ask the Mother for Her advice. Throwing up Her hands, the Mother said: “How do you think the Divine works if he doesn’t work through people like you? You keep up all your contacts!” So Jyotipriya queried, “But if I keep to my own sadhana, I’ll go along faster?” To which the Mother replied, “Yes. It is that way. Just work on your own sadhana and you go very high, but you leave everybody else behind. The way *you* grow, you take others along with you. It is slower, but it is a much more rich and beautiful and cosmic path.” And then She repeated what She had told Jyotipriya at their first meeting years ago, “You have chosen it—to serve—long ago.”

Jyotipriya went back to America to serve in March 1950, after a last darshan of 21 February. She recorded her final impressions of Sri Aurobindo: “Vast deep calm dynamic with a mighty wisdom...Had time to really have a good look. He looks so well and strong and fair, yet His consciousness seemed infinite, not just local. Such currents!” She felt that the message given to her then was this: “Have trust therefore in us, absolute trust, and we will lead you to your goal.” As a fitting close to the three-year stay in India that was the treasure of Jyotipriya’s life, Arabinda Basu, who had led her to Sri Aurobindo, saw her off at the boat at Calcutta. Then, as she wrote in her diary, “With thoughts of Ma and Guru” she departed. Armed with the future, Jyotipriya went back to the West to become Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s premier pioneer in America.

(*To be concluded*)

MANDAKINI
(MADALEINE SHAW)

THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1981)

The Churning of the Ocean

The gods of light and titans of the dark
Battled for his soul as for a costly prize.¹

VYĀSA's attempt to convey the esoteric lore of the Vedic Mysteries in a form suited to a more broad-based audience took the shape of an individual's quest or trials in the Pauṣya Parva. In the Pauloma Parva he involves a god, Agni, very closely in the conjugal relations of Bhṛigu, to the deity's disadvantage. Here the Vedic substratum is practically impossible to retrieve. However, in the Āstika Parva (Chapters 18-19) Vyāsa plumbs the depths of the collective unconscious to dredge up archetypal imagery raising the level of the symbolism to the cosmic plane; the gods and the titans churning the primal waters for nectar, then battling over it, with the gods ultimately spiriting it away while the titans are engrossed in Viṣṇu's *mohinī-mūrti*.

This episode starts with the gods gathered on Mount Meru to discuss how to obtain amṛita. Nārāyaṇa advises Brahmā to churn the ocean with the titans. As churning-rod, the mountain Mandāra is selected but the gods fail to uproot it and approach Viṣṇu who has Ananta, the snake-emperor, to do this. The mountain pivots on the back of the tortoise-king, and Vāsuki is used as the churning rope. Indra fastens Mandāra on the tortoise's back by his vajra. The friction of the churning produces dense flaming smoke from Vāsuki's mouth, converting itself into clouds and lightning from which rain falls refreshing the gods (not the titans, significantly, though it is they who hold Vāsuki's hood and the gods his tail). Flowers rain from the mountain-top refreshing devas and asuras alike. To quench the friction-born fire consuming the mountain's flora and fauna, Indra drenches it with showers,

Till the juices and resins of the different trees mingled
with the ocean's waters.

The gods drank the waters mixed with liquid essence of gold
and nectar-proprietyed juices, and became immortal.

Then from the milky waters clarified butter (ghee) is produced. At this point the gods repair to Brahmā complaining that they are exhausted Nārāyaṇa provides both gods and titans with the necessary strength and the churning recommences to produce the moon, Lakṣmī, wine, the Kaustubha gem, the Pārijāta tree, Surabhi, Ucchaisravas, Dhanvantari with the amṛita vessel, Airāvata and finally poison which

like smoke-filled fire
 covered the earth,
 till the three worlds reeled
 with the deadly fumes,
 till Siva drank the poison
 at Brahma's request.

(sl. 42-43)

Now the titans fight for Lakṣmī and the amṛita. However, the nectar appears to be in their possession ever since they shouted "Gurs" (Sl. 40) when it first emerged from the ocean, and Nārāyaṇa in the Mohini-mūrti beguiles them into handing it over to him, distributes it among the gods and then wreaks havoc among the asuras with the help of Nara and the deities, till they flee to the earth's bowels and the salt sea. The gods return to heaven and hand over the nectar to Nara for safe-keeping.

On the face of it this myth is purely Purāṇic with no Vedic precedent. A close analysis, however, reveals that it is nothing but the Vedic Soma Mystery which has been recast in this fashion. The key to the symbolism lies not only in the produce of the ocean, but the very act of churning itself consisting of the hill or mountain, the ocean, the nāga-rope and the kurma-base, besides the asuras and the suras. Meru is the Hill of Being, and the gods gather on its summit which is the plane of the supreme Truth-Consciousness. This is very clearly set forth in tantric symbolism, where Meru stands for the spine connecting the mūlādhāra, a four-leaved lotus, with the thousand-petalled lotus on the cranium, through the means of the Kuṇḍalinī force lying dormant in the former. The union of these two lotuses takes place when the Kuṇḍalinī is awoken to rise up through Meru and its seven chakras. This coming together of Śiva at the top and Śakti at the base produces amṛita to permeate the entire being.²

In the Veda the action takes the shape of the concept of a celestial axis, *stambha*, a pillar joining heaven and earth, the planes of *sva* and *bhūr* (Rigveda X.89.4 where it is the axle joining these two wheels of Indra's chariot), often identified with Agni (Rv. I, 67, 3; VI, 8, 3; IV, 5, 1) and with the cosmic tree (Rv. IX, 5.10; V.1.1).

In post-Vedic literature, Meru becomes this pillar supporting heaven and connecting it with earth or the ocean. Bosch points out that it is identified with the Cosmic Tree because Meru is called the *mūlakāṇḍa*. It is also the macrocosmic equivalent of the *padmamūla* (at the base of the spine) in the human being. Bosch sees the churning as a different way of representing the organic plant image which permeates Hindu sculpture and thought with the tortoise standing for the *padmamūla* (*mūlādhāra*), the mountain for the stem (*suṣumnā nāḍī*), the serpent for the two side-branches (*Iḍā* and *Prīṅgalā nāḍīs*, vital energy channels). The plant draws its sap from the waters just as the mountain churns nectar from the ocean. This also assumes the Puruṣa image, with the stem as the human trunk with arms as the branches and his shock of hair as the wide-spreading crown of the cosmic tree embodying the godhead. The mystic seer's vision of Meru, one version of which is

given by Vyāsa briefly in Sl.5-9, chapter 17 of the Āstika Parva, is this:

There walled apart by its own innerness
 In a mystical barrage of dynamic light
 He saw a lone immense high-curved world-pile
 Erect like a mountain chariot of the Gods
 Motionless under an inscrutable sky.
 As if from Matter's plinth and viewless base
 To a top as viewless, a carved sea of worlds
 Climbing with foam-maned waves to the Supreme
 Ascended towards breadths immeasurable....
 So it towered up to heights intangible
 And disappeared in the hushed conscious Vast....
 It marries the earth to screened eternities...
 A summary of the stages of the spirit,
 Its copy of the cosmic hierarchies
 Refashioned in our secret air of self
 A subtle pattern of the universe.
 It is within, below, without, above....
 Its steps are paces of the soul's return
 From the deep adventure of material birth,
 A ladder of delivering ascent
 And rungs that Nature climbs to deity...
 A Seer within who knows the ordered plan
 Concealed behind our momentary steps,
 Inspires our ascent to viewless heights...²

Mandāra means "slow, tardy, sluggish"³ which identifies it with the Vedic *adri* ("hill, rock") symbolising "the physical nature and it is out of this hill or rock that the herds of the Sun are released and the waters flow. The streams of the *madhu*, the honey, the Soma, are said also to be milked out of this Hill or Rock".⁴ Soma, of course, is amrita which is produced from the churning. In the Angirasa myth of the R̥gveda we also find the hill-image figuring prominently: "This darkness, this lower world of Night and the Inconscient in the formed existence of things symbolised in the image of the mountain which rises from the bowels of earth to the back of heaven, is represented by the secret cave at the base of the hill, the cave of darkness."⁵

But, as Monier-Williams notes, *mandāra* is often equated with *meru*, the significance of which we have already studied. In the amritamanthana myth the two are one and the same, and the descent of *Mandāra* into the depths of the ocean identified it with another feature in the Vedic Aṅgīrasa myth, "the goad of the luminous seer, Puṣan, lord of the Truth, the goad that drives open the closed heart and makes the sacred word to arise from its depths."⁶

The ocean itself, of course, constitutes the single most important symbol as well as the basic clue to the hidden meaning of the myth. Vāmadevas' hymn to Agni (IV. 58) contains the secret. Two oceans are repeatedly mentioned in the Veda, the upper is the luminous ocean of the superconscious while below is the darkness of the subconscious deeps. Between the two lies conscious existence as a horizontal line (X. 129.3-5) rising out of the heart-ocean of darkness. Vāmadeva also speaks of the *hr̥dyasamudṛāt* (IV.58.5) "the ocean of the heart... out of which rise the waters of the clarity, *ghṛtasya dhārāḥ*; the flow", he says, becoming progressively purified by the mind and the inner heart, *antar hr̥da manasā puyamānaḥ*.⁷ In the first ṛik itself Vāmadeva speaks of a honeyed wave rising from the heart-ocean, equates this with Soma and states that it is this which enables one to attain to immortality: "out of the subconscious depths in us arises a honeyed wave of Ānanda, or pure delight of existence (by which) we can arrive at immortality; this Ānanda is the secret being, the secret reality (the rik says that Soma is the secret name of *ghṛtasya*, clarity) behind the action of the mind in its shining clarities."⁸

It is significant that the very first product of the churning is *somaḥ sitāmsuru-jvalaḥ* which is glossed by Vyāsa as the thousand-rayed moon. Now, "Soma, the god of the Ānanda, the Vedanta also tells us, is that which has become mind or sensational perception; in other words, all mental sensation carries in it a hidden delight of existence and strives to express that secret of its own being. Therefore Ānanda is the tongue of the gods (*vide* IV.58.1) with which they taste the delight of existence, it is the nodus in which all the activities of the immortal state or divine existence are bound together."⁹

Indra's action in striking at the base of Mandāra with vajra in order to fix it firmly on the tortoise-Viṣṇu is a familiar symbol recalling his sending the vajra to assist Uttanka to rive open the hard ground. It is the base of the mountain in the cave of the subconscious and, when the lightnings of the illumined consciousness strike it, the result is the hidden wealth of the divine waters of Ānanda pouring out. Again, Indra's showering of refreshing rain on the flaming mountain is merely another way of representing the descent of the divine grace which soothes and refreshes the struggling aspirant in the midst of the exhausting process of the churning of the inner depths.¹⁰ The action of Agni is also shown clearly when smoky flames are said to envelop Mandāra. We have already seen in the Uttanka myth¹¹ that the action of the inner flame at the beginning of the sādhanā is in the lower vital regions, obscured by the desires of the sense, and hence described as smoky. When, however, it rises to the higher realms, ultimately reaching that of *sva* (Indra) it becomes the pure white steed Uchāśravas, the Vedic Dadhikravan representing the unsullied action of the divine flame in transforming the lower consciousness.

(To be continued)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

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³ Monier-Williams: *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 788.
⁴ *The Secret of the Veda*, pp. 88 & 249.
⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 224.
⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 230.
⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 98.
⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 97.
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¹¹ See the issue of Nov. 1980, pp. 681-2.

MOUNTAIN MOMENT

I KNOW not names of stars
 Nor valleys of the moon.
 I know not call of bird,
 If a blossom shines too soon.

I know not ways of love,
 Nor what a tealeaf tells;
 I only know of Thee,
 My Soul, the calm which dwells

In argent sweetness vast,
 The light behind my plod.
 And I know a mountain moment
 Pure, in which lives God.

DHRUVA

THE LORD OF HORSES

A NOVELLA

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1981)

2

AND then, one day, I learnt to weep.

It was during my fourth year. Mohammed-bin-Moktar loved me more and more. Mehhi, his son, called me his "cloud" or his "storm-racked sky" or his "sacred wrath", as he passed his little hands around my neck. And he would murmur into my ear names that my Master's warriors had conferred on me and which he retained in his memory.

Mehhi was not my Master, he was my brother. When he did not call me "my cloud" or "my storm-racked sky" or "my sacred wrath", he would simply call me "my brother, my little brother."

His voice was all soft and gay. I loved him. I would move my ears in appreciation and thank him for all that he said to me. I would breathe lightly over his shoulder and that would tickle him and he would clap his hands in glee. We were so happy, Mehhi and I. And Mohammed was happy for our happiness. The whole camp was happy too.

Then came the day when I had to learn to weep.

But how shall I recount that? How shall I recreate the moment when all of a sudden it seemed as if the sun had ceased to shine, as if night had engulfed the earth forever. How can one recount grief and pain? And tears, my first tears? Tears are voiceless and flow in silence bringing solace at long last to him who weeps.

I felt relieved after I wept. And something else happened too, something that I cannot explain. I felt different. I felt bigger. I felt in me an understanding of things that was deeper in its grasp. These tears had taught me that happiness was precious, so precious that every one wants to rob the others of it. They taught me that to preserve happiness one has to fight relentlessly and that if one loses it one has to fight doubly hard to win it back.

To learn this truth of happiness, I paid dearly. Very dearly indeed. To bring me closer to the understanding of happiness, Kismet had, in fact, debarred me from it.

It happened thus:

Mohammed's prosperity was on the rise. His herd of camels had been further enriched. So too his herd of goats. During our journeying these would trot along with their kids bleating away obstinately in the midst of the proud camels that walked on in undisturbed silence.

On the camels' humps, the other riches of Mohammed rested. Ourida the Rose's

husband, Aziz, at the head, carried the tent of ceremonies which Mohammed installed for the festival of Ramadan or when he hosted a banquet to thank Allah for all his generosity and to which everyone in the camp was invited.

The following three camels carried the three palanquins reserved for the three wives of Mohammed.

On the fifth camel, a big basket upholstered with gold-embroidered cushions was kept ready to give refuge to Mehhi when he was tired.

Others served as mounts for the warriors of Mohammed when they rested their horses.

Others still carried either thick-pile carpets or coffers replete with rich raiment or chiselled silver jewels that enhanced the beauty of Mohammed's three wives.

The rest carried nothing and walked slowly, all linked by a rope that passed around one of their legs. These camels were meant for sale. Mohammed would sell them for a very high price in the souks of cities where we stopped sometimes. Or else they were used to honour some alliance. In which case, Mohammed would offer them as gifts to his friends, new and old. For Mohammed was generous and much loved.

But, of course, if he was so much loved, it was only by men who were honest. Everywhere on this earth, there are also men who are greedy, lazy and cruel. Such men were there around us too, a few days' march from our caravan. They were jealous and full of hatred for Mohammed. Small thanks to them I suddenly realised that stupidity and meanness can ruin the most perfect of joys. And it is when this dawned on me that I learnt to weep.

It was one of the first evenings of the month of July. Mohammed had decided to dine outside his tent as he wanted to watch the stars that glazed the sky as with a dust of diamonds.

Mehhi and his favourite warriors were beside him, seated around a big copper plate from which the smell of spices rose up in the air. Each in his turn put his right hand into the plate and took out a meat-ball with his first three fingers. And quietly they all ate singing praises of Allah.

A little away, Mohammed's wives and daughters waited for him, in silence, to finish his meal so as to eat from the same plate.

To the right of the tent, behind the women, slept Ourida the Rose, her neck outstretched, eyes half-shut, her long head turned eastwards. Suddenly, her eyes opened, her ears shuddered and she looked nervous as she started getting up.

Just then, my mother who was beside me started snorting noisily. What did she feel, Daughter of the Wind, in that soft and subtle wind of night? And then, breathing hard, she started digging into the sand with her hoofs. What was going on? I did not understand. But I felt my blood warm up, my heart beat faster. And I too started digging into the sand and breathing excitedly. Something was going on. Something quite serious. My instinct warned me of some imminent danger. But how could I visualise danger, I who had known only happiness?

I looked a long time at Mohammed. He had stopped eating and was surveying the night that loomed in front of him, beyond the other tents of the camp. His hand now rested on his belt where he always carried a silver-hilted dagger. His warriors, beside him, were also on their toes.

Just then, Akibu arrived, running. He had been sent to get goglets of palm-wine. "Master, Master. It's Abouaf, Abouaf the Terrible!"

And in the whole camp simultaneously the horses started to neigh, the goats started to bleat and the camels to roar.

Fear is the word.

But Mohammed was not afraid. He confided Mehhi to Meryem. And Meryem hid Mehhi under the folds of her long veil. Then Mohammed, along with his warriors, moved out to the outer limits of the camp. He was riding Daughter of the Wind, having left Ourida the Rose, my beloved nurse, to me, my only companion in that terrible night which now was resounding not only with the confounded noises of beasts but also with loud cries of war.

In spite of my tender age, I too would have wanted to go and fight against Abouaf. I would have kicked, I would have bitten, I would have trampled. The terrible plunderer and his horde could not have stood up to me. But Ourida the Rose held me back:

"Stay," she quietly told me. "Stay with me. Kismet wants you to be the pride of your race."

I tried to protest but she went on:

"It is not in war that you will fulfil your destiny but in peace and in solitude."

I did not understand what she meant but I obeyed.

Meanwhile terror reigned around us. Women rushed out of the tents, screaming. Most of them were unveiled and this filled me with rage against Abouaf. For it was because of him and his boisterous horde that the women were running away, without having had the time to put back the veil over their faces, their faces that only their husbands' eyes could contemplate.

Abouaf's men followed them, goading their horses towards them. These horses were far less beautiful than the least beautiful horse of our camp. But horses they were and it filled me with shame.

The tumult did not cease to grow. To the screams of women, to the howling of animals, to the clamour of that infernal gallop of Abouaf's horde was now added the sinister clanking of scimitars that crossed each other.

Even the skies shied away from witnessing this slaughter. The stars seemed farther than on other nights and glowed feebly, as if in sadness. I felt that the sky was hiding herself behind the deep gloom, there to weep, and I realised that very soon I too would weep. The terror was now so great that the goats started to flee. They crossed the camp, all huddled together, blind and affrighted, spilling calabashes, breaking goglets, uprooting the stakes of tents that crumbled one after another.

The camels were fleeing too, huddled together, blind and affrighted. But

Abouaf's men laughed the laughter of men possessed and followed the fleeing camels to capture them.

We did not move—neither Ourida the Rose nor I. We made no movement from in front of Mohammed's tent and were watching the disaster without a word. I believe we wanted our Master to find us where he had left us after he had vanquished Abouaf. Perhaps we wanted to show him that we had not been cowards and had watched over his battle.

How Abouaf's men failed to notice us, Ourida the Rose, so tall and of such rare colour, and me, the Lord of Horses, is a question that I often asked myself. And then I found the answer: we were protected by Allah.

So Ourida the Rose and I, we watched the horde of Abouaf break up. In places the fray was so tangled that we could not distinguish our men from the plundering men of Abouaf the Terrible.

The horses, my brothers, spurred on by their riders, hurled themselves against each other, their heads and flanks colliding as in a hurricane of madness. Mohammed's companions wielded scimitars invoking the name of Allah. Abouaf's men invoked the name of Allah too but added to it insults and abuses and the voice of carnage urged them on.

The ground was already littered with the dead. That a creature could die, I had never imagined. And this picture of death pained me more than anything I can say. Life had gone out of all these bodies. These very men, a few hours ago, were laughing and eating and caring for their wives and children and their animals and singing praises of Allah. Even Abouaf's men had laughed and eaten and loved their women. And even if they had done all this for reasons that were not good, they had enjoyed life nevertheless. Now they were no more.

Ourida the Rose bent her long neck towards me to stop me from seeing. But I told her:

"No, Ourida, don't do that. I must see that I may learn."

"It is well," she replied. "You are proud and brave. You are the Lord of Horses. Look horror in the eye and the dread of horror shall pass from you."

The camp was in flames. One of the plunderers had, no doubt, put fire to a fallen tent. And now a lot of noise sprang forth. The beasts that had not yet run away started to flee in all directions, helter-skelter.

The sky was blacker than ever. It was as if the Garden of Allah had been closed and no man had the right to enter into it. I felt that we were abandoned. I wanted to see Mohammed again and I wanted to tell him that we were all alone, that we had lost all.

And just then I spotted him. He was riding Daughter of the Wind, my mother. And his face shone bright, not merely because the fire crackled a few steps away from him but also, I realised at once, because the spirit of Justice had come into him. I thought then how wrong it was of me to lose hope. Nothing was lost. We were not alone. The Garden of Allah was not closed.

Mohammed was fighting three very ugly men. I guessed one of them to be Abouaf. He had a long dirty beard and when he opened his mouth I could see his sharp teeth glitter like sharp tusks. Ourida told me the names of the other two. They were brothers of Abouaf: Ozouf the Cruel and Tatouf the Merciless.

In spite of the wickedness that marked their faces, I was sure that Mohammed would not take long to come out victorious. If he killed them the camp would be saved. The women would be able to take care of the wounded, and the men who had survived without a wound could go out in search of the lost animals. Life would start as before, in calm and in gladness.

And then, because of the fire that fiercely raged, my mother, Daughter of the Wind, suddenly reared. I saw her big eyes where danced the red shadows of flames and her eye was sad. Her lips were covered with foam. My mother, she was not afraid. Perhaps she knew better than I, perhaps even better than Mohammed, that at *that* moment everything was going to be decided. She flung herself on the horses of Abouaf and his brothers.

And I saw her collapse, her breast pierced through.

And I saw Mohammed too collapse, his eyes wide open and throat agape.

And I heard Abouaf the Terrible and Ozouf the Cruel and Tatouf the Merciless laugh with all their might and insult the death of my mother and the death of my Master.

They looked at their blood-stained scimitars. They could not see me. They saw nothing. I flung myself on them like lightning. They did not know when they died. Perhaps they did not even feel my hoofs trampling their faces. They did not know that it was the "sacred wrath" that had struck them down.

"My sacred wrath," Mehhi used to call me. And Mehhi now had disappeared with Meryem. The camp was engulfed in flames. The corpses had started to burn. And the wounded did not even have the strength to move out of the scene of our ruin. Here and there, smoke was going up, in a sign of mourning as it were.

I came back to Ourida the Rose who had allowed me to avenge my mother's and my Master's death.

"Come, Saïd," she murmured. "The Noblest and the Most Pure, come."

And turning our backs to this horrible spectacle, we left the camp and plunged slowly into the night.

Above us, I saw the stars reappear. And it was then that I started to weep.

(To be continued)

ARCHAKA & CHRISTINE

(Translated by Maurice from the original French)

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Word as Revelation—Names of Gods. By *Ram Swarup*. Publishers: Impex India, 2/18, Ansari Road, New Delhi-110 002. Pp. : XVI+160. H. bd. Ed. 1980. Price : Rs. 75/-

“WHAT is honour? a word. What is that word, honour? Air. A trim reckoning!” pooh-poohs Falstaff, the funniest of Shakespeare’s comic creations. Another admirable and lovely character by the same dramatist, Juliet, cautions her lover Romeo, “O, be some other name! What’s in a name? that which we call a rose, By any other name would smell as sweet.” But to Ram Swarup, an original thinker and spiritual seeker, ‘word’ is everything and ‘name’ is something great. His present work, which is an outcome of the study and exploration of the mystic path, particularly that of the Upanishads, Patanjala and Buddhist yogas and the medieval Indian saints of both *nirguna* and *saguna* traditions, glorifies the ‘word’ and the ‘name’.

A foreign missionary, when he came to India, jotted down his first impressions in his notebook and the first line read: “When a pious Hindu opens his mouth, only the names of Gods come out.” The religious man, with a gift of expression, again and again, has sung of Gods and divine life and his idea of the good and the beautiful in sublime speech. This sublime speech, these inspired words, he has treasured as his veritable heritage, his Vedas. But in the passage of time, man’s thought-habits and speech-mores change. And because of this change of meanings, the inspired words become difficult to understand.

The Vedas, humanity’s oldest extant scripture, remain forever, in spite of the sundry interpretations both medieval and modern, a Sphinx’s riddle; and the adventurous Swarup, like Oedipus, attempts to make some sense out of it. He places before us two questions : “Can we understand the mentality of the seers of the Vedas by studying their language? Or can we understand the import of their language by entering into the state of their mind?” Plato believes: “Hard is the knowledge of the good, and names are a great part of that knowledge.” The purpose of this book is “to understand that aspect of the language in which it incarnates the higher reaches of mind and expresses the deeper truths of the heart”.

The first part begins with the author’s inquiry into the nature of language. Following in the footsteps of Socrates who believes that speech should be broken up into its elemental constituent sounds that have different expressive values, the author takes us along to have a close look at the speech-sounds of the language. He provides us with abundant information regarding the vowels, consonants, letters and sounds in four different languages, namely, English, classical Sanskrit, Chinese and Japanese. With the intention of making all sorts of readers understand his point, fundamentals like the definition of phoneme, the number of speech-sounds in any language, he hints at the grouping of sounds and the formation of vowels and consonants.

Taking the well-developed Hindu theory of Speech, *Vāk*, for examination, he

discusses first what the modern scientists have to say about speech and then explains the four levels of speech of increasing subtlety—*vaikhari*, *madhyamā*, *paśyanti* and *parā*—enumerated by the Indian sages. A scholarly study of concrete things like car, telephone, Aeronaut, etc. is made and the ways of naming things are admirably explicated. This lively study further takes us to words in Economics, names of classes or epithets. While elucidating his point—“when we meet objects we give them names after their most striking quality”—he says, “the howling sound of owl, the *pi, pi* sound of pigeon, the noisy flight of partridge and the crowing sound made by the crow earned them their names”. But the reader will be tempted to ask: “Does the crow crow or caw?” In the ‘funny English language’ (the phrase is from G.B. Shaw), “The cock crows and the crow caws.”

Explaining what is known as ‘etymology’, the author draws certain examples from languages like Arabic, Persian and English to show that they contain words that are inflectional in character. “Are words nothing more than labels?” The chapter on Synonym begins with this question. “An object invokes more than one suggestion and conveys more than one idea. Therefore, it calls for more than one name to describe it. No object is simple enough to convey only the idea to be designated by only one root-word. Therefore generally a language has several words to describe several ideas suggested by the same object.” To illustrate his point, Swarup takes words like river, fire and many more, traces their roots and focuses light on their multiple meanings.

The discussion now takes a new turn on the multiple levels of meanings and their underlying unity, for a word exists simultaneously at several levels, the physical, the psychological, the moral and the spiritual. To show that the meanings of a word co-exist and interpenetrate, he makes a fruitful study of vocables like stone, flower, fire and water. The fact that what is *da* to Prajapati, is *datta*, *damayata* and *daya-dhvam* to men, Gods and asuras respectively is well known. The same things appear differently to different people. The author adds, while explicating this point, “The word ‘night’ means one thing to a thief, another to lovers waiting for their tryst and yet another to a saint or a devotee. They tend to become symbols of a larger reality.”

Probing into language, the author points out that a language can be approached in two ways: a) from the side of the world and its objects and b) from the side of the mind. Man himself, according to Indian thought, is conceived as mind, which is considered to be made up of many principles and observed as functioning on many levels. Though these principles have been indicated by different names in the long history of Indian thought and yoga, they can be reduced to three: *indriya* (senses), *manas* (the organ of perception) and *buddhi* (intellect) and these taken together are known as *antahkaraṇa*, the internal organs of cognition. The idea that ‘a word has to stand for an object, a feeling, an idea, a truth of the spirit and the process of enlargement continues without a stop’ is presented systematically in the *Sāṃkhya* philosophy, which gives us a unified and ordered theory of all knowledge and meanings and shows us how the physical and the physiological meanings are held in the affectional and

how the affectional and the sensuous in the conceptual; the last in turn is held in the intellectual. *Sāṃkhya* also provides simultaneously for two opposite movements. It shows how consciousness moves from the physical to the psychological and the intellectual and also from the intellectual to the psychological and the physical. Many illustrations are furnished to justify this point.

The author explains further the three different qualities of the mind (*tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*), the two levels (*bhumi*) of purity, figuring in the functions of the mind (*karma-bhūmi* and *dhyāna-bhūmi*). His attempt to make clear his statement—"However exalted a word may appear to be, from whatever organ of the mind it may originate, it too is capable of a lower meaning put into it by the desire-mind"—is an exquisite example of Swarup's mastery in observation and linguistic formulation.

Looking from another angle, the author asks several questions like "If words have higher meanings and holiness, where do these meanings reside? Why are they not so self-evident?", and proceeds to answer. The three bodies of a word (physical, subtle and causal), the two main angles (*śabda* and *artha*) from which the word has been studied; what Shakespeare and the Bible have done to the English language; and what Tagore, Gandhi, Chandidasa, Tulsidasa and Vyasa have done to their respective languages are brought to light. And in the first part of the book, the author concludes, "Meditation is a great key for opening up the deeper meanings of moral and spiritual truths. Whether one meditates on physical elements or directly on moral and psychic truths, the results are the same. For the two paths meet and soon both become truth of the spirit."

In the second part of the book, the author's research turns to Hindu religious thought, particularly to its ancient Vedic expressions. His aim is to find out how it embodies the higher meanings and how it mirrors the higher quest and the higher life. The study of the ancient literature of the Hindus, particularly the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Mahabharata shows that: a) they make a very large use of concrete images, b) the spiritual consciousness of the race is expressed in terms of the plurality of Gods and c) all Gods invariably have a number of names to their credit. In this connection, questions like "In what way did familiar objects like the Sun, the Moon, the Sky assume divine forms? Why are the images in the Vedas and the Upanishads concrete?" are cleverly answered. After a brief discussion on the validity of concrete images Swarup opines that since the Vedas and the Upanishads contain secret teachings, there is only one path to their knowledge—the path of love and sacrifice, which is not an easy one. According to Hindu thought, the names of Gods are not names of external beings. These are names of the truths of man's own highest self. So the knowledge of the epithets of Gods is a form of self-knowledge. A chance is given to acquaint ourselves with some of the names of the Vedic Gods like Fire, Water, Night, Indra and many more. The discussion leads to the problem of one God and many Gods. The Hindus do not call their Gods either 'One' or 'Many'. According to them, what they worship is One Reality, *ekam sat*, which is differently named. The Hindus' approach is neither polytheistic nor henotheistic.

nor monotheistic but advaitic. They worship One Reality, neither many Gods nor one God. A scholarly discussion on monotheism, polytheism and other terms relating to God follows and the author arrives at the result that the two expressions—monotheism, polytheism—try to convey the truths of a higher consciousness and that the Names of Gods are, at heart, the truths of man's own higher life.

Swarup now considers the post-Vedic Gods and their names with the purpose of making the discussion more comprehensive and also help towards deep self-discovery. Since every God has a thousand names, the author meticulously chooses by way of illustration only four deities—Vishnu, Shiva, Surya and Ganga—and gives their more important names to show how they interpenetrate each other and how they embody man's psychic truths and meanings. This illuminating study, undertaken for the better understanding of man and his Gods and his higher life, yields the following fruitful result: Each God is a) omnipresent; b) full of valour, vigour and beauty; c) the source, the embodiment and the secret self or truth of everything; d) combines all the opposites and has also the qualities of knowledge, light, askesis, joy and truthful resolve; is hence a great teacher, protector and saviour; e) the great healer and bearer of all gifts to his worshippers and finally f) the Great Question, the Key to all Answers, the Great Exposition of everything. All these points make one point clear : "The Deity that is worshipped under different names is the same. The Godhead exists fully and indivisibly in each name." The author deserves praise for illustrating his points aptly and interestingly. But the fanatics might not stomach a particular image in this connection. The image of the philanderer, when one is talking of Gods, sounds somewhat crude, though no better image would drive home the author's point.

Coming to the concluding portion of the book—the shaping and transforming power of the Names of Gods—Swarup leaves us a valuable message, "Gods' names are meant for meditation; and through meditation for assumption and assimilation of something of their higher meaning and powers. If one meditates on these names, they not only reveal their deeper meanings but also tend to shape one in their image." Thus advocating meditation, the author feels sad for the world that suffers from exploitation, cruelty, bestiality and pollution because the Gods have withdrawn. All this is because we are not meditating on the names of Gods properly. And there is a remedy for the curse—"The Gods could be invoked again, by the power of aspiration, askesis and meditation." One remembers the words of Colton : "Men will wrangle for religion; write for it; fight for it; die for it; anything but—live for it."

If "Books are the legacies that geniuses leave to mankind, to be delivered from generation to generation, as presents to those that are yet unborn" (Addison), this book doubtless is of that sort. Although the price and the subject treated, are beyond the reach of the common reader, Swarup's scholarly work is worthy enough to find a place on the shelves of the libraries, both private and public.

P. RAJA