

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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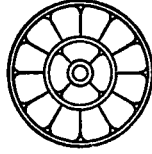
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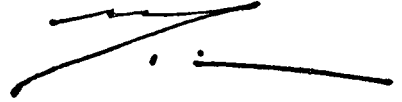


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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PEACE

A PRONOUNCEMENT BY THE MOTHER ON 24 APRIL 1955

It is only by the growth and establishment of the consciousness of human unity, that a true and lasting peace can be achieved upon earth. All means leading towards this goal are welcome, although the external ones have a very limited effect; however the most important, urgent and indispensable of all, is a transformation of the human consciousness itself, an enlightenment of and conversion of its working.

Meanwhile some exterior steps may be taken usefully, and the acceptance of the principle of double nationality is one of them. The main objection to it has always been the awkward position in which those who have adopted a double nationality would be in case the two countries were at war.

But all those who sincerely want peace must understand that to think of war, to speak of war, to foresee war is to open the door to it.

On the contrary, the larger the number of people who have a vital interest in the abolition of war, the more effective the chances towards a stable peace, until the advent of a new consciousness in man makes of war an impossibility.

THE DIVINE INFLUENCE—THE SUPREME GUIDANCE

SOME HOME-TRUTHS FROM THE MOTHER

To feel hurt by what others do or think or say is always a sign of weakness and proof that the whole being is not exclusively turned towards the Divine, not under the divine influence alone. And then, instead of bringing with oneself the divine atmosphere made of love, tolerance, understanding, patience, it is one's ego that throws itself out, in response to another's ego, with stiffness and hurt feelings, and the disharmony is aggravated. The ego never understands that the Divine has different workings in different people and that to judge things from one's own egoistic point of view is a great mistake bound to increase the confusion. What we do with passion and intolerance cannot be divine, because the Divine works only in peace and harmony.

*

You are distressed because instead of listening to the voice of your soul, you have accepted the suggestions of vulgar minds and obscure consciousnesses who see ugliness and impurity everywhere because they are not in contact with the psychic purity.

Refuse to listen to these wrong suggestions, turn deliberately to the Divine and rekindle your faith in His Supreme Guidance.

4 April 1934

GOD'S WILL

TWO REMINDERS BY THE MOTHER

It is quite wrong to go on brooding about the past. The true attitude is to remember that nothing happens but by God's will and to submit to that will quietly.¹

*

It is not to your feelings about death that I object, because I know for certain that one dies only at the moment decreed by the Supreme. To fear or to wish death in fact makes no difference; when your time is come you go, according to the Will of the Lord; and His Will is necessarily the wisest.²

¹ The Centenary Ed., Vol. 14, p. 254.

² From Huta's Copyright book, *White Roses*, of the Mother's letters to her, reproduced in facsimile. The book has been printed by Tata Press (Bombay) and has won the First Prize in the recent Books Exhibition at Madras.

CORRECTION

In reply to the editor's inquiry, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library has sent the following information:

“The statement entitled ‘*The Divine, Self-giving and the World*’, which was published in the *March Mother India* as a writing of Sri Aurobindo, is in fact by the Mother. The French original first appeared in *Quelques Paroles, Quelques Prières* (1939), its English translation in *Words of the Mother* (1940). The reason that you found the translation rather Aurobindonian in style is no doubt because it was revised by Sri Aurobindo; an early typescript of the translation has corrections in his hand. It is not known whether it is a revision of his own translation or someone else's.”

DREAMS

A TALK OF THE MOTHER ON 13 APRIL 1955

Sweet Mother, sometimes we dream of ordinary things, but sometimes we have dreams which are not...

Yes, that's what Sri Aurobindo says, doesn't he? He says that all dreams are not ordinary dreams, associations of memories, that there are dreams which are revelations. He describes all kinds and types of dreams here.

Mother, does this depend on the day? If one is more conscious in the day, one will have dreams of a good kind?

It is very difficult to say on what it depends.

It happens that when you need to dream of something, so that it may enlighten you on a point of your nature, give you an indication about the effort you must make, it comes.

It depends perhaps on a consciousness that watches over everyone; and provided one is just a little open, it can guide him and give sure indications.

I think there is an entire category of dreams which are absolutely commonplace, useless and simply tiring, which one can avoid if, before going to sleep, one makes a little effort of concentration, tries to put himself in contact with what is best in him, by either an aspiration or a prayer, and to sleep only after this is done... even, if one likes, try to meditate and pass quite naturally from meditation into sleep without even realising it... Usually there is a whole category of dreams which are useless, tiring, which prevent you from resting well—all this might be avoided. And then, if one has truly succeeded well in his concentration, it is quite possible that one may have, at night, not exactly dreams but experiences of which one becomes conscious and which are very useful indications, as I just told you, indications about questions you asked yourself and of which you did not have the answers; or else a set of circumstances where you ought to take a decision and don't know what decision to take; or else some way of being of your own character which does not show itself to you clearly in the waking consciousness—because you are so accustomed to it that you are not aware of it—but something that harms your development and obscures your consciousness, and which appears to you in a symbolic revelatory dream, and you become clearly aware of the thing, then you can act upon it.

It depends not on what one was during the day, because this doesn't always have much effect upon the night, but on the way one has gone to sleep. It is enough just to have at the moment of sleeping a sincere aspiration that the night, instead of being a darkening of the consciousness, may be a help to understand something, to have an experience; and then, though it doesn't come always, it has a chance of coming.

There is also, you know, a whole lot of activities of the night which one doesn't remember at all. Sometimes when one has awakened quite slowly and quietly, when one hasn't jumped up while awakening, when one wakes up quite gently, quite slowly, without stirring, one has a vague impression of something that has happened which has left an imprint on one's consciousness—you have your own way of waking up—particular, sometimes even strange. And so if you remain very quiet and observe attentively, without moving, you will notice a kind of half-memory of an activity that took place at night, and if you remain concentrated on it, still motionless for some time, suddenly it may come back like that, like something that appears from behind a veil, and you can get hold of the tail of a dream. When you hold the tail—just a little even—when you hold the tail, you pull it, like this, very gently, and it comes. But you must be very quiet and must not move. And usually these dreams are very interesting; these activities are very instructive.

One does lots and lots of things at night which one doesn't know, and if one learns, you see, when one becomes conscious, one can begin to have control. Before being conscious you have no control at all. But when you begin to be conscious, you can also begin to have a control. And then if you have control of your activities of the night, you can sleep much better; for the fact that when you wake up you are often at least as tired as when going to bed and have a feeling of lassitude shows that you do any number of useless things during the night, you tire yourself running around in the vital worlds or moving in the mind in a frantic activity. So when you get up you feel tired.

Well, once you have the control you can stop that completely... stop it before going to sleep... make yourself like a vast sea, that is, it is completely calm and still and vast... well, you can make your mind like that, vast, calm, like a flat, motionless surface; then your sleep is excellent.

Of course, here too it is a question of people going in their sleep to places of the vital worlds which are very bad, and then, when they return, sometimes they are more than tired, at times they are ill, or they are absolutely exhausted. This is because they were in bad places and had a fight. But this surely has something to do with the state of consciousness during the waking hours. If, for example, you have been angry during the day, you see, there are many chances that at night you will be in a vital fight for some time. This happens.

*

Many dreams are just phenomena of the brain, that is, of things which go into activity again under some stimulus or other and bring back the same pictures, sometimes exactly the same, sometimes with slightly different associations and connections; so there are differences.

At times some dreams are repeated, you know, often dreams which are lessons or indications, dreams which announce something to you or want to draw your at-

tention to something or put you on your guard against something. Very often it happens that they recur either at brief intervals or at a certain distance. And usually it means that the first time the impression was very faint, one doesn't remember it well. The third time or even after the second, one has a vague impression already: "Why! this isn't the first time", when one sees it. Then the third time it is clear, precise, absolute, and one remembers: "Ah, I have already seen this thrice!"

Usually these dreams are extremely interesting and give you precise indications: either about something to be done or something not to be done, or about precautions to be taken or perhaps about your relations with someone, what you should expect to receive from a person, how you should act towards him or in certain circumstances.

You see it is quite a small detail, a very small detail which recurs in this way; sometimes it comes immediately: one night, the second night; sometimes it takes weeks to recur.

Sweet Mother, to profit by one's nights, to have good dreams, is it necessary that one should have done nothing very intellectual late at night, or that one should not eat too late at night or do anything external?

This depends on each one; but certainly if you want to sleep quietly at night, you must not study till just before sleeping. If you read something which requires concentration, your head will continue to work and so you won't sleep well. When the mind continues working one doesn't rest.

The ideal, you see, is to enter an integral repose, that is, immobility in the body, perfect peace in the vital, absolute silence in the mind—and the consciousness goes out of all activity to enter into *Sachchidananda*. If you can do this, then when you wake up you get up with the feeling of an extraordinary power, a perfect joy. But it is not very, very easy to do this. It can be done; this is the ideal condition.

Usually it is not at all like this, and most of the time almost all the hours of sleep are wasted in some kind of disordered activities; your body begins to toss about in your bed, you give kicks, you turn, you start, you turn this way and that, and then you do this (*gesture*) and then this... So you don't rest at all.

TOWARDS THE DIVINE

LIGHT ON THE PATH BY SRI AUROBINDO

THERE is no reason for your troubles other than this readiness to listen to their knock and open the door. If you desire only the Divine, there is an absolute certitude that you will reach the Divine, but all these questionings and repinings at each moment only delay and keep an impeding curtain before the heart and the eyes. For at every step, when one makes an advance, the opposite forces will throw these doubts like a rope between the legs and stop one short with a stumble—it is their *métier* to do that... One must say, “Since I want only the Divine, my success is sure, I have only to walk forward in all confidence and His own Hand will be there secretly leading me to Him by His own way and at his own time.” That is what you must keep as your constant mantra. Anything else one may doubt but that he who desires only the Divine shall reach the Divine is a certitude and more certain than two and two make four. That is the faith every sadhak must have at the bottom of his heart, supporting him through every stumble and blow and ordeal. It is only false ideas still casting their shadows on your mind that prevent you from having it. Push them aside and the back of the difficulty will be broken.

*

Make more of the good experiences that come to you; one experience of the kind is more important than the lapses and failures. When it ceases, do not repine or allow yourself to be discouraged, but be quiet within and aspire for its renewal in a stronger form leading to a still deeper and fuller experience.

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of March 1981)

September 18, 1935

I am still in the 'slough of Despond'. Really, Sir, no belief or faith in effort at all. I will choose the mulish revolting way and that would be the easiest. What do you say?

I AM inclined to say "Pshaw!" Have more faith, not less.

Apart from this, I have observed that whenever I communicate an experience to you, the next moment it stops. I hope my Guru is not in some way connected with this! I remember a story of my childhood. I was dining with my father when I was obliged to go out. I turned round and said, "Papa, see you don't eat my fish!" Well, fathers may not, but Gurus?

That is a thing that we used often to note formerly when sadhana was in the early stages—viz. to speak of something experienced was to stop it. It is why many Yogis make it a rule never to speak of their experiences. But latterly it had altogether ceased to be like that. Why are you starting that curious old stunt all over again?

No, Sir, I don't eat your fish. I have oceans of fish at my disposal and have no need to consume your little sprats. It is Messers. H.F. (hostile forces) who do that—the Dasyus or robbers. You display your fine new pen-knife and they say "Ah! he is fond of his fine new pen-knife, is he? We'll show him!" and they filch it at the first opportunity.

Do tell us how the Supermind will make us great sadhaks overnight. We are hanging all our hopes on its "tail", which you said was descending.

If you expect to become supramental overnight, you are confoundedly mistaken. The tail will keep the H.F. at a respectful distance and flap at you until you consent to do things in a reasonable time instead of taking 200 centuries over each step as you seem to do just now. More than that I refuse to say. What is a reasonable time in the supramental view of things I leave you to discover.

Your Overmental Force seems to have utterly failed in cases of people like us. Where then is the chance of this Mr. Supramental who is only a step higher?

Overmind is obliged to respect the freedom of the individual—including his freedom to be perverse, stupid, recalcitrant and slow. Supermind is not merely a step higher than Overmind—it is beyond the line, that is a different consciousness and power beyond the mental limit.

Please don't think of what India is going to do with her Independence. Give her that first, and then let her decide her fate for herself. Independence anyhow—your Supermind will do the rest.

You are a most irrational creature. I have been trying to logicise and intellectualise you, but it seems in vain. Have I not told you that the independence [of India] is all arranged for and will evolve itself all right. Then what's the use of my bothering about that any longer? It's what she will do with her independence that is not arranged for—and so it is that about which I have to bother. To drag in the Supermind by the tail here is perfectly irrelevant. We have been talking all the time on an altogether infra-supramental basis—down down low in the intellect with an occasional illumined intuitive or overmental flash here and there. Be faithful to the medium, if you please. If you do not become perfectly and luminously logical and rational, how can you hope to become a candidate for the next higher stage even? Be a little practical and reasonable. ^

September 19, 1935

But when did I tell you, Sir, that I expect to become supramental overnight? Good gracious! Don't I realise that being an ass myself, it is not in my power to do so,—nor do I conjure up any such phantasms of hope to cross the 'Ass's Bridge'?

You said "Overnight", Sir, "Overnight". It was a logical inference from your desire to become a great sadhak overnight. In this remarkable correspondence I am not using intuition. I am proceeding strictly by mental (not supramental) reason and logic. A "great sadhak" in the supramental Yoga means a supramental—or ought to according to all rules of logic.

Asses seldom realise that. If they see a thistle on the other side, they try at once to go after it—so here again your logic fails.

You have admitted your failure in intellectualising me; now I am waiting to hear at any time the admission that all your attempts to make me a yogi seem to be in vain!

Perhaps that is because for the sheer fun of it I tried the impossible, intending not to succeed—because if you had really become luminously intellectual and rational, why, you would have been so utterly surprised at yourself that you would have sat down open-mouthed on the way and never moved a step farther.

From all my fulminations, please don't understand that I am craving for the Supermind or the Absolute. I just want an inner calm and to remain unshaken like Lord Shiva himself, in all circumstances.

And yet you say you are not after the Absolute!!!

About the Supermind, I only wanted to know how this gentleman is going to help us. Minimising our depressions? Breaking our difficulties? Keeping off the waves of the subconscious? etc., etc.?

He can do any or all of these things. But we can leave him to fix his programme after he has got on his feet (subsequent to the bump of the descent) and has had time to look about him.

I know my nature too well to hope for any Supermind, Overmind or any other Mind—overnight. Still you say that I am “an irrational, illogical, impractical creature”!

Well, but you talked of becoming a great sadhak (if not supramental) overnight. So unless you withdraw that—

Some people say that the Supermind will establish a direct connection with the psychic and spur it to come to the front quicker.

Well, it can do that, but it is not bound to do that only and take no other way.

In your Yoga the main issue seems to be to bring out the psychic to the front, after which everything becomes easy.

Not quite that. The psychic is the first of two transformations necessary—if you have the psychic transformation it facilitates immensely the other, i.e. the transformation of the ordinary human into the higher spiritual consciousness—otherwise one is likely to have either a slow and dull or exciting but perilous journey.

When I said apropos of India's Independence, that your Supermind will do the rest, I only meant that before India has any chance of becoming free, the Supermind will descend and guide India's destiny.

How do you know it will do that? It may simply look on, twist its moustache and say “Ahem”!

I would like to report that my head is very heavy, painful, body feverish and a painful boil in the nose.

Is it the result of your mind bumblebeeing too much around the tail of the Supramental?

You said yesterday that the Overmind is obliged to respect the freedom of the individual. Do you imply then that the Supermind will do no such thing?

Of course I do! It will respect only the Truth of the Divine and the truth of things.

I send you a photograph with the note-book. What do you think of this snap—a Mussolini gone morbid? Anyhow, it looks as if you have at last succeeded in putting some intellect in this brain-box of mine!

Good heavens, what a gigantic forehead they have given you! The Himalayas and the Atlantic in one mighty brow! also, with the weird supramental light upon it! Well, well, you ought to be able to cross the Ass's bridge with that. Or do you think the bridge will break down under its weight?

September 20, 1935

When one has a mighty pen, Sir, one can wield it in any way one likes. However, I hope you intend to succeed in making me a yogi not out of sheer fun!

I hope so.

But, really, Sir, I never expected you to take my "overnight" so literally. As a matter of fact I did not mean anything precise and particular. You could have allowed for a little exuberance in metaphor, surely!

Don't understand your deep expressions—you did not mean that it would happen rapidly and suddenly? "Overnight" in English means that, if you had some extraordinary supramental meaning (beyond the mental and out of the human time-sense) in your mind, it is a different matter, and then I express my awe-struck, heartfelt, flabbergasted regrets, pleading only as excuse my inability to grasp such a deep and novel use of the language. May I ask, very humbly, what you did mean, if not a sudden and rapid development into great sadhaks?

Is it because you use only the mental? Suppose we use your expression "Very near the tail of the Supramental" in our human time-sense?

I supposed that you would take it as a metaphor or as anyone reading English in the ordinary way would do. No need of a superhuman time-sense or timeless sense to interpret the phrase, although it seems it is needed in order to understand your "overnight".

I am not very clear about the transformation of the psychic. Doesn't it mean a process of change from a gross lower nature to a fine and higher one? But the psychic is a part of the Divine and hence always pure, noble and high. Do you mean a greater evolution?

I fear, I shall have to stop writing altogether, since even the simplest things I write are so unintelligible even to the few "intellectuals" of the Ashram. I never said anything about a "transformation of the psychic". I have always written about a "psychic transformation" of the nature which is a very different matter. I have sometimes written of it as a psychicisation of the nature. The psychic is in the evolution, part of human being, its divine part—so a psychicisation will not carry one beyond the present evolution but will make the being ready to respond to all that comes from the Divine or Higher Nature and unwilling to respond to the Asura, Rakshasa, Pishacha or Animal in the being or to any resistance of the lower nature which stands in the way of the divine change.

You have said that the psychic being is at this stage a flame, not a spark. Does it apply to the human species as a whole?

I simply meant that there was a psychic being there and not merely a psychic principle as at the beginning of the evolution. The difference between one and the other is one of evolution. The psychic being is more developed in some but the soul-principle is the same in all.

By the way, can't you be a little less indefinite than saying "evolve itself out" regarding India's independence? When the Yogi B. Babu was asked about the date of India's Independence he replied, "Not within 50 years." Good Lord! Can you give a more definite date or is it again a 'play of forces'?

I am not a prophet like B. Babu. All I can say is that the coming of Independence is now sure (as anyone with any political sense at all can see). As you do not accept my "play of forces" explanation of things, I can say no more than that, for that is all that can be said by the "human time-sense".

I had a temperature of 100° all day. Arjava threatens that people will lose all faith in doctors unless I cure myself quickly. I fear the Supramental gave me some severe lashes with its tail!

Not at all. You are simply "not well"—the reason you as a doctor ought to discover. Unless you have committed a secret sin (of one kind or another) and the temperature is a foretaste of the heat hereafter. But that also is for you to see.

Pushpa doesn't seem to be willing to oil her machine with olive oil!

She wants, I suppose, to rely "only on the Mother's force". I suppose she does not like medicines.

September 21, 1935

Evidently then, you speak of two transformations—one psychic, and the other human into something else.

But, hang it all, the psychic is part of the human nature or of ordinary nature—it has been there even before the human began. So your plea does not stand for a moment.

The psychic takes thousands of lives to evolve and turn towards the Divine. Is the involution also a similar process, or is it one single descent all at once into the Inconscient ?

No, certainly not. The involution is of the Divine in the Inconscience and it is done by the interposition of intermediate planes (Overmind etc., mind, vital—then the plunge into the Inconscient which is the origin of matter). But all that is not a process answering to the evolution in the inverse sense—for there is no need for that, but a gradation of consciousness which is intended to make the evolution upwards possible.

By that cursed phrase "being a great sadhak overnight", as I said, I didn't mean anything precise. There might have been something in the subconscious, perhaps an idea about X being a great sadhak.

There you go again! "Great sadhaks", "advanced sadhaks", "big sadhaks" like X, Y and Z! When shall I hear the last of these ego-building phrases which I have protested against times without number? And you object to being beaten!

I regret to find that this phrase has led to so much froth. If you take such things seriously you will find many occasions for beating me and one day in sheer despondency you might utter, "Useless! useless! All pains, all efforts in vain, in vain!"

It looks like it! "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit" saith the Preacher! I fear all Preachers have to come to that in the end—especially the vanity of correspondence.

What 'secret sin' did you insinuate? Joke or jest? Well, a few days ago I cooked a little 'khichuri' here, but that is hardly a sin!

That's all? Only "a little khichuri"? Umph! The transformation seems to have begun already.

I am much tempted to quote to you a very fragmentary touching picture of your brother Monomohan: "Dressed in a grey suit, tall, well-built—the face mysterious like the night, dreamy and tired eyes, Manomohan came to the class and all were spell-bound. A cursed poet fallen from the heaven of beauty onto our dusty earth. He used to read poetry and his sad eyes flamed up in delight. The class would come to an end like a dream."

If any part of you remained human, you would have shed two drops on reading this. But there seems to be some similarity between you and him as regards charming the students by an overwhelming personality.

Not even a fragment of a drop! Monomohan had a personality, but it was neither overwhelming nor sweetly pathetic. So even with this piece of honeyed rhetoric the tears refuse to rise.

September 25, 1935

I understand your protesting against "great" or "big" sadhaks; but why against "advanced" sadhaks? It is a fact that some are more advanced than others.

Advanced indeed! Pshaw! Because one is 3 inches ahead of another, you must make classes of advanced and non-advanced? Advanced has the same puffing egoistic resonance as "great" or "big". It leads to all sorts of stupidities, rajasic self-appreciating egoism in some, tamasic self-depreciating egoism in others, round-eyed wonderings why X an advanced sadhak, one 3 inches ahead of Y, should stumble, tumble or fumble while Y, 3 inches behind X, still plods heavily and steadily on, etc. etc. Why, sir, the very idea in X that he is an advanced sadhak (like the Pharisee "I thank thee, O Lord, that I am not as other unadvanced disciples") would be enough to make him fumble, stumble, and tumble. So no more of that, sir, no more of that.

September 26, 1935

T says I leave the smell of medicine on the lap of the Mother which she has to breathe every day. Perhaps I smell of that since I come straight from the Hospital. If it is nauseating to Mother and others, I think I should change before coming to Pranam.

Mother smelt the hospital fragrance in you but she does not mind at all, it does not disturb her. As for others, well, I leave it to you. Some are pernicky; some are not, but I don't know if any others go into the first category.

September 27, 1935

S's abrasion is following quite a normal course. The wound is perfectly clean and healthy. He wants it to take a speedy, supernormal course, but we have no means to do that; it is your business.

Perhaps S has doubts about what the Doctors may be doing with him, just as you have doubts about what the Divine may be doing with him—hence some nervousness: Better or worse? Where the deuce is the progress? When am I going to be healed? After centuries?

What is the first experience that the soul had in its descent?

Partial separation from the Divine and the Truth—these things at the back and no longer in front and everywhere; division; diminished sense of unity with all, stress growing on separate existence, separate viewpoint, separate initiation, aim, action.

You say that if the soul goes on with its Karma, it does not get liberation. But isn't liberation a consummation of the result of Karma, at least according to Buddhism?

Not that I know of, in the ordinary theory. Karma always produces fresh Karma; it is only the cut from Karma that produces liberation.

Buddhism seems to say that we are bound to the chain of Karma and so past Karma is always guiding our present and future. In that case would not Buddha's very attainment of Nirvana be due to his past Karma?

The only truth of that is that by the use of compassion and acts of compassion one is helped to become a Bodhisattwa—just as sattwic deeds and feelings help to become less murky with the Ignorance. But it is knowledge that liberates according to both Buddhism and Vedanta, not Karma.

Buddha did not concern himself with any play of forces.

Why should he? It was the play of sanskaras that interested him, the binding play of wrong ideas, and his whole aim was to get rid of that.

He seemed to have gone in for personal effort and struggle.

Yes, because individual liberation was his aim and for him God and Shakti did not exist—only the Permanent above and a mechanical chain of Karma below. To undo the chain of sanskaras that create the individual is the point; the individual is a knot

that must undo itself by disowning all that constitutes itself. The individual must undo it, because who else is going to do it for him? There isn't anybody. All else including the Gods are only other knots of sanskaras and no knot can undo another knot—each knot must undo itself. *Comprenez?*

Buddhist Yoga is an uphill business, like the Adwaita Vedanta. You have to do the whole thing off your own bat, and even Tota Puri, Ramakrishna's teacher in Adwaita, was after thirty years of sadhana far from his goal, so much so that he went off to the Ganges to drown himself there—only Ramakrishna and Kali interfered in a miraculous way; that at least is the story.

The Buddhist Church, however, as distinguished from the uncompromising theory of the thing, proved weak and admitted *saranam*¹ in Buddha as well as in the Dharma and the Sangha.

This implies that he did not "pump" his force into his disciples as you do into us.

Surely not. He would have considered it a wrong thing altogether—even if he had any idea about pumping force, which he probably never had. At least I never heard of his doing this operation. He might have given enlightenment [to his disciples], but I think only through *upades*²—not certainly by pumping light into them. An individual knot of sanskara can tell another how to dissolve itself, but where is the ground for a more direct interference? All that of course is only the conscious theory of Buddha's action. I won't swear that without meaning it he did not influence his disciples in more secret and subtle ways.

(To be continued)

¹ refuge

² advice and instruction

THE REVISED EDITION OF *THE FUTURE POETRY*

NEWLY WRITTEN OR CORRECTED MATTER

(Continued from the issue of March 1981)

A fair amount of revision was given to the first and second paragraphs, and light revision to the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the nineteenth chapter. The seventh paragraph was quite thoroughly revised and the next Arya paragraph significantly altered. Two entirely new paragraphs were written for insertion before and after the last-mentioned paragraph (which begins "Browning stands apart..."). The final paragraph has one slight change.

The revised version of the first two paragraphs is given in full:

CHAPTER XIX

The Victorian Poets

THE epoch associated in England with the name of Victoria was in poetry, like that of Pope and Dryden, an age of dominant intellectualism; but, unlike that hard and sterile period, it has been an imaginative, artistic intellectualism, touched with the greater and freer breath of modern thought and its wide interest and fullness of matter, not brass-bound in furbished and narrow bands of social ease and polite refinement, but alive, astir, capable of personal energy and inspiration, aesthetical in its refinements, above all not entirely satisfied with itself, but opened up to some mountain-top prospects, struck across by some moments of prophecy. But still whether we compare it with the inspirations from which it turned or with the inspiration which followed and replaced it, it is a depression, not a height, and without being either faultily faultless or splendidly null, as epochs of a too self-satisfied intellectual enlightenment tend to appear to be in the eyes of the more deeply thinking ages, it fails to satisfy, unlike the Roman Augustan, the French grand century, or even in its own kind the English Augustan. It leaves an impression of a too cramped fullness and a too level curiosity. It is a descent into a comfortable and pretty hollow or a well-cultured flatness between high, wild or beautiful mountain ranges behind and in front a great confused beginning of cliff and seashore, sands and rocks and breakers and magic of hills and sea-horizons. There is much in this work to admire, something here and there to stimulate, but only a little that lifts off the feet and carries to the summits of the poetic enthusiasm.

The descent from the uncertain but high elevations of the first romantic, half spiritual outbreak is very marked, baffling and sudden. This is not in the nature of a revolt, an energetic audacity of some new thing,—except for a moment in Swinburne,—but a change of levels, a transition to other more varied but less elevated interests,

the substitution of a more curious but less impetuous movement. The rich beauty of Keats is replaced by the careful opulent cultivated picturesqueness of Tennyson, the concentrated personal force of Byron by the many-sided intellectual robustness and energy of Browning, the intense Nature poetry and the strong and grave ethical turn of Wordsworth by the too intellectually conscious eye on Nature and the cultured moralising of Arnold, the pure ethereal lyricism of Shelley by Swinburne's turgid lyrical surge and all too self-conscious fury of foam-tossing sound, and in place of the supernatural visions of Blake and Coleridge we have the mediaeval glamour and languorous fields of dream of Rossetti and Morris. There is a considerable gain, but a deep loss; for this poetry has a more evolved richness, but in that greater richness a greater poverty. The gain is in fullness of a more varied use of language, a more conscious and careful art, a more informed and varied range of thought and interest; but the loss is in spiritual substance and the Pythian height of inspiration. There is a more steady working, but with it a clogged and heavier breath; a wealth of colour and nearer strain of thinking, but a lower flame of the spirit. This labour is assured and careful enough in its workmanship but, less inspired, it has a paucity of greatness and a too temperate impulsion.

In the fifth paragraph, the ninth sentence has one addition, the word "sometimes": [. . .] a taking, sometimes opulent and effective form.

The last sentence of the same paragraph (SABCL, Vol.9, p. 136, ll. 12-13) also has one addition:

The spirit is not filled and satisfied, much less uplifted, but the outer aesthetic mind is caught and for a time held captive.

The sixth paragraph has two small additions. In the fifth sentence (p. 136, l. 25) "gives" is altered to "could give":

[. . .] and that could give a scope for a very noble kind of poetry [. . .]

In the beginning of the next to the last sentence of the sixth paragraph, (p. 137, l. 13) the word "or" was inserted before "impassioned":

The poet has no meditative, no emotional or impassioned, no close or revealing grasp on life [. . .]

The revised version of the eighth paragraph is given in full below. It is followed by the new paragraph on Browning (printed, with three small errors, in the Centenary edition, pp. 139-40). Sri Aurobindo put a notation at the end of his manuscript of this paragraph indicating that the old paragraph on Browning ("Browning stands apart") was to be indented as a paragraph after the new one, and not run on as it has been in the Centenary edition (p. 140).

The old paragraph on Browning was revised significantly, and so is reprinted in

full in its proper position. It is followed by the new paragraph on Arnold, the Centenary text of which (p. 141) contains several errors, including one omitted phrase. The present editors have allowed themselves a few divergences from Sri Aurobindo's manuscript, the emendation of "reigns in" to "raise him" (p. 142, ll. 6-7) being the most significant. "Reigns in" makes no sense, and is clearly an error, a misunderstanding of Sri Aurobindo's dictation.

The only change in the last paragraph of the chapter is the alteration of "small" (p. 142, last word) to "less".

Here then is the full revised text of the last portion of the nineteenth chapter, starting with the seventh paragraph:

Tennyson is the most representative and successful poet of the Victorian epoch. Others who have not the same limitations, either fall below him in art or have a less sustained and considerable bulk and variety of work. Swinburne brings in into the poetry of the time elements to which the rest are strangers. He has a fire and passion and vehemence of song which is foreign to their temperament. He brings in too the continental note of denial, atheistic affirmation, sceptical revolt, passionate political idealism, but to these things he gives the Anglo-Celtic aggressiveness and violence, not the Latin sureness and clarity. He is a great lyricist, but like many of his contemporaries revels too much in device and virtuositities of form and his lyrical thought and sentiment turn easily to the dithyrambic note, are marred by excess, diffuseness, an inequality in the inspiration and the height and tone. But he has especially in his earlier poetry done work of a perfect and highly wrought beauty, a marvellous music. There is often a captivatingly rich and sensuous appeal in his language and not unoften [it] rises to a splendid magnificence. *Atalanta in Calydon, Dolores, Hertha, The Garden of Proserpine* and numerous other poems with the same perfect workmanship will always stand among the consummate achievements of English poetry. He is at his best one of the great lyrical singers; he writes in a flood and sweep and passion of melody: he is unique as a voice of all-round revolt, political, moral and of every kind, and in this lies his main significance. But he exhausts himself too soon; the reproach of emptiness can be brought against much of his work and his later voice becomes empty of significance but not of resonance. The quieter classical power of Arnold which voices the less confident search of a self-doubting scepticism, has lucidity, balance and grace, a fine though restricted and tenuous strain of thought and a deep and penetrating melancholy, the mediaevalism and aesthetic mysticism of Rossetti, the slow dreamy narrative of Morris which takes us to a refuge from the blattancy and ugliness of the Victorian environment into the gracious world of old story and legend, bring in each their own significance for the age and help towards that enrichment of the language of thought and artistic poetical feeling which is the chief work of this intervening time. They have all three this characteristic that they are studious artists,—it is significant that two of them are painters and decorative craftsmen,—who are concerned to give beauty and finish to the material of poetry rather than original poets with a large power of inspiration. Their range is small, but they

have brought into English poetry a turn for fine execution which is likely to be a long-abiding influence.

Among the Victorians Browning stands next to Tennyson in the importance of his poetic work and station as a representative figure of the age and creator. He surpasses him indeed in the mass and force and abundant variety of his work and the protean energy of his genius. His inventiveness of form and range and variety of subject are prodigious; he turns to every quarter of the world, seizes on every human situation, seems to be trying to exhaust a study of all possible human personalities and minds and characters and turns his eye on every age and period of history and many countries and all possible scenes and extract from them their meaning and their interest for the satisfaction of his universal curiosity and his living and inexhaustible interest in the vividness and abundance of the life of earth and man. He has an equal interest in the human mind and its turns of thinking of all kinds and its human aims, ambitions, seekings and wants to pursue it everywhere in its ramifications, in its starts of individuality, peaks, windings, even all manner of burrowings of thought and feeling, nothing human is foreign to his research and pursuit, all enters into this prodigious embrace. This gives to his poetry a range and unceasing interest and richness of attraction which surpasses immeasurably all that his contemporaries can give us in wideness of the call of life, even though in them the poetic height to which they draw us may be greater than his. In his mass of creation he can be regarded as the most remarkable in invention and wideness, if not the most significant builder and narrator of the drama of human life in his time.

Browning stands apart also from the other contemporary poets in the character and personality of his work. He is in many ways the very opposite of them all. He is the one robust and masculine voice among these artists, sceptics, idealists or dreamers, always original, vigorous, inexhaustible; with a great range of interests, a buoyant hold on life, a strong and clear eye, an assured belief and hope but no traditional conventionality, he alone adequately represents the curious, critical, eager, exploring mind of the age. He has depth and force and abundance of a certain kind of thought, which if not of the very first greatness and originality, is open to all manner of questioning and speculation and new idea. His regard ranges over history and delights in its pictures of the stir and energy of life and its changing scenes, over man and his thought and character and emotion and action, looks into every cranny, follows every tortuous winding, seizes on each leap and start of the human machine. He is a student, critic, psychologist, thinker. He seeks to interpret, like certain French poets, the civilisations and the ages. His genius is essentially dramatic; for though he has written in many lyrical forms, the lyric is used to represent a moment in the drama of life or character, and though he uses the narrative, his treatment of it is dramatic and not narrative, as when he takes an Italian *fait-divers* and makes each personage relate or discuss it in such a way as to reveal his own motive, character, thought and passion. He does not succeed except perhaps once as a dramatist in the received forms because he is too analytic, too much interested in the mechanism of temperament,

character, emotion and changing idea to concentrate sufficiently on their results in action; but he has an unrivalled force in seizing on a moment of the soul or mind and in following its convolutions as they start into dramatic thought, feeling and impulse. He of all these writers has hold of the substance of the work marked out for a poet of the age. And with all these gifts we might have had in him the great interpretative poet, one might almost say, the Shakespeare of his time. But by the singular fatality which so often pursues the English poetical genius, the one gift needed to complete him was denied. Power was there and the hold of his material; what was absent was the essential faculty of artistic form and poetic beauty, so eminent in his contemporaries, a fatal deficiency. This great creator was no artist; this strength was too robust and direct to give forth sweetness. There was no lack of a certain kind of skill. If not an artist in verse, Browning is a consummate technician, one might almost say a mechanician in verse; his very roughnesses and crudities and contortions have the appearance of device and calculation. He had an immense command of language and was never at a lack for forcible and efficient expression, but in its base though not in all its turns it was the language of a vigorous and vivid and colourful prosaist rather than of a poet, of the intellect and not the imagination. He could throw into it strong hues of the imagination, has sometimes though too seldom a vigorous richness and strong grace, achieves often a lyric elevation, but they supervene upon this base and do not ordinarily suffuse and change it or elevate it to a high customary level. Much strong and forceful work he did of a great and robust substance, won many victories, but the supreme greatness cannot come in poetry without the supreme beauty.

Arnold is a third considerable Victorian poet of the epoch, though he bulks less than the two more abundant writers who have till now held the first place. But as time goes on his figure emerges and assumes in quality though not in mass of work a first importance. His poetic work and quality may even be regarded as finer in its essence of poetic value if more tenuous in show of power than that of his two contemporaries. There is a return to the true classic style of poetry in the simplicity and straightforward directness of his diction and turn of thought that brings us back to the way of the earlier poets and gives a certain seriousness and power which we do not find in the over-consciousness and the too studied simplicity or elaborate carefulness and purposeful artistry of the other poets of the time. This imparts a note of depth and sincerity to his passion and his pathos, a character of high seriousness to his reflection and meditative thought, a greatness and strength to his moments of height and elevated force which raise him above the ordinary levels around him and create an impression of the truest poetry, the most genuine in poetic value, if not in effect the greatest of this Victorian age. His simplicity is a true thing and not the over-studied false simplicity of Tennyson; his thought is free from the conventionality and platitude which constantly meets us in Tennyson's thinking; he can achieve the strongest effects, even the romantic effect without the overwrought romantic colour of Rossetti, Swinburne's overpitch or Tennyson's too frequent overcharge and decorative preciousness of expression. We are at ease with him and can be sure that he will not say too much but

just what the true poet in him has to say and no more. For this reason he was able to bring into Victorian poetry the expression of the most characteristic trains of thought expressing the contemporary mind and temperament at its highest and best. Tennyson voices the conventional English mind, Swinburne a high-pitched cry of revolt or a revolutionary passion for freedom or even for licence; Rossetti and Morris take refuge in mediaevalism as they saw it: Arnold strikes out the more serious notes of contemporary thinking. He fails however to look beyond to the future. In one respect of literary workmanship he does however anticipate future trends; for he makes a departure towards certain tendencies of modernist forms of verse. He made the first attempt at any regular free verse and thus anticipated the modernist departure from metrical forms. He attempted also an imitation of the Greek dramatic form but not with Swinburne's originality and the success achieved in *Atalanta in Calydon*.

This is the balance of the Victorian epoch; a considerable intellectual and artistic endeavour, contradicting, overcoming but still hampered by an ungenial atmosphere; two remarkable poets held back from the first greatness, one by imperfection of form, the other by imperfection of substance; four artists of less range, but with work of an accomplished, but overpitched or thin or languorous beauty; an enrichment and strengthening of the language which makes it more capable of fine and varied and curious thought, and the creation of an artistic conscience which may impose in the future a check on the impulse of an overabundant energy to imperfection of eager haste and vagary in execution. If the promise of the coming age is fulfilled, it may be remembered as a fine, if limited period of preparation for the discovery of new, more beautiful and grander fields of poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of March 1981)

2

EVERY evening, at 8 p.m., what was called the Soup Distribution Ceremony took place. It was held daily in the present large Reception Hall facing the main entrance of the Ashram. The Mother used to distribute the soup to all inmates. She would come and sit in a chair situated on a low pedestal at the centre of the eastern wall. One dim light was kept burning and all others were put out. The Hall was bathed in an atmosphere as pure as it was deep and intense. A large vessel containing the soup was put on a wooden stool in front of her. She would stretch out her two hands over the vessel and concentrate awhile, invoking Sri Aurobindo's force. Then the distribution would begin. Each sadhak meditating in his place allotted by the Mother would now get up in turn and approach her, carrying a cup in his hand. She would fill the cup offered to her with soup, take a sip from it and give it back to him. Then he would slowly come out of the Hall. The ceremony would last more than an hour and a profound silence charged with an intense inner glow was maintained all through.

In that dim light it felt as if a glimpse of a new world, the reflection of a higher being, had fallen upon the consciousness and was spreading itself. Some other influence than the earthly became dense and perceptible. The inner and outer parts seemed to get crystallised in that condensed stillness and one's identity started fading away. I could not perceive where I was or where I had entered—unknown, unheard-of perceptions of the inner world would become distinct. Amidst all these things the Mother looked wonderfully charming and manifested divine moods. Her eyes did not appear at all like human eyes. And what a look. Piercing the bodily armour it could reach the innermost part, and see its very core. And her smile had no parallel, it cannot be compared either. She very often kept holding in her hand the soup-cup in a state of immobile trance. Then, as she returned to her physical consciousness, the distribution would begin again in an easy natural manner—as if nothing had happened in the interval.

Soon after my arrival I was permitted to see the Mother once a week, and once a week she came to my room and sanctified it with the touch of her feet. My book of life was filled with her instructions during this time. With what care she taught us how to take every step, to observe, and to look within! She gave me the force to know myself, to choose the right thing from among a confused heap of falsehoods. Our whole life she cast into a new mould to prepare it for a divine life, a new birth of consciousness, an inner life. Nolini had written to me before I came to the Ashram, "Here

the resources of ordinary life will be of no use at all." Its meaning became gradually clear to me.

The Mother visited our house on her way to her evening-drive. We used to see her in the morning. On Sunday evenings she went to Dilip's house where an English lady from London, named Miss Maitland, was also accommodated. She had come to spend six months in the Ashram—she used to attend the Sunday meetings and ask the Mother whatever questions she had and get replies from her. Besides Maitland the group was made up of Nolini, Doraiswamy Iyyer (a Madras-advocate then visiting the Ashram every week-end), the American Vaun Macpheeters and his wife Jeanette (renamed Shantimayi here), Pavitra, Dilip and myself. The Mother started with a meditation, sometimes on a particular topic, and enquired at the end of the meditation what its result was in each individual. Then followed questions and answers, which were recorded in shorthand by Shantimayi. This phase began on 7th April 1929 and lasted fifteen weeks. All the questions and answers running into fifteen chapters were published in 1931 in book-form under the title *Conversations with the Mother*. It was not meant for sale but for free distribution by the Mother to the sadhaks. Later, it was available for sale. Since then many conversations of the Mother have come out in parts known as *Talks of the Mother*. In Dilip's house was the origin of such conversations. One was lost in wonder at the incandescent touch of the Mother's fathomless wisdom.

The Mother used to take some of us by turns once a week for a motor-drive in the afternoon. The lucky ones were Doraiswamy, Nolini, Chadwick, Dilip and myself. Chadwick, an Englishman, came to India as a professor of Mathematical Logic in Lucknow University. Subsequently he became Sri Aurobindo's disciple and came away to Pondicherry after I had arrived. Sri Aurobindo gave him the name 'Arjavananda'—in short, Arjava. The Mother's car was driven by Pavitra, Doraiswamy sat by his side while we followed this car in a small Fiat. We visited many places far away. Pavitra seemed to know where to go, where to stop, which direction to take. A great experience it was to be with the Mother, the atmosphere changing everywhere as it were by itself.

When the car stopped, the Mother got down first, then the others. As she walked on, we followed her. It seemed all the paths and byways were familiar to her. After we had walked some distance, she would sit in a place of her choice and we took our places around, very close to her. To sit so near to her in an open space where nature was so charmingly beautiful was an unimaginable delight. She had brought with her some French lozenges and gave one to each of us.

One day a villager brought, wrapped in banana leaves, some palm fruits plucked and peeled from a nearby tree and offered them to the Mother. She asked us if we would take them. Dilip and myself picked up two fruits. Another day, when we had comfortably seated ourselves in a place, we noticed a hideous insect crawling towards us. We felt naturally very uneasy and fidgety. Our attention and gaze were glued on it and all were ready to get up at the least sign. But Mother remained unperturbed

and slowly moved the insect out of the way. She was not pleased at all with our being so easily disturbed. She and Sri Aurobindo never approved of fear of any kind. It was very harmful to our sadhana, they maintained. Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me, "All fear ought to be cast out."

On 18 October 1931 the Mother fell seriously ill and for one month we could not see her. We were extremely dejected. The day when she came down to give us blessings again was a most happy one; we felt the same as on seeing Sri Aurobindo on darshan days. This delight is beyond description; its nature, its stuff is of a special order. Such things belong to another domain than the earth and come from there. The Ashram-life went through a lot of change after this illness. The Mother used to come a little late in the morning for our pranam which was now held in the hall in front of Amrita's room. The pranam continued till 12. Her evening drive, her visit to sadhaks' houses, the soup-distribution, etc.—all these stopped for good. Once or twice, however, we had a glimpse of her when she passed from one house to another within the main Ashram block. In 1946, the Mother again began to come out where exercises and games had started in the Ashram. She used to visit regularly the Playground to make the activities run smoothly. After her illness in 1931, we visited her only when we were called. There was no hard and fast rule about it. The Mother's illness was quite a different thing from what we call illness. Sri Aurobindo wrote about it in answer to a sadhak's query: "I have not yet said anything about the Mother's illness because to do so would have needed a long consideration of what those who are at the centre of a work like this have to be, what they have to take upon themselves of human or terrestrial nature and its limitations and how much they have to bear of the difficulties of transformation. All that is not only difficult in itself for the mind to understand but difficult for me to write in such a way as to bring it home to those who have not our consciousness or experience. I suppose it is to be written but I have not yet found the necessary form or the necessary leisure." (19.12.1931)

One can have some rough idea of the true nature of the Mother's illness when one reads her Prayer of 24 November of the same year from her book, *Prayers and Meditations*, in the light of this illness. Let me quote it:

November 24, 1931

O My Lord, my sweet Master, for the accomplishment of Thy work I have sunk down into the unfathomable depths of Matter, I have touched with my finger the horror of the falsehood and the inconscience, I have reached the seat of oblivion and a supreme obscurity. But in my heart was the Remembrance, from my heart there leaped the call which could arrive to Thee: "Lord, Lord, everywhere Thy enemies appear triumphant; falsehood is the monarch of the world; life without Thee is a death, a perpetual hell; doubt has usurped the place of Hope and revolt has pushed out Submission; Faith is spent, Gratitude is not born; blind passions and murderous instincts and a guilty weakness have covered and stifled Thy Sweet Law of Love.

Lord, wilt Thou permit Thy enemies to prevail, falsehood and ugliness and suffering to triumph? Lord, give the command to conquer and victory will be there. I know we are unworthy, I know the world is not yet ready. But I cry to Thee with an absolute faith in Thy Grace and I know that Thy Grace will save."

Thus my prayer rushed up towards Thee; and, from the depths of the abyss, I beheld Thee in Thy radiant splendour; Thou didst appear and Thou saidst to me: "Lose not courage, be firm, be confident,—I COME."

A few days after my arrival, I got permission to cook for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. There was then no separate kitchen for them. With the Mother's permission the inmates would cook something at their homes, some every day, others on two days or once a week and so on, again without any rigidly fixed rules. Neither was there any direction given to us how to cook (of course, it was all vegetarian diet).

Whatever was prepared with devotion was acceptable to them, they ate very little. However, I used to cook twice a week. What a joy it was! I would also now and then go to the Mother to learn something about cooking and she would tell me quite readily, especially when I wanted to prepare some French dish. We knew their usual meal-time and we would accordingly carry our food-offerings on a tray and leave them at a particular place meant for them or give them into Champaklal's hands. In the evening we brought back the dishes and partook of the prasad left for us.

Another English lady, Dorothy Hodgson, known as "Datta" (the name given by Sri Aurobindo), occasionally carried the dishes. She was said to have lived with the Mother in Europe for some time and had travelled to many places with her. She gave us the impression of a pure white flower dedicated at the feet of the Divine.

All sadhaks and sadhikas lived in separate rooms in small houses. Each one had a cot, a table, a chair and a clothes-rack, and each had a servant for an hour or two. That was sufficient, for nobody cooked at home except for tea which they prepared on their stoves. The tea leaves were supplied according to the fixed quota, as was done with all other things.

The life in the Ashram often made me feel how few were our real needs and to what proportions had we swollen them. The inconvenience that we feel is indeed of the mind not of the body and, when we want to ignore it, it is usually the mind that protests. I did find at the beginning some difficulty in adjusting myself to the limited measure allowed but the Mother's Grace soon made me see from where came the so-called objections. Much had I thought of hard austerities regarding sadhana before coming here, but found that the way of sadhana here was not at all one of that type. No one needed to follow that difficult path.

In order that we might give ourselves fully to the Divine, the Mother had provided for all our needs and we had not to worry about anything. I realised after a few days' stay that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo did not of themselves speak to the sadhaks about sadhana nor did they give any direction. For, instead of an outer explanation, they relied more upon an inner help by virtue of which the sadhak could

develop a power of understanding from within. Sri Aurobindo emphasises more an inner growth, a development of consciousness. When, however, the sadhaks under trying situations wanted to know something definite, the answers were given according to the urgency or importance of the inner demand. Sri Aurobindo would answer in letters, the Mother in various subtle ways.

One could see the Mother whenever there was a need. She spent about four hours daily for the interviews. Some she would call every day, or once or twice a week, once in two weeks or even a month. During those days one could talk about one's sadhana or work and get the Mother's answers. Many a time she made her meaning clear through her looks and not through any speech. Sometimes, though one had gone to her with a problem the Mother started meditating with one, keeping her hand on one's head; the question was now totally forgotten and the being was brimmed to the full with an unearthly reward. The Mother wrote letters too to a few. But our Gurus' ways of communication was specially through silence, and their help and guidance, their abundant grace were constantly with us, whether we knew it or not. Our rhythm and view of life had therefore changed considerably. We could see things from a different angle, in a different perspective. A radical change of man's consciousness and its transformation by the descent of the Supermind was the mission the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had come to fulfil. That is the purpose of the Yoga. They took us forward almost by holding our hands not counting any difficulty, however colossal it might be, or avoiding any struggle and suffering, however painful. When they had to deal with the three dimensions of heaven, earth and the abyss, even a grain of sand was not too small for them. It is for this reason that they have accepted us, insignificant as we are, and spare no pains. Otherwise who will consider our life worth so much? Once Sri Aurobindo wrote to us:

“We mind no trouble so long as we can carry you farther and farther on the path of transformation. Let the greater consciousness, the vastness and the peace grow in you and the psychic liberated from these veils flood you with the divine love and the soul's happiness. We shall certainly concentrate our endeavour to help you towards that.”

(To be continued)

OPENING SPEECH FOR THE SRI AUROBINDO RESEARCH ACADEMY

24 APRIL 1978

(On request we are publishing, in honour of the third anniversary of the opening of the Academy building, the introductory words spoken on the first occasion.)

IN EVERYTHING connected with Sri Aurobindo, as this Academy most evidently is, we have to think of the new Truth of the spiritual consciousness, which he has brought to the world—the all-creative and all-transforming Supermind.

The Supermind, by the very nature of its comprehensiveness, takes the whole of life into its scope. The new Truth which it represents must, therefore, mean a host of fresh insights waiting for us in all the fields of human activity—philosophy, sociology, history, science, art and even business. Everywhere by its influence we should be able to discover novel aspects which would change the views and interpretations hitherto prevalent.

Sri Aurobindo should lead us not only to look more energetically for the verities of life but also to look in a way not done so far, look again and again—with an ever more penetrating eye. What he should bring about is not merely a search for things: he should bring about a re-search, a new quest, a fresh exploration, a movement along unexpected lines. In this sense of the word the Sri Aurobindo Research Academy has to function.

However, for this sense to be fully operative we must go beyond mental means of questing and exploring. The quest and exploration have to be *by* the mind but not *from* the mind exclusively. We must aim to draw upon sources deep within, founts far above, and make the mind their instrument. Then alone will the Academy re-search basically in the Aurobindonian spirit.

In the hope of its fulfilling such an ideal I declare it open today. And in doing so I cannot do better than quote some lines from *Savitri*, that epic of supreme research, which might take for a subtitle the name of one of Balzac's novels: *La Recherche de l'absolu*. The mood at our opening ceremony, at which I was honoured with the job of cutting the ribbon at the Academy's door, should be inspired by what Aswapathy, the father of the poem's heroine, experienced:

Awakened to new unearthly closenesses,
The touch replied to subtle infinities
And with a silver cry of opening gates
Sight's lightnings leaped into the invisible.

K. D. SETHNA

TRANSMUTATIONS

10.15 a.m., April 24, 1980

ROAD DOWN - ROAD UP

WITHOUT a word you went.
Ungracious not to tell—
Unless your silence meant
The sheer Ineffable.

The dark abyss devised
A horror for your part.
Suddenly you surprised
Death by your Godward heart.

While playing his tragic role,
In a bravery of sleep
Heaven's depth within your soul
You plumbed with your blind leap.

FREEDOM

Seeing you freed from the long tremor of human breath
Each flame in me straightened in that deep calm, your death.

Flickerless the soul strained now to an empyrean air
Through your still face of all-forgetting endless prayer.

Surrendered limbs, in-gaze, faint-smiling lips apart—
It's so you unknotted forever the Time-grip on my heart.

AK

A VISION

ON the first of January, at 6.10 a.m., I was coming to the Ashram for Sunilda's music; but I was late! The doors were shut. So I walked into the school courtyard and sat in a chair, facing the teachers' room. In the meantime concentration started in the Ashram; I also tried to concentrate. After much effort I was in a deep sleep-like state.

Then all of a sudden, with my eyes closed I saw on my right-hand side many Khaki-clad beautiful-looking persons—resembling the Commanders of an army—passing very quickly. Then with my eyes closed I turned to my left-hand side. There I saw thousands and thousands of fighters in battle-array marching.

After they had vanished, just near the lotus-pool, I saw a very long table and near it a throne-like chair of gold. On that chair the Mother was sitting, attired in a beautiful white dress.

I came near, pranammed to the Mother and said, "Oh Mother, now I have your Darshan. When can I have Sri Aurobindo's Darshan?" Then the Mother beckoned me to be silent. Instantaneously everything changed. The whole school-compound was covered with golden arches. At the end of these arches, there was hanging a beautiful swing of gold inset with precious stones. On that I found the Mother and Sri Aurobindo sitting majestically. Again the scene changed. The swing vanished and Sri Aurobindo was not there any more. Instead I found two golden gates opened wide; and inside was a big hall. There I found a large throne on which sat a resplendent Godhead, whom I recognised as "PARASHAKTI". Again the Mother and Sri Aurobindo appeared near the Parashakti. They were surrounded by countless Siddhas and Sages. This scene again changed.

I heard a terrible noise. Without opening my eyes I saw before me Garuda fluttering his vast wings. From his wings water was dripping. And the drops of water were making small but beautiful islands. At last from his final flutter torrential rain poured and it made a huge island.

The king of the birds flew to that island and soon from that place rose a mighty voice, "Victory to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo," and it rent my ears. I opened my eyes. I was filled with indescribable peace and happiness.

A SADHAK

JYOTIPRIYA (DR. JUDITH M. TYBERG)

MAY 16, 1902—OCTOBER 3, 1980

(Continued from the issue of March 1981)

III

“For you who have realised your soul and seek the integral yoga, to help the others is the best way of helping yourself. Indeed, if you are sincere you will soon discover that each of their failures is a sure sign of a corresponding deficiency in yourself, the proof that something in you is not perfect enough to be all-powerful.”

December 1955



THE East-West Cultural Center is located in a part of Los Angeles where the blare of radio rock music and the smell of barbecued beef fill the concrete streets. But when you enter the Center founded by Jyotipriya, you step into another world altogether. Greeting you at the doorway are happy flowers, and a smiling picture of the Mother, garlanded by Her words, “Serve the Truth.” Up the stairs, in the library, are more flowers, perfumed wafts of incense, and a large, luminous portrait of Sri Aurobindo. The rooms are filled with the sounds of Sanskrit and mantras, spiritual literature, photographs of Tagore and the great saints of India. And then there was always the radiance of Jyotipriya, who would welcome you in with her beautiful smile and an outstretched hand. Thirty years’ worth of spiritual seekers each have that image of Jyotipriya engraved indelibly upon their souls.

True to her modest nature, Jyotipriya kept that treasured 1955 message from the Mother framed in a quiet corner of her study. Never one to boast or claim personal credit, she regarded the Mother’s words not as praise, but as challenge. In her view, there was never enough she could do to help manifest the Hour of God, and Sri Aurobindo’s great vision of a Supramental Divine Life on Earth. She was too self-effacing to say how it was through her labour of love that so many in the West came to know and cherish India’s spiritual light. Nor would she speak of how that endeavour was an uphill struggle every step of the way. If you were to ask her about the later years of her life, she would shift the talk to that child of her devotion—the East-West Cultural Center—and of the many illumined souls who helped it to prosper and grow. In the history of the East-West Cultural Center are the seeds of America’s present spiritual flowering—and the record of the last thirty years of Jyotipriya’s life.

Sri Aurobindo had envisioned for the United States an important role in the world's spiritual awakening, and the Mother had once remarked how the American people were "capable of enthusiasm and aspiration and plunging into the future." When Jyotipriya first arrived back in America in April 1950, the truth of the Mother's words appeared to be immediately borne out. Jyoti's three years in India had not weakened her network of contacts and, within 48 hours of her reaching the California shores, calls for meetings and lectures began to pour in. During the voyage back from India, Jyoti's ship had docked in Hawaii, giving her the chance to meet and discuss with her old Benares friend Professor Charles Moore of the University of Hawaii the results of his 1949 East-West Convention of Philosophers which had been attended by many eminent personalities, including the Zen Buddhist, Suzuki. From their talks, Jyotipriya gathered ideas for an approach to Sri Aurobindo that might readily appeal to the Western mind. But once back in America, she had little time to prepare in advance for her talks. Her schedule was "packed", and as she wrote to Sri Aurobindo Ashram Secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta: "Am trying to plan some kind of schedule, but evidently something or somebody else is also planning just a little bit ahead of me, so I just take the calls for lectures as they come in... It seems I am destined to do public work for the Divine." In her first week, Jyotipriya addressed enthusiastic audiences numbering 80, who kept her busy for two solid hours after the lectures answering questions at the door. In the following week, she gave nine speeches, and then addressed a church congregation of 1,000! The result of another occasion was a letter of reverential greetings sent to "Rishi Sri Aurobindo", signed by over 90 American seekers. The United States was eager for "the uncensored truth about India," and Los Angeles—Jyotipriya's home base—was, in her words, "just teeming with interest in Sri Aurobindo." Jyoti then was asked to keep a similar crammed schedule in San Francisco, where she reported an enthusiastic reception at prestigious Stanford University. From that time on, she divided her energies between the two cities, five hundred miles apart.

But whether or not Jyotipriya had time to prepare for any of these talks did not seem to matter, for once before an audience she felt "driven by another force"—a power that gave her "a greater ease in speaking" than she knew to be usually her share. This force, that would come down in great "swirls" from above her head, would set her "upper body vibrating" and get her "centralized to speak". It was then that she would feel the Ashram atmosphere surround her, and feel in a concrete way the living presence of the Mother. After nearly every lecture, she was booked for another engagement.

In 1951, Jyotipriya accepted an appointment as Professor of Indian Religion and Philosophy at the newly-founded American Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco—the same institution where Frederic Spiegelberg and Haridas Chaudhari were positioned, and Dilip Kumar Roy was later to teach. An eternal student herself, Jyotipriya quickly established a rapport and confidence with her students. Mature graduates were to repeatedly tell Director of Studies Spiegelberg of her "superior

teaching abilities and about the way she understood to make every single class meeting a vitally interesting one." At a 1952 Summer International Relations Workshop on India at San Francisco State College, her educational leadership was praised as "exceptionally effective." In these professional activities—and in her private at-home meetings for "friends of the spirit"—Jyotipriya was busy "casting Sri Aurobindo's pearls" about on every opportunity and occasion. For, as she wrote to the Mother, "You must know how happy I am to have something so genuine to offer those seeking truth...I just must share my great happiness and blessing with others."

This open and enthusiastic mood in America ended abruptly with the outbreak of the Korean War. Once again, the death-toll of American boys fighting in foreign lands was mounting day by day, and the nation's former interest in global neighbours froze into a hard isolationist stance. India's foreign policy grew suspect, and the frenzy of fear of an all-out holocaust made materialism America's saviour of the day. In a letter to Nolini, Jyotipriya described how "the selfishness and fright were escalating, the hoarding and amassing of wealth and possessions reaching an unbelievable pitch." It was in this atmosphere of suspicion—where "those interested in spiritual things are very much in the minority"—that the East-West Cultural Center was born. The fledgling American Academy of Asian Studies began to walk a tight-rope of finances and diplomacy. To use Jyotipriya's tactful description, "lack of funds to pay for teaching made it necessary" to seek elsewhere for her to serve. And in what seemed at first to be a disastrous and incomprehensible turn of events, was the impetus for Jyotipriya to found a religious institution where she could teach Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's Yoga without restrictions.

The East-West Cultural Center was inaugurated on 1 May 1953—the month of Jyotipriya's 51st birthday—in a small room in the home of a friend in Los Angeles. In keeping with the times, the objectives stated in its first brochure announcement were "broad and non-sectarian"—"East meets West in cultural reciprocity for greater world unity...in the fields of the living arts and philosophy." The Center offered language classes in Hindustani, Sanskrit, Pali, and Greek; courses in the art, culture, history, and religions of India; studies in Comparative Religion, the Sacred Scriptures and great sages of all time; study groups in *Savitri* and *The Life Divine*, and the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. There were opportunities for guided individual research, and Jyotipriya's "Oriental Library" was opened to the public. Books on India's many yogic paths were available for sale. The East-West Cultural Center School for creatively gifted children in grades 2-12 was also initiated in 1953. Promising "high ideals, aesthetic and studious habits formed", the school conducted classes in New Math, phonics, history, geography, science, art, music, piano, and typing. All of the East-West Cultural Center activities—for both adults and children—were organized and taught by Jyotipriya single-handedly. Alone, and without any financial support save the modest fees that were the payment for her teaching, she carried the venture forth.

Something of what Jyotipriya was up against can be glimpsed from two of her

letters, written a decade later, to Ashram friend Prithvi Singh. Only in 1960 could she write: "The feeling towards things Indian is certainly improving. The prejudice is fading away so I can be more open and frank about what I really am about." But still in 1962, she was to say: "We heard from Purani today from New York.... This lone kind of lecturing around the States is not an easy task in material-minded America. You have to have selected audiences pre-arranged to have any real response." But if ever there were personalities to woo into warmth the icy scepticism of an American audience, they belonged on the one hand to the ever-dynamic A.B. Purani—and on the other to Jyotipriya. Few people had her "wide spiritual horizons"...those reminiscences "spiced with rare humor" and "the best thinking of both East and West"...her "sympathetic rather than critical" outlook...and that "dedication prompted by a love of mankind"—to quote from a very apt description circulated by a group called The New Age Questors, which would often sponsor Jyoti's "My Search for Universality" talks. Jyotipriya had the gift of drawing people to her, and a real skill for creating attendance-worthy activities and media-catching events. Premium newspaper coverage came with her "Open-House" lectures explaining Indian Art, which she co-ordinated in a very timely way with a national magazine's spread on the subject. Expensive radio publicity for the Center was gained without cost when a local station queried Jyotipriya about a tour, called "India and the World", which she was asked to lead for a non-profit Study Abroad group.

And the Center grew. From one small room...to all the rooms of her friend's house...to a large rented hall just the next year...and on Thanksgiving Day 1955—which that year coincided with 24 November, Sri Aurobindo's Siddhi Day—to a home of its own, when devoted students unexpectedly presented Jyotipriya with 15,000 dollars to pay for the down payment and first mortgage on the purchase of a building and property. She accepted their generosity on the sole condition that it was to be a loan which through her earnings she would repay. The first celebration of Sri Aurobindo's birthday in this new home took place in the Center's 125-person capacity auditorium. Twenty young people participated in presenting through drama, recitation, and dance, a sweeping panoramic view of India's wealth of spiritual tradition. The climax of the program came with a powerful portrayal from Sri Aurobindo's epic, *Savitri*—the dramatic confrontation between Savitri, Daughter of the Sun, and Yama, Lord of Death. Jyotipriya wrote to the Mother how she felt "a wonderful presence" as the two youthful protagonists gave their speeches by heart. The afternoon ended with the singing of *Bande Mataram*—India's spiritual anthem—and the recitation of one of the Mother's prayers.

The East-West Cultural Center School too flourished, soon receiving all city, state, and national government certifications. Jyotipriya's "special tricks for making things easier", her devotion, and the focus on the children's "god-like qualities" resulted in their acceptance by leading colleges as much as two years in advance of public school pupils. Jyotipriya's students—from generations spanning 1953-1973—were to recall their years at the East-West Cultural Center School as "a wonderful and

unique opportunity”.

The “Cold War Fifties” gave way to the “New Age Sixties”. Across America, interest in Yoga was abroad. Jyotipriya was there and ready to nourish the very first shoots, as the Mother’s prediction about America’s spiritual flowering began its burst into life. The East-West Cultural Center quickly became known as a headquarters for information on India to which inquiries came in on a non-stop basis. It was one of the only places in the United States where one could purchase a complete line of literature on the many limbs of yoga, no less than learn Sanskrit—and to help the influx of new students, Jyotipriya added for sale her own cassette recordings of Sanskrit vocabulary and mantras. The Center’s mailing list expanded; its reputation grew. There were a whole range of activities, all emphasizing spiritual themes. The public was invited to attend Indian luncheons, dinners, and teas...movies of Eastern lands...dramatic readings from Indian literary classics...evenings of Indian Dance. Many were the times an audience would drift into enchantment with the weaving of a *raga* on sarod, or the walls resound with the aspiration of a harmonium *bhajan* rising straight upward to the Divine. With her melodious voice, Jyotipriya would hold centerstage to chant in devotion the *slokas* learned at the feet of the pandit Kapāli Śāstri, during her treasured Sri Aurobindo Ashram days. From all these activities, a spiritual community began to be built up.

Soon, serious young seekers, who were “reverently in tune” with the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, came to work and live at the Center, to share in the inner life of its spiritual heart—the *Jyoti Ashram*, for “leaders and lovers of light who radiate Truth.” The dynamic personality of Swami Chidananda—who gave “a beautiful tribute” to the Mother at the Center’s celebration of Her 82nd “Bonne Fête”—attracted more seekers to the East-West Cultural Center. Revered friends and eminent personages from India, such as Swami Ramdas and Mother Krishnabai, His Holiness Jagadguru Sankaracharya of Puri, V.K. Gokak, and Indira Devi brought their light to shine. Jyotipriya’s auditorium on Sunday afternoons became known as a starting-off place for holy people from the East in the United States. Indian gurus, in turn, would often send their American disciples to visit Jyotipriya “and be benefited”. The Swamis Muktananda, Satchidananda, and Vishnudevananda—who have helped guide many young Americans to the spiritual light—all were early East-West Cultural Center guests. Anandamayee Ma wrote how “very pleased” she was to hear about Jyotipriya’s activities. Jyoti received this message from Rishikesh:

Adorable Self,

...I greatly admire the solid work you do for the spiritual good of mankind in a silent manner. This is dynamic Yoga. The whole of America will be grateful to you.

With regards, Prem, and OM,
Thy Own Self,
Swami Sivananda

But if anyone were to try to credit Jyotipriya with the Center's growth and progress, she herself would be the very first to transfer the praise to "the Mother's spiritual help and power" as the force that kept everything moving ahead despite the many obstacles that continually arose. She wrote to Prithvi Singh: "I know Her help is here all the time because of the many unusual things and blessings that happen all the time." In the category of both "unusual" and "blessing", was the situation that came about after a major Los Angeles earthquake, when Jyotipriya was wondering to herself how in the world she would be able to pay for the damages to the Center caused by the tremor. The next morning, a repairman showed up, saying he had come to work on the building. Denying any payment for his services, he left as suddenly as he came—when the costly reconstruction work was complete. Then, there was the story of how the East-West Cultural Center came to move into its present home—the large building with seven trees that that yogi back in 1947 had forevisioned. The United States Government, continually revising its building standards for a center of educational work, one day informed Jyotipriya that she had exactly 90 days to relocate all of the Center's activities into a larger property with a parking lot—or be closed down! It took one year and a half of real estate searches and court pleadings until the Center at last was located in suitable new quarters. And Jyotipriya, who faced a judge three times, with the Mother's Blessing Flowers in hand, knew in her heart precisely who had saved her endeavour from total collapse.

These were the years when, despite all steps forward, the line from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*—"A vast surrender was his source of strength"—became Jyotipriya's familiar refrain. In 1960, when the United States Government at last accorded the East-West Cultural Center a tax-free non-profit status as an educational institution, Jyotipriya wrote to Prithvi Singh: "I feel the time is not too far away when I will see Mother face to face again. After the worst debts are paid on the Center and the taxes adjusted, things will be much easier, but at present we have to work pretty hard to keep all the bills paid." As she wrote to the Mother: "It is hard for most people in India to understand the costs involved in living here in America. The standards for a Center of Educational Work are very high and exacting. We must have the latest improvements in gas, electric fixtures, etc., etc., or we lose our licenses to carry on." Jyotipriya had to wait until 1967 for that precious physical Darshan to take place. And it was not until 1979—when she was 77 years old—that she was to complete her payments on all the Center's debts. In all those difficult years of budget balancing and frugal living, no visitor to the Center was ever pressed into making a contribution, and Jyotipriya continually sent, in her letters to the Mother, offerings for Her work.

The difficulties during the Center's growth were more than financial. Never married, Jyotipriya, as "a woman alone" in America, was often in a precarious situation, since her work was that of gathering people to her. Then, her small income always kept the Center in modest-income neighbourhoods. Derelicts from surrounding areas would frequently wander into the Center, mistaking it, in their stupor, for a Salvation Army Mission, and expecting from Jyotipriya "square meals" and lodg-

ing for the night! Because she saw the good in everyone and the potential soul within, her quota for strange characters far exceeded any other person's lifetime allotment. But no one was ever turned away. Once, a frequent visitor who had been suspected of repeated theft was caught "red-handed". The person was only asked "Please don't steal." But that is not to say that Jyotipriya did not have a strong streak of Kali in her nature. If a person proved insincere, as certain professed holy people turned out to be, Jyotipriya would immediately cut off all aid and connections. For she had a sharp impatience with falsehood—and particularly when it meant a misrepresentation of India's spiritual light. Still, the upright person that she was, she would never speak against anyone, even if the result was to her own detriment. When asked about a cut in connections, she would simply say: "I cannot disclose my reasons, but I assure you they are genuine." And the only thing that could dampen her spirits was not the number of times she was cheated, but the number of people who preferred what she called "spiritualistic phenomena of a rather low order" to the true spiritual light. Let it be briefly stated that Jyotipriya had quite a challenge before her to educate Americans in the difference between fascinating but often fraudulent "psychic phenomena", and the true "psychic", to use Sri Aurobindo's terms—the soul consciously evolving and turning Godward to a life divine.

"Dr. Tyberg is at home in the library sharing the wisdom and Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother"—is how the familiar heading for the Thursday night satsangs would read on the East-West Cultural Center bulletin of events, sent to hundreds of subscribers each month. Intending the Center to "open up the way for a vast truth", Jyotipriya found the best manner of doing so was to let it act as a forum for the different aspects of the spiritual life. But she would not rest unless every seeker with whom she came into contact knew of "the highest path offered"—Sri Aurobindo's "broad and integral" Purna Yoga. Thus, for her as for so many seekers of all ages, races, and occupations who gathered around her, the Thursday night satsangs were the high point of the week, since it was then that she could share in a depth not possible on other occasions the teachings of her *Devaguru* and *Devamātā*. There, in the Library, before Sri Aurobindo's portrait she would sit—the books for that night on all sides around her—ready to read with golden glow Sri Aurobindo's vision of a glorious future for humanity, or the Mother's expert instructions for voyaging to Tomorrow. Though there was a warmth and camaraderie among the group that would fill and often overflow the Library at those times, what drew people was not the prospect of a social evening but Jyotipriya's ability to communicate Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's teachings, for—as one sadhika observed—Jyoti "did not interpret or ever become vague, or indulge in clichés, but seemed able to identify so completely with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that one continually felt their presence." Jyotipriya always said she liked it best when there were plenty of questions and lively discussion in the group, but oftentimes all present would just be quietly reflective, lost in her recollections of darshans with Sri Aurobindo and intimate moments with the Mother. Then would Jyotipriya read from her heart the revelation of Sāvitrī, with an inspira-

tion that profoundly prepared for the meditation to follow. One long-time sadhak, who started with Jyotipriya in the early days, when he was often the only other person in the room, recalled how during meditations he would open his eyes a little to look at Jyotipriya, seeing her “as through a veil”, watching as “she would turn into the Mother, Sri Aurobindo and the other great souls she knew”... how friends from the Ashram who came to the Library on occasion would say that “that was the only place they had felt so strong a power outside the Ashram”... and how during the meditations, “the force was so powerful”, his body would bend. To end the evening, Jyotipriya would lead the group in a Sanskrit singing of Sri Aurobindo’s “OM Anandamayī” mantra, invoking the Divine. Bliss, Consciousness, and Truth were very tangible things in the still moments following the hush of that collective voice. Certain it is that anyone who stayed long enough in the company of Jyotipriya developed a deep and sincere love for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, growing in all those weeks marked by Thursdays in an “inner attunement” with Jyotipriya, and that “silent comradeship understood by devotees in this collective yoga.” Today, graduates of Jyotipriya’s school of devotion can be found living as devotees and sadhaks all through the West, in Auroville, and at the Ashram. For countless seekers, through the history of the East-West Cultural Center, Jyotipriya was a “golden bridge”.

Jyotipriya once wrote to the Mother: “It feels so strange to have these ills of body and yet feel so well and energetic and enthusiastic in my work for you.” The Mother once had told Jyotipriya: “You were in such a rush to come down and join in the work, that you were careless about the body you chose!” Despite the pain that afflicted her body throughout her adult life, Jyotipriya kept “cheerfully agoing on” right up till the end—conducting satsangs, accepting new professorships (The College of Oriental Studies, 1973; the Goddard College Graduate Field Faculty, 1975), and initiating students into Sanskrit’s “wisdom-treasury” until the final days of her life. For, indeed, it was in the joy of teaching that she would transcend all pain. *The Language of the Gods*, published in 1970, was the culmination of her earlier publications on Sanskrit and her 45 years of Sanskrit teaching. With introductory remarks written by both B.L. Atreya and V.K. Gokak, it was dedicated by Jyotipriya “In reverent memory of Sri Aurobindo”—and was hailed as a “bold”, “original” and “pioneer work”. In 1972, Jyotipriya paid her last visit to her “spiritual home” to celebrate Sri Aurobindo’s Birth Centenary at the Ashram, and have the grace of a final physical darshan with the Mother. In 1980, after a miraculous physical recovery, she wrote to a friend at the Ashram her joy in the new lease on life that allowed her to conduct yet another beloved Easter Flower Festival, presenting the Mother’s spiritual meaning of flowers. She wrote: “I am going to be able to carry on as I have for 27 years.”

There is one image of Jyotipriya that will long remain in the memories of all those who were present at the Mother’s birthday celebration held at the East-West Cultural Center, a few years back, when a group of sadhaks and devotees were asked by Jyotipriya to recite a selection of the Mother’s prayers. One by one, each spoke

from the heart, prayers which Jyotipriya had suggested with an incredibly accurate insight into what was deeply appropriate for each seeker at that time. Then came Jyotipriya's turn. With a radiant face, she began the words of the Mother's meditation of 31 March 1917—"Each time that a heart leaps at the touch of Thy divine breath, a little more beauty seems to be born upon the Earth . . ." In a moment, the atmosphere was one of a shrine. And smiling, Jyotipriya spoke from her soul:

"Thou hast heaped Thy favours upon me, Thou hast unveiled to me many secrets, Thou hast made me taste many unexpected and unhoped-for joys..."

Perhaps what illumined her whole being with so extraordinary a light, was her recollection of some experiences she had in 1956 at about the same time of year. In a letter of 8 March 1956, Jyotipriya took a tone that differed markedly from that expressed in her previous mid-February correspondence, and wrote to the Mother: "It is hard to explain to you a new type of experience I've been having but I can only say it is a kind of sudden awareness at times of the presence of another realm with a different vibration and sound around me. It lasts only a few minutes at a time, but comes rather often at various times during the day." The Mother's message of the Supramental Manifestation reached Jyotipriya two months later, thus fulfilling the faith she always kept that all was "being moulded for something wonderful". Then she, who was not only the Mother's "petite enfant" but also Her friend, sent this cable on 4 May:

MOTHER REJOICE GLORIOUS SUPRAMENTAL BIRTH
GRATITUDE SURRENDER LOVING PRANAMS JYOTIPRIYA

But there was more gold to be manifested by Jyotipriya, as she continued to recite on that Mother's Birthday Celebration day, for every line seemed to hold for her more meaning than even the one before, and in the rapt silence of that room she went on:

"...but no grace of Thine can be equal to this Thou grantest to me when a heart leaps at the touch of Thy divine breath. ...Tell me, wilt Thou grant me the marvellous power to give birth to this dawn in expectant hearts, to awaken the consciousness of men to Thy sublime presence, and in this bare and sorrowful world awaken a little of Thy true paradise? What happiness, what riches, what terrestrial powers can equal this wonderful gift?"

No longer aware of even the seekers who through her efforts were gathered there that day, Jyotipriya concluded the Mother's prayer, with upswept hands, and a heaven-bound face.

Jyotipriya left her body at 3:15 p.m. on the third of October 1980. In her last testament she had written:

“In the event of my death, I would like my body to be cremated and the ashes therefrom thrown among the flowers of a happy garden. May any service that may be held be one of meditation, music and prayer for the speedy return of my soul to the Divine for new joy, power and wisdom, so I may return again to serve the Light.”

(Concluded)

MANDAKINI
(MADELEINE SHAW)

THE MOTHER'S MUSIC

YOUR music leaped, a laughing wave, from heights
 Of gleaming joy and spaces of sudden light's
 Outburst. It poured and flowed in torrents pure
 In crystal blue-white waves. The far azure
 Was flung into a flaming rhapsody—
 Hymn-cadence from a moon-lit eternity.
 It was a surge of foamless bliss, the stress
 Of an unshadowed, shimmering loveliness;
 Sounds of fairy-feet above the ridge
 Of rainbow-beauty's paradisaal bridge,
 Or wings breaking into life's twilight-sleep,
 Or else the heart that had caught the pinioned leap
 Of *Apsara* ever dancing above the foam
 Of earthly dream's horizoned violet home.
 They were the notes vibrant with the wind and the stars,
 Insistent melodies of light. The bars
 And passages of a song distant, unheard,
 The cosmic whispering thrill of a sun-word.
 They came, they poured, they swept and suddenly rent
 The hidden barrier-veils of the firmament.
 To me they brought the luminous wizard cry
 Of your love's call, your sun in a cloudless sky.

ROMEN

POETRY - PHILOSOPHY - YOGA

TWO LETTERS TO AN AMERICAN FRIEND

April 6, 1974

I've received two Sister Americas as against your receipt of one Mother India. This is a rather idiotically ingenious way of saying that you have written me two letters while I have sent you one copy of our periodical. But today I am in a somewhat ingeniously idiotic mood and this very frame of mind eggs me on to hair-split between being idiotically ingenious and ingeniously idiotic! Perhaps I may best illustrate the former by the "famous" lines of Eliot:

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table...

Here the stress falls upon ingenuity and the idiot-element grins from the background. But the grin, like that of Lewis Carroll's Cheshire Cat, is all over the place and drowns the ingeniousness when Wordsworth's straightforward paradox—

The Child is father of the Man—

is metagobrolised into the ridiculous riddle spun out by Swinburne:

The manner of man by the boy begotten
Is son to the child that his sire begets
And sire to the child of his father's son.

On a higher plane—the Chubbian plane, I might say where at present you are floating since you are now studying philosophy under my friend Dr. Chubb, I may cite as a magnificent example of the first category Shankara's theory of the world as Maya, Illusion, and his call upon an unreal individual to effect an unreal escape from an unreal bondage into the one and only Reality that is never either bound or individualised and is too static even to effect the most unreal of escapes!

The second category may be piquantly exemplified by the theory known as Solipsism. Here the philosopher, sitting face to face with his students in a classroom, energetically argues to convince those students that since all he can know is his own perceptions the students have no existence outside the teacher's own mind and that the class-room is another construction of his mental consciousness which is roomy enough to hold everything in heaven and earth and is the sole subject-object deserving to be classed and studied as "existence"!

Maybe, philosophy sometimes falls into disrepute because of such gymnastics and people think it better to avoid grandiose problems and just stop with such questions and answers as: (1) "What is mind?"—"No matter!"; (2) "What is matter?"—

“Never mind!”.

Now for a spot of seriousness. Most philosophical problems arise from a lack of comprehensiveness in vision. The two questions and answers which I have quoted at the end of the last para seem often a necessity because of the exclusivist tendency in conceptual thought. To a comprehensive vision matter and mind are not opposites prompting a reductionist solution by which either the former is a mere sensation of the latter without having an existence of its own or else the latter is an epiphenomenon, a mere byproduct, a useless halo, as it were, of brain processes. Rather, mind and matter are both the aspects of a single reality which manifests itself through their opposition as well as interplay—a reality not “neutral” in its “stuff” *à la* Bertrand Russell but more luminous than mind and more substantial than matter: in short, a fundamental divine Existence variously creative of its own forms. It is indeed this Existence after which we Aurobindonians strive and by which we hope to change matter no less than mind to a perfect instrument of a Divine Life on earth.

I think your final impression of me from this letter will be that I am not quite unlike the first American woman to come to the Ashram, one Mrs. Macpheeters whom an Ashramite correctly hit off by a stroke of Indian English which mystified even that mystic-minded old lady. He characterised her as “frivolous in the face but serious in the back”!

*

January 23, 1975

It was delightful to hear from you and to have the memory of you conjured up. Yes, those were indeed rich days when you used to come and have a pretty pow-wow with Dr. Chubb and me.

Dr. Chubb seems to have given you a very vivid picture of me after my leg accident. The moving about by pushing a chair forward and being a six-legged creature safe from all tosses was so enjoyable that I sometimes thought I would adopt it even when my leg had recovered. Now I am out of plaster and practising again to be Plato’s “featherless biped”.

Mention of Plato brings me to your awe-inspiring programme of learning. With the subjects you have mentioned I’m sure you will soon be fit to rattle off a series of articles of your own on subjects like Teilhard de Chardin. I am glad you are following closely my own dissertations. If there is any point in them that specially makes your grey cells go radioactive, please do discuss it with me.

You have written of the ease in acquiring knowledge and the difficulty in acquiring wisdom. I suppose that when one goes on filling gaps in one’s education and yet feels not only that gaps still remain to be filled but also that all knowledge is itself a big gap, one begins to be a little wise. One grows wiser and wiser as one more and more feels that this gap is a strange glow and that “a mystery we make darker with a name” is trying to come through. Perhaps wisdom begins to grow really concrete when the gap is felt to be God-shaped and becomes a hushed expectancy and then an

intense receptivity of the unknown Beauty which the heart must love before the eyes can see.

Things in Pondicherry are moving as usual. Does that amount to saying they are not moving at all? Perhaps the right way of putting it is that they are moving as if a stillness and an immobility were on the move. This reminds me of the Isha Upanishad's declarations:

"One unmoving that is swifter than Mind, That the Gods reach not, for It progresses ever in front. That, standing, passes beyond others as they run... That moves and That moves not; That is far and the same is near; That is within all this and That also is outside all this. But he who sees everywhere the self in all existences and all existences in the self, shrinks not thereafter from aught."

Yes, such would be the true report of the life here and of its seekings and its arrivals.

But let me whisper in your ear—or, as the Upanishad would say, in the Ear behind your ear—that life in the Ashram would be a little brighter if a certain face with a notable nose and a certain head with the surprising hair-do of a Roman Senator were to mingle with

Calm faces of the Gods on backgrounds vast,
Bringing the marvel of the infinitudes.

AMAL KIRAN

POEMS BEFORE AND AFTER 1973

OFFERING: XI

I HAVE WALKED SHORES—1967

I HAVE walked shores in winds of season,
And I have seen the sea
In fury out of all reason
Hurl itself upon rock with violent fingers
And drop, its passion spent.

Passion spent,
The mist of passion lingers
And cells of rock containing memory
Seed ocean floors.
The sands are violent with sea.

THE SILENCE COMES—SEPTEMBER 1979

The silence comes.
What comes in the silence?

Wonder poised in a profounding stillness;
Sound which is no sound
When even the sounds of silence cease.
Without thought, in the quiet of the mind I listen,
Blessed, blessed no sound...
Uncorruptible and incomparable peace.

And the mind falls to its knees.
Oh, rare and perfect hour when the tide
Of silence retreats to a sea calm and aloof
And leaves a radiant expanse that bears
Un-touched, Sun-washed and wide
Only the ripple-marks of Truth.

ELIZABETH STILLER

THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of March 1981)

The Churning of the Ocean (Contd.)

In the first sukta of the third maṇḍala of the Ṛigveda we find a clue towards the significance of the “churning”. Describing the birth of Agni, Vāmadeva says that he is hidden in the earth’s growths, *oṣadhinam* (a synonym for *Vanaspatin*, the trees on the Mandāra hill) and has to be brought forth by a sort of pressure which is the working of heaven on earth, the two parents of the divine flame. Earth and Heaven are the two *araṇis*, the rubbing of which against each other gives birth to the fire. Another name of this process is “churning”. The cooling rains of Indra are necessary to it because “this immortal Force is produced by man with pain and difficulty from the workings of the pure mind upon the physical being.”¹²

In the third ṛik of this sukta Agni is described as “Full of intellect, purified in discernment, the perfect friend (or, perfect builder) from his birth of Heaven and of Earth, he establishes the Bliss”.¹³ In other words, it is this divine Consciousness-Force in man which establishes the supernal Ānanda in him, causes the streams of Ānanda to pervade the being : “out flow the streams of the sweetness, the clarity, where the Bull of the abundance has grown by the Wisdom” (ṛik 8). Vyāsa, also, places the appearance of *ghee* (clarity) immediately after the flames appear on the mountain.¹⁴

This *ghee* is formed when the juices from the crushed trees on the mountain mingle with the waters of the ocean (śloka 28, chapter 18). The *vanaspatin* (trees and herbs) are also symbols of that same delight of existence permeating all creation which is Soma. That is why Soma is the deity of all vegetation in the Purāṇas. As for the ocean, Vyāsa gives us a hint when he refers to its “milky waters” (the P. Lal translation is incomplete here as the original has the word *kṣīra* i.e. “sweet milk”). Both in the Veda and the Purāṇas the ocean symbolises infinite and eternal existence which is also “an ocean of absolute sweetness, in other words, of pure Bliss...not essentially different from the *madhu*, honey or sweetness, of Vāmadeva’s hymn (IV.58).”¹⁵ It is, therefore, a mingling of the essence of delight found even in earthly existence through the manifestation of Agni in the universal sea of Ānanda holding all creation.

The hint that in the churning myth Vyāsa is recasting the symbolic Vedic ritual of pressing out Soma during the sacrifice is to be found in śloka 12, chapter 17:

devairasurasanghaisca mathyatam kalasodadhīh.

This is the only śloka in which the ocean is referred to as *kalasa* instead of the usual *samudra*. Now, in the Veda, *kalasa* is the receptacle which holds the Soma (Ṛigveda

IX.17.4; 18.7; 82.2 and Sāmaveda V.2.3).¹⁶ Again, *samudra* also means the same thing (Ṛigveda VIII.5.12; Sāmaveda Uttara VII.4.1; IX.8.2; X.11.3). Further, *samudra* refers, in the Veda, both to the terrestrial sea and the heavens, i.e. the sub-conscious and the superconscious levels of consciousness (Ṛigveda IV.58, see p. 6 *ante*).

Soma used to be extracted from the plant in this receptacle by being pounded and crushed by means of the stone, *grava* or *adri* in the mortar, *udukhala*. Now, *adri* also means *giri* (mountain) which Sāyana interprets as “pressing stone” (Sāmaveda, Uttara IX.19.1; Ṛigveda IX.95.4; 98.9). It is on the mountain, *girstaḥ*, that Soma grows and it is also said to lie hidden within the hill (Ṛigveda IX.98.9; 62.4; 18.1; Sāmaveda Uttara V.1.7; VI.5.1; VII.6.1). Moreover, both in the Veda and Vyāsa’s myth the Soma Amṛita is said to be produced below and to rise up to the heavens (Ṛigveda IX.75; IV.58). Dange suggests¹⁷ that the Vedic analogue of Dhanvantari emerging from the *samudra* with the amṛita is to be found in IX.77.2 where Śyena, the falcon or eagle, is described as having churned out the Soma from the aerial ocean. Indeed, in IX.74.2 the Soma-stalk is identified with Meru/Mandāra/Agni as the pillar based on earth and supporting heaven. Keeping in view all this and the mingling of the essences crushed out of Mandāra’s plants and trees during the churning with the ocean to make it into sweet milk and create *ghee*, Sri Aurobindo’s commentary on IX.83¹⁸ offers extremely revealing insights into the symbolism of the churning: “Soma is the Lord of the wine of delight, the wine of immortality. Like Agni he is found in the plants, the growths of the earth, and in the waters [hence the *manthana* applies equally to the vegetation on the hill, to Mandāra itself and to the ocean]. The Soma-wine used in the external sacrifice is the symbol of this wine of delight. It is pressed out by the pressing stone (*adri-gravan*) which has a close symbolic connection with the thunderbolt, the formed electric force of Indra also called *adri*....Once pressed out as the delight of existence Soma has to be purified through a strainer (*pavitra*... the mind enlightened by knowledge, *cetas*) and through the strainer he streams in his purity into the wine bowl (*camu*)...or he is kept in jars (*kalasa*) for Indra’s drinking...the human system is the jar.... Soma, Lord of the Ānanda, is the true creator who possesses the soul and brings out of it a divine creation. For him the mind and heart, enlightened, have been formed into a purifying instrument; freed from all narrowness and duality the consciousness in it has been extended widely to receive the full flow of the sense-life and mind-life and turn it (the Soma-wine of life) into pure delight of the true existence, the divine, the immortal Ānanda...As the body of a man becomes full of the touch and exultation of strong wine, so all the physical system becomes full of the touch and exultation of this divine Ānanda.”

This, then, is the significance of the churning out of *amṛita*. How closely Vyāsa follows the Ṛigvedic symbol-structure can be seen in his reference to Indra’s vajra being used to fasten the hill securely on the tortoise’s back. This is close to the Aṅgira-myth where the Dasyus and Paṇis hide away the ray-cows and heavenly waters in the dark cave at the base of the mountain which is the physical being. This cave is riven open by Indra’s vajra to release the waters of bliss, just as striking at Man-

dāra's base by the vajra leads to the churning out of the amṛita. The symbolic significance is quite obvious :

by the blow dealt by the *vajra* even as Vṛitra, the darkened cloud of adverse forces and ignorance and inertia vanishes, so also the hard matter of body loses its hardness, becomes plastic, free from *tamas*, inertia and its brood of adverse conditions and forces that oppose the release of *rasa*, the delight of all experiences to be offered to the Gods, the Cosmic powers of the Godhead...the Vajra weapon...(is) the Vāk...the Word of power issuing forth from the higher consciousness, which is the domain of Indra pregnant with the light of knowledge, but dynamic in its vibrant movement that removes all kinds of coverings and effects with the blow it deals out to the being of the worshipper, *yajamāna*, the release of the essence of the light lying latent and hidden in the vessel, *ādhāra* of the human being.¹⁹

The action of the vajra in firmly settling the base of Mandāra which enables the churning to start is analogous to the Ṛigvedic epithet applied to it, namely "broad-based Stone" (I.28.1) which presses the Soma-juice out. This hints at the widening of the base of spiritual consciousness in the aspirant which precedes the descent of the light from above.²⁰ It is, in a way, another form of Āruni-Uddālaka's experience of the universalizing of the individual ego.

There is little doubt that what the seventh maṇḍala of the Ṛigveda celebrates as the "pressing out" of Soma has been metamorphosed by Vyāsa into "churning" while recasting the ancient Aṅgīrasa myth concerning the confrontation between the powers of Darkness and Light. Vyāsa, too, ranges the titans and the gods against each other and faithfully follows the Veda by leaving the amṛita initially in the possession of the former. Characteristically, again, the titans give up the supernal Bliss for the evanescent and deceitful lure of the sense, the *Mohinīmūrti*, whereby Vyāsa hints at their intimate association with the ignorance-shrouded physical being.

Indra's drenching of Mandāra in heavy showers—till the essences of the trees mingle with the ocean's waters, become "nectar-propriety" and immortalise the gods (śloka 25-27, ch.18) besides reviving them when exhausted (śloka 17)—has its parallels in the Ṛigveda. Thus, VII.49 speaks of the streams cloven out by Indra from the hill as full of honey and intoxicating the gods with energy. In VII.47 these streams are full of clarity, *ghṛtavat*, which is comparable to śloka 28 of Vyāsa where ghee is produced as Light and Bliss given to the worshipper.²¹ The *Yoga-Vaśiṣṭa Rāmāyaṇa* also lends the same significance to the rain symbol in its description of the yoga of Uddālaka (quoted at the end of the discussion on the Uttanka myth).

The whirling around of Mandāra with Vāsuki as the rope has a meaning which becomes clearer on looking at the Ṛigvedic parallel in I.28.4:²²

They fasten the churning staff with a rope as with reins to control a horse...

This is the steadying of the consciousness and the body-vessel, making them firm, so that the flow of Delight is not wasted. The “rope” is the aspiration itself. The ascent of the inner aspiration and the descent of the Force from above creating a churning within the being to produce the nectar of Bliss. The use of Vāsuki brings in the concept of the *kuṇḍalīni śakti* lying hid at the base of the body (Mandāra). This is aroused at the touch of *vajra*, the Force from above, to rise up steadily with the help of aspiration and practice of *tapas* to open up all the mystic *chakras* and flood the being with illumination and bliss.

This idea of steadying the body-receptacle for housing the divine-delight is allied to the concept of baking the vessel in fire in order to prepare it for storing this ecstasy. Vyāsa’s flaming Mandāra²³ appears to be a version of the Ṛigveda IX.83.1:

He tastes not that delight who is unripe and whose body has not suffered in the heat of the fire; they alone are able to bear that and enjoy it who have been prepared by the flame.

In the beginning of the spiritual ascension, the aspirant is “unripe”; there is pain, fear, suffering. After a discipline of continuous devotion, ridding the consciousness of this fear, disregarding the pain, the rewards begin to come in the form of the various “gems” brought forth by the churning:

The wine of the divine Life poured into the system is a strong, overflowing and violent ecstasy; it cannot be held in the system unprepared for it by strong endurance of the utmost fires of life and suffering and experience...his conscious being will not be able to hold it; it will spill and lose it as soon as or even before it is tasted or it will break down mentally and physically under the touch.²⁴

The great roar referred to in śloka 19 as arising during the churning from Mandāra emphatically proves Vyāsa’s mountain to be borrowed from the Ṛigvedic *adri*, *gravan* and the *udukhala* (pressing stone and mortar). In the Ṛigveda these are said to roar aloud on numerous occasions (*e.g.*, IX.65-68, 86, I.28). Kapali Shastry while commenting on I.28.5 (where the mortar is urged to sound forth like a victor’s drum) explains that this is the body’s proclamation of its victory over the forces of inertia and darkness opposing the release of the sap of delight hidden within.²⁵ Besides this, there is the experience testified to by spiritual masters of the *japa*, the sacred mantra, being chanted continuously within and building up to a tremendous vibration encompassing the entire inner universe.

Before leaving the mountain and the churning rope, it is necessary to refer to the valuable investigations by Bosch²⁶ into the serpent image. He shows that the morphological resemblance between the snake’s body and the fan-like bundle of creeper at the base of the lotus stalk led to their being identified and that the Agni and Soma properties of the stalk’s sap were transferred to the serpent. However, the *nāga* as-

sumed more of the Soma qualities—association with water, nectar (guarded by snakes) and fertility—than those of Agni (the heat of poison being the only Agni quality). We find here, therefore, a conglomeration of Soma images: Mandāra (the hill containing Soma), the trees (also housing the sap of delight), the sweet-milk ocean of Bliss, and finally Vāsuki the snake king. Thus, through a pattern of Soma-symbols Vyāsa conveys the central theme: the churning out of Delight in the process of spiritual ascension.

What of the tortoise which is the pivoting base for the Mandāra churning-rod? The Purāṇas state that it was an avatāra of Viṣṇu, and most appropriately so. For where *nara*, the eternal and infinite ocean of Existence-Bliss is being churned, it is the all-pervading Puruṣa immanent in it, *Nārāyaṇa*, who is seen in its depths in tortoise form to support the churning. This intimate connection of the turtle or tortoise with gross material existence (earth) is not peculiar to Hindu mythology but occurs as a leitmotiv in Huron, Maidu and Central Asian creation myths.²⁷ The symbol, here, stands for the realisation that even at the very basis of the subconscious ocean the Divine is immanent, that the darkness itself is one of his manifestations. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XI.1.6 it is very clearly stated that Prajāpati created the Asuras by his downward breath, that they entered the earth, and that it created darkness for Brahman who inferred that thus evil had come into being. Therefore, it continues, Brahman cursed the Asuras with evil which led to their being defeated by the gods. According to the occult tradition, for rescuing creation from the clutches of evil forces and darkness, the Divine embedded an emanation of itself, made of love and consciousness, in the very base of inconscient matter: “In ancient narratives this Being was described as lying stretched in deep sleep at the bottom of a dark cave [*the cave is said to lie at the base of the hill of darkness. Mandāra, resting on the back of Viṣṇu-kūrma*] and from It as It lay asleep emanated rays of prismatic light which spread gradually into the Inconscience and were lodged in every element of the Inconscience so that it might start its work of reawakening....Indeed it is this one who is the origin of all Avatārs. He is, so to say, the first universal Avatār who has gradually put on bodies more and more conscious and in the end has manifested in the somewhat known line of Beings who descended directly from the Supreme to perfect the world so that it may, by continuous progress, be ready to receive and manifest the Supramental Light in its entirety.”²⁸

It is this finding of the sun at midnight, of light in the depths of darkness, which formed the hidden secret of the Mysteries of the ancient civilisations. The enigmatic riddle posed in the Emerald Tablet of Thoth is precisely this:²⁹

Heaven above, heaven below;
 Stars above, stars below;
 All that is over, under shall show.
 Happy who the riddle reads!

The role of the titans in this churning out of nectar firmly establishes the myth of polarity: that the gods and the asuras are indispensable to each other, being two aspects of the same essence which created the universe. The confrontation between them is also inevitable and necessary, for, as Heraclitus wrote, "Homer was wrong in saying 'Would that strife might perish from amongst gods and men.' For if that were to occur, then all things would cease to exist."³⁰ That they are complementary to each other is brought out in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa account of their creation, already referred to. It is the Asuras who hold the nectar the gods seek and their role in this myth is identical with that played by the Dasyus and Panis in the Vedic Aṅgīrasa myth. Typically, they can be beguiled by an appeal to sense-desires, seeking which they hand over the ambrosia to its rightful holders. They are vanquished by Nara, the *jīvātman* and Nārāyaṇa, the *paramātman*, and flee to the depths of the subconscious (symbolised by the bowels of the earth and the bottom of the salt sea in the myth). The battle itself resembles Rīgveda I.33 where Indra and his human allies fight the Dasyus. Nara, like Indra there, shatters mountains and slays Dasyus with his lightning-like gold-tipped arrows. Just as the Dasyus were unable to escape Indra who had set the Sun's rays to seek them out, here Nārāyaṇa's Sunlike discus annihilates them wherever they seek to hide. Most significantly, at the end it is to Nara that the gods assign the nectar for safe keeping: the *jīvātman* holds in itself the divine Ānanda which has been churned out of the ocean of the subconscious.

(To be continued)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

REFERENCES

- ¹³ *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 114. ¹³ *Ibid*, p. 111.
¹⁴ In IV, 58.1 *ghee* is said to be the other name of Soma which is the Nodus of Immortality. Here too the Gods drink these waters to become immortal.
¹⁵ *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 102.
¹⁶ S.A. Dange: *Legends in the Mahabharata* (Motilal Banarasidass, 1969), p. 248-252.
¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 251. ¹⁸ *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 342.
¹⁹ T.V. Kapali Shastry: *Further Lights on Veda*, p. 125-128.
²⁰ I am indebted to my father for this clarification.
²¹ *Sri Aurobindo: Archives & Research*, April 1977, p. 36.
²² Kapali Shastry, *op. cit.*, p. 133. ²³ *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 339.
²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 344. ²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 134-135.
²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 135.
²⁷ G.H. Long: *Alpha, The Myths of Creation* (Collier Books, 1969), p. 197-210.
²⁸ *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Avatarhood*: (ed) Sri Aurobindo Society 1972, p. 20 italics mine.
²⁹ A.W. Watts: *The Two Hands of God* (Collier Books, 1978), p. 188.
³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 46. Also, in Egyptian Mythology there is a close analogue in the story of how Apophis, the Snake of Darkness, stupefies the crew of the Sun-boat in their journey under the earth till Seth (who, ironically, becomes the Arch-Opponent later) protects Re, the Sun-god, and enables the journey (like the Vedic *yaṅa*-journey) to continue and the Sun to be reborn out of the darkness.

THE LORD OF HORSES

A NOVELLA

(Continued from the issue of March 1981)

3

I DECIDED, then, to run away from the company of men.

The man I had loved most was dead. Meryem and Mehhi had disappeared. Perhaps they too had died. And Akibu's fate must not have been very different.

Was there anyone who could equal Mohammed in wisdom, Meryem in affection and Akibu in kindness? And would I ever find a brother like Mehhi?

All this had happened because men erred. And so I could no longer keep the company of men.

It is for this that I never thought, not even for a moment, to go back to the tribe of Ouled Nails, where my father, Drinker of Air, still lived. Neither did I wish to go looking for those tribes to which my brother, Safy, and my sister, Leila, had been offered.

No. I decided to remain alone and recollect myself and meditate. All my life if need be. And I told my mind to Ourida the Rose.

"Ourida, I don't want to meet anyone ever again."

"Never again?" she asked and her voice trembled.

"No, never."

"Not even me?"

And her voice was sad.

I did not have the courage to look at her. I knew I was going to give her a lot of pain. I came near her and placed my head against her flank that was so very soft. I felt her heart beat faster than usual. She was afraid, Ourida the Rose, afraid that I would leave her. But somewhere she knew that I was going to leave her and somewhere she had accepted the fact.

Was it necessary for me to answer, then? I remained silent. But she repeated her question:

"Not even me?"

"No," I said very feebly, "No, Ourida. Not even you. I must be all alone."

"It is well," she answered.

And her voice was no more sad. She had even uttered "It is well" with a note ringing with pride. Perhaps she was proud of me, Ourida the Rose.

She seemed to reflect for a moment. At last, she stretched her head in front towards a horizon that night had made invisible.

"Look," she said. "Look well. There, enveloped in uttermost night, lies the Great Desert."

The Great Desert. How many stories I had heard about the Great Desert! But

none of the caravan of Mohammed had ever ventured there. And I had never quite understood why.

With all the strength of my eyes, I tried to make out the sands, coloured ebony black by night. But I saw nothing. And so the desire awoke in me to see the Great Desert as soon as possible.

"I would like to go to the Great Desert," I told Ourida.

"It is well," she said. "That is the place you must needs go to. And I will escort you up to there."

I would have liked to thank her. But I was too impatient to know. So I asked Ourida to tell me a little more about the Great Desert. Slowly she nodded her head and said:

"The Great Desert is the Domain of the Lords. And it is surely the Domain of the Lord of Horses."

"But tell me then, Ourida, if the Great Desert is the Domain of the Lords, why isn't anybody there?"

"Because there are very few Lords indeed. Very few are the men who deserve to see the Great Desert. The Great Desert is too beautiful. It was my father who told me this and he heard it from his father. As for me, I've never put my hoof there. I never dared. Because the Great Desert is the Domain of the purest of beings only."

I protested a little.

"But, Ourida, you are pure. Your coat is the most beautiful coat even a camel can have. I am quite certain that the colour of the Desert does not equal the colour of your coat."

She kept still. Then, having breathed in the air of night, she resumed:

"Listen to me, O Saïd, Lord of Horses. Listen. The Desert is like the Heart of God, it is like the Being of Allah. The Desert is all that exists in that which exists not."

I understood, by instinct, what she meant. She wanted to say simply this that the Great Desert is like the sky. And the sky appears empty in daylight although it is strewn with tens and thousands of stars. And one must wait for night to discover the stars. And even then one cannot see them all, for they are innumerable in the sky.

I was certain that this was what Ourida had wanted to say. And I was sure that if I went into the Great Desert it would be like climbing into the sky, up to the Animals' Heaven which Allah had created as He had created the Garden of Delights for man that he might taste perpetual felicity.

I thanked Ourida this time for having given me such a beautiful gift: being my escort till the Great Desert.

And we decided to wait till dawn to leave. For the way was long and we needed first some rest.

So we started at the break of dawn. Above us and in front, the sky was the colour of pearl, the colour of sand and of water from the sources. It was almost transparent. One would have thought Allah was getting ready to reveal himself through it. I could not help prancing with joy. But Ourida asked me to calm down and keep

my energies in reserve.

We walked slowly: she in a step that was long and full of a disdainful serenity, and I in a step marked with glee. In the beginning, we followed a track that caravans used, to make their journey easier. But then the track got lost in the sand.

"Do we arrive very soon?" I asked Ourida the Rose.

Ourida raised her head and considered the sky. Now the sky was a very intense blue and the sun shone so high above us that I guessed it was mid-day.

"Not yet," Ourida the Rose answered. "It is now that the most difficult part of the journey begins."

She showed me a range of orange-coloured mountains to our left.

"We must go up to those mountains, there," she said. "And after that we must go still further. Only then will we reach the Great Desert."

I neighed a neigh of disappointment. I would have so much wanted the Great Desert to be close at hand, to be near at once.

Ourida leaned over me:

"Are you tired, Saïd?" she enquired.

"Can the Lord of Horses be tired?" I answered. "No, Ourida. I am not tired. But I am overeager to be in the Great Desert."

"The Great Desert must be won with great effort," Ourida answered. "If you could go to the Great Desert with such ease, without pain, would you savour it as much as you will savour now?"

Ourida was right. I agreed that that was true. And we resumed our march.

It took us two hours to reach the orange mountains. And when we were near them I found they were not orange any more. They seemed to be covered with thousands of very soft colours: pale blue, pink, slate-grey, and golden yellow. But as the hours passed and the sun continued to decline the shadows lengthened on the face of the mountains. And this face was violet.

Ourida the Rose and I stopped at the foot of these mountains and looked ahead. A rather narrow path stretched in front of us. We could not see its end. And it seemed perilous because of the high mountains that lined it on either side. Rocky blocks could fall off and crush us. But I was not afraid.

"We're almost there," Ourida told me.

"I sense it, Ourida. I know. And beyond...beyond, oh, beyond is the Great Desert, isn't it?"

"Yes, beyond lies the Great Desert. The Great Desert that can be seen only by true Lords."

And so I started gambolling, dancing the dance of happy horses. And Ourida the Rose did not object. And when I stopped dancing, I noticed in Ourida's eyes a sadness. But she said naught to me. And I bowed to her silence.

And soon afterwards we entered the narrow gorge between the mountains. We walked very slowly to avoid any injury from the flints that lay scattered all over the ground.

Everything here was rugged and forbidding; this pathway, it seemed, by its mere look discouraged from the Great Desert those that were not pure enough, not strong enough to reach it. But as for me, I did not feel weak. I kept telling myself that at the end of this arduous journey lay the Great Desert and that the rest did not matter, that the sufferings this trek on stones imposed on me did not matter.

As for Ourida the Rose, she remained quiet. She walked slower because she too was suffering. And perhaps also because she wanted to delay the moment of our parting. So slowly she walked that for a moment I thought she would swoon. I gave her a comforting look. And then she was back to her gait as of a ship on the waves of the sea. And very soon we were out of the gorge.

In front of us stretched the Great Desert.

As far as the eye could see lay nothing but the Great Desert.

And my mind reeled on seeing this vastness.

Solemnly I started to neigh, to chant a long neigh of gratitude to Allah who had helped us come here. Then I turned to Ourida the Rose. And Ourida inclined her head before me.

"There you are, O Lord of Horses," she said. "From this moment, the Great Desert is yours. May you remain always worthy of it. And may you find the peace your heart seeks for."

And she sat beside me, flexing first her forelegs, then the hindlegs. And suddenly she seemed to resemble a house, a sort of refuge. Her coat that glowed with the light of pearls from the East had never been more beautiful. It was a lord's refuge that she became there, sitting at the Gateway of the Great Desert. Perhaps she wanted to let me know that if the Great Desert did not give me what I looked for, she would be there, she would be there always, waiting like a true refuge.

I kissed her softly.

"Fare thee well," I told her. "Fare thee well, beloved Ourida."

"Fare thee well, Saïd. Fare thee well and be forever Lord of Horses. May Allah protect you at every moment of your life."

"May Allah protect you too, Ourida."

And then I turned around and went away in a gallop. I did not want to see tears flow down on Ourida's face, those tears that I had seen shine in her eyes. They were rosy tears, rosy like the rose of diamonds, rosy like the rose of her coat, rosy like the rose of sands that stretched in front of me, rosy like the incandescent rose of the Great Desert.

And I was galloping in the Great Desert. I was galloping in light. Under my hoofs, the sand was like light transfigured into an infinity of little glowing suns. And around me all was light. Even the sky was not blue but white, the sky too was light. I fain would have you share this feeling but how shall I communicate it to you, the feeling of frolicking in the very heart of light, of galloping at the centre of the sun? How shall I say that I felt I was becoming light? I was no more a horse. No more Saïd, the Lord of Horses. I was a ray of light in the midst of that multitude of

light with which the Desert was aglow.

Then I knew with fervour: "Verily, this is God."

And tears of joy welled into my eyes. And I remembered the tears of Ourida the Rose at our parting. And I wanted to go back and seek her out and show her this world of infinite marvels. But I was afraid lest she should misunderstand my return. I was afraid that she might think I wanted to go back with her into the world of men. I was afraid that by learning the contrary she would suffer a far greater pain than she did at our farewell. And so I remained where I was, without any desire to move, utterly happy with this perfect happiness.

When night came with its freshness and its perfumes, it seemed to me that even night was luminous. Here, where I was, the stars seemed nearer to the earth than in any other place I knew. I preferred not to sleep. I wanted to pass this night watching the stars.

(To be continued)

CHRISTINE & ARCHAKA

(Translated by Maurice from the original French)

IDEAL CHILD

THE first edition of the book *Ideal Child* which was printed in 1953 carried on the cover the words: "Let this book reach every child." One day suddenly its true significance was revealed and it was decided to endeavour to fulfil The Mother's expressed wish.

Soon after, the work of translating and printing in many other languages was taken up. Up till now it has been printed in 13 Indian languages (Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, Malayalam, Urdu, Assamese, Sindhi, Sanskrit) and six foreign languages (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch) and preparation is going on for printing it in other languages. About eight lakh copies of the booklet have already been supplied for free distribution to the students all over the world. Further orders are expected. We hope to receive many more orders from amongst yourselves.

We are passing through a critical phase in the development and progress of our country. It is the future generation which will lead India to play its true role in the world. It is the responsibility of the present generation to guide and prepare the future generation by presenting the highest ideal to the budding citizens. In the booklet *Ideal Child* we have this highest ideal. Let us then present this highest ideal to every student to inspire him to become an ideal child growing into an ideal citizen. We fully understand that it may not appeal to each and every child. But even if it can inspire a few children it will provide sufficient guidance to the others, encouraging them to emulate the few. The seeds of the high ideals sown from very childhood would ultimately grow into fully developed trees providing beacons of light to the whole society.

The contribution for 1000 copies in India is Rs. 300.00 only. The receipt for the contribution carries tax benefit to the donors. All cheques, bank drafts, may kindly be made payable to "Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry". All correspondence and remittances should be sent to Keshavji, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-605002, India. For overseas orders the contribution for despatch by surface mail is Rs. 500/- or \$ 70.00; and by air mail (except Americas) Rs. 800/- or \$ 115.00 and for Americas Rs. 1000/- or \$ 140.00; Bank drafts, etc. should be made payable to "SABDA, Pondicherry", in US dollars payable in India or in U.S.A.

Indeed it would be a great achievement if this booklet could reach every child throughout the world—if not every child, as many children as possible.

In this connection we would like to quote from a letter dated 29-10-80 received by us from the Information Adviser to the Prime Minister:

"The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 11 October 1980. The wise words of The Mother will provide guidance to children...."

The Vice President, Shri M. Hidayatullah in his letter dated 22-11-79 stated: "I have read the book and find it very interesting."

N.C.E.R.T. by their letter No. F 12-8/80/PT-3702 dated 8-12-80 have recommended the purchase of this booklet by the Demonstration Multipurpose Schools

attached to Regional College of Education of N.C.E.R.T.

Further, Shri M.D. Gupta, Asst. Educational Adviser, Ministry of Education, & Culture (Department of Education), Govt. of India, New Delhi, by his letter No. F-1-1/80—Schools—II dated 13-1-81, has advised us to correspond with the State Governments on this subject.

Letters have also been received from United Nations IYC, as well as Jaycees International, admiring the booklet and extending their full cooperation in publicising our project of the Ideal Child.

We invite your collaboration in this endeavour and solicit your support in securing orders for as many copies of the booklet as possible for distributing to children in your region. "Let this book reach every child."

A Prayer from the Booklet *Ideal Child*

Prayer of the Students

Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them.

6-1-1952

THE MOTHER

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

India in English Fiction. By *Dilip K. Chakravorty*. Published by Prayer Books, 43/B, Nandaram Sen St. Calcutta—700 005. Hard Bd. Pages: 120. Price Rs. 25.

EVER since the English landed in India to barter their valuables for our precious things, they developed a liking for our land. Who will not love this amiable and amicable country when it has something or other to offer everyone according to his or her taste? It is no wonder that all those who were gifted with a speaking stylo took up describing this exotic land under the garb of fiction. And so India—both traditional and modern—lives authentically to a certain extent in several such works.

The book in my hand makes a study of fictional works by British men of letters and doubtless it is a new area for the critical attention of the research scholar as well as the general reader. Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Forster, L.H. Myers, Somerset Maugham and George Orwell are the novelists of eminence taken up for study. The author Dilip K. Chakravorty has exercised meticulous care in culling what is Indian in the fiction of the above-said writers.

The result is that every chapter is flooded with quotations. The author makes the reading of these well-researched and written essays interesting by mixing his own research with information regarding the biographical and literary achievement of the writers chosen for study. At times the essays sound more biographical than critical, especially the one on L.H. Myers. And whenever the author sounds more biographical we find nothing about India. But he deserves our appreciation for the comparative study he makes now and then of the writers taken up for discussion in between 'the cover of the two boards that bind this book'.

In the last two highly informative chapters titled, 'Fiction as a Mirror of Indian History' and 'Indian Struggle of Independence and English Fiction', the reader finds himself travelling in a forgotten realm of literature. Some of the writers we encounter here are complete strangers and their works discussed have already become a collector's item. And so, to say that these two chapters will be of immense use to scholars is no hyperbole.

The book is interesting chiefly because it is well-written and lively. Doubtless, it has something delightful to give every reader and no lover of Indian Literature should fail to read it, for there is genuinely something of our land and its peoples in it.

P. RAJA