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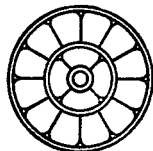
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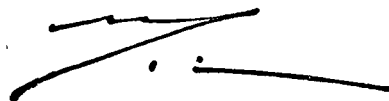


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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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**SRI AUROBINDO'S FIRST FAIR COPY OF HIS
EARLIEST VERSION OF SAVITRI**

SÂVITHRÎ

BOOK I

(Continued)

But now to a Nature more remote, self-hidden
From all but its own vision deep and wild,
Attracted by the forest's sombre call 255
Her chariot hastened, skirting prouder glades
Where the green stragglers lingered in the light
Behind immenser seas of foliage, rear
Of a tremendous solitude of trees.
Here in a lifting of the vast secrecy 260
Where plunged a narrow cleft, a track ran hewn
To screened infinities from a farewell space
Of sunlight, she beheld a kingly youth
Magnificent in the morning of his force,
Clad in a rough robe sewn of forest bark, 265
Taming a wild horse to his gentle hand.
Still by its inner musings sealed from life,
Aware of Nature, vague as yet to man,
Her wandering gaze the splendid beast admired,
Not yet the master creature. Then it woke. 270
Half-turned to her over its tangled mane
She saw, she knew, as if oft seen before,
Eyes and a face rich, noble, high and swift
Like the gods' morning. She cried out like a bird
Who hears her mate upon a distant bough 275
And by her musical bidding seized and stilled,
Hooves trampling fast and crashing chariot ceased,
The unwilling horses pawing yet for speed.

Line 254: "her" as variant for "its".

In line 256, the original adjective for "glades" was "wilder": below it appears "shaggier", which is also scratched out. In line 164 one is not sure that "a kingly" is the last intention: "high-eyed a" is written above the end of the line. Perhaps "high-eyed a kingly youth" was intended, but then we should have an alexandrine. As the original "a" before "kingly" is cancelled, even without "high-eyed" the reading may be "kingly a youth." In line 266, the original version is kept in spite of a scratch over "Taming", for it is difficult to guess what new version was intended when above this line we read: "He filled with strenuous play his golden tame"—and in the line itself what looks like "And tamed". Line 277 had originally "hurthng" for "crashing": later variants are "hurrying" and "haste-filled".

But Suthyavân who heard the liquid voice
 Wedding the summer air stood marvelling: 280
 Himself, his task, his victory forgot,
 He left the rapid creature to its will.
 It seemed to him vaguely as if the sweet call
 Were to the chariot-horses of his life
 Turning their speed towards a glorious goal. 285
 He came, they met, wide wondering eyes gazed close
 Into bright eyes and deep, their comrade orbs.
 Touched by the warning finger of sweet love
 The soul can recognise its answering soul
 Across dividing Time. Upon life's ways 290
 Absorbed wrapped traveller, turning, it recovers
 Familiar splendours in an unknown face
 And thrills again to the old immortal love
 Wearing a new sweet body for delight.
 But the mind only thinks, "Behold the one 295
 For whom my life has waited long unfilled!
 Behold the sudden sovereign of my days."
 Love dwells in us like an unopened flower.
 Roaming in his charmed sleep mid thoughts and things
 The child-god is at play; but through it all 300
 He lingers for the touch that he shall know
 And when it comes, wakes blindly to a voice,
 A look, a smile, the meaning of a face.
 He seizes on some sign of outward charm
 To guide him by the groping mind obscured, 305
 Desires the image for the godhead's sake
 And takes the body for the sculptured soul.
 Her heart unveiled, his now to meet her turned.
 Attracted as in heaven star by star
 They wondered at each other and rejoiced. 310

First Suthyavân: "Who art thou, virgin bright?
 My mind might dream perhaps and my heart fear,
 Risen on a morning of the gods thou drivest
 Thy horses from the Thunderer's luminous worlds.
 For they have wandered in the silent hours 315
 And lingered in the slumbrous noonday woods
 And know that gods from heaven walk abroad.
 If such thou art, pause once before thou fade

Line 308 has the variant "find" for "meet".

Like a bright thought too glorious for our hold.
 But if thy heart was made for human love, 320
 My eyes grow glad to know and my bosom rejoices
 That mortal sweetness smiles between thy lids,
 Thy heart can beat beneath a human gaze,
 This golden body dally with fatigue
 And the sweet taste and joy of earthly food 325
 Attract thee. From thy journey cease; come down.
 Close is my father's woodland hermitage.
 There follow me. Though rude and poor our life,
 The woods are round it and the heavens above
 Look down at a rich secrecy and hush. 330
 The forest gods have taken it in their arms
 And brightly apparelled it in green and gold."
 And the girl, musing, "I am Sāvithrî,
 Princess of Madra. Who art thou? what name
 Musical on earth? What trunk of ancient kings 335
 Has flowered in thee upon its happy branch?
 Why is thy dwelling in the pathless wood
 Far from the deeds thy glorious youth demands?"
 And he: "King Dyumathsen in Shalwa reigned
 Through all the tract that from beyond these tops 340
 Turns looking back towards the southern heavens.
 But the bright gods recalled the gifts they gave,
 Took from his eyes their glad and helping ray
 And led the uncertain goddess from his side.
 He sojourns in the deep and solemn woods. 345
 Son of that king, I, Suthyavân, have lived
 In their huge vital murmur kin to me,

From line 311 the original passage ran:

First Suthyavân: "Who art thou, virgin bright,
 Born surely of the sun? What goal thy wheels
 Intend, I know not, nor what most I fear,
 Conjecture whether thou from some far sky
 More natural to thy substance and thy light
 Embodied in this earthly-seeming form
 To snare our senses hast come wandering down;
 For so the gods from heaven walk abroad.
 But if thy limbs are subject to fatigue
 And earthly food thy senses can attract,
 Here in my father's sylvan hermitage
 Rest for one day the hours shall clothe in gold,
 A night remembered till whatever end."

Line 321 is uncertain in its beginning, and there seems to be a variant for its ending—something like "my veins rejoice."

Nursed by their vastness; Chitrâshwa too they name me;
 For the early child-god took my hand to limn
 The bright and bounding swiftnesses that stray 350
 Wind-maned in our pastures. So my mind approached
 Before I lived in its wide natural haunts
 The dumb great animal consciousness of earth
 Now grown so close. Gold princess Sâvithrî,
 High is my life and happy I find my state 355
 Possessing royally the earth and skies;
 But I have seen thee; these seem not enough:
 New rich deep things felicitous I desire;
 And heaven and earth are in a moment changed.
 O, if thou art the source, draw nearer yet 360
 Down on this sward disdaining not our soil,
 For here are spaces emerald to thy tread,
 Descend, O happiness. Let thy golden feet
 Enrich the rough floors on whose earth we dwell.”
 She said: “My heart turns to my father’s house 365
 And yet will stay here on this forest verge.
 Now of more wandering it has no need.”
 Down came she with a soft, bright, faltering haste,
 Her gleaming feet upon the green-gold sward,
 And like pale brilliant wandering moths her hands 370
 Claimed from the sylvan verge’s sunlit arms
 Bright comrades of the summer and the breeze
 And twined a natural garland deep and pure
 Fit for their love. This with glad unshamed eyes
 Upraised in hands that trembled with delight 375
 Lingering around the neck of him she chose,
 She hung,—such the fair symbol of those days,—
 Upon his bosom coveted by her love.
 Nor with that equal bond ceased satisfied
 Her heart, but as before a sudden god 380

From the middle of line 349 we have another version up to the middle of line 351:

but because my hand
 The bright and bounding swiftnesses described
 That hurl our straining chariots to the goal
 They name Chitrâshwa.

The original version took off from the end-part of line 348 and was shorter.

who am named
 Chitrâshwa because my yet childish hands
 Painted the bounding swiftnesses that foam
 In our strong chariots.

In line 350 “stray” has the variant “roam”.

She bowed down to his feet and touched the hem
 Of his coarse raiment with her worshipping hands.
 He took them in his own; the sweet first touch
 Of all their closeness through long intimate years
 Feeling each other for the soul behind, 385
 Joined them for bliss upon his bosom. They parted,
 She to her father's rich and sculptured halls,
 He to the cottage rude she hoped for, thatched
 With leaves, built of hewn forest-boughs, where lingered
 In toil and penury of their fallen state 390
 His parents bearing patiently their days.
 Thus were they wedded and the knot was bound.

Attracted by the golden summer earth
 Nârada the heavenly sage from Paradise
 Came harping through the quivering lustrous air. 395
 Rapturous and drunken with the wine of God
 He poured upon the world his mighty chant
 Casting the harmonies of his heaven-born voice
 Unwearied. By the sweetness of his song
 Earth the dumb sufferer was awhile appeased 400
 And all heaven's kindled regions shook, alight
 With his heart's ceaseless joy. He sang the name
 Of Vishnu and the secret of the stars
 And the beginnings of the conscious world.
 He hymned Delight and Love that knows not death: 405
 He sang the rapture of the Heart divine
 That calls our spirits and of discords healed
 And pleasure that shall die in a white bliss
 And sin delivered from itself by love
 And immortality surprising earth. 410
 And as he sang, the demons wept with joy:
 They dreamed of the defeat for which they hope
 When with their chosen dreadful labour done
 They shall return to him who sent them forth.
 So harping, singing came the man divine 415
 To men obscured on earth. The glory down
 Like a persistent streak of lightning fell,
 Nearing, until the rapt eyes of the sage
 Looked forth from luminous cloud and, strangely limned,
 His face, a beautiful mask of antique joy, 420
 Appeared from light, descending where arose

King Uswapathy's palace to the winds
 In Madra, flowering up in delicate stone.
 There welcomed by the strong and thoughtful king
 Who ceased from common life and care and sat 425
 Inclining to the high and rhythmic voice,
 Seated on sacred grass the heavenly seer
 Spoke of the toils of men and what the gods
 Strive for on earth, and joy that throbs behind
 The marvel and the mystery of pain. 430
 He sang to him of the lotus heart of love
 With all its thousand luminous buds of truth
 That quivering sleeps veiled by apparent things.
 It trembles at every touch, it strives to wake
 And one day it shall hear a blissful voice 435
 And in the garden of the spouse shall bloom
 When she is seized by her discovered lord.
 Even as he sang, came with a voice of hooves
 As of her swift heart hastening, Sāvithrī.
 Changed with the halo of her love she came, 440
 Her radiant tread glimmering across the floor,
 A happy wonder in her fathomless eyes.
 And happily her stately head she bowed
 Before her father and her shining gaze
 Saw like a rose of wonder and adored 445
 Sweetness and glory of that Son of Heaven.
 But Nārada casting on her from his eyes
 Celestial the unwounded light of heaven
 Griefless, "From what wild border, Sāvithrī,
 Turns back thy wheels' far quest with wonderful earth 450
 Satisfied, singing of sweet haste to bliss
 As one who brings hushed treasure for his soul,
 Rapt burdens and rich secrets from some shrine
 Where sits a godhead mystic in the stone?
 What divine floods bathed pure thy pilgrim limbs 455
 And burdened heart? or as from marvellous lands,
 Verges of wonder and horizons strange,
 Landscapes of mystery, rivers of delight,
 Flew once the Bird who from the flaming kings
 Of pain ravished the ambrosia for the gods, 460

In line 447, "eyes" has a variant: "gaze". There seems to be another version of this line, which would do away with the need of the next and join up directly with line 444. This version is:

But Narada casting on her face his look

Exultantly—so fleest thou bright-winged back
 Rejoicing with some flushed and heavenly fruit
 Seized in the dangerous woodlands of desire?
 Such light is seen beneath thy mortal lids.”
 Then Uswapathy, “An unknown face one seeks 465
 Among the indifferent visages of earth,
 Known to the secret sense our clay conceals:
 And when it opens, even such light can dawn!
 For we are seekers of our hidden suns.
 To find its own lord since to her through earth 470
 He came not yet, this sweetness ventured forth.
 Now she brings back her dedicated soul.
 Reveal, my child, the name thy heart has learned.”
 Shining she answered, “Suthyavân, an exile
 In the huge and desolate forests, is my lord. 475
 My father, I have chosen, this is done.”
 And Uswapathy wordless for a space
 Answered his child, “What thou hast chosen and done,
 The silent god within thee shall approve.
 In the rich commerce of this mystic world 480
 Where all things given wonderfully return,
 Life for its offering, bare of every claim
 The heart has prostrated before the adored
 Satisfied with its privilege to love.
 Dimly it knows, descended from the skies, 485

In line 461, “here” is a variant for “back”, and in line 463 “Found” for “Seized”.

The whole passage, lines 447-461, has been considerably redone, but not perhaps with utter finality. The original version was:

Then Nârad: “From what wild border, Sâvithrî,
 Speeds back thy wheels’ far quest, with wonderful earth
 Satisfied? Bring’st thou then urned in thy rich soul
 Secret of rapt devotion from some shrine
 Where sits a godhead mystic in the stone?
 In sacred city or under musing hill
 What divine flood washed pure thy pilgrim limbs
 And burdened heart? Or from thy journey’s end,—
 As once the Bird who from the flaming kings
 Of Pain ravished the ambrosia for the gods,
 Wounded,—so, happier, fleest thou bright-winged back

Here, in line 6, “under musing hill” is varied with “by divine hill” and, in line 7, “divine flood” by “holy river”.

Line 475 has “dread” as variant for “huge”. Line 481 has the alternative:

Where each thing given wonderfully returns,

Originally, in place of lines 482 and 483, the manuscript read:

The heart casts all down before one desired

and had “lays” as variant for “casts”, and “life” for “all”. The next line read “the” instead of “its”.

Its sweet lost fortune by that gift restored,
 Deep price at which the costly worlds were born
 Self-giving the great merchandise of God."
 Sāvithrī answered not. Her happy eyes
 Hooded with light from an immortal source 490
 And finding hidden glories on the earth
 Smiled at thought whispering, confident of bliss.

But Nārada now, the seer, lifted his voice
 That sang the first thoughts of the new-born gods,
 Turning on her the rapt celestial eyes 495
 Bare to whose gaze Time toils, his unseen works
 Detected: "Wilder-sweet thy curves, O life,
 Following the stream of Time through the unknown
 Than sealed thought dreams of! Wandering soul, thy wings
 Strike hidden goals. A god's tremendous touch 500
 Seems pain unbearable to mortal nerves,
 But high that agony climbs, the flower of flame
 In whose fierce seed is the sweet tree of heaven.
 Endurance first the ethereal kings trod out
 Pacing the measures of the dateless road; 505
 Serene rose next equality from the stars
 Weaving her vast and rhythmical walk; thrilling
 Their large third rapturous stride discovered bliss.
 But blind and swift the great-maned life of earth
 Alarmed by grief swerved from their dreadful path. 510
 She dulled the pang to her children, heeding not
 In the fond passion of her mother mind
 That they who toil self-given into the hands
 Of her great sorrows and arise grow gods,
 Possessors of the eternal joys unseen, 515
 The master souls who are for ever glad.
 By pain there works a spirit from the clod;
 By pain eternal Night gave forth the suns;
 By pain the wise Immortals knew and chose
 The leaders of the dark and mighty march, 520
 The swift and radiant who shall help the world.
 From sojourn in some high preparing skies,
 From rapture in the worlds of flame and light
 Obscured they come, down on the yearning earth,
 Conscious of their lost heavens. Soul who hast lived 525

Line 492: "inly" as variant for "whispering".

Guarded in thy sweet happy heavenly self
 From life's great hands,—but now the gods have touched,—
 Awake by sorrow, daughter of the sun.”
 But high the King cried back to the bright seer,
 “Ominous thy thoughts are, Nârad, to our hearts 530
 Which only ask brief joy for their brief life.
 Flame not too high beyond the mortal's ken.
 What soul aspires to grief or uncompelled
 Would taste of torture? If from joy to joy
 Chanting man climbed, then might we grow to gods. 535
 Too endless is the sad and stern ascent,
 Too slippery and precipitous the path.
 Rather if the thought silent in the wise
 That knows its wisdom vain to help mankind
 Close not thy lips, our blinded will succour, 540
 That it may see the pitfall and the escape.
 Because to our footsteps light has been denied,
 Like children travelling to an unseen goal
 In night-hung paths in forest or morass
 We fearfully retrace some happy steps, 545
 We call to each other at some doubtful bend
 Guarding from winds some flickering torch of hope.
 We wander. If the mist could once be rent,—

Line 529: “replied” for “cried back”. Line 532: “sight” for “ken,” and perhaps “thus” for “too”.

The earliest version, from line 538, goes:

But if the Power that is silent in the wise
 Close not thy lips, our straining will enlighten,
 O sage, to see the pitfall and the escape.
 For not by fate alone our steps are moved
 But fate and will together are the world;
 Here hope has blinded, passion lamed the will
 And only by our darkness fate is lord.”

A variant from line 543 runs:

As those who travel to a far-off goal
 In night-hung paths in forest and morass,
 Such are we, but if the veil could once be rent,
 If man had sight, if his blind steps were led
 By brighter fires than pallid reason lights
 And other than the flickering torch of hope

After line 543, there is another version:

On night-hung paths in forest and morass,
 We wander. If the mist could once be rent,—
 Chased never by the reason's pallid light,
 Pierced never by the flickering torch of hope,—
 Which from the first was settled round our way

Chased never by the reason's pallid light,—
 Which from the first was settled round our way, 550
 The dire immortal bows that ring our walk
 Stringless would fall and Fate to Will be bound.
 O Will is God concealed and Fate his bride.
 But now in her immense and passionate mind
 Shaping unruled the cycles of the stars, 555
 With thoughts eternal, violent, large of pace,
 She takes the little centuries in her stride
 And holds him hooded in her mighty hands.
 She knows without him all her strength were vain.
 Two powers toil and meet in every field, 560
 She clasps him bound lest he desert her arms,
 She hides him in her breast to guide the suns."
 But Nârâd still with that celestial gaze:
 "Why vainly must thou ask for light in front?
 Safe doors cry opening, but the doomed pass on. 565
 None can renounce the chain his soul desires
 Until a will eternal has been done.
 Man by his nature to great grief is drawn;
 For a mysterious Power compels his steps
 And Life is stronger than the trembling mind." 570
 With troubled heart King Uswapathy heard;
 He reined his rearing thoughts to make reply:
 "Still must man seek for light and quest in front,
 Chained to his passion on the labouring earth.
 Yearning to clasp an enemy of her heart 575

After line 552 a different sequel has been noted:

But now in her immense and passionate mind
 With thoughts eternal, violent, large of pace,
 Shaping unruled the cycles of the stars,
 Taking the little centuries in her stride,
 She holds him hooded in her mighty hands.
 Yet not by Fate alone our paths are hewn
 Two are the powers that rule the mortal's acts,
 And Fate and Will together watch the world.

A very early version after line 565 runs

None can escape his nature and its fruits,
 None can put off the chain his soul desires
 Nor Sâvithrî do other loving too well
 Than call to her anguish for her nights and morns."

Of course the phrase "loving too well" must be understood as having a comma preceding and succeeding it. Uswapathy's reply, beginning with line 573 now, began at one time

"In all the passion of the labouring earth
 For a woman's subject life this is worst grief,
 Yearning to choose an enemy of her heart.

Is cruellest grief for woman's subject life,
 A bitter thing to love! Or two may cling
 United yet some natural fault in him
 Turn even their close daily tenderness
 A cherished suffering and a tortured joy. 580
 Which of these swords shall pierce my child, O sage?"
 But Nârad smiling with immortal lips:
 "Fear not such coarser tremblings shall be struck
 From spirits who are harps the gods have made.
 Gentle as the soft bud the spring desires, 585
 Pure like a stream that kisses lonely banks,
 Like a hill high-gazing where a fruited grove
 Has made a murmuring nest for southern winds,
 Calm and delightful is young Suthyavân.
 The Happy in their sweet ether have not hearts 590
 More wide and blissful than this forest boy's.
 His nature deep and true lives with the god
 In common things and that large-eyed communion
 Has learned by which man's veiless mind wakes free,
 Griefless, uplifted; its wonderful domains 595
 Grow luminous fields thronged with the tread of gods.
 Alas, if death into the elements
 From which his gracious envelope was built,
 Shatter this vase before it breathe its sweets,
 As if earth could not keep a divine thing! 600
 In one brief year when this bright hour flies back
 Through Time, the shrouded night surrounds his soul."

(To be continued)

Line 577 "for" instead of "to". Line 580: "To" and "to" for "A" and "a". Line 581: "find" for "pierce". Another version of lines 577-581 has been attempted, but it is not clear, for changes are made again and again. One reading is:

A bitter thing to love! Or else some evil
 In him shall, coiled around her wounded thoughts,
 Make even of close daily tenderness
 Her cherished suffering and her tortured joy.
 Even such pain brief earth has for her sons.

Two lines decipherable are:

Or oft the evil in him coils around
 Her wounded thoughts, her woman's soul disarmed

Another snatch is:

Has she then found
 The torturor of her heart in Suthyavân?

THE SUPRAMENTAL CREATION

A TALK BY THE MOTHER ON 18 JULY 1961

THE question which introduces this talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's aphorism: "Sin is that which was once in its place, persisting now it is out of place; there is no other sinfulness."

What are the very first things that the Supramental Force intends to drive out, or is trying to drive out so that everything may be in its place, individually and cosmically?

Drive out? But will it "drive out" anything? If we accept Sri Aurobindo's idea, it will put each thing in its place, that's all.

One thing must necessarily cease, and that is the distortion, that is to say, the veil of falsehood upon Truth, because that is what is responsible for everything we see here. If this is removed, things will be completely different, completely. They will be what we feel them to be when we come out of this consciousness. When one comes out of this consciousness and enters into the Truth-consciousness, the difference is such that one wonders how there can be anything like suffering and misery and death and all that. There is a kind of astonishment in the sense that one does not understand how it can happen—when one has really tipped over to the other side. But this experience is usually associated with the experience of the unreality of the world as we know it, whereas Sri Aurobindo says that this perception of that unreality of the world is not necessary in order to live in the supramental consciousness—it is only the unreality of Falsehood, not the unreality of the world. That is to say, the world has a reality of its own, independent of Falsehood.

I suppose that is the first effect of the Supermind—the first effect in the individual, because it will begin with the individual.

It is probable that this state of new consciousness will have to become a constant state. But then a problem arises: how can one remain in contact with the world as it is in its deformation? Because I have noticed one thing: when this state is very strong in me, very strong, so strong that it is able to resist anything that comes to bombard it from outside, then when I say something, people do not understand at all, not at all; so this state inevitably does away with a useful contact.

Taking only the earth, for example, how could there be a little supramental creation, a nucleus of supramental action and radiation upon earth? Is it possible? One can conceive very well of a nucleus of superhuman creation and of supermen, that is to say men who were men and who through evolution and transformation (in the true sense of the word) have succeeded in manifesting the supramental forces; but their origin is human and since their origin is human there is necessarily a contact; even if everything is transformed, even if the organs are transformed into centres of force, there remains nonetheless something human, like a colouring. It is these beings, according to the traditions, who will discover the secret of direct supramental creation, without passing through the process of ordinary Nature, and it is through them that the truly supramental beings will take birth, the ones who must necessarily live in a supramental world. But then how would the contact be made between these

beings and the ordinary world? How is one to conceive of the transformation of Nature, a transformation sufficient to bring about the supramental creation upon earth? I do not know.

Naturally, for such a thing to happen, a considerably long time is needed, this we know; and there will probably be stages, steps, things which will appear, things which for the moment we do not know or do not conceive, and they will change the condition of the earth—but that means seeing some thousands of years ahead.

There remains the problem: is it possible to make use of this notion of space, I mean the space on the terrestrial globe?¹

Is it possible to find a spot where one could create the embryo or seed of the future supramental world? The plan came in all the details, but it is a plan which in its spirit and consciousness does not at all conform to what is possible on earth at present; yet in its most material manifestation, it was based on terrestrial conditions. It is the concept of an ideal town which would be the nucleus of an ideal country, a town which would have contacts, purely superficial and extremely limited in their effect, with the outside world. One would therefore already have to conceive—but this is possible—of a power sufficiently strong to be at the same time a protection against aggression or ill-will (this would not be the most difficult protection to obtain) and against infiltration and admixtures. But if necessary, one can conceive of that. From the social point of view, from the point of view of organisation, from the point of view of the inner life, these are not problems. The problem is the relation with what is not supramentalised, to prevent the infiltration, the admixture: that is to say, to prevent the nucleus from falling back into an inferior creation—it is a problem about the period of transition.

All those who have given thought to the problem have always imagined something unknown to the rest of humanity, like a gorge in the Himalayas, for example, a place unknown to the rest of the world. But this is not a solution; it is not a solution at all.

No, the only solution is an occult power, but this already implies that before anything can be done, a certain number of individuals must have reached a great perfection of realisation. But one can conceive that if this can be done, one can have a spot which is in the midst of the outside world and yet isolated (without any contacts, you see), a spot where everything would be exactly in its place—as an example. Each thing is exactly in its place, each person exactly in his place, each movement exactly in its place—and in its place in an ascending progressive movement, without any relapse, that is to say, quite the contrary to what happens in ordinary life. Naturally, this presupposes a kind of perfection, this presupposes a kind of unity, this presupposes that the different aspects of the Supreme can be manifested and, of course, an exceptional beauty, a total harmony and a power strong enough to command obedience from the forces of Nature. For example, even if this spot were surrounded by forces of destruction, they would not have the power to act; the protection would

¹ Later, when asked about the meaning of this phrase, the Mother laughed and said: "I said that of the other side!—the side where the notion of space is not so concrete."

be sufficient. All this requires the utmost perfection in the individuals who would be the organisers of such a thing.

(*Silence*)

Indeed, nobody knows how the first men were formed, the first mental realisation. One does not know whether they were isolated individuals or groups, whether this happened in the midst of others or in isolation. I do not know. But there may be an analogy with the future case of the supramental creation. It is not difficult to conceive that in the solitude of the Himalayas or in the solitude of a virgin forest an individual would begin to create around him his little supramental world. It is easy to conceive. But the same thing would be necessary: he would have to have reached such a perfection that his power would act automatically to prevent intrusion, so that automatically his world would be protected; that is to say, all contrary or foreign elements would be prevented from approaching.

Stories of the kind have been told, of people who lived in an ideal solitude. It is not impossible at all to conceive that. When one is in contact with this Power, at the moment it is in you, you see quite well that it is child's play; it is even possible to change certain things, to exert an influence on surrounding vibrations and forms, which automatically begin to be supramentalised. All that is possible, but it is on an individual scale. Whereas, take the example of what is happening here, the individual dwelling at the very centre of all this chaos; there lies the difficulty! Does it not follow from this very fact that it is impossible to reach a kind of perfection in the realisation? But then too, the other example, that of the solitary in the forest, does not at all prove that the rest of mankind will be able to follow; whereas what is happening here is already a much more radiating action. This is what must happen at a given moment, this must happen inevitably. But the problem remains: can this happen at the same time or before the other thing is realised—at the same time or before the individual, the one individual is supramentalised?

Evidently, the realisation under the conditions of community or the group is much more complete, integral, total and probably more perfect than any individual realisation, which is always, *necessarily*, on the external, material plane, absolutely limited, because it is only one mode of being, one mode of manifestation, one microscopic set of vibrations that is touched.

But from the point of view of the easiness of the work, I believe there is no comparison.

(*Silence*)

The problem remains. All people like Buddha and the others had *first* realised and then entered into contact with the world: well, this is very simple. But with regard to what I have in view, is it not an indispensable condition, for the realisation to be total, that one remains in the world?

The Mother's Collected Works, Vol. 15: 403-407

TWO ITEMS FROM THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE "ARYA"

The following is an excerpt from the first issue (15 August 1914) at the time of the outbreak of the First World War. It is reprinted here as it seems to have a wider applicability to whatever "war" may occur in life, be it collective or individual. It is interesting to note the poise of transcending the vital conflict by stopping the "News of the Month" and continuing the "Arya"'s "pure philosophy" that holds the real key to the solution of the problems.

THE NEWS OF THE MONTH

The War

THE "Arya", a Review of pure Philosophy, has no direct concern with political passions and interests and their results. But neither can it ignore the enormous convulsion which is at present in progress, nor at such a time can it affect to deal only with the pettier happenings of the intellectual world as if men were not dying in thousands daily, the existence of great empires threatened and the fate of the world hanging in the balance. The War has its aspects, of supreme importance to a synthetic Philosophy, with which we would have the right to deal. But now is not the hour, now in this moment of supreme tension and wide-spread agony. Therefore, for the time, we suppress this heading in our Review and shall replace it by brief notes on subjects of philosophical interest, whether general or of the day. Meanwhile, with the rest of the world, we await in silence the predestined result.

"Arya", Vol. I, p. 128, 15 August 1914

Another item of interest is the Preface of the "Arya", on the inside front cover of the first issue, the statement of the purposes of the journal that published serially the works which constitute the major part of Sri Aurobindo's "teaching".

"The "Arya" is a Review of pure philosophy.

The object which it has set before itself is twofold:—

1. A systematic study of the highest problems of existence;
2. The formation of a vast Synthesis of knowledge, harmonising the diverse religious traditions of humanity occidental as well as oriental. Its method will be that of a realism, at once rational and transcendental,—a realism consisting in the unification of intellectual and scientific disciplines with those of intuitive experience.

This Review will also serve as an organ for the various groups and societies founded on its inspiration.

The Review will publish:—

Synthetic studies in speculative Philosophy.

Translations and commentaries of ancient texts.

Studies in comparative Religion.

Practical methods of inner culture and self-development.

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1981)

January 23, 1937

I think it is a very fine idea of beauty-loving Bengali people to conceive of flowers as feminine. Why should a hly, lotus or rose be masculine, with all their grace and charm?

No objection to flowers being feminine, but one's notions get topsy-turvy when সঙ্গীত [song] becomes feminine. Even so, it was the ambiguity created which is gruelling, not the transformation of gender.

They have no masculine properties or souls.

Why then the seven brothers চম্পক [Champak]?

I don't dislike "very fine" poetry. Anything short of that is not pleasant.

Rather exacting to demand that everything written shall be very fine.

February 17, 1937

So you also fail to say the precise meaning of the poem!

Who the devil can give the precise meaning of inner things?

Then it will never be understood. People will sarcastically say, "Surrealist! W.P.B.!"

"Write plenty of books"!

The other day D said to M. Baron, "But one can't understand this surrealist poetry." He replied, "Why should you understand?"

Exactly—why should you understand? When you can instand, overstand, roundstand, interstand what's the need of understanding?

If you don't understand how do you pronounce fine, very fine, etc.? By simple feeling?

Queer fellow! As if feeling could not go deeper than intellectual understanding!

Anyhow it seems the poet has nothing to do but to submit himself to the Force. For when he doesn't know what he is talking about how is he going to improve?

He need not understand, but he can know.

It is like casting a net and depending on luck to catch small or big fish as may be. Is there any other way?

Of course there is. Find it out.

But seriously, how to write better in this kind of stuff? What is the trick?

The trick is to put your demand on the source for what you want. If you want to fathom (not understand) what you are writing, ask for the vision of the thing to come along with the word, a vision bringing an inner comprehension. If you want something mystic but convincing to the non-mystic reader, ask for that till you get it.

February 18, 1937

Will a simple "demand" give the thing? But which source?

A demand is an aspiration for something—it will bring its answer, not always immediately, but in time. Whatever the source.

And where is the time to ask for all that when one is busy writing?

Have it at any time as the thing you want—whenever you think of your poetry.

I thought of giving you a simple beauty today, but give this instead for you to see if what I demanded from the source has been granted.

If it's something which means a big advance, you can't expect it all at once.

February 23, 1937

I fondly cherish a hope that one day we shall be able to write like Harin.

Better I hope.

Perhaps we may not have his fluency.

So much fluency is not necessary. He had perhaps too much.

Nowadays I am having more difficulty in writing. The "abundance" of inspiration seems to have vanished. In one hour I write just one sonnet.

It is probably because of your seeking for something better which makes the mind hesitate—as also the bar put upon the constant repetition of old images. But that is only a transitional difficulty. Still perhaps you are thinking too much while writing.

I concentrate or meditate for a while before writing; at times I go within and then write. But the difficulty is no less. I have to pause after every expression.

Pause to do what? Think? You have to cultivate the power of feeling instinctively the value of what you write—either while writing or immediately you go over it when it is completed.

February 24, 1937

How is my aspiration for greater beauty, depth, etc. "vague"? How to be more precise when one doesn't know the meaning of what one is writing?

Whatever the reason it is not precise, it is only a general formula which in practice might mean a hundred different things.

February 25, 1937

You spoke about a "formula" yesterday. If you could give it, we could aspire with it and get quick results.

There is no formula—these things are not done by formulas. It is the thing that you want for your poetry that you have to make precise in your perception and get it.

Or do you mean that one should first aspire for harmony, then depth, images etc.?

Harmony certainly and as much depth as possible and the right images and language giving the thing to be expressed as powerfully built and living a form as possible. But I am not aware that there is any fixed order like that in their coming.

You say sometimes images are forced. How to understand that? inner feeling?

One can surely feel that if one tries.

But my inner vision didn't tell me that অসুখর গ্ৰন্থ [the book of the ocean] was a forced

image, nor did it tell me that the poem was not cogent enough.

Well then, the inner vision or the subtle [sense] of these things has to be developed till it is capable of feeling and seeing these differences.

I realise however that all this will take time to develop. Meanwhile one has to stumble, make mistakes and sometimes have good luck.

If one can't yet see one's way, one has to feel it by experiment.

March 1, 1937

You find "funny" things in my poems? Then, Sir, you have only to ask me to stop writing.

But why do you object to fun? Modern opinion is that poets ought to be funny (humorous) and that the objection to fun in poetry is a romantic superstition.

But then how is it that you give remarks "very fine" etc.?

Well, it can be funnily fine or finely funny—can't it?

If they are really funny, why should I spoil my valuable time writing them when I could sleep comfortably for two hours?

For the joy of the world, of course. Funny however is used in the sense of "extraordinary". You can't deny that these things are extraordinary?

Is that the reason why you don't give any explanations either? Very well, Sir!

Why should I explain when you can understand and explain yourself? As Christ came to save sinners, not the righteous, so am I here to explain the inexplicable to the nonunderstanding.

[There were a few friends who, inspired by my surrealist poems, were writing poems in the same vein, and I was sending them to Sri Aurobindo asking him to explain some of the difficult ones. After explaining once or twice he said that if it continued he would go on "strike".]

But I don't see the logic of your threat of "strike". Against whom?

The strike is supposed to be against the 4,5,6 ad infinitum, not against the two.

If people begin writing these surrealistic poems by your inspiration, am I to blame and suffer?

My inspiration? When they catch it from you!

Who are the two, by the way, for whom you have to write explanations from set to dawn? One is my precious self?

Yes.

And the other is Jyoti?

Yes. I have to explain for her also.

But she is not a surrealist!

Surrealist or symbolist, it comes to the same so far as need for explanation goes.

March 2, 1937

In spite of your decrying my poems, Sir, there are plenty of beautiful conceptions, you must admit!

Who decries it? Some are funny—I beg pardon, extraordinary—but the beauty is all there.

March 7, 1937

A problem. I told you that I have written 2 poems in an hour. Should I have written one instead and revised it to make it a better egg if possible?

No such rule necessary.

But when this stuff itself is not very remarkable can further labour improve it much?

Only detail corrections are needed.

Wouldn't it be a waste of time?

Yes.

If so why not write another poem instead?

Yes.

*Of course one can go on altering and altering till an altogether new poem is created.
That is what you do, I understand.*

That is for "big" poetry. Short poems I usually revise only once and alterations are not many.

SHARING

THERE is a joy as I lie
This evening under the sky
Sharing with all above, around,
Life, breathing, acting, without purpose.

Many questions and thoughts float about,
Swaying with green buds and bees,
Gliding with sparrows, quail and kites,
Suddenly a few dart and dive

Into my brain, but seeing the cells
At repose, all windows open but entry closed
They bid adieu and depart; their poise
Unruffled, they too exist without thought.

There is a joy—intense, calm
And sheer fun in just existing
Sharing without doubt or thought,
Doing what each does best.

DINKAR

OM: AN EXPERIENCE OF CHAMPAKLAL

RELATED BY HIMSELF

I WAS sitting with eyes closed—not in meditation—simply sitting. Many times I sit like that. I also lie down with eyes closed as I feel nice that way.

EXPERIENCE

I hear the infinite sound of “Om” coming from afar—just one word “Om”, in the same prolonged rhythm continuing endlessly. It appears to be chanted at a very very far distance. Then it sounds as if this chant were now coming nearer and nearer—very near to me. In a moment, it seems as if it was being spoken just by my side. Then in a short while, I feel, “No, no, this sound is arising from within me!” Then it looks oh! except this sound, there is nothing else in the universe! Then it appears that all are speaking only Om! What can one say to this? Can one call it a sound or what?

After waking up, it occurs to me that all this happening at the same time is not possible in the usual way, but that I have heard it and experienced it that way is also as much a factual truth.

Even after waking up, there is a unique and indescribable feeling of Ananda in having heard and gone through this impossible experience.

$$6+6+8+1=21$$

6.6.81

21 is a sacred and auspicious day.

1. The sound is being chanted at a far, far, very far distance.
2. The sound now appears to be coming nearer and nearer.
3. The sound, *i.e.*, the word Om, is being spoken just near me.
4. The sound is coming from inside me, is being repeated in me.
5. In the entire universe, except this sound, there is no other existence; this alone is everything.
6. Each and everyone is speaking only Om.

These are 6 kinds of experiences happening simultaneously. The date of these experiences is also 6.

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1981)

7

THERE was a proposal to translate into Bengali Sri Aurobindo's small Book, *Six Poems*, and to dedicate the translation in a printed form as an offering at his feet on 15th August, 1934 on the occasion of his birthday. Six sadhaks would translate these six poems. Nolini asked me to translate one of them. The five others were Nolini Kanta Gupta himself, Suresh Chakravarty, Anilbaran Roy, Dilip Kumar Roy and Behari Barua. The one I was to translate was "In Horis Aeternum"—a very difficult poem. I had much doubt if I could cope with it.

Still, when such a great opportunity had arrived I didn't want it to go by easily. I consented, knowing that I could draw upon the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's force. Sri Aurobindo gave his consent and I started with great zeal. Often I had to seek his help regarding many points. I quote here a few instances of the verbal exchanges.

"Your 'In Horis Aeternum'," I wrote, "has put me to a lot of trouble. Many people are discouraging me saying that this poem is very difficult, almost impossible to translate. Dilip holds the same opinion. Quite a few seem to have tried and failed. Only Nolini gives some hope. 'To make an effort is good in every way,' he says. We are all aware that the poem is truly difficult. Even so, I am emboldened to undertake its translation, relying entirely on your help and inspiration, not on my own capacity. When I am depending on One whose force makes the impossible a possibility, then—who knows?— I may also succeed. With this ray of 'who knows?' I have advanced. Besides, to feel what you have written and try to give it a form has a great value and delight. However, I have made a rough attempt of four lines. Dilip has seen them, and did not seem to have been impressed. He said, 'It won't do as it is, you have to change a lot.' I don't mind doing so but I can't quite understand what I should do. Do you also think that the poem can't be translated? Please tell me frankly—so that I may not stick on to something which is impossible."

Sri Aurobindo's reply:

"The poem is not at all easy to translate, but one cannot say that it is impossible, one can always try provided one is prepared not to mind if it is a failure or half-success. To try sometimes even impossible things can be a very good training for the capacity."

Myself: "Translation of Mother's writing and of yours can never be equivalent to the original, nobody expects it. But whatever approximation is possible, whatever inspiration can be received should be enough so long as the thought and movement are preserved."

Sri Aurobindo: "Yes. A complete equivalent is not likely—but something approximative can be done."

Myself: "One thing: I am doing my translation in blank verse. Dilip objects strongly to it. He says that without rhyme it won't do. Do you have the same view?"

Sri Aurobindo: "If it can be done in rhyme so much the better—as the original is in rhyme. But if not, it can be tried in blank verse. The form will not be the same, but to keep something of the movement may not be impossible."

Myself: "I am rewriting it, in rhyme. It appears very difficult, but very attractive too. A great urge is pressing me and I am trying hard. The first four lines are not yet done well. The 'movement' can be felt, but the adequate expression has yet to come. So I remain unsatisfied. I tried one long line in blank verse. As Nolini found 'it somewhat heavy', I am changing it. The expression 'unchangeable monotone' I can't echo in Bengali to my satisfaction. Please give me light, inspiration. Whether I can do it or not, the very attempt to do your things gives me great joy. I feel as if I am always in contact with you. The consciousness remains turned upward, and there is a strange feeling of some inner change. That is why I want to continue and can't give up though I can't do it well. And I am troubling you for nothing. Again, I want to know more clearly if in these two lines

'Over its head like a gold ball the sun tossed by the gods in their play
Follows its curve.

the second 'its' refers to the sun."

Sri Aurobindo: "It is the sun's own curve."

Myself: "I have done some parts. May I send them to you as samples so that you may decide if it will do?"

Sri Aurobindo: "Yes, you can send."

I sent the samples. On seeing them, Sri Aurobindo wrote: "You have made an excellent start."

Myself: "Please explain to me this line I have marked. I can't get the full sense of it:

'Something that waits, something that wanders and settles not, a Nothing that was
all and is found.'

Sri Aurobindo replied in Bengali, which may be translated thus: "The sense is: something ineffable—as if it is nothing *asat*, yet it is everything, contains everything—it was not, yet it can be obtained, and once obtained, everything is obtained. I don't know if I have made it clear."

Myself: "The last line as I have translated it doesn't satisfy me at all. Something is missing. I have made changes; Dilip wants further changes and is helping me too. He has changed the last three words, I am sending them. If you think that Dilip's version is better, that will be kept."

Sri Aurobindo: "I cannot say that I approve of either of Dilip's last words or any of the other alterations suggested by you or Nolini. All seem to miss the mark."

However, finally after many changes the poem took shape. Dilip worked hard at

it. Nolini and Dilip encouraged and helped to make possible what was really impossible. Dilip himself wrote a letter to Sri Aurobindo after the completion. It will be seen from Sri Aurobindo's reply how patiently he saw our work and taught and helped us.

Dilip wrote:

"I feel the last verse makes very clear meaning anyway, but since Sahana is not pleased with it and she has been labouring at it for days, I think I may have mistaken your meaning. Doubtless, the 'Something' I could not keep as I took it to mean that the passing moment reflects the Eternal when 'Caught by the spirit in sense'. Tell me therefore—O Lord, I must stop."

Sri Aurobindo's reply:

"Dilip,

I think it is a very fine rendering. In line 4 however I would not say that there is no reference to day as a movement of time but only to the noon, the day as sunlit space rather than time, it is the fixed moment, as it were, the motionless scene of noon. The eye is of course the sun itself, I mark by the dash that I have finished with my first symbol of the gold ball and go off to the second quite different one.

In the last line your translation is indeed very clear and precise in meaning, but it is perhaps too precise—the 'something' twice repeated is meant to give a sense of just the opposite, an imprecise unseizable something which is at once nothing and all things at a time. It is found no doubt in the momentary things and all is there, but the finding is less definite than your translation suggests. But the expression is very good.

One point more. 'Caught by the spirit in sense' "means" there is a spirit in sense (sense not being sense alone) that catches the eternal out of perishable hours in these things'."

At one time I used to write a lot of poems. That was one of the brightest periods as regards writing poetry. Nolini Kanta Gupta and Suresh Chakravarty had of course started long ago, Anilbaran also, Dilip, Nishikanta were going on with great speed. Behari Barua, Jatin Das, of Chittagong were also on the list. Nirod's niece Jyotirmala (formerly Jyotirmoyee) started writing here and was doing it remarkably. Nirod too put his hand to it and was faring well. I used to compose from childhood, but not regularly. My writing was intermittent, following the pressure of inspiration. Anil Kumar Bhatta was another novice. Amal Kiran (K.D. Sethna) was already a poet, but here his poetry took a different colour. Arjava (John Chadwick) started writing here and became a fine poet. His poems, which were many, were published by the Ashram after his death. Romen, a mere boy, began writing poems in English and was doing well. Besides Nolini, Dilip, Nirod and Anilbaran were writing in both English and Bengali. Nishikanta brought out a book of English poems—Nolini was writing in French also. Harin came, as a great genius, and went on writing in huge quantity. He composed directly on the typewriter. He was already known as a fine poet. Sri Aurobindo had written a glorious review of his first book, *The Feast of Youth*, in the *Arya*. Nishikanta's genius had flowered in Shantiniketan, but here it took a different turn and his poems earned high praise from Sri Aurobindo.

Jyotirmala, Nirod, Anil Bhatta, Amiya and myself learnt Bengali and Sanskrit laghu-guru chhanda from Dilip for some time. Dilip had then become a master in chhanda. He and Nishikanta were making various experiments in laghu-guru and were trying to introduce it in Bengali poetry and song, not without success. Laghn-guru seems to create a deep feeling and a fine sound-vibration. It has not only a mantric effect, it carries great power too. To know its rules is not sufficient. One must know how to read it as well. Then alone its nature, beauty and special delight can be grasped. The Bengali ear is not used to the swing of this chhanda, but with a little practice one can catch and enjoy it.

Among us, Jyotirmala had made a good progress. Nirod and myself were also doing well. We three and Anil Bhatta used to write daily at a fixed hour and invoke Sri Aurobindo's inspiration before doing it. It was done as a part of our Sadhana. What we wanted was that our poetry should be cast and shaped from its very roots by his inspiration. A new zeal and taste carried us forward. When a poem was finished, how eagerly we sent it to Sri Aurobindo and how expectantly we waited for his reply which Nolini used to bring the next morning! It was his duty to deliver letters at every house by 7 a.m. With Sri Aurobindo's touch and his remarks the poems would come back filling our beings with an uncommon exhilaration. Sometimes he would say "Good", "Fine" or even "Very beautiful" about my poems. As his appreciation increased, so did my joy. Only those who received something from the Mother or Sri Aurobindo can appreciate their full impact. I would invite his suggestions at times when particularly some alternatives had to be chosen. For instance, I asked: "Which one is better—'নবাকর্ণ সাথে', 'উষসীব সাথে' না 'অহনাব সাথে'?"

He replied: "On the whole নবাকর্ণ seems to me better."

One can almost say he led us onward, holding us by the hand. We were making various experiments with poetry, not regarding the poetic beauty alone, but regarding the rhythm too. The more we entered into the rhythmic varieties the more was the enjoyment...We realised that the knowledge of rhythm intensifies this delight.

Feeling and beauty of words apart, the swing of Chhanda, which was something unknown before, gave a new taste, an increased pleasure in poetry. I had loved poetry always but I did not know it had so many aspects to delight us. As I proceeded onward, a door suddenly opened, as it were, of an unknown house and lines of English poetry began to come. Most incredible! I was astonished. I knew very little of English, yet the lines were coming in that tongue. I set them down in this form:

Mother, in my deep heart I find
A jewel shines amidst the night,
When all the mortals senses are blind
It speaks to the stars of unknown height.

Mother, a flame of love so sweet
Sways along the path of gold

And rises to touch your heavenly feet
Where sun and moon and stars you mould.

Mother, a flower of eternity
Unfolds its petals within my soul.
I sing to the light that unveils to me
The Crystal tower, your shining goal.

Mother, in my precious secret spot,
I am nestled on your breast alone
Where all my parts are gathered and brought
Before the dream of your opening-dawn.

Nirod took my poem to Sri Aurobindo, since by then all correspondence had come to a stop. Sri Aurobindo corrected it like this:

Mother! deep in my heart I find
A jewel glimmering in the night,
When every mortal sense is blind
It speaks to stars of unknown height.

Mother! a love-flame swift and sweet
Swaying along the path of gold,
It rises to your heavenly feet
Where sun and moon and stars you mould.

Mother! the flower of eternity
Unfolds its petals in my soul,
I sing to its light that unveils to me
A crystal tower, your shining goal.

Mother! in a lonely secret spot
I am cradled on your breast alone
Where all of me is gathered, brought
Into your dream of opening-Dawn.

Another incident to note. I was working in the Building Department, supervising the repair and construction of houses, and dealing with workers. One day when I was inspecting the repair of a house called Nanteuil House, one line in English began to hover around me:

Travels from height to height unseen.

Well, I was puzzled; neither could I drive it away, it would insist on coming back. So I started jotting down lines just as they flowed in. Here they are after Sri Aurobindo's correction:

An emerald-soul of peaks within
 Travels from height to height unseen;
 The shadow of the Infinite falls on earth's pain
 A golden desire, a heavenly rain.
 Transcendent of Time's moments, power
 Comes encircling the eternal hour.
 The sun above, the moon below,
 Unheard foot-falls come soft and slow,
 A bell rings from Eternity:
 Whirling the Almighty's power, She
 Creates a land of blue and white
 Within the smoke and doze of night:
 She comes in her golden robe of fire
 To release God-music from earth's lyre.

After a few days, as I sat down to write, I found that like the English poem some lines in Bengali were coming whose meaning was unintelligible to me. It seemed very strange and intricate since Bengali was my own native tongue. However, I went on writing and tearing up as things seemed to have no head or tail. For six days I continued in this way till I met Nirod and said to him, "What is all this happening to me? Can you tell me?" He said, "Can you recite some lines?" I did that quite easily, for they had become so natural after so many days of repetition. He heard them and said, "They are oceans of mystic lines. Don't throw away. Finish them as they come and give them to me. I shall show them to Sri Aurobindo."

With a wild fervour, I finished the poem. Though it was all Greek, it read well and I felt something, as if there was some stuff in it. Nirod showed it to Sri Aurobindo and, before I had time to ask him, he said: "Sri Aurobindo read your poem and said, 'If Sahana throws away such inspiration, then what's the use of giving her inspiration?' " And when Nirod reported the meaning of the poem as explained by Sri Aurobindo I was not only astonished, I became speechless and wondered how the mysteries of the unseen world could pass through my pen.

Warmly encouraging me Nirod said, "Go on writing even if you don't understand." So I continued for some days writing mystic poems. Sometimes words dropped into me, whose meaning was unknown to me and I had to consult people or the dictionary if any such words actually existed. A poem came in this manner, whose language was simply majestic and would give an impression that I was a master of Bengali.

Then I felt that, though it was all a puzzle, far behind my consciousness, the image

of Shiva appeared again and again. The lines gave me a thrill, the reading of them was accompanied by an inner satisfaction. After writing some new lines, my heart was full—how wonderful are the lines and the picture they evoke, I said to myself....

I took the poem after completing it to Nolini. He is very fond of mystic poems and understands them well. He read and said that the poem was about Shiva. Nirod then showed it to Sri Aurobindo. The meaning he made out was also beyond my grasp, relating to higher worlds. It was about Shiva all right, and many other things he said which made me gape with wonder.

After practising for some days, I had an insight into a few features of these mystic poems. They cannot be written nor corrected by one's own effort, both their coming and their correction follow the same method. Mind's intervention is not possible, since what the poems are going to say and how they will say it are entirely unknown to the writer. The planes from which they come are beyond the reach of the mind. So the only thing to do is to make oneself an instrument and let the inspiration flow. Very often I tried to change by the mind and the result was a marked discord, incongruous with the original inspiration and stood out glaringly. Mystic poems create their own atmosphere and their language is veiled with a mystery. Besides, they don't express all that they want to say and what they say suggests an infinite meaning lying concealed behind the words. Just as knowledge has no end, and the more one enters within the more is the new light discovered, so are the mystic poems. A touch unfathomed is felt which suggests much more than it reveals.

Nolini rendered one of my mystic poems into English. I quote it here and close the chapter on mystic poetry.

The first tremor of the Light, to the dream-journey
Night's desire is now appeased, She feels the Sun within her,
The Mother of Infinity holds in her bosom her first guest;
The Call awakens in the lotus-scented senses.

On the far shore where moves the Fiery Wheel
Rose, unheeded, the cry of the Space,—
It spread and enveloped even our shadowy horizons:
A golden vision flutters on Earth's eye-lids,
As the flaming Spider weaves his luminous web around himself !

The Bard wheels onward in his sweeping march:
He gathers in perfect rhythm the soul's obeisances,
Urges secreted in the heart, of the sun-flower,
Hymns limned in her petalled gold!

Darkness massed on darkness has burst all on a sudden:
Eyes once closed open to the Lightning's flare.

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1981)

This is the
interesting story of
how a being discovered
the Divine Life



2

THE more I tried to concentrate on my goal, the more these adverse forces attacked me by taking various and numberless forms. They worked through people, through ill-health, through doubts, fears, ego, aggressiveness, expectations, despair, false imaginations, inferiority complex, jealousy and dissatisfaction.

I was entangled in this net of illusion.

I questioned the Mother: "The divine Forces are slow to appear, while the anti-

divine forces, without losing a moment, rush into my consciousness. Why is that?" She answered:

"Because your call is not sincere enough and your confidence in the Divine's Grace is not sufficient."

How could I cultivate sincerity and confidence when I saw adverse things happening all around me? It was really difficult to discriminate between the two gigantic forces—the divine and the anti-divine. I received constant suggestions from the dark forces and I felt that they were absolutely right in pointing out countless things which seemed utterly true and real. No wonder I believed them. As a result there was a ceaseless conflict between my inner and my outer being—this division within me left me completely lost. Many a time a prayer to the Mother surged up from my aching heart, begging for her help. In reply to one of these appeals she wrote:

"I am giving and shall continue to give—but the important thing is that you *must receive*.

"If you call or aspire with fear that you will not be heard and have doubts about the Divine's answer, then the adverse forces that are always on the watch, slip into your consciousness *through the fear and the doubts* and do their mischief.

"So you must call with a true and sincere faith.

"Help and Grace are *always* with you. But you must open yourself to them."

I tried to follow her advice as much as I could but it was not always easy to persevere. Some parts of my being refused to accept the new conditions of life and revolted against the Mother's Force, Love, Light and Truth. Frequently these parts opened doors to welcome the hostile forces.

I was among strangers and in a strange atmosphere. There had been a sudden change of environment, food and climate. I wondered whether I could find the Divine in such a place. Thus more and more I got trapped in a dreadful web of falsehood and my love and faith in the Mother got suffocated.

During that time there was an unpleasant incident which left me totally shaken. In answer to my letter of anger at it the Mother wrote:

"...Now, from the point of view of Yoga, it is always better to attach no importance to these superficial things and to keep an inner poise and a quiet mind, taking refuge with the Divine and giving importance only to the relation with the Divine."

I fought down my anger and recovered myself. The inner being implored the Mother to give her strength to help me settle down in this life. She promised:

"My love is always with you, my help is always with you, my strength is always

with you. I will lead you throughout all difficulties towards the Light, the Peace and the Joy.

“This you must never forget.”

A few lines from the Mother, her sweet smile, her tender touch, soothed me momentarily, but I often forgot her luminous words. It seemed there was no end to the psychological struggle.

In spite of my not being conscious, the Mother’s Force worked non-stop within me.

On the 28th June, for the first time after my coming to the Ashram, I had a glimpse of the Peace and the Presence and that made me happy. The Mother confirmed:

“Now that you have experienced the Peace and the Presence you must keep them by keeping very quiet in your mind. I am always helping you, but it is only when your mind is quiet that you can receive the help.”

Unhappily the little mind was not always quiet and silent. It built and broke numberless images and wandered impatiently and endlessly in its own domain of reverie. Several times I brushed away the cobwebs of wrong imaginations and misleading thoughts from my mind, but often I failed. The Mother threw more light on my consciousness:

“I told you already several times what is the way, *the only way*; it is *complete surrender*. When you came here you said you wanted to give yourself to the Divine, that you wanted the Divine only. But in your brain there were a number of things (not material but emotional) that you wanted from the Divine in exchange. And when you did not get what you wanted, but something else—far superior—that you did not understand, something in your mind and your vital revolted, was dissatisfied and depressed and created all the trouble. Well, now there is nothing else to do but to be sincere to your higher aspiration and not only want the Divine but agree full-heartedly to the *Divine Will* and *give yourself without demands*; then and then only you will recover your poise, quietness of mind and happiness. It goes without saying that my full help is with you for that purpose.”

I asked the Mother whether she was angry with me because of my restless mind. She answered:

“I am never angry with you and always ready to help you with all my love and force.”

I also told her that I did not wish to have joy and happiness for myself alone—I

wanted them for others too. She wrote:

“Yes, I know that.”

I wondered whether she had heard my call even if it had not been wholly sincere. She replied:

“I always hear your call and answer at once.”

Alas! on my side I was so opaque that I could not receive her answer. Life was not as easy as I had thought it would be. Days rolled on.

Now it was Sri Aurobindo's birthday. As usual the Mother gave the Darshan message to everyone in the Meditation Hall upstairs.

I compared this message with the one which she had given on her own birthday and I wondered at their striking similarity. The message for Sri Aurobindo's birthday was a poem of his, which ran:

A strong son of lightning came down to the earth with fire-feet of
 swiftness, splendid;
 Light was born in a womb and thunder's force filled a human frame.
 The calm speed of heaven, the sweet greatness, pure passion, winged
 power had descended;
 All the gods in a mortal body dwelt, bore a single name.

A wide wave of movement stirred all the dim globe in each glad and
 dreaming fold;
 Life was cast into grandeur, ocean hands took the wheels of Time.
 Man's soul was again a bright charioteer of days hired by gods impetu-
 ous bold,
 Hurlled by One on His storm-winged ways, a shaft aimed at heights
 sublime.

The old tablets clanging fell, ancient slow Nature's dead wall was rent
 asunder,
 God renewed himself in a world of young beauty, thought and flame:
 Divine voices spoke on men's lips, the heart woke to white dawns of
 gleaming wonder,
 Air a robe of splendour, breath a joy, life a godlike game.

Cent. Ed., Vol. 5, p. 595

At this time the Mother had a toothache and disliked going out with a swollen cheek. She remained at home for a few days and I became miserable without seeing

her. On top of this, people without losing a moment started talking and imagining all sorts of things about her. I was affected by their vibrations and felt nervous, bewildered and helpless. This was how the adverse forces assaulted me. The Mother consoled me;

“Surely, my child, I have no intention of leaving you and you need not worry.

“Why do you listen to all the rubbish people say? They are full of mischief and throw their poison on everybody.

“One thing you must know and never forget—it is: all that is true and *sincere* will always be kept—only what is false and insincere will disappear.

“So—in the measure in which your need for me is sincere and genuine, *it will be fulfilled.*”

Yet I was still under the influence of the hostile forces. Specially at night, I often sat on the wide ledge under the opened shutters of the Golconde window, pressed my head between my hands and sobbed my heart out, desperately, wildly and blindly, in a tempest which shook my whole being until I felt as if I could bear the incessant clamour of my mind no more. I felt so sick at heart that frequently I turned my face into my pillow and wept myself to sleep. The Mother wrote to me soothingly:

“My child,

“I am always with you and will never leave you. But as you are asking what to do, I shall tell you one thing that you must do, because it will help you.

“Even if you do not understand French, come to all my French lessons, that is to say: *Mondays, Thursdays* and *Saturdays* at 5.30 p.m. for the translation lessons; *Wednesdays* and *Fridays* at about 7.15 or 7.30 p.m. for the class and the reading.

“You will sit there and listen and after some time you will see that you will understand more and more and in any case, understanding or not, you will be near me, like the baby cat near his mother, and you will benefit from the atmosphere.”

I set off joyously for the translation lessons, but I did not know to which room I should go or where I should sit. So I asked a few persons who were also going, but they gave me evasive answers. They hinted that there was no place for me in the class as it was overcrowded already, and I had no knowledge of French anyhow!

Some people were constantly jealous of me and harassed me in every possible manner. Nevertheless I found my way and stood near the classroom as some others did, waiting for the Mother. There too I felt that some tried to humiliate me. My eyes were swimming with tears and within a few moments countless defeatist thoughts raced through my mind.

The Mother came out of her room and at once inquired about me. I approached

her. She was still unwell. With a faint smile she gave me a copy of *The Human Cycle* with a lovely page-mark. Then she put her arm round my shoulders and led me gently into the class. Everyone got up. Indeed the classroom was very crowded, but the Mother gave me a very good place just in front of her on the second bench. All the time I marvelled at her Grace.

A few days later she called me and said to me in an intimate tone:

“Child, you should never listen to people. And if you do, then you should hear through one ear and let it out through the other.

“If something wrong happens, at once repeat my name—‘Ma’, ‘Ma’. Indeed it is like a meditation. Whenever you repeat the Name of the Divine you must always feel that the Divine is in your heart—there you can feel sweetness and peace. No doubt sometimes you do not feel the Divine’s Presence and Peace; it is because your consciousness is entangled in the mind and full of illusions. But you must understand that the hostile forces are false and the Divine Forces are true. You must also develop your consciousness towards the Divine Light.

“At the same time, you should eat well—not for your sake but for the sake of the Lord and His work. You should keep your body fit. Relax before you go to sleep and call me and then sleep in that atmosphere. Then my Force will work and will organise the whole being.

“You must never think that the thing is difficult or impossible for you to put into practice and never say that you cannot do anything. Instead of that you must say, ‘The Lord makes everything easier for me.’ In fact you must try your best in order to achieve your goal. Keep absolute faith and a strong will. If you remain idle without making any effort and say, ‘Ah! I want everything’, well, then it is quite impossible for you to attain your goal.

“Whenever you feel my Presence, Peace and Joy, you must always believe in these things because they are *true*. As you gradually feel the Divine’s Presence, you will get new strength, new consciousness—everything.

“Once for all the adverse forces are bound to submit to the Divine Forces and the Divine’s Victory is certain.”

*

One fine morning, the 24th September, to my sheer amazement the Mother for the first time sent me through Amrita, the General Manager of the Ashram, pretty tiny pink rosebuds—signifying “Tenderness for the Divine. It is sweet with charming shade and delicate form, a smile that blossom.”

I pressed them against my heart and closed my eyes for a second or two in order to assimilate their occult message.

Subtle fears and obstinate doubts often blurred my vision. Each day, each second

was a trial to me. I knew very well that I could neither escape from the Ashram nor stay in the ordinary world nor do anything against the ceaseless attacks. Again and again I felt lonely and lost. When I expressed my feelings to the Mother, she replied:

“My dear child,

“You did well to write if it helps you to get rid of the nasty attack.

“But how can you feel lonely when my love is always with you?

“Your place is *here* and your soul knows it well, and it is *here* that you will get rid of all trouble.”

I wanted very much to see the Mother more often and tell her everything personally because I felt that she alone understood me. I was longing to be freed from the clutches of the hostile forces and to attain my goal. In answer to my prayer the Mother wrote:

“I *do want* that you should be freed from these cruel forces that make you so unhappy and inwardly I am constantly working to save you from their nasty grip—with my Force, Thought and Love, I never leave you for a moment—they constantly surround you with their protection and help. It is only physically that I cannot see you and speak to you always because I am too busy and have too many things to do. So you must learn to feel always my very real Presence and also my help whenever things become difficult.

“It would be good if daily you could devote some time to prayer, worship and meditation in whatever place you find it easier.

“Meanwhile keep courage and faith. I shall see you on the 1st November, your birthday, with the purpose of giving you a new birth, a birth in the spirit, to make you strong and peaceful.”

This letter brought me a gleam of hope and comfort.

I now recall what the Mother has stated in the *Bulletin* of February 1959, p. 81:

“What is called ‘New Birth’ is the birth into the spiritual life, into the spiritual consciousness; it is to carry in oneself something of the Spirit which, through the individual soul, can begin to govern the life and be the master of one’s existence. In the supramental world it is the Spirit which will become the master of this world in its entirety and of all its manifestations and all its expressions consciously, spontaneously, naturally.”

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO'S SUPERMIND, CAUSAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND "TURIYA"

A LETTER

THE following are my ideas after reading p. 256 of the book you wanted me to consult: Sri Aurobindo's *Letters on Yoga*, Tome I.

In the first letter, after the mention of the external waking consciousness and then the inner subliminal whose movements are felt like things of dream and vision, there is the phrase: "the Superconscient (Supermind, Overmind etc.) is beyond even that range and is to the mind like a deep sleep."

All that is above the inner subliminal is here considered "the Superconscient", and Supermind no less than Overmind and the other "overhead" ranges comes under the rubric.

The next letter (in reference to the one Self that is at the base of all the states) alludes to this third state as "the Self that supports the Deep Sleep State or Causal Consciousness, *Kāraṇa*". So the causal or *Kāraṇa* is all the "overhead", with Supermind as its top. Supermind is evidently the *Kāraṇa* consciousness *par excellence*.

The fourth state or "the Self in the Supracosmic Consciousness", therefore, cannot be Supermind, strictly speaking. Inasmuch as Supermind, the organising Truth-Consciousness, is the original divine plane where the term "cosmos" (=organised play of One and Many, truths of the Unmanifest brought forth and put in order for a manifestation of the universal and the individual) becomes meaningful, Supermind is not "Supracosmic."

But inasmuch as the cosmos manifested on that plane is the archetypal cosmos, the Truth-world, Supermind is not cosmic in the sense that would apply to Overmind, etc. The fact that it is part of a transcendent quaternary—*Sat* (Existence), *Chit-Tapas* (Consciousness-Force), *Ananda* (Bliss), *Vijñāna* (Knowledge)—renders it "Supracosmic": it is the Supracosmic turned towards cosmicisation, or the Transcendent Cosmified. It is both transcendent and universal. Perhaps this is what the third letter on the same page means by its closing phrase: "Prajna or Ishwara—the Superconscient Spirit, Master of all things and the highest Self on which all depends."

The last seven words here would seem, strictly speaking, to apply to the second letter's "Self in the Supracosmic Consciousness". But in this letter Sri Aurobindo is referring, as the opening sentence says, only to "two sets of three names." The fourth name is not in question.

In Sri Aurobindo's outlook, Supermind is the Supreme *Kāraṇa* or causal consciousness which is continuous with the Self in the Supracosmic Consciousness.

As for "turiya"—the term on the strength of which you have argued differently from me—I should say that Supermind is "turiya" or "fourth" when we descend from *Sat*, *Chit-Tapas* and *Ananda* as well as the same when we ascend from Matter, Life and Mind. It is known by that term in the Rigveda as Sri Aurobindo interprets that

scripture. It is not the “turiya” of the Mandukya Upanishad’s gradation, the sheer Self beyond all manifestation, the utter Absolute distinct from the Self of “Sleep”, “Dream” and “Waking”. Or we may consider it this “turiya” in the sense that for Sri Aurobindo the Supermind is continuous with it and is itself that “fourth” in an archetypally cosmifying activity on which all cosmos from Overmind downward depends and which is their cause or *Kāraṇa*.

Once we stop identifying the Rigveda’s “turiya” with the Mandukya Upanishad’s without any reservation, we shall grasp Sri Aurobindo’s vision correctly in the context of our discussion.

AMAL KIRAN

HER SCHOOL

All masonry rippled powerfully to an inward music,
 Protecting, like living stone,
 The adolescence of future man.
 A mind of light whose insistence keen
 Pressures here into wakefulness
 Ancient souls
 With large supernal gaze and unchiselled diadems of immortality:
 The quiet hunger at first which drew them here,
 Wrapping in blaze of ever-ascending wave
 The phoenix-children of the lost realms of Truth—
 Rediscoverers of primordial wonders,
 Intuitive architects of a new and greening earth—
 Rings with deadly fire hydras of the past
 And glamorous adventures
 That must give way to Light.

ARVIND HABBU

MĀYĀ AND YOGAMĀYĀ

WE have two verses in the Gita, wherein explicit distinction is drawn between the Lord and His Māyā: His power of creation and His mode of drawing souls to Him, guiding and ripening them by His own patent action of yogamaya. What we gather from verse 14 of chapter VII is the Lord's declaration: "This Māyā of mine, Divine in origin and constituted of the three gunas of Sattwa, Rajas, and Tamas is very hard to comprehend and tide over to the other shore of parā prakṛiti presided over by me; only those who look up to me and reach out to me can comprehend or cross it."

From verse 61 of chapter XVIII, we understand Sri Krishna saying: "The Lord is seated at the heart of the universe, manipulating the wheel-machine whereon creatures are mounted, ostensibly for a merry-go-round of a giant escalator. Only by seeking shelter, unreservedly and categorically, in the Lord, can one feel peace abiding through grace abounding.

In both these verses, there are clear demarcations of two hemispheres: The one of parā prakṛiti with the Lord and His grace, the other of aparā prakṛiti with its framework of relentless law and bondage to the triple cord of the three guṇas or to the exasperating wheel of machinations and endless illusory experiences.

Shall we denominate the two powers of the Lord—that of action in the lower hemisphere by ineluctable law and causation of karma, and that of his action in the higher hemisphere by His grace and protection—by two handy and traditional names of Māyā & Yogamāyā?

If Māyā in its primary derivative sense is the power of creation, time-cum-space reckonings and measurements, in its secondary sense it also means something elusive or even illusionary, some dark power of enchantment and hypnosis that ties us down to sense-wedded experiences and sensational life. It is precisely that centrifugal pull of that heady wine of degenerating or diffusing the spirit-potency into wrong channels, that has been the bane down the ages of spiritual orientation and fulfilment of spiritual destiny.

But that malady, too, has its remedy. Counteract for once the centrifugal force by the centripetal force: turn towards the Divine and His saving grace, stick to Him and His counterbalancing power of Yogamāyā, and there will no more be anything to deplore or fear or denounce.

CHIMANBHAI

THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1981)

THE three metres Gāyatrī, Triṣṭubha and Jagatī are celebrated in I. 164 at length, a sukta which is the source for the well-known Upanishadic symbol of two birds seated on a tree, one eating the fruit, the other watching.²⁸ Garuḍa, of course, also sits atop the gigantic Rauhina which is the Vyāsan analogue of the World-tree or Igdrasyr whose fruit is nectar, the delight-sap at the essence of all existence. The role of these metres is specifically akin to that of Garuḍa in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* (VI. 1.6.1): they are sent out to fetch Soma by Kadru and Suparṇī who are competing about their forms. Kadru wins and bids Suparṇī obtain Soma from “the third heaven”, *i.e.*, the world of Sat-Chit-Ānanda. In the same passage it is explained that Kadru is the earth and Suparṇī the sky. The effort is that of earth to obtain the divine Bliss, for which it bids the sky, *i.e.*, the world of Pure Mind, to fetch it. Suparṇī, in turn, bids its progeny the sauparṇeyas, who are the metres, to do so. One by one Jagatī, Triṣṭubha and Gāyatrī try. The first two fail, losing two of their letters in the process. Finally, the youngest of them (just as Garuḍa is the youngest of the progeny of Kadru and Vinatā), Gāyatrī brings back not only Soma but the lost letters. She carries two pressings of Soma in her feet and one in the beak, being imaged as a bird, in the same manner as Garuḍa flies with the tree-branch in his beak and the tortoise and the elephant in his claws. Finally, this Soma is stolen by Viśvvasu the Gandharva, paralleling Indra’s attempt to do so from Garuḍa.

The important feature here is the identification of the metres as the children of Suparṇī because in the *Maitreyani Saṁhitā* (III.V.8)²⁹ she is identified with *Vāk*. This suggests the use of the metres as mantras, particularly as Gāyatrī is famous as a mantra invoking Surya, the Lord of Truth, to flood the entire being of the aspirant with an effulgence of divine knowledge. Dange points out²⁹ that in the *Suparṇadhyāya* V. 12.3-4 Garuḍa explicitly tells Vinatā-Suparṇī that he is the very metres which were sent by the gods to fetch Soma and which support the *yajña*. Along with this we keep in mind the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* account (III.2.4.1)³⁰ wherein the gods desiring to obtain Soma for the sacrifice created the two, Kadru and Suparṇī, out of *māyā*. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*²⁹ version (III 25) is even more explicatory as it describes the metres who are approached by the gods and the sages for bringing them King Soma, transforming themselves into suparṇas and flying up. There is, therefore, no doubt that the metres or mantras are symbolised as birds whose function is to bring down Soma from the highest heaven for performing the pilgrim-sacrifice which is the basic theme of the Veda. It is in sukta 164 of the first maṇḍala of the *Ṛigveda* that we come across not only this particular role of the “birds” but the association of this with *Garutmān*:³¹

Speech hath been measured out in four divisions, the Brāhmaṇs who have understanding know them.

Three kept in close concealment cause no motion; of speech, men speak only the fourth division.

They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and he is heavenly nobly-winged Garutman.

To what is One, sages give many a title: they call it Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan. Dark the descent: the birds are golden-coloured; up to the heaven they fly robed in the waters.

Again descend they from the seat of Order, and all the earth is moistened with their fatness. (ṛiks 45-47)

The four divisions referred to here are the four planes of consciousness and the four levels of being—waking (*jāgrata*), which is the world of matter; yogic dream (*svapna*), which corresponds to the plane of the Life-force, the vital; yogic sleep (*susupti*) where the Mind-principle is dominant, the world of Svar or the divinised mind; and finally the supreme causal plane (*tūriya*) or mahākāraṇa. It is through these successive levels that the throb of the supreme creative word AUM descends to the sphere of human speech as mantra, “the word of inspiration that expresses in rhythm truths of intuitive vision or direct perception”.³² Yaska in his *Nirukta* says that the mantra “came to the Ṛishis who were doing Tapas, therefore, they became the Ṛishis, in that lies the Ṛishihood of the Ṛishis” (II.11) and “the shore (of knowledge) of the Mantras has to be reached by Tapas” (XIII.13)³³. The aim of the seer-poets of the Veda was to use the mantra to invoke Agni, the pathfinder, *purohita*, who would summon the other cosmic powers to participate in this act of self-offering which is *yajña*. Kapali Sastry, in his study of the Vedic Vāk, writes:³⁴

The potency of the Vedic Vāk as prayer lay in the fact that it was an externalised vibrant sound, a perfect reproduction in resonant rhythms of thought-vibrations charged with feelings from the depths of the Seer-poet and others who used it... Agni, then, is Vāk, the power of expression, the voice of Call, in the physical plane; in his subtler aspect at the back of the voice he is the psychic fire whose flame throws up the force of Aspiration in the march towards the Godhead; radically he is the Godhead himself, his Will secret in the heart of things and of man.

Realising the power of sound over matter and mind, the rishis used the mantric word “to evoke the powers of intuition and inspiration, to develop the faculties of truth-audition and truth-perception, and thereby to formulate effective forms of prayer, *mantra*, to achieve definite ends in the inner as well as the outer life of the Initiate.”³⁵ In other words, as Nolini Kanta Gupta puts it so succinctly, “Mantra or initiation, in its essence, is nothing else than contacting the inner being... to awake to the consciousness of the psychic being (the Vedic Agni), to hear its call,—to live and move and act

every moment of our life under the eye of this indwelling Guide, in accordance with its direction and impulsion."³⁶ The progress of the initiate, as described in the Veda, is thus:³⁷

And when by the Word, by the Name, the Fire within is kindled and the birth of the Divine, the Immortal element becomes settled, the Initiate gradually hands over the charge of his self-discipline to the Mystic Fire who determines the road and steps to be traversed and carries him safe through openings to the radiant realms of Truth Force, Truth-Consciousness and Truth-Light. He builds the planes of his being, opens the closed centres that are linked to the Cosmic planes, confers on him Truth-vision and Truth-audition, and... He grants him Knowledge, power or concentration and through all this He reaches him to the immortal Life, the undying Light, to the Sun-World which is the plenary Home of Truth.

Referring back to the riks quoted previously, it is the role of the mantras in descending into the dark material plane with their golden wings of Divine Knowledge, carrying the immortalising waters of Bliss, which is their theme.³⁸ The analysis of Kapali Sastry, showing that Agni itself is Vāk in the physical plane of material manifestation, tallies perfectly with the Garuḍa-Falcon-Agni identification which we have been tracing in the Ṛigveda. In the *Mahābhārata*, therefore, Vyāsa is once again recasting a Ṛigvedic symbol in Purānic mould, carefully maintaining the same theme. That is why Garuḍa is hymned as the destroyer of darkness and the nether powers. He is veritably Indra's *vajra*, the puissant Word, which "flashed forth...against the Coverer on the slopes, the Wolf on the path, the Robber by the streams."³⁹

The Vāk-vajra-Garuḍa identification falls in with the *adrigrava*-Soma structure in the amritamanthana myth. It will be recalled that Mandāra, the mountain (*adri*), is the vast upper pressing-stone used for churning Soma out of the Waters of Existence. This *grava* is *vajra*, whose blow destroys the dark forces obstructing the release of Bliss (Soma).⁴⁰ It is significant that according to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* version it is Garuḍa who has to carry the mountain and immerse it in the ocean to be churned: he is literally carrying the "stalk" of the Ṛigvedic hymns to the gods for being pressed out as Soma juice. In both myths the theme is that of the churning out of Soma and wresting it from the grasp of the dark forces. In one the key figure is the mountain, which is identified ultimately with vajra-Vāk, while in the other it is Garuḍa who, also, is finally a symbol of the Creative Word.

An interesting sidelight is offered by one of the meanings of the word *Kadru*. In the Ṛigveda VIII. 45.26 it is the name of the vessel containing Soma. It will be recalled that the word has also been held to signify "tawny", which is mentioned frequently as the colour of Soma-juice in the Veda. The serpents, powers of darkness, are appropriately the children of Kadru, the Soma-vessel, because it is they who possess this nectar initially just as the Asuras are the ones to seize the jar of amrita the moment it has been churned out of the ocean. Again, just as Nara-Nārāyaṇa had taken

amṛita away from the Asuras, so does Garuḍa wrest it from the serpents guarding it and allow Indra to spirit it away before the snakes can taste it. Now, the *kalasa* or jar containing Soma is nothing but the body of the Initiate, as shown by Kapali Sastry in his analysis of IV.27.5.⁴¹

Keeping all this in view, the Garuḍa myth falls into a clear consistent symbolic pattern. Kadru, the Body, successfully makes Vinatā, the Mind, work as its slave. Vinatā, after years of askesis, gives birth to Garuḍa-Vāk-Agni, the pathfinder-saviour. He gathers strength by destroying all impurities in the being (eating up the unrighteous Niṣādas, devouring the constantly quarrelling elephant and tortoise) and then wrests the immortalising Ānanda from the clutches of the Vṛitra-Coverers, the Light-and-Bliss-denying dragon powers of Nescience. Befriended by the Power of the Pure Intelligence and the Supreme Solar Truth (Indra and Viṣṇu), he is able to free his higher consciousness from bondage to the lower instincts, while restoring the treasure of supernal Bliss to its proper station to fill the entire being with beatitude. That is why Garuḍa is immortal, the significance being that perfection of the Initiate's being which results in "a vast beatitude, a large enjoyment of the divine and infinite existence reposing on a perfect union between the Soul and Nature; the soul becomes King of itself and its environment, conscious on all its planes, master of them, with Nature for its bride delivered from divisions and discords into an infinite and luminous harmony."⁴²

It is interesting to see how this Ṛigvedic mystic symbol of the Bird of Fire recurs in the mystic experiences of a seer-poet of the twentieth century, with almost identical significance:

A heaven-bird upon jewelled wings of wind
Borne like a coloured and embosomed fire,
By spirits carried in a pearl-hued cave,
On through the enchanted dimness moved her soul.

Savitri, X.3.p.64

It is in his *Bird of Fire* that Sri Aurobindo evokes a resplendent Garuḍa-Suparna image brilliantly combining the Rigvedic symbols of the Eagle as representing Agni tipping over the Soma vats of supernal ecstasy. There is no better poetic explication of the pregnant Ṛigvedic symbol:

Gold-white wings throb in the vastness, the bird of flame went
glimmering over a sunfire curve to the haze of the west,
Skimming, a messenger sail, the sapphire-summer waste of a
soundless wayless burning sea.
Now in the eve of the waning world, the colour and splendour
returning drift through a blue-flicker air back to my breast,
Flame and shimmer staining the rapture-white foam-vest of
the waters of Eternity.

Gold-white wings of the miraculous bird of fire, late and slow
 have you come from the Timeless. Angel, here unto me
 Bringst thou for travailing earth a spirit silent and free or
 His crimson passion of love divine,—
 White-ray-jar of the spuming rose-red wine drawn from the vats
 brimming with light-blaze, the vats of ecstasy,
 Pressed by the sudden and violent feet of the Dancer in Time
 from his sun-grape fruit of a deathless vine?

White-rose-altar the eternal Silence built, make now my nature
 wide, an intimate guest of His solitude,
 But golden above it the body of One in her diamond sphere
 with her halo of star-bloom and passion-ray!
 Rich and red is thy breast, O bird, like blood of a soul climbing
 the hard crag-teeth world, wounded and nude,
 A ruby of flame-petalled love in the silver-gold altar-vase
 of moon-edged night and rising day.

O Flame who art Time's last boon of the sacrifice, offering-flower
 held by the finite's gods to the Infinite,
 O marvel bird with the burning wings of light and the unbarred lids
 that look beyond all space,
 One strange leap of thy mystic stress breaking the barriers of mind
 and life, arrives at its luminous term thy flight;
 Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire
 thou frontest eyes in a timeless Face.

A final word before we leave the Garuḍa myth. The word *Trakṣya* is occasionally used in the epic for referring to Garuḍa. This also has Ṛigvedic origins, occurring in I.89.6 and X.178.1. In both cases the context shows that the word signifies "steed" (cf. the epithet *ariṣṭanemi* "whose fellies are intact" in both ṛiks). This links up with the identification of Garuḍa with the Horse-Dadhikravan-Agni.

(To be continued)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

NOTES

²⁸ See Griffith p. 111; the passage is worth reading in full, the relevant ṛiks being 20-22.

²⁹ Dange op. cit. 71-75.

³⁰ op. cit. p. 79-80.

³¹ Griffith p. 113.

³² Kapali Sastry: *Lights on the Ancients* p. 30.

³³ Kapali Sastry: *Rig-Veda Samhita* vol. 1 p. 58.

³⁴ cf. n.

³⁵ p. 37, *ibid.* p. 45.

³⁶ N.K. Gupta. *Collected Works* vol. 3 p. 75.

³⁷ cf. n. 32 p. 50.

³⁸ In *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo has stated how the mantra works:

Its message enters, stirring the blind brain
 And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;
 The hearer understands a form of words
 And musing on the index thought it holds,
 He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
 But finds bright hunts, not the embodied truth.
 Then, falling silent in himself to know
 He meets the deeper listening of the soul. (IV. 30 p. 375).

³⁹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 10. For a detailed exposition of the Mantra theory see *The Upanishads* by him, pp. 168, 172.

⁴⁰ Kapali Sastry: *Further Lights* p. 125.

⁴¹ *Further Lights* op, cit. p. 147-148.

⁴² Sri Aurobindo: *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* p. 243.

CORRECTION

In the July issue, p. 379, after the first line there, which ends Sahana's letter to Sri Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo's reply got inadvertently omitted. Sahana's letter ran: "You have written that my physical consciousness has the habit of responding to illness. But I am not at all aware of it. How to become so? Whatever little perception I do have, makes me feel that I don't want these things at any cost, for they do a lot of harm to me. So, I would like to know how to become conscious of them."

Sri Aurobindo replied:

"To get rid of that one must awaken a will and consciousness in the body itself that refuses to allow these things to impose themselves upon it. But to get that, still more to get it completely is difficult. One step towards it is to get an inner consciousness separate from the body—to feel it is not you who are ill but it is only something taking place in the body—and affecting your consciousness. It is then possible to see this separate body consciousness, what it feels, what are its reactions to things, how it works. One can then act on it to change its consciousness and reaction."

I WILL DRINK FOR YOU

A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY

ONCE upon a time, a lazy man lived in a village. He was so lazy that he took only liquid food just to avoid the trouble of munching. And whatever he swallowed he didn't do of his own accord. Somebody should compel him and pour it into his mouth. With great reluctance he would swallow without even allowing the food to touch his gums or teeth.

He had an aged mother who worked in the fields as a coolie. She supported her son with the help of the wages she earned every day. The neighbours took pity on the old lady. They now and then scolded the lazy son. Whoever came to their house advised him, "Why are you so lazy? Is it not your duty to look after your mother? Don't you think that it is an unpardonable sin to make her work at this old age?"

Whatever might be the charges levelled against him, he never bothered to listen. He would never even open his mouth. All that he knew was the *pyol* of his house where he was always seen sleeping. Even when he was awake he never stirred from the place.

One day the old lady passed away. But the lazy fellow didn't leave the *pyol*. He didn't even join the funeral procession. The good-hearted neighbours took the trouble of cremating the dead old lady.

Now that his mother was dead, the lazy man had nobody to support him. Yet the sympathetic neighbours poured into his mouth whatever was left after they had taken their meals. But that didn't work out well. They felt too tired of pouring food into his mouth and so they decided to stop their hospitality. One day they told the lazy man, "Look! We can't go on providing you with food. Everyone should sweat and earn his food. Go and work in the fields to support yourself or else die. We do not care."

All their warnings were of no avail to the lazy man. Nothing could move him from his 'heavenly *pyol*'. Days passed. He began to feel the pangs of hunger. And since none was ready to offer him food he sat there all day long, deep in thought, until a stupid idea came into his head. He moved from the *pyol* to the street and lay across it thereby obstructing the traffic. He refused to move, though many of his well-wishers persuaded him to move from that place.

The bullock-cart drivers and hand-cart pullers and a few of the irritated pedestrians reported the matter to the chief of the village. He came to the spot and commanded the lazy man to move away. But he lay there like a log. Exasperated at his silence, the chief sentenced him to death.

Everyone thought that the lazy fellow would get up with a start and run for his life. But they were astonished to see him still. The crowd that gathered by now unanimously agreed that there was no use of keeping him alive.

The guards lifted him up and put him into a cart. One of them pulled the

cart while the others followed it to the punishment altar, to sever his head from his body—a punishment practised in the villages.

As they crossed the market place, a close relative of the lazy man rushed towards the cart and saw him lie like a corpse. The relative requested him, “Come with me. Look after my cows and buffaloes. I’ll give you food and shelter. Why should you die? I am here to help you. Come with me.”

The lazy fellow kept dumb as a fish. The guards resumed pulling the cart.

They had hardly crossed a few yards when they were suddenly stopped by a kind-hearted landlord. Pitying the lazy fellow, he asked, “Tell me your last wish! I’ll fulfil it.”

There was no answer.

The landlord bought a bunch of bananas from a nearby shop and gave it to the lazy man. He looked at it and gestured to the landlord to peel off the skins from the fruits.

“You want me to peel off the skins!” asked the landlord wondering at the matchless laziness of the man.

The lazy man nodded his head in approval. The landlord taking that for his last wish peeled off the skins of all the bananas and gave the fruits to him.

The lazy fellow again gestured to the landlord to crush the bananas and liquefy them. The landlord brought a bowl, put all the bananas and with his hand crushed and liquefied them. He then offered the bowl to the lazy man.

Pointing to his wide opened mouth he gestured to the landlord to pour it into his mouth.

“Ah! Close it. Close it. It may pain you to open your mouth. Close it. I’ll drink for you,” said the landlord. Furious with rage he screamed, “You sluggard ass! What do you take me for? Am I your paid servant to obey all your gestures? It’s my fault for having pitied you. You want to enjoy life at the expense of others!...eh? You don’t deserve to live.”

Then looking at the guards he said, “Hurry up! Chop off his head lest he should convince us by our own folly that anyone of us can go on living without a stroke of work.”

P. RAJA

THE LORD OF HORSES

A NOVELLA

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1981)

8

I **CROSSED** the Bosphorus. Then I went through Arabia. And finally I arrived in Egypt. I headed straight for an oasis. The journey across the sands had powdered my coat and my nostrils were ablaze. I was thirsty.

Far off on the outskirts of the oasis I saw trucks and tents, tall metallic turrets and large metallic shields reflecting light. A whole crowd of people was bustling about the turrets. Anxiously I wondered what was going on. Of what use were these yonder turrets, and the large metallic shields? And why were there so many people? Awhile I remained on top of the sand-dune thinking as I watched the spectacle before me.

Then I tapped the sand with my hoof, lowered my neck, raised it again and gave a long neigh. And I bolted down the dune. I had perhaps never galloped so fast in my life. My mane floated like a sail in the wind that had been aroused by my gallop. I neared the crowd and the crowd parted screaming to make way for me. I passed by the turrets. And from atop the turrets voices cried out to check me. I finally arrived in front of a canvas chair where sat a fat bald man sponging his forehead as he smoked an enormous cigar.

I stopped so abruptly in front of him that a cloud of sand rose up around me.

Then the cloud fell back. And it was then that I realised that everybody was looking at me. A majestic silence reigned and I knelt down slowly on the sand as Mohammed-bin-Moktar had taught me in my younger days.

“Wow! what a fantastic beauty!” exclaimed the fat bald man. “Oh, what a horse!”

Then, turning to a woman I hadn’t noticed, he said:

“Isn’t he fantastic, Tedda, just fantastic?”

“Out of this world,” Tedda drawled.

And she moved towards me. She was dressed in a gold-embroidered yellow robe that swept the ground. There hung on the robe necklaces of gold balls. And gold balls dangled from her ears too.

This woman of the name of Tedda was not tall. She was actually quite short. But her body was slim and supple. And her walk was haughty. She had large black eyes and her eyelids were painted. Her hair was blond and fell down her back. And from time to time she would toss her head and her hair would softly sweep her shoulders.

She came and stood near me and patted my forehead. Then, turning to the fat bald man who had remained seated in his canvas chair, she said:

“Bill, this horse must act in our film.”

I did not quite understand. The fat bald man whose name was Bill took a puff from his cigar.

“Sure,” he answered. “Sure, Tedda.”

“I’ll look after it,” continued Tedda. “He’s just fabulous.”

And she bent down close to my ear. But she said nothing. And I wondered whether she wasn't a little cracked. Suddenly a very bright light dazzled my eyes. Later I came to know that Tedda had been photographed at that moment in a very original pose and in the company of the horse she had taken under her protection. This humiliated me.

Then she turned away from me and announced in a casual but compulsive tone:

"There should be articles in the Press about us, about me and *my* horse: the beautiful Horse of the Most-Beautiful. Bright-eyed Beauty tames a Wild Horse. Now that's a terrific scoop for journalists. What d'you say, Bill?"

"Sure, Tedda."

Bill's voice betrayed a shade of fatigue or irritation. And I understood that Bill did not like Tedda because Tedda was capricious and petty and thought only of herself. I too started disliking her.

She snapped her fingers at me:

"Come on, sweetie."

But I did not move and she gave me a furious look.

"Come along, I say."

Just then a voice scoffed from the crowd:

"Eh Tedda, you expect him to obey you? You haven't even given him a name."

"I called him sweetie, didn't you hear?" retorted Tedda immediately.

"But that ain't a poodle, dear. It's a horse. Now you sure don't want to fix pink ribbons to his mane, do you?"

"And why not?" Tedda hissed back. "Would you prevent me, Ramon?"

"Of course I would, Tedda. Because this horse is far too beautiful. He's a lord. In Arabic the word for lord is 'Saïd'. Call this horse Saïd and you'll see he'll follow you."

"Never in my life!" Tedda replied in a huff. "You expect me to call him by that name, by that ridiculous name?"

And so this man of the name of Ramon came out of the crowd and started walking towards me. He stopped in front of me and in a soft voice he said:

"You come, Saïd?"

I bowed my head to obey. And Ramon went through the crowd silently. Quietly I followed him. And then, behind us, someone burst into hysterical sobs. It was Tedda.

So my name was given back to me. And I also found a friend in the person of Ramon who, like the rest of the team, was American.

In the film that these people were shooting in the oasis, Tedda played the role of Ramon's wife. And that caused some fireworks because Tedda passed her time in growling and scowling. Whenever something was denied to her she would fly off in a rage. Unfortunately we were obliged to see her every day. But Ramon, who was gifted with an ample sense of humour, would tell me every time Tedda seethed with anger:

"Now just watch the show. Ain't it hilarious?"

I would laugh as horses do: curl up my lips from my teeth and neigh short neighs. And when Tedda couldn't go on any more, when she had exhausted herself in fury, had shouted to her heart's content, we could resume our work.

No one liked Tedda very much. Bill, who was the director of the film, didn't like her nor did his assistants and the other stars, the film supers and the cameramen—no-one, just no-one, liked Tedda. On the other hand Ramon was loved by all, because Ramon was gentle. And with me he was more gentle than with the rest.

Early in the morning, he would come to look for me in the stable where I occupied a box which was the biggest of all and he would look lovingly at all the horses and they were quite many. Then softly whistling he would enter my box and caress my neck and wink. Then, having saddled me, he would take me out for a ride.

At that time he hadn't yet put on his costume for the film. We had almost an hour before he must do it. And so we roamed as we liked during that time. It was fun.

We left the camp while the whole shooting team still slept. We would cross the oasis at a trot and then stop at the foot of an enormous palm-tree to drink. My thirst quenched, we would start off once again. On our way we would meet natives riding along on their donkeys or on their mules and Ramon would respectfully greet the men. The natives too would return the salutation.

Then, leaving the oasis, we would go promenading. Ramon would contemplate awhile the skies that turned crimson with the rising sun.

Then we would gallop for a while after which it was time to return. At the location everyone would now be up and doing. Some men would be mounting the metal deflectors, others climbing onto the turrets with a monkey's skill. From the turret-tops, Ramon explained to me, one could see for miles around. This was very useful when a battle-scene had to be filmed.

And so, while they worked on the film, I remained with Abdullah whom Ramon had chosen to look after me in his absence.

When Ramon emerged out of the make-up room he was unrecognizable. His face was smeared with an orange cream and his lips were painted red-brown. His eyes that had been greyed were outlined with green. But that wasn't all. He wore a golden casque and a breast-plate that too was golden. He had a golden tunic that reached half-way to his thighs. And he had golden sandals whose intricate lacing came up to the knees. The first time I saw him in this outfit I could not check laughing, so ridiculous I found him.

But one day I too was put to such a treatment. They caparisoned me in gold. The bridle too was golden and they had dabbed my forehead with a golden powder. My eyes were outlined with a black paste. And I felt ashamed at that. But I told myself that if I did not let them do what they wished I would never be able to go to America and if I did not go to America I would never see my brothers, the mustangs of Nevada.

So I did not protest. I did not snort. But sometimes I thought that life was really strange. In fleeing the company of men I had fallen amidst the craziest of the

lot. But no-one else could help me get to America. I thought, I hoped that when they left for their country they would take me with them. And I waited for that day with impatience. As time passed I was more and more convinced that I was right in running away from the company of men, convinced that men were mad and that their madness was incurable.

By way of proof, one had only to consider the atmosphere in which the film was being shot. There was Tedda and her frequent tantrums. There was this whole haggard crowd of extras disguised in every way possible, who one day acted as the soldiers of one army and on the other became the opponents. Then, there was the fat bald man sponging away his forehead between puffs of his cigar and his cries of despair. And so many other things besides.

There were also the caravans that had been brought at a great cost. I had never, never seen such caravans. The camels too were unbelievable, caparisoned in gold like me. And they were made to walk in a cadence that was not theirs but which was more effective for the film. Anyway that was what Bill affirmed. The caravan-owners were indignant and demanded that the camels not be maltreated. Bill promised them everything they asked for. But merely in word.

And when everybody spoke, they spoke in different languages: the people did not understand one another. But they all pretended they did. And that resulted in many blunderings.

And then, everybody would run helter-skelter in search of someone who had disappeared or of something that could not be found. This created a great brouhaha but we managed to work on in spite of that.

Bill had only to scream one word from his canvas chair: "QUIET."

The brouhaha would calm down and everybody fall silent. One heard only the buzzing of the camera that filmed scenes about which I understood nothing and which had to be done over and over again. What amused me most was when Ramon had to do a scene with Tedda, which happened quite frequently, since, as I've already told you, they were playing husband and wife and Tedda had to smile therefore at Ramon before the camera, even though in her heart she hated to do it.

After all this how could I help not thinking that men were mad and that their madness was incurable?

But if they were so off their heads, these cinema people were perfectly capable of taking me with them to America. My fate had not yet been decided. Ramon had not yet made up his mind and no-one talked about me.

One fine morning, a man arrived in an iron-bird. And everybody pressed ceremoniously around him as he came out of that noisy iron-bird. Even Tedda appeared friendly with him. I suspected this man to be a very important person. I soon found out. He was the producer of the film and had come to see how Bill's work was progressing.

He was closeted with Bill in a truck and he came out only a few hours later. He looked pleased. As for Bill, he was exuding pride as if the producer had decorated him

with a medal inside the truck.

And the producer was so happy that before climbing back into the iron-bird he stood a while to felicitate the entire team. And he gave a little speech at the end of which he said these words that I'll never forget because they opened for me the doors to America.

"My friends," he said, "America is proud of you. You've done an excellent job. I congratulate you. And I congratulate you also to have found this horse. He will be the hero of my next production."

The producer was really the craziest of them all. If he wasn't, he had no reason to felicitate people for being crazy. But that didn't bother me any more. Now I knew that I was destined to go to America in quest of the mustangs. And in their midst I would be free once again.

From that day, time passed very rapidly. In a few weeks' time the film was completed. Everybody got ready to leave. And then for the first time in my life I found myself aboard a plane.

A box had been installed in the plane to accommodate me. And this box was truly worthy of the madness of those who were taking me with them. It was padded with pink velvet and on one of the sides a mirror was fixed so that I could look at myself whenever I wanted to. But I never did. Because I did not want to be the cracked horse of these cracked people.

I don't know how long I was on the plane. And then I felt as if we were coming down. Yes, we had arrived in America. And as soon as we arrived there I escaped. I did not know which direction to take. I did not even know where Nevada was.

But first let me recount it to you as it happened:

The crazy people of the cinema had announced that on my alighting from the plane I would drink champagne, since I was a big star now. And I was obliged to drink champagne from a gold and pink bucket to please everybody and specially Ramon and also to enable the journalists to take my photos. The champagne had made me a little fuddled. But that didn't disturb me. On the contrary I used it as the pretext to run away. It proved very effective.

I had feigned to dance and jump for the photographers' sake. Everyone had applauded, even Tedda. And the photographers had not stopped clicking their cameras, when suddenly I ran away in a gallop. Everyone must have thought I would come back, that I was only too happy to show them a real gallop. But actually I had escaped. And I had escaped into a countryside that differed from all the other countrysides I had seen till then.

Now it was nightfall. But I continued to gallop. And to encourage myself I thought of the mustangs. I would at last meet them and be free once again. And I thought of freedom.

(To be continued)

CHRISTINE & ARCHAKA

(Translated by Maurice from the original French)

EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

(Continued from the issue of May 1981)

46

FRANCE was one of those countries in Europe that had never been dominated by an alien race with a different cultural background. The Arabs were on the north of the Pyrenees, that is, on French soil, only for a short while and Hannibal the Carthaginian general used France only as a passage to Italy. England invaded France in the fourteenth century with a desire to conquer and subdue her. The result was the Hundred Years War, a meaningless and wasteful carnage that eventually brought nothing to either side. But it must be remembered that the English at that time were half French. William the Conqueror who gave the English a stable government and united England firmly, bringing her out of the Dark Ages, was a French Duke. Naturally his army and the retinue that went over with him to England from Normandy were all French. Then the English kings married French heiresses who inherited vast provinces in France. Thus the ambition of the English kings to unite the two crowns was whetted. This was a very temporary danger to France. The French were able to oust the English, although not without difficulty. The real danger came as late as the twentieth century, not from any Asiatic people but from her next-door neighbour, the Germans.

France dominated Europe culturally for several centuries. That the martial qualities of the French people were also something to reckon with was demonstrated well when, under Louis the Fourteenth, France dominated Europe with her armed forces. If she did so partially at that time, under Napoleon her domination was complete. After such a tremendous life a lull was sure to come and France was busy tidying up her home. Prussia in the meantime was employed in raising an army the like of which the world had never seen before. She defeated France, but one cannot refrain from smiling when one remembers how after the battle of Sedan the Prussian king was proclaimed the German Emperor in the Palace of Versailles, to bring prestige to the new status of the Prussian king. No German palace was good enough. Europe must be made to recognise the fact with the help of France's continuing prestige.

Pursuit of power, race for power, lust for power seemed to be the occupation and the pre-occupation of the enemy of France. It was almost exactly one century after Waterloo that the Germans attacked France in 1914. Yet in her predicament France was able to keep her position. Why she capitulated in nineteen-forty, in face of an army considered by many to be far inferior to the Imperial German Army of nineteen-fourteen, remains a problem. "Battles are won in the minds of the

opposing commanders, not in the bodies of their men," wrote Liddell Hart. This is well recounted in the story of Count Frederick von Schlieffen. Head of the War Department in the Kaiser's regime, von Schlieffen spent ten years planning, sketching, correcting, finalising the great blue-print for the assault. The minutest details did not escape his discerning eyes. Perhaps Providence too saw the details of the blue-print and planned otherwise. Von Schlieffen died before a war could be started. When the war came the command was given to Count Moltke. He did not fully approve of von Schlieffen's plan. Yet he could do nothing, for the War Office and the Kaiser approved of it. As soon as war was declared, the German army overran northern France, entering the country through neutral Belgium. In tremendous enthusiasm the army rushed forward. Moltke let it go, perhaps he did not care where it went as long as it went somewhere. According to von Schlieffen's plan the army ought to have attacked Paris from the rear, that is from the south. The army flushed with victory attacked Paris from the north. The Sixth French Army was guarding Paris under Marshal Joffre. The result was the famous Battle of the Marne in which the Imperial German Army was thoroughly routed. It was almost the beginning of the war yet to many historians it was the turning-point, the beginning of the end and of the destruction of the German army. Our route to Switzerland lay just south of the river Marne and we could not but think of these stories.

From ancient times France claimed that her frontier meant the Pyrenees in the south, Switzerland in the east, the River Rhine in the east and the north. She had fought many a battle to establish this. The most precious province in the east was the Alsace-Lorraine industrial area grabbed by Germany after the French defeat at Sedan. Not loss of prestige alone but a tremendous economic loss it meant. France never forgot and never forgave. The government of the Third Republic did its utmost to keep up the spirit of revenge. In the Place de la Concorde was erected a statue of Strassbourg to remind the people of her loss. Daudet wrote his "La dernière classe". Paul Deroulède wrote his songs—songs that awakened the desire for revenge. The Nation and the Sovereign State were concepts that had become predominant during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries in the minds of men. At this time the German youth was indoctrinated with the philosophy that the greatness and good of the world are to be found in the Germanisation of the globe. And all this came from such eminent thinkers as Dahlmann, Droysen and Treitschke. This was something the French could not possibly swallow. Apprehension filled France, for she was aware that the Germans had trained an army of asuric strength.

After two world catastrophes, war was banned. The Kellogg-Briand Pact had in nineteen twenty-eight, even before the Second World War, repudiated war as an instrument of policy. War had been outlawed. Henceforth nations engaged in war would be considered as violators and law-breakers of the world. Today the code for international law and morality are there but there is no one to enforce them. How simple were the wars and conquests in the ancient world! How comparatively straightforward the thoughts of the great conquering kings and generals! only one incident in

the ancient world. History will never forgive only one incident in the ancient world. That is the deliberate burning of Persepolis by Alexander the Great.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The First Wife: a Novel by *Maggi Lidchi*, London, Gollancz, 1981, £.6.95.

THIS is not a book for prudes, for people who are shocked or fearful to read the famous four-letter words or references to parts of the human anatomy usually discreetly veiled in euphemism; some of the characters in this story are quite brutal in expressing 'all the things one has spent one's life trying not to hear' as one of them puts it. On the other hand anyone taking it up for titillation will be sadly disappointed; it is frank but nowhere prurient—not a shocker or a thriller.

Nor can I say that it is 'compulsive reading'... the plot unfolds its convolutions at a steady comfortable pace that allows you to set the book down at the end of a chapter and get on with your life, if you have to, without undue tension or suspense... and yet you feel grateful and glad to return at your leisure, to the world where Olivia and Raphael watch the people around them 'indulging their flair for chaos'. (That's what the dust-cover says, and it's quite a good way of putting it.)

Neither is it likely ever to become 'compulsory reading'—prescribed to Eng. Lit. students for the excellence of its prose or the profundities of its thought. Yet this book has a voice all its own, its own quiet depths, and wherever you choose to open it, it is likely to raise a smile. For although the story is set in modern South Africa, and the sad political condition of that country is not ignored, Maggi Lidchi has not chosen to write about the usual grey contemporary concerns, either political or psychological. Her theme—as one might expect from a resident of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram—in this second published novel, as in her first, *Earthman*, is awakening: the awakening of the individual to new depths of himself—and she writes as if she knows what she is talking about. The book is full of the atmosphere of a serene smiling light that gives coherence and meaning to the apparently chaotic and threatening events of life.

After twenty years of happy marriage, Olivia and Raphael have a son at University, a beautiful house and garden, an ordered, successful, harmonious life, an oasis of peace and fulfilment in a troubled world. Like a challenge to that harmonious existence, a series of unsettling people and happenings burst in on them. The first is Speer, the small, eccentric-looking, surprising owner of a shop called 'Occult Books', whose contact brings Olivia unexplained illumination and peace, and who soon assumes for her the role of sage and seer, a new dimension of experience she finds it difficult to communicate to her husband. Their life is further complicated by the arrival of a stunningly beautiful Portuguese girl who claims, and indeed seems to be, the reincarnation of Raphael's first wife who died in childbirth more than twenty years before. She not only remembers in all-too-convincing detail their life together, but is passionately, single-mindedly, even neurotically, determined to oust Olivia and relive it.

The combined effect of these two on Tuppy, Olivia's 19 year-old son, leads to further convolutions, and brings her and Raphael into reluctantly close contact with Tuppy's obnoxious friend Fred—brash, worldly-wise, perhaps the most unsettling

influence of all... but one who in the end turns out to be almost a knight in shining armour well-disguised, and even more: a most unlikely angel of revelation!

Fantastic and improbable, yes... but isn't life so? And that seems to be what Maggi Lidchi is telling us, smilingly, through this tale: that behind the improbabilities of life there is a meaningful pattern; that the very things which appear most threatening, disrupting and disagreeable may have been specially missioned to grace us with new illumination, knowledge and growth; that in certain blessed moments we can contact a warm something behind the heart that makes sense of things. That this 'something' is not an immediate panacea to all ills the author very honestly makes us see; the opening to it may create all kinds of further problems, be yet another, more fundamentally unsettling factor in the situation. But for Olivia it proves the source of strength and understanding and delight and, one feels as the book closes, of growing enrichment as life flows unpredictably on.

So, all in all, a worthwhile book, I should say—thoroughly entertaining and, if not thought-provoking, maybe something better: experience-inducing. Read it if you can get hold of it.

SHRADDHAVAN