

# MOTHER INDIA

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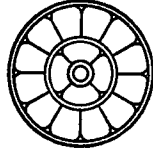
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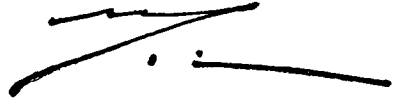


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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All correspondence to be addressed to:

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India

Editor's Phone: 4782

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR

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# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXIV

No. 1

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

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## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
SRI AUROBINDO'S FIRST FAIR COPY OF HIS EARLIEST VERSION OF <i>Savitri</i>	... 5
THE INTEGRAL DIVINE: AN ILLUMINATION FROM SRI AUROBINDO	... 11
"WHEN LOVE COMES": A LETTER WITH FURTHER WORDS FROM THE MOTHER	... 15
	<i>Devakinandan</i>
NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO: THE COMPLETE SET	... 16
THE LAST MOVEMENT (Poem)	... 23
	<i>Dinkar</i>
AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO : RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA (Translated by Nirodbaran from the Bengali)	... 24
THE STORY OF A SOUL	... 27
	<i>Huta</i>
SUDDENLY, SILENTLY... (Poem)	... 37
	<i>Stuart</i>
LETTERS ON POETRY: IV SOME PROBLEMS OF POETIC EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESSION	... 38
	<i>K. D. Sethna</i>
'THE BLESSED FEMININE': A STUDY OF THE WOMEN CHARACTERS IN SRI AUROBINDO'S PLAYS	... 47
	<i>M. N. Sundararaman</i>
AT THE END (Poem)	... 51
	<i>Bhanushankar Bhatt</i>

## CONTENTS

THREE MAIN POISES OF THE SPIRIT	<i>Chimanbhai Patel</i>	... 52
THE SECRET OF THE <i>Mahābhārata</i> : AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH	<i>Pradip Bhattacharya</i>	... 55
SHEKHAR FINDS A FRIEND: A SHORT STORY	<i>Chunilal Chaudhury</i>	... 59
THE LORD OF HORSES: A NOVELLA (Translated by Maurice from the Original French)	<i>Christine &amp; Archaka</i>	... 67
RIDDLES FROM PONDICHERRY: COLLECTED AND RENDERED INTO ENGLISH	<i>P. Raja</i>	... 71
CROSSWORD	<i>U</i>	... 74

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

*SÂVITHRÎ*

BOOK II

*(Continued)*

So on they journeyed still through happy mists,  
And faster now all fled as if perturbed, 1445  
Escaping from the clearness of her soul.  
Then Death cried high,—a vaguer, brighter form  
He bore now like a night that smiles at dawn:  
“Because thou hast the wisdom to transcend  
Both veil of forms and the contempt of forms, 1450  
Arise delivered by the seeing gods,  
Rest in thy freedom satisfied alone  
Nor seek for others’ joy they have not won:  
Let each soul to its rapture be enough.  
Though thou art strong by the dread Goddess moved 1455  
Cease, mortal, to compel the deathless powers.  
Highest wisdom find that guards its strength and knowledge  
Unused, unspoken lest the world should perish  
By wisdom and be overthrown by power,  
Dragged like a ship by bound leviathan 1460  
Into the abyss of his stupendous seas  
For far too swift the aeons would stumble on  
If strength were given to imperfect souls,  
If veiless knowledge smote the unfit brain.  
Therefore God hid His face and seemed to err. 1465  
Aim not at dangerous swift-foot victories,  
Sheltered by smallness only such steps desire  
As earth can bear in her frail denser moulds.  
If thou art strong with the dread Goddess filled,  
Use not thy strength like the wild Titan souls, 1470  
Touch not the ancient lines, the seated laws;  
Respect the calm of great established things.”  
But Sâvithrî replied to the vague god:  
“What is the calm thou vauntest, O Law, O Death?  
Is it not the dull-visioned tread inert 1475  
Of monstrous energies chained in a vast round

Soulless and stone-eyed with mechanic dreams?  
 What were earth's ages if the grey restraint  
 Were never broken and glories sprang not forth  
 Bursting their obscure seed nor man's slow life 1480  
 Leaped hurried into sudden splendid paths  
 By divine words and human gods revealed?  
 I trample on thy law with living feet  
 For to arise in freedom I was born.  
 If I am mighty, let my force be unveiled 1485  
 Equal companion of your dateless powers  
 Or else let my frustrated soul sink down  
 Unworthy of godhead in the original sleep  
 I ask not, I demand, O gods of Time,  
 My will immortal " He replied, "Yet choose 1490  
 Another turn than this that thou pursuest.  
 Art thou so strong and free? Then canst thou take  
 Thy pleasure upon wayside flowering fields  
 Yet falter not from thy proud journey's goal."  
 And Sāvithrī: "Even such my choice, O Death. 1495  
 What liberty has the soul which feels not freedom  
 Unless stripped bare and cannot kiss the bonds  
 The Lover winds around his playmate's limbs,  
 Nor choose his tyranny crushed in his embrace,  
 Smiling in golden chains, most bound, most free? 1500  
 To seize him better with her boundless heart  
 She accepts the circle of his limiting arms."  
 "Prove yet thy absolute force to the wise gods  
 By choosing thy own joy; for self desire  
 And yet from self and its gross chain be free. 1505  
 Know fear of bondage for thy last fine snare.  
 Show me thy strength and freedom from my laws."  
 And Sāvithrī to Death: "Thus can I take  
 Who claim upon the flowering fields of life  
 My earthly pleasures, never mine but his, 1510  
 Or mine for him. Fulfil on the sweet earth  
 Whatever once the living Suthyavân  
 Desired in his heart for Sāvithrī."

Apropos of line 1500 we may note three verses put down at the bottom of the page without any indication as to what and how much of the present version they may substitute:

Thus may she smile not as the bound who flee  
 From bondage, knowing not their flight a chain.  
 For fear of bondage is the gods' fine snare.

Death bowed his sovereign head and made reply:  
 "Long days I give of thy unwounded life, 1515  
 Daughters of thy own seed in heart and mind,  
 Fair hero sons and sweetness undisturbed  
 Of union with thy husband dear and true  
 And thou shalt know in thy life's house where love's  
 Oneness shall reign of many gathered hearts 1520  
 Felicity of thy surrounded eyes  
 And happy service to the heart's desired  
 And loving empire over all thou lov'st.  
 Win easily by love all fruits  
 Which hardly with great labour high-tasked souls 1525  
 By difficult virtue ripen tilling earth.  
 Return, O woman, to thy conquered world."  
 But Sāvithrî to Death, "Thy gifts resist.  
 Void are thy words if lonely I return."  
 Then Death sent forth once more his angry cry 1530  
 As chides a lion his escaping prey.  
 "What knowst thou of earth's rich and changing life  
 Who thinkst that one man dead all joy must cease?  
 Hope not to be unhappy till the end!  
 For grief dies soon in the tired human heart 1535  
 And other guests the vacant chambers fill.  
 Rich as a holiday painting on a floor  
 Traced for a moment's beauty love was made.  
 Or if a voyager on the eternal trail,  
 Its objects fluent change in its embrace 1540  
 Like waves to a swimmer upon infinite seas."  
 But Sāvithrî replied to the vague god,  
 "Give me back Suthyavân, my only lord.  
 Thy thoughts are vacant to my soul that feels."  
 Death answered her, "Try then thy soul, return. 1545  
 Soon shalt thou find appeased that other men  
 On lavish earth have beauty, strength and truth.  
 And when thou hast half forgotten one of these  
 Shall wind himself around thy heart that needs  
 A fellow heart. Then Suthyavân shall fade, 1550  
 A gentle memory pushed away from thee

Line 1524 "from" as variant to "by". We may note that the line is lacking in one foot. It is a tetrameter, not a pentameter. Perhaps, instead of "from", a two-syllabled adjective is written above the line to go between "by" and "love", but, if so, it is indecipherable.

Line 1539: "voyage" as variant to "voyager".

By new love and thy children's tender hands  
 Till thou shalt wonder if thou loved'st at all.  
 Such is the life earth's travail has conceived."  
 But Sâvithrî replied to eternal Death: 1555  
 Thou mockst the mind's and body's faltering search.  
 For what the immortal spirit shall achieve  
 I have discovered, nor such trials need.  
 For now at last I know beyond all doubt  
 The great stars burn with my undying fire 1560  
 And for its fuel life and death were made.  
 Life only was my blind attempt to love;  
 Earth was its struggle, heaven its increase,  
 And when transcended both shall join and kiss  
 Casting their veils, a deathless birth is ours. 1565  
 Earth shall seize all that heaven strives to give  
 Nor anything be lost the soul has seen."

But as she spoke the body of Death was changed.  
 His darkness and his soul-destroying might  
 Abolishing for ever and disclosing 1570  
 The mystery of his high and violent deeds  
 Epiphanies of immortal life arose.  
 Her senses thrilled in a sweet rapturous world,  
 Twilight and mist were ended. Perfect heaven  
 Smiled down from undreamed sapphire, sincere gold 1575  
 Of sunlight lavished strong riches on the eyes  
 That suffered without pain the absolute ray  
 And saw immortal clarities of form.  
 Perfected all the images of earth  
 Were thoughts the sense could live in glad, unbound 1580  
 The soul could use for freest joy of form;  
 Creations large of God's victorious mind,  
 They dwelt like living scenes sublimely born  
 In a calm beauty of creative joy,  
 Orchards and valleys, gleaming lakes and hills, 1585  
 Pastures and woodlands of celestial bliss

An older version of lines 1568-72 reads:

Even as she spoke and ceased, the dread form changed,  
 His darkness and his soul-destroying might  
 Became the happy beauty of the gods;

Line 1572 has actually no full-stop but overflows: Before her

There is, however, no further continuation and so the extra words, which are not indispensable to the sense, have been omitted here.



And villages and cities of delight  
 Where luminous lived the nations of the blest.  
 Above her rhythmic godheads whirled the spheres,  
 Around her melodies and enchantments flowed: 1590  
 From the glad bosom of a griefless world  
 Songs thrilled of birds upon unfading boughs,  
 Music not with these striving steps of sound  
 Aspired, that labour from our human strings,  
 From every note claimed richer ecstasies 1595  
 For a changed bliss that kept each sweetness old.  
 For ever faultless instruments were heard  
 And high-eyed chantings inexpressible,  
 Strains trembling with the secrets of the gods.  
 From marvellous flowers imperishably sweet 1600  
 Immortal fragrance filled the unquivering air:  
 To live was sweetness and to breathe was song.  
 And on a sense made pure to seize all tones  
 And to feel on untired intensest things  
 Heaven's subtleties of touch unwearying forced 1605  
 More vivid raptures than the mind can bear.  
 What would be suffering here was mighty bliss.  
 Delivered from the limits of her mind,  
 Grey limping judgment dead, the sight unbarred  
 Entered the mysteries of the Artist's craft. 1610  
 She saw all Nature wonderful without fault.  
 These were the decorated doors of worlds  
 Nobler, yet as felicitously fair.  
 There every thought like a sweet radiant god  
 Climbed strong without endeavour to the sight 1615  
 Of the All-blissful; feelings were waves of light,  
 Rose from each other in a tranquil surge.  
 Deep, candid, a sweet-natured wisdom grew  
 The bright beneficent sunlight of the soul,  
 Or sheer wild rounds inviolably pure 1620  
 Swayed linked in moonlit revels of the heart  
 Knowing their riot for a dance of God.  
 Calm seers and poets heard the absolute thoughts  
 That now come travellers pale deformed with toil  
 From their large heavens to our clouded minds, 1625  
 Spent in their journey, changed with broken wings,  
 Seized perfect words that here are frail sounds caught  
 By difficult rapture on a mortal tongue.

The strong who stumble and sin grew clear, great gods.  
And where she stood in ever-flowering groves 1630  
Carolling thrilled response to united hearts  
She saw the clasp which is denied to earth,  
Felt a rapt candid passion of the soul  
And viewed the unending joys of veilless love.  
Then spoke the god, a figure sweet, august 1635  
And on his lips the smile that wear unmasked  
The immortal secret helpers of the soul.

# THE INTEGRAL DIVINE

## AN ILLUMINATION FROM SRI AUROBINDO

THE Master of our works and our being is not merely a Godhead here within us, nor is he merely a cosmic Spirit or some kind of universal Power. The world and the Divine are not one and the same thing, as a certain kind of pantheistic thinking would like to believe. The world is an emanation; it depends upon something that manifests in it but is not limited by it: the Divine is not here alone; there is a Beyond, an eternal Transcendence. The individual being also in its spiritual part is not a formation in the cosmic existence—our ego, our mind, our life, our body are that; but the immutable spirit, the imperishable soul in us has come out of the Transcendence.

A Transcendent who is beyond all world and all Nature and yet possesses the world and its nature, who has descended with something of himself into it and is shaping it into that which as yet it is not, is the Source of our being, the Source of our works and their Master. But the seat of the Transcendent Consciousness is above in an absoluteness of divine Existence—and there too is the absolute Power, Truth, Bliss of the Eternal—of which our mentality can form no conception and of which even our greatest spiritual experience is only a diminished reflection in the spiritualised mind and heart, a faint shadow, a thin derivate. Yet proceeding from it there is a sort of golden corona of Light, Power, Bliss and Truth—a divine Truth-Consciousness as the ancient mystics called it, a Supermind, a Gnosis, with which this world of a lesser consciousness proceeding by Ignorance is in secret relation and which alone maintains it and prevents it from falling into a disintegrated chaos. The powers we are now satisfied to call gnosis, intuition or illumination are only fainter lights of which that is the full and flaming source, and between the highest human intelligence and it there lie many levels of ascending consciousness, highest mental or overmental, which we would have to conquer before we arrived there or could bring down its greatness and glory here. Yet, however difficult, that ascent, that victory is the destiny of the human spirit and that luminous descent or bringing down of the divine Truth is the inevitable term of the troubled evolution of the earth-nature; that intended consummation is its *raison d'être*, our culminating state and the explanation of our terrestrial existence. For though the Transcendental Divine is already here as the Purushotama in the secret heart of our mystery, he is veiled by many coats and disguises of his magic world-wide Yoga-Maya; it is only by the ascent and victory of the Soul here in the body that the disguises can fall away and the dynamis of the supreme Truth replace this tangled web of half-truth that becomes creative error, this emergent Knowledge that is converted by its plunge into the inconscience of Matter and its slow partial return towards itself into an effective Ignorance.

For here in the world, though the gnosis is there secretly behind existence, what acts is not the gnosis but a magic of Knowledge, an incalculable yet apparently mechanical Overmind Maya. The Divine appears to us here in one view as an equal,

inactive and impersonal Witness Spirit, an immobile consenting Purusha not bound by quality or Space or Time, whose support or sanction is given impartially to the play of all action and energies which the transcendent Will has once permitted and authorised to fulfil themselves in the cosmos. This Witness Spirit, this immobile Self in things, seems to will nothing and determine nothing; yet we become aware that his very passivity, his silent presence compels all things to travel even in their ignorance towards a divine goal and attracts through division towards a yet unrealised oneness. Yet no supreme infallible Divine Will seems to be there, only a widely deployed Cosmic Energy or a mechanical executive Process, Prakriti. This is one side of the cosmic Self; the other presents itself as a universal Divine, one in being, multiple in personality and power, who conveys to us, when we enter into the consciousness of his universal forces, a sense of infinite quality and will and act and a worldwide knowledge and a one yet innumerable delight; for through him we become one with all existences not only in their essence but in their play of action, see ourself in all and all in ourself, perceive all knowledge and thought and feeling as motions of the one Mind and Heart, all energy and action as kinetics of the one Will in power, all Matter and form as particles of the one Body, all personalities as projections of the one Person, all egos as deformations of the one and sole real "I" in existence. In him we no longer stand separate, but lose our active ego in the universal movements, even as by the Witness who is without qualities and for ever unattracted and unentangled, we lose our static ego in the universal peace.

And yet there remains a contradiction between these two terms, the aloof divine Silence and the all-embracing divine Action, which we may heal in ourselves in a certain manner, in a certain high degree which seems to us complete, yet is not complete because it cannot altogether transform and conquer. A universal Peace, Light, Power, Bliss is ours, but its effective expression is not that of the Truth-Consciousness, the divine Gnosis, but still, though wonderfully freed, uplifted and illumined, supports only the present self-expression of the Cosmic Spirit and does not transform, as would a transcendental Descent, the ambiguous symbols and veiled mysteries of a world of Ignorance. Ourselves are free, but the earth-consciousness remains in bondage; only a further transcendental ascent can entirely heal the contradiction and transform and deliver.

For there is yet a third intensely close and personal aspect of the Master of Works which is a key to his sublimest hidden mystery and ecstasy; for he detaches from the secret of the hidden Transcendence and the ambiguous display of the cosmic Movement an individual Power of the Divine that can mediate between the two and bridge our passage from the one to the other. In this aspect the transcendent and universal person of the Divine conforms itself to our individualised personality and accepts a personal relation with us, at once identified with us as our supreme Self and yet close and different as our Master, Friend, Lover, Teacher, our Father and our Mother, our Playmate in the great world-game who has disguised himself throughout as friend and enemy, helper and opponent and, in all relations and

in all workings that affect us, has led our steps towards our perfection and our release. It is through this more personal manifestation that we are admitted to some possibility of the complete transcendental experience; for in him we meet the One not merely in a liberated calm and peace, not merely with a passive or active submission in our works or through the mystery of union with a universal Knowledge and Power filling and guiding us, but with an ecstasy of divine Love and divine Delight that shoots up beyond silent Witness and active World-Power to some positive divination of a greater beatific secret. For it is not so much works lifting us beyond world-process to the originating supreme knower and Master, but rather this thing most intimate to us, yet at present most obscure, which keeps for us wrapt in its passionate veil the deep and rapturous secret of the transcendent Godhead and some absolute positiveness of its perfect Being, its all-concentrating Bliss, its mystic Ananda.

But the individual relation with the Divine does not always or from the beginning bring into force a widest enlargement or a highest self-exceeding. At first this Godhead close to our being or immanent within us can be felt fully only in the scope of our personal nature and experience, a Leader and Master, a Guide and Teacher, a Friend and Lover, or else a Spirit, Power or Presence, constituting and uplifting our upward and enlarging movement by the force of his intimate reality inhabiting the heart or presiding over our nature from above even our highest intelligence. It is our personal evolution that is his preoccupation, a personal relation that is our joy and fulfilment, the building of our nature into his divine image that is our self-finding and perfection. The outside world seems to exist only as a field for this growth and a provider of materials or of helping and opposing forces for its successive stages. Our works done in that world are his works, but even when they serve some temporary universal end, their main purpose for us is to make outwardly dynamic or give inward power to our relations with this immanent Divine. Many seekers ask for no more or see the continuation and fulfilment of this spiritual flowering only in heavens beyond; the union is consummated and made perpetual in an eternal dwelling place of his perfection, joy and beauty. But this is not enough for the integral seeker; however intense and beautiful, a personal isolated achievement cannot be his whole aim or his entire existence. A time must come when the personal opens out to the universal; our very individuality, spiritual, mental, vital, physical even, becomes universalised: it is seen as a power of his universal force and cosmic spirit, or else it contains the universe in that ineffable wideness which comes to the individual consciousness when it breaks its bonds and flows upward towards the Transcendent and on every side into the Infinite.

\*

In a Yoga lived entirely on the spiritualised mental plane it is possible and even usual for these three fundamental aspects of the divine—the Individual or Immanent, the Cosmic and the Transcendent—to stand out as separate realisations. Each by itself then appears sufficient to satisfy the yearning of the seeker. Alone with the

personal Divine in the inner heart's illumined secret chamber, he can build his being into the Beloved's image and ascend out of fallen Nature to dwell with him in some heaven of the Spirit. Absolved in the cosmic wideness, released from ego, his personality reduced to a point of working of the universal Force, himself calm, liberated, deathless in universality, motionless in the witness Self even while outspread without limit in unending Space and Time, he can enjoy in the world the freedom of the Timeless. One-pointed towards some ineffable Transcendence, casting away his personality, shedding from him the labour and trouble of the universal Dynamis, he can escape into an inexpressible Nirvana, annul all things in an intolerant exaltation of flight into the Incommunicable.

But none of these achievements is enough for one who seeks the wide completeness of an integral Yoga. An individual salvation is not enough for him; for he finds himself opening to a cosmic consciousness which far exceeds by its breadth and vastness the narrower intensity of a limited individual fulfilment, and its call is imperative; driven by that immense compulsion, he must break through all separative boundaries, spread himself in world-Nature, contain the universe. Above too, there is urgent upon him a dynamic realisation pressing from the Supreme upon the world of beings, and only some encompassing and exceeding of the cosmic consciousness can release into manifestation here that yet unlavished splendour. But the cosmic consciousness too is not sufficient; for it is not all the Divine Reality, not integral. There is a divine secret behind personality that he must discover; there, waiting in it to be delivered here into Time, stands the mystery of the embodiment of the Transcendence. In the cosmic consciousness there remains at the end a hiatus, an unequal equation of a highest Knowledge that can liberate but not effectuate with a Power seeming to use a limited Knowledge or masking itself with a surface Ignorance that can create but creates imperfection or a perfection transient, limited and in fetters. On one side there is a free undynamic Witness and on the other side a bound Executrix of action who has not been given all the means of action. The reconciliation of these companions and opposites seems to be reserved, postponed, held back in an Unmanifest still beyond us. But, again, a mere escape into some absolute Transcendence leaves personality unfulfilled and the universal action inconclusive and cannot satisfy the integral seeker. He feels that the Truth that is for ever is a Power that creates as well as a stable Existence; it is not a Power solely of illusory or ignorant manifestation. The eternal Truth can manifest its truth in Time; it can create in Knowledge and not only in Inconscience and Ignorance. A divine Descent no less than an ascent to the Divine is possible; there is a prospect of the bringing down of a future perfection and a present deliverance. As his knowledge widens, it becomes for him more and more evident that it was this for which the Master of Works cast down the soul within him here as a spark of his fire into the darkness, that it might grow there into a centre of the Light that is for ever.

*(To be continued)*

## **“WHEN LOVE COMES”**

### **A LETTER WITH FURTHER WORDS FROM THE MOTHER**

IN THE October 1981 issue of *Mother India* I have read with interest “When Love Comes—Guidance by the Mother”. It is a portion of a talk which was given by the Divine Mother about 25 years ago (19th Sept. 1956) in reply to a question put by me during my stay in the Ashram. The complete talk along with my question was published in *Mother India* of July 1973 (pages 515 to 517). However, as certain points of the talk were not very clear to me at the time, I approached the Mother again a few days after the talk, and sought further clarification from Her. During Her clarification about so-called human love, she very kindly gave two very definite and very enlightening replies which I am giving below for the benefit of the readers of *Mother India*:

- 1) If you want to do yoga and that is your aim, you must very strictly and very radically reject all attachments.
- 2) The sentiment of love has to be purified with the power of the psychic which can be done by going deep inside your heart centre.

**DEVAKINANDAN**

# NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

## THE COMPLETE SET

*(Continued from the issue of December 1981)*

*December 1, 1935*

*But what is this, Sir, I felt last night? It was a warm touch on my forehead, as warm as your feet at Darshan. But it was so sudden that I doubted it almost. Possible such touches?*

Possible! What an absurd question to ask! Such touches are quite a common experience in sadhana. There are however different touches. Sometimes the touch is personal, sometimes it is the touch of the Power or Presence from above. Many feel not a warm touch but a wave of something warm descending, etc.

*December 3, 1935*

*The other day we had a discussion about the possibility of the atrophy of sex-glands as a result of sex-abstinence. Yogis say that ojas and tejas can only be produced by such abstinence.*

That is correct. The whole theory of brahmacharya is based upon that by the Yogis. If it were not so, there would be no need of brahmacharya for producing tejas and ojas.

It is not a question of vigour and energy per se, but of the physical support—in that physical support the ojas produced by brahmacharya counts greatly. The transformation of retas into ojas is a transformation of physical substance into a physical (necessarily producing also a vital physical) energy. The spiritual energy by itself can only drive the body, like the vital and mental, but in driving it it would exhaust it if it had not a physical support—(I speak of course of the ordinary spiritual energy, not of the supramental to be which will have not only to transmute retas into ojas but ojas into something still more sublimated.)

*How is it then that scientists attach no value to sex energy except its use for procreation? The current theory is that sex is a physiological necessity.*

You mean the doctors. But even all doctors do not agree in that; there are many (I have read their opinions) who say that sex-satisfaction is not an absolute necessity and sex-abstinence can be physically very beneficial and is so—of course under proper conditions.



As for scientists, the product of the sex-glands is considered by them (at least so I have read) as a great support and feeder of the general energies. It has even been considered that sex-force has a great part to play in the production of poetry, art etc., and in the action of genius generally. Finally, it is a doctor who has discovered that sex-fluid consists of two parts, one meant for sex-purposes, the other as a basis of general energy, and if the sex action is not indulged the first element tends to be turned into the second, (retas into ojas, as the Yogis had already discovered). Theories? So are the statements or inferences of the opposite side—one theory is as good as another. Anyhow I don't think that the atrophy of the sex-glands by abstinence can be supported by general experience. X's contention is however logical if we take not individual results but the course of evolution and suppose that this evolution will follow the line of the old one, for these useless organs are supposed to disappear or deteriorate. But will the supramental evolution follow the same course as the old one or develop new adaptations of its own making—that is the uncertain element.

1. What about P's eyes? She complains that they only repeat ancient history—cure and recure and you seem to be quite callous about her hard, hard case. What? 2. What about N? He writes that he has realised he was having fever all the time, though it did not occur to him that it was fever. I hope this is not the result of the tuberculosis suggestion of Manilal. 3. What happened about A? He was to have another urine examination by Becharlal. Did it take place?

*December 4, 1935*

*P is better in every respect. But how am I to impress upon her that trachoma is a nasty business, that it takes a long time to cure completely?*

She does not care about all that. Her point of view is that the doctor is there to cure her and why doesn't he do it? Very careless and callous of him. It is something like the attitude of many to us and our Yogic force.

*By her own confession, you will see that there is at least some improvement. Isn't it something?*

Obviously.

*I intend to try a new medicine on her eyes, brushing the lids with sodium chlorate powder which is supposed to give good results. But it is rather painful. She might complain of the excruciating pain.*

Good Lord! She will make a worse noise than Hercules in the shirt of Nessus!

*If you give us courage, we may venture.*

Not possible. Prasanna will become more than *aprasanna*, she will become *abasanna* and do *dharnā*. Won't do.

*I knew nothing about N's fever. He swept in today and said he was feverish. Temperature was normal, his feeling can't be due to T.B. suggestion; for he doesn't know what T.B. is.*

He is writing very aghast notes and demanding an explanation from me of his perilous condition—so I thought it better to refer the matter to the medical authorities.

*A's urine was examined. The specific gravity was rather high and we advised him to take less sugar, after that we didn't enquire and he didn't complain.*

He does not complain. I simply wanted to know what had happened.

*Dr. Valle suggests a radiogram to be taken of S's stomach and intestine.*

It might be better. But I understand it can't be properly done here. Must be done at Madras or Calcutta.

*We can make at least a screen examination.*

It might be done—only R is in charge. He might object to an allopathic screen pushing into the stomach and upsetting his homeopathic effects. What?

*To take up our yesterday's discussion—Is it possible by the observance of brahmacharya to have a prodigious memory, as is said about Vivekananda?*

Possible, of course.

*We have heard about your doing such feats of memory also, on a miniature scale.*

Hallo! !

*But everybody knows you are a much greater 'Ananda', Sir! so perhaps possible?*

Possible, of course.

*What I wanted to say however is that poets and artists as a class are rather loose and lavish in their sex economy. If they indulge much in sex, how can their sex-force produce great things?*

You have not understood. I was answering the statement that scientists don't attach any value to sex-gland product and think it is only of use for an external purpose. Many scientists on the contrary consider it a base of productive energy; among other things it plays a part in artistic and poetic production. Not that artists and poets are anchorites and Brahmacharis but that they have a powerful sex-gland activity, part of which goes to creative and part to (effectual or ineffectual) procreative action. On the latest theory and Yoga theory, the procreative part would be *retas*, the creative part the basis of *ojas*. Now supposing the poet or artist to conserve his *retas* and turn it into *ojas*, the result would be an increased power of creative productivity. Q.E.D., sir! Logic, sir!

*I suppose Valmiki, Vyasa and Kalidasa were complete abstainers?*

Excuse me, there are no doubts about Kalidasa. Very much to the contrary.

December 5, 1935

*I asked R about S's screen examination. He said he would write to you.*

He is sardonically permissive—displeased with S's bull-like unmanageableness and says he does not care whether he is rayed or remains rayless all his life.

*I am now caught up in a triangle of confusion: one side of the triangle is story writing, another is poetry and the base—concentration, meditation, etc.*

Make it a triangle of harmony.

*Now all on a sudden an onrush of all these three. I've actually completed half a story. Not that it is something great or good.*

All right—great or not, complete it.

*My main idea is to attempt to develop a style by constant practice, and to open up my grey matter if possible, though I doubt it very much. Agam doubt! Yes, sir, doubt at every blessed nook and corner.*

You must have been St. Thomas in a past life, also Hamlet, an Academic philosopher, and several other things.

*If I can develop the style, I hope the rest will follow—at least you have made me believe so.*

Of course.

*As regards poetry, there again I am inundated by hazy ideas for 2 or 3 compositions and many lines seem to peep out.*

What is the meaning of this “seem”? Do they peep or do they not peep?

*But they seem more bent on tantalising me than meaning anything serious, because as soon as I sit down to transcribe them, they evaporate like ether or camphor.*

What do you mean? Why should you sit down to transcribe them? Keep hold of the lines and expressions by the nose as soon as they peep out, jump on a piece of paper and dash them down for prospective immortality.

*It appears so easy to catch all these amorphous beauties and put them into morphological Grecian statues!*

Why amorphous, if they are lines and expressions?—lines and expressions are either morphous or they don't exist. Explain yourself please.

The one thing you have not written is how the third side of the triangle manifests its activity. You say, all are active together?

*Can you solve this eternal disharmony and is there any possibility of harmony?*

Every possibility if you will cease to Hamletise and go straight or go baldheaded for the thing to be done when there is a chance.

*If poets have powerfully active sex-glands, I suppose I can be also called a poet, at any rate an embryonic one! Q.E.D. Logic, Sir! n'est-ce pas?*

No, sir—ce n'est pas ça. You are illegitimately connecting two disconnected syllogisms. 1st syllogism—the poets are sex-gland active, Nirod is a poet, therefore Nirod is sex-gland active. 2nd syllogism—all sex-gland actives are poets, Nirod is sex-gland active, therefore Nirod is a poet. The second proposition does not follow from the first as you seem illogically to think. All poets may be sex-gland active, but it does not follow that all sex-gland actives are poets. So don't start building an epic on your sex-glands, please.

December 6, 1935

*What shall we do about S? Ray him or leave him?*

Wait awhile till the present imbroglio is over.

*We allopaths are concerned with diagnosis. We open up even a dead man's viscera not to speak of sacrificing so many guinea-pigs which according to Moni is much more abominable than goat-sacrifice before Kali.*

I suppose the objection is to the suffering inflicted which is avoidable in the other cases.

*Shall we continue giving K cod-liver oil? He seems all right.*

It might be stopped. Perhaps Nergine may be given instead. He will have hard work now, so a little support may be necessary.

*You are asking why amorphous? The lines, expressions, words that I feel swarming all around me, but I cannot put into form, what else shall I call them?*

If you simply feel things swarming without a shape, then you can't call that lines and expressions—it is only the chaotic potentiality of them.

*One begins with the morphous lines hoping that the amorphous chaos will sweep in ecstatically and help me build a splendidly original cosmos, and what do I find? Either they elude me or what comes is something fictitious and commonplace.*

That's another matter. It's like dreams in which one gets splendid lines that put Shakespeare into the shade and one wakes up and enthusiastically jots them down, it turns out to be—

“O you damned goose, where are you going  
While the river is flowing, flowing, flowing?”  
and things like that

*Do you mean that I should scribble down all these expressions as soon as they hop in? Good Lord! there will be parts and pieces only. How shall I make a whole poem out of them?*

Many poets do that—jot down something that comes isolated in the hope that some day it will be utilisable. Tennyson did it, I believe. You don't want to be like Tennyson? Of course it is always permissible for you to pick and choose among these divine fragments and throw away those that are only semi-divine.

*Already words and lines of four or five poems in halves and quarters are lying in a comatose condition, without any hope of resurrection.*

Well, well—all that shows you are a poet in the making with hundreds of poems in you also in the making, very much so. The mountains in labour, you know—what?

*The only bit of time available to me for writing poetry, is about 1 to 1½ hours at night, and what can one write in that little time?*

Lucky man! Ample time, sir, ample time, both to realise the Brahman and to write another Iliad—or Nirodiad.

Good Lord! What can one write in 1 or 1½ hours? If I could only get that time for immortal productions every day! Why, in another three years Savitri and Ilion and I don't know how much more would be all rewritten, finished, resplendently complete.

*I can write at the most 10 lines which seem so poor a stuff!*

The question is whether they are really poor or something can be made out of them.

*Today I have produced 8 unchiselled lines in the afternoon—so I couldn't do any meditation.*

What of that? Chisel them at the next opportunity.

*Please don't ask me to fix the consciousness high while writing, for that is impossible. This is the difficulty I've been facing all along: one part bounding for concentration, another plunging into literature. How can I go straight or bald-headed?*

Well, but what I mean is to stop this profitless debate in your stomach and do what you have to do. When you are moved to concentrate, concentrate—when you are moved to cosmicise chaos, cosmicise away. And don't waste time in remorse for having done either. Remorse is a damned useless affair, very depressing, defertilising etc. Even if you murder somebody or, what is worse, write lines which amount to a murder of the Muse, remorse is out of place. In the first case, the useful thing to do is to bury the corpse and in the second to seek the capacious arms of the W.P.B. for your misdeed or try to cover it up by doing better.

*I was perplexed by your reply about Kalidasa (4.12.35). You mean he was an abstainer? You seem to know his life very well; then is there any truth in the conjecture that you were Kalidasa?*

Don't know anything about that. But I said "There are no doubts, very much to the contrary"—meaning that everybody knows that he was a sex-gland active.

*I have given you my timetable so that you may concentrate on me at the exact time.  
I hope the mathematical figures won't give you a shock!*

No fear. Mathematics are more likely to send me to sleep than give a shock.

*(To be continued)*

## THE LAST MOVEMENT

If you only had stayed  
In the chair opposite,  
Your vision, when my eyes opened,  
Would have completed the movement.

Beethoven in E flat concerto  
Builds slowly to a crescendo  
While the main theme recurs  
Half first, then three quarters:

And the music enters a magic land  
Of fairies—gurgling streams,  
Falls and jets of sonic waters  
Of blooming buds and swaying flowers.

But as the finale is approached  
Before the notes fade Beethoven stopped,  
With tired fingers and failing sight  
He sagged, relaxed and reached  
Beyond words, and heard vibrations  
That produced the dream—You  
Sitting in the chair in front  
Completing the last movement  
By the rhythm of Your presence.

DINKAR

# AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

*(Continued from the issue of December 1981)*

Now I am publishing a number of letters from me and answers from Sri Aurobindo on different topics. They are much more numerous than what I have included in my original Bengali book. We had no personal contact with Sri Aurobindo except on the four occasions of the Darshan. Therefore all our external communications with him regarding sadhana and other incidental questions were made through these letters.

His answers used to carry his presence and the best way to speak about him is to present his correspondence. Some of the answers have been published in his collected works. Even so, I cannot resist the temptation of reproducing at least a few among the many written in his own hand. They carried his blessings and form a part of my most invaluable treasures.

It has not been possible always to publish an entire letter of his since it contained personal touches which were not meant to be shared by others. There are many answers without my questions because Sri Aurobindo would simply send his answers, keeping back our own notes. I have not taken the risk of reconstructing my questions by ransacking my memory of the past. There were several letters of mine which were written in exercise books. Sri Aurobindo's answers were given in their margins or in other available empty spaces. Most of the correspondence I am quoting has been taken from these exercise books. It dates to the years 1930-38. In 1930 the letters were few; the number went on increasing year by year, till the letters stopped completely after the accident to Sri Aurobindo's right leg on the night of 23rd November 1938. On a superficial reading, many of them may look repetitive, but each really carries a special import of its own. I may add that even when I wrote to the Mother, the answers often came from Sri Aurobindo.

\*

**MYSELF:** The tears shed for the Divine out of sheer Ananda or from love and devotion—do they have a mixture of the vital ego?

**SRI AUROBINDO:** It is only the ordinary vital emotions which waste the energy and disturb the concentration and peace, that have to be discouraged. Emotion itself is not a bad thing, it is a necessary part of the nature, and psychic emotion is one of the most powerful helps to the sadhana. Psychic emotion, bringing tears of love for the Divine, or tears of Ananda ought not to be suppressed, it is only a vital mixture that brings disturbance in the sadhana. (21.3.1931)



MYSELF: Mother, is the Ananda about which I have written to you this morning a vital Ananda?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Ananda you describe is evidently that of the inner vital when it is full of the psychic influence and floods with it the exterior vital also. It is the true Ananda and there is nothing in it of the old vital nature. When the psychic thus uses the vital to express itself, this kind of intense ecstasy is the natural form it takes. This intensity and the old vital excitement are two quite different things and must not be confused together. When there is the intensity with a pure and full satisfaction, content and gratitude leaving no room for claim, demand or depressing reaction, that is the true movement. (6.12.1931)

MYSELF: What should be the true mutual relation among us? How to bring it about?

SRI AUROBINDO: What you must have with other sadhaks is a harmonious relation free from any mere vital attachment (indifference is not asked from you) and free from any indulgence in vital wrong movement of the opposite kind (such as dislike, jealousy or ill-will). It is through the psychic consciousness that you have found it possible to be in a true constant relation with the Mother and your aim is to make that the basis of all your life, action and feeling; all in you, all you feel, all you say and do, should be consistent with that basis. If all proceeds from that psychic union of your consciousness with the Mother, dedicating everything to her, then you will develop the right relation with others. (10.2.1932)

MYSELF: Very often I see that I feel greatly disturbed in the face of a difficulty and fall into a condition from which rising seems impossible. But surprisingly enough I get back strength by your Grace and say to myself: "Since Mother and Sri Aurobindo have said so, I will surely succeed." With this inner urge I stand up and step forward, all fresh and fine. I have written to you what happened this time and what experience I gained. I was shown almost miraculously how difficulties turn into opportunities if we accept them in the right way. What a joy it was!

SRI AUROBINDO: The attitude you have taken is the right one. It is this feeling and attitude which help you to overcome so rapidly the attacks that sometimes fall upon you and throw you out of the right consciousness. As you say, difficulties so taken become opportunities—the difficulty faced in the right spirit and conquered, one finds that an obstacle has disappeared, a fresh step forward has been taken. To question, to resist in some parts of the being increases trouble and difficulties—that was why an unquestioning acceptance and obedience to the direction of the Guru was laid down as indispensable in the old Indian Yoga—it was demanded not for the sake of the Guru, but for the sake of the *shushya*. (13.2.1932)

MYSELF: Mother dear, can I practise *tratak*? I was doing a bit of looking at a bright star, but I, unlike Dilip, failed to see anything. Perhaps some time is needed for the vision to open.

**SRI AUROBINDO:** We do not consider it necessary for you to practise *tratak*. It may be useful to someone who has a strong predisposition—in Dilip for instance, in his development something was always trying to bring out this power of vision. But in your case you can wait for the vision to develop of itself or at any rate leave it till later. For you what is important is to carry on what has been begun till it is complete in all the parts of your nature. (28.2.1932)

**MYSELF:** Mother mine, how sweet it is when you write so frankly about what you want of us. I have never tasted the joy of having no desire as I do now.

I have found out one thing, Mother. Please tell me if it is true that singing in the open air on the terrace causes a strain to the throat, often followed by a crack in the voice.

**SRI AUROBINDO:** Perhaps when you sing it is better to do it inside; for when singing in the open one is usually led to strain or force the voice. (4.4.1932)

**MYSELF:** Mother, I feel such an unease when I do something without asking you beforehand. Whenever anybody wants me to do something, my automatic answer is: "I can't do or say anything without asking the Mother." There are many who don't like this. They say: "Why should everything be told to the Mother? We get to consider the word more important than the spirit." Is that so? I ask myself: "Am I being excessive? Is it all mental?"

**SRI AUROBINDO:** You are quite right in following what you feel about asking us in these matters. It is not mental or an exaggeration. (12.4.1932)

**MYSELF:** Sweet Mother, I would like to tell you something. Yesterday, repeatedly I had an experience while discussing with D about *sadhana*... It was like this: I often felt that it was not I who was speaking but someone was speaking through me. I myself was so surprised to hear what I was uttering. It was absolutely impossible for only me to speak so. I felt sure that something which was trying to express itself came out through me.

**SRI AUROBINDO:** Yes, it is true that something has been speaking through you. Be more and more careful to speak without the interference of the mind or the feeling and speech will become more and more clear. (4.5.1932)

**MYSELF:** When I commit a fault, I repent and cause myself much pain. I don't know why I should feel so intensely.

**SRI AUROBINDO:** It is a certain excess and exaggeration somewhere in your vital. A greater constant calm and control in your vital—the whole of it—is necessary. For these movements do not help—they prevent a quick recovery and shake the nerves and the body and push to unreasoned action. (20.5.1932)

*(To be continued)*

*(Translated by Nirodbaran from the original Bengali)*

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

*(Continued from December 1981)*

## The Mother's Message

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



6

ONE evening, before the French lesson, I went into the Mother's room and said to her, "Mother, you are so sweet and loving—you are doing so much for me. Yet often I fail to receive your Love and Force because I am really helpless against the constant attacks of the dark forces. I feel that I am unconscious and cannot realise

your inner closeness and help. Also I have not the slightest knowledge of the Divine Life. How can I ever achieve my goal? I am disappointed and disturbed.”

I felt the hot tears rising to my eyes as I expressed my feeling. The Mother put her hands on my shoulders and pressed them gently. I raised my eyes to hers which were full of tenderness and understanding. After a moment or two she said:

“All these mischiefs are of the hostile forces. When these forces come, you must not lose your balance and say, ‘Oh! now I cannot do anything—I am helpless.’ On the contrary, you must have a strong will and faith. Otherwise these bad forces will surely build a huge wall between the Divine Mother and yourself.

“The Divine has given you legs for walking—don’t stick to one place. You must make some effort—you must call me and I am always there to help you.”

Her closing words fell on my ears like a benediction.

In spite of this wonderful assurance, a black shadow of sorrow still weighed upon me—my mind was restless and full of vacillating thoughts. I knew all too well my weaknesses and my helplessness.

On the morning of 27th January the Mother wished me thus:

“Bonjour  
My dear little child Huta  
Let it be a peaceful and luminous day.  
With my love and blessings.”

Whenever the Mother wrote, she always put forth her Force so that I might realise the peace.

The Mother sent me yet another card on the 29th January showing a sparrow sitting near its nest on the branch of a tree—a worm in its bill—ready to feed its little ones, tiny wide-open mouths. These words followed:

“Let it be for you a day of peace, light and strength.”

There was no end to the Mother’s sympathy and solace.

On the 30th January she sent me a letter saying:

“My dear little child Huta,  
On 10th morning I shall see you at 11 o’clock in the meditation hall upstairs.  
This morning I have chosen among the saris you have given me a plain one of a very beautiful colour and Vasudha will cut it and give you.  
With my love and blessings.”

Vasudha—known as Akka (Sister) to all—was in charge of the Mother's embroidery department in which all the Mother's dresses were made. The Mother always liked her dresses to be stitched by hand and not by machine—except for certain clothes which needed the machine.

I used to take to Golconde, for stitching, the material which had been cut for her dresses. Occasionally I sat in the department and did a few things which needed to be done on the spot.

It was the last day of January. I thought that days and months were passing and I had not achieved anything in my life. I truly aspired to realise the Truth. I sent an ardent prayer to the Mother. The next day, the 1st February, she sent me a card depicting a blue bird which was as if descending from a far Transcendent and carrying these words of the Mother:

“I read your very nice prayer of yesterday—let it be fulfilled.  
With my love and blessings.”

\*

I was still attached to my people and whenever I received letters from them regarding their difficulties I grew sad. A strange feeling—fear, unease and God knows what else—filled my heart. I informed the Mother about it and she replied:

“I intended to answer this morning to your letter in which you speak of your family and you ask me why they are so disturbed. It is because of financial difficulties. As yet, for them, money has a capital importance and when the money difficulties come, they are very much upset.

“However, the only way to face these difficulties—as all the others—is to keep faith in the Divine's Grace and to be as calm as possible.

“And yesterday I received your second letter in which you speak of the strange feeling in your heart. This happens because you become sad and worried and upset—it naturally affects your heart. And the only way to cure it is to keep as peaceful as possible, not to get upset for small and passing things and to love sufficiently the Divine so that the other things do not have so much power to upset you. The Divine's love is always with you and that is the only thing that never fails in life.

“My help, strength, love and blessings are always with you.”

I was no nearer a solution to the problems which beset me. They continued to torment me throughout the day.

At night I prayed to the Mother for her soothing peace. After that I wrote a letter to my father and Laljibhai:

My respected father and brother,

Loving greetings along with the Mother's blessings.

I was glad to receive your letters.

Father, I am not at all worried about the situation there, because I am confident of the Mother's Force and Grace.

I request you not to be anxious about the crisis. The Mother will do the needful.

Indeed, I wish you all to be happy and peaceful. Moreover, I beg of you not to forget the Mother.

Yes, I have received the money as previously arranged. You have written that if I required more money I should ask. Thank you. I am content with what I get. You have written about Mr. Muljibhai Madhvani. But he has not come here so far. Truth is not easily perceived. I pray that the Divine may give true understanding and wisdom to all.

Yes, Mr. A.B. Patel has already come to the Ashram. I am amazed not to have heard from you about your forthcoming visit here! Work is a life-long phenomenon. Yet now it is high time all of us turned towards the Supreme.

Thank you for sending the book, *Darshan*.

If my mother wishes to stay at Rajkot,<sup>1</sup> let her do so. Everyone is free to do according to their inner feeling.

My mother has written to me. I am afraid she has not got over the shock of my staying here. But she should not worry at all about me.

You wrote to me about your recent visit to Jinja.<sup>2</sup> I am sorry to learn about the feeling of the second brother and his wife who do not have children. If they pray sincerely to the Mother with an unshaken faith, her blessings will never go in vain. After receiving a letter from the second brother, I had a talk with the Mother. And whatever she told me, I conveyed to him.

I do remember you all. I wish you all to come here.

Brother, I am pleased to read your letters also. I believe that this time the importance of the April Darshan will be immense. I have already sent you the Mother's message regarding the matter. She told me that she had been trying to bring you all here. She will be very happy if all of you come. Deep within me I feel that there is definitely an occult reason behind her call.

I have been observing changes in my life and at the same time experiencing the Mother's Grace and Love. She is totally aware of my day-to-day life.

I have already written to you about the completion of my one year in the Ashram on 10th February. On that day I shall go to see the Mother in her apartment in the main Ashram building. I shall offer the Saree-pin on behalf of all of you.

The Mother knows perfectly the critical situation all of you have been going

<sup>1</sup> In Saurashtra.

<sup>2</sup> In Uganda.

through. She will certainly help. I have already talked to her about everything as you have wished me to do, and expressed my own concern also. Here is her reply:

“I intended to answer this morning to your letter in which you speak of your family and you ask me why they are so disturbed. It is because of financial difficulties. As yet, for them, money has a capital importance and when the money difficulties come, they are very much upset.

“However, the only way to face these difficulties—as all others—is to keep faith in the Divine’s Grace and to be as calm as possible....”

Please do contemplate on her light-filled words and accept the Mother’s Truth. For, she has everybody’s good at heart and dissolves the troubles of everyone. I firmly believe that all things belong to the Mother and they are her responsibility.

I am happy to hear about the incredible heavy rainfall in your Estate after an awful drought. This is one more proof of the Mother’s Grace. Henceforth you will surely find a tremendous change over there in a short span.

It is my duty to write to you to accept the invitation of the Mother who has asked you all to come here for the April Darshan.

You have stated in your letter that you did not wish to come to the Mother with empty hands, because you like to offer something to her. I appreciate your feeling. But, in fact, she wants only love from the heart. She has come upon the earth to redeem human beings.

Work is always there but to turn a little bit to the spiritual life is indispensable. For, this opportunity does not come often. The Mother has specifically indicated the prominence of these months. If this opportunity is missed then there will be nothing but regret.

Do you remember the story of Saint Jalarambapa of Virpur (Saurashtra)? A barber often asked the Saint jestingly that if he got a divine call from God, he should take him also to Heaven. And it so happened that the barber did see God’s messengers come for him. He refused to go with them, saying that he had a lot of business on hand. The messenger told him: “Jalaram has prayed to us to take you. Now you must come.” The barber kept on making excuses as if his common daily affairs were more valuable and needed urgent attention. The same day he heard of the Saint’s passing away. He wept his heart out realising what a golden chance he had missed. But now all tears were in vain!

Once you have come here, please be frank with the Mother and leave everything to her. She will not fail you. The Mother is omniscient. Only she can and will settle each and every thing. Do write to her before coming here. Please come to the Ashram in March at the latest. The visit will be beneficial for all of you.

I am much younger than you all. But I take the liberty of proffering advice. Kindly forgive me. To get out of troubles and difficulties and to im-

prove the present situation, collaboration and unity among the family members are absolutely necessary. This will considerably improve the economical condition. Then there will be harmony, peace and happiness in the family.

The Mother's help, protection and blessings are always there. At the moment perhaps it may not be easy to realise the Mother's Grace. But the day will come when all of you will be convinced of it. So do not lose faith, hope and courage. Go forward. The Mother is there to see you all through.

I enclose a letter of my friend Stephanie to you.

I trust all of you are well. Please remember me to all there and give my fond love to the children.

With kindest regards,

Huta

I was swept back on the wings of memory to my childhood among my people. I went over everything again and yet again—even when those wings were weary of their fluttering and I was dropping off to sleep at last.

The attachment was so deep-rooted that it was difficult to discard it once and for all. This very attachment was the mask assumed by the adverse forces. I was misled and felt that it was quite natural to be attached to my family because they were mine. But I was wrong—it did not dawn upon me that I should rise above worldly responses, both emotional and sentimental, if I really wished to consecrate my life exclusively to the Supreme. Indeed, I experienced so many different feelings that it is impossible to describe them all in words.

I questioned the Mother: "Why can't I receive and feel your Love, Help and Force? What is it that really comes between you and me?" And she gave the answer:

"You ask in your letter what comes between you and the love, help and force that I send you, so that you cannot feel and receive them. It is the small *ego* that comes in between and closes the doors of your receptivity. It is only by aspiration and prayer that the ego can be overcome; a constant and sincere aspiration is *always* answered by the Divine."

Now the Mother had drawn my attention to the ego. As a matter of fact, I had not been really conscious of it before. But, since I became a little more aware of myself, I felt it to be true that whenever I was hurt or offended, it was always my ego that was at fault. I prayed to the Mother to release me from this defect, and she sent the reply:

"Just received your letter in answer to mine of this morning, in which you ask me to remove your ego. It is just what I want to do and I am working at it. I wrote to you about it only to wake in you the desire to get rid of your ego, because when such is your wish I can do the work more quickly and you will the



sooner be liberated from the difficulty.

“So, keep good hope and courage, I shall see that you get out of trouble.

“With my love and blessings.”

My mind flew back to her first letter of the year, in which she had explained the cause of my ill-health and referred to the tight knot in my being, the knot of my small ego! This is how the Mother makes us conscious of our defects and lets her Force work upon them. Unhappily people have a tendency to think that the Mother knows of their difficulties and that she will solve them without their telling her of them or praying to her. But this is not always true. The Mother does know everything, but on our side we must become conscious of our deficiencies and aspire to her and implore her to free us from them. Once she is aware of our sincere wish to surmount all our imperfections, she can surely do the work more quickly, as she mentioned in her letter to me. Our collaboration and response are constantly needed till the goal is reached.

One afternoon I received an unexpected note from the Mother:

“My dear little child Huta,

“I have just received some nice letter paper, and I am sending you the first sheet, with my love and blessings.”

This showed how much a child of hers could be present in her Consciousness. All the time she remembered me and thought of me. No words can ever do justice to her limitless Love.

Some people had the impression that I troubled the Mother too much by telling her of all my difficulties and the difficulties of my family and that I made her write too many letters and so on. When I heard of all this I was terribly hurt and I wrote to her. She answered:

“In your letter you say two things that are quite true. First, that the child must always go to his mother for help, knowledge and protection; and consequently must tell everything to his mother, and the second is that you must not tell even a single thing to ‘one’ or to anyone except me, because it always creates a confusion.

“So, you are quite right when you speak to me of your family and you ask my help for them; and I am always ready to give that help....

“I hope you are quite well now, with my love and blessings.”

At once the Mother’s Light flashed into my consciousness—I became aware of the source of my trouble. Yes, it was my ego which had got upset.

Now I knew from this experience that if I argued against other people’s egos, then obviously I would accumulate difficulties and invite a lot of trouble. I felt that I

should not utter a word to my critics even if they were absolutely wrong in their statements and conceptions. However much it hurt my ego, I tried to keep as quiet as I could against the assault, knowing that the Truth would shine out in its own time. I stated my attitude to the Mother and her response was:

“Indeed, your letter of last night is a very nice one, and it made me quite happy; because this is the true way to get rid of the ego; and it shows that you are open to my working in you, and also that soon you will be able to feel my force and love and to be aware of my presence in you.”

She encouraged me enormously but the petty ego did not give up its sway easily. It was rigid and obstinate like a rock. As a matter of fact, I suffered much owing to this defect but I continued my endeavour to keep the ego under control.

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I was now engrossed in making a dress for the Mother, and from time to time I still did typing for Nolini—my special work was typing the Mother’s Messages. Apart from all this, I kept everything clean in the Mother’s private stores which are in the Ashram building. Never before in my life had I swept and scrubbed floors. I had been brought up like a princess. I found it pretty hard, my hands and knees ached, but still I carried on, knowing that this too was one of the Mother’s ways of breaking my ego’s pride. Nevertheless, I enjoyed the work. But what I really wanted was some creative work which would offer me an opportunity for self-expression. I wondered whether I would have to pass my whole life in only this kind of vocation.

While working in the stores, I always had to keep the front door shut lest anybody should come in. Huge cupboards concealed almost all the windows. The place was really stuffy and dark. All the time I had to keep the lights on.

It was interesting to see and clean countless different kinds of fabulous things. Silver vases, carved ivory boxes and other pieces in ivory. Sandalwood boxes and fans, brass pots and varieties of brassware including many idols, colourful carpets, and carved furniture. Big porcelain jars, vases and crockeries. Magnificent cut-glasses and other articles. Also the Mother’s own clothes, which she used to wear before she came to India. Her grandparents’ clothes and antique things. In fact, I felt as if I were in a chain-stores of art and handicraft and a vast miscellany.

When I came across cut-wine-glasses, I wondered why they were in the stores. Later I came to know that at times in the early days Sri Aurobindo took some wine.

I myself tasted wine when I went to Europe in 1952 with one of my brothers and his wife. The red wine of Germany—Assmannshausen—was the best. I have heard that many people from America and other countries go specially there to enjoy this beverage.

Of course, we did not go purposely for the drinks. But since we had been tra-

velling across the continent by car, we just passed through this beautiful place.

Often after my work I sat near Sri Aurobindo's big arm-chair, which he had used for quite a number of years. I prayed to him as if he were sitting there. I cleaned too the cupboards where there were clothes and pillow-cases used by Sri Aurobindo. I liked to touch them. When the stores were being repaired, I wrote to the Mother that now I could not work there any more and she answered:

"I have received your letter and understand that you need some work. The 'stores' work is the best, but they have not yet finished their work and say that they will finish only after *darshan*.

"I will go there when the repairs are finished and I shall call you at that time.

"Meanwhile I shall try to find something else."

So I had to wait. Now I became impatient to attain the goal. I wanted three things—realisation of the Divine, everlasting peace and unchanging happiness—and all in the twinkling of an eye! Some strange impulse stirred in me and made me ask these three boons from the Mother without openly saying what they were. I merely hinted they were precious and difficult to get. I had a doubt whether she could give them to me. In fact, I wrote to the Mother almost without thinking—driven by a whimsical mood. And this is what I received from her:

"Indeed, do not worry about the dress, I am always happy to receive whatever you give me and the one of almond colour is quite welcome.

"As for your letter of yesterday morning, I did not take it seriously—I could not have, because it is the Divine Grace that told you to ask whatever you need, and you cannot put *conditions* on the Divine Grace. So, if you want three things from me, you can ask freely, even if they are, as you say, 'very important, very expensive and difficult to get', but you cannot put conditions on me before asking.

"However, I took your letter for a child's joke and that is why I answer you this:

"It must be three spiritual things that you want, because, indeed, the spiritual things are the most important, the most expensive and the most difficult to get. And these, I can always promise to give you, because they are under my control.

"I shall see you tomorrow at 11 o'clock."

I was ready to sink into the ground and was ashamed to go to the Mother the next day to offer the dress which I had finished making. I was all varieties of a fool. But, of course, she knew what was really required in order to lead me to my goal. No wonder I failed to recognise her divine ways and her working in me, for I was extremely self-willed—and I was really sorry. I wrote this to the Mother and she replied:

“I shall wait for you tomorrow morning and you must come.

“You need not be ashamed because I am not at all displeased. Ignorance is a general human illness and nobody can escape it until one is united with the Divine.

“So in any case you come to me and I shall receive you with all my love and blessings.”

Most appropriate indeed are Sri Aurobindo’s words:

“A deep of compassion, a hushed sanctuary,  
Her inward help unbarred a gate in heaven;  
Love in her was wider than the universe,  
The whole world could take refuge in her single heart.”

*Savitri*, Cent. Ed., Vol. 28, p. 15

When I went to the Mother her charming smile wiped off all my embarrassment. She examined the sewing of the dress minutely and admired it. As her birthday was approaching soon, I also offered her on behalf of my family a gold pin studded with real pearls. She was very pleased with it and wore it several times afterwards. Then she looked deeply into my eyes while holding my hands. Lastly she gave me flowers along with a small bag which contained my pocket money. I told her that the bag had been given to her by me the preceding year—why should she return it? She laughed tenderly and said:

“Whenever I feel like giving something to a person—I have such a lot of things to choose from—I never think, ‘what should I give?’ I simply ask the material things, ‘Who wants to go?’ And at once I get the reply, ‘Me!’ And I pick up that very thing and give it to the person.”

I was amazed and thought that all this showed that even the most material things were full of consciousness and the Mother was able to identify herself with them and communicate with them.

That evening she wore the dress I had made for her, and the next day I received a lovely card with these lines:

“Indeed your work is very nice and the ‘Kamiz’ you gave me yesterday is quite pretty. I had great pleasure in wearing it.

“As for the new one you are preparing, the white and light green thread will surely look very nice, so you can use it.”

Now I was making a silver-grey dress for her and was waiting anxiously for the new work which she had promised.

In answer to my prayer the Mother wrote:

“Let the aspiration and love for the Divine conquer in you all desires and all difficulties.”

*(To be continued)*

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#### NOTE

Huta wishes her readers to make a correction in the October instalment of “The Story of a Soul”. She has said that the Mother used to take the “Questions and Answers” class on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Instead of Saturdays, it should be Fridays.

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### SUDDENLY, SILENTLY...

I WAS at the Ashram today  
 reliving a time when thousands came  
 from all the world over.  
 We crowded Samadhi courtyard  
 with our little white selves  
 shoulder-to-shoulder to make  
 the new being.  
 The great inner Self manifested  
 in us, as the Divine we came to receive  
 revealed itself in each according  
 to our capacities,  
 descending in us—showering inwardly  
 a high ecstatic grace  
 expanding our inner space  
 beyond human,  
 while we merely sat  
 and forgot ourselves.  
 Once being there,  
 one never leaves.

STUART

# LETTERS ON POETRY

4

## SOME PROBLEMS OF POETIC EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESSION

I

ARTISTIC intensity I have always stressed. It provides the key to a lot of problems connected with poetry. The problem of sincerity which you mention is one of them.

A poem is admittedly an art-medium and, if an art-medium is chosen for what one has to say, artistic intensity is of paramount value. Once you grant this, it becomes pointless to speak, as you have done, of "simply an artistic value" in a spiritual poem. Perhaps you mean by "artistic value" decorativeness laid on from without or mere technical skill. But these things are not art. The former is in fact a fault which art must avoid. The latter is indeed necessary, yet it is not all that art comprises. A particular kind of force from within, a certain type of intensity, has to become technical skill if we are to have artistic value. Thus understanding artistic value we may state that in a spiritual poem, as in any other kind of poem, sincerity is worthless without it. If spiritual sincerity in a poem is to depend for its worth on anything else, what purpose can be served by selecting a form of art for its expression? Why not just blurt out what you feel? Why cast it into image and symbol, why attend to qualities of rhythm, why resort to metre and rhyme?

I am not asking you to be an art-for-art's-saker in the sense that so long as you create art it does not matter whether the art is spiritual or no. You are quite right, as a sadhak, to believe that you must produce spiritual stuff or nothing. But don't forget you are producing it in an art-medium. If you do, the quality of your work will suffer. I don't think you are oblivious of the paramount importance of artistic intensity. Otherwise, why should you pick and choose, as you do, from among your poems? All you write is spiritually sincere, yet you reject some poems and keep others. Your sifting is done because, no matter how sincere, you may spiritually be, your sincerity will not be the sort necessary in poetry if you do not achieve artistic intensity.

Here you are likely to raise the point: "Is it not possible for a poem to come artistically intense, to be inspired in form, without being sincere?" Well, how is a reader of poetry to judge what poem is sincere and what insincere? He is not supposed to know how a poet has lived: he has only the poem to go by. You surely do not expect all your readers to be aware that you are a resident of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram and are faithfully following in your Guru's footsteps? Lacking that awareness, will they be doomed forever to doubt your sincerity? I put it to you that they will never fail to feel a poem to be sincere if there is artistic intensity in it, the inspiration of form. In the absence of this intensity they may feel that you are sincere as a man, but they will never feel that you are sincere as a poet. Conversely, they will feel that where a poet has artistic intensity he is *ipso facto* sincere.

Is this startling? It wouldn't be if certain misconceptions were removed. The first truth to bear in mind is that a poet is not bound to have an actual experience of whatever he says. When, for instance, you write:

O deep starry secrecy  
Twinkling in my heart!—

are you stating a fact of your experience as a man? You may be, but you could just as well have written the lines without doing so. Certainly, you did have some emotion of what you said; but I doubt whether your psychic being actually experienced a mysterious vastitude, realised a divine cosmicity full of myriad glimmerings and thrillings of intuition. What did happen, most probably, is that such an Immense existing within the hitherto unexplored profundities of your inner and higher self found you sympathetic to its presence, stirred your imagination and used you as a verbal medium. Of course, if one were possessed of the full experience one would be more frequently a verbal medium of its rare richness, but outbursts of regions of consciousness unrealised by the poet do occur pretty often in poetry.

The second truth to remember is that a man can have many sides to his nature and, while one side may have a turning towards God, another may have a penchant for the Devil: the work he does through the former is not insincere just because the latter has play in him too. Unless he rejects the devilish side, he will not create very often through the Godward side and his creative possibilities there will remain unfulfilled on the whole. Yet, what does come forth in poetry through the opening he somewhere has to the Divine can be as sincere as the work of a consistent spiritual seeker, provided the artistic expression is perfect.

The third truth to keep in view is that a poet has the power of entering into some sort of communion with anything and everything—even those things which are far removed from his trend of life and run counter to his general disposition or character. A dramatist may write a play to illustrate his own vision of the truth of the universe, but one of his *dramatis personae* can be somebody who holds a diametrically opposite vision and this vision can be expressed also with poetic perfection in the course of the play. You don't suppose Shakespeare was a murderer or even in sympathy with murdering: still, the speech he puts into the mouth of Lady Macbeth invoking the powers of evil to aid her in killing Duncan is one of the peaks of the Shakespearean Parnassus. And it has not one false note, it is absolutely sincere, a potential murderer seems actually speaking.

I have written at some length merely to help you look at poetry in the right way. My remarks are not meant to dissuade you one whit from cutting yourself off, for the sake of your personal sadhana, from certain poets and feeding more and more on certain others. But what I have written can assist you to distinguish grades of artistic excellence in the poets you like and not accept everything as equally good. Also, I hope some parts of this letter will help you in intensifying your own inspiration and

guiding yourself along the correct path in your self-criticism.

I cannot say that the path indicated by your friend in his letter is really desirable. If we went by the criterion of the same recognisable Force which is behind all your poems, there would be no need to weed out anything: all your poems bear the mark of an Aurobindonian sadhak and, judged in that light, they must without exception be preserved and published. But to lump everything together would be to serve ill even the Force your friend speaks of: that Force is best served in poetry by what is poetically intensest.

## 2

We must not underrate in the poetic phenomenon the importance of form. When you respond to poetry, words and rhythms seem to remain for you a little in the background. I do not deny that to write with striking phrases and euphony and effective metre without any inner word-life and rhythm-movement getting expressed is to construct verse rather than to create poetry. But, conceived as inwardly animated and determined, form cannot occupy "a secondary place" and for the obvious reason that without it there can be no poetry at all. The *bhava*, the living sense, which you speak of as being the primary value to care for cannot function poetically in its absence. To miss form in the connotation I have given it is to miss poetry. The *bhava* has to be there, or else we shall have gibberish; but side by side with it we must have form to produce poetry or any artistic work. If you are only after *bhava*, you are going to art not for its artistic qualities but only for its idea, its sight, its emotion, and if you do not attend to those qualities you will get these things in just a general way and not in their individual character and force. The general idea, sight and emotion in Browning's

God's in His heaven,  
All's right with the world

is almost the same as in Dilip Kumar Roy's

For 'tis His will that overarches all,  
His sentinel love broods o'er the universe.

And yet what a gulf of difference between the individual character and force of the one and that of the other! The vision is merely skimmed in Browning: it is caught with its depths wide open in Dilip Kumar Roy. Both thought and feeling in Roy are luminously and rapturously mystical: they have in Browning no turn or tremor beyond a lightly lyricised religious outlook's. The profound glow and rapture in Roy can get realised by us only if we respond in full to the form of his expression, if we let his words and rhythms play upon us. Change the words, alter the rhythms and though the general *bhava* may stay the same, the beauty has vanished and with the beauty all



individual character and force.

Maybe you will argue that once you comprehend the idea and grasp the image and stir to the emotion, it is not necessary to let the values of words and of their order and of sounds and of stresses hold the consciousness: the feel of the language, of its movement and of its music may seem to you secondary if not negligible. But in that case any words so arranged as not to be without concrete import and correct grammar would do just as well for conveying Roy's substance, and prose would be as effective as poetry. Surely you cannot imply this? If you do not, then form is of extreme use. And in form the elements which you regard as very minor—long and short syllables, assonances and consonances, basic beats and modulations—count a lot. You may not pause to notice them and the poet may not have paused every time to manipulate them, but they are there: the inspiration working through the poet has intuitively attended to them and we must attend too, though not with a schoolmaster's dry-as-dust mind. We need not start analysing them, but we do need to give them their proper realisation: if we mispronounce and misaccent, we shall mar the music and prevent the subtle suggestions borne on the music from filling out those of the words taken as intellectual pointers. If you go to art and do not respect form as much as what you call *bhava*, you fail to draw from art the specific values and powers it has to offer.

By the way, your observation that no great poet thinks of stresses and feet and long and short syllables while composing his poem is erroneous. Inspiration coming in a perfect rush leaves no need for the poet to play consciously the artist; but inspiration coming slowly and after considerable effort on the poet's part calls for a fair amount of conscious art-activity. Many poets correct even while they create instead of leaving correction to be done afterwards. And you are mistaken in your idea that, if they created without any correction then or afterwards, the poem would always be more touched with natural freshness and radiance. You believe Walt Whitman never revised or modified his first draft and thereby achieved a rare sincerity and simplicity which to what you term "sophisticated ears" sounds somewhat crude. That is not so. Whitman worked over his first draft as assiduously as any other poet: of course, on several occasions he had no need to work over it, but he never thought such working to be loss of sincerity and simplicity. His free verse is not another name for poetry just flowing through—without the "sophistications" of chiselling and polishing as well as of rhyme and metre. There is plenty of deliberate art and cunning rhythm-scheme and deft disposition of subtle harmonic units in his free verse.

The first draft of anything has nothing to recommend it in being first: it may be inspired or no, it may be sincere and simple or it may be "sophisticated": everything hangs on whether genuine inspiration has found a channel or a false facility has got an outlet. A corrected version is not bound to be "sophisticated"; it may be the very soul of simplicity and sincerity. Keats originally began his *Endymion* with the line:

A thing of beauty is a constant joy.

Only later, when a friend found it lacking something, he re-wrote:

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.

The first draft was tame, the second electric. Those famous lines of his—

...Magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn—

had in the first draft “windows” for “casements” and “keelless” for “perilous”. The whole spirit of the thing was lost: the magic atmosphere and the fairy feeling entered only when Keats started being what you term “sophisticated”.

I must here mention that by your coupling of sincerity with simplicity and opposing them to sophistication you appear to suggest that to be sincere and not sophisticated one must be simple. I don't see sincerity in terms of simplicity alone. To be complex is not necessarily to be sophisticated. Sophistication is truly the product of an artificial braininess or a deliberate high-brow ingenuity. The “metaphysicals” of the seventeenth century are often sophisticated in the former sense, the “modernists” of the twentieth in the latter. But there are effects in both that are brainy or ingenious in an inspired way: some of Donne's conceits, for instance, are not superimposed on the idea and emotion but organic to them and Eliot has at times an intricate cross-light imagery that is really penetrating. Here they are apparently sophisticated while being truly sincere. Where, however, there is in a poet complexity without any braininess or ingenuity the charge of sophistication has not even an apparent bearing. Poetry may be simple or it may be complex—according to the personality of the poet and the theme in hand.

Complexity can result from a packing together of many glimpses or a drawing out of one glimpse into many details; it can result also from a colourful and opulent style instead of an austere one or from a multi-winged structure of sentence and syntax rather than one that is straight-lined and direct-designed. No jot of sincerity is sacrificed by thus being complex: we may with equal force declare that Nature is natural only when she sends forth a straight stream and not a winding river, raises a mountain with easy contours and a single peak and not a steep-faced mass of several summits, unfolds a majestic oak or a grand baobab spreading uniformly upward and not a sublime banyan hanging from its height pillar on strange pillar downward to the earth. So long as some elemental energy, some urge from within, drives a poet, he rings sincere: inspiration perfectly expressing itself is the sign of sincerity and there is no reason why inspiration should be simple and not complex.

There is also the fact that occasionally the vision transcribed from an abnormal plane of consciousness seems complex to our normal mind, whereas in reality it may be quite simple for a perception in tune with that plane's spontaneities, as in a similar fashion what is clear to the mystical eye is blurred and hazy to the gaze unaccustomed

to hidden yogic lights. We need not doubt the sincerity of poems expressive of such seeing. Again, a poet may be simple in one respect and complex in another. Homer is said to be the best example of simplicity. His sentences have on the whole a simpler construction than Milton's or Keats's. Still, Homer has an extraordinary variety of inflexions and a recurrent play of polysyllables beside which the cast of Miltonic or Keatsian words is simple. He is simpler in his basic ideas than either of these English singers and yet if we mark the manner in which he lengthens out and details off his similes we must deem him more complex than they. Sincerity can go hand in hand with a lot of different things.

I am sure you did not intend to question this, but as your statement was leaning slightly to one side I have made bold to point out the impression it creates. My ideal is to be as wide-notioned and many-viewed as can be consistent with an unsleeping watch to distinguish the genuine gleam from the spurious glitter. I insist unrelentingly on authentic inspiration in poetry—the ring and radiance of the gold of beauty. Once sure of that gold, I let no bias rule me about the plain or the luxuriant, the forthright or the subtle, the clear-cut or the intricate.

## 3

All poetry must be patiently and intimately lived with if we are to extract from it its full delight: spiritual or mystical poetry still more, and most the type of inspiration a few Aurobindonian poets aim at. "Most"—not simply because the meaning is likely to be difficult to grasp at first or because the life-stuff of spiritual or mystical inspiration is a reality which cannot be seized except by a sort of aesthetic Yoga. There is yet one more reason: the poetic aim now is the Divine in the original and not in a translation! This rather puzzling statement is best made clear by answering the query: what kind of poetry is the most spiritual or mystical?

To be most spiritual, poetry must draw much more than its thought-substance from a lofty source. The thought-substance of all sterling religious literature has its origin in the altitudes of the Spirit, but one usually deals in abstractions or in some emotional reconstruction of spiritual idea. The thought, of course, has to grasp the spiritual truth—and there must be an emotional counterpart to the process—but an effort must also be made to let that truth speak itself instead of our finding speech for it on the planes of consciousness on which we habitually live. The speech of these planes will not render the poetry deficient as poetry nor prove the poet's mysticism to be sham. Yet, what may be genuine as mysticism and wonderful as poetry is not necessarily supreme as the Spirit's own intrinsic expression, not necessarily vibrant with the actual life-throb of the Spirit's own heaven and home where it stands everywhere revealed in every aspect. The Spirit clothing itself superbly in the mind's garments—there you have the wonder and wealth of the main bulk of mystical poetry in English. A few other movements are mixed with this, but this is the predominant one, and with whoever wishes to write first-rate poetic literature of mysticism *copiously*,

it cannot as a rule help being predominant, since mind-stuff is for us the easiest to draw upon. But what a few of the Aurobindonians aspire to do is to write things in which the mind's garments are set aside and the Spirit's body grows visible and vibrant.

Nor is that body most desired by them as it appears on certain inner planes. An exquisite or dynamic Occultism catches the Spirit naked; so too does a radiantly piercing and sweet Psychism—but neither the habitat of God's magician nor that of God's saint holds the divine body in its direct amplitude and puissance. These poets do not rest content with the "deep within": they strive to press on to the "high above", the planes from which has descended the cosmic formula, inward or outward. And there it is the rhythm, more even than the cast of vision and the word-mould, that is the secret of the shining out of the pure Spirit. The rhythm of the "high above" is the most difficult capture. Not in all its forms, though; for there are gradations and only at the very top the utter rhythm of God's self is immediate and absolute. Then we have the *mantra*, the word plucked from the heart of the ultimate Unknown. Then "translation" is left leagues behind: we have not only a direct poetic intimacy with God in the "original" but a sheer poetic identity with Him: we not only are beyond the mind's intervening medium, we have passed from the lesser intensities of God's presence to His keenest and profoundest and vastest Self and Supernature. The *mantra* arrives in utter authenticity on the pinions of a rhythm that seems to make each line a brief aureoled manifestation, so to speak, of its passage from infinite to infinite. A consciousness, sovereign and boundless, is at play in it, and the play is most vividly communicated through an immense unfathomable vibration, as in Arjava's lines:

This patter of Time's marring steps across the solitude  
Of Truth's abidingness, Self-blissful and alone—

or in Dilip Kumar Roy's:

Dark waifs aspire to Thy white haven of sleep,  
With voice of clay sing to the immortal stars—

or in the second of Nirodbaran's couplets:

All joy of life is now a shining part  
Of the ecstasy of the Eternal Heart  
Where time is a voyage with wide unfurled wings,  
The flame-sails of unknown awakenings.

Sometimes the word-mould and the cast of vision are nearly of the top and still are prevented from being entirely so by a subtle lack in the sound-values. This calls for an extremely sensitive perception on the poet's as well as the reader's part to be

recognised. How crucially determining a factor rhythm is can be observed if we take such a line as:

A cry to clasp in all the one God-hush.

The quality and movement here emanate from the broad clear daylight of the Spirit prevailing in the *Sahasrara Chakra*, “the thousand-petalled lotus” of consciousness immediately above the head. But we at once leap through two still higher stages and reach the threshold of the amplest intensity by merely shifting a pair of words from the middle of the line to its end:

A cry to clasp the one God-hush in all.

The rhythmic movement goes somehow sweeping into the Unknown, just drawing the sense out to a massive measureless suggestion. Such a minor alteration—a change in the place of two words, that does not perceptibly modify the meaning—and so great a difference in the spiritual quality of the line! The purely poetic power was not less before; what is added now, however light it may be, is the mantric touch.

The way the mantric touch gets in leads me to consider another question: Does intense spiritual inspiration sustained from poem to poem prove an intense spiritual life throbbing in the poet from day to day?

Indeed, to get the mantric touch often, one must be initiated into Yoga. Even to write, with some degree of command, in the language of the regions above the human mind yet below the level of the *mantra*, one must spend years in contact with the divine Truth. In the past, except for very short accidental spells, poets outside the Rig Veda, the Upanishads and the Gita never caught inspiration from these realms of light. To succeed in making these realms one’s habitual fount would be to create a new poetic literature, to usher a novel era in inspired utterance. It is part of the mission of Sri Aurobindo to give poetry this large and luminous innovation. In his later work he has performed feats of spiritual creativity that are a breath-bereaving grandeur. A moiety of his opulence those who have stayed close to him have been able to receive. They can never thank their stars enough for the privilege to reside in his Ashram and learn by his gift of inspiration and critical insight the art of opening doors to the in-world and the over-world.

Yes, they have learnt to open mystical doors, but you must not conclude that the portals keep open all the while or that they can pass through them at will into the innermost shrine and the loftiest holy of holies. They may take a few steps forward now and again; what they more often do is to stand at the divine doors and practise a concentrated looking at the mysteries within, an intent hearing of the footfalls of the Gods. If they had the courage and consistency to walk right in and remain there among superhuman presences, they would bring to birth a more shining song, a poetry more frequently alive with the pulse of the Eternal. But, even as it is, a contact

deep down inside them with the Divine persists and, though it may not kindle a transformation of their whole self, it is at times a laying of golden fingers on the heart-strings of the poet in them.

To write with spiritual intensity is not always to be a great Yogi. If the lines that are mantric were pointers to the poet's realisation, he would outhalo Ramakrishna and dwarf Vivekananda's sagehood. Do you know that these lines derive from the dizziest pinnacles of the over-world? They flow, if not from the top of Shiva's shadowless head, then at least from under his radiant feet—and those immortal feet are all the summit of samadhi and the *ne plus ultra* of Nirvana! Surely, even though some of the poetic triumphs issue from there, the poets do not dwell in their kingdom. Nor can anyone claim to have jumped from the thousand-petalled lotus to the ineffable flower wherein the ultimate deity stands—by just transferring a pair of words to the end of a line from its middle! The jump is an act of art, not of life.

No doubt, there is an experience of vague spiritual exhilaration in every act of art that aspires to the Divine: the force of the Eternal is intuited and a grace of soul added to the consciousness; yet the phenomenon is not tantamount to realisation. The poetry has aided the Yoga but it does not measure it accurately, for it is more a shadow of things to come than a shape of what the poet is. The Spirit has sent down powerful or delicate messages to his artist-being and he has transmitted them, himself deeply thrilling in the process and moving readers like you. He has transmitted them with a new and unusual fidelity because he has been taught by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to watch and wait concentratedly for the Everlasting Voices. Some day he will rise from his lowlands to the kingly peaks with his whole self and live in the consciousness of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Then his poetry will not shame its imperfect composer but project in art the artist's very life and be more than a short and occasional and interrupted rapture; it will be all the time a moulded magnificence—a conflagration under divine control, a trained tornado out of the vast, a deluge of ecstasy directed by the Heavenly Hand.

K. D. SETHNA

# **'THE BLESSED FEMININE'**

## **A STUDY OF THE WOMEN CHARACTERS IN SRI AUROBINDO'S PLAYS**

*(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1981)*

Sri Aurobindo follows the Shakespearean method of using some characters as foils so that the dominant characters may shine all the more. These other characters are not necessarily contrasts, but sometimes they serve as complements or as choruses singing the glory of the main personalities. In *Perseus the Deliverer* we learn of many aspects of Andromeda through the words of her devoted friend and servant, Diomedes. Her fidelity to Iolaus and Andromeda is unquestioning and unquestionable. Eunice fulfils this role in 'Rodogune'. She too loves Antiochus, but she gives up her love for the happiness of Rodogune. In the words of Prof. Seetaraman, "Eunice is indeed capable of genuine love and a quiet strength and power of endurance and sacrifice for the sake of those she loves."<sup>28</sup> She is a friend of the good and virtuous. When Antiochus asks her: 'Eunice, wilt thou go/ To Antioch safe? My mother loves thee well', she replies: 'I follow her and thee. What talk is this? I shall grow angry', and adds: 'You are my God, my warrior, and the same you ever were.' Her comments on men and events are very significant. Hertha, wife of Swegn, is a good contrast to Aslaug. While the latter is romantic and emotional, the former is practical and realistic. While Aslaug wants to kill Eric who has put her brother to shame, Hertha is cool and realistic in her appraisal of the situation: 'We chose the arbitration of the sword./ That last appeal of all, the sword has adjudged/ Against our claim.' She even advises her husband to surrender to Eric: 'Yield, husband, to the Sun./ There is no shame in yielding to the gods.' She is so clever that Aslaug admits: 'You have a swift/ Contriving careful brain I cannot match./ To dare, to act was always Aslaug's part.' Eric calls her 'a wondrous politician'. It is ironical that her husband has a poor opinion of her cleverness:

'Hertha, alas, thy crooked scheming brain  
That brought us here.'

It is, however, in 'The Viziers of Bassora' that we get an interesting character called Doonya whom her uncle, Ibn Sawy, rightly calls 'the little satirist'. She plays the role of the friend of the lovers and brings them together in spite of the stern warning of her uncle to the contrary. But she playfully confesses her role in the words: 'Part! You shall not abate/ My glory: I am its artificer/ The auxiliary and supplement of Fate.' In the same spirit she calls herself Fate because she claims: 'I upset the plans of viziers and of kings.' To quote Prof. Seetaraman:

Doonya is the embodiment of the very spirit of laughter. She is not only humorous in herself but the cause of humour in others. She is in the deepest part of her being a confirmed romantic but has also developed in her a thoroughgoing realist and she could pass from one to the other with extraordinary agility and detachment and look at the one in the background of the other. Add to this her interest in seeing life as much as living it. That is perhaps the secret of her humour.<sup>29</sup>

Munjoolica, the princely companion of Vasavadutta, is intelligent, playful and well-versed in the princely arts. She is a Sourashtrian princess captured by Gopalaca. Her love and fidelity for Vasavadutta are deep and sincere. Her cleverness in tackling problems impresses Vasavadutta so much that she remarks: '...Thou hast a brain; give me thy counsel.' When Vuthsa runs away with Vasavadutta, she offers to be his charioteer. When he doubts her ability, she tells him: 'Hope not to find a better in thy realms.' Later Vuthsa acknowledges her ability: 'Thou hast held the reins divinely.' Vicurna asks her to ride ahead to meet Yougandharayan and advises her to 'rein lightly' as the horse is 'high-mettled'; she replies: 'Teach me not. There is no horse yet foaled I cannot ride.' These characters, besides being evidences of the creative ability of Sri Aurobindo, bring out the various traits of the leading characters by their words, deeds and attitudes towards them.

Sri Aurobindo has introduced in four out of the five plays women who are middle-aged matrons. They show a better understanding and exhibit better intelligence and resourcefulness than their husbands. All of them are shown chiefly as mothers. Of them, two assert themselves and disagree politely but firmly with their husbands and disapprove of their actions with reference to their children. Cassiopea in *Perseus the Deliverer* is a very impressive character. She is essentially a mother whose affection for her children is quite deep. She stoutly opposes her son being handed over to the priest:

I hope you will not give up to the priest,  
My Iolaus' golden head?

and adds:

Empty thy treasuries, glut him with gold.  
Let us be beggars rather than one bright curl  
Of Iolaus feel his gloomy mischief.<sup>30</sup>

She reveals greater mettle than her husband in dealing with the priest:

Beware! Thou shalt not have my child. Take heed  
Ere thou drive monarchs to extremity.  
Thou hopest in thy sacerdotal pride  
To make the kings of Syria childless, end



A line that started from the gods. Think'st thou  
It will be tamely suffered? What have we  
To lose, if we lose this? I bid thee again  
Take heed, drive not a queen to strong despair.<sup>31</sup>

Even the mighty Polydaon is taken aback by her anger and is forced to make a retreat: 'See/ In the queen's eyes her rage. We must discover/ New means; this way's not safe.' She is so resourceful that she plans to make it a condition for Phineus that he must save Iolaus if he is to marry Andromeda. The fact that she is one with her daughter in encouraging the new religion is evident from the words:

There are other gods  
Than thy Poseidon. They shall punish thee.

She is a devoted wife and will readily share pain with her husband:

With no half soul I came  
To share thy kingdom and thy joys; entirely  
I came, to take the evil also with thee.

Cleopatra in 'Rodogune' is another remarkable creation of Sri Aurobindo. She is not the voluptuous woman who transforms the triple pillars of the world into strumpet's fools. Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar has observed:

Sri Aurobindo had read the Euripidean and Corneillian versions of the Andromeda legend, and he had likewise read Appian and Corneille's *Rodugune*. But the play he wrote was no mere rendering but a transmutation of the earlier versions of the story. In Sri Aurobindo's play, Cleopatra does not kill her husband... there is, at the beginning, no uncompromising feud or rivalry between Cleopatra and Rodogune, and neither of them delivers to the brothers Antiochus and Timocles (Seleucus in Corneille) the awful command, 'kill and...' Sri Aurobindo humanises Cleopatra... Sri Aurobindo seems to have distributed most of Cleopatra's cold criminality between Phayllus and Cleone.<sup>32</sup>

Dr. Prema Nandakumar puts the same idea in different words when she says:

Sri Aurobindo has retained only the name and the fact that Cleopatra was the Syrian Queen. For the rest, there is nothing in common with the historical Cleopatra or Corneille's Cleopatra. In Sri Aurobindo she is a mother above everything.<sup>33</sup>

Cleopatra is presented by Sri Aurobindo as a tragic character, an imperious but

enlightened empress, a devoted wife, and above all a loving mother. The central incident of this play is not very different from that of 'King Lear'—a parent depriving her legitimate and honest child of what is his due simply because he does not satisfy her vanity. Commenting on the central element in her character, Prof. Seetaraman has this to say:

The centre of Cleopatra's personality is the outer egoistic vital with its violent possessiveness and attachment. Hence her desire to possess her sons and the consequent declaration of peace.<sup>34</sup>

In this play she is loyal to her earlier husband and hates Antiochus, the elder:

Will the Furies stir  
Because I hated grim Antiochus?  
When I have slain my kin, then let them wake.  
The man who's dead was nothing to my heart:  
My husband was Nicanor, my beautiful  
High-hearted lord with his bright auburn hair  
And open face. When he died, miserably  
A captive in the hated Parthian's bonds  
My heart was broken.<sup>35</sup>

She is happy and relieved over the death of Antiochus mainly because of her children. She exclaims: 'He would not let my children come to me,/ Therefore I spit upon his corpse', and also '...Never again can grief be born/ In this glad world that gives me back my sons.' However in the case of her son, Antiochus, she is disappointed, as he, like Cordelia, in the case of Lear refuses to gratify her ego. When Antiochus wants to kneel by the side of the dead king 'to draw his mightiness into' his soul, Eunice makes a significant comment on the effect of his action on his mother: 'This was a stab./ Is there some cold ironic god at work?' Cleopatra's tragedy evokes our pity. There is a struggle in her heart between what is right and what is desirable:

If I thought that,  
I would transgress all laws yet known or made  
And dare Heaven's utmost anger. Gods who mock me,  
I will not suffer to all time your wrongs.  
Hush, hush, Cleone! it shall not be me.  
I thought my heart would break with joy, but now  
What different passion tugs at my heart-strings.  
Cleone, O Cleone! O my sweet dreams,  
Where have you gone yielding to pangs and fears  
Your happy empire? Am I she who left  
Laughing the death-bed of Antiochus?

While Antiochus disappoints her by his lack of filial affection, Timocles disappoints her by his sensuous preference for Cleone's company. At one stage, Cleopatra pathetically cries: 'I am alone, so terribly alone.' Finally, when she learns that Timocles is responsible for murdering his brother, she rushes out crying:

Call me not mother:  
I have no children. I am punished, gods,  
Who dared to outlive my great unhappy husband  
For this.

(*To be continued*)

M. N. SUNDARARAMAN

28. M.V. Seetaraman, *Studies in Sri Aurobindo's Dramatic Poems*, p.7. (Annamalainagar, Annamalai University, 1964),  
29. *Ibid.*, p.27.  
30. "Perseus", p.43.  
31. *Ibid.*, p.47.  
32. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo: a Biography and a History*, 3rd rev. and enl. (1945; Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, 1972), pp.225-226.  
33. Prema Nandakumar, *Rodogune: a Study*, Sri Aurobindo Circle, Twenty-second Number (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1966), p.65.  
34. M V. Seetaraman, p.5.  
35. "Rodogune", p.340.

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## AT THE END

THE Master and the Mother are the Sun and the Moon,  
The Sun to shower the gold of the noon,  
The Moon to rain the silver delight,  
We require their radiance for day and night.  
Both are no more, their presence we feel,  
Their grace is there holding when we reel,  
We call for their help, they answer our call,  
They guide us aright to save us from fall.  
On bended knees we pray for their grace  
To give us their Darshan at the end of our race.

BHANUSHANKAR BHATT

## THREE MAIN POISES OF THE SPIRIT

INFINITE is the Spirit; and infinite, therefore, the ways and modes of its manifestation. Out of these, three main poses are easily discernible: the Spirit *vis-à-vis* Matter, the Spirit *vis-à-vis* Letter or Form, the Spirit *vis-à-vis* Senses of the full-fledged human organism.

Spirit, pure and simple, condensed and withdrawn within, is one end of the whole scale or gamut of manifestation; Matter is the other end, apparent negation of the Spirit itself—inverted Spirit, if we can pardonably say so. Matter (*Bhuh* of the ancient seers) is the solid base or basis on which all the super-structure of the multi-storeyed mansions for housing the proliferations of the spirit are being raised. It is the fecund ground, fraught with endless possibilities, into which the seeds of the Spirit are strewn and sown to flower out in endless varieties and plenitudes of the inexhaustible Spirit outgoing from itself into a multimillion (*'sahasra'*) radiations. The vibrations and pulsations of the spirit are also marked and concretised in denser and denser concentric rings or sheaths or stadia or planes, culminating in the brute rocky matter that we primarily happen to see, little knowing what stores or riches of minerals and salts are being momentarily generated and stratified to minister to the various kingdoms sprouting on the earth—the mineral to the vegetable, the vegetable to the animal, the animal to the human and whatever else is yet to be.

\*

It is the sad lack of wide-winged creative imagination of the seer-poet (कविर्मनीषी) to follow the double movement of involution and evolution, that has led men to devise lop-sided doctrines of 'brahman alone is real, the rest unreal'. Or it is the imbecile spirit of half-baked men that cannot come to grips with the problem of life on earth—lack of boldness to grapple with the dilemma posed by the eternal sphinx that has driven souls to seek shelter under easy catchwords and build-up theories of escapism-cum-pacifism, or self-doping tricks of talismans and L.S.D. and what-not. As the Kena Upanishad teaches, the very Gods had to be taught the most elementary lesson of respecting the occult presence behind even such a miniature symbol of matter as a piece of straw, by the incarnate shakti of the spirit, 'Uma Hemavati', when she posed: *Kimidam yaksham?* ('What is this protean-elusive thing?'). The Gods failed to find out the root of the mystery: even the spirit-oriented consciousnesses have to admit the limitless power that matter holds latent in itself. Shall we say, with the ancient seers, that essentially 'matter is Brahman'? It is all a stage-setting, preliminary spadework that present-day science (विज्ञान) is doing for the full development of the true science (विज्ञान) of the spirit?...

## II

The next poise is more intricate and more arduous to comprehend: viz. Spirit

*vis-à-vis* Letter or Form. As life on earth evolves, organisms grow more and more complex, and man-made organisations too follow suit, newer and newer forms, formulations, modulations, laws governing the physical and biological phenomena, rules and regulations governing social and institutional stability, codes of conduct and computer-like mechanisms, blueprints and red-tape behaviour: all form a veritable maze of network seeking to act as auxiliary aids to the full growth and health of bodies civic, social and political, but in actual practice and procedure act more or less as smothering and stultifying agents or forces, so that one wonders at times where all this is going to lead—this race or rivalry of spirit that saves and enlivens, and letter or form that kills and deadens the finer susceptibilities of man, defeating its avowed aim—*cum*—objective of bringing out the manifold lines of spirit-manifestation! But the saving grace of the spirit can work out its way even through all this jungle—almost magically—even as a river works out its way and forms its own banks that further its progress to its be-all and end-all of the wide deep seas beckoning from beyond...

\*

We live in an age that teems with untold possibilities for earth-life, total extinction or annihilation, from one viewpoint—that of the cynics and pessimists, who cast the weightage of their negative faith on the side of the asuric forces that are locked in a sombre struggle of life and death with the divine forces of the spirit working at their acme; and despite all appearances to the contrary, despite all prophets of gloom and declarations of astrologers who ought to have known better—we need at the moment to consolidate forces of positive faith; for it was not an idle saying that the Gita put forth: According to your faith, be it unto you—*Yo yachsraddah sa eva sah*: One becomes what one paramountly believes in.

Not only that; the very stranglehold of 'letter' could be turned to advantage by the saving grace of the spirit, as the poet sought to demonstrate through that most symbolic pitching of the saving grace of the new dispensation against the dry-as-dust outworn old dispensation, which merely believed in the indelible and ineluctable law or karma: "My deeds upon my head" is its creed or credo, in sharp contrast to Savitri's credo of love-life!

### III

The third main poise of the Spirit *vis-à-vis* the Senses is even more intricate and difficult to grasp in all its ramifications and implications. Down the ages, the senses have been held to be enemy no.1 of spiritual life, and men, ever impatient and enamoured of easy solutions of the problem, are driven to opt for the cloister, the monastic life, and have indeed held up the standard of spiritual life even at the cost of mutilating their own full growth. All possible and plausible means of diverting the ordinary consciousness have been invented and implemented to the great gain of the Spirit, but the '*Élan vital*' has ever succeeded in asserting its *raison-d'être*, and the

war or conflict between spirit and senses has never come to a final abiding termination.

Here also it is the lamentable lack of comprehending the full import of the problem, that is responsible for half-way-house treaties and armistices between spirit and senses. It is the spirit that has devised and installed the senses in the human organism for cognising its own creation and distilling out delight or *Rasa*, the essence of existence; and the senses, instead of referring back all the phenomena, to the spirit and ministering to its intensity, smuggle the sensational goods and by-products of manifestation on the vital plane for its own furtherance of vested interests and immediate satisfactions! Let the psychic or spirit-incarnate in man understand that and set right the whole balance of the game!"

We have two words derived from the word 'sense': 'sensible' and 'sensitive'; and both are used complementarily. That itself is sufficient to prove that even the much-maligned senses have a positive side to their credit: the senses could be trained to be handsome vehicles of the Spirit. Everything is raw and wild in the beginning; it is by culture and habit that right results accrue. All fine flowerings of art and civilisation owe their origin to the action of the spirit behind, 'the breath of the spirit,' as is said; as 'spirit' could hoist even letter by its own petard, it can hoist even senses by their own aberrations of frustrated pursuits and sad depletions of vital energy to cope with the projects and promptings of the spirit behind.

And if once the senses are in perfect control of the right master thereof, viz. *Buddhi* and the Self, what a beautiful sight it would be to see the horses of the senses waiting for the 'Word' and tramping gloriously to their role of forcing the gateways to victory by subtilised sense and dedicated spirit. They would no longer be handicaps and hurdles to the pressing march of the spirit, they would vault and stride over all impediments to the manifestation of full-voltage spirit, and ever be a standing example of what wonders could be worked by the spirit with the help and co-operation of senses of cognition and conation implanted by the spirit in human organisms.

CHIMANBHAI PATEL

# THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

## AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of December 1981)

THE battle between the Devas and the Asuras which forms the background of the Kacha myth is again a Vedic symbol re-used in the Purāṇas and the *Mahābhārata*. The occult significance of this has been explained lucidly by Nolini Kanta Gupta in his essay, "A Page of Occult History".<sup>43</sup> The conflict is between the Powers of Truth and those of the Ignorance and Falsehood in which man dwells, for possession of the mind, life and body of the human being, for his liberation and immortality or bondage and mortality. Born of Aditi, the undivided and illumined Infinite, the gods in the human being lead him towards light, truth, unity. The Asuras, born of Diti or Danu, the separative consciousness, dwell in darkness and strive to break up into disharmony and to limit man's knowledge, will, strength and joy.<sup>44</sup> This is what Vyāsa conveys through the cutting-up by the Asuras of Kacha's body while he is tending the cows, *i.e.*, fostering the growth of the rays of Truth-illumination within him. Vyāsa explicitly uses the Vedic image of the antagonist as the Wolf, the tearer and devourer, in this context (śloka 38, chapter 76).

The Asura is "the mentalised vital being (who) stands where consciousness descends from the Mind in the Vital or Life-Force. He is the personification of ambition and authority and arrogance, he is the intolerant and absolute self-seeker—he is Daitya, the son of division".<sup>45</sup> Allied to the Asuras are the Rākṣasas ruling over "the Mid-vital, made wholly of unmixed life impulses"<sup>46</sup> and characterised by "an undisciplined fury of self-indulgence".<sup>47</sup> Below them, in the lower vital, "the seed-bed of lust and cruelty, of all that is small and petty, and low and mean, all that is dirt and filth"<sup>48</sup> are the Piśāchas. It is into the realm of this triple hostility that Kacha, the Aryan striver, descends as an emanation of the Agni Aṅgīrasa seeking the Light by the force of the will and finding it through the Word of Creation hidden in Śukra-Sūrya lying amid this darkness like the Purāṇic Mārtaṇḍa, the "dark sun" born of Aditi:<sup>48</sup> "Surya, the divine Knowledge lies concealed and unattainable... enveloped and contained in the ignorance and error of the ordinary human existence."<sup>49</sup>

Kacha, like the Bhṛīgu and Aṅgīrasas, seeks this out by tending cows, by the power of truth in his mind, and aids the gods to shatter the obstructions created by the titans in the *devayāna*, the path towards the Truth. The form this aid takes is the discovery of the Word of Power emanating from the hidden sun, which parallels the Vedic release of the Sun's illuminations, the creation of the divine Dawn, the liberation of "this power of undivided and all-embracing vision, this eye of the gods concealed in our subconscious being".<sup>49</sup> In the Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa version, the parallel is even closer, with Indra persuading Sūrya-Uśanā-Kāvya to leave the Asuras, and, saved from the pursuing Titans by the mantra, invoking Soma to stream forth with its im-

mortalising waters of Bliss and Truth. It is that mantra which is referred to in this passage as the pillar going up to the heavens, which identified it with the Vāk of the R̥gvedic x.125.6 which penetrates earth and heaven, linking the two, like a ladder, along which man progresses to the higher planes. This is, in fact, the *devayāna*.

The significance of the Initiation theme in the Kacha legend is also closely linked with the *devayāna*-mantra. The initiation into seerhood implies not only the growing of the inner vision which perceives this hidden truth, but also the opening of an inner hearing which brings one the Word:<sup>49</sup>

It is when "the thought rises from the seat of the Truth" that Surya releases into the wideness the mystic Cow of Light. Surya himself is not only "the son of Heaven who is the far-seeing eye of knowledge born of the gods" (X.37.1), but he is the speaker also of the surpeme word and the impeller of the illumined and illuminating thought. "The truth that thou rising free from sin, O Sun, speakest today to Mitra and Varuna, that may we speak and abide in the Godhead dear to thee, O Aditi, and thee, O Aryaman" (VII 60.1). And in the Gayatri, the chosen formula of the ancient Vedic religion, the supreme light of the godhead Surya Savitri is invoked as the object of our desire, the deity who shall give his luminous impulsion to all our thoughts... this new-moulding of thought, act, feeling, will, consciousness in the terms of the Truth, the Bliss, the Right, the infinity is a new creation... To prepare that new birth and new creation for man by his illumination and upward voyaging is the function of Surya, the divine Light and Seer... the seer and the creator meet again in this apotheosis of the divine vision in man.

### AFTERWORD

The foregoing analyses show that Vyāsa, at least in the Ādi Parva, is writing directly in the mystic tradition of the R̥gvedic ṛṣis, couching spiritual messages in an elaborate symbolic structure. Vyāsa's technique differs from that of the seer-poets of the Vedas in that his symbolism is not so highly esoteric. He prefers to cast his understanding of spiritual truths in a popularised form as attractive and unforgettable stories which speak their secrets to the initiated. Indeed, there is little doubt that, as T.V. Kapali Sastry writes in his commentary on the R̥gveda (vol. 1, p. 98, 129), "The Mahābhārata really gives in plain language what is concealed in the legends and happenings recorded in the Vedas.... In spite of the difference in language the Mahābhārata uses at times the very Vedic words and brings out generally the significances found in the Veda."<sup>50</sup>

The question, however, remains why it was necessary at all for Vyāsa to undertake such a "popularisation" of the Vedic corpus. The answer lies in the changed socio-cultural conditions of the country. The highly close-knit cults of the Vedic ṛṣis had given way to a virtually ṛṣi-less society in which the secrets of Vedic mys-



ticism had been submerged under the ruthless decimation of the Bhārgava Fire-Priests by the Haiheya monarchs. These kings not only destroyed all the centres of Vedic tradition, but uprooted the other kingly dynasties, leaving Āryāvarta a field of ashes. The reason why Vyāsa is so highly revered and occupies so important a place in the Hindu scriptural tradition lies in his magnificent effort to re-establish Dharmakṣetra in this field of ashes. With that end in view, he set about systematising the Vedic lore and disseminating it throughout the country by a chain of āśramas, linked through the means of wandering *sutas*, minstrels or redacteurs who carried everywhere his metamorphoses of the esoteric, forgotten lore of the past in the form of gripping stories. These tales were so made that the *suta* and the audience would naturally be attracted and there would be no difficulty in their being imprinted in the mind and the imagination. But behind the façade of the enthralling story lay the secret message of the Vedas which the initiated one could grasp through keys supplied in the very body of the tale. To the seeker after spiritual truth, these tales held forth accounts of different stages and varying types of spiritual experiences and development. The Upaniṣadic sages followed a similar pattern when they wove interesting stories around profound philosophic truths in order to catch the roving attention of their disciples.

The Ādi Parva stories conform to the general truth regarding myths that they are primarily a form of entertainment and edification, but also that—and this is their real importance—they are a means of communication between generations. Here is the forgotten lore of a past age being passed on in a memorable form to a new generation by one who straddles the transitional phase in the development of a new culture being born out of the ashes of the old one. In this respect, again, Vyāsa's myths fall into the pattern of all Mythology, viz. that myths are told in transitional situations in order to remove the audience from normal space and time, and by interposing a sacred interval put the individual in rapport with the mystic secret of the cosmos. The Ādi Parva myths, like all other mythical stories, are valuable precisely because they are multifunctional and can mean different things to different people having varying levels of meaning. Theirs is a hidden symbolic sense like the logic of dreams, derived from the subconscious or the unconscious. To approach them with the logic of civilised culture would be to court disaster. After all, their very appeal lies in the fact that they are basically allusive and not rational in technique and content, being aimed at the hidden layers of our being.<sup>50</sup> It is in this spirit that we have approached the *Mahābhārata*, believing that the secret lies in the mystic seer's vision:<sup>51</sup>

A soul not wrapped into its cloak of mind  
 Could glimpse the true sense of a world of forms;  
 Illumined by a vision in the thought,  
 Upbuoyed by the heart's understanding flame,  
 It could hold in the conscious ether of the spirit  
 The divinity of a symbol universe.

The message which Vyāsa was trying to spread, the vision which he was attempting to restore to a Bharat in the throes of a re-birth, was essentially the discovery of the Divine within the individual. This truth he transmitted in the garb of fascinating tales which were his way of resurrecting the Vedic Mysteries:<sup>51</sup>

... to the musing and immobile Spirit  
 Life and himself don the aspect of a myth...  
 For the key is hid and by the Inconscient kept;  
 The secret God beneath the threshold dwells....  
 A seeker of hidden meanings in life's forms...  
 He is the explorer and the mariner  
 On a secret inner ocean without bourne:...  
 His is a search of darkness for the light,  
 Of mortal life for immortality...  
 A sailor on the Inconscient's fathomless sea,  
 He voyages through a starry world of thought  
 On Matter's deck to a spiritual sun....  
 And never can the mystic voyage cease,  
 Till the nescient dusk is lifted from man's soul  
 And the morns of God have overtaken his night.

He fulfils a Mystery and ultimately his actions

With the Truth-Light strike earth's massive roots of trance,  
 Wake a dumb self in the inconscient depths  
 And raise a lost power from its python sleep  
 That the eyes of the Timeless might look out from Time  
 And the world manifest the unveiled Divine.<sup>52</sup>

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

(Concluded)

43 *Collected Works*: Vol. 3, p. 252.

44 *The Secret of the Veda*, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

45 N. K. Gupta, Vol. 3, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.

46 Sri Aurobindo: *The Upamshads*, p. 409.

47 Gupta *op. cit.*, p. 47.

48 *The Secret of the Veda*, *op. cit.*, p. 426, also see *Savitri*, I.2 (p. 18).

49 *Ibid.*, p. 428 In *Rama and the Bards* (Writers Workshop 1975, pages 77-104) Fr. R. Antoine shows how the *Rāmāyana* can be called the Epic of the Word, for the theme of the power of the Word is the pivot around which the epic revolves and which lends the work structural consistency. It is the Word which bings about the conflict between Good and Evil and leads to the final victory of the former.

50 G.S. Kirk: *The Nature of Greek Myths*, pp. 14, 29, 39-42, 69, 81, 89, 90, 283, 292.

NB: The cultural milieu of Vyāsa as given here is based on K.M. Munshi's *Krishnavatara*, Vol.6 (*The Book of Veda Vyāsa the Master*).

51 *Savitri* II.6. p. 176;

52 *Ibid.*, I.4. pp. 67, 68, 69, 71, 72.

# SHEKHAR FINDS A FRIEND

## A SHORT STORY

A FINE winter morning. Dew-soaked green grass, field and forest are bathed in liquid gold sprinkled from the eastern horizon.

Shekhar sees the play of gold on green and silver from a running train across the meadows of Madhya Pradesh. He sees but cannot concentrate as he has to listen to Bikashbabu's animated talk.

Seated beside him Bikashbabu goes on discussing modern science, its progress and possibilities. He speaks about the cause and effect of solar eclipse and the prospect of harnessing energy from sun-rays both for domestic and industrial use. He touches upon the topic of supersonic jet planes and the future of space travel. Shekhar listens but cannot concentrate on this, either.

In fact science does not interest him much. He is not a science student. He is concerned with beauty, art, poetry and music. The seven colours of the sun attract him more than the scope of energy harnessed from its rays. Planes speedier than sound-waves do not have much appeal for him. Rather he prefers to dwell within the domain of sound, amidst ideas and feelings contained in words, rhymes and tunes...

"Tickets?" The checker extends his hand. They give him the tickets and wait with open palms to get them back. The discourse continues as before.

The checker neither punches nor returns the tickets. He simply looks at them over and over again without a word. Then finally he asks gently, "Where do you intend to go, please?"

"Why, it is printed on the tickets!" Bikashbabu seems to be a bit surprised as well as annoyed.

"True, but the train won't go to Nagpur."

"Won't go! Where will it go then?" Bikashbabu jerks up on his feet.

"Tatanagar."

"That means to the opposite end!"

"Right."

"But at Bilaspur station one of your colleagues showed this train to be the Tata-Nagpur passenger!"

"Maybe, but did you tell him that you were going to Nagpur?"

"Oh no."

"Then it is the confusion between up and down trains. You got into this train from platform No.1, whereas the train for Nagpur started from platform No.3."

"I see, but what about the starting time?"

"Almost the same, a difference of only a few minutes. Up and down Tata passengers meet at Bilaspur—of course if they run on time."

"That's it, that's it... now what to do?"

"Get down at the next station; no, no, you have not to pay any extra fare. This

is a genuine mistake!" The checker returns the tickets and resumes his checking work.

Bikashbabu drops down on the bench and is mute and motionless. Shekhar gets a respite from his non-stop talk and turns his eyes towards the moving panorama of green and gold outside....

Shekhar came to Bilaspur to spend his school holidays with his aunt. She is a rising artist and recently held an exhibition of her paintings in the local school. He enjoyed his short stay with her and learnt a lot about modern art and painting. He is now on his way back to the place of his study via Nagpur where he will break his journey for a day or two.

He could very well go by Bombay Mail but his aunty suggested, "Shekhar, better go by Tata-Nagpur passenger. In that case you will be able to see the flora and fauna of the place in their varied beauty from morning till evening and at every station. But for that you will have to get up very early in the morning...."

Shekhar was late going to bed and, as a result late getting up also. However, getting ready as quickly as possible and assuring the rickshaw-puller of an extra tip, he managed to reach the station in the nick of time. He hurried to the booking office and nearing it stood dumbfounded. Innumerable passengers were waiting in a long queue for tickets.

Shekhar was at a loss to decide what to do. Would he wait for the Mail or go by this train itself without a ticket and pay the fare as and when necessary?

"Where would you go, my boy?" the query comes from a tall and well-built young man standing in the queue, very near to the booking office window.

On being thus oddly addressed Shekhar looks challengingly at the well-dressed inquisitive young man. "My boy, eh! what does he think himself, a grandfather or what?" But..but... does he know him? No, definitely not. Oh, what eyes, bright and large, with a glint of good humour in them!

"Nagpur," he cannot but reply normally.

"Nagpur! Very good, come, let me buy your ticket as well. I am also going there."

Shekhar is very pleased at this cordiality and feels like clasping the helper's hands in gratitude but restrains himself. He silently passes to him a currency note for the ticket. After a while the young man comes up with the ticket and the balance of the money. Sweetly smiling he asks, "A stranger like me, I suppose? What's your name?"

"Shekhar."

"Ah, a nice name! My name is Bikash. I have come here with a job recently, a job which is not in keeping with my temperament. I am a science student and love the subject but the job has very little to do with that. However, let us make a move or we shall miss the train."

This is how the talk started and it continued all through till the ticket checker came and disturbed it.

“Shekhar, please don’t worry, everything will be all right,” Bikashbabu opens his mouth after a long while. Shekhar gets amused at his consoling words and smiles. He enjoys the situation very much.

At the next station they hurry to get down. Setting foot on the platform Shekhar looks around and exclaims, “Oh, how beautiful!” The mistake has turned out to be a boon in disguise, otherwise how could he see at leisure such a picturesque place?

The large green fields in front extend up to the foot of the wooded hills hanging like clouds at the distant horizon. Behind, the grassy undergrowth gradually blends with a regular forest. In between stands the long and wide platform resembling the runway of an aerodrome but covered with a green carpet of grass and marked with some trees here and there, each tree being encircled by rings of multi-coloured season flowers.

Below, on both sides of the platform lie two sets of rail lines. Overhead, there is no cover except the vast canopy of the blue sky. The overbridge afar leads to a lone office room beside which there is an asbestos shed used as a godown.

It is about 7 o’clock in the morning. Nature after her nocturnal dew-bath appears to have her hair dressed by a huge golden comb. “Had I been equipped with easel, brush, canvas and colour I could have passed hours together by painting the lovely scenery,” thinks Shekhar eagerly.

“Now what to do, Shekhar?” Shekhar is startled by Bikashbabu’s voice but then amused at his helpless manner of expression. A few minutes earlier it was he who consoled him saying not to worry and now he does not know what to do. Very funny indeed. “Why, there is the office room, from there we can know what to do,” suggests Shekhar casually.

“Oh yes, an idea, Shekhar, you are really a genius.”

Shekhar cannot but smile, he remembers the great scientist Einstein who used to be confused by simple and easy things. The story goes that once, not knowing how to return to his own house, he phoned to his secretary for directions. Is Bikashda going to be a second Einstein?

They find the office room empty. On the table lies a big open register, the pages of which are fluttering in the breeze of the moving fan overhead. “There must be someone, somewhere, we have to find him,” says Shekhar. “Yes, of course, let’s see.” From the doorway both of them cast their searching look outside. Meanwhile someone from the godown-side dashes past them and enters the room. Oblivious of everything around, he stoops over the open register and starts turning the pages frantically. Looking at the roughly-dressed middle-aged man, Bikashbabu coughs slightly to draw his attention.

“Yes, what can I do for you, anything stolen?” he asks without raising his head.

“Stolen! oh no,” Bikashbabu is visibly startled.

“No robbery, theft or pick-pocketing?” Abruptly he raises his head and scrutinises them with a peculiar suspecting look.

“We want to go to Nagpur,” bluntly says Bikashbabu to avoid his uncanny gaze.

“Want to go to Nagpur? How did you come here?” He springs up erect. “Haven’t you come from that side just now?”

No, it’s a mistake.”

“Mistake! I see you with my own eyes...”

“Yes, that’s true, you see us. But we made a mistake by getting into the wrong train, the opposite one.”

“Why the opposite one? On purpose?” His doubt deepens and he observes them with screwed eyes.

Bikashbabu bursts into a frank, free and light laughter at this, which disarms the man and he fumbles, “You see, you see, the place is infested with swindlers, thieves, dacoits and all sorts of antisocial elements. Only last week a goods train was looted at this very station....”

“We are quite strangers here and have no concern with looting or robbery. Here are our tickets, please suggest some means to go to Nagpur as early as possible.”

“There is no train for Nagpur before the afternoon,” he looks into his work, discouraging further talk.

“One p.m., without food or drink what shall we do waiting in this solitary place? At least if we could return to Bilaspur...” Bikashbabu speaks to himself. The station officer casts at him his typical suspicious and stern look. Bikashbabu giggles. The gentleman gets ashamed and suggests forthwith, “A goods train is expected to come within fifteen minutes from now. You can request the guard to give you a lift up to Bilaspur.” He sinks into his work again.

“Thank you very much. By the way, may I use your phone for a minute?”

“Oh yes,” the officer consents reluctantly, apprehensive of Bikashbabu’s giggling. While Bikashbabu goes to phone, Shekhar moves out of the office-room, crosses the overbridge and gets to the open platform. Looking around he feels exalted and starts reciting a few lines from Tagore’s poem “Phanki”:

“The train to be changed at Bilaspur station,  
We should hurry to get down....”

“What are you reciting, Shekhar?” A mild touch from behind makes him turn his face. Bikashbabu has joined him. Shekhar changes the topic, “It’s nothing. Well, Bikashda, a quarter of an hour is already over, still there is no trace of the train!”

“Perhaps it’s running late. Doesn’t matter, let’s take a stroll.” Slowly they move along fixing their eyes afar to see if the train is coming or not. But suddenly their attention is drawn towards the platform. A half-veiled lady is quietly sitting under a tree with a child sleeping on her lap. She seems to be sobbing, drops of tears fall from her veiled eyes, while the child’s face brightens at times with a heavenly smile in a dream.

Pity assails Bikashbabu, he approaches the lady and anxiously asks her, “Why do you weep, sister, what has happened to you?” She does not reply, only the shedding

of tears increases. "Why don't you speak, sister? We are your well-wishers and will help you if necessary." Bikashbabu is kindness personified. The lady opens her mouth and what transpires from her jerky rural dialect is this:

She was going to Nagpur by Tata-Nagpur passenger (the train which they missed) in search of her husband, a railway employee posted at Nagpur. He has stopped writing or sending money to her for more than three months. At night, in the train her bag with money and ticket was stolen. But the ticket checker won't believe her. At the dead of night he forced her to get down from the train at this station. Now what will she do without food, drink or money and forsaken by everybody? She releases a deep sigh and starts weeping again.

"Please, please, don't weep, we are here, we are also going to Nagpur. We shall take you along with us and help you find your husband..." Bikashbabu assures her with a deep sympathetic voice. Just then a feeble rattling sound becomes audible, gradually the sound grows louder and, shortly after, the goods train emerges into view. It reaches the platform and glides along with its long chain of locked-up wagons. Even when it stops its tail remains outside the platform.

"Where is the guard's compartment?" asks Shekhar.

"We have to look for it, let's start from the end." All three go to the end of the platform, get down onto the field and find that the last carriage is the guard's compartment. But from below they cannot see if there is anyone inside.

"Hallo..., if you please," Bikashbabu shouts at random. After a while a head peers through the window. It has short erect hair and round red eyes with a piercing look. Bikashbabu requests its owner to give them a lift up to Bilaspur. The man does not speak but with a lordly gesture of his hand bids them get in. The compartment is too high from the ground to get in. They manage anyhow with a lot of effort, particularly the lady needs a helping hand from Shekhar. Up inside, the supposed guard is found sitting motionless with eyes fixed on an invoice book placed on a big wooden box used as his table.

On the floor stands a tiffin carrier beside which lies a red-and-green flag, a few empty bottles are strewn here and there and the typical guard's lamp keeps a mute watch over them. Abruptly the man opens his mouth and asks authoritatively, "What brings you here at this odd hour? The question of last week's wagon looting will come later; first tell me, from where you have abducted her." He points to the lady. "Next, what do you know about yesterday's snatching away of a necklace from the running train. Where have you spent...?" He cannot finish, a time bomb explodes, "Shut up, rascal, what do you mean?" Bikashbabu goes a step forward. The door and windows of the compartment tremble at the sound.

Instantly the red eyes of the guard turn white, the erect hair get levelled and he jumps down from the train onto the open field below, he steadies himself and runs towards the platform staggeringly.

Shekhar wonders how and where this time-bomb was hidden in the person of the ever gentle and sweet-hearted Bikashda!!! "Ho, ho, ho... have you marked,

Shekhar, what a coward is your round-faced, red-eyed guard? He has come to interrogate and threaten us. What insolence! Why don't you oil your own machine, man?" His voice turns grave and serious, "It has become their regular practice to harass honest, innocent and helpless passengers only to squeeze some money out of them, while the real culprits not only escape but get backing and encouragement from them..."

Shekhar contradicts, "Bikashda, from one or two stray instances we cannot draw a general conclusion. There are plenty of honest and sincere workers and officers."

"Maybe, but everywhere the trend is towards ever increasing corruption and malpractice."

"This is due perhaps to ever increasing want and poverty amongst people. They say that want is the mother of corruption."

"But my view is just the opposite, it is corruption that creates poverty. Is it not a fact that corruption and malpractice by businessmen and officials are responsible for the present deplorable economic condition of our otherwise resourceful country?"

Shekhar keeps silent for a while and then observes, "So far as I understand, the eradication of the malady cannot be effected without a radical change of the administrative structure and policy as a whole."

"Yes, in a way you are right. But so long as that does not come about what should we do? Should we not start the work ourselves? No, I do not speak of any external revolutionary movement. I speak of an inner change of consciousness and nature by a kind of working from within and that will create an influence and atmosphere which will work on others as well, for the betterment of their nature even without their knowing. But the task is arduous and extremely difficult—difficult because it cannot be achieved by our unaided effort alone. For a work like changing of nature, help and intervention of the Supreme Divine Power are indispensable. So we should invoke the Divine Shakti at every step of our endeavour. We should pray in tune with a mighty spiritual figure of India:

"Mother Durga! We are thy children, through thy grace, by thy influence may we become fit for the great work, for the great Ideal. Mother, destroy our smallness, our selfishness, our fear....

"Make us great, make our efforts great, our hearts vast, make us true to our resolve. May we no longer desire the small, void of energy, given to laziness, stricken with fear...'"

A heavenly glow plays on his face as he speaks, and his eloquence and sincerity make Shekhar exclaim to himself, "Oh, he is not only a lover of science but a patriot and spiritualist as well!" The lady also seems to be full of awe and adoration for Bikashbabu. Her veil is removed as she looks at him and Shekhar can now have a full view of her shapely face.

The lady reminds Shekhar of the guard and he cautions Bikashbabu. "Bikashda, perhaps the guard is after creating some trouble. It is going to be more than an hour, still he doesn't turn up!"



"Quite possible, let me see," Bikashbabu is about to get down when he sees that the guard is coming escorted by two armed police constables.

"You please get down, the train will not go," informs one of the constables .

"Is it so? Shekhar, you please wait here, let me go and ring Mr. Raghavan," Bikashbabu steps down and moves towards the platform. "Which Mr. Raghavan? Do you mean our D.R.M. (Divisional Railway Manager)?"

"You are right; besides I have to phone to Mr. Rao also."

"Which Mr. Rao? Do you mean our I.G. of police?" asks the second one.

"Quite so."

"But Mr. Rao has been transferred and perhaps he has already left the place."

"Doesn't matter," Bikashbabu walks along and the constables and the guard follow him. Shekhar gets very much interested. He asks the lady to wait for a while and himself gets down to the rails.

A jeep stands in front of the office-room. As they approach, Mr. Ghosal, the Police Superintendent, comes out of it, hurries to salute Bikashbabu and asks astonished, "Sir, you are here! Haven't you gone to Nagpur? Oh, then it was you who phoned to the D.R.M. However, everything is ready as advised. The van with the group of armed police will be coming soon."

The startled Station Master casts questioning eyes alternately on Mr. Ghosal and Bikashbabu. The Superintendent of Police explains, "Our new I.G. in place of Mr. Rao." The alerted constables salute forthwith in proper style. But the guard does not know what to do. Finally, turning his head he observes the engine of the stationary train.

Bikashbabu smiles at Shekhar heartily who marks in his manner the same simple humour as he did at Bilaspur station. But this time he does not get exalted, rather he remains indifferent and avoids his look. He is aggrieved at his deception, at least he thinks it to be so.

Bikashbabu, unoffended and smiling as ever, says, "Shekhar, please don't worry at all, we will reach Nagpur on time, my grandfather is anxiously waiting there for me."

Shekhar is still stiff and mute. Bikashbabu adds, "Believe me, Shekhar, it was a genuine mistake and quite unintentional. Before also I have marked that whenever I had to do something special I would be confused and commit a mistake like this. In fact the selection of my vocation is the result of such a misconception and error."

"Excuse me, Bikashda, I was myself confused to see your role." Bikashbabu draws him near affectionately by the hand and addresses the guard, "Yes, the train will stay here for tonight. But you will have to take the engine to Bilaspur with Shekhar and the lady." Then to Shekhar, "Shekhar, please accompany her to Bilaspur and eat, drink and enjoy yourself till I reach there. As soon as the van comes I shall start...."

All are inquisitive but nobody dares ask him anything. He clarifies, "You know that the jungle nearby is infested with thieves and dacoits. So we have decided to

keep the train here for tonight as a bait for them. Our fully prepared armed police will remain ready in disguise to take action as and when necessary....”

Shekhar has never before seen a diesel engine at such close quarters. Oh, how neat, clean and nice. No coal, no dust, no fire, no firemen. The driver sits on a high stool, presses this switch, moves that handle and the engine runs along. Shekhar extends his gaze outside. By now the vast and green meadow has assumed a different hue and beauty. The projection of golden rays on it is no more, the deposited silvery dews have evaporated. Everything is quite bright and shining and appears to be seen through a sheet of glass. “Perhaps Bikashda is unaware of this difference in colour and texture of nature,” he thinks, “but what a nice man he is, a soul open and free and without a tinge of deceit and malice in it. He is ever memorable, at least I shall remember him with love and gratitude for the rest of my life even though I may not see him again....”

The trend of his thought gets disturbed by a soft and sweet ringing of laughter. He turns his face and the picture he sees pleases him beyond words.

The child is no longer on his mother’s lap. He has woken up and gone to the guard who has lovingly lifted him up in his arms. The child in turn runs his tiny and tender fingers playfully over his face but being pricked and tickled by his unkempt beard bursts into musical laughter. The guard enjoys the situation with closed eyes and happy visage, whereas the lady smiles stealthily under her veil. Shekhar also relishes the sweet and soothing sight. With a broad smile he turns round and stretches his look again to the distant horizon. The thought of Bikashda creeps into his memory without his knowing....

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

*(Adopted by the author from his original Bengali)*

#### ANNOUNCEMENT

Sri Aurobindo’s Action proposes to hold a Convention at Pondicherry on the 19th and 20th February 1982 on the subject: “INDIA TODAY AND TOMORROW”.

The Convention will be open to the members of Sri Aurobindo’s Action and of World Union. The participants in the Convention will enrol as delegates by the payment of a Delegate Fee of Rs.10.00 per head. If anyone else wishes to participate he or she can become a member of Sri Aurobindo’s Action or of World Union and pay the Delegate’s Fee of Rs.10.00.

The Delegate’s Fee from all who wish to participate in the Convention should be sent to Shri Udar Pinto, Secretary, Sri Aurobindo’s Action, Pondicherry 605002.

An application has been made to the Railway Ministry, New Delhi, for Rail Concession for the participants in the Convention who will be able to avail themselves of this concession when and if the same is received.

With regard to board and lodging of the participants, the Organizers of the Convention will do their best to arrange it for those who want it. The latter must indicate this very early and send advance payment for reservation stating for how many days they require this and in what range of cost. We shall try to cover a wide range from low cost accommodation to high cost.

Please write with full details to Shri Udar Pinto, Secretary, Sri Aurobindo’s Action or to Shri A.B. Patel, General Secretary, World Union, Pondicherry 605002.

# THE LORD OF HORSES

## A NOVELLA

*(Continued from the issue of December 1981)*

WE soon arrived in a forest of oak and the oak-trees here looked golden. There were sequoias too. And their red trunks reminded me of arrested fires. Daylight was stretching over the thick foliage. The soil exuded sweet odours. A leafy, luxuriant silence changed the rhythm of life, slowed it down, softened it. Everything appeared so full of repose. And everything inspired respect.

Sometimes birds I could not see would go flying across through the branches. And the whole forest then quivered with the silken rustle of their wings. And the birds sang too and their song filled the forest. Sometimes it was the fluffy footfall of an animal who moved across the thickets. And I waited to see a deer emerge, a deer with velvety eyes, or a stag whose eyes were svelt and translucent and full of love. But I saw nothing. And I continued following Pinky. And Pinky went trotting in front of me, pursuing a path, then diverging onto another track, then coasting along a rampart of ferns.

From time to time, I asked myself where the Kinkars were and I thought perhaps they were hiding behind the trees. But it did not worry me as I trusted Pinky.

Then all of a sudden I became aware of music. It contained the most beautiful notes of harmony. It was like a heavenly chorus. Thousands and thousands of very dulcet voices sang into my ears. And all these voices were one. And even though the song was wordless I had the feeling that these voices were telling me:

“Welcome Saïd to the Land of the Kinkars.”

“Here the heart of men is your abode, O Saïd.”

“Here you’re at the centre of happiness, O Saïd.”

“The Kingdom of Love is yours, O Saïd.”

And all the voices would take up the refrain:

“Welcome Saïd to the Land of the Kinkars.”

And these voices reminded me of the voices I had heard in the Great Desert just before I had met the two Sages. And this music reminded me of the music created by the two Sages without any instrument. And I said to myself that if the Kinkars were as kind and as wise as the two Sages of the Great Desert then surely the secret of happiness would be given to me.

A little later, Pinky and I came out of the oak-forest at last. And we found ourselves in a vast glade where flowers of all colours blossomed amidst the green grass.

“There we are, Saïd,” said Pinky.

For a moment I thought that Pinky was joking. I opened wide my eyes and I could see that the glade was forlorn. But as the music did not cease to resound in my ears, as the voices did not cease to repeat the song of welcome, I thought it was

impossible that Pinky would make fun of me. Perhaps I was not ready enough. Perhaps I had to pass through some sort of a test before meeting the Kinkars. And I was ready to pass through any sort of a test to win this privilege. And then no doubt, when I had passed the test, a miracle would take place.

And suddenly a miracle took place.

At the end of the glade bordered by a bluish-coloured hill, the Kinkars appeared.

From where we stood, Pinky and I found it hard to know how many they were. But they were many. And they all walked slowly towards us, walked as if they were peacefully strolling. And they were singing sweet songs whose music reached my ears and transported me to ecstasy. And they were surrounded by a multitude of animals who also moved with them very, very slowly.

Birds fluttered over and around them or came chirping to perch on the Kinkars' shoulders. Dogs frisked about them. There were also wolves and stags, foxes and deers. And there were animals dreaded by men. There was a big brown bear and a huge lion and a tiger with a gaping jaw. Then there were monkeys too and cows with milk-white coats and lambs with curly hair. There even was an elephant.

As the Kinkars and the animals neared I noticed that they all wore ornaments of flowers of all colours. The dogs, the wolves, the roes, the foxes and the deers, they all wore garlands of white and yellow flowers. And on the big brown bear's chest a cascade of periwinkles descended. The lion's mane was braided with red lilies. And the tiger's striped coat disappeared under a bed of sunflowers. And the monkeys held bouquets in their hands. And the cows' horns were girdled with lyres of sylvan flowers. And the fleece of lambs was quilted with golden buttons. The birds held a flower between their frail little legs. As for the elephant, he had huge garlands of roses that came down to the ground and around his legs were girdles of roses too and he held a rose with his trunk.

And the Kinkars wore flowers too: in their hair, around their necks, on their arms. And their dresses were painted with flowers, flowers of all colours, enchanting flowers that were like innumerable suns and moons and stars, flowers that sang of the simple joy of living.

On seeing them approach, surrounded by their flower-adorned animals, I knew that the Kinkars did in truth possess the secret of happiness.

And I heard the songs they sang. And they were all songs of love. They were singing:

“We are so full, so full of love  
For all God's children, lion and dove,  
For ants and trees and the stars above,  
So full, we're mad, O Love, O Love!”

My ears quivered on hearing these words. I was stunned to know that the Kinkars thought themselves to be mad and avowed it. But their voices were so pleasant when they said it, so pure that I was convinced that they meant another kind of

madness than the one I had found in the world. No doubt the Kinkars meant the madness of love, of that supreme Love that kindles the heart and makes men more good.

Then the Kinkars stopped. And the animals stopped too. But the glade was so vast that a greater distance still separated us.

“Why don’t they come to us?” I asked Pinky softly.

“Wait,” answered Pinky. “Wait. Be patient and look. The Kinkars will now make a ceremony.”

“A ceremony? What ceremony?” I enquired.

“This day is auspicious,” Pinky answered calmly. “This day the Kinkars go out to welcome new recruits, beings that seek happiness and yearn for love.”

“But am I not a new recruit?” I asked.

“Of course, you are, Saïd,” Pinky gently replied. “And you too will take part in the ceremony. But we have to wait for the other recruits to come.”

“Are these new recruits men?”

“Yes, they are men.”

“That’s fine,” I answered. “I’m happy then.”

Pinky also was happy. Happy to see me so moved by the spectacle. And he swung his head from left to right. And the tiny bells jingled around his neck. And the red flower rose and dipped behind his left ear.

Then with his tiny eyes whose lashes were colourless he peered at me intensely. And he said to me:

“We must also wait for the two men who created the society of the Kinkars.”

“The leaders of the Kinkars?” I asked.

“No, Saïd, they are not leaders. They do not impose themselves over anyone. They are like us. Or if they’re different from us it is because they are better than the best of us. Because their love is greater and more pure.”

And Pinky’s voice trembled with emotion in uttering these words. And I concluded that these two men must be quite exceptional, perhaps as exceptional as the two Sages of the Great Desert. And I felt like telling Pinky about them. And I asked him:

“Where do these two men come from?”

“Nobody knows,” answered Pinky. “We believe they come from very, very far away, from the other side of the world maybe. Because they do not resemble the inhabitants of America at all. We know no more.”

And he kept quiet. So I started looking at the Kinkars and the flower-animals at the centre of the glade.

Most of the animals adorned with flowers had crouched on the grass. Or rather they had knelt. And the Kinkars knelt too. And the Kinkars strewed around them the flowers that they had been carrying in their arms.

And at the same time they continued singing. They sang about their faith in love, about love being the king of the universe, about love being the only purpose of life. And they sang about the love of all things, the love of human beings, and the

love of the earth, the love of trees and animals and the love of the sky and of all that was contained in it.

And around them the flower-animals softly grunted, softly bellowed, softly roared, softly yelped, softly bleated. And the elephant softly trumpeted and the birds softly chirped. And it seemed that the flower-animals were singing too. Or rather they became the magical orchestra that accompanied the voices of the Kinkars.

And this concert thrilled my heart with joy. And tears of happiness welled up in my eyes. And when I realised that Pinky beside me was grunting softly and that his grunts were mingling harmoniously with the sound of the other animals in the centre of the glade, my tears fell down my cheeks. And more tears came rolling down when I found out that I too was neighing softly to the rhythm of the Kinkars' song. And I was so overjoyed that I felt blessed.

Then the singing ceased. And a grand majestic silence came over the place.

I looked at the Kinkars and the flower-animals. All of them held their eyes closed as if in expectation of a supernatural event. And they all swayed from left to right. And beside me Pinky did the same.

As for me, I did not want to close my eyes. I wanted to see. And I saw how peaceful was the glade. And I thought it was like the Garden of Delights.

Then I looked up at the sky. And the sky was an intense blue. And suddenly in that sea of blue I perceived a speck. And the speck was growing bigger. And the speck became a bird. It was a huge eagle flying in the direction of the glade. And I could not help thinking about Farhaj, the eagle of the two Sages.

And at that very moment, at the end of the glade two men appeared. And I thought that perhaps these were the two men about whom Pinky had spoken to me, and who had created the society of the Kinkars.

The two men walked very slowly, as slowly as the Kinkars and the flower-animals had walked a few moments ago. But the two men did not sing. And they did not have flowers on them. And no flower was painted on their dresses.

Both were brown in complexion and both wore long robe made of white wool. And they kept advancing as calmly as ever towards the Kinkars and the flower-animals. And the Kinkars did not open their eyes yet. Then the two men were at the heart of the gathering. And the Kinkars and the flower-animals opened their eyes, all at once. And I gave a long neigh of delight. Because at that moment I saw the two men who had created the society of the Kinkars and because they possessed the secret of happiness. I saw them and I recognised them. They were the two Sages of the Great Desert.

*(To be continued)*

CHRISTINE & ARCHAKA

*(Translated by Maurice from the original French)*

# RIDDLES FROM PONDICHERRY\*

Collected and Rendered into English by P. Raja

1. There stands the rungless ladder  
and above it sits a bag.  
Above the bag stands a pipe  
and the pipe balances a heavy ball.  
Countless blades of grass above the ball grow.  
Beware! Animals wild wander in that forest.  
What is it?
2. It is a pot.  
But no potter has ever made it.  
It holds water.  
But no rain drop has ever pierced it.  
Its whiteness is beyond praise.  
But no washerman has ever bleached it.  
What is it?
3. Catch that green criminal.  
Rip off his spine and daub  
that hot white stuff.  
Imprison him in the cave  
and let the cruel guards of the cave  
dine on him *sans* mercy.  
Who is that criminal?
4. Invisible is this flower  
that the biggest lake bears.  
Rootless it floats and  
easily gets trapped.  
Never can it adorn ladies' hair,  
nor can it fade like sweet flowers.  
To give taste to what you eat  
this flower is a "must".  
Can you name it?
5. A pot-bellied wench is she.  
A small mouth she has  
but never can utter a word.

\* Solutions given at the end.

How could she?  
 She is tongueless, toothless and lipless.  
 Tirelessly she gulps  
 whatever you could feed her with.  
 But ask it back; she'll hesitate.  
 Coax her; cajole her; threaten her,  
 She'll never yield.  
 Rip open her belly; have no mercy.  
 You'll get it back.  
 Who is she?

6. Sow the black seeds in the white field.  
 Use your hands to do it. But remember:  
 To reap what you have sown  
 You can only use your mouth.  
 What is it?

7. Tallest he stands like a sentry.  
 His own business he minds.  
 He brandishes two swords—  
 one short and the other long.  
 He's awake guarding  
 when all of us are fast asleep.  
 You can rely on him and be safe.  
 But be sure to rule him with a rod  
 lest he should cheat.  
 Who is he?

8. It is spherical.  
 But it is no globe.  
 Its body abounds with hair.  
 But it is no ape.  
 On its head there's a tuft.  
 But it's not a brahmin.  
 Three eyes it has on its face.  
 But it is not Lord Shiva.  
 Then who is he?

9. It is now many months  
 since she left her parents.  
 With erudites she makes a living.  
 Silently she suffers



the immortal wounds  
 the erudites make on her.  
 Never does she protest, instead  
 enjoys their cuts and stabs,  
 for she knows  
 "Suffering brings forth immortality."  
 Who is she?

10. He has a big mouth,  
 yet never will speak.  
 He has no grievance  
 yet will heave sighs.  
 He eats no rice  
 yet he is stronger than many.  
 He has no eyes  
 yet will move without help.  
 He cares not for the scorching sun  
 and the heavy rain does not bother him.  
 He screams and drinks water.  
 A faithful servant is he  
 to his master and obeys  
 every syllable of his command.  
 Who is he?

## SOLUTIONS

1. Man.    2. Coconut.    3. Betel-chewing.    4. Salt.    5. Hundi: Money-box.  
 6. Writing and reading.    7. Wall-clock.    8. Shorn coconut.    9. Palm-leaf manuscript.  
 10. Locomotive.