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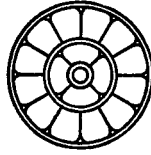
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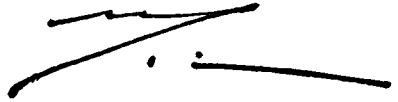


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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Vol. XXXIV

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM, PONDICHERRY

A WARNING

We do not guarantee the authenticity of pamphlets and communications sometimes circulated among people. Sri Aurobindo himself has said in one of his writings that many are the prophets who will declare in his name their own conceptions and imaginations.

Only what is issued from the Ashram in the name of the Trustees is to be trusted. The rest is mostly the result of the imagination and speculation of the writer.

Nolini-da

THE OPENING SECTIONS OF THE 1936-37 VERSION OF SRI AUROBINDO'S *SAVITRI*

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE story of how Sri Aurobindo disclosed in private to one of his disciples the growing wonder of his *Savitri* has already been recounted in different ways in three books: *Sri Aurobindo—the Poet, Light and Laughter, Our Light and Delight*. But parts of it are especially relevant now that the actual text of the disclosed version is being published.

Soon after I arrived in the Ashram on December 16, 1927 I started to hear snatches of information to the effect that a poetic masterpiece by Sri Aurobindo had been in progress for many years. But nobody could claim to have set eyes on the slowly developing epic. I was extremely eager to catch some scent of this creation which promised to become a veritable “thousand-petalled lotus” at the top of the human poetic endeavour. Once in 1931 and again in the two succeeding years I received in reply to my questions short general answers from the Master about his work on the poem and about the technique of its blank verse. But I remained in the dark as to its living reality.

Savitri first came to light for me—or rather to light me up—*incognito*. Having had from my school-days the urge to make verses I continued to jot down whatever seemed to pour into me by intermittent inspiration. Sri Aurobindo was as expert a literary guru as a spiritual one. Judicious criticism, balanced encouragement, illuminative analysis met every effort I made towards better and better composition. On one such occasion, to illustrate some point, he sent me with his helpful comments two lines of poetry describing, as he put it, “the Ray from the transcendent penetrating through the mind’s passive neutral reflection of the supreme quietude of the silent Brahman”. They ran:

Piercing the limitless Unknowable,
Breaking the vacancy and voiceless peace.

I was struck by the profound word-reverberations that reinforced the mystical word-suggestions with a tremendous immediacy of spiritual fact. But there was no sign of the source of the lines: they were a “limitless Unknowable”. I could not help asking where they had come from. The reply was: “*Savitri*.”

I never forgot this initial brief impact of the closely guarded secret. Even before it, Sri Aurobindo had tried to make me aware of a certain element in poetry that hailed from what he called the Overhead planes, the hidden ranges of consciousness above the intellect, with their inherent light of knowledge and their natural experience of the infinite. He broadly distinguished four planes: Higher Mind, Illumined

Mind, Intuition, Overmind. The last-named has been, according to him, the highest reach of the dynamic side of man's spirituality so far. The master dynamism of the Divine, the integral earth-transformative power which Sri Aurobindo designated Supermind or Gnosis or Truth-Consciousness and which was his own outstanding personal realisation, rendering his Yoga a unique hope for the world, has lain unmanifest and mostly unseized. Until certain radical conditions are completely fulfilled, it cannot find direct expression in life or literature. More and more Sri Aurobindo sought to help me not only to respond, in my appreciation of poetry, to the rising scale of the already captured Overhead note but also to bring some strain of it into my own verses. The quest of that note grew for me a dominant passion and most of all I prayed for the Overmind's touch.

One day, emboldened by his innumerable favours of tutorship, I made a singular request. I wrote:

"I shall consider it a favour indeed if you will give me an instance in English of the inspiration of the pure Overmind. I don't mean just a line like Milton's

Those thoughts that wander through Eternity

or Wordsworth's

Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone,

which has a brief burst of it, but something sustained and plenary. I want to steep my consciousness in its rhythm and its revelation. It will be a most cherished possession. Please don't disappoint me by saying that, as no English writer has a passage of this kind, you cannot do anything for me."

Sri Aurobindo wrote back in his characteristic vein:

"Good Heavens! how am I to avoid saying that, when it is the only possible answer—at least so far as I can remember? Perhaps if I went through English poetry again with my present consciousness I might find intimations like that line of Wordsworth, but a passage sustained and plenary? These surely are things to come—the 'future poetry' perhaps, but not the past."

With the familiarity—almost the impudence—he permitted us, I replied:

"I think the favour I asked was expressed in perfectly clear language. If no English poet has produced the passage I want, then who has done so in English? God alone knows. But who is capable of doing it? All of us know. Well, then, why not be kind enough to grant this favour? If difficult metres could be illustrated on demand, is it impossible to illustrate in a satisfying measure something so natural as the Overmind? I am not asking for hundreds of lines—even eight will more than do—all pure gold to be treasured for ever. So please... Perhaps it is possible only on Sunday: I can wait answerless for twenty-four hours with a sweet *samatā*."

The answer came the very next morning:

"I have to say Good Heavens again. Because difficult metres can be illustrated on demand, which is a matter of metrical skill, how does it follow that one can produce poetry from any blessed plane on demand? It would be easier to furnish you with hundreds of lines already written out of which you could select for yourself anything overmindish if it exists (which I doubt) rather than produce 8 lines of warranted overmind manufacture to order. All I can do is to give you from time to time some lines from *Savitri* on condition you keep them to yourself for the present. It may be a poor substitute for the Overmental, but if you like the sample, the opening lines, I can give you more hereafter—and occasionally better."

And then after an "E.G." there followed in his own fine and sensitive yet forceful hand sixteen lines of the very first section of *Savitri* as it stood then, dealing with the "Symbol Dawn." Below the quotation were the words: "There! Promise fulfilled for a wonder."

After a whole day's absorption in the absolute nectar, I sent Sri Aurobindo a note:

"Like the sample? Rather! It is useless for me to attempt thanking you. The beauty of what you have sent may move one to utterance but the wideness takes one's breath away. I read the lines over and over again. I am somewhat stunned by the magnitude and memorableness of this day: I think your description of the divine dawn can very well apply to its spiritually poetic importance for me. Perhaps you will laugh, but I had two strange feelings before writing this letter. I was reading your verses, when I had the mute sense of big tears in the heart and a conviction that having seen what I had seen I could not possibly die! What do you say to my madness?"

The day of days was October 25, 1936. From then onwards for a time Sri Aurobindo kept sending passages which I typed and he touched up again or slightly expanded. About the next passage I remarked:

"It goes reverberating in depth upon depth of one's being. What I admire is that the burden of infinite suggestion is carried with such a flexible ease. There is no attempt—as in the poetry of us lesser fry—to make things specially striking or strange or new, but a simple largeness of gesture which most naturally makes one surprising revelation after another of beauty and power."

His comment was:

"Well, it is the difference of receiving from above and living in the ambience of the Above—whatever comes receives the breadth of largeness which belongs to that plane."

The precious gift of passages continued for months. Although there were long interruptions at a later stage, it was only at the close of February 1938 that the series stopped. A visit by me to Bombay got prolonged into a stay for many years. In the meanwhile Sri Aurobindo met with an accident: he broke his right leg on the eve of the *darshan* of November 24, 1938. During his convalescence he turned to revising several of his writings. *The Life Divine* was taken up first and, some years later,

Savitri got its chance. It underwent revision and expansion on a much grander scale than ever before. What he had already begun on the typescript much earlier is characterised in a couple of letters from him at the commencement of my Bombay-visit.

“I have been too occupied with other things to make much headway with the poem—except that I have spoilt your beautiful neat copy of the ‘Worlds’ under the oestrus of the restless urge for more and more perfection; but we are here for World-improvement, so I hope that it is excusable.”

“I have pulled up the third section to a higher consistency of level: the ‘Worlds’ have fallen into a state of manuscript chaos, corrections upon corrections, additions upon additions, rearrangements on rearrangements out of which perhaps some cosmic beauty will emerge!”

It would seem that the opening passages of the poem were not touched until long after the accident. I came to know of the radical change only in 1946 in connection with Nirodbaran’s reading out to Sri Aurobindo the typescript of my treatment of *Savitri* in the final chapter of *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*, based on the 1936 version. Sri Aurobindo sent me the following letter: “You will see when you get the full typescript [of the first three books] that *Savitri* has grown to an enormous length so that it is no longer quite the same thing as the poem you saw then... In the new form it will be a sort of poetic philosophy of the Spirit and of Life much profounder and vaster in its scope than was intended in the original poem...”

On receiving “the new form” I saw that the Symbol-Dawn prelude of 16 lines had not only been slightly altered in phrase but also stood in a passage of 93 lines with its opening and its close considerably separated. At first I felt a regret at the alteration. Sri Aurobindo answered that I had been so accustomed to the old prelude that I could not sufficiently outgrow the *samskāras* to respond easily to the new. Even now a faint nostalgia lingers for the dawn’s direct breaking after the first few lines instead of its appearance being delayed by the lengthy evocation of the preceding night and the vision conjured up through it of the original Inconscience from which the material world evolved as well as of the unmanifest Unknown negatively reflected by that Inconscience. But I can appreciate well the awesome effect of lines like those four about the suggestion emanating from “the huge foreboding mind of Night” which has replaced her earlier “huge unslumbering spirit”:

Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,
In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse
The abysm of the unbodied Infinite;
A fathomless zero occupied the world.

The third line here is indeed one of Sri Aurobindo’s tremendous single-pentameter Mantras comparable to the mightily tranquil

All can be done if the God-touch is there

or the deeply surprising

Our minds hush to a bright Omniscient

or the revelation-packed

Earth's winged chimeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven

or the inward-alluring

Unweave the stars and into silence pass.

Excepting the last of these brief miracles, which occurs towards the end of the present *Savitri*, all have their places in contexts which Sri Aurobindo sent me in 1936: they are products of the great subsequent enlargement. But there is enough in the old draft to render it an amazing feat. For instance, it contains the description of the poem's heroine, starting

Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven

and ending

And moved in her as in his natural home—

a passage of 31 lines which was subsequently expanded to 51 but which even in its original form constitutes a rarity in all literature for its sustained spiritual height. I asked Sri Aurobindo: "Are not these lines which I regard as the *ne plus ultra* in world-poetry a snatch of the sheer Overmind?" He replied: "This passage is, I believe, what I might call the Overmind Intuition at work expressing itself in something like its own rhythm and language. It is difficult to say about one's own poetry, but I think I have succeeded here and in some passages later on in catching that difficult note; in separate or briefer passages (i.e. a few lines at a time) I think it comes in not unoften."

Considering Sri Aurobindo's remark in 1946 about his attitude ten years earlier—"At that time I hesitated to assign anything like Overmind touch or inspiration to passages in English or other poetry and did not presume to claim any of my own writings as belonging to this order"—and considering that several lines of other poets which he had hesitated about were later adjudged by him to be from the Overmind, it seems certain that this passage which he had ascribed to the Overmind Intuition, a plane he had defined as not Overmind itself but an intermediate level where intuition proper grows massive in substance and rhythm, would have been traced by him to the supreme source if he had been privately asked about it again.

Several lines of extreme originality are already in the 1936 version:

His wide eyes bodied viewless entities....
 The Craftsman of the magic stuff of Self
 Who labours at his high and difficult plan
 In the wide workshop of the wonderful world,
 Moulded in inward Time his rhythmic parts....

A figure in the ineffable Witness' shrine
 Pacing the vast cathedral of his thoughts
 Under its arches dim with infinity
 Mid heavenward brooding of invisible wings....

One-pointed to the immaculate Delight,
 Questing for God as for a splendid prey,
 He mounted burning like a cone of fire....

There is also that coinage—along the lines of “infinitude” and “vastitude”—in the vivid passage which, except for one additional phrase towards the end, is found fully in the old draft:

To a few is given that godlike rare release.
 One among many thousands never touched,
 Engrossed in the external world's design,
 Is driven by a pointing hand of light
 Across his soul's unmapped immensitudes.

We have, however, to mark significant enrichments in many places in the later revision. Thus earlier we read how “hidden altitudes” keep for us as “our rapturous heritage”

The calm immunity of spirit space,
 The golden plateaus of immortal Fire,
 The moon-flame oceans of unfallen Bliss,
 To which the indwelling Daemon points our flight.

In the final form we come across:

Our souls can visit in great lonely hours
 Still regions of imperishable Light,
 All-seeing eagle-peaks of silent Power,
 And moon-flame oceans of swift fathomless Bliss
 And calm immensities of spirit Space.

Here and there a fascinating mystic touch has entered the text. The earlier draft had some members of the occult fauna: "the gold hawk", "the enemy-Serpent" and "the white-fire dragon-bird of endless bliss." The new brought in many strange figures in place of psychological simple postures. Thus what once was a straightforward exceeding of the mental consciousness—

For him the limiting firmament ceased above.
In a tense period of the sleepless urge
A gap was rent in the all-concealing vault—

had later not only the first line slightly modified but also the second turned completely into a flash of enigmatic symbolism with a half-lion half-eagle emerging from a Vedic vision:

In the griffin forefront of the Night and Day...

At times the felicities of a passage are moved apart to make entirely different revelations. Originally there were the lines:

Caught in a voiceless white epiphany
The toiling thinker widened and grew still,
Wisdom transcendent touched his quivering heart,
And with a silver cry of opening gates,
Breaking the intellect's hard and lustrous lid,
Across our mental sky he glimpsed above
The superconscious realms of motionless peace
Where judgment ceases and the word is mute
And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone.

This combination of thrilled spirituality and occult vision directed towards a soul-fulfilling Beyond which is brought home on the breath of a Mantra whose music conveys most profoundly the sense of the supreme Ineffable—this many-faceted whole gets distributed into three equally inevitable moments at considerable intervals packed with extra matter of great spiritual and occult importance:

Awakened to new unearthly closenesses,
The touch replied to subtle infinities,
And with a silver cry of opening gates
Sight's lightnings leaped into the invisible....
His centre was no more in earthly mind,
A power of seeing silence filled his limbs:
Caught by a voiceless white epiphany

Into a vision that surpasses forms,
 Into a living that surpasses life,
 He neared the still consciousness sustaining all...
 Thought lay down in a mighty voicelessness;
 The toiling thinker widened and grew still,
 Wisdom transcendent touched his quivering heart:
 His soul could sail beyond thought's luminous bar;
 Mind screened no more the shoreless infinite.
 Across a void retreating sky he glimpsed
 Through a last glimmer and drift of vanishing stars
 The superconscient realms of motionless peace
 Where judgment ceases and the word is mute
 And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone.

At each step in the final version we have this kind of proliferation. Sri Aurobindo justified it in a letter to me answering some criticisms by a friend of mine who had a *penchant* for compositions like Milton's *Lycidas* or *Comus* and who reacted unfavourably to the gradual detailed unfoldment of the theme in the very first canto. Sri Aurobindo explained the reason for such an unfoldment as well as the general principle of the final version:

"Its length is an indispensable condition for carrying out its purpose and everywhere there is this length, critics may say an 'unconscionable length'—I am quoting the description of the *Times Literary Supplement's* criticism of *The Life Divine*—in every part, in every passage, in almost every canto or section of a canto. It has been planned not on the scale of *Lycidas* or *Comus* or some brief narrative poem, but of the longer epical narrative, almost a minor, though a very minor *Ramayana*; it aims not at a minimum but at an exhaustive exposition of its world-vision or world-interpretation. One artistic method is to select a limited subject and even on that to say only what is indispensable, what is centrally suggestive and leave the rest to the imagination or understanding of the reader. Another method which I hold to be equally artistic or, if you like, architectural is to give a large and even a vast, a complete interpretation, omitting nothing that is necessary, fundamental to the completeness: that is the method I have chosen to follow in *Savitri*. But X has understood nothing of the significance or intention of the passages he is criticising, least of all, their inner sense—that is not his fault, but is partly due to the lack of the context and partly to his lack of equipment and you have there an unfair advantage over him which enables you to understand and see the poetic intention. He sees only an outward form of words and some kind of surface sense which is to him vacant and merely ornamental or rhetorical or something pretentious without any true meaning or true vision in it: inevitably he finds the whole thing false and empty, unjustifiably ambitious and pompous without deep meaning or, as he expresses it, pseudo and phoney. His objection of *longueur* would be perfectly just if the description of

the night and the dawn had been simply of physical night and physical dawn; but here the physical night and physical dawn are, as the title of the canto clearly suggests, a symbol, although what may be called a real symbol of an inner reality and the main purpose is to describe by suggestion the thing symbolised; here it is a relapse into Inconscience broken by a slow and difficult return of consciousness followed by a brief but splendid and prophetic outbreak of spiritual light leaving behind it the 'day' of ordinary human consciousness in which the prophecy has to be worked out. The whole of *Savitri* is, according to the title of the poem, a legend that is a symbol and this opening canto is, it may be said, a key beginning and announcement. So understood there is nothing here otiose or unnecessary; all is needed to bring out by suggestion some aspect of the thing symbolised and so start adequately the working out of the significance of the whole poem. It will, of course, seem much too long to a reader who does not understand what is written or, understanding, takes no interest in the subject; but that is unavoidable."

The amount of elaboration done on the older draft can be gauged from two letters. One dated 1936 refers to the form existing in that year as compared to earlier attempts: "Savitri was originally written many years ago before the Mother came as a narrative poem in two parts, Part I Earth and Part II Beyond (these two parts are still extant in the scheme) each of four books—or rather Part II consisted of three books and an epilogue. Twelve books to an epic is a classical superstition, but the new *Savitri* may extend to ten books—if much is added in the final version it may be even twelve. The first book has been lengthening and lengthening out till it must be over 2000 lines, but I shall break up the original first four into five, I think in fact I have already started doing so. These first five will be, as I conceive them now, the Book of Birth, the Book of Quest, the Book of Love, the Book of Fate, the Book of Death. As for the second Part, I have not touched it yet."

The second letter is of 1948. We have quoted its first few lines already as well as some from its closing paragraph. Sri Aurobindo writes: "There are now three books in the first part. The first, the Book of Beginnings, comprises five cantos which cover the same ground as what you typed out but contains much more that is new. The small passage about Aswapathy and the other worlds has been replaced by a new book, the Book of the Traveller of the Worlds, in fourteen cantos with many thousand lines. There is also a third sufficiently long book, the Book of the Divine Mother. In the new plan of the poem there is a second part consisting of five books: two of these, the Book of Birth and Quest and the Book of Love, have been completed and another, the Book of Fate, is almost complete. Two others, the Book of Yoga and the Book of Death, have still to be written, though a part needs only a thorough recasting. Finally, there is the third part consisting of four books, the Book of Eternal Night, the Book of the Dual Twilight, the Book of Everlasting Day and the Return to Earth, which have to be entirely recast and the third of them largely rewritten. So it will be a long time before *Savitri* is complete... I am trying of course to keep it at a very high level of inspiration, but in so large a plan covering most sub-

jects of philosophical thought and vision and many aspects of spiritual experience there is bound to be much variation of tone: but that is, I think, necessary for the richness and completeness of the treatment."

Yes, the new *Savitri* is not only a Legend and a Symbol but also a Philosophy and, as we have quoted its author as saying, "profounder and vaster in its scope", besides being poetically a more lavish luminousness. But the 1936 version, although less complex, is yet no mere narrative poem. It has epical proportions of its own and very markedly the same afflatus in essence as the later recension. Sri Aurobindo declared on November 3, 1936 about the work then in progress: "As it now stands there is a general Overmind influence, I believe, sometimes coming fully through, sometimes colouring the poetry of the other higher planes fused together, sometimes lifting any one of these higher planes to the highest or the psychic, poetic intelligence or vital towards them." Again, like the final version it not only strikes the identical opening chord—

It was the hour before the Gods awake—

a semi-Vedic cosmic suggestion found only in the last of the nearly dozen recastings that preceded that of 1936: the 1936 draft also depicts for the first time at some length the climbing of planes, which, as Sri Aurobindo says in a letter of November 1 of that year, "was only a brief interlude of a few lines formerly". Furthermore, it has had the unique luck of being the one version from which Sri Aurobindo read extracts to the Mother.

This observation rests on what Huta has recorded in the article entitled *Spiritual and Occult Truths* and published in *Mother India*, February 21, 1978. The Mother disclosed to her in 1961 "how she had achieved in her tender age the highest occult truths, how she had realised all the visions set forth in *Savitri*". Here indeed is a marvellous flash of psychic autobiography. Huta continues the report based on the Mother's words: "Actually, she had experienced the poem's fundamental revelations before she arrived in Pondicherry and before Sri Aurobindo read out *Savitri* to her early in the morning day after day at a certain period of the Ashram. She also said to me that she had never told Sri Aurobindo all that she had seen beforehand." What could have been "a certain period"? The years when *Savitri* underwent ample revisions and extensions were after the accident to the poet's right leg at almost the end of 1938. Now the poet was surrounded by a small number of attendants, to one of whom—Nirodbaran—he accorded a privilege whose gloriousness I most envy, for after some time he commenced dictating his re-creation of the poem to him. From the end of 1938 to December 5, 1950 when Sri Aurobindo departed from his body there was no occasion in the midst of his constant attendants to read *Savitri* to the Mother. The period in question is almost certainly the years when he copied, chiselling as he went on, from his manuscript the passages he sent to me every morning in large envelopes. Before enclosing them, usually with the

Mother's "Amal" inscribed on the covers, he must have read out the verse to her prior to breaking up their joint sessions of correspondence with the sadhakas late at night and through the small hours of the morning. The year and a half from nearly October's end in 1936 to the close of February 1938 must have contained that period of shining surprise not only to the Grace-inundated disciple to whom *Savitri* was sent but also on a far deeper plane to the Mother for the wonderful language in which the Master unveiled his high visions and to the Master himself because the Mother had anticipated them in mystic silence thirty years in advance.

From various viewpoints I feel encouraged to lay before the readers of *Mother India* whatever stream of *Savitri* came to me in private before it ceased in early 1938 like the fabled river Sarasvati of the Rigvedic symbolism.

Postscript

Several times I have said: "in private." But a small qualification is needed. The circumstances were such that to keep *Savitri* a total secret was very difficult. In those days Nolini was Sri Aurobindo's postman to the sadhakas or—shall we say?—the messenger Mercury from the Olympian Jupiter of Pondicherry. He used to distribute the Master's daily replies: we would wait eagerly for him around 7 a.m. Seeing the large envelopes, he guessed that some special correspondence was going on between Sri Aurobindo and me. Not out of curiosity but literary interest, occasionally when he handed me my "post" he slightly lifted his eyebrows and lingered for a few seconds. I looked very innocent, took the envelope and waited for him to depart before opening it. It happened like that four or five times. Then I felt a little nervous, so I wrote to Sri Aurobindo my impression that Nolini would soon get it into his head to inquire. "What should I do?" I asked. Sri Aurobindo very blandly replied: "Let us hope he will not get it into his head" (14. 5. 1937). But the silent inquisition of the lifted eyebrows for a moment or two did not cease. Then I wrote in desperation to Sri Aurobindo that I was sure the question would come and I must know whether to take Nolini into the secret or not. Sri Aurobindo answered: "Yes." So this secret was shared between Nolini and me for ten years—that is, until 1946, when I wrote a book on Sri Aurobindo's poetry and *Savitri* was divulged to the world—with Sri Aurobindo's approval. Excerpts from the poem came out for the first time in that book. Afterwards the Ashram published whole cantos in various journals and in a number of fascicles and then the entire epic in two volumes.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

SAVITRI

PART ONE: EARTH

I

The Book of Birth*

I. *The Last
Dawn*

It was the hour before the Gods awake.
Across the path of the divine Event
The huge unslumbering spirit of Night, alone
In the unlit temple of immensity,
Lay stretched immobile upon silence' marge,
Mute with the unplumbed prevision of her change.
The impassive skies were neutral, waste and still.
Then a faint hesitating glimmer broke.
A slow miraculous gesture dimly came,
The insistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
Persuaded the inert black quietude
And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.
A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
That glowed along the moment's fading brink,
Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.
A thought was sown in the unsounded Void,
A sense was born within the darkness' depths
Vague like a promise from still powerless suns,
A memory quivered in the heart of Time
As if a soul long dead were moved to live.
But the oblivion that succeeds the fall
Obscured the crowded tablets of the past,
And all that was destroyed must be rebuilt
And slow creation laboured out once more.
Yet the undying Ray took shape on high.

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* From Sri Aurobindo's Notes

"This First Book is divided into sections and the larger sections into subsections... The first section is 'The last Dawn', i.e., the dawn of the day of Satyavan's death, (but it must be remembered that everything is symbolic or significant in the poem, so this dawn also,) the next is 'The Issue'; both of these are short. Then comes a huge section of the Yoga of the Lord of the Horse (Aswapati, father of Savitri) relating how came about the birth of Savitri and its significance; finally the birth and childhood of Savitri" (26.10.1936).

Out of the superconscient altitudes
 A glamour from unreached transcendences
 Iridescent with the glory of the Unseen,
 The brief perpetual sign recurred above. 30
 Ablaze awhile upon creation's edge
 Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues,
 Burying its seed of grandeur in the hours—
 Bright like a soul that nears the sill of birth,
 And is absorbed into life's common day,
 A spark of heaven enshrined in Matter's crypt,
 Its lustre vanishing in the inconscient planes.
 Almost that morn the epiphany was disclosed
 Of which she is the coloured signal-flare:
 A lonely splendour from the invisible goal 40
 Almost was flung upon the opaque Inane.
 Only a little the God-light endures,
 But through that little the ancient Marvel shines.
 Once more a tread perturbed the vacant vasts.
 A face upon Infinity's borders, One
 Parted the ageless lids that open Heaven;
 A Form from far beatitudes seemed to near.
 Ambassadors twixt eternity and change,
 Outlined but still protected by her mask,
 The omniscient Goddess leaned above the breadths 50
 That wrap the fated journeyings of the stars
 And saw the spaces ready for her feet.
 Once she half looked behind for her veiled Sun,
 Then, thoughtful, turned to her immortal work.
 Earth felt the Imperishable's passage close,
 The waking ear of Nature heard her steps
 And wideness turned to her its limitless eye,
 And, scattered on sealed depths, her luminous smile
 Kindled to fire the silence of the worlds.
 All grew a consecration and a rite. 60
 Air was a vibrant link between earth and heaven;
 The wide-winged hymn of a great priestly wind
 Arose and failed upon the altar hills,
 The high boughs prayed in a revealing sky.
 Here where our half-lit ignorance skirts the gulfs
 On the dumb bosom of the ambiguous earth,
 Here where one knows not even the step in front
 And Truth has her throne on the shadowy back of doubt,

An anguished and precarious field of toil
 Outspread beneath some large indifferent gaze, 70
 Our prostrate soul bore the awakening Light.
 Here too the glamour and prophetic flame
 Touched for an instant trivial daylong shapes,
 Then the divine afflatus, lost, withdrew,
 Dimmed, fading slowly from the mortal's range.
 A sacred yearning lingered in its trace,
 The worship of a Presence and a Power
 Too perfect to be held by death-bound hearts,
 The prescience of a marvellous birth to come.
 Affranchised from its respite of fatigue, 80
 Once more the rumour of the speed of Life
 Renewed the cycles of the blinded quest.
 All sprang to their unvarying daily acts;
 The thousand peoples of the soil and tree
 Obeyed the unforeseeing instant's urge,
 And, leader here with his uncertain mind,
 Alone who seeks the future's covered face,
 Man lifted up the burden of his fate.

And Savitri too woke among these tribes
 That hastened to join the brilliant summoner's chant 90
 And, lured by the beauty of the apparent ways,
 Acclaimed their portion of ephemeral joy.
 Akin to the eternity whence she came,
 No part she took in their small happiness.
 Its chequered eager motion of pursuit
 And fluttering-hued illusion of desire,
 Its message of brief light shone not for her.
 A mighty stranger in the human field,
 The embodied Guest within made no response.
 In her there was the anguish of the Gods 100
 Imprisoned in the transience of our mould,
 The deathless conquered by the death of things.
 A vaster joy had dwelt with her, but long
 Could stand not on this brittle earthly base.
 A narrow movement on Time's deep abysm,
 Life's fragile littleness denied the power
 And proud and conscious wideness and the bliss
 That she had brought into the mortal form:
 Offered to the daughter of Infinity
 Its passion-flower of love and doom it gave. 110

As with one who watches over men left blind
 And bears the load of the unwitting race,
 A dread foreknowledge separated her
 From all of whom she was the star and stay:
 To the lone immortal's unshared work she rose.
 At first life ached not in her burdened breast.
 Awhile she lay in silence twixt two realms,
 Nothing recalling of the sorrow here,
 Then sighing put her hand upon her bosom,
 Nor knew why the dull lingering grief was there, 120
 Deep, quiet, old, made natural to its place.
 Heavy, unwilling were life's servitors
 Like workers with no wages of delight:
 Sullen, the torch of sense refused to burn;
 The unassisted brain found not its past.
 Only some vague earth-nature held the frame.
 But soon her strong far-winging spirit returned
 Across the ebbing of the seas of sleep.
 Her house of Nature felt the unseen sway:
 Illumined swiftly were the darkened rooms, 130
 And memory's casements opened on the hours,
 And the tired feet of thought approached her doors.
 All came back to her. Earth and love and doom,
 Dim giant figures wrestling in the night,
 The ancient disputants encircled her,
 And in the shadow of her flaming heart
 At the sombre centre of the dire debate
 An image white of high and godlike Pain,
 A guardian of the unconsolated abyss
 Inheriting the long agony of the globe, 140
 Appeared and gazed with fixed regardless eyes
 That saw grief's timeless depths but not life's goal.
 Afflicted by his harsh divinity,
 Bound to his throne, he waited unappeased
 The daily oblation of her unwept tears.
 All the fierce question of man's hours relived:
 The sacrifice of suffering and desire
 Earth offers to the immortal ecstasy
 Began again beneath the eternal Hand.
 Awake she endured the moments' serried march, 150
 And looked on this green smiling dangerous world,
 And heard the ignorant cry of living things.

Her soul arose confronting Time and Fate:
 Immobile in herself, she gathered force.
 This was the day when Satyavan must die.

2. *The Issue**

Awhile she moved in the many-imagined past.
 All that she once had dreamed and hoped and been
 Flew by her eagle-winged through memory's skies.
 All her life's highways and its sweet bypaths
 Were mapped in her sun-clear recording view,— 160
 Then this new turn where Heaven raced with Hell.
 Twelve passionate months had brought a day of Fate
 When, lonely, she must face the power of Death,
 Measuring her depths with his all-seizing Night.
 Alone among unknowing happy hearts
 Her armoured soul kept watch upon the hours
 Listening for a foreseen tremendous step
 In the closed beauty of the inhuman wilds.
 A combatant in silent dreadful lists,
 No helper had she but the Strength within; 170
 There was no witness of terrestrial eyes.
 The Gods above and Nature sole below
 Were the spectators of that mighty strife.
 Around her were the austere sky-pointing hills
 And the green murmurous broad deep-thoughted woods
 Muttering incessantly their muffled spell.
 Here in this dense magnificent coloured world,
 Amid the chequered sunbeams and blithe flowers
 Draped in the leaves' emerald vivid monotone,
 Immured, her destiny's secluded scene 180
 Kept vacant for its act a grandiose stage:
 Her drama's radiant prologue here she had lived.
 Twelve months before this white ray-haunted dawn
 Here through an aureate opening in Time
 Amidst the cloistral yearning of the woods
 And under the aspiration of the peaks,
 Changing to rapture the dull earthly round,
 Repeating the marvel of the first descent
 Love came to her hiding the shadow, Death.

* From Sri Aurobindo's Notes

"Here is . the second section which is entitled 'The Issue'—that is of course the issue between Savitri and Fate or rather between the incarnate Light, the Sun Goddess, and Death the Creator and Devourer of this world with his Law of darkness, limitation, ignorance" (31.10.1936).

Well might he find in her his perfect shrine! 190
 Since first the Earth-being's heavenward growth began,
 Through all the long ordeal of the race,
 Never a rarer creature bore his shaft,
 That burning test of the godhead in our parts,
 A lightning from the heights on our abyss.
 All in her pointed to a nobler kind.
 Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven,
 Exalted and swift her young large-visioned spirit
 Winging through worlds of splendour and of calm
 O'erflew the ways of Thought to unborn things. 200
 Ardent was her self-poised un stumbling will,
 Her mind, a sea of white sincerity,
 Passionate in flow, had not one turbid wave.
 As in a mystic and dynamic dance
 A priestess of immaculate ecstasies,
 Inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault,
 Moves in some prophet cavern of the Gods,
 A heart of silence in the hands of joy
 Inhabited with rich creative beats
 A body like a parable of dawn 210
 That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
 Or golden temple-door to things beyond.
 Immortal rhythms swayed in her time-born steps;
 Her look, her smile awoke celestial sense
 Even in earth-stuff and their intense delight
 Poured a supernal beauty on men's lives.
 The great unsatisfied godhead here could dwell.
 Vacant of the dwarf self's imprisoned air,
 Her mood could harbour his sublimer breath
 Spiritual that can make all things divine: 220
 For even her gulfs were secrecies of light.
 At once she was the stillness and the Word,
 A continent of self-diffusing peace,
 An ocean of untrembling virgin fire.
 In her he met a vastness like his own;
 His warm high subtle ether he refound
 And moved in her as in his natural home.
 Till then no mournful line had barred this Ray
 Since her orb'd sight in its breath-fastened house,
 Opening in sympathy with happier stars 230
 Where life is not exposed to sorrowful change,

Remembered beauty death-claimed lids ignore
 And wondered at this scene of fragile forms
 Carried on canvas strips of shimmering Time.
 Although she learned to bear the human load,
 The impunity of unborn Might was here.
 A radiance from the Immortals' world was there:
 Almost they saw who lived within her light
 The white-fire dragon-bird of endless bliss,
 Her playmate in the sempiternal spheres 240
 In her attracting advent's lustrous wake
 Descended from his unattainable realms,
 Drifting with burning wings above her days.
 Heaven's tranquil shield guarded the missioned child.
 A glowing orbit was her early term,—
 Years like gold raiment of the Gods that pass;
 Her youth sat throned in calm felicity
 But joy cannot endure until the end.
 There is a darkness in terrestrial things
 That will not suffer long too glad a note. 250
 The armed Immortal bore the snare of Time.
 One dealt with her who meets the burdened great.
 A Will moves his too large for us to know,
 Whose sanction he obeys as him our fates.
 Assigner of the ordeal and the path
 Who uses in this holocaust of the soul
 Death, fall and sorrow for the spirit's goods,
 The dubious Godhead with his torch of pain
 Lit up the chasm of the unfinished world,
 Calling to fill with her vast self the abyss. 260
 He used the Spirit's dreadful strategy.
 Assailing her divinest elements,
 Measuring the difficulty with the might,
 He dug more deep the gulf that all must cross,
 Made kin her heart to the striving human heart,
 And forced her strength to its appointed road.
 To wrestle with the Shadow she had come
 And must confront the riddle of man's birth
 And life's brief struggle in dim Matter's night.
 Whether to bear with Ignorance and Death 270
 Or hew the ways of Immortality,
 To lose or win the godlike game for man,
 Was her soul's issue thrown with Destiny's dice.

But not to accept and suffer was she born.
 This was no fabric of terrestrial make,
 A creature formed to bend beneath the yoke
 Submissive and subject to earth's dolorous law,
 Half-animated for a passing play
 An image fluttering on the screen of Fate,
 Or, tossed along the gulfs of circumstance, 280
 A chattel and a plaything of Time's lords.
 A conscious Frame was here, a self-born Force.
 For in this strange uneasy compromise
 Of limiting Nature with the limitless Self
 Where all must move between an ordered Chance
 And an uncaring blind Necessity,
 Too high the Fire spiritual dare not blaze.
 An answering touch might shatter all measures made
 And earth sink down with the weight of the Infinite.
 A grey tribunal of the Ignorance, 290
 An inquisition of the priests of Night
 In judgment sit on the adventurer Soul,
 And the dual tables and the Karmic norms
 Restrain the Titan in us and the God,
 Pain with its lash, joy with its silver bribe
 Guard the Wheel's circling immobility.
 A bond is put on the high-climbing mind,
 A seal on the too vast and open heart
 To keep the throne of the Inconscient safe,
 While the slow coilings of the aeons pass 300
 And the Animal browses in the sacred fence
 And the gold Hawk can cross the skies no more.
 But one stood up who lit the limitless flame.
 Arraigned by the dark Power that hates all bliss
 In the dire court where life must pay for joy,
 Sentenced by the mechanic justicer
 To the afflicting penalty of man's hopes,
 Her head she bowed not to the unseen decree,
 Obedient to the statutes fixed of old,
 Admitting without appeal the nether Gods. 310
 Inapt to fold its mighty wings of dream,
 Her spirit refused struck from the starry list
 To quench in dull despair the God-given light,
 Asked not from mortal frailty pain's relief,
 Accepted not to close the luminous page

And set a signature of weak assent
 To the brute balance of the world's exchange.
 In her own self she found her high recourse
 And matched with the iron law her sovereign right;
 Her single will opposed the cosmic rule.
 To stay the wheels of Doom this greatness rose.
 A flaming warrior from the eternal peaks
 Empowered to force the doors denied and closed
 Smote from death's visage its dumb absolute
 And burst the bonds of consciousness and Time.

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(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO ON THE EARLY SAVITRI

I used *Savitri* as a means of ascension. I began with it on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I rewrote from that level. Moreover I was particular—if part seemed to me to come from any lower levels I was not satisfied to leave it because it was good poetry. All had to be as far as possible of the same mint. In fact *Savitri* has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's own Yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative. (1936)

Savitri... is blank verse without enjambment (except rarely)—each line a thing by itself and arranged in paragraphs of one, two, three, four, five lines (rarely a longer series), in an attempt to catch something of the Upanishadic and Kalidasian movement, so far as that is a possibility in English. (1932)

... I receive from above my head and receive changes and corrections from above without any initiation by myself or labour of the brain. Even if I change a hundred times, the mind does not work at that, it only receives. Formerly it used not to be so, the mind was always labouring at the stuff of an unshaped formation. (1934)

SURRENDER, OFFERING, ASPIRATION, CONCENTRATION

THE MOTHER'S TALK OF FEBRUARY 22, 1951

"Yoga means union with the Divine, and the union is effected through offering—it is founded on the offering of yourself to the Divine."

Questions and Answers 1929 (28 April)

What is the difference between surrender and offering?

THE two words are almost synonymous: "I make the offering of myself and I surrender myself", but in the gesture of offering there is something more active than in the gesture of surrender. Unfortunately, *soumission*, in French, is not the true word; in English we use "surrender"; between the words "surrender" and "offering" there is hardly any difference. But the French word "soumission" gives the impression of something more passive: you accept, while offering is a giving—a voluntary giving.

What is the exact meaning of the word "consecration"?

"Consecration" generally has a more mystical sense but this is not absolute. A total consecration signifies a total giving of one's self; hence it is the equivalent of the word "surrender", not of the word *soumission* which always gives the impression that one "accepts" passively. You feel a flame in the word "consecration", a flame even greater than in the word "offering". To consecrate oneself is "to give oneself to an action"; hence, in the yogic sense, it is to give oneself to some divine work with the idea of accomplishing the divine work.

"When the resolution has been taken, when you have decided that the whole of your life shall be given to the Divine, you have still at every moment to remember it and carry it out in all the details of your existence. You must feel at every step that you belong to the Divine; you must have the constant experience that, in whatever you think or do, it is always the Divine Consciousness that is acting through you. You have no longer anything that you can call your own; you feel everything as coming from the Divine, and you have to offer it back to its source. When you can realise that, then even the smallest thing to which you do not usually pay much attention or care, ceases to be trivial and insignificant; it becomes full of meaning and it opens up a vast horizon beyond."

Questions and Answers 1929 (28 April)

Because the least detail of life and action, each movement of thought, even of sensation, of feeling, which is normally of little importance, becomes different the moment you look at it asking yourself, "Did I think this as an offering to the Divine, did I feel this as an offering to the Divine?" If you recall this every moment of your life, the attitude becomes quite different from what it was before. It becomes very wide; it is a chain of innumerable little things each having its own place, whilst formerly you used to let them go by without being aware of them. That widens the field of consciousness. If you take a half-hour of your life and think of it, putting to yourself this question: "Is it a consecration to the Divine?" you will see that the small things become a big thing and you will have the impression that life becomes rich and luminous.

Identification is the goal of Yoga. Can one say that surrender is the first step and offering the second?

No, some begin with an offering and end with surrender. It depends upon the character of each one. You may perhaps begin by having a feeling of inferiority—you are a little crushed by the grandeur of the Divine, and then you feel a little freer and give with joy what you are. This is not always so. Many begin by self-giving; for them the easiest movement is to give themselves. In the beginning the giving is a little indefinite, then one has to make an effort at times to surrender in detail; you can give yourself with much enthusiasm, but when at every step you have to submit to the higher Will, the thing becomes more difficult.

Does not offering imply surrender?

Not at all. You can give for the joy of giving, without any idea of surrender. In a movement of enthusiasm, when you have glimpsed something infinitely higher than yourself, you can give yourself in an *élan*, but when it is a question of living that every minute, of surrendering oneself every minute to the higher Will and when every minute requires this surrender, it is more difficult. But if by "offering" you mean the integral offering of all your movements, all your activities, that is equivalent to surrender, without implying it necessarily. But then it is no longer a movement made in enthusiasm, it is something which has to be realised in detail. One may say that any movement made in ardour and enthusiasm is relatively easy (that depends upon the intensity of the movement in you), but when it is a question of realising one's aspiration every minute of one's life and in all its details, the enthusiasm recedes a little and one feels the difficulty.

Is there an experience which proves that one is living in the presence of the Divine?

Once one begins to live in the presence of the Divine, one does not question any

longer. It carries its own certitude—one feels, one knows, and it becomes impossible to question. One lives in the presence of the Divine and it is for you an absolute fact. Till then you ask, because you do not have the experience, but once you have the experience, it has such an authority that it is indisputable. One who says, “I think I live in the presence of the Divine but I am not sure”, has not had the true experience, for as soon as one has the inner shock of this experience, no more questioning is possible. It is like those who ask, “What is the divine Will?” As long as you have not glimpsed this Will, you cannot know. One may have an idea of it through deduction, inference, etc., but once you have felt the precise contact with the divine Will, this too is not disputable any longer—you know.

I add, so that there may not be any misunderstanding: all experience has its worth only in the measure of the sincerity of the one who has it. Some are not sincere and fabricate wonderful experiences, and they imagine they have them. I put all that aside, it is not interesting. But for sincere people who have a sincere experience, once you have the experience of the divine presence, the whole world may tell you it is not true, and you will not budge.

If you are not sincere, you may have wonderful experiences, but these have no value either for you or for others. You should distrust your thought a good deal, for the mind is a wonderful constructor and it can give you wonderful experiences solely by its work of formation; but these experiences have no value. It is hence preferable not to know beforehand what is going to happen. For even with a great will to be sincere, the mind fabricates so much and so well that it can present to you a wonderful picture or even play for you a splendid comedy without your being aware of it, by its sheer power of formation, and it is very difficult to find out. Hence one essential condition for having true experiences: leave this machine in quietness; the less it moves, the better it is, and beware of everything it imagines for you.

What is the difference between aspiration and a demand?

When you have experienced both, you can easily make the distinction. In aspiration there is what I might call an unselfish flame which is not present in desire. Your aspiration is not a turning back upon oneself—desire is always a turning back upon oneself. From the purely psychological point of view, aspiration is a self-giving, always, while desire is always something which one draws to oneself; aspiration is something which gives itself, not necessarily in the form of thought but in the movement, in the vibration, in the vital impulse.

True aspiration does not come from the head; even when it is formulated by a thought, it springs up like a flame from the heart. I do not know if you have read the articles Sri Aurobindo has written on the Vedas. He explains somewhere that these hymns were not written with the mind; they were not, as one thinks, prayers, but the expression of an aspiration which was an impulse, like a flame coming from the heart (though it is not the “heart” but the psychological centre of the being, to use

the exact words). They were not “thought out”, words were not set to experiences, the experience came wholly formulated with the precise, exact, inevitable words—they could not be changed. This is the very nature of aspiration: you do not seek to formulate it, it springs up from you like a ready flame. And if there are words (sometimes there aren’t any), they cannot be changed: you cannot replace one word by another, every word is just the apt one. When the aspiration is formulated, this is done categorically, absolutely, without any possibility of change. And it is always something that springs up and gives itself, whereas the very nature of desire is to pull things to oneself.

The essential difference between love in aspiration and love in desire is that love in aspiration gives itself entirely and asks nothing in return—it does not claim anything; whereas love in desire gives itself as little as possible, asks as much as possible, it pulls things to itself and always makes demands.

Aspiration always gives joy, doesn't it ?

Rather a feeling of plenitude—“joy” is a misleading word; a feeling of plenitude, of force, of an inner flame which fills you. Aspiration can give you joy, but a very special joy, which has no excitement in it.

Are the soul and the psychic being one and the same thing ?

That depends on the definition you give to the words. In most religions, and perhaps in most philosophies also, it is the vital being which is called “soul”, for it is said that “the soul leaves the body”, while it is the vital being which leaves the body. One speaks of “saving the soul”, “wicked souls”, “redeeming the soul”... but all that applies to the vital being, for the psychic being has no need to be saved! It does not share the faults of the external person, it is free from all reaction.

When one works and wants to do one's best, one needs much time. But generally we don't have much time, we are in a hurry. How to do one's best when one is in a hurry ?

It is a very interesting subject and I wanted to speak to you about it in detail, one day. Generally when men are in a hurry, they do not do completely what they have to do or they do badly what they do. Well, there is a third way, it is to intensify one’s concentration. If you do that you can gain half the time, even from a very short time. Take a very ordinary example: to have your bath and to dress; the time needed varies with people, doesn’t it? but let us say, half an hour is required for doing everything without losing time and without hurrying. Then, if you are in a hurry, one of two things happens: you don’t wash so well or you dress badly! But there is another way—to concentrate one’s attention and one’s energy, think only of what one is

doing and not of anything else, not to make a movement too much, to make the exact movement in the most exact way, and (it is an experience lived, I can speak of it with certitude) you can do in fifteen minutes what you were formerly doing in half an hour, and do it as well, at times even better, without forgetting anything, without leaving out anything, simply by the intensity of the concentration.

And this is the best answer to all those who say, "Oh, if one wants to do things well, one must have time." This is not true. For all that you do—study, play, work—there is only one solution: to increase one's power of concentration. And when you acquire this concentration, it is no longer tiring. Naturally, in the beginning, it creates a tension, but when you have grown used to it, the tension diminishes, and a moment comes when what fatigues you is to be not thus concentrated, to disperse yourself, allow yourself to be swallowed by all kinds of things, and not to concentrate on what you do. One can succeed in doing things even better and more quickly by the power of concentration. And in this way you can make use of work as a means of growth; otherwise you have this vague idea that work must be done "disinterestedly", but there is a great danger there, for one is very quick to confuse disinterestedness with indifference.

(The Mother's Centenary Ed., Vol. 4, pp. 132-38.)

THE WINDOW

WALKING in mind's corridor
A glance pulled me across
The thought-carpeted floor
To a deep-seated window.

I stopped, leaned and looked
Onto vistas of settled past,
Revealed anew were mile-posts
I had counted on this one-way road.
I could see many look-alikes
Seeking in those frozen fields
Ripening fruits of would-have-beens
And lost jewels of forgotten dreams.
I smiled, and turned and stepped
Once again into the timeless stream
Which carries seeds from long-dead trees
To future hills and valleys and plains.

DINKAR

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of October 1982)

February 2, 1936

By the way, you spoke of my friend J.B. receiving the Mother's Force.

(Sri Aurobindo underlined "Mother's Force" and wrote:)

"In contact with" the Divine Force which is the force of the Mother—that was what I wrote, I believe.

But which Mother? Ours or some universal Mother, as people say? Perhaps an ignorant and foolish question, but can't help it.

How many Mothers are there? Who is this "some universal Mother"? How many of these some universal Mothers are there?

I ask because I do not understand how without involving the Mother, he gets her Force.

Have you not put him by the photograph and his letter in connection with us? Has he not turned in this direction? Has he not met Prithwi Singh and been impressed by him—a third channel of contact? That is quite sufficient to help him to a contact if he has the faith and the Yogic stress in him.

And I do not understand either, how a married man—married not like Ramakrishna, I mean—gets all these experiences so easily.

Why not? A married man can get experiences, especially if he is not gross or over-sexy by nature. But if he follows this Yoga, he will have to drop copulation or he will get upsettings.

You have heard of Monoranjan Guha Thakurtha and his wife who are leading a married life, having children, and making a lot of progress in sadhana—especially his wife, it seems, had no sex-desire at all. She used to submit to these procreative acts with detachment. Possible?

That is possible but how many can do it?

I thought any sex-act, with or without desire, is a great hindrance to Yoga, and Mother has said, I hear, that every sex-act is a step towards death.

Well, did your Mrs. Guha live?

Well, but in spite of everything she did progress in sadhana, as far as a layman can judge.

To a certain extent yes—but if she had been sexy, it would have been more difficult for her.

Regarding 'how many Mothers are there?' K says that all power, force, light in the universe belong to you and emanate from you. In that case, I asked K, "Does Raman Maharshi who is an aspirant of the Impersonal Brahman get a response from Mother and Sri Aurobindo?"

Who is the Mother and who is Sri Aurobindo? And who is this fellow you call the Impersonal Brahman?

K says, "Yes, because they are identified with the Supreme and the Supreme is static and dynamic at the same time." I answered, "Maybe—especially when Krishna is supposed to have contained the whole universe in his mouth or when he says that whoever takes the name of the Divine, or offers a flower etc., comes to his feet." Then why is it also said that he is an Overmind god? Doesn't it mean that there is a greater godhead than Krishna?"

What was said was that Krishna as a manifestation on earth opened the possibility of the Overmind consciousness here to men and stood for that, as Rama was the incarnation in mental Man. If Krishna was an overmind "God", that means he was not an Incarnation, not the Divine, but somebody else who claimed to be the Divine—i.e. he was a god who somehow thought he was God.

Somehow I can't accept that people following other paths of sadhana are calling Mother and Sri Aurobindo and getting their help and Force. In that case wouldn't all of them, except the worshippers of the Impersonal, be their disciples?

The Divine is neither personal nor impersonal, formless nor formed. He is the Divine. You talk of these distinctions as if they separated the Divine into so many separate Divines which have nothing to do with each other.

I continued to K, "My friend J.B. was having experiences which, Sri Aurobindo says, were coming from Mother, even before he was put in contact with them."

If so, why were you so much flabbergasted when he wrote about them? What was the date on which they began in this vividness—not as a mental impression but as a concrete contact with the Divine Presence or the Force?

I have no objection to your being the Supreme. Only it stupefies one to think of you as such!

But there was no question about my being the Supreme; the question was whether there was one Divine Mother or 20,000 Divine Mothers. At the same time I don't see why it should stupefy one (you?), in spite of your absence of personal objections to think of me as such (the Supreme). Why, you are yourself the Supreme, aren't you? *So aham, tattvam asi Nirada*, ঈশ্বর কোন বেটা, আনিই ঈশ্বর¹ (Vivekananda). "আনি" in this formula means not V but anyone, that is to say Nirod. Also vide Krishnaprem. So what's this stupefaction about, I should like to know? When everybody is the Supreme and of everybody it can be said that he is God, why should I alone as such stupefy you?

Leave aside the question of Divine or undivine, no spiritual man who acts dynamically is limited to physical contact—the idea that physical contact through writing, speech, meeting is indispensable to the action of the spiritual force is self-contradictory, for then it would not be a spiritual force. The spirit is not limited by physical things or by the body. If you have the spiritual force, it can act on people thousands of miles away who do not know and never will know that you are acting on them or that they are being acted upon—they only know that there is a force enabling them to do things and may very well suppose it is their own great energy and genius.

February 4, 1936

You can send your Force to whomever you like—Lenin, Kemal, Gandhi, but how people calling Shiva or Krishna for their Ishta Devata get responses from you, I don't understand.

Again who is Shiva? and who is Krishna? and what is an Ishta Devata? There is only one Divine, not a thousand Divines.

It would mean that wherever a sincere heart is aspiring for the Divine, his aspiration reaches your ears.

¹ "Who is this person Ishwara? I am Ishwara."

Why my ears? Ears are not necessary for the purpose. You might just as well say, reaches me by the post.

And you send your responses, because you want to manifest the Divine rule on earth.

That has nothing to do with it. Besides it is not the Divine Rule on earth that I am after, but the supramental rule. This however has nothing to do with any supramental or Divine Rule on earth. It is only a general question of the response of the Divine and to the Divine.

...Now, if you are He, there is much, Sir, for this chicken soul to be stupefied by. Of course, if I follow your logic, there is nothing—everybody is the Supreme; why should one Supreme be stupefied by another? Then would I have remained here crying all the time at your door for some alms? So there is only one Supreme, and that is you. I repeat, I am stupefied. Why? Have you forgotten how Arjuna was stupefied, horrified, flabbergasted by seeing the Vishwarup of Krishna whom he had thought of as his friend, guru, playmate. Could I, for a moment, play all these pranks with you if I saw your Vishwarup?

But that was because the Vishwarup was enjoying a rather catastrophic dinner, with all the friends and relations of Arjuna stuck between his *dansthrani karalani*. But my vishwarup has no tusks, sir, none at all. It is a pacifist *vishwarup*.

Already people say that I have no respect for you because I write anything and everything! "Sri Aurobindo who is the Lord Supreme with whom he plays all these pranks!"

And I return the compliment—I mean reply without restraint, decorum or the right grave rhythm. That is one reason why I indulge so freely in brackets.

No, Sir, I am satisfied with you as Sri Aurobindo pure and simple.

No objection, I only suggested that I don't know who this Sri Aurobindo pure and simple is. If you do, I congratulate you.

I am wrong about J.B., I discover. I forgot that he was put in contact with you by his photograph long ago. Who knew that you have been acting on him since then?

You must not imagine I have been thinking solely about J all the time. When a fellow contacts, a Force goes out to him and acts according to his capacity of response, that's all.

I have sent P's photograph also, but apparently there is no contact.

Plenty of people have sent their photographs—some mad, some sane, some good, some bad, some indifferent. You don't expect all to get the contact, do you? That would be too too even for a Vishwarup.

Mulshankar is much better today, Sir, and the doctor has asked him to eat macaroni and potatoes. But the fellow can't bear the name of potato! Very queer, all of us are mad over it in the Asram!

Quite queer—for he has surely eaten plenty of potatoes in the Asram.

The doctor seems to have said that it is or was a very serious case. But no serious symptoms are visible. What did you find in the occult, Sir? Had to work a lot?

Yes, still have to.

What should be done with the letters written to him, from outside?

I suppose the letters can be sent to him or is it medically inadvisable?

February 5, 1936

A funny dream, Sir. On the Darshan day when I went up, I heard you say to the Mother, "Caress the boy a little." The Mother did so and you in turn looked at me with wide open eyes and, as you were taking them away, the Mother said, "No, no, look at him a little more," (please do, Sir, do!). The Mother was rather advanced in age and dark, while you were younger—these things make me doubt the dream.

These dreams are in the vital and their appearance is not fixed as it is in the physical body. It can change to express various things, some vital conditions, some psychological symbolism, something in the mind of the man who sees, etc., etc., etc. So nothing funny, sir,—all quite normal and natural.

You were not at all like what we see. Then what we see is an illusion?

Obviously—even science knows that. You see only what your eyes show you.

(To be continued)

THE MOTHER'S CHARIOTS

THE Mother, when She permanently settled down in Pondicherry, made a habit of taking long motor drives in the evenings. By then She must have formed clear ideas as to how She would create a new world of Her own, giving concrete shape to Sri Aurobindo's vision and Her dreams. For Her future disciples and children, who would one day fill the Ashram and go out and about everywhere, She wanted to make Pondicherry and the surrounding countryside safe, free from un-Divine forces. There were many such forces, it seems, as in any other ancient place. For Pondicherry, as the Tamil name Puducherry indicates, may be new, but on this site there were townships from antiquity. Even in the temples, the so-called places of Divine worship, there lurked ugly beings and forces in the domes and crevices. The Mother would sometimes give us hints as to how She tackled these gnomes and entities. There were also good forces that recognised Her and offered Her their services. But the ugly, obstinate ones tried to bargain with Her, and tried to resist Her transforming force. Some had to be hunted out as they were incorrigible. So the Mother's evening drives were not pleasure trips but hard work: Durga riding by in Her heavenly chariot destroying the asuras.

From an early photograph we can guess that the Mother's first car was a Ford, and of course Pavitra (Philippe Barbier St-Hilaire) drove it. What cars came in between we do not know. When we first came to Pondicherry the Mother was using a brand-new Humber and a latest model Ford. It is a pity no one thought of preserving the Mother's cars. They ought to have been kept in an exhibition hall, with dates and other pieces of information attached to them and shown to people. It could have been a delightful place to feel the Mother's living presence. How meticulously Vasudha has preserved the Mother's dresses and personal things. She has shown parts of her collection in several exhibitions. We enjoyed them very much.

I for one felt keenly sorry for the cars when the Mother stopped going out in 1960. She had stopped Her evening drives long before, when She had taken up tennis. But then She would visit other places, go out when there was a new department to be opened. She would also visit us on our birthdays. After tennis She would drive to the playground. Throughout the evening Her car used to be parked near the playground-gate just opposite our house. I always felt happy seeing it and said, "Hallo, Durga's chariot!" One day, sometime after the Mother had stopped coming out, I saw the Humber passing by our house. I was on the terrace. Pavitra was not at the wheel and there were visitors inside. The car cried out to me, "Look, did you not see the Mother riding me day after day? Look what has become of me!" I felt a lump in my throat. Another day I saw the Plymouth. It looked so crestfallen and sad. "The Mother will never ride me again, what agony to have to serve other people," I heard it cry out in pain.

That particular model Plymouth was a beautiful car. It had an association with us. Within two months of our buying it Sanat was sent to Pondicherry as the Con-

sul General in the French Possessions in India. When he resigned and the Mother installed us at Nanteuil House, Sanat broached the question, "Mother, will you take out our car?" "Yes, what will you do with a car now, unless you want to go to the Playground," said the Mother rather thoughtfully. I intercepted their conversation and said, "No, Mother, for that we have adopted a novel method. As soon as we hear Pranab giving orders through the microphone we start running from our house and are always lucky to get in line when he gives his next order." The Mother seemed pleased with my explanation and smiled. We too laughed.

We had no idea what the Mother would do with our car. One evening, as we turned a corner coming home from somewhere, we saw the Plymouth go by, the Mother's beautiful face at the window smiling sweetly at us. We were so surprised that we even forgot to smile back at Her. That was happiness. Yet more happiness was in store for us that night when we saw the Mother inspecting the light arrangements and other contraptions in the Plymouth with Pavitra, Pranab and Amiyo in attendance. From then onwards the Plymouth came by every alternate week, carrying the Mother back from the Tennis-ground. Pavitra was in league with us and blew the horn loudly as the car neared Nanteuil. I ran to the window just in time to see the Mother handing Her handbag to Pranab from the road-side window—that is to say, on our side, Her head inclined and Her face aglow with a smile for Pranab. Why she chose that window is still a mystery.

There is a beautiful photograph of the Mother getting down from the Plymouth. I have kept a copy with me and inscribed these lines below from *Savitri*:

And sunlight grows a shadow of thy hue
Because of change within me by thy look.
Come nearer to me from thy car of light,
On this green sward disdaining not our soil

and

Descend, O Happiness, with thy moon-gold feet
Enrich earth's floors upon whose sleep we lie.
O my bright beauty's princess Savitri...

In the whole course of human history, was ever a human being's car used by a Divine Being? Oh, yes, Sri Krishna rode in Arjuna's car on the battlefield of Kurukshetra and said:

*sarvadharmānparityajya māmekam śaraṇam vraja
aham tvā sarvāpāṇebhyo mokṣisyāmi mā śucaḥ*

*"Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in me.
I will deliver thee from all evil, do not grieve."*

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of October 1982)

MYSELF: Mother, what is the colour of moonlight? Does it give the impression of a golden colour or a silver colour? My impression is that the light of the Sun is gold but the light of the moon is silvery. Is it not generally said "Silvery moon"? Of course in the moon sometimes one can see a little golden tint just when it begins to rise, but its light is always silver. Is it not so? Or is it sometimes golden?

SRI AUROBINDO: The moon itself is often golden, not always silvery. As for the light when it rests on the ground it is golden, in the air it is pale whitish blue.

21.10.33

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo, what is the poetical convention regarding moonlight? In Bengali poetry and in Sanskrit too, moonlight is considered to be "silver-white". Dilip said that the poetical convention is golden light. You wrote: "in the air it is pale whitish blue". When pale whitish blue becomes radiant or shining, then the impression, if it is not silvery, can't be golden. By silvery I have meant silver-white and when the white becomes shining, the silver tint is suggested. Am I right?

SRI AUROBINDO: In English poetry moonlight is usually spoken of as golden, because of its effect on the ground or water, although moon-silvered is also used. The silvery element is there in the moonlight in the air, but it is an element only.

22.10.33

MYSELF: I am ever busy with thinking of myself, seeing and giving importance to myself. Even the progress I make is to my credit. My ego at every step brings in front the "I" as the master, and due to habit I accept it again and again. The play of this "I-ness" is going on; the road out of it shown by Sri Aurobindo in so many ways and so beautifully remains out of reach. As long as this "I" is there, how shall I realise you or become entirely yours? This feeling is getting the upper hand and making me suffer, even depressed.

SRI AUROBINDO: You cannot expect to drive the ego out of the movements in a short time. What is necessary is to see it quietly without being discouraged by its presence, and by a steady persistent action work it out of the system.

26.10.33

MYSELF: Mother, on the whole, I am all right. There is no longer a feeling of irritation about work; the inclination to work comes now and then. Still, a state of disorder seems to persist. Sometimes a state of spontaneous conscious control over

some aspects, at other times a sense of “lightening” in regard to other aspects—these keep alternating.

SRI AUROBINDO: All these things are in fact things that had been left in the outer being, in the physical consciousness, though some were rejected by the higher parts and their persistence there or their remnants made the progress incomplete. Now they are rising up for dispersal and have to be thrown out from these parts also. As for unwillingness to work, if the sleep comes fully back and the body recovers its elasticity it should not be difficult to get rid of that.

MYSELF: Today also at noon there was an attack of depression. At first, I thought of concealing it from you. Neither did I want to reject it. I feared that you might be displeased with me. However, eventually I rejected it after a regular tussle! And the light came, thanks to your Grace.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is always a mistake to conceal. That was the tamasic ego in the vital physical—a resistance of inertia which comes when the rajasic is disappointed.

7.II.33

MYSELF: Mother, again everything appears off-colour even after coming from you. I feel so bad. I expected that everything would be all right, once I would see you, but quite the contrary is the effect. I feel so bad that there is a strong impulse to go away; that feeling is still active. Today your dealing with me seemed very remote and on the surface. I missed this time the intimacy I had known when I had come up to you with my last difficulty. You had put me right with the touch of your deep affection, but there was no joy of satisfaction in the recent contact; you had moved far away and this was the first time that I felt like this. For the first time I feel no ardour, eagerness or prayer for the 24th's Darshan. God knows what will happen finally! Perhaps this movement may draw me away! Death appears to be preferable as a way of deliverance.

I don't feel like writing even. If this continues I will have to stop writing. Have I then stumbled upon a desert-tract?

SRI AUROBINDO: It was certainly not because the Mother was different to you from other days or pushed you to a distance, but because you came rather shut up in that part of your physical being which is still shrinking from the Light. It is this part which was always fundamentally responsible for all your bad passages and painful movements even when the direct difficulty was higher up. Its nature is to cling to the old habitual pre-Yogic consciousness and to shut up doors and windows against the help that is offered and lament in the darkness when it has felt itself hurt. This is a thing that everybody must get rid of who wants to progress. Do not go on identifying yourself with this part and calling it yourself. Get back into your inner being and look at this only as a small though obstinate part of the nature that has to change. For apart from its insistence there is no reason why your way should enter into a desert. It should enter into a wideness of liberation—open to the calm and peace

and power and light of a consciousness that is wider than the personal and into which the ego can happily disappear. 8.II.33

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo's letter has made me healthy again. I was completely closed within. My *abhimān* about you went on increasing till it ended in revolt, finally in madness. That's how I was in its grip and suffered a lot. There was no will at all. I won't write further; the body is utterly broken.

SRI AUROBINDO: We are very glad to know that you have recovered. Your true self got covered up by a dark cloud of a foreign Force. It covered up your reason and took from you your will. You must always in future turn back from any movement that allows this to come in. At the least trouble turn to take refuge in our protection and love. 8.II.33

MYSELF: My dear Mother, I am well, I am happy but with a vital joy, for I talked a lot—the aftermath of suffering, as it were. Your affection has filled me up. The whole Ashram came to know I was on the point of leaving. What a drama! And a total shrinking! Now the approach of the 24th's Darshan fills me with joy. How I was caught by what Sri Aurobindo calls the 'black being'!

SRI AUROBINDO: At any rate you know now and can be on your guard—so that lessens his chance.

As the moment of the possibility of the supramental Descent grows nearer, these forces have become more eager to keep their hold in the Asram atmosphere and break the sadhana of anyone they can touch. Their main aim is to get as many as possible to leave the Asram, so that they may not share in the descent and so that the descent itself may be delayed and disturbed by a constant tempest in the atmosphere. That is why I put the notice suggesting that the sadhaks should not admit these forces and need not. To be on one's guard and admit no violent and irrational movements, to be calm and persistent in faith and self-opening to us is all that is needed. 12.II.33

(*To be continued*)

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of October 1982)

The Mother's Message

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



16

Now the hope in me peeped out of the gloomy clouds of dejection. The severity of heat in Pondicherry had not lessened a bit. In Golconde there are no fans, because the building is situated in such a way as to get a gentle breeze. At times it was difficult for me to sleep at night when the breeze stopped.

Lights in Golconde are extremely dim. The bulbs used there are of 40 watts.

I remember a joke. An American happened to stay in Golconde. He remarked that to find a light in Golconde one needed a torch!

On top of the building always flutters the Mother's flag in full glory. I like Golconde. This magnificent creation of the Mother reminds me of these lines from *Savitri*:

“There is a meaning in each curve and line.
It is an architecture high and grand
By many named and nameless masons built
In which unseeing hands obey the Unseen,
And of its master-builders she is one.”

Sri Aurobindo has described the significance of the Mother's flag in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 25, p. 359:

“About the blue flag. I presume you mean the flag with the white lotus. If so, it is the Mother's flag, for the white lotus is her symbol as the red lotus is mine. The blue of the flag is meant to be the colour of Krishna and so represents the spiritual or divine consciousness which it is her work to establish so that it may reign upon earth. This is the meaning of the flag being used as the Ashram flag, that our work is to bring down this consciousness and make it the leader of the world's life.”

The Mother has stated in her Cent. Ed., Vol. 12, p. 262 about her flag:

“The flag that is shown on the cover of our *Bulletin* represents the symbol of a full-blown golden lotus with two rows of petals, four inside and twelve outside, at the exact centre of a silver-blue square.

“This blue is the blue of the spirit and the gold is the colour of the Supreme Mother. The red of the cover surrounding the flag signifies the illumined physical consciousness.

“This flag was originally chosen as the flag of the J.S.A.S.A¹ but later, when we celebrated India's Independence Day (15th August 1947), we found that it also expressed the spiritual mission of the whole of India. So for us it is the symbolic flag of a resurgent, united and victorious India rising above the torpor of the centuries, having cast off the shackles of enslavement and undergone all the pangs of a new birth to emerge once more as a great united nation and lead the world and humanity towards the highest ideal of the spirit.

“We therefore consider ourselves very fortunate to have a flag with such a symbol and we cherish it deeply.”

*

¹ Jeunesse Sportive de l'Ashram de Sri Aurobindo.

It was Sunday. The Mother saw me in her room at the Playground as on other days. We meditated together. After that she picked up my right hand, turned it over thoughtfully and read my fortune with a magnifying glass and said with a smile while looking at me:

“C'est bien!”

I wanted to know more about my fortune, but the Mother went into a trance. I too closed my eyes wondering endlessly.... She awoke from the trance and gave me a variety of flowers and bade me “Au revoir”.

After that I never asked the Mother about what she had observed in my palm, because her “C'est bien” was enough for me.

The Mother has written about palmistry in her Cent. Ed., Vol. 15, p. 39:

“Palmistry is a very interesting art, but it depends for its exactitude and truthfulness almost entirely upon the real ability of the one who practises it. Moreover, it relates only to the material destiny and this destiny can be altered by the intervention of the higher forces.”

In the evening there was a distribution of toffees, and fine music was played. I sat in the courtyard of the Playground. Then suddenly I remembered to write a letter to the Mother. I knew it was my soul's inspiration:

My sweet Mother,

It is true indeed that to work for the Divine is very important. But to work like a machine without any change of consciousness can serve no purpose in my life. I aspire to be transformed.

I feel that the conversion of my whole being will assist me to consecrate my life to the Supreme Lord.

Mother, kindly tell me whether my awful nature can be changed entirely.

Love,

Huta

The Mother sent me a card indicating a lovely white rose opening itself fully to the sunlight. These lines followed:

“Yes, my dear child, the nature can change, completely change with the practice of Yoga—nothing is impossible for the Divine Grace—it can transform a being so totally that all that seemed for it completely impossible becomes not only possible but *done*. That is what I want to do for you—so that all your difficulties will become like unreal nightmares and vanish in an inexistent past.

“The Grace is there working for that transformation.

“With my love and blessings.”

That evening I went to her. She smiled graciously and took me into her arms—the softness of her loving arms encircled me and the subtle fragrance of her exquisite perfume enveloped me. It was the day of her French class, but she gave me the feeling that she was not at all in a hurry and had the whole of eternity before her.

She leaned forward and took from my hand the note-book in which I had scribbled the French translation, and turned a few pages. Her eyes were bright with amusement when she said with a smile:

“C'est bien.”

And she gave the note-book back to me. At once I thanked her inwardly and was glad that she had not seen it in detail. Otherwise, she would not have made head or tail of my writing. Also, when I had got bored while writing, I had drawn sketches of some people, which looked like caricatures. Thank God! these too escaped her eyes—at least so I thought. And if the people concerned were to see the note-book, they would simply curse me!

I looked at the Mother—her eyes met mine with a dazzling smile. I said: “Mother, you see, I am always afraid of reptiles. Snakes are rarely to be seen, but my goodness! lizards are everywhere. I feel disgusted when I look at them. Whenever I see even a tiny lizard in my room, I have it chased out, only then can I work or sleep.”

I thought that I always succeeded in making a complete idiot of myself.

The Mother's face broke into laughter, and gently she ran an affectionate finger down the curve of my cheek. She had indeed a pretty laugh—silvery clear—joyous without loudness. Then she said softly:

“Child, you must not be afraid of anything. This is the first lesson of transformation. So you have to conquer fear.

“When you fear, you must take refuge in the Divine and consider that in everything there is the Divine. Then all things will seem simply charming and wonderful because, truly, everything is the Divine and there is nothing to fear.

“Once Ramakrishna was meditating beneath a huge tree. A big cobra came there and bit him on his wrist. Ramakrishna woke up and rubbed his wrist and asked the cobra, ‘O Mother Kali, why did you bite me?’ Immediately he was cured, and once again he went into a profound trance.

“You must not fear anything. You know, every day during my lunch a big lizard comes to me for food. It is amusing to watch how nicely it eats. Sometimes the lizard climbs up my leg. It is a fine sensation.”

I shuddered and felt that, if the lizard did this to me, I would surely swoon that very instant.

The days slipped by monotonously in a dull and regular routine except that I enjoyed going to the Mother. The weather now was intolerably hot.

One evening when I saw the Mother in the Playground, and after we had exchanged flowers and smiles, we talked about the idols which I was decorating. She suddenly went into a deep meditation while holding my hand. When she awoke, her eyes were full of dreamy tenderness and limitless compassion. She said smilingly with still half-closed eyes:

“Even the greatest God is my child—Krishna is my child also—they all are like children before me. No doubt, I have two ears, one nose and a human form, but my Spirit and Force are everywhere. My Consciousness is wider than the universe. I go in my subtle body in various ways and aspects to people in all kinds of places I fondle and embrace human beings and what they feel of my Presence and contact is perfectly true. I talk also—but whatever I do, I do through their hearts, so they must concentrate in their hearts and find me there. For, I am always there.”

The smile still lingered sweetly round the corners of her mouth. Once more she lapsed into a trance. Then slowly she opened her eyes and said:

“People here think they are so miserable but they must know that there are millions of people more miserable than themselves—these have no food, no clothes—practically they have nothing—and still they carry on their lives.

“Indeed, miseries come because there are two opposite things in the same person—one part in him likes this and another likes that—and these parts are fighting each other as sometimes husband and wife do! If a person wants to get rid of this contradiction, then there must be a divorce. Afterwards there is no more struggle.”

The Mother’s laugh rang out. Her lively sense of humour made me laugh too. That very night I contemplated on the Mother’s conversation about her being the Supreme Mother. For, she had said that even the greatest God is her child....

The following lines from Sri Aurobindo grandly catch the Mother’s role as the Supreme Power, Aditi:

“...Aditi is the infinite Light of which the divine world is a formation and the gods, children of the infinite Light, born of her in the *ṛtam*, manifested in that active truth of her movement guard it against Chaos and Ignorance. It is they who maintain the invincible workings of the Truth in the universe, they who build its worlds into an image of the Truth. They, bounteous givers, loose out upon man its floods variously imaged by the mystic poets as the sevenfold solar waters, the rain of heaven, the streams of the Truth, the seven mighty Ones

of heaven, the waters that have knowledge, the floods that breaking through the control of Vritra the Coverer ascend and overflow the mind....”

The Cent. Ed., Vol. 10, p. 423.

Next day the Mother sent me a card showing a butterfly on a sunflower, with these words:

“Another picture of Nature’s beauty, representing the consciousness turned towards the Divine’s Light.

“With my love and blessings always active near you, for you.”

There was a film at the Playground. Unhappily my poor memory does not recall the names of all the movies I saw except the three films which I remember very well. One was on the life of Buddha and another was *Shakshi Gopal* and the third was *The Wizard of Oz*.

After seeing the film about Buddha, the next day in the evening the Mother gave me a vivid explanation of Buddha’s life. I felt as if Buddha himself spoke through her in a solemn voice.

I remembered a few striking words of hers to the effect that Buddha knew that Death could be conquered, but the world was not ready.

I came across a remarkable passage from *The Light of Asia* by Edwin Arnold about Buddha:

“This is the Blossom on our human tree,
Which opens once in many myriad years
But, opened, fills the world with Wisdom’s scent.”

I have had great affinity to Buddha right from the very beginning of my childhood. I was not surprised when the Mother revealed that one of my births had been in Buddha’s time.

She added that when the movie was going on she felt Buddha’s Presence concretely. But in the last scene when Gandhi’s picture was shown and he was declared an Avatar, the Presence of Buddha withdrew.

I heard all this in sheer amazement.

It was absurd to believe Gandhi was an Avatar. He was only a good leader of India.

The Mother has written in her Cent. Ed., Vol. 13, p. 23, about Gandhi:

“In the effort of humanity to reach the Truth and manifest it, all those who made a discovery, however small it may be, have a place, and Gandhi is one of them.

“But the great mistake has always been to oppose these partial discoveries instead of unifying them in a supreme harmony. That is why humanity is still groping in the dark.

“Sri Aurobindo has come to reveal that this supreme harmony exists and show us the way to discover it.”

About the other film—*Shakshu Gopal*—the Mother told me that whoever played Krishna and Radha held in themselves the consciousness of Krishna and Radha. She praised a lot the way in which the Reality of these deities was conveyed.

As regards the film—*The Wizard of Oz*—somebody at Golconde told me that this very film had been shown in 1952, and the Mother had liked it a great deal. She had disclosed the occult truths behind the whole story of the movie.

I saw it now and was fascinated by it. This film reminded me of how one wanders in other worlds with a subtle body.

The Mother has affirmed in her Cent. Ed., Vol. 12, pp. 244-45 about the Cinema in general:

“We would like to be able to show the children pictures of life as it should be, but we have not reached that point, far from it. These films have yet to be made. And at present, most of the time, the cinema shows life as it should not be, so strikingly that it makes you disgusted with life.

“This too is useful as a preparation.

“Films are permitted in the Ashram not as an amusement but as part of education. So we are faced with the problem of education.

“If we consider that the child should learn and know only what can keep him pure of every low, crude, violent and degrading movement, we would have to eliminate at a stroke all contact with the rest of humanity, beginning with all these stories of war and murder, of conflict and deception which go under the name of history; we would have to eliminate all present contact with family, relatives and friends; we would have to exercise control over all the vital impulses of their being.

“This was the idea behind the enclosed monastic life of convents, or the ascetic life in caves and forests.

“This remedy proved to be quite ineffectual and failed to pull mankind out of the mire.

“According to Sri Aurobindo, the remedy is quite different.

“We must face life as a whole, with all the ugliness, falsehood and cruelty it still contains, but we must take care to discover in ourselves the source of all goodness, all beauty, all light and all truth, in order to bring this source consciously into contact with the world so as to transform it.

“This is infinitely more difficult than running away or shutting our eyes so as not to see, but it is the only truly effective way—the way of those who are truly strong and pure and capable of manifesting the Truth.”

In the depth of my heart, I felt that in spite of the crises in my life I would surely swim and not sink in the dark sea of unconsciousness. I expressed my feeling to the Mother. She answered:

“I have read your very nice letter which is quite true.

“Indeed I am quite convinced that sincere love will overcome all obstacles, difficulties and deficiencies, that is why I am sure of the final Victory, because I know *you love me* and *I love you*. With my blessings.”

Later in the evening the Mother explained to me at length about painting. She told me:

“Oil painting is not an easy thing. It is quite different from water colour and pastel colour. In oil painting you require oil colours, various sizes of oil-colour brushes—hog hair, pure red sable—canvas boards, a palette, a palette knife, an easel, charcoal sticks or thick pencils, distilled turpentine and linseed oil and lots of rags to wipe the brushes and the palette.

“First of all you can start painting on a small board which must be fixed properly on an easel. Also full light must be allowed to fall on the board. Then choose any object and place it nicely so that you can copy it as it is. Do not forget to put a coloured or white cloth behind the object as a background because it is essential to judge correctly the shadows and the lights of the object.

“Before starting a painting, you must make the proper concentrated observation of an object in order to do perfect work. Here also three things are to be remembered: (1) colour—play of colour, (2) light and shadow, (3) form—volume and outline. Now draw the outline of an object with the charcoal stick. If you want to rub it off, you can use either the middle part—the soft part—of bread or a good eraser.

“Squeeze out colours from the tubes on to the palette. White colour should be in the centre and the other colours on both sides. There are many whites: Flake White, Titanium White, Zinc White and so on. Never use two whites together; otherwise after some length of time the picture will become black. It is better to use only Flake White. For painting you will require more white than any other colour. So always keep a tube of 1 lb. I too used to keep a 1 lb. tube of white colour while I painted.

“Now mix the colours required. Then find out where the darkest shadow and brightest light are on the object you wish to paint. At once, then, put on the canvas board a stroke where there is the brightest light and another on the darkest shadow. Remember, colours should not be taken either thin or very thick but just moderate.

“If you paint a picture fully—that is, from top to bottom—then it is excellent! For, in oil painting you cannot possibly keep a vacant space as in water colour. Again, in oil painting, only a touch is required. It cannot be done by

rubbing brushes against a board as it is done in water colour; otherwise it ruins the charm of the painting.

“If a painting is half done and is not completely dried, you cannot possibly resume work on it. Otherwise the beauty of the colours will be spoilt. Even if the work seems dried on the surface, it is always wet underneath. So make sure that a picture is completely dried, and if necessary, give the finishing touch to it to make it more vivid and attractive. It is not wise to use very much a medium like turpentine and linseed oil; otherwise after years a painting becomes dull and sometimes cracks show on the surface.

“It is most important to take the best care of your painting materials. Colours must be squeezed out from the bottom and not from the top of the tubes. After finishing a painting, if any colours remain over, you can always take them carefully from the palette with a palette knife and put them in small glass pots, and whenever you start painting again, say after a few hours or so, you can use those colours once more. Do not let the tubes remain without their caps.

“The palette must be cleaned thoroughly with turpentine, soap and luke-warm water. Wipe it with a soft cloth and make it shine like a mirror. Then hang it on a hook or stand it against a wall. Also great care must be taken of brushes. After finishing painting, wash the brushes with turpentine. Petrol is not good for them, because they get burnt and lose their hair.

“Now pour turpentine into a glass pot, dip the brushes in it and turn them round and round rapidly, dry them with a smooth cloth, then take some soap and water in your palm and clean the brushes carefully. Finally, wash them in warm water and once again wipe them with a soft cloth. Let them dry in a big pot with tail down and head up.

“Indeed, it takes time to learn oil painting perfectly well. It needs skill, patience and a steady mind. Also, hands and eyes must be trained. You can gradually learn painting—first from objects, then from Nature, after that from imagination; and lastly come portraits and visions.”

Now something would always keep ringing in my ears about oil painting!

The following morning a lovely card of snow-clad mountains came from the Mother:

“Bonjour to my dear little child, to my sweet Huta,

“Yes, I shall teach you all I know about painting and feel sure you will learn well.

“Here is one beauty site of Nature.

“With my love and blessings always.”

The Mother saw me before the translation class. She reminded me to go to her the next morning to show her the image of Vishnu.

I sat in the class. But I was not at all attentive. I found everything boring, because I could not understand the Divine Teaching. Countless thoughts about my work, my life, my future, my goal passed through my mind like an endless train of rain-clouds. Time and again the Mother looked at me with her radiant eyes, which brought to my mind a fleeting silence.

Thank God the class was over. After picking up the flowers from the Mother's room, I made my way to Golconde. Afterwards I went to the Ashram to see the Mother.

At night the atmosphere of Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi was blissful and serene. I made my pranam at it.

The Mother's inscription in red-paint on a white marble slab which is fixed in French on one side and in English on the other of the Samadhi is most touching:

“To Thee who hast been the material envelope of our Master, to Thee our infinite gratitude. Before Thee who hast done so much for us, who hast worked, struggled, suffered, hoped, endured so much, before Thee who hast willed all, attempted all, prepared, achieved all for us, before Thee we bow down and implore that we may never forget, even for a moment, all we owe to Thee.”

The Mother has also written in her Cent. Ed., Vol. 13, p. 7:

“We must not be bewildered by appearances. Sri Aurobindo has not left us. Sri Aurobindo is here, as living and as present as ever and it is left to us to realise his work with all the sincerity, eagerness and concentration necessary.”

I feel that the same applies for the Mother. She too is very much among us—living, guiding and leading us to our supreme goal.

The next morning I received a card from the Mother indicating some flowers and saying:

“Bonjour to my dear little child, to my sweet Huta,

“À tout à l'heure. 10.45 this morning.

“Meanwhile, here is skill in works which you have already.

“With my love and blessings always.”

It was a Tuesday morning, the 24th July 1956. I went to the Meditation Hall upstairs, and set the idol of Vishnu on a small stool. The Mother came smiling—bringing a bunch of white roses with her. Her smile deepened when she saw the Vishnu, which she admired.

She passed a remark after regarding the hooded cobra for a few seconds:

“He is very cunning—he won't let anybody pass the gate....”

While making a face she moved towards her high-backed chair and sat down gracefully.

The atmosphere of the room was exceedingly pleasing. The rose-scented incense-sticks were burning steadily, spreading their aroma, which mingled with the fragrant flowers.

The Mother held my hands and gazed straight down into my eyes to see my soul. She slowly closed her eyes for a few moments. Then they opened like blue lotuses waking to the sun. Those eyes—so entrancing!

After I had received a bouquet of flowers and a smile, which thrilled me, I made my exit and went to the Stores to place the image of Vishnu among the other adorned idols.

Sri Aurobindo has written about Vishnu in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 17, p. 47:

“The Eternal’s Personality of Consciousness; in him all is supported, in his wideness, in his stability, in his substance.”

Sri Aurobindo has also stated in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 23, p. 977:

“Vishnu or Narayana in this image which is a normal Puranic image is the Lord of the waters of Space and Time—the Preserver of the principle of the Universe which he maintains as a seed in himself even in intervals between one creation and another. Out of that seed on his navel (the navel is the central seat of the Vital, the Life Principle) Brahma the creator arises in the Lotus (cosmic consciousness) which grows from it when Vishnu awakens from the intra-cyclic sleep. The snake Ananta is the Energy of the cosmic manifestation of the Infinite in Space-Time.”

In the evening when I went to the Mother at the Playground, she showed her pleasure in my work. As usual we meditated together.

The next day the Mother sent me diaries accompanied by these words:

“I am sending you two diaries that you can use as notebooks.”

I was glad to receive them as I had now so many things to write—all that the Mother had told me about spirituality as well as painting.

*

Days rolled on. My aspiration to surmount the lower elements never ceased.

I received from the Mother a fine card showing a red flower—*Amaryllis*—along with these lines:

“This is *conversion of the physical*—which means that the physical consciousness becomes entirely consecrated to the Divine in a total surrender. The Grace is there to help for the realisation of it.

“With my love and blessings.”

Sri Aurobindo has explained about the physical consciousness in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 24, pp. 1425-26:

“These are things which come almost inevitably in one degree or another at a certain critical stage through which almost everyone has to pass and which usually lasts for an uncomfortably long time but which need not be at all conclusive or definitive. Usually, if one persists, it is the period of darkest night before the dawn which comes to every or almost every spiritual aspirant. It is due to a plunge one has to take into the sheer physical consciousness unsupported by any true mental light or by any vital joy in life, for these usually withdraw behind the veil, though they are not, as they seem to be, permanently lost. It is a period when doubt, denial, dryness, greyness and all kindred things come up with a great force and often reign completely for a time. It is after this stage has been successfully crossed that the true light begins to come, the light which is not of the mind but of the spirit. The spiritual light, no doubt, comes to some to a certain extent and to a few to a considerable extent, in the earlier stages, though that is not the case with all—for some have to wait till they can clear out the obstructing stuff in the mind, vital and physical consciousness, and until then get only a touch now and then. But even at the best this earlier spiritual light is never complete until the darkness of the physical consciousness has been faced and overcome. It is not by one’s own fault that one falls into this state, it can come when one is trying one’s best to advance. It does not really indicate any radical disability in the nature but certainly it is a hard ordeal and one has to stick very firmly to pass through it. It is difficult to explain these things because the psychological necessity is difficult for the ordinary human reason to understand or to accept.”

It was 5.30 p.m. I got ready to see the Mother in her room at the Playground. She held my hands and said with a delightful smile:

“Child, let us meditate on the physical body which will be transformed, penetrated by the Supramental Light, Harmony, Truth and Love....”

We meditated for quite a long time as it was Sunday. I was bemused and was utterly ignorant regarding the transformation of the physical body. What I really liked and felt happy about was her closeness.

Sri Aurobindo has written in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 25, p. 49:

“Her embodiment is a chance for the earth-consciousness to receive the Supramental into it and to undergo first the transformation necessary for that to be possible. Afterwards there will be a further transformation by the Supramental, but the whole earth-consciousness will not be supramentalised—there will be first a new race representing the Supermind, as man represents the mind.”

The Mother has written memorably in her Cent. Ed., Vol. 13, p. 57:

“My Lord, what Thou hast wanted me to do I have done. The gates of the Supramental have been thrown open and the Supramental Consciousness, Light and Force are flooding the earth.

“But as yet those who are around me are little aware of it—no radical change has taken place in their consciousness and it is only because they trust my word that they do not say that nothing has truly happened. In addition the exterior circumstances are still harder than they were and the difficulties seem to be cropping up more insurmountable than ever....”

The succeeding morning the Mother wrote on a pretty card:

“I have asked for the list of painting materials from Jayanti¹ and will give it to you as soon as I have it.”

Now she was preparing everything in order to teach me painting. Then came the last day of the month and the Mother wrote:

“I am sending you herewith the list of requirements for oil painting. The address of the Company is on the top; it is from their catalogue that the list has been made and it is to them that your brother must go.

“All these things have been carefully chosen and will be useful. So it is better if he buys everything.”

At that time one of my brothers was going to England from Africa. I sent the list to my family according to the Mother’s instructions. These painting materials would be coming from the Company Windsor and Newton and my brother would arrange to get them sent through an agent there.

Now the Mother and I waited for the painting materials to come.

(To be continued)

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¹ A sadhak who is an artist.

FROM THE HILL OF MATHERAN

SOME OLD LETTERS OF MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA TO K.D.S.

I

17th May, 1956, 7.30 a.m.

So I am once again in our beloved Matheran. I seem to find the capacity to love it as I have never loved it before. There is such a vast and profound peace here and a little door in my heart has flung wide open. Each stone on this hill, each clump of rich red earth, the heaven-perfumed dark-green trees and the mountain-caressed breeze blowing against my face—each of these things penetrate my heart with a force I have not known on other visits. And all this because I have known the Mother more and more each day. Whatever I see on this most beautiful of hills is merged with the Mother, because each moment that I drink in all these things the Mother is deep within me. She seems to me closer than ever here on these breathless heights. The mountain air, laden with that peculiar myrtle fragrance (which you must be remembering so well) is enough to turn one's head—one feels that one's chest is bursting with sheer joy and happiness. Not the ordinary kind of happiness of this world but something most special as if our consciousness is suspended in some heavenly ether. I pray that I remain throughout this trip as I have been all these days, for then only can I breathe in each moment here with this intensity. Even though my kiddies make noise at their play and Nari plays the radio, I feel perfectly isolated.

At present I am sitting on the red-stone bench at the foot of our garden. Against my body the stone feels cold with the early morning coolth of the hill. In the thick trees on my right, sings the special bird we associate always with Matheran. He seems to be ageless, because the self-same notes we have heard for some 30 years past. Opposite me stands the king of kings among mountains—the inscrutable silent Prabal. I feel humbled before it and I want to sit with my head bowed—this is God's ground. There is such grandeur, dignity, calm and mystery on the face of Prabal. No one can gauge the depth of its secret. Looking at Prabal is like looking at the face of Sri Aurobindo. Perhaps His spirit is on these silent heights just as the Mother's presence is so definitely near among the purple-chequered silences of this hill.

My deep obeisance to Her and our love to Sehra and you.

2

30th May, 1956

After a stay bringing all sorts of wonderful experiences of this dear hill-top, we will be going to Bombay on 1st June, Friday, by the afternoon train. If we want, we can stay till the 11th, because the children's school re-opens only on the 12th, but our cash is limited and perforce we have to leave.

Matheran has put on quite a different look from its warm, coloured summer look, though none the less beautiful and grand. For the last 3 days it has been rain, chill and huge misty visitors even up to our very doorstep. This is the first time I am here during constant rain. It will be quite an experience to go down the precipitous hill with rain, accompanied by thunder, beating against the toy train. With the advent of rain, hundreds of nightingales came in a sudden migration to the hill. A certain nightingale would start her haunting song from early dawn to late dusk in our garden. There are hardly any appropriate words to describe the quality and timbre of this song—the song does not end with the cessation of the notes....

May the Mother's protection grant us a safe descent! All due to Her grace we have had a lovely time, without illness. Please thank Her deeply from me. A few days back I wrote Her a letter and also sent Her my poem about Prabal. Over here, on this beautiful spot, Her peace has come to us plentifully. I have drunk of it with gratitude. As you say, coming here is the next best thing to being near the Mother. But I feel such a finality in seeing everything here and so all the more poignant.¹ Perhaps a vaster and more abiding Sanctuary in my life awaits me! This reviving peace we have known here, I pray it may last through our days in Bombay. A big ogre in the shape of "delayed salaries" is waiting for us. The several transfers in the Department where Nari works are not seen in print in the Government Gazette so far. Such a trifle to Government but so serious to "cashless" people like us. We are hoping each day to see the 3 months' accumulated salaries, for out of them we have to pay our debts. And we have no source of borrowing any more. Please keep the Mother informed for her grace.

After reaching Bombay I'll post you more passages from my "Matheran Impressions". I shall be very happy if you can use them for the Mother's Paper. Thanks so much for the interest you take in my poems. I appreciate your suggestions. Love to both of you.

Here are all my new poems.

Luminous Lordly Spirit

The ever-changing deep shades and moods
 Of the changeless face of Prabal's height!
 The giant mists resting on his high head—
 The thick wild trees gorged with strange violet light.

O Luminous lordly Spirit, O mysterious Heart,
 Vast, endless calms are thy domain—
 Great Silences steeped in a purple peace,
 Thy depthless peace heart-piercing with blissful pain!

22nd May 1956

¹ Editor's Note: Actually no more trips to Matheran were made, since our grandfather died shortly after and "Sethna Cottage" had to be sold.

Purple Valley

Purple valley,
 My valley of beautiful sleep—
 Where ridges
 After green-shadowed ridges sweep
 Down to the depths—
 Where the wilderness-poppy thrives
 And saturates the distance—
 Where violet oblivion strives
 To outpace
 The roaring wild wind's tread—
 Where red-gold sunset
 And twilight orchid-shady wed.

27th May 1956

Witchery

Hour of silence, hour of birth—
 Darkness entwined with hint of morn—
 Dripping sweetness of recent rain—
 A nightingale's song, and magic is born.
 Low-cadenced, clear, richly deep-toned,
 Intense, ecstatic melody—
 Sweetness poignant, beautiful
 Witchcraft, haunting all eternity!

27th May 1956

Prabal in Seclusion

Gone are his green shades and flaming purples,
 Gone his summer wakefulness and sun—
 Lost to the world in a samadhi of gigantic mists—
 A sublime sleep—his earth-vigil done.
 Before man's brush can touch the canvas
 To capture the grandeur of his kingly height,
 With a grand defiance to trapping his beauty
 He disappears into Holy Sanctuary out of sight!

30th May 1956

HOW I BECAME A HINDU - 5

(Continued from the issue of October 1982)

I SAW quite a bit of the "Great Calcutta Killing" of August 16-17, 1946 with my own eyes. There were a large number of dead bodies lying on the streets. There were many more floating down the Hooghly. I saw an extensive destruction of private and public property by fire as well as by mob fury. The death and desolation all around moved me to despair about human nature itself. But I did not try to find the causes of this holocaust—or to fix responsibility on the political movement which had provoked it. Instead I wrote a long article, *The Devil Dance in Calcutta*, in which I held both Hindus and Muslims equally responsible for this meaningless massacre. The article was circulated in a cyclostyled newsletter which a circle of friends was publishing from Delhi. Some of these friends appreciated the graphic picture I had drawn and the literary flourishes I had displayed.

But the letter I received from Ram Swarup in the next few days was quite different in its tone. He had not appreciated my "sitting on the fence" and equating Muslim violence with Hindu violence. He urged me to see the right and wrong involved in what I had described as an internecine strife. According to him Muslim violence was aggressive and committed in the furtherance of a very reactionary and retrograde cause, namely, the vivisection of India. The violence of the Hindus was defensive, and forced upon them in the service of a very worthy cause, namely, the unity and integrity of India, which was worth even a civil war. I must confess that I could not see the point. I was not prepared to forgive the Hindus for the orgy of death in which they had also indulged. How were the Hindus in a better moral position, even if it was granted that Muslims had started it in the first instance?

A few months earlier Ram Swarup had sent to me the typescript of a long dialogue, *Let Us Have Riots: The Philosophy of Those Who Want to Divide India by Street Riots*, which he had written in a Shavian style. Many prominent political leaders belonging to the Congress, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha figured in it. Dr. Ambedkar had also made his own characteristic contribution on the subject of partition. I laughed hilariously as I read it again and again. The Muslim League leaders, particularly Mr. Jinnah, had made themselves thoroughly ridiculous. So had Pandit Nehru who could see nothing beyond what he described as Hindu communalism and could not talk coherently on any subject for more than a few sentences. Ram Swarup had a way of putting their own words into the mouths of many leaders, which took away the glamour with which they had been clad in public eyes and reduced them to their real stature which was puny and piteous most of the time. But I again failed to read the serious message spread all over this dialogue. I could not see the tragedy of the situation in which a whole national leadership had surrendered not only its political will but also its moral judgement to a pack of bullies, rowdies, clowns and lunatics. The tragedy was all the greater because this national

leadership also represented a large chunk of the educated Hindus who passed as the intellectual and political elite.

By now I had become emotionally as well as intellectually neutral between the Hindus and the Muslims. There was perhaps a tilt towards the Muslim point of view. The communist pamphlets which I had read in support of Pakistan had left me cold for all practical purposes. But the communist weekly, *New Age*, which I now bought and read regularly, had started exercising its influence. This weekly always presented the Muslims as the exploited peasantry and proletariat and the Hindus as the exploiting landlords and capitalists. It constantly accused the Congress leadership of striking a compromise, almost a bargain, with the British imperialists to share power and pelf, rather than making common cause with the Muslim League leadership and seizing power by revolutionary mass action.

My disgust for the Hindus was reinforced by what I heard from my own people amongst whom I lived again, after I had sent my family to the village. These were the same people who had always ridiculed me as an educated nincompoop. They were always denouncing Mahatma Gandhi, many times in pretty foul language. The Mahatma was moving about in Noakhali where Hindus had been massacred and molested on a large scale by Muslim mobs maddened by Muslim League demagogues. He was doing his best to put down the fires of communal frenzy. He certainly did not deserve the denunciations which my people were daily hurling at him. These denunciations became more violent when the Mahatma went on a fast unto death to restrain the Hindus of Bihar, who were now bent upon taking revenge for Noakhali, I also used equally violent language in defence of Mahatma Gandhi. The result was my ex-communication from the community to which I belonged. They started calling me "*soor ka bachcha* Suhrawardy".

By now I had become some sort of a senior executive in the firm in which I was employed. The salary was small. But I had an exclusive chamber, a telephone and a peon at my command. I could also sell at my discretion some small quantities of a chemical which was in short supply. A young Marwari broker always pestered me for a drum or two and I always drove him away. Little did I know that this broker was to lead me straight into the lap of the Communist Party in Calcutta.

One day I was reclining in my swivel chair during the lunch break, with my feet on the table and the latest number of *New Age* spread out before me. Suddenly this broker moved into my chamber. My peon was away and could not stop him. His face became bathed in broad smiles as soon as he saw the paper I was reading. Next he confided: "This is something I never knew about you. You are a progressive. Then you must be knowing many other progressive people in Burra Bazar. Tell me the names of some of them. I know practically all of them." I told him that I knew no progressives except myself. He went away after assuring me that he would see to it that I met quite a few of them and very soon.

He kept his promise. A few days later he came to me with a pass for a shadow drama which the Indian People's Theatre Association, a communist front, was sta-

ging in a well-known theatre house of Calcutta. I went and saw it the next day and came away quite impressed. It was a caricature of the Congress leadership which was luring the common people into communal riots so that it could conspire with British imperialism behind the people's back. It depicted how the streets of Calcutta had been rendered unsafe for both Hindus and Muslims and how the only man who felt safe now was the white man. It appealed to Hindus and Muslims to unite and make the streets of Calcutta unsafe for the white man once again, as had happened during the days of the INA trials in the Red Fort and the RIN revolt in Bombay.

A greater gain from this theatre attendance was my meeting with a number of other Marwari young men to whom my broker friend introduced me after the show. One of them now became my constant companion in the coffee house. He was also a broker, though in the more prestigious share market. But it was his knowledge of communist leaders of India which really impressed me. He told me many heroic tales about Muzaffar Ahmed, P. C. Joshi, Dange, Adhikari, Ranadive and so on. In my ignorance I took them to be true and was filled with admiration for these great personalities. I did not know at that time that it was mostly communist mythology for the consumption of the rank and file.

But I could not help taking as true one tale he told me about a communist leader from Nagpur. He was imprisoned in the same jail as Acharya Vinoba Bhave, sometime in 1941. Vinobaji used to wash his own clothes every morning while the communist leader sat nearby smoking his cigarette. His clothes were never clean. One day Vinobaji invited him to join him in washing his clothes and observed that it was quite fun: The communist leader walked away quietly, came back with a bundle of his soiled clothes, piled them before Vinobaji and said: "Come on, Bhave, have some more fun."

A few days after I met these Marwari communists my place was visited by a Bengali communist who was most probably the secretary of some Communist Party unit in Burra Bazar. He cited the name of my Marwari friends as his reference and invited me to visit the commune in which he lived along with some other party members. I went with him to a nearby place and met a dozen boys and girls who shared a small ill-kept room and a smaller kitchen. I was told that there were three married couples amongst them. This was my first and last visit to a commune. I did not like the look of it. Nor did I meet the Bengali communist very frequently. My only gain from this contact was that a hawker started supplying me a free copy of the Bengali communist daily, *Swadhinata*, and I was introduced to the Progressive Writers Association, another communist front organisation.

The President of the Progressive Writers Association in those days was the noted Bengali novelist, Sri Tarashankar Bandopadhyaya. I had read some of his novels and thought very highly of him. I now hoped to meet him in the Association office any day. That turned out to be a vain hope because I never met any writer whatsoever in that office during my frequent visits lasting over a year. I did not particularly like the two novels of Tarashankar which the comrades recommended very

highly—*Manvantar* and *Hansuh Banker Upakotha*. The great writer was to tell me later on that these were the only two novels he wrote under communist influence and that both of them failed. He had to revise *Manvantar* quite a bit before it became acceptable to his Bengali readers.

A notable event of my association with the Progressive Writers Association was the staging of the Russian film, 'Ivan, the Terrible.' It had been directed by the famous Eisenstein during the War to whip up Russian nationalism against the Nazi invasion. And it had been hailed as a great achievement of Soviet cinematography. Someone in the Association gave me a book of 25 tickets to sell amongst those I knew, or could influence, to see this masterpiece of progressive art. I succeeded in selling only a few, distributed the rest and paid some Rs. 64 /- from my own pocket. The language of the film was Russian with titles in English. I could not make head or tail of the story. It bored me and I wanted to run out of the crowded hall. But when I compared notes with other comrades in the coffee house, I thought it better to say some words of appreciation. They were full of praise for it while denouncing the decadent Hollywood productions. Eisenstein came under a shadow in 1948 and had to make an abject confession of his errors. 'Ivan the Terrible' was one of those errors.

I was heading full steam into communism when I received a severe jolt. It was a novel by Aldous Huxley, *Time Must Have A Stop*, which had just appeared on the stalls. As I saw it I was reminded of Ram Swarup and could not resist buying it, although its price was the only money I had in my pocket. But it was almost the end of the month and I could look forward to my salary after a few days. I had never read a book by Huxley so far. This one was quite a revelation of his unique genius. I was enraptured by one of its characters, Bruno, contemplating the dark destiny of an erudite scholar with great compassion. But what almost broke my Marxist spell was his demolition of the dogma of inevitable progress which was the bedrock of all Western thought during the 19th century. He also questioned as a "manipulative fallacy" the repeated reconstruction of social, economic and political institutions to achieve a more equitable order of things. His conclusion was that the roots of social evils lay ultimately in human nature itself. A desirable social order could not be built out of the desire-soul of man. Shades of Sri Aurobindo, I thought.

This book shook me very badly and its influence was to surface two years later. Meanwhile, I took to reading Huxley and finished his major novels as well as his two famous books, *Ends and Means* and *Perennial Philosophy*. I was preparing myself to dwell on a different dimension of thought and feeling. I confessed my misgivings to my communist friend from the share market. He had not read any Huxley. But he knew the party line on this great writer. It was not at all flattering. Next, my friend accused me of being an intellectual. It was his settled opinion, and experience also, that intellectuals did not last in the Party for long. Their great sin was their failure to become partisans on major ideological issues. They suffered from bourgeois objectivity. I felt properly snubbed, even though I knew that my friend had hardly ever read a book in his whole life.

A few days before the riots broke out in August 1946 I had run into an American journalist who was the bureau manager of a prestigious US news agency in Calcutta. He banged the table and made our coffee cups fly when I observed that Truman was a criminal who should be hanged for dropping that atom bomb on Hiroshima. I thought that was the end of our acquaintance. But he rang me up a few days later and explained that he should have tried to understand the Asian point of view on the matter. We met again and again and became friends. He was at that time what the Americans call a liberal and we in India a leftist. It was he who first took me to the Communist Party bookstall in Dacres Lane in Calcutta. He thought that they published some good literature and that their weekly in English was a very well-edited tabloid.

He was also a good friend of Mr. Jeelani, the editor of the Muslim League daily, *Morning News*, who later wrote often in *Organiser*. But he had no friend who could explain to him the Hindu point of view. He had toured the whole of Calcutta during the August riots. He thought that the Muslims had suffered far more than the Hindus. Later on, he visited Noakhali. His impression was that the situation was not so bad as the Hindus were painting it. One day he met me soon after he had attended a debate on Noakhali in the Bengal Legislative Assembly. He was very angry with Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookherjee and other Hindu leaders for their making so much of the Hindus in Noakhali being forced to eat beef. "What is so awful about eating beef?" he asked me. I had no opinion on the subject. But I readily joined him in ridiculing "that pot-bellied demagogue", as he called Dr. Mukherjee. Some-time later this friend moved to Delhi and met Ram Swarup. I promptly received a letter from Ram Swarup saying that I had made quite a Muslim Leaguer out of our American friend. But I did not take the hint.

My personal fortunes changed for the better when I joined as manager of a new concern. The salary was much better. But what mattered to me most was that my new boss, a young man of my own age, was a convinced communist. He was a very well-read man and had a well-stocked personal library from which I could borrow whatever I wanted. He was also a subscriber to many foreign journals which toed the international communist line. I remember how I gulped down large doses of communism as I read the American periodicals, *New Masses* and *New Republic*, week after week.

I had given the good news about my new job and my new boss to my American friend on the eve of his departure from Calcutta. A few days later I received a letter from Ram Swarup which said: "I learn that your boss is a communist. It is like hearing that a Buddhist made a war. But it seems that the ordinary man is wiser than both Marx and Lord Buddha. He will never give to them anything except his subjective loyalty."

But once again I failed to take the hint.

(To be continued)

SITA RAM GOEL

THE LAW OF CONTRADICTION AND THE LOGIC OF THE INFINITE

A CRITICAL STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF THE NIRVISHESHA ADWAITA OF SHANKARA AND THE INTEGRAL ADWAITA OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Concluded from the issue of October 1982)

SRI AUROBINDO shows how finite reason can never make a synthesis of the riddles of the One and the Many, Finite and Infinite, Status and Dynamis, *Nirguṇa* and *Sa-guṇa*, Change and Changelessness. Sri Aurobindo does not violate the law of contradiction. He formulates that Law and shows its field of application and its limits, and where it cannot be applied. Shankara says commenting on Brahma-Sutra (2-1-14), *Na hi ekasya Brahmanah pariṇāma dharmatvam tadviparitattvam ca śakyam pratipattum*: Brahman cannot be cause and effect. Commenting on the Sutra 3-2-11 of Ubhaya-linga section of the Brahma Sutras, that is, twofold characteristic of Brahman, Shankara says, *Na hi ekam vastu svata eva rūpadi viśeṣopetam śakyam virodhāt*: The same thing cannot at the same time have a form and attributes and do the opposite, for that involves a self-contradiction. Shankara says this with regard to Saguna Brahman with qualities and Nirguna Brahman without qualities. He considers it impossible for Brahman to have qualities and be without qualities at the same time. I have quoted extensively to show how finite reason is applied to the Absolute. There can be people who doubt if Shankara does not know that he was applying formal or abstract logic to Brahman. It is not possible to delve into that within the space of this article. Besides the aim of this article is the law of contradiction and the Logic of the Infinite as applied to Brahman by Shankara and Sri Aurobindo respectively.

Sri Aurobindo says, "That law is necessary in order that we may posit partial and practical truths, think out clearly, decisively and usefully, classify and deal with them effectively for particular purposes in our divisions of space, distinctions of form and property, moments of time. It represents a formal and strongly dynamic truth of existence in its practical workings, which is the strongest in the most outward term of things, the material, but becomes less and less rigidly binding as we go upward in the scale, mount on the subtle rungs of the ladder of being".¹ Even with regard to material things it cannot judge things or objects in isolation. "The isolation is certainly necessary for our first knowledge. A diamond is a diamond and a pearl a pearl, each thing of its own class, existing by its distinction from all others, each distinguished by its own form and properties. But each has also properties and elements common to both, and others which are common to material things in general. And

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 104.

in reality each does not exist only by its distinction but much more essentially by that which is common to both; and we get back to the very basis and enduring truth of all material things only when we find that all are the same thing, one energy, one substance, or if you like, one universal motion which throws up, brings out, combines, realises these different forms, these various properties, these fixed and harmonised potentialities of its own being.”¹ Thus the knowledge of Brahman does not entail the denial of the world. “Thus the knowledge of distinction arrives at its greatest truth and effective use, when we arrive at the deeper knowledge of that which reconciles distinctions in the unity behind all variations. The deeper knowledge does not deprive the other and more superficial knowledge of effectivity nor convict it of vanity. We cannot conclude from our material discovery that there is no original substance or matter, only energy manifesting substance or manifesting as substance, that the diamond and pearl are non-existent, unreal, only true to the illusion of our senses of perception and action, that the one substance, energy or motion is the sole eternal truth and therefore the best and only rational use of our science would be to dissolve diamond and pearl and everything else that we can dissolve into this eternal and original reality and get done with forms and properties for ever. There is an essentiality of things, a commonalty of things, and an individuality of things; the commonalty and individuality are true and eternal powers of the essentiality; that transcends them both, but the three together and not one by itself are the eternal terms of existence.”²

Shankara says this cannot be. The diamond or pearl of this world is only name and form, a delusion of our senses brought about by a mysterious and indefinable *Māyā* and the best and only use of life is to find the original reality and get dissolved in it. The only rational and best use of life is to find the original reality and get dissolved in it by escaping from life. Human life is a divine gift given to man to find himself and get dissolved in That. This is so, because manifestation has no ultimate meaning to him. Shankara did not perceive spiritually the link between the Unmanifest and the Manifestation and had to apply finite logic to solve the riddle. This alogical supra-rational riddle of the universe wrapped in the mystery of his *Māyā* must manifest only phenomenally inside an enigma,—well, we do not know the locus of this enigma.

Sri Aurobindo says, “it is irrational to suppose that a finite consciousness and reason can be a measure of the Infinite, this smallness cannot judge the immensity, this poverty bound to a limited use of its scanty means cannot conceive the opulent management of those riches; an ignorant half knowledge cannot follow the motion of All Knowledge.”³ Even intellectual reason cannot succeed in determining the laws of life. The law of contradiction cannot be applied even to a Time-Infinite or Space-Infinite, let alone Space and Time Eternity. “A law founded on observation

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 105-6.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

of what is divided in Space and Time cannot be confidently applied to the being and action of the Indivisible.”¹ Well does Dr. Ramnath Sharma in his thesis, *The Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, published by Kedarnath Ramnath, Meerut (U.P.), say, “As the standard of Reality changes, so do the concepts to describe its experience.” One cannot test the excellence of the rose on a touch-stone nor can the heat of the sun be measured with the thermometer.

As Sri Aurobindo points out, all trinities are chimeras in the eye of the law of contradiction. How can anyone, who argues that the Absolute is unknowable by mind, say that it cannot be both determinate and indeterminate simultaneously, as it involves a self-contradiction? Are we not imposing our mental laws—the laws of identity and contradiction—on the Absolute? Is it not itself self-contradictory to assert that the Absolute cannot be grasped by mind or reason and at the same time try to determine its nature by the measure of mental laws? *Na tatra cakṣurgacchati na vāk gacchati no mano*: There the sight travels not nor speech nor mind.² If the Absolute transcends nature, how can its character be determined by natural laws—mental, vital or material?

Again in *The Hour of God*, at page 28, Sri Aurobindo writes on the law of contradiction, “It is true of a clod that it cannot be at the same time a clod hanging up or posted on some high bough, a clod protruding from the earth or a shapeless mass trodden into mother soil. What is true of matter is not true of the Spirit nor do the standards apply to the formless”. Now Sri Aurobindo formulates the law of contradiction as he sees it: “The law of contradiction is here only valid in so far as two different and opposite statements cannot be true of the same thing at the same time in the same field in the same respect from the same point of view and for the same practical purpose.”³

The above statement opens the way to the Logic of the Infinite. Here comes the necessity and relevance of the Logic of the Infinite. It is experience alone that can tell us whether two things or qualities are compatible with each other or not; one can know from experience alone if his reasoning corresponds with the truth of his spiritual experience. It is the realisation of this fundamental truth that the nature of the things of the world or Reality cannot be determined by pure reason or law of thought that opens the way for the operation of the Logic of the Infinite. This does not mean that the Absolute acts capriciously, erratically and whimsically. “There is logic in It, because there are relations and connections infallibly seen and executed.” The following eloquent and pregnant remark of the Master gives “body” to the above statement: “What is magic to the finite reason is Logic of the Infinite.”⁴

It is convenient here to dispose of the usual objection which is heard in philosophical conferences that Integral Adwaita is disrupted from within, because it admits

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

² Kena Upanishad, 1-3.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

the principle of self-limitation in the Absolute. This objection is based on a mental concept like the application of the law of contradiction, a mental law, to that which transcends mind. This is based on the concept of *determinatio negatio est*: determination is negation. But this is self-determination, not an imposition from outside. Besides *determinatio* means not only limitation but also boundary. This is "self-bounding" or self-limiting, which means fixing a limit of its own accord on itself. So this is not limitation in the sense of a disability. That is why the Gita says in *śloka* 13-17, *Avibhaktam ca bhūteṣu vibhaktam iva ca sthitam*: The status indivisible yet as if divided in the becomings (Sri Aurobindo's translation). So the Absolute plays as if divided. The objection has no substance. For example, Spinoza does not seem to be conscious of this contradiction in his philosophy, because he does not try to reconcile the opposed elements in his philosophy. According to the law of contradiction, existence cannot be consciousness and also bliss at the same time. *Saccidānanda* is the first and original confrontation with the law of contradiction.

Again, Shankara comments under Brahma-Sutra 3-2-11 thus: *Na hi ekam vastu svata eva rūpadi viśeṣopetam tat vīparitam ca iti avadhārayitum śakyam virodhāt*: The same thing cannot be with and without attributes, as it involves a self-contradiction. That means it cannot be both *Nirguṇa* and *Saguṇa* at the same time. Is Shankara not applying the mental law of contradiction? Besides, is Brahman a *vastu* that is, a thing or an entity? It is generally argued that the timeless has come down to the time-level and hence the law may be applied. Shankara admits the immanence of Brahman, the essential unity between the world and Brahman, although his logic seems to pose an opposition between them. The *ghatākāśa* (pot-space) and *Mahadākāśa* (Universal space) are essentially one. It is pot-shape and pot-name that are illusory. So even at the time-level *Saccidānanda* is *Saccidānanda*. The objections are the ignorance of the learned. "To Brahman there are no whole and parts but each thing is all itself and benefits by the whole of Brahman."¹ Besides, "A part may be greater than the whole, for it belongs to the transcendence".² "That incoercible unity in all divisions and diversities is the mathematics of the Infinite indicated in a verse of the Upanishad—"This is the complete, that is the complete; subtract the complete from the complete, the complete is the remainder."³ The verse is the *Praveśa pāṭha* (entry text) of the Isha Upanishad. So mental laws can never be applied indiscriminately to that which is indivisible.

That does not mean that reason has no place in philosophy and logic no ground at all. Rishabhchand compiled a booklet entitled *Reason and Beyond Reason* from Sri Aurobindo's works, published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay. The place and field of operation of reason is indicated therein: "Reason cannot grasp all truth in its embrace, because truth is too infinite for it; but it does grasp something of it which we immediately need and its insufficiency does not detract from the value of its work, but is rather the measure of its value."

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 87.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 45. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

So reason, mental reason, has a place in philosophy and its limit is shown. It is also shown how mental reason cannot meet the Infinite on its own plane and how we need the Logic of the Infinite to deal with the action of the Infinite. Sri Aurobindo has written so much at relevant places on the law of contradiction that a brochure can be easily compiled of his observations on that law—this ubiquitous and omnipotent law that has held the minds of the mighty in the realm of the spirit. Perhaps the glory goes to Sri Aurobindo here, as in so many other fields also, as he is the first to catch it by the forelock and show it its place. Once for all he has put this law aside, demarcating its legitimate field of operation with a firm warning: “Thus far and no farther.”

It is on account of his integral experience of the Absolute that the Master has been able to do all this.

“Sri Aurobindo’s Absolute is a most remarkable conception. Philosophically one could say it is an Absolute in an absolutely absolute way. It is governed by its own logic of the Absolute, the logic of the finite and the relative being inadequate for it. The former conceptions in the history of philosophy have often suffered in one way or another from some taint of the relative. Here the Absolute is a real Absolute which is personal as well as impersonal, complete and perfect, dynamic and evolutionary and an infinite lot more.”¹

Let me end this article by quoting a few lines from that timeless and immortal epic poem, *Savitri*, on the Logic of the Infinite, for there are many references to it there. The Sage-Seer looks into the future:

“A brighter heavenlier Sun must soon illumine
This dusk noon with its dark internal stair,
The infant soul in the small nursery school
Mid objects meant for a lesson hardly learned
Outgrow its early grammar of intellect
And its imitation of Earth-Nature’s art,
Its earthly dialect to God-language change,
In living symbols study Reality
And learn the logic of the Infinite.”²

Mental laws should give place to a higher consciousness. Then only can we understand

“The slow calm logic of Infinity’s pace
And the inviolate sequence of its will.”³

(Concluded)

P. KRISHNA MURTY

¹ Indra Sen, “Problem of Life and Sri Aurobindo”, *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual* (1943), pp. 48-9.

² Book I, Canto V, p. 76.

³ Book III, Canto IV, p. 342.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Ethical Fragrance in Indian Art and Literature. By Dr. C. Sivaramamurti. Kanak Publications, 37-B, Pandara Road, New Delhi-110 002. Pp: X+137. Plates: 110. Price: Rs. 200/-

DR. C. Sivaramamurti is an extraordinarily talented sculptor and artist and through his monumental book *L'Art en Inde*, he has had the good fortune to have his life and work to date meticulously recorded. Historian and scholar of Sanskrit, he seems equally at home in archaeology and epigraphy.

Collected under the title *Ethical Fragrance in Indian Art and Literature*, are the P. D. Gune Memorial Lectures delivered by the author at K.T.H.M. College, Nasik, in 1978 at the invitation of the University of Poona. "Indian Art," writes the author in his Preface, "with all its aesthetic appeal and grandeur of technique, has mainly been inspired by a devotional and ethical urge rather than by a pure and single-minded effort towards mere aesthetic perfection." This is the point he tries to enunciate through this well-produced and abundantly illustrated book.

Dr. Sivaramamurti captures the significance of Indian sculpture and painting by unveiling the ethical background of the figurations or inscriptions in the light of the relevant literary productions. He affirms: "The sculptures and paintings in India have always been created with a purpose, and the right purpose of visual education of the highest ethical nature, like the audible education through the exposition of important portions of the great epics."

Quotations profusely culled from the Vedas, Puranas, epics, Buddhist and other writings as well as from the works of literary giants like Kalidasa, are presented to show that these are nothing more than commentaries on the themes embodied in Indian sculpture, pictorial illustrations and paintings.

Dr. Sivaramamurti's explication of a passage from Kalidasa's *Kumarasambhava* and the interpretations he gives to the Vedic saying "Soma creates the world" are marks of his scholarship. A large number of pages are devoted to Lord Shiva. But historical examples of devoted wives like Sembian Mahadevi, Karaikal Ammai-yar, Halidevi too find their respective places here. Since the book abounds in stories, legends and parables both familiar and little known, we are not in any way forced to close the book before the end.

But can you understand at first sight what the author says in the following words?

"there is them agnificent monumental panel" (p. 25)

"thebu ffalo demon" (p. 26)

Well! Take your own time. Printing errors begin in the third line of the author's 'Preface' and continue to show their heads. Even the very first line of the blurb is no exception.

Such a scholarly work and a costly production as this should have no printing errors in the form of brain-teasers.

A grand feast is served for our eyes in the section 'Plates'. We are dazzled by the beauty of the girl issuing from her bath (Plate 108); we take pity on the plight

of the girl teased by the monkey (Plates 106 & 107); we are wonderstruck at Lord Shiva's four monumental heads (Plate 27) and we envy the passionate Rishis by the side of Mohini (Plate 39). Doubtless, no apt adjective is there to describe the beauty of the plates.

Few can fail to be charmed by their magical quality. They are a splendid bonus to a beautifully produced book.

P. RAJA

IN YOUR ROOM

GOLD and amber flood the eyes,
a wonder-hold of secret skies;

On swift and mighty Power-flows,
Serenity's resplendent glows;

Your face, ethereal rapture-blaze—
the sun-drenched ocean of Your gaze;

Sweet Yearning's breath, a full release
to tender homage, ardent pleas;

Of heights unseen, an ambience rare,
a thousand charms of fragrant air;

An all-pervading Grace's lift,
Lord of Life, Your closest gift.

“U”