

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

DECEMBER 1982

Price: Rs. 2.75

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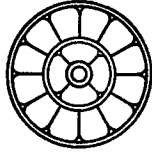
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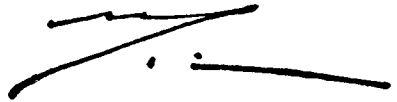


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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Editor's Phone: 4782

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR

Published by: P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY - 605 002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry - 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No. R. N. 8667/63

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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXIV

No. 12

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1982)

PART ONE: EARTH (Contd.)

I

The Book of Birth (Contd.)*

3. *Ascent to Godhead—Unveiling* A world's desire compelled her mortal birth.
A leader of the immemorial play
In which the One discovers himself through forms
And the blind Void struggles to live and see,
A thinker and toiler in the ideal's air, 330
Adept and king, drew down the luminous Power.
His was a spirit that leaned from subtler breadths
Of Nature screened to our soon-wearied search
And shed their grandiose ray on human life.
A strength of the omnipotent Permanence
Imprisoned in the moment and its flow,
Enmeshed in this thick maze of narrowing thoughts,
This groping consciousness with its half-view,
He kept the vision of the vasts behind.
Their ocean impulse lifted every breath, 340
Enlarged the spaces of life's dreams and made
A playground for the living Infinite.
Each moment was a beat of puissant wings.
His mind was like a fire assailing heaven,
His will a hunter in the trails of light.
Impelled by the veiled Delegate within,
His days mapped a long growth towards heights supreme:
A skyward being nourishing its roots

*From Sri Aurobindo's Notes

In the "Yoga of the Lord of the Horse" which is the next series of sections, "there is a long passage describing Aswapati's progress through the subtle physical, vital and mental worlds towards the Overmind" (1.11.1936). "The Yoga of the Lord of the Horse" covers a number of sections making the greater part of the first book; it is not the title of a section only. This title is essential to the plan of the work. " (16.11.1936). Asked about the titling of the first section of the series, Sri Aurobindo replied: "For the moment I can think of nothing but Ascent to Godhead—Unveiling." To the statement "I suppose the Horse is Dadhikravan of the Vedas", the answer was: "Yes" (9.11.1936).

On sustenance from occult spiritual founts
 Climbed through white rays to find an unseen sun. 350
 Though Earth's the body and the instruments,
 Yet deep in man celestial Powers can dwell:
 The form deceives, the person is a mask!
 Still in the symbol of humanity draped,
 In him a pure and brilliant Witness sat
 Unrecognisable by the outward view.
 Day after day the strong Inhabitant
 Watched the dim icon growing by his gaze
 And pressed his will upon the changing cells:
 Persuading flesh to hold the untarnished beam, 360
 Transmuting heart and brain in golden fire,
 He shaped the figure of his unborn might.
 Hastening the human process from above
 That turns this frail earth-engine for heaven-use,
 The Mechanician of etheric Space,
 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 Presence wrought behind the ambiguous screen 370
 And beat his soil to bear a Titan's weight;
 Refining half-hewn blocks of natural force
 It built his soul into a statued god.
 Thus helped, the invisible Grandeur outlined here
 Its first magnificent frame of things to be;
 Man's fallen nature brooked celestial birth.
 A Seer arose, a shining Guest of Time.
 For him the limiting firmament ceased above,
 In a tense period of the sleepless Urge
 A gap was rent in the all-concealing vault; 380
 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.
 Thence momentary winged upliftings came 390

And voices that an inner listening hears
 Cast on him from the unreachable Secrecy,
 In flame-wrapped outbursts of the immortal Word
 And flashes of a close unbearable Light,
 Hints of the Truth to which the heavens aspire.
 Or inspiration with her lightning feet,
 A sudden messenger from the all-seeing tops
 Releasing over the reason's slender curve
 White spaces of a knowledge beyond speech,
 Bore earthward fragments of revealing thought 400
 Hewn from the silence of the Ineffable,
 Lent vibrant words to the unuttered Vast,
 Or of the Timeless she disclosed one face.
 Awakened to the lines that Nature hides,
 Attuned to her movements that exceed our ken,
 His wide gaze bodied viewless entities
 And, piercing through our vision's narrow walls,
 Neighbour and comrade of the Invisible,
 He saw the cosmic Forces at their task
 And knew the occult impulse behind man's will. 410
 Thence sprung the greatness of his front to earth.
 One and harmonious by the Maker's art,
 The human in him paced with the divine;
 Its acts betrayed not the interior flame.
 An Influence guided him sublime, remote,
 A genius heightened in his body's cells
 That knew the meaning of its fate-hedged works
 Kin to the march of unaccomplished Powers
 Beyond life's arc in spirit's immensities.
 Mind in a larger consciousness was drowned 420
 And needed not to plan precarious steps
 Driven by screened prompters who compel its choice.
 The universal strengths were linked to his:
 Filling this smallness with their bourneless breadths
 He drew the energies that transform an age,—
 Immeasurable by the common look,
 Made of great dreams a mould for coming things
 And cast his deeds like bronze to front the years.
 Lonely his days and splendid like the sun's.
 Far-peaked he seemed, apart in selfless toil, 430
 A demiurge shaping the lives of men.
 But even this grandeur could not be his close.

Far richer is the spirit's ample right
 Than earth's uplook to a remote Unknown.
 Our world is a beginning and a base
 Where Life and Mind have built their structured dreams,
 And now those half-way splendours are our light
 Arresting us with their imperfect blaze.
 But greater realms delay, by us undreamed,
 That from the timeless Glory shall stoop down 440
 To commune with our seized illumined clay.
 Above Thought's largest sweep and highest sky
 Lie hidden altitudes unviewed, unreached;
 There, kin to the ineffable secrecies,
 Treasured within the Infinite's stainless folds
 They keep for us 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. 450
 A burning Witness in the sanctuary,
 He looks through Time and the blind walls of Form
 And sees the goal of the unconscious world,
 The heart of the mystery of the journeying years.
 Earth quests through the soul's war and quivering pain
 The pure perfection this dim Nature needs,
 While far above us like gold dazzling suns
 Veiled by the Ray no mortal eye can bear,
 A Mind not haunted by misleading gleams,
 A Will expressive of soul's deity, 460
 A Strength not forced to stumble by its speed,
 A Joy that trails not sorrow for its shade,
 On the eternal summits wait their hour.
 As if the original Ukase still held back
 In the locked archives of the spirit's crypt,
 This was the signature and fiery seal
 Of Wisdom on the dim Power's hooded works,
 Who builds in ignorance the steps of Light,
 This the Immortal's promise to the days.
 Our time-clamped aims unreal grew and small. 470
 His being, prophetic now of godhead won,
 Resiled from poor assent to Nature's terms.
 Its height refused the lowness of earth's state,
 Its wideness discontented cast away

The tedious treasure of her limited gifts,
 Her shreds of knowledge packed in careful heaps,
 Her timid store of wounded brief delights,
 Pale scanty earnings of the bargain made
 Between our littleness and bounded hopes
 And the compassionate Infinitudes. 480

He felt the doubtfulness of all things here,
 The incertitude of man's proud confident thought,
 The transience of the achievements of his force.
 All that was yet vouchsafed from the Beyond
 Resembled a miser shower from gilded clouds
 Cast to beguile our dalliance with the mire.
 This casual coin could fill his want no more.
 A bribe of distant light was not enough,
 The Glory we glimpse afar must be his home.
 Impatient of the burden of its gains, 490
 His soul retired from all that he had done.

A portion of the world and yet apart,
 Amid the restless noise of human toil
 Impassive he lived, immune from earthly ties,
 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.
 Aware of his occult omnipotent Source,
 Allured by the omniscient Ecstasy, 500
 He felt the invasion and the nameless joy.

A call was on him from intangible heights;
 Indifferent to the little outpost Mind
 He dwelt in the wideness of the Eternal's reign.
 Life's circumscribing soil could hold no more
 His spirit from the adventure of the Vasts.
 There now it shot from the tense bow of Time,
 A ray returning to its parent Sun.
 A living centre of the illimitable,
 One-pointed to the immaculate Delight, 510
 Questing for God as for a splendid prey,
 He mounted burning like a cone of fire.
 Pallid and faint in distant fading streaks
 The earth-nature's summits sank below his feet;
 He climbed to meet the infinite more above.
 Thus borne on the surge of the enlarging Self,

He left the Inconscient whence our stuff is drawn
 To win the ungrasped Immense from which we come.
 To a few is given that godlike rare release.
 One among many thousands never touched, 520
 Engrossed in the external world's design,
 Is driven by a pointing hand of light
 Across his soul's unmapped immensitudes.
 A pilgrim of the everlasting Truth,
 He has turned from the voices of the narrow realm,
 He has cast from him our measures and our bounds
 And left the little lane of human time;
 Now through the vestibules of the Unseen
 Trod are the precincts of a vaster plan:
 All that was grasped and certain far behind 530
 And the deep cosmic murmur falling still,
 A lone forerunner of the Godward earth
 Among the symbols of yet unshaped things,
 Watched by closed eyes, mute faces of the Unborn,
 Journeying to meet the Incommunicable,
 He hears the echo of his single steps
 In the eternal courts of solitude.
 As rose his spirit into pathless heights,
 A strong Descent leaped down, a Flame, a Power,
 A violent Ecstasy, a Sweetness dire; 540
 His nature shuddered in the Unknown's grasp:
 Overswept, compelled as by some dangerous Bliss,
 It underwent a new and bourneless change.
 In a pure voidness and eternity,
 As when a timeless Eye annuls the hours,
 All that represses our fall'n consciousness
 Was taken from him like a forgotten load.
 A fire was lit that burned the limiting past;
 Its outworn high thought-buildings disappeared
 Making large room for a new self to live. 550
 A greater Force than the earthly held his limbs;
 Increased and heightened were the instruments,
 Huge workings bared his undiscovered sheaths,
 Strange energies wrought and screened tremendous hands
 Loosened the triple net of tenebrous strings
 That ties us with these knots of nerve and brain
 And cramps us to a fixed external gaze.
 His spirit breathed a superhuman air.

A cosmic vision looked at things through light:
 Illusion lost her aggrandising lens,
 Atomic were her shapes that loomed so large 560
 And from her failing hand her measures fell:
 In the enormous spaces of the Self
 The living form seemed now a wandering shell;
 Earth was one room in his million-mansioned house,
 The mind a many-frescoed outer court,
 His soul the tongue of an unmeasured fire.
 The imprisoned deity rent its magic fence;
 All barriers crashed around the huge escape:
 The fixed immovable peripheries 570
 Effaced themselves beneath the Incarnate's tread;
 All-knowing guardians of an ignorant world,
 The dread velamen and the bottomless crypt,
 Circle and end of every hope and toil,
 Could not restrain nor slay the arisen Power;
 The old adamantine vetoes stood no more.
 Immune, rejecting Nature's obsolete law,
 It burst the narrow dams that keep us safe
 Against the forces of the Universe:
 Abolished were the scripts of destiny. 580
 Overpassing the stature by Earth-fate assigned,
 A boundless point travelling infinity,
 He found unpathed unwall'd his titan scope.
 All was uncovered to his sealless eye:
 By the compulsion of some termless Gaze
 A secret Nature yielded to his search,
 Masked by occult innumerable doors,
 Her perilous arcana and hooded powers:
 Her gulfs stood nude, her far transcendences
 Flamed to transparencies of crowded light. 590
 Life in him learned its huge subconscious rear;
 The little fronts unlocked to the unseen vasts.
 All being was seen in its unnumbered planes:
 Ascending and descending twixt life's poles,
 The seried kingdoms of the graded Law,
 Each lifting tops to its own high Beyond,
 Predestined stadia of the evolving Way,
 Paces of the many-visaged Wonderful,
 Measured the stature of the growing soul
 In a hierarchy of climbing harmonies 600

From Matter's abysses to the spirit's peaks.
 A giant order was discovered here
 Of which the tassel and extended fringe
 Are the scant stuff of our material lives.
 Across the unfolding of the seas of self,
 At once remembrance and apocalypse,
 Appeared the numberless countries of the One.
 A many-miracled consciousness unrolled
 Vast aim and process and unfettered norm,
 Half-caught at first through wonder's gleaming lids 610
 A larger Nature's great familiar roads:
 Affranchised from the mesh of earthly sense
 Wide continents of potency were glimpsed,
 Sun-tracts of knowledge, moon-belts of delight,
 Beyond this indigent corporeal range.
 Adventurer and discoverer in realms
 Denied to this perishing eye, this failing tread,
 A voyager upon uncharted routes
 Fronting the viewless danger of the Unknown,
 He broke into another Space and Time. 620

(To be continued)

WIDENESS AND CALM

SOME TALKS BY THE MOTHER

“What do you mean by these words: ‘When you are in difficulty, widen yourself’?”

I AM speaking, of course, of difficulties on the path of yoga, in comprehension, limitations, things like obstacles, which prevent you from advancing. And when I say “widen yourself”, I mean widen your consciousness.

Difficulties always arise from the ego, that is, from your more or less egoistic personal reaction to circumstances, events and people around you, to the conditions of your life. They also come from that feeling of being closed up in a sort of shell, which prevents your consciousness from uniting with higher and vaster realities.

One may very well think that one wants to be vast, wants to be universal, that all is the expression of the Divine, that one must have no egoism—one may think all sorts of things—but that is not necessarily a cure, for very often one knows what one ought to do, and yet one doesn’t do it, for one reason or another.

But if, when you have to face anguish, suffering, revolt, pain or a feeling of helplessness—whatever it may be, all the things that come to you on the path and which precisely are your difficulties—if physically, that is to say, in your body-consciousness, you can have the feeling of widening yourself, one could say of unfolding yourself—you feel as it were all folded up, one fold on another like a piece of cloth which is folded and refolded and folded again—so if you have this feeling that what is holding and strangling you and making you suffer or paralysing your movement, is like a too closely, too tightly folded piece of cloth or like a parcel that is too well-tied, too well-packed, and that slowly, gradually, you undo all the folds and stretch yourself out exactly as one unfolds a piece of cloth or a sheet of paper and spreads it out flat, and you lie flat and make yourself very wide, as wide as possible, spreading yourself out as far as you can, opening yourself and stretching out in an attitude of complete passivity with what I could call “the face to the light”: not curling back upon your difficulty, doubling up on it, shutting it in, so to say, into yourself, but, on the contrary, unfurling yourself as much as you can, as perfectly as you can, putting the difficulty before the Light—the Light which comes from above—if you do that in all the domains, and even if mentally you don’t succeed in doing it—for it is sometimes difficult—if you can imagine yourself doing this physically, almost materially, well, when you have finished unfolding yourself and stretching yourself out, you will find that more than three-quarters of the difficulty is gone. And then just a little work of receptivity to the Light and the last quarter will disappear.

This is much easier than struggling against a difficulty with one’s thought, for if you begin to discuss with yourself, you will find that there are arguments for and against which are so convincing that it is quite impossible to get out of it without a

higher light. Here, you do not struggle against the difficulty, you do not try to convince yourself; ah! you simply stretch out in the Light as though you lay stretched on the sands in the sun. And you let the Light do its work. That's all.

(*Silence*)

"What is the easiest way of forgetting oneself?"

Naturally that depends on each one; everyone has his special way of forgetting himself, which is the best for him. But obviously there is a fairly general method which may be applied in various forms: to occupy oneself with something else. Instead of being occupied with oneself, one may be busy with someone else or with others or some work or an interesting activity requiring concentration.

And it is still the same thing: instead of doubling up oneself and brooding over oneself or coddling oneself as it were, like the most precious thing in the world, if one can unfold oneself and get busy with something else, something which is not quite one's own self, then that is the simplest and quickest way of forgetting oneself.

There are many others but this one is within everyone's reach.

Questions and Answers 1956, pp. 286-288.

*

Someone has asked me what I meant by these words:

"One must be calm."

It is obvious that when I tell someone, "Be calm", I mean many different things according to the person. But the first indispensable calm is mental quietude, for generally that is the one that's most lacking. When I tell someone, "Be calm", I mean: Try not to have restless, excited, agitated thoughts; try to quieten your mind and to stop turning around in all your imaginations and observations and mental constructions.

One could justifiably add a question: You tell us "Be calm", but what should we do to be calm?... The answer is always more or less the same: you must first of all feel the need for it and want it, and then aspire, and then try! For trying, there are innumerable methods which have been prescribed and attempted by many. These methods are generally long, arduous, difficult; and many people get discouraged before reaching the goal, for, the more they try, the more do their thoughts start whirling around and becoming restless in their heads.

For each one the method is different, but first one must feel the need, for whatever reason it may be—whether because one is tired or because one is overstrained

or because one truly wants to rise beyond the state one lives in—one must first understand, feel the need of this quietude, this peace in the mind. And then, afterwards, one may try out successively all the methods, known ones and new, to attain the result.

Now, one quickly realises that there is another quietude which is necessary, and even very urgently needed—this is vital quietude, that is to say, the absence of desire. Only, the vital when not sufficiently developed, as soon as it is told to keep quiet, either goes to sleep or goes on strike; it says, “Ah! no. Nothing doing. I won’t go any farther. If you don’t give me the sustenance I need, excitement, enthusiasm, desire, even passion, I prefer not to move and I won’t do anything any longer.” So there the problem becomes a little more delicate and perhaps even more difficult still; for surely, to fall from excitement into inertia is very far from being a progress. One must never mistake inertia or a somnolent passivity for calm.

Quietude is a very positive state; there is a positive peace which is not the opposite of conflict—an active peace, contagious, powerful, which controls and calms, which puts everything in order, organises. It is of this I am speaking; when I tell someone, “Be calm”, I don’t mean to say, “Go and sleep, be inert and passive, and don’t do anything”, far from it!... True quietude is a very great force, a very great strength. In fact one can say, looking at the problem from the other side, that all those who are really strong, powerful, are always very calm. It is only the weak who are agitated; as soon as one becomes truly strong, one is peaceful, calm, quiet, and one has the power of endurance to face the adverse waves which come rushing from outside in the hope of disturbing one. This true quietude is always a sign of force. Calmness belongs to the strong.

And this is true even in the physical field. I don’t know if you have observed animals like lions, tigers, elephants, but it is a fact that when they are not in action, they are always so perfectly still. A lion sitting and looking at you always seems to be telling you, “Oh, how fidgety you are!” It looks at you with such a peaceful air of wisdom! And all its power, energy, physical strength are there, gathered, collected, concentrated and—without a shadow of agitation—ready for action when the order is given.

I have seen people, many people, who could not sit still for half an hour without fidgeting. They had to move a foot or a leg, or an arm or their head; they had to stir restlessly all the time, for they did not have the power or the strength to remain quiet.

This capacity to remain still when one wants to, to gather all one’s energies and spend them as one wishes, completely if one wants, or to apportion them as one wants in action, with a perfect calm even in action—that is always the sign of strength. It may be physical strength or vital strength or mental strength. But if you are in the least agitated, you may be sure there is a weakness somewhere; and if your restlessness is integral, it is an integral weakness.

So, if I tell someone, “Be calm”, I may be telling him all kinds of things, it depends upon each person. But obviously, most often it is, “Make your mind quiet, don’t be restless all the time in your head, don’t stir up lots of ideas, calm yourself.”

For most people an experience exists only when they can explain it to themselves. The experience in itself—contact with a certain force, a widening of consciousness, communion with an aspect of the Divine, no matter what experience, an opening of the being, the breaking down of an obstacle, crossing over a stage, opening new doors—all these experiences, if people cannot explain them to themselves in so many words and materialise them in precise thoughts, it is as though these did not exist! And it is just this need for expression, this need for translation, which causes the greater part of the experience to lose its power of action on the individual consciousness. How is it that you have a decisive, definite experience, that for instance, you have opened the door of your psychic being, you have been in communion with it, you know what this means, and then—it does not stay? It is because it does not have a sufficiently tangible power unless you can express it to yourself. The experience begins for you only when you are able to describe it. Well, when you are able to describe it, the greater part of its intensity and its capacity of action for the inner and outer transformation has already evaporated. There it may be said that expression, explanation is always a coming down. The experience itself is on a much higher plane.

Questions and Answers 1956, pp. 329-32

HIEROPHANTIC

Importune not the evanescent hour
 To lend its beauty to your eloquence.
 Barren your hope that its unstable power
 Can permeate your fragile, earth-born phrase
 With incorruptible magnificence!
 To the soul's vision of unbodied Grace
 Compel your eager artifice to submit;
 For, music that outsoars the murk of time
 Needs vaster wings than brief, capricious joys.
 Curb the impulsive brain's fame-hungry wit,
 The self-sufficient clang of facile rhyme,
 The fitful, immature, fantastic mood.
 Make the deep spirit-within your sovereign poise—
 Willing to wait in agelong quietude
 To hear but once the Everlasting Voice.

AMAL KIRAN

“HE HAS GIVEN YOU EVERYTHING”

A TALK BY NIRODBARAN AT THE CONFERENCE OF THE SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY ON AUGUST 14, 1982*

Friends,

Tomorrow is the birthday of Sri Aurobindo, our Lord, Master, unfailing Guide and intimate Friend, whom we love and adore and to whom we have consecrated our life-long service. It makes me happy to be able to offer my humble gratitude to him on the eve of the august occasion and I am thankful to you for giving me this fine opportunity.

The Mother has revealed the significance of this Day in glowing mystic terms. I shall read it to you, though you may know it. To hear these mantric utterances now and then is good for our souls. A disciple asked the Mother: “You spoke of Sri Aurobindo’s birth as eternal in the history of the universe. What exactly was meant by eternal?” Her answer:

“The sentence can be understood in four different ways on four ascending planes of consciousness:

1. Physically, the consequences of the birth will be of eternal importance in the world.
2. Mentally, it is a birth that will be eternally remembered in the universal history.
3. Psychically, a birth that recurs for ever from age to age upon earth.
4. Spiritually, the birth of the Eternal upon earth.

“Since the beginning of earth history, Sri Aurobindo has always presided over the great earthly transformations, under one form or another, one name or another.”

More than a hundred years ago, a Divine Child was born upon our earth, but none recognised him; no wise men with their offerings of gold, myrrh and frankincense came to worship him. He arrived incognito, “a colonist from Immortality”, bringing with him a new Dawn and a new consciousness. Probably his father alone, helped by his medical intuition, perceived that he was favoured with an unusual child, and unconsciously he hit upon the right name: Aurobindo—meaning Divine Consciousness. It was an entirely new name for him, not used so far for any other child. Much later on, a famous Calcutta astrologer remarked in a certain context that he was the world’s Aurobindo and that his fragrance would spread all over the earth. The Light he brought down began at once to act upon the whole world slowly and imperceptibly, till passing through great ordeals the Divine Child was revealed to us as “the Golden Purusha”. Soon in his wake, another Divine Child, “the Eternal’s artist

* Expanded version.

Bride", was born and the two working for a while in their respective spheres joined together at last—

The twin souls born from one undying fire.

*

Travellers across the limitless plains of Time
Together drawn from fate-led journeyings...

*

The united Two began a greater age.¹

Their combined "God's Labour" brought the work to fruition, at the end of which both of them left the world-stage to carry on their mission to ultimate Victory from behind the scene. One does not know how long it will take for the world to realise what a glorious Day is the 15th August! Meanwhile let "the wise men talk and sleep".

Leaving these cosmic musings, let me come to my own small domain—my reminiscences which you have called me to recount. But fortunately or unfortunately most of my reminiscences are now in your possession. I can therefore say nothing that will be new to you. Still, the sweet tragi-comedy the Lord played with me may give you some innocent delight.

Well, my remembrance goes almost to "a dark backward and abysm of time", the early 'thirties and covers a wide span of years during which I was lucky enough to witness the Divine Play sweet and sad, grim and gracious, that was enacted before our eyes—all bearing a transcendent touch. I will select, out of many baffling aspects of the supreme Actor, four directly concerning my own self. They are Sri Aurobindo the Grand, Sri Aurobindo the Friend, Sri Aurobindo the Bard, and Sri Aurobindo the Inscrutable.

On Sri Aurobindo the Grand, I won't dwell much, for many of you had the unforgettable ecstatic vision during the Darshans. His simple grandeur and sublimity redolent with sweetness and compassion, the transforming touch of his sunlike hand, the ineffable look of his seer-eyes, lifted us for a while into a world of pure bliss. At times, however, though near, he seemed far away, oblivious of the world. It may have been a subjective impression but it was awe-inspiring. Referring to this "grim" aspect, once I wrote to him: "The Overmind seems so distant from us, and your Himalayan austerity and grandeur takes my breath away, making my heart palpitate." Sri Aurobindo answered: "O rubbish! I am austere and grand, grim and stern! every blasted thing that I never was! I groan in an un-Aurobindian despair when I hear such things. What has happened to the common sense of all you people? In order to reach the Overmind it is not at all necessary to take leave of this simple but useful quality. Common sense by the way is not logic (which is the least common-sense-like thing in the world), it is simply looking at things as they are without inflation or deflation—not imagining wild imaginations—or for that matter despairing

¹ *Savitri*.

‘I know not why’ despairs.” This is the tone he often adopted in my relationship with him throughout my long correspondence, as if I were one of his close friends, a chum as they say in English. I will never know what made him so affable towards an average young man whose only credit was that he had a foreign medical degree. He may have found here some affinity, for his father was an England-trained medical man and he himself had a foreign training. You may laugh at my childish conjecture but you know the ways of the Divine are mysterious. Except for this degree I was more or less a cipher and what he has made of this cipher is really a small supramental miracle which I am going to narrate.

Let me start with a very minor example. To-day, I am called to give talks. But in my pre-yogic days I was like “poor Poll”, a shy and tongue-tied young man. After my first visit to the Mother, she remarked to Sri Aurobindo, “He is very shy.” My guardian, on being told that I wanted to go to England to study Law, gibed, “Law, indeed! He can’t even utter two words!” And today the Master of Yoga has made me tongue-freed, tongue-loosed, even *mūkam karoti vāchālam!* I believe I can face a multitude with the least auricular flutter!

I have turned out to be a writer also, one whose only writings had once consisted of answering voluminous examination papers, particularly the medical ones, or else penning brief elliptic prescriptions. But my extensive correspondence with Sri Aurobindo on various topics where I poured out most freely all that I knew and did not know, my stupidities, my exclamations, illogical logicisings, and his patient encouragement, bore fruit: it brought out the latent writer from the subliminal depths. When I look back at some samples of the writings, I wonder at my own literary distinction. If I spoke like “poor Poll”, I “wrote like an Angel”, though without knowing it! Here too lay the Master’s art: the freedom that he gave was the builder of my reputation.

But the plume in my cap was due to the pre-eminent achievement in the field of poetry, specially English poetry. It is a long, fascinating tale of how I, a medical man, was metamorphosed into a poet. Though I had a general taste for poetry I had read very little of it. I had no idea of metre or rhythm and a very scanty knowledge of the English language. Yet, when I proposed the Quixotic adventure of composing English verse, Sri Aurobindo instead of dismissing the idea out of hand embraced it, taught me metre, rhythm, corrected my poems, commented upon them, for years together; on the one hand was his gentle rebuke for my metrical and rhythmical gaucheries, on the other his god-like labour and patience which sustained me through all failures and vicissitudes, till he cried, “The poet is born. What about the yogi?” Once when, because of the difficult endeavour and unsatisfactory result, I wanted to throw in the sponge and complained, “Have I come here for poetry? Where is Yoga in all this?”, he replied, “You have not come for poetry, but poetry has come for you. So why not sing on the way?” And I went on singing, often out of tune and frequently not knowing what I was singing about. In this way we proceeded, till the gate was tragically closed owing to a mishap to his right leg on

the eve of the Darshan of November 24 in 1938.

By the way, a book of my English poems with Sri Aurobindo's remarks is in the press. If you want to verify my statements, please buy a copy. Innocent business propaganda!

Along with poetry Sri Aurobindo took up the burden of intellectualising me. Fancy, a man who had enjoyed games and sports more than his studies and passed the creative part of his life poring over medical books, now trying to become an intellectual. I admit, here too I had a seeking for knowledge, but that alone need not have spurred Sri Aurobindo to spend so much of his valuable time to achieve this objective.

I think he wanted to invalidate my own argument that Yoga cannot "supramentalise" an ordinary man, or did he make an experiment with me as a type to see how far Yogic power could develop faculties in an average man? Whatever may be the hidden reason, I was given an unrestricted scope and an abundant pasture-ground over which to range at will. Yoga, philosophy, religion, poetry, medicine, even politics, etc., etc. were my fare. Of course, the questions were of the kind a general reader would be interested in and the answers were addressed to that level. Still, at times they struck deeper mines and extracted bright gems. Such were topics like Avatarhood, Sri Aurobindo's personal life, especially political life on which I have a very precious document, homeopathy *vs* allopathy, action of spiritual force, women. As to how far he succeeded in intellectualising a 'wooden head' can be gauged from the epithet he has used.

But the extraordinary quality of the correspondence rested in the tone and manner he employed throughout the long training. A completely new aspect of Sri Aurobindo's personality came to light. First of all, he was as if carrying on an argument not with a disciple but with a pal of equal rank. So he gave free rein to his divine levity, iridescent humour sprinkling the discourse with light and delight and beauty. A vast catholicity, the modernity and the warmth of a temperate sun were the principal characteristics. Audaciously I pitted my own petty ideas against his: I denied the efficacy of his Karma Yoga; I tried to belittle the potency of homeopathic drugs; I questioned his living a 'dangerous life'. I claimed to find inconsistency in his arguments. I twisted even the 'tail of the supermind'. And in the long discussion on Avatarhood, when he again and again set his own example for us to follow, I rejected it outright as of no use for mortals like us. I argued, though vanquished. He persisted and warned, "As long as you don't accept it, I shall go on beating you." Apropos of which I don't know how I was prompted to recall an old joke about our College Librarian. I said in his vein, "Cut me or beat me, Sir, but don't forsake me." And the unexpected soul-assuring answer came pat, "Never! but beat a lot." You can imagine my unbounded joy when I read this oracle on the next day. Only once he was ironical, but instead of iron, it had the effect of a golden shaft. Here is the instance:

Replying in a long letter to my 'Jeremiads' as he called them, he ended with a

fortifying declaration, “But within there is a soul and above there is Grace. This is all you know or need to know.” I wrote back, “A most stimulating formula. Is that all really?”—and went on stupidly arguing again, instead of remaining content with it. I argued, “I have never heard that Grace did everything. And, where it seems to do so, how do we know that somebody has not done sadhana in his past life? You can’t deny this, can you?” He answered: “You can’t affirm it, can you?”

MYSELF: “I hesitate to believe much in Grace.... Even Ramakrishna’s baby-cat sadhak has to make a decisive movement of surrender....”

SRI AUROBINDO: “I never heard that the baby-cat was like that—if it were, it would not be a baby-cat.... But you have evidently so great a knowledge of spiritual things (surpassing mine and Ramakrishna’s) that I can only bow my head and pass humbly on to people with less knowledge.”

MYSELF: “If anybody can do the baby-cat surrender at a stroke, is it not because his ‘unfinished curve’ in the past life has finished in this?”

SRI AUROBINDO: “Hail, Rishi, all-knower! Tell us all about our past lives.”

MYSELF: “Surely the soul instead of sleeping has to aspire etc., to call down its Lord the Grace.... If you build my spiritual castle and poetic mansion on little trickles, then I can only say well, what shall I say?”

SRI AUROBINDO: “Better say nothing. It will sound less foolish.”

This last sting made me laugh heartily, as if I had been administered laughing gas!

This in short is the story of my long correspondence unique in the history of the relationship between the Guru and the disciple. Somebody has said that Plato’s and Buddha’s dialogues are unsurpassed. I presume that mine also may be added to the list. I anticipate a day when a candidate for a Doctorate thesis may choose this Divine-human Correspondence as his subject.

When the Mother heard most of the Correspondence read out to her, she smiled at many places and said to me, “He has given you everything.” She spoke about it in the *Agenda* also.

But Sri Aurobindo gained his laurels when he won me over from the clutch of the Man of Sorrows with whom I had established a grand alliance. How did he do it? Apart from the Force, it was the spring-freshness of his laughter in the Correspondence that made me laugh with him, expert physician that he was! My fits of depression, my doubts in season and out of season to which I had clung with a leech-like tenacity were blown off with letters such as these. Though there were tears in

one eye, the other eye was sparkling with sunshine. Once I wrote to him:

“I am thrown out of joint by two recent miracles, Sir: (1) R’s miraculous cure by Homeopathy—or is it yours? (2) N.K.’s writing English poetry, though Madam Doubt peeps still from behind. Anyhow, no chance for me. कपाल,¹ Sir!”

SRI AUROBINDO: “Why out of joint? It ought to strengthen your joints for the journey of Yoga.

“Not at all कपाल, sir. Mind, sir, mind. Madam Doubt, sir, Madam Doubt. Miss Material Intellectualism, sir! Aunt Despondency, sir. The whole confounded family, sir.”

At another time, I wrote: “Please ask Mother to give some blessings to this hopeless self.”

SRI AUROBINDO: “Vin. Ashirvadam m VII
 Recept. Chlor gr. XXV
 Aq. Jollity Ad lib
 Tic. Faith m XV
 Syr. Opt. zo ss.

12 doses every hour.”

MYSELF: “12 doses every hour!”

SRI AUROBINDO: “One each hour; plagiarised from your language.”

MYSELF: “And who is to bear the cost?”

SRI AUROBINDO: “Gratis for the poor.”

Lastly about poetry. I sent him a poem and asked him:

“What thinkest Thou of this anapaest poem, Sir —
 Written by my humble self? Pray, does it stir
 Any soft feelings in Thy deep within?
 Or touches not even Thy Supramental skin?”

He answered in the same vein:

“So soft, so soft, I almost coughed, then went aloft
 To supramental regions where rainbow-breasted pigeons

¹ Misfortune.

Coo in their sacred legions.

N.B. This inspired doggerel is perfectly private. It is an effort at abstract or surrealist poetry, but as I had no models to imitate, I may have blundered.”

You can realise then how the Man of Sorrows had to make his melancholy retreat before the avalanche of pure laughter.

All these things Sri Aurobindo did with a thoroughness which is the mark *par excellence* of a god. I am reminded of a verse from his poem “Who?”:

The hand that sent Jupiter spinning through heaven,
Spends all its cunning to fashion a curl.

The crowning victory, however, that I achieved was when I had the vision of him as the Bard, the Singer of the Everlasting Day of the Divine Song, *Savitri*, and I happened to be his human scribe. What shines even now before my eyes is his simple easy pose and what rings in my ears is his quiet clear voice and his dictation day after day of the entire Eleventh Book comprising nearly 600 lines with the least possible revision. Sitting on the bed and leaning slightly on a side pillow, the upper part of his body bare, the Rishi-like silver-golden beard swaying gently in the breeze and the eyes looking in front or towards the door, he dictated for about two hours at a stretch with a masterly ease during the last period. Sometimes, he looked at my writing pad and asked a question, but rarely met my glance. If hearing wrongly I made an amusing mistake he laughed and corrected it. So slow was the speed of the dictation, as if he was waiting for the next line, that I could have drafted some short letters to friends in the intervals. You may be amazed at the bluntness of my poetic perception, but though I had composed by that time many poems my appreciation of sublime spiritual poetry was still at a low level. K. D. Sethna’s (Amal Kiran’s) heart would have galloped perhaps with sheer delight. I could certainly feel that the verses were pouring down from high peaks of vision, but what struck me most was the sustained pitch of inspiration throughout, though there were diurnal breaks between the dictations. When, proceeding in this easy natural canter and giving the finishing touch to everything, he seemed to be in sight of the goal, he asked what else remained. “The Book of Death and the Epilogue,” I answered. “Oh, we shall see to that later on,” was his enigmatic reply. There the chapter closed and he took his well-earned divine rest.

To-day, as I realise more and more the marvel that is *Savitri*, I wonder at my own humble role. The entire episode appears like a scene enacted on another plane of existence. Here or there, I was born under a lucky star.

Now, to round off the talk, out of this long memorable association, three souvenirs glow in my heart. The first is, “Never forsake, but beat a lot.” The second is one occasion when he was rinsing his mouth and cleaning his teeth and I was attending to the ablution. He took out something from his mouth and extended his

hand towards me. I offered my hand and he gently posed something on my palm. Lo, it was a whole tooth! My face was all flushed with joy, but his wore no expression at all. He gave an invaluable treasure in such an impersonal manner as if it was a gift of no consequence. Do we not know how a tooth of Buddha has been venerated? The third is connected with the end of his earthly sojourn. Suddenly breaking his supposed uraemic coma and calling me by name, he made a request, He said, "Nirod, give me some water." These were his last words before he passed away about ten minutes afterwards, his last act of Grace, particularly so because he rarely called us by name. They were therefore pregnant with the meaning that he had wiped off all my failures while serving him during the period following the accident.

This leads me to the final feature of the drama, his inscrutability. The question which will ever remain an unsolved mystery is: "Why did he leave his body?" When everything was going on so well, the War had ended and India had become free, his magnificent message had chalked out India's great role on the world-stage and the Supermind was about to descend into Matter itself; above all when he, according to his own words, had cured himself of the serious malady he had been suffering from, why this self-undoing? All our queries come back baffled from the guarded silence of the Unknown. So I shall quote three sonnets on the subject: two from two disciples, the other from the Master himself written in 1939 soon after his accident and let the reader make what meaning he can.

"This Can Never Be the Close"

Unknown the reasons for Thy Sacrifice.
O Lord! Thy single word could cancel Fate,
What made Thee then to pass through Death's dire gate?
What Love impelled this careless throw of dice

In a cosmic game whose moves to us are veiled?
Thy deeds were planned in secrecy's abode,
In silence Thy flame-born wide-winged warriors rode
Behind earth-sight in Wisdom's armour mailed.

Only we know that this can never be
The close, but must a greater light descend
And Thou emerge once more in a glorious blend
Of Truth and Love and Joy that the world might see

A golden God proclaiming the end of Night
In a tardy evolution's ceaseless fight.

PRITHWI SINGH

Heaven's Light and Mortal Doom

The Parthenon's pillars built to upbear the sky
Could keep not even an earthly roof; and all
That colour kindled for the Eternal's eye
In deep Ajanta fades; no rhythms recall
The two grand plays the terrible chisel-stroke
Of the titan mind of Aeschylus set beside
Prometheus Bound: their power Time's brute hand broke.
Heaven's light passes—divine Aurobindo died.

But this one death, where Heaven's own self gave room
For dire eclipse of its eternity,
Has spent the whole blind force of mortal doom
Against the Soul's vision of a wondrous sod
In which the Undying can work His artistry.
Now Man breaks free to grow for ever God.

AMAL KIRAN

In the Battle

Often, in the slow ages' wide retreat
On Life's long bridge through Time's enormous sea,
I have accepted death and borne defeat
If by my fall some gain were clutched for Thee.

To this world's inconscient Power Thou hast given the right
To oppose the shining passage of my soul:
She levies on each step the tax of Night.
Doom, her unjust accountant, keeps the roll.

Around my way the Titan forces press;
This earth is theirs, they hold the days in fee,
I am full of wounds and the fight merciless:
Is it not yet Thy hour of victory?

Even as Thou wilt! What still to Fate Thou owest,
O Ancient of the worlds, Thou knowest, Thou knowest.

SRI AUROBINDO

At any rate, whatever may be the cause, I shall end with the Mother's words

to a discouraged disciple after Sri Aurobindo's withdrawal. She caught his hand and said:

"Nothing has changed. Go on asking Sri Aurobindo for inspiration, as you have always done. You will get the same help as before. Nothing has changed."

She also has passed away. But the Truth abides, like a star. For, they are ever with us just behind the earth-screen till their work is done. Meanwhile, to quote two verses from Shelley:

They wield the world with never-wearied love,
Sustain it from beneath, and kindle it above.

SRI AUROBINDO

From the Hill of Matheran

LORD, on Thy still face
I see the endless quiet and peace
Of massive mountain-moods
And the silent intensity of trees.

The wisdom and deep compassion
That rest in Thy gentle eyes
Are to me the depth and meaning of life,
The mystery and answer of colossal skies.

The grandeur of flaming sunsets,
The ageless strength of rocky space,
The lofty trance of soundless summits
Are merged for me in Thy silent face.

31.5.1956

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1982)

MYSELF: Mother, today what I heard from some sadhaks would have been better for me not to hear and for all not to hear. They were not saying it with any disrespect, still when they do utter things like “If the Supermind has descended, why should Mother’s eyes suffer?”, they don’t seem to know that it is not our business to bother about such matters. I was pondering: “Our limited mind, vision, consciousness can’t have the slightest inkling about these things; why then should we sit in judgment over them?” Maybe, I am posing myself as a superior being trying to judge others from an egoistic attitude. Still, I told them, “Have Sri Aurobindo and the Mother said anywhere that the Supermind has descended into their bodies?”

SRI AUROBINDO: No, I have not said that at all.

It is quite impossible for the Supramental to take up the body before there has been the full Supramental change in the mind and the vital. X and others seem always to expect some kind of unintelligible miracle—they do not understand that it is a concentrated evolution, rapid but following the law of creation, that has to take place. A miracle can be only a moment’s wonder. A change according to the Divine Law can alone endure.

14.11.33

MYSELF: Here in the Ashram many people say, “Mother and Sri Aurobindo want that our sadhikas should dress well.” I can’t accept this opinion, since both of you have often stressed detachment. My belief is that women are by nature much attached to good dress. If, however, Sri Aurobindo has written anything to this effect, I would like to know.

SRI AUROBINDO: After realisation whatever the Higher Will demands is the best—but first detachment is the rule. To reach the Freedom without the discipline and detachment is given to few. The Mother and myself went for years through the utmost self-imposed bareness of life.

15.11.33

MYSELF: I feel a sort of calm and quietness. I am aware still of what I have to do. Usually all our talks revolve round persons, their actions, doings etc. Now I see that if we put a stop to idle gossip, there remains hardly anything to talk about. Besides, even if the talks were of a good kind the sense of “I”, with its pride, superiority, has a play in various guises. So, there is no further incentive to talk. Everything seems to become quiet.

SRI AUROBINDO: What you say about ordinary conversations is quite correct and that all should fall away is very necessary for the true consciousness.

MYSELF: Now, the matter of food doesn't appear to be a problem. If anything good is sent to me the taste is enjoyable, but the former pleasure has changed its character. Once you said that these things can crop up after a long lapse. If I pay no attention to it, then what would you say?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is better to be careful in the matter of food etc.; as in the stage through which your sadhana is passing there is a considerable sensitiveness in the vital physical part of the being and it may be easily disturbed by a wrong impact or a wrong movement like overfeeding.

MYSELF: Mother, when K was overtaken by an attack of depression, I saw distinctly that he was possessed by something very black. I at once remembered the eclipse of the moon by Rahu. Just as the moon is slowly devoured by Rahu, so was he by this black something. I didn't have visions before. Is there any truth in it?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is so seen when the inner vision is opened. It is an influence from an adverse force or from the universal lower nature (an influence more often than a possession) that brings about this violent depression and disturbance and it is seen like a grey or black cloud or form throwing itself on the adhar.

MYSELF: Mother dear, people see light, radiance etc. in your face. Not all have this faculty. Can it be then the Divine Grace that enables one to see it? Or is it an inborn gift? Does this vision open by itself by people's contact with you or do you open it in them?

SRI AUROBINDO: What people see around the Mother is first her aura, as it is called nowadays and secondly the forces of Light that pour out from her when she concentrates as she always does on the roof for instance. (Everybody has an aura—but in most it is weak and not very luminous, in the Mother's aura there is the full play of lights and powers.) People do not see usually because it is a subtle physical and not a gross material phenomenon. They can see only in two conditions, first if they develop sufficient subtle sight, secondly if the aura itself begins to become so strong that it affects the sheath of gross matter which conceals it. The Mother has certainly no idea of making people see it—it is of themselves that one after another, some 20 or 30 in the Ashram I believe, have come to see. None of them are big yogis, some of them are mere beginners. It is certainly one of the signs that the higher Force (call it supramental or not) is beginning to influence matter. 15.11.33

MYSELF: After receiving that letter of Sri Aurobindo saying, "First detachment is the rule. The Mother and myself went for years through the utmost self-imposed bareness of life", an aspiration towards detachment has come upon me and a will that luxury or desire or habit of any kind should be eschewed. It is after the darshan of the 24th that the will has become active that I should plunge into sadhana with all sincerity.

SRI AUROBINDO: If it can be done (in a positive not merely in a negative way), then it would be an immense step forward. 18.11.33

MYSELF: Mother, Sri Aurobindo has written of a positive way, not a negative way. I can't make out what it means. Please explain.

SRI AUROBINDO: By negative I mean merely repressing the desire and wrong movements and egoism, by positive I mean the bringing down of light and peace and purity in those parts from above. I do not mean that these movements are not to be rejected—but all the energy should not be directed wholly to rejection. It must also be directed to the positive replacement of them by the higher consciousness. The more this consciousness comes, the easier also will the rejection be. 19.11.33

MYSELF: Mother, not 'this' or 'that' alone but all that is not the Divine I want to be free from and go forward.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, detachment from all that is not the Divine and development of all that is the Divine. 20.11.33

MYSELF: Mother, the resolution that I have taken is extremely difficult. I know it. Even so, since by your Grace it has come, I must proceed on the way. You know very well, Mother, that plenty of difficulties will try to entangle my steps: sentimentality, attachment, tenderness etc. will beckon me and block the way. But I must remain firm. On the 24th, laying down all my past at your feet and carrying your blessings and with complete surrender I would like to walk on the path with quiet steps. I am getting prepared within but the outer has not yet begun to follow.

SRI AUROBINDO: Determination is needed and a firm patience, not to be discouraged by this or that failure. It is a change in the habit of the physical nature and that needs a long patient work of detail. 21.11.33

MYSELF: I have no inclination for reading or writing or any other mental work, except to live within. Why is there this unwillingness, while the physical work is quite welcome?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no indispensable need to do these things when the mind is otherwise concentrated. At present the preparation of the inward change is more important than anything else. 21.11.33

MYSELF: I understand that I shouldn't pay any attention to whatever we do or say when seized by anger, for they aren't really part of our true nature, but still when it happens, for the moment I am much disturbed.

SRI AUROBINDO: I think it would be quite useless and harmful to lay stress on things said by anyone in these fits of the whirl of dark forces or to resent or remember them at all for they are exaggerations and perversions of the vital mind, that boil up whenever the vital is in effervescence and they cannot be taken as something deli-

berately thought and spoken. It is better to let them disappear and be forgotten as if they had not been said—to give them importance strengthens them to return when the occasion arises. 30.11.33

MYSELF: It is not that I have no weakness for things, but I feel a joy to see that to reject firmly and to call for your help are helping me greatly not to submit to the weakness or to think of these things. The result being: by rejection grows the strength of rejection.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is so. Each victory gained over oneself means new strength to gain more victories. 7.12.33

(To be continued)

THE HUSH

Hushed is the sky profound,
the fathomless earth,
the peak of the Himalaya,
Hushed the clusters of stars.

Hushed the velleities of mind,
the uncertainties of thought,
the memory of the past,
Hushed the ponderings of the self.

Hushed the dreamland vast,
the strivings unceasing,
the prostrations and chants,
Hushed all communings, all contemplating.

Thou alone at last,
O Thou!

SHAM KUMARI

(Translated by "The Mother's Gardener" from the Hindi)

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of November 1982)

The Mother's Message

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



17

THE new month arrived and a card showing a flower—water-lily—together with these words:

“This flower of beauty and sweetness—with all my love and blessings, always.
The Grace is with you.”

Right from the morning I was not quite well—I felt terribly uneasy in my heart and had a premonition of something unknown and awful.

I went without any feeling to the Prosperity Room to receive the Mother's blessings as she used to give blessings there to people every first of the month.

In the evening the Mother saw me in her room at the Playground. She at once knew my state of mind. I was very much conscious of the fact, and perturbed at finding myself in the grip of an emotion to which I could give no name. She held my hands and went into a trance for a few moments, and then gave me flowers. She did not talk. I took my leave.

I was not in the mood to attend the Wednesday class in the courtyard of the Playground.

The following morning the Mother sent a lovely card picturing a deer and these words followed:

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

“All my love and blessings and assurance of the constant Presence of the Grace.”

I really got bored remaining in the same consciousness. Nothing seemed right. I started remembering my own people. I did not go to the Mother.

Oh! everything was so hopelessly confused in my mind. The more I tried to fathom the condition and reach an answer the more muddled I became.

At night I felt as if horrible invisible entities were all around me—in the very air I breathed—and they were constantly on the watch to assault me. In fact I was attacked by the hostile forces, and my mind became a mad whirl of doubts and fears. I wondered whether the Mother loved me and cared for me sufficiently. My heart had sunk low with despair, I put a hand to my eyes and tried desperately to collect my shattered consciousness into some semblance of order, but without avail. Once the whole being was in disorder, I felt—to adapt a phrase of Vivekananda's—like a wild, mad and drunken monkey bitten by bees.

On top of this, some people had been difficult to reason with, and I was hurt by their misunderstandings. I did not know what to say or do. I was not all the time with the Mother. I had to deal with several people regarding my work.

The Mother sent me a card in the morning, with a quotation from her own writings:

“Sincerity is the certitude of Victory. Sincerity! Sincerity! How sweet is the purity of thy presence.”

On the same card she wrote:

“Bonjour, to my dear little child, to my *sweet Huta* who must come in front and leave no place in the consciousness for that which contradicts her true na-

ture. The Grace is always there to accomplish that transformation.

“With my love and blessings.”

In the evening I went to the Mother. She chided me rather severely. I felt choked with humiliation and wounded pride; I sat mute. Then a sudden sense of shameful compunction smote my heart and my anger began to cool down. My head drooped a little, and I was dejected. The Mother saw the gleam of unshed tears in my eyes. She drew me near her to soothe me.

She kept trying to make a bridge between herself and me, but I persisted in knocking it down by receiving suggestions from the hostile forces and acting accordingly. There seemed to be no end to it.

I did not see the film at the Playground.

Tired out though I was, owing to numerous thoughts, sleep came reluctantly to my eyes that night.

In the morning the Mother sent me a card showing many deer drinking water from a pool, and these lines followed:

“Of one thing you can be sure, if I was not certain that you will reach your goal, I would never scold you, because it would be useless. My scolding is a proof of my conviction that you will succeed.

“My love and blessings are always active with you.”

To be very frank, I am not at all ashamed to state that sometimes the Mother scolded me rather severely. Nevertheless, she knew exactly how much I was capable of grasping and she was determined to get the best from my soul.

Sri Aurobindo has explained the dealings of the Mother with her children in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 25, p. 268:

“The Mother speaks or writes much more pointedly and sharply to those whom she wishes to push rapidly on the way because they are capable of it, and they do not resent or suffer but are glad of the pressure and the plainness because they know by experience that it helps them to see their obstacles and change.”

In the evening the Mother and I meditated for quite a long time. After that she revealed my inner state through a sketch which she did before me, and explained what my situation was. While pointing to the sketch she said:

“There are two things for human beings. Either one can go up towards the Supraconscious or go down towards the Subconscious. The material vital or ego is just in the centre—it is called the ego-centre also. The psychic being is between the Supraconscious and the material vital.

“At present your consciousness is in the ego-centre. It is surrounded by

all kinds of lower and narrow elements, and as a result you cannot see and understand anything about the Supraconscious. At the moment you can see only the things which are just before you. Now, what you have to do is to get into the psychic consciousness. This is the first condition for the Divine Life, and then gradually you can enter into the Supraconscious—into the Divine Consciousness. My child, it will certainly take time.”

The Mother is also reported, in the book *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part Eight, p. 138, as saying:

“...You are occupied, most of the time with other things. You are full of yourself, packed with it, and there is no room for anything else. You are not merely passively filled with yourself, but very actively, you are furiously busy with yourself. How can you notice then the marvellous things that are about you, around you? You get a glimpse unawares, perhaps when you are asleep; but it is faded very soon. Man’s ego is a formidable thing; the whole universe, to him, is a mere function of the ego. You are the centre and the entire creation revolves around you. Such is your vision of the universe. You do not see it as it is; you see only yourself when you look at it.

“To begin, then, you must be able to come out of your ego. You will have to enter, as the first step, into something like a state of inexistence. Thereafter only you will begin to see things as they are, that is to say, from a height....”

The Mother’s Light and Force acted upon my whole being. My innumerable defects came one by one to the surface to show themselves. I was baffled and thought that the dark journey in the subconscious was never-ending.

The night grew darker and darker but still I sat in my arm-chair, solemnly brooding over the countless problems of my life, and never thought of going to bed. My brain grew dizzy.

The next morning the Mother gave me assurance on a pretty card:

“Even the greatest darkness of night is bound to disappear in front of the Dawn.

“Remember your soul and its aspiration: the Sun will rise—this is certain.

“With my love and blessings.”

But Old Nick was all the time there and played his hand skilfully. It was very easy to yield to his suggestions. He set temptations in such various and alluring forms that it was impossible to discriminate right from wrong, good from bad. This mocking, laughing devil whispered from morning till evening—day in and day out—doubts about the Divine: “Is He really the creator of the whole universe and governing it?”

Does He really exist? If so, why all the miseries, sufferings and troubles?" All these challenges the devil put into my brain, they drove me totally mad. I was really 'between the devil and the deep blue sea'.

Besides, some people ruffled me, and I was caught in a swirl of emotion. Vainly I fumbled to get out of the confusion.

The Mother sent me another card of flowers—*Gladiolus*—and these words:

"This is to remind you to be *receptive* to the Grace and to act under your *soul's* inspiration.

"With my love and blessings constantly with you."

On Sunday the 12th, the Mother went to the Meditation Hall downstairs to distribute saris and handkerchiefs. A week before the Darshan Days she did so. As always, her high chair was placed near the staircase surrounded by beautiful flowers which were of various hues, shapes and fragrances. She looked majestic and charming in a printed sari. When she saw me approaching, a sudden smile kindled in her starry eyes.

That evening I saw her once again and said to her: "Mother, it is really hard to remain in the psychic consciousness and act according to it. You know already that there is a hotchpotch of lower elements in me. They do not let me remain in peace so that I may contemplate on my soul. I have still a long way to go to reach a really happy state. I also keep thinking about my future. What will happen to me? I am so alone and young. Suppose I fail in this life...."

She stretched out a hand to tuck a strand of my hair behind my ear and while caressing my hair she said:

"Such a thing is unthinkable. Why do you think of the future? You must not think much in advance. The Supreme Wisdom is to think about things only when they happen, not otherwise. If you think a lot and pile up a huge mountain of difficulties in front of you, then naturally you suffer terribly and say, 'Alas! what will happen now?' Child, you should not think about your past and future. You should only think of the present time and act accordingly. Then surely you will realise the Truth. You see, nobody knows the future except the Divine."

Here I recall Jal-al-udin Rumi's words:

"Past and future veil Him from thy sight.
Burn both in fire."

The Mother looked penetratingly into my eyes. I experienced the powerful sparks from their brilliance touching my heart.

While going home I felt strongly within me that since she had granted me a golden

opportunity to see her every evening, I should make the most of it. I should pray to her to give me meditations regularly so that I could receive all that she gave me. At the moment, we did not meditate regularly though I went to her every day. I expressed my feeling to her and she answered on a card showing a sweet little baby-fawn near a pretty bush:

“I read your nice letter. Your proposal is good—when there is nothing to say we shall sit quietly together with love and aspiration—and only when there is something that has to be said, we shall speak. And then also love and Grace will be there as they are, indeed, always present. With my blessings.”

And this is how I used to meet the Mother at the Playground, in her room which was now renovated and looked quite attractive. Whenever I entered it, my first glance would fall on Sri Aurobindo's photograph—garlanded with fragrant flowers and ever-green leaves; and then on a beautiful drawing—*alpina*—on the floor, which added to the charm of it all. On the writing table there was always a fine arrangement of various kinds of pretty flowers, which had a lovely scent. The whole atmosphere conveyed the feeling of an ethereal world. When I turned to my left, there she sat glorious on her couch, all smiles. She always received me lovingly. I used to sit near her feet, on the carpet. After we had exchanged our flowers which communicated mutely our feelings of love, she held my hands in hers and looked deep into my eyes. Sometimes the Mother went into a trance for a few minutes and sometimes for more than an hour. During the meditation, I felt a sweet warmth emanating from her physical Presence. Frankly speaking, I did not know how to meditate—also, I was not fully conscious of her working in me. But I felt exceedingly happy to be near the Mother. After the meditation, she gathered me into her arms and kissed my forehead and cheeks. Many a time I laid my cheek against hers and closed my eyes for a moment or two and felt utter relief. Lastly, once again she concentrated for a few seconds while pressing my hands in order to fill my being with her Force. I put my head in her lap, she caressed my hair tenderly. Slowly I collected the flowers she gave me and departed.

I have noticed that whenever the Mother took my hands into hers and pressed them, her delicate perfume lingered on my palms for hours on end, and it reminded me of her comforting closeness, which I loved.

*

The previous month—July 1956—I had started embroidering a huge ship on a beautiful almond-coloured silken cloth. The ship had sailed on an ocean, cutting many waves. I had to use various kinds of coloured silk-thread to show the vividness of the whole panorama.

The embroidered cloth was going to be fixed on a wooden screen designed by

the Mother. Afterwards the screen would be placed in Sri Aurobindo's room on his birthday—the 15th August.

The Lord's birthday was approaching soon. I was extremely busy with my work.

Well, the night of the 13th August was a real trial for me, because still there was much to do in embroidery. Usually, I would finish my work before the scheduled date but this time I failed to do so. For, I had not been keeping quite up to the mark. I had to offer the cloth to the Mother just the next morning. Every moment was now precious to me. So without further ado I set my heart firmly to the task. This was the first time in my life I kept awake the whole night. I had to sit down on the floor to do the embroidery, because the cloth was fastened on a low wooden frame.

My back ached acutely—I was heedless of the pain. My eyes closed often so I splashed water on them to soothe them.

Time and again I had a glimpse, through my shutters, of a faint light coming from the Mother's room, and I was conscious of her Presence. Oh! là-là, suddenly the frogs from the water canal which ran round the garden of Golconde began to sing their chorus, seeming to vary from tenor to baritone to bass. The shrill singing of crickets added to the orchestra!

My memory flashed back to the night when we had caught seventy-five frogs. I remembered carrying a torch to point them out—some had sat leisurely on the big leaves of water-lilies, others had been swimming briskly and yet others jumping on the grass! My fellow-Golcondians had carried small pots and jars to catch them in and then put them one by one into a big earthen pot.

As a matter of fact, personally I do not mind the serenade of these creatures, but for sheer fun I had set out on the hunt. I say 'hunt' but that is just an expression. We did not in the least harm the frogs. We only wanted to get them out of Golconde. So they were collected and taken somewhere far away and there set free to continue their croaking career until in Nature's good time they would finally 'croak', as slang would put it.

The night wore on gradually. The sky paled and the last stars faded. It was still quiet. The faint rose-pink glow of dawn appeared. I could now see the bright light of the Mother's bathroom; yes, she was already up. The scent of incense sticks which burnt at the Samadhi mingled with the smell of the fresh-baked bread from the bakery which is close to the Ashram and Golconde.

Once again fear and nervousness gripped me. Oh God! there were yet a few details left. I skipped the balcony darshan and breakfast. I took my bath in a great hurry and started once again the embroidery. Meanwhile I received a card from the Mother, saying:

"To my dear little child, to my sweet Huta
À tout à l'heure at 11 o'clock. I shall be in
Sri Aurobindo's room to receive your embroidery.
With all my love and blessings."

I shed a few tears, because the embroidery was not yet completed. My fingers ran like a machine on the cloth, I finished the embroidery just in time at 10.45. I ran to the Ashram. I went into Sri Aurobindo's room, and lo! the Mother was already there. Her smile and look set my fluttering heart at rest. I gave her the embroidery. She viewed it minutely and showed her satisfaction. She told me that after the cloth was attached to the wooden screen, it would remain in Sri Aurobindo's room. Afterwards she gave me white roses and gazed into my eyes, which were quite red. I told her: "Yes, I did not sleep at all last night, because I wanted to finish the work." She said with concern:

"Oh! but now you must go and sleep."

I said: "No Mother, I cannot—I have lots of other things to do." She patted my cheeks and kissed my forehead. I felt good with her in Sri Aurobindo's room.

Confused emotions drained me. I went to bed early that night, completely exhausted. The next morning the Mother sent me a lovely card showing red lotuses which were so symbolic on the Lord's birthday. She wrote on the card:

"À tout à l'heure at darshan
With all my love and blessings."

In the morning I wore the sari the Mother had given on Sunday. I combed my hair in two plaits. I always wore my hair like that. At times the Mother used to pull my plaits. For, my hair was very long. I used to put oil on my hair and no make-up at all.

At 10 a. m. I entered Sri Aurobindo's room. My glance fell on the screen with the embroidered cloth. I felt that it looked nice in the room, the whole atmosphere of the room was heaven-haunted, packed with concrete silence and sweetness.

The Mother distributed her message to people in the Meditation Room upstairs. Her attire was superb and her love and smile were divine.

The message was in the form of a card depicting red flowers—*Haemanthus*, Blood lily or Red Cape Tulip—and underneath it was inscribed:

"Supramental Manifestation."

I have read a glorious description of the manifestation of the Supramental in the book, *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*, pp. 254-55:

"...The manifestation of a supramental truth-consciousness is therefore the capital reality that will make the divine life possible. It is when all the movements of thought, impulse and action are governed and directed by a self-existent

and luminously automatic truth-consciousness and our whole nature comes to be constituted by it and made of its stuff that the life divine will be complete and absolute. Even as it is, in reality though not in the appearance of things, it is a secret self-existent knowledge and truth that is working to manifest itself in the creation here. The Divine is already there immanent within us, ourselves are that in our inmost reality and it is this reality that we have to manifest; it is that which constitutes the urge towards the divine living and makes necessary the creation of the life divine even in this material existence....”

In the evening there was a march-past in the Playground. The Mother took the salute from her children while standing against the map of undivided India.

Indeed it was a joy to do the marching with a band. During the march-past I felt that we were the army of Light. These verses from *Savitri*, Book Two Canto Seven, pp. 211, came to my mind:

“Only were safe who kept God in their hearts:
 Courage their armour, faith their sword, they must walk,
 The hand ready to smite, the eye to scout,
 Casting a javelin regard in front,
 Heroes and soldiers of the army of Light.”

I was pleased to hear from some people about my embroidered cloth. I particularly like the remark by Mona Pinto:

“I saw your ship in Sri Aurobindo’s room. It was really beautiful and luminous. One felt as if it was actually sailing. It gave the sense of life.”

For several years the screen remained in Sri Aurobindo’s room. When the Mother retired upstairs for good in 1962, the screen too was taken upstairs to the small room next to the music room which was called also the interview room. After the Mother’s passing away the screen was kept in her private Stores where I used to work. I saw it there in March 1982.

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Often my whole being quivered with fear, doubt and restlessness. I felt strongly a surge of the old melancholy beginning to oppress me. The Mother was perfectly aware of my troubles. She also knew that my nervous system was too delicate to stand such shocks and she had carefully shielded me from them more than once. But owing to my hyper-sensitivity and moodiness, I got upset about so many things.

The Mother sent me a picture card accompanied by these words:

“The thoughts of the Divine are like white doves of peace and sweetness.
“My love and blessings surround you.”

Nothing interested me. I found myself bored to death. Everything and everybody got on my nerves. More and more I sank into depression.

During that time my elder brother suggested in one of his letters that I go either to Africa or to Kashmir for a change.

I asked the Mother whether I could go to Africa. She answered on a card depicting golden roses—‘Golden Dawn’:

“This is the ‘golden dawn’—the dawn of a victorious day.

“I have read your letter. You did well to come to me on the darshan day although you had to wait long for it—but that cannot be avoided in these busy days. For some days more it will be like that so long as there are so many visitors who all ask to see me. But after some time it will become better again.

“As for the question you are putting I shall answer later on when it is time to take a decision.

“My love and blessings are always at work for you and in you even when you do not feel it.”

One morning I suddenly went to the Mother and met her in a corridor and told her all about my hatred towards human beings. She put her hands on my shoulders and said sharply:

“So you dislike my creation, eh! If you don’t change your attitude, then I will have nothing to do with you. I will only love you if you love the whole humanity and turn to the earth. Do you understand what I mean?”

I did not answer. I was stunned and ran away from her, battling with my tears and an anguished heart. Anger in me was fanned into an all-consuming flame as my ego felt wounded. My moods had been queer for many days—uncertain and unhappy with sudden bursts of incomprehensible bitterness. Now I started hating the Mother.

The Mother advised me to go to Kashmir with one of my brothers when he would arrive from Africa. But I knew all too well that I did not wish to go to Kashmir. I wrote to her saying that she was purposely punishing me; otherwise, being the Divine, she would set me free from my present state. She answered:

“I have no intention of punishing you and will never do so. It is a pity that you are harming yourself so much and uselessly—but one day this also will have to go and nothing will stand in the way of your progress and your realisation.

“I have given you all permission to do as you think best. And yesterday

itself I told you that to quiet down the opposition and revolt in you it might be wiser to go to Kashmir with your brother for a month or so and after you will come back and find things easier. I need you in November for the 'doll' exhibition because you will have to arrange the section of the 'idols' which will certainly be the great success of the exhibition. So I want you to be quite well and strong at that time.

"Once for all take out of your mind the idea that I can punish you or separate you from me because I will never do it, and always I shall keep you wrapped in my love and protected by my Grace. With my blessings."

Before I went to bed I penned the following letter to Laljibhai:

Respected Brother,

Loving greetings along with the Mother's blessings.

I have received all the letters which you wrote to the Mother. I handed them over to the Mother on that very day.

She said nothing. But I am confident that whatever she will do will be best. Please do not worry.

I am glad to learn about Paroobhai's departure for India on the 28th August.

You have suggested to me that I should go with Paroobhai either to Kashmir or to E. Africa when he goes back there. I have already told the Mother about the matter. She said that I could go to Kashmir.

Well, I have given up the idea at present. Besides, it is not the season for Kashmir now. Actually, people are coming from there, because of heavy snowfall.

My health is so-so. I do not really know what will happen. Nevertheless, the Mother is taking great care of me.

I am sure all of you are well. Please remember me to all and convey my good wishes. Give my love to the children and pranam to our father. I trust both our sisters are fine. Our mother's letter came from Rajkot a few days back. She is all right.

Now what else to write?

Kindly tell Vasantbhai that I have received his letter and shall answer it a little later.

Happy to learn that you have sent to Maganbhai the list of painting materials and my letter. I believe that within a short time he will be back in Mirwani from London. I hope he will send me everything directly to Pondicherry.

How is Paroobhai's health? I reckon he is better.

Do write to me.

With the kindest regards along with the Mother's blessings.

Huta

I did not want to accompany my brother; I wished to return to Africa to my parents. A strong feeling carried me back nostalgically to memories of the past, to

the old carefree life. In answer to a letter the Mother wrote:

“You are repeatedly asking permission to go to Africa and you want an immediate answer—so I am writing here that the *permission is given*.

“With all my love and blessings.”

My brain reeled under this terrible shock. Remorse, anxiety and despair played havoc with me. I understood within my true self, as I mused over the matter, that I did not want anything else except the Mother and with a sudden cry of irresistible emotion I broke out into a passion of tears after I had finished reading her reply.

Indeed, Shakespeare had the right words:

“The grief that does not speak
Whispers the o’er-fraught heart and bids it break.”

I wrote to the Mother that it would surely break my heart if we parted. And she answered:

“My very dear little child,

“I have seen your letter *just now*—and at once I want to tell you this: Never, never, *never I shall leave you*—you will *always* be my little child whom I love dearly and *always* I will be with you to help you—the permission has been given because *you asked* for it—but you are not obliged to use it—on the contrary, if your heart tells you that you do not want it, you need not make use of it at all.

“Love and blessings.”

The tempest in me still did not subside. I skipped the Mother’s French class. Several times during that evening I was filled with wonderment at the contrast and conflict in my whole being. I sat on the wide ledge under my window, and buried my face in my arms and cried out, “O Compassionate Lord, O Merciful Mother, blot out all my defects. Make me forget my past, for only you have the power to heal my sorrow. Grant me the Grace to be truly patient and a good child of yours. I will try my best to love your creation.”

I have already mentioned in the account dealing with the year 1955 that in one of my letters to the Mother I expressed the feeling of my soul that I did not wish to have joy and happiness for myself alone—I wanted them for others too—and her answer was:

“Yes, I know that.”

Now, here, in fact it was my outer being, the exterior nature, which had a feel-

ing of hatred towards human beings.

Indeed, struggles between the outer and the inner self were constant. Nonetheless, within my true self I knew all too well that I was not brought into the world just to be selfish and self-interested, but to be a true child of the Divine, who could use my life for His purpose.

Next morning, the Mother answered on a fine card showing Mahalakshmi:

“Here is a nice Lakshmi for your collection. I have received your promise and will never forget it.

“My help, love and blessings will always be with you.”

I went to the source of my present miseries and found the World Forces evolving very fast and influencing living beings. Jealousy and self-centredness were the very root of endless troubles and miseries. They had come to have a grip on me ever since my childhood, because I had been totally surrounded by a narrow environment. I had had no wide field to develop my consciousness. I had lived like the others: ‘In Rome live as the Romans do.’ Even if I disliked and hated the customs, company, atmosphere and circumstances, I was compelled to dip myself into the falsehood. I had no choice or voice against the clamour of Universal Nature. No wonder my true self was crushed ceaselessly and ruthlessly. With my over-sensitiveness I was aware of collective suggestions and various vibrations. They got me all muddled.

When I saw the Mother in the evening, I told her all about my childhood. At that period I could not possibly express my feelings, my wishes to anybody. I could not even confide in my parents. They provided me with my material needs and left me alone. They were always busy and absorbed in their own activities of daily life. Not that I blame them.

My father loved me dearly. I remember having travelled all over Africa with him in a car, hundreds of miles at a stretch, when I was only five or six years old. But he did not care one way or the other what I really aspired for. He was a businessman and industrialist.

I remembered an incident of my childhood, which had left a deep impression in my consciousness.

When I was a child of three or four years of age, I was travelling with my father. On his way to a certain town he met an English captain of a small steamer which ran along the river Nile.

My father’s chauffeur carried me to the upper deck where my father and the captain were talking. Looking over the rail, I caught sight of what was happening on the lower deck. A native cook was rapidly chopping off the heads of a large number of cocks. The screeching of the birds and the splashing of the blood struck me with horror. I was in a cold perspiration and instantly fainted. When my eyes opened I was already in the car. My father tried to soothe me and the captain opened a

big box of chocolates in front of me and offered them to me. I refused to eat them. I begged my father to take me home to my mother. He did so. I recall my mother telling me later that I used to scream in my sleep in the middle of the night. The memory was so heart-piercing that even now I cannot obliterate the impression.

My father and the poor captain thought that I had a severe sun-stroke. Unfortunately I could not explain to them my feelings. I am a vegetarian.

My eyes filled with tears. The Mother listened to me very seriously and attentively. Then she smiled—the most tender, curiously sad smile I had ever seen on her face. So much softness combined with so much power showed in her eyes. She drew me close to her, pressed my head against her heart and said soothingly:

“I know and I have seen that parents do not really know how to bring up their children, how to understand their feelings, how to be considerate and how to lead them towards an ideal life.

“My child, if you had come to me right from the very beginning of your childhood, you would have attained your goal long ago and would never have gone through such hideous difficulties....”

She withdrew into herself for a while and then spoke with a calm voice:

“To be generous is to be benevolent towards everyone—not only materially but also in the heart and in the mind. It means always to have goodwill towards all. Even in the mind there must never be any ill-will towards anybody or anything.

“To have a generous heart is to be always joyful and happy in the happiness and joy of others and to remain in harmony with all and to approach them with kindness. This attitude helps a great deal to widen the consciousness and to open the heart and the mind to the Divine’s influence and thus you get joy and happiness from everything. It is in that way that generosity can put an end to most of the difficulties.”

The Mother has explained nicely about generosity in *Questions and Answers 1950-1951*, p. 27:

“I shall not speak here of material generosity which naturally consists in giving others what one has. But even this virtue is not very widespread, for as soon as one becomes rich one thinks more often of keeping one’s wealth than of giving it away. The more men possess, the less are they generous.

“I want to speak of moral generosity. To feel happy, for example, when a comrade is successful. An act of courage, of unselfishness, a fine sacrifice have a beauty in them which gives you joy. It may be said that moral generosity consists in being able to recognise the true worth and superiority of others.”

In the book *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, part 5, p. 35, it is rightly written:

“...The surroundings in which a child lives and grows form the atmosphere which he breathes in at every moment and if there is a poison in it, he inhales and imbibes the poison which becomes part of his substance and nature...”

In one of her talks on education, the Mother says about parents:

“...When they have brought a child into the world, and when they have given him food and satisfied his various material wants by looking more or less carefully to the maintenance of his health, they think they have fully discharged their duty. Later on, they would put him to school and hand over to the teacher the care of his mental education...”

“...With very few exceptions, parents do not take into account the disastrous influence their defects, impulses, weaknesses, want of self-control have on their children...”

The Mother also says in her book, *Words of the Mother*, pp. 182-183:

“It is an invaluable possession for every living being to have learnt to know himself and to master himself. To know oneself means to know the motives of one’s actions and reactions, the why and the how of all that happens in oneself. To master oneself means to do what one has decided to do, to do nothing but that, not to listen to or follow impulses, desires or fancies.

“To give a moral law to a child is evidently not an ideal thing; but it is very difficult to do without it. The child can be taught, as he grows up, the relativity of all moral and social laws so that he may find in himself a higher and truer law. But here one must proceed with circumspection and insist on the difficulty of discovering that true law. The majority of those who reject human laws and proclaim their liberty and their decision to ‘live their own life’ do so only in obedience to the most ordinary vital movements which they disguise and try to justify, if not to their own eyes, at least to the eyes of others. They give a kick to morality, simply because it is a hindrance to the satisfaction of their instincts.

“No one has a right to sit in judgement over moral and social laws, unless he has taken his seat above them; one cannot abandon them, unless one replaces them by something superior, which is not so easy.

“In any case, the finest present one can give to a child would be to teach him to know himself and to master himself.”

That night, when I was in my room, I felt that perhaps it was not too late for the Mother to mould me the way she wished because I was still like unshaped clay in her

hands. Moreover, she had promised transformation to me; I was consoled.

Then suddenly a cry broke from the depths of my heart:

“O Mother, help me to be generous in my thoughts and actions. Wipe away my bitterness and teach me to seek out the best in people—whoever they are, however different they may seem outwardly.

“Let me be what you want me to be....”

The Mother sent me a pretty card with these words:

“Bonjour to my dear little child, to my sweet Huta,
For that one who wants the Divine alone, all events in life come to teach a lesson and bring you closer to your goal.”

The Mother sent me yet another beautiful card—the picture of Avalokiteshvara, holding a lotus in his right hand—a reproduction of the magnificent painting from the Ajanta caves, and her reassuring words:

“Forever with you along with Grace, the Divine Presence, the love and blessings.”

*

Now I was jotting down all that the Mother had said previously about spirituality and art. I asked her whether she would see and correct my notes. She answered:

“I have read your very nice letter and it is with great pleasure that I shall see your diary and correct it if necessary.

“These days I am still very busy and cannot call you in the morning, but if you bring your diary at the playground I will see it there. With all my love and blessings for ever.”

That evening I did not take the diary because of her French class.

The next morning the Mother sent me a card of printed flowers—Snap-dragon (*Antirrhinum majus*)—with these lines:

“Here is the power of expression to help you in your writing. Yes, bring to the playground what is ready—it is better to see it little by little.

“With my love and blessings always in the Grace.”

That evening I acted according to wish.

The next morning she wrote on a card showing some flowers—Carnations—the following lines:

“Indeed, yesterday I was quite pleased with the way you remembered what I had told you and I will be glad to correct what you are writing—consequently it will be better to put it in a general way as you propose to do.

“It is good that you have a good and correct memory—it can be made quite useful.

“With my love and blessings in the Grace always with you.”

That evening she saw what she had said previously about generosity.

The next morning a card of printed flowers—*Balsamina*—came from her, and these words followed:

“Here is some fine ‘generosity’ in all parts of the being. It goes to you accompanied by my love and blessings and the Grace that never leaves you.”

Ever since she sent me the card, I have sincerely tried to be generous.

(To be continued)

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AN AUROBINDONIAN CHRISTIAN

A LETTER

YOUR extremely friendly letter and the enclosed fine-feeling'd articles of Bede Griffiths have been lying in front of me for quite a time. Now at last I have sufficient leisure to give them the lengthy consideration they deserve.

Let me at the very start tell you that I remember our meetings in the Ashram with great warmth and also that I have never wavered in my general admiration for Bede Griffiths ever since I came across a pamphlet of his on Hinduism. Recently I went through his *Return to the Centre*, marking several passages of keen insight which go beyond the conventional and traditional in common Christianity and make living contact with the basic truths of all mystical experience. Orthodox Catholicism might get shocked on finding grounds to suspect what may be called "panpsychism" or even "pantheism" — but actually these "heresies" appear not in their European form which can be taken to exclude or negate the transcendent Divine but in their Indian version in which, as far back as the Rigveda, the Seers perceived about the Supreme Purusha that "one quarter of him is here on earth, three quarters are above in heaven". In these matters as well as in many others one would not be wrong to term Griffiths an Aurobindonian Christian. And how indeed can he be essentially anything else when his book contains the truest and greatest compliment ever paid to Sri Aurobindo by any Catholic? Perhaps he is the only Catholic interpreter—except for Abbé Monchanin and Beatrice Bruteau—who gives Sri Aurobindo his due. Compared to him, writers like Father Feys, for all their show of intellectual acumen, are plausible frauds in the end. So memorable is Griffiths's passage on Sri Aurobindo that I should like to cull it for you from his book:

"In his philosophy there is a wonderful synthesis, based on the Vedanta, of ancient and modern thought. In him the values of being and becoming, of Spirit and matter, of the One and the many, of the eternal and the temporal, of the universal and the individual, of the personal God and the absolute Godhead, are integrated in a vision of the whole, which has never been surpassed in depth and comprehensiveness. In the integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo the values of matter and life and human consciousness and the experience of a personal God are not lost in the ultimate Reality, the divine Sachchidananda. Matter and life and consciousness in man are seen to be evolving towards the divine life and the divine consciousness, in which they are not annihilated but fulfilled." (p. 137)

The Supramental Physical and the Body of the Resurrection

Just after these words Griffiths writes:

"This is the goal of a Christian Yoga. Body and soul are to be transfigured by the divine life and to participate in the divine consciousness. There is a descent of the

Spirit into matter and a corresponding ascent, by which matter is transformed by the indwelling power of the Spirit and the body is transfigured..." (pp. 137-8)

I can understand Griffiths's seeing a general analogue of Aurobindonianism in Christianity, but what he says here applies to every *via mystica*, especially the Sufi kind, which is a blend of Vedanta and Vaishnavism. The comparison can bear uniquely on Christianity if Griffiths's next paragraph can hold true. He continues:

"For a Christian this has already taken place in the resurrection of Christ. In his body matter has already been transformed, so as to become a spiritual body, which is the medium of the divine life..." (*Ibid.*)

In the address delivered at the International Transpersonal Conference held in Bombay from the 14th till the 20th February this year, Griffiths touches on the theme again and, referring to Sri Aurobindo, says:

"He conceived that...the Supermind descends not only into the soul or psychic consciousness but also into the body or physical consciousness. In fact, it is well known that he and the Mother, who accompanied him in all his work, were both attempting to transform the body, so that it would not be subject to death. Their attempt was not successful, but it corresponds to a deep human instinct, which urges us to seek for an immortal body, a diamond body, as it has been called in Buddhist tradition..."

"In the Christian belief the body of Jesus in the resurrection underwent precisely this transformation..."¹

Surely, Griffiths must know that both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were aware of all that has happened or was sought for in spiritual human history. They knew their Bible very well and never hesitated to point out in it legends or symbols, visions or intuitions having some link or other with their own spiritual quest just as they noted doctrinal or experiential affinities elsewhere to their integral Yoga. If they were trying to repeat in their bodies and hoping to achieve in those of their followers what had taken place in Jesus, why did not they ever give a hint of it? It should be clear to us that there were radical differences between the Aurobindonian transformation and what the Resurrection of Jesus could be.

First of all, Jesus died before he was "raised". Neither Sri Aurobindo nor the Mother thought of a post-mortem transformation.

Secondly, the Resurrection, whether in Jesus or in his followers, was never conceived in terms of a crowning evolution. There was no question of an aeonic development of earth-history by an evolutionary process starting with matter, passing through vital and mental stages and culminating in a supramental race. Nor was there any question of a prolonged Yoga, a concentrated and accelerated evolution by a mystical growth over self-dedicated years, moving gradually through what Sri Aurobindo has named psychicisation and spiritualisation, which would cover all that the *via mystica* attempted to compass in the past, and then progressing towards supramentalisation which, according to Sri Aurobindo, was mostly something new

¹ "Science Today and the New Creation", *The Examiner* (Bombay), February 27, 1982, p. 138.

though, since the Divine Supermind is at the back of all earth-history in however concealed a form, there has always been a striving not only after an illuminated mind, a love-suffused heart, an ultra-capable life-force but also after a body of radiant health, free from the encroachment of *tempus edax*, "time the devourer". The resurrection implies no practice of sustained mysticism: it is said by St. Paul to happen "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52)—a sheer sudden miracle with merely a faith in Jesus and an ordinary religious piety as its antecedent or its *conditio sine qua non*.

Thirdly, the Resurrection is promised solely at the end of time. No one doing the Christian Yoga gained or even hoped to gain by his inner development a body such as is attributed to the risen Christ. I don't understand what Griffiths means in his book (p. 139) by writing: "The body of the Virgin Mary is said to have been transformed in the same way, and doubtless there are other saints and Yogis of whom this is true." I have not come across a reference to the Virgin Mary's body in the Gospels or in the Epistles of St. Paul. Indeed, St. Paul does not refer even to the virginity of Mary which one or two verses in the infancy accounts in a couple of books (Matthew and Luke) out of the twenty-seven or more comprising the New Testament state or suggest. Actually, St. Paul, whose Epistles are the earliest Christian documents, simply speaks of Jesus as having been "made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4) or, as the Roman Catholic Jerusalem Bible phrases it, "born of a woman, born a subject of the Law".¹ The second part refers, of course, to the common unredeemed world with its constituents ruled by an established universal Law. The first part alludes to another facet of the same condition, as is obvious from the Bible itself when Jesus speaks of John the Baptist who, for all his greatness, is shown by Luke (1:13) to be the product of Zechariah's marital relations with Elisabeth. Luke puts into Jesus's mouth the words: "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist..." Matthew (11:11) has, almost *verbatim*, an identical report of Jesus's pronouncement. Paul's two expressions are invariably associated in the Bible with natural humanity. To St. Paul the birth of Jesus was like that of any other man. But, even granting that there is scriptural authority for something extraordinary happening to Mary's body, how can it be compared to that of the resurrected Christ when Griffiths compares it also to those of "other saints and Yogis"? Has any saint or Yogi obtained a body comparable to "the body of Christ, which is no longer limited by space and time" (p. 138)? On a certain instance in Griffiths's mind I shall touch a little later. Here I shall express my opinion that it would be a mistake of Christian thought to ascribe a Christ-like resurrectionist body to any person before the end of time. For, the transformed body, which Griffiths mentions, is necessarily eschatological. The transformation *à la* Sri Aurobindo was envisaged as a goal to be reached in the present age, as Griffiths himself admits when he alludes to the lack of success in the efforts of Sri Aurobindo and

¹ The Jerusalem Bible (Longman, Darton and Todd, London, 1966), p. 326 of the New Testament.

the Mother to accomplish here and now a transformation of the body by the Supermind's descent into the physical no less than the psychic consciousness. The objective of the Christian Yoga is poles apart from that of the Aurobindonian.

Fourthly and lastly, Christ's resurrected body is not an example of transformation that has stayed on the earth. It is reported to have appeared and disappeared, a mysterious visitant acting occasionally as grossly physical and occasionally as subtly substantial, and never in any case meaning to be a permanent part of terrestrial life in the course of history. It was not intended to be an achievement by a revolutionary evolution, as it were, which would serve as the beginning of a race of Supermen carrying to perfection both the inner and the outer existence, the individual and the collective being, in the immediate or near future. The physical transformation, divinisation, supramentalisation at which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother aimed has no anticipatory parallel in the resurrected body which Matthew, Luke and John and the author of the Acts picture Christ as possessing.

Ramalingam's "Golden Body" and the Supramental Physical

In addition, quite relevantly in the Griffiths-context, I may deny any presaging likeness to the Aurobindonian goal in the body of light which the songs of the nineteenth century's South-Indian saint Ramalingam describe. Griffiths has written an Introduction to a full-length biography and interpretation of Ramalingam by G. Vanmikanathan,¹ who argues that the Saint's celebration of a "golden body", won by him and enjoying deathless life or immortality, is an inner experience consequent on the soul's union with the Supreme and its liberation thereby from our doomed physical existence. Griffiths demurs to such a gloss which harks back simply to the famous Upanishadic passage "from the unreal to the Real, from the darkness to the Light, from death to Immortality". Part of his comment² on Ramalingam's spirituality runs: "This idea of an immortal body is found in Taoist mysticism and in the concept of a 'diamond body' in Tibetan mysticism as also in the 'spiritual body' of St. Paul and Christian tradition. Mr. Vanmikanathan seems to diminish the significance of this state of deathlessness by reducing it to the state of the delivered soul freed from the body in *videha mukti*."

No doubt, Vanmikanathan's terms are too general. But the shade of the Vedantic liberation cannot be washed away from a cry like Ramalingam's

Oh men of the delusive world!
It is not fair to perish in this world of ignorance.
Come along to live the great deathless life.
Come here and settle down in the status
Of (a member) of the purposeful Pure Blissful True Creed!³

¹ *Pathway to God trod by Ramalingam Swamikal* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1976).

² *Ibid.*, p. xvii. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 677.

or from a proclamation by Ramalingam like:

The talk of the adepts and the Jeewan-mukthas is about me.
 What have I to do any more in this reviling world?
 All the miseries of birth and death have vanished from today!¹

What can legitimately be said by Griffiths is that the Vedantic *mukti* is not all in all in Ramalingam. Then his objection would be both correct and salutary. However, he errs in taking the Saint too literally. He overlooks the fact that Ramalingam speaks of “the primeval Çivam”, who is “transcendental Brahman”,² having a “golden body” and of Ramalingam “embracing” it and, as a result of that “moment” of “union”, becoming “transformed into the form of eternal bliss that is Çivam”.³ Here is indeed something ignored by Vanmikanathan, a sense of another state of corporeality than the gross and no bare infinite of illumination. And yet to suggest a change of the gross body into a golden one is to overshoot the mark: all that can be read is a subtle occult form of light experienced within the gross and felt as infiltrating it: Shiva’s “golden body”, his “form of eternal bliss”, is then realised as the devotee’s own inner body-sense—possibly leading now and again to some extraordinary functioning in the natural organism.

This is no exclusive or utterly new realisation of Ramalingam’s. Manikavachakar, 3rd century A.D., sings also of two bodies, a beatific imperishable one replacing in awareness the ordinary mortal sheath. In his *Thiruvachakam*, a book to which Ramalingam was much attached,⁴ Manikavachakar⁵ records:

The Superb One...
 that effulgent Being
 Who, for my sake, coming today,
 Without any effort on my part,
 did away with the body which spells ruin...
 and abode in me;...
 He made for me a body which yields ecstasy...

This is precisely Ramalingam’s “form of eternal bliss”, about which he has further chanted:

My Lord comes to give me a blissful form...
 The Great Effulgence of Grace
 Who has transcended the Fourth State is coming
 To give me a form of bliss...⁶
 I have gained the boon of the mortal body
 turning into a golden body!⁷

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 659. ² *Ibid.*, p. 728. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 730. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46. ⁵ *Ibid.*
⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 710. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 730.

I hugged the golden form,
 which he pressed on me,
 and rejoiced!...¹
 I am experiencing the great Fourth State,
 I have joined the Universal True Path,
 And, gaining the embrace of my Husband...
 I have become His form;
 I live, delighting in it...²

Mysticism of a high order is before us, joining up, as Griffiths³ remarks, with “that kind of bridal mysticism, which is so well known in Tamil Nadu and which has its parallels in both Islamic and Christian mysticism”. But no question arises here of what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother intended by a supramental divinisation of the actual physical substance and shape. The Taoist “immortal body” and the Tibetan “diamond body” are also inner subtle realities which, it is hoped, will produce a marvellous exterior effect at some future period of the Divine Manifestation, like the Resurrection looked forward to by St. Paul as the taking on of a “spiritual body”. Nowhere is any evidence of an already established lasting transfiguration of the gross physical.

The very description we have of Ramalingam’s person by a long-standing eye-witness is enough to disprove the claim on his behalf. Vanmikanathan⁴ informs us: “Photography had come to India in the life-time of our Swamikal, but no photograph of him is available to us. It is said that attempts to photograph him always ended in failure. Nor do we have any portrait of the Swamikal. What we have today and what appears now in books and periodicals is a modern artist’s impression of the Swamikal, a product of the imagination based on certain accounts of the appearance of the Swamikal and on certain of his poems. Fortunately, we have on record a vivid description...by one of his contemporaries, Sri Velayutha Muthaliyar of Tholuvor, a disciple of the Swamikal.”

As Vanmikanathan⁵ records, Muthaliyar was a disciple for a quarter century and survived Ramalingam. From intimate knowledge he⁶ writes: “In personal appearance, Ramalingam was a moderately tall, spare man—so spare, indeed, as to virtually appear a skeleton—yet withal a strong man, erect in stature, and walking very rapidly; with a face of a clear brown complexion, a straight nose, very large fiery eyes, and with a look of constant sorrow on his face. Towards the end, he let his hair grow long; and what is rather unusual with Yogis, he wore shoes.” Then Muthaliyar goes on to speak of Ramalingam’s abstemious habits and his abnormal capacity to fast for long periods. But not the slightest hint of a material body of golden light is here.

Even if we go along with Griffiths about Ramalingam, what do we reach? He⁷

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 731. ² *Ibid.* ³ *Ibid.*, p. xvii. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44. ⁵ *Ibid.* ⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

writes "Ramalingam's mysticism does not involve the loss of the body in the final state of liberation but its transfiguration... It is filled with the divine life and becomes a spiritual body no longer conditioned by the present laws of matter, but transfigured in the divine light. The story of his own passing that he simply disappeared, whether it is literally true or not, is surely of deep symbolic value in this respect." The last sentence is my cue for an Aurobindonian comment.

In one of his letters Sri Aurobindo¹ observes: "Whatever may have happened to Chaitanya or Ramalingam, whatever physical transformation they may have gone through is quite irrelevant to the aim of the supramentalisation of the body. Their new body was either a non-physical or subtle physical body not adapted for life on the earth. If it were not so, they would not have disappeared..." Another letter² says: "The idea of a transformation of the body occurs in different traditions, but I have never been quite sure that it meant the change in this very matter. There was a yogi some time ago in this region who taught it, but he hoped when the change was complete, to disappear in light. The Vaishnavas speak of a divine body which will replace this one when there is the complete siddhi. But, again, is this a divine physical or supraphysical body?" A body of light perpetually present amongst men has not been known so far: one that does not stay on the earth to mark a novel evolutionary turn in physical existence is certainly not the sort Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had in view as the *grand finale* of their all-harmonising, all-fulfilling Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo does not refuse to see some approach or other in the past to his ideal. But he is explicit about the basic divergence even where an apparent similarity may be discerned. He³ speaks of "the transformation of the whole physical mind, vital, material nature—not by imposing siddhis [=abnormal faculties] on them, but by creating a new physical nature which is to be the habitation of the supramental being in a new evolution." And he continues: "I am not aware that this has been done by any Hathayogic or other process. Mental or vital occult power can only bring siddhis of the higher plane into the individual life—like the Sannyasi who could take any poison without harm, but he died of a poison after all when he forgot to observe the conditions of the siddhi. The working of the supramental power envisaged is not an influence on the physical giving it abnormal faculties but an entrance and permeation changing it wholly into a supramental physical." Again, Sri Aurobindo⁴ points out: "...the endeavour towards this achievement is not new and some yogis have achieved it, I believe—but not in the way I want it. They achieved it as a personal siddhi maintained by yoga-siddhi—not a dharma [=inherent law] of the nature." The Aurobindonian supramentalisation has to be an intrinsic permanent state of the body by the junction of the descending free Supermind from above the mental plane with the Supermind evoked from matter where, according to Sri Aurobindo, it lies involved. Both the spiritual vision and the spiritual dynamics of

¹ "Letters on Yoga", *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, 1972, Vol. 22, p. 94.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 24, p. 1237. ³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, pp. 78-79.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

his Integral Yoga differ from those recognisable in past "saints and Yogis".

We may pause a little over Sri Aurobindo's words: "this achievement"—and then the following "some yogis have achieved it, I believe". His meaning is not quite clear. What "this achievement" signifies is most probably "the transformation of the whole physical mind, vital, material nature" spoken of in the other letter, as a result of "siddhis" imposed by "mental or vital occult power". The term "transformation" can cover many Yogic changes. A supramental transformation by means of "siddhis" is not likely to be intended. But, even if it is, how does it bear on the case of Ramalingam?

His case is of particular relevance because not only did Sri Aurobindo and the Mother show special interest in him at one time but also because the Mother on two occasions made a remark on what Ramalingam had named "Grace-Light" or, as Vanmikanathan puts it, "Effulgence of Grace". On July 12, 1970 she greatly appreciated the term and the experience it stood for, which corresponded to one of her own experiences. She was even reported as equating the Grace-Light to the supramental consciousness and as saying that a number of individuals, known or unknown, are likely to have brought this consciousness to the earth throughout the ages but that now instead of an individual possibility Sri Aurobindo and she were working to establish it as a collective possibility, as a terrestrial fact and a possibility for all. On July 22 the topic was raised once more. She was pointedly asked whether the Grace-Light and the Supramental Light were one and the same thing and whether she had meant that Ramalingam had already worked out the individual supramentalisation rather than that even this was specifically her endeavour and Sri Aurobindo's. She replied: "It is a pity, but you make me say what I have not said. Thus I have nothing to answer to your conclusions which are unfounded." Asked if she had really implied Ramalingam to have been directly in contact with the Supramental, her reaction was: "Why not?... I have the feeling that men have big scissors and always want to cut off bits of the Lord!"¹ However, she categorically countered the earlier report which had equated the Supramental Light with the Grace-Light. She declared: "The Grace-Light is not the Supramental Light but one aspect of it, rather one activity of the Supramental."²

The last statement is a decisive clarification. Face to face with it we should be absolutely illogical if we attributed to Ramalingam a supramentalised body. How can just a single aspect or activity of the multifarious Supermind, which is not only light but also consciousness, force, bliss and whose light even is not confined to being "Grace-Light", be claimed to have accomplished so radical and extreme a phenomenon as the total supramentalisation of the body—a most difficult task which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, who were in possession of the entire Supermind in their inner consciousness and had suffused with it even their subtle forms, considered nobody to have done and which they were themselves still seeking to do?

¹ Letter to the author by Satprem after an interview with the Mother.

² *Ibid.*

With the help of Grace-Light Ramalingam must have had a remarkable result in his subtle form, as compared to most other Yogis of the past, but even there the supramentalisation could be no more than partial. As for the physical body, the consequences are bound to have been still less—certainly the powerful sense of a rare glory outflowing from the inner self yet as certainly falling short of any appreciable physical supramentalisation, no matter what unusual capacities it may have brought about. The question whether by means of them Ramalingam, as Griffiths words it, “simply disappeared” cannot be settled. Griffiths, for one, is not sure that the story “is literally true”.

Have we any sign of the Mother’s attitude here? Her outlook can be gauged from a talk in January 1960.¹ The problem was put to her: “I have read that the bodies of some saints, after their death, have disappeared and become flowers or just vanished into the sky. Can such a thing happen?” The Mother replied: “Everything is possible, it could have happened, but I do not believe it did. We cannot always believe what is said in books. Nor is there a necessary connection between such phenomena and sainthood.” Then the Mother affirmed that some “mediums”, who are often people of very low character, perform dematerialisation and rematerialisation under the strictest scientific control. So such phenomena do genuinely occur in rare instances. After this, the Mother returns to the point originally raised and concludes: “In connection with great or holy men all sorts of stories get started. When Sri Aurobindo had not left his body, there was circulated a story that he used to go out of the roof of his room—yes, physically—and move about in all kinds of places. It is even written down in a book. He told me about it himself.”

Returning from Ramalingam to Griffiths’s main theme, namely Christ, I may reiterate in conclusion on this subject that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother knew what Christ’s resurrected body might connote and they did not regard the description of it as reflecting the transformation they had in mind. Not without significance did the Mother, in evident reference to religious history in general and to Christianity in particular, give the New Year Message of 1957: “It is not the crucified body but the glorified body that will save the world.” As a later talk (September 13, 1967) clarifies, if Christ had a glorified body it belongs not to the world but to heaven.

Christianity, Reincarnation and Krishna

In Griffiths’s remarkably wide-voiced book as well as in his recent elevating speech another sad deficiency is in regard to Reincarnation. He quotes Shankara to the effect that “the Lord is the only transmigrator”. Reasoning from this, he infers that the one Self dwelling in humanity as in everything is alone the reality that passes from life to life. In support he quotes Aquinas’s dictum: “All men are one Man.”

¹ “Words of the Mother”, *The Centenary Edition* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1980), Vol. 15, p. 395.

The whole argument strikes me as an evasion of what the theory of reincarnation implies.

Did not Aquinas write at some length on the individual soul created by God at birth? And did not Shankara too grant a "jivatman"? He may have regarded the "jivatman" as ultimately an illusion, but then he regarded the "Lord" also as the highest illusion and believed the birthless and deathless, undivided and qualitless Atman or Brahman, a-cosmic and free from name and form, to be the one and only Existent. In the world which for all practical purposes he took as real, even though from the final spiritual experience it might be mere Maya, he granted the traditional Indian view of the individual soul reincarnating or transmigrating. Aquinas can escape just as little as Shankara the destiny, whatever it may be, of each separate man. Both Shankara and Aquinas are brought in by Griffiths in order not to abandon the dogma of a new soul called into existence *ex nihilo* at every birth and to evade the concept of a soul going through many lives, getting diverse experiences, gradually rising higher and higher. If evolution is a fact and if it is to have a spiritual meaning, the spiritual evolution can proceed only through the progress of an individual soul through a series of lives across the ages. Reincarnation in a literal sense is unavoidable in a spiritually evolutionary world-vision.

Doubtless, there is a host of subtleties and the popular idea is too school-mas-terish: Sri Aurobindo has discussed all the aspects of "rebirth" in a few exceedingly insightful chapters of *The Life Divine* and put it in the right framework. If Griffiths is drawing strength, as he does, from modern science for his spiritual outlook he can ill afford to get round the individual soul's spiritual evolution. He has accepted many truths of the Spirit from India, which his too conservative co-religionists would be inclined to look askance at. It is best not to jib at literal reincarnation. Perhaps it should be enough for him to believe that the soul was created out of nothing at the very start of the evolutionary process and that afterwards it goes on getting reborn in the manner Sri Aurobindo expounds.

I personally don't fancy this compromise. It is a pity that one so profound in his spiritual practice and so finely touched by the tremendous truths of Indian seer-hood should have to make concessions to his accepted religion and feel compelled not only here but in a number of other instances to argue the superiority of that religion: thus "Christian love" is sought to be made out so much greater than the love that flows from the heart of both Hinduism and Buddhism to all creatures and not merely to human beings. Similarly, Krishna, though appreciated, is cut down in comparison to Christ and also relegated to the world of myth. Krishna is obviously historical in the Chhandogya Upanishad. In the *Mahabharata* he is depicted fully as a human being who is the Divine Incarnate. Even in the Brindavan story the substratum of reality is clear in the midst of the poetry and the symbolism. And why does Griffiths sidetrack to the Brindavan-context the phrases quoted from Chapter XVIII. 65 of the Bhagavad Gita and declared to have been spoken on the battlefield of Kurukshetra: "Give me thy mind and give me thy heart and thy sacrifice and thy

adoration. This is my word of promise: thou shalt in truth come to me, for thou art dear to me"? R. C. Zeuner, a convert to Catholicism, looks on the Gita as the greatest scripture in the world, and indeed the range of spiritual vision and experience it sets before us cannot be matched by anything in any other sacred book. (Here I hold no brief for the Gathas of Zarathustra, though I was born a Parsi.) The Krishna who emerges from whatever myth and legend have grown around his historicity is a uniquely many-sided and magnificently soul-satisfying figure at once ideal and actual, immense and intense, oceanic and intimate, Himalayan and heart-luring—Lord and lover, Master and life-companion. Those who inwardly know him are not just indulging in poetic ecstasy: he is to them both the Supreme and a fact of history. It is out of such knowledge that Sri Aurobindo has said that in Krishna we have the certainty of the Divine having at least once touched the earth.

Scriptural Translation

There are a few other points in the book and in the address which I could question, but I'll pass over them at the moment, for they are mostly concerned with secondary matters like scriptural translation—I mean rendering of some Biblical passages, which strike me as misguided. Only one text I'll mention in passing. The famous "Logos"-prelude in John's Gospel has a controversial reading at one point (1:13). The commonly accepted version uses the third-person plural, but the Jerusalem Bible prepared by French scholars differs from it, although admitting in a footnote the general opinion against which it runs. The eminent Roman Catholic scholar Raymond E. Brown is quite frank about the untenableness of the minority view to which Griffiths subscribes. He¹ remarks: "The third-person singular reading in John 1:13: '*He who* was begotten, not by blood, nor by carnal desire, nor by man's desires, but of God', is considered by most an early patristic change from the original plural in order to make the text christologically useful" Brown² expresses his surprise at quite a number of French-speaking exegetes favouring this reading although it is "not found in a single Greek Gospel ms". I don't know why Griffiths flouts the scholarly consensus. But I won't dwell overmuch on these things lest I should convey to you a wrong impression of my attitude to him. I'll turn briefly to his scientific deliverances.

Yes, I would like to be succinct here but there is a danger of my being carried away by the fascination of the subject. Already my letter has lengthened out inordinately. I'll reserve the new discussion for a second letter. I am not at home with Rupert Sheldrake's *New Science of Life*; so I shan't venture to treat it. Fritjof Capra's *Tao of Modern Physics* has been in my hands for quite a time and I think I can comment on it a little as well as on Griffiths's understanding of it. In the meantime please acknowledge this letter and accept my regards and convey the same to your teacher whom I have esteemed for several years.

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* (Paulist Press, New York, 1973), p. 59.

² *Ibid.*, fn. 96.

HOW I BECAME A HINDU - 6

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1982)

I WAS present at the Second Party Conference of the Communist Party of India which was held in the Maidan at Calcutta in February 1948. It was some time before this Conference that B.T. Ranadive had taken over from P.C. Joshi the General Secretaryship of the CPI. The Ranadive line, as it came to be known in India, was an adoption of the international communist line laid down by Stalin through the mouth of his minion, Zhdanov, in September 1947.

The Zhdanov line led to widespread purges in East European satellites of the Soviet Union and the communist take-over of Czechoslovakia. The communist parties in India, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia and the Philippines staged violent uprisings. The civil war in China was intensified and it led to Mao's victory in 1949. The culmination of this line was the invasion of South Korea by North Korean communist armies. Stalin was out to fill the vacuum created by the withdrawal of British power and the demobilisation of US forces in the Pacific.

The large-sized stage in this Second Party Conference of the CPI was decorated by portraits of Marx, Engels, Stalin, Lenin, Mao and Marshal Tito. Delegates from several East European and South East Asian countries were present in this public meeting. The Yugoslav delegate was particularly paraded on the stage as a famous warrior who was still carrying a German bullet in his shoulder blade. To me his name sounded like 'Jagdish'. Later on I learnt that he was Comrade Dedeir. Speaker after speaker thundered in very strong language and called upon the people "to give hell to the bourgeois bastards who had sold their souls to the Anglo-American imperialists."

I was really thrilled and made up my mind to join the Party immediately. A few months earlier I had come quite close to a Bengali communist who was well-placed in the Party hierarchy in Calcutta. He was a friend of my boss and had an equally well-stocked library. I now approached him to take me to the Party headquarters and get me enrolled as a party member. He fixed up a date on which I was to accompany him for a rendezvous with revolution. And I started looking forward to that date with an eagerness which I had seldom experienced earlier.

But Fate had planned it otherwise. The Communist Party in Bengal was banned exactly on that date. There was a telephone on the ground floor of the house in which I now lived. I had given this number to my Bengali friend in case he ever needed to call me in an emergency. He called me that day. It was early in the morning. I did not know that the Party had been banned. He gave me the great news in very grave tones. His advice to me was not to go anywhere near the Party office or the office of any front organisation and to stop professing communism in public. A few days later it was suggested to me by my Marwari friend from the share market that as my place was not suspected by the police, it could be used for lodging a communist leader from Rajasthan who was expected in Calcutta after a fortnight. I im-

mediately extended a warm welcome to the veteran's visit.

But destiny was determined, as it were, to deny me that honour also. My friend Ram Swarup suddenly appeared on the scene and expressed his intention to stay with me for quite some time. It was his first visit to Calcutta. I was very happy because he was my nearest and dearest in the whole world. I did not know that Ram Swarup had by now come to regard communism as a very great evil threatening to engulf the future of mankind. There had been nothing in his letters to indicate this decisive turn. He had only warned me that I was too intelligent to remain a communist for long. But he had also conceded that I was too intelligent *not* to become a communist. I had overlooked his warning and taken his concession seriously.

Ram Swarup's conclusions about communism were revealed to me dramatically a few days after his arrival when there were some fireworks between him and my Marwari friend who had come specifically to meet a person about whom I had always talked so warmly and so highly. I was unhappy to find that there was very little prospect of my two good friends striking a friendship between them. As I saw off my Marwari friend downstairs, he informed me that he would not allow the communist leader from Rajasthan to stay under a roof which harboured a man of such undesirable political credentials. I was taken aback. I could never think of Ram Swarup as an undesirable person. But I did not know how to counter the argument. Returning to my room upstairs I asked for Ram Swarup's opinion about my Marwari friend. He smiled and said: "Well, he is quite thick-headed. It seems that no argument can penetrate his head." My friendship with this Marwari broke down soon after I renounced communism and we became total strangers.

Next I tried to find out if Ram Swarup would hit it off with my Bengali friend. I had talked to him also about Ram Swarup and given him to read Ram Swarup's *Let Us Have Riots: The Philosophy of Those Who Want to Divide India by Street Riots*. We were entertained in the true tradition of Bengali hospitality at the home of this friend one day. But there was hardly any dialogue between Ram Swarup and our host. Ram Swarup simply listened to my old friend expounding the new party line at length. I was intrigued by Ram Swarup's studied silence. And I asked for his opinion about my friend as soon as we came out of the latter's house. Ram Swarup said: "Well, his commitment to communism is a pathological addiction; it needs to be unravelled." This was my second disappointment within a few days of Ram Swarup's arrival in Calcutta.

My Bengali friend was arrested and detained in a camp in North Bengal some weeks later. By the time he came back in 1949 I had not only renounced communism but had also written against it in some Calcutta newspapers. He came to meet me in our office and said that he had read some funny statements by me. I told him that I was very serious in what I had stated and that perhaps we could meet some day to thrash it out. He showed no eagerness for an argument. That was also the end of a very warm friendship. Our chance meetings in later days were always a cold and correct affair.

Finally, I arranged a meeting between Ram Swarup and my boss. Both of them exchanged pleasantries and avoided the one subject which I wanted them to discuss. The discussion took place a few days later as my boss was passing by my table and found Ram Swarup sitting in front of me. It was about the next big world depression and disintegration of the world capitalist system suspected by us communists to be round the corner. There could be no agreement because Ram Swarup was convinced that another depression would not be permitted by the capitalists who had acquired a fairly good grasp of their economies. My boss gave figures of firms that had gone bankrupt within that year. Ram Swarup requested him to find out for himself and for us also the figures of new firms that must have come up during the same specified period. His argument was that in a living economy some firms must fall sick and go out. But it did not matter if the reverse trend was also there. This provided a new perspective to the whole argument. I asked Ram Swarup's opinion about my boss. He said: "He is much better. He argues with a lot of facts and figures and not with party slogans."

A few months passed. Ram Swarup converted me from communism to anti-communism during those months. I had to go out of Calcutta on a business trip spread over several weeks. Ram Swarup stayed over in Calcutta but was gone by the time I returned. As I met my boss, his first words were: "Your friend is a wonderful man. We spent a lot of time together. I can now see the worth of what he has to say about communism." They have been very good friends ever since.

After I had failed to pit my three best communist friends against Ram Swarup, I had to face him myself and all alone. The discussions spread over several months. Most of the time I repeated party slogans, sometimes very vehemently. Ram Swarup dismissed them with a smile. One day in my exasperation I struck a superior attitude and said: "We find it difficult to come to any conclusion because I have a philosophical background while you proceed merely from economic, social and political premises." Ram Swarup enquired what I meant by philosophy and I rattled out the list which I had ready in my mind—Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer and so on. Ram Swarup told me that at one time or another he had studied all of them but had found them irrelevant and useless. I was surprised as well as pained. Ram Swarup explained: "Suppose one knows this philosophical system or that. Does it make a better man out of him in any way? These systems are mere cerebrations and have little to offer towards the practical purposes of life." The word cerebration got stuck in my mind and made it impossible for me to read any abstract philosophy any more. I had been very fond of Western metaphysics and epistemology till then.

One day Ram Swarup asked me to go to the US information Library in Esplanade and look up only the documentation in David Dallin's *Slave Labour in Soviet Russia*. I had a great hesitation in going anywhere near this library which I had so long regarded as a seat of blatant imperialist propaganda. It was the same sort of inhibition as I had experienced earlier in reading the Bhagavad Purana. But my

curiosity had been aroused. I went to this library like a thief and looked up this book. The documentation, mainly photostats of identity cards issued to inmates of forced labour camps located all over the Soviet Union, was extensive as well as very informative. I was shaken. I suddenly remembered that according to the Moscow weekly, *New Times*, Molotov had admitted the existence of "corrective labour camps" in the Soviet Union in a UN debate on the subject of forced labour.

I mentioned my suspicions to my boss. He smiled and asked me to read Victor Kravchenko's *I Chose Freedom* which had appeared some time earlier. I now remembered that my boss had offered to lend me a copy of this book a few months before and that I had turned it down with the contemptuous remark that I did not want to waste my time on imperialist propaganda literature. I borrowed the book from him now and read it non-stop. The old experience of reading Laski's *Communism* was repeated. Communism now lay in shambles all around me. I could now understand why my boss, an enthusiastic party liner earlier, had shown no enthusiasm for the new party line adopted in February 1948. His reading of Kravchenko's book had considerably cooled his enthusiasm for the Soviet Union. He admitted as much when I questioned him next day.

Kravchenko, an eminent metallurgical engineer in the Soviet Union, had been sent to Washington during the War to look after military supplies under the Lend Lease Programme. He had defected to the West after some time and written this book as his testament to truth about the Soviet Union. The book became very successful because it was very controversial and saw several editions in quick succession in several languages of the world. I myself was to translate and publish it in Hindi. The Communist Press denounced the book as well as its author in very strong language. At the very time that I first read it, Kravchenko was fighting a prolonged defamation case against a famous French weekly magazine published from Paris. The magazine had described him as a drunkard, a liar, a traitor and so on. The *Manchester Guardian* was publishing the proceedings of the case in great detail, day after day. An airmail edition of this English daily was regularly received in the British Information Service at Calcutta.

I followed the Kravchenko case in the *Manchester Guardian* with great interest. Any lurking doubts that might have remained in my mind about the truth of what Kravchenko had stated were removed by this case. The Soviet Embassy in Paris was participating in the defence by the French magazine on the plea that the reputation of their country was involved. The Embassy made many witnesses from the Soviet Union take the stand in the Paris Court. Most of the famous communists as well as fellow-travellers from all over Western Europe were also enlisted against Kravchenko. I was amazed to witness a drama in which while Kravchenko marshalled facts and figures, derived mostly from official Soviet publications, in support of what he had written in his book, a whole battery of communist bigwigs had nothing better than standard communist swearology to hurl at him.

One episode was very revealing. It was the communist contention that Krav-

chenko was not at all an eminent metallurgical engineer which he had made himself out to be in his book. Kravchenko produced a copy of *Pravda* in which Molotov had described him by name as one of the most eminent metallurgical engineers being put in charge of a new Soviet metallurgical factory in Vladivostock. Next day Kravchenko's old professor of engineering from Leningrad University appeared in the court and testified that Kravchenko was indeed a brilliant metallurgical engineer and one of his best students. The professor had left Leningrad in the aftermath of the German invasion and was hiding somewhere in Western Europe to avoid repatriation by the Western powers in keeping with a post-war agreement with the Soviet Government.

Another great book which I came across in quick succession was *Stalin's Russia* by the famous French socialist, Suzanne Labin. She had described in great detail all facets of the Soviet Union and documented her version very meticulously from Soviet sources. It was a hair-raising account. I was now ashamed of myself. Why had I not cared to study life in the Soviet Union before becoming a rabid communist? Ram Swarup's cryptic comment was: "Facts about the Soviet Union have always been known mostly from Soviet sources. There is not much difference about those facts between the communists and those who are opposed to communism. What makes the difference is the way you interpret those facts. And your interpretation again is a matter which very much depends upon your sense of values and the culture from which those values are derived."

It was a call for an introspection into, as well as a retrospection of, my entire philosophical outlook as it had evolved upto now. I had a second look at Marx who had led me to communism. I found that Lenin and Stalin were not Marxists at all. They had only used Marxist language to dress up their case, which was quite different. They had reversed Clausewitz's statement that war was politics by other means to read that politics was war by other means. Marx on the other hand was a serious sociologist and economist. But in the last analysis his system of thought was derived from the same premises as those of Western capitalism. These premises were a materialist metaphysics, an evolutionistic sociology, a hedonistic psychology, a utilitarian ethics and a consumerist society. After all, the Soviet Union aspired to be tomorrow what the United States was today. The goal in both cases was the same—an economy of abundance. The Soviet Union had taken the road of State capitalism and systematic terror while the United States had left it to the remorseless operation of market forces. Was I prepared to accept that goal as the highest human aspiration? If not, what was the goal which could be held out as a better choice?

I had no answer to this question. I was now in the midst of a philosophical void which was to last for several years. The quest which I thought had ceased with my acceptance of communism was on once more.

(To be continued)

SITA RAM GOEL

THE MOTHER'S CONSUL

AT THE beginning of 1950 Sanat came to Pondicherry as the Indian Consul General to the French Territories in India. It seems so long ago yet so very near. Now that I look back I wonder whether he was the Consul from the Government of India or was he the Mother's Consul to the Government of India.

We were spending our holidays in the Ashram in the winter of 1949. We saw a lot of the Mother, had our Darshan of the 24th November. The Mother talked to us every now and then, sometimes seriously sometimes in a jovial mood. We came to admire Her and love Her more and more, we felt so close to Her. She would give me a good-night kiss on my forehead every night. One day discussing a serious topic with Sanat she came out with this, "I want to see Nehru, India's first Prime Minister." Our minds came to a halt for a few minutes. Then slowly it dawned on us that between Her wish and ourselves there was a close connection. A few days later Sanat said to the Mother, "How would you like to have me here as the Consul?" The Mother gave Sanat one of Her sweetest smiles. The fiat went forth and we knew how to move.

Back in Delhi Sanat approached the Foreign Secretary who was a senior colleague and a friend. Our predecessor in Pondicherry had made a mess of the whole affair and there was a talk of his being transferred elsewhere. "But, Sanat, do you really want to go there? Things are in utter confusion in Pondicherry, your energy and resources will be severely taxed." "I know but I want to go there," answered Sanat. Things moved one by one like a series of miracles. Our bags were packed and furniture loaded when came the invitation from Pandit Nehru for a luncheon party. He made me sit by his side and asked innumerable questions about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the Ashram. His curiosity was very much aroused.

The Nehrus and my family were very close. The family mansions were almost opposite to each other on the same road. Great-grandfather Sir P.C. Banerji and Pandit Motilal Nehru were intimate friends. One of the former's great grandsons and Jawaharlal Nehru were together at the Middle Temple, London. Sreemati Vijayalakshmi, my aunts and my father had played together as kids. Great-grand was so moved on hearing of the death of Pandit Motilal Nehru that cancelling all other arrangements he sent his own Rolls-Royce to Lucknow to bring the body back to Allahabad for cremation and final immersion of the ashes in the *Sangam*, the confluence of the rivers Ganges and Jumuna. Coming from that family so utterly westernised, what made me feel so attracted to spiritual life was the question that intrigued Pandit Nehru that afternoon.

So far so good. Things seemed to move admirably in the right direction. We were back to Pondicherry within a month. Sanat sent reports on the problems of Pondicherry and suggested solutions to Delhi, but only after consulting Sri Aurobindo first. The Mother was of course always the unfailing help and support. If we ever hesitated or faltered She was there to revive our spirits with Her suggestions

and sweet smiles. Nolinida too came out one day with something very congenial: he said, "We consider you as our friends and relatives." The time was ripe and the *grand-finale* came from Pavitra-da. He told us, "The Mother said that if Sanat resigned and joined the Ashram Nehru might come." Sanat resigned almost at once. The Mother installed us on the first-floor flat at Nanteuil House saying to me, "This is my best house and I am giving it to you. Look after it well."

A few years later Pandit Nehru came to the Ashram to see the Mother. Sanat and I sat back on our chairs watching the celebration and entertainment. Our life's mission was accomplished: that is, to bring India's first Prime Minister to the Mother.

CHAUNDONA BANERJI

RIDDLES FROM PONDICHERRY

Collected and Rendered into English by P. Raja

1. Two lovely wells
at the head of a hill rest.
Venomless snakes of black hue
guard them without rest.
They shroud the wells now and then
and see that no harm is done.
What are they? (Eyes and eyelashes)
2. None is there in this wide world
ignorant of her presence.
Is there any, if he has eyes?
Her saree is so long
that you can never measure its length.
And she is very rich,
you can never count her coins.
Who is she? (Sky with stars)
3. There goes the man
born of the destroyer and purifier.
Look! How he scales mountains of unknown height.
But, you know, he has no bones.
Who is he? (Smoke)
4. There stands the crane
knee-deep in a pond.
Upright stands his beak
yet he sucks the pond with his tail.
He laughs while he sucks
but falls down dead
when dry becomes the pond.
What is it? (Oil-lamp with wick)
5. In every house of bones and flesh
the mason planted a wet tree.
So precious is it to every house
that it is imprisoned in a cave
and guarded by one score and twelve thugs.
But to make use of it
no carpenter ever dares.
What is it? (Tongue)

SRI AUROBINDO AND SUBRAMANIA BHARATI

IN this birth centenary year of the renowned Tamil poet, C. Subramania Bharati, we offer our readers a sign of how this poet was an admirer of Sri Aurobindo even before he became personally acquainted with him. The Tamil Weekly, *India*, edited by him from Pondicherry, carried in its issue of 15th May 1909 a cartoon illustrating the acquittal of Sri Aurobindo with “NOT GUILTY” in the Alipur bomb case.



Bharati explained the cartoon:

“Sri Aurobindo, the flame of wisdom, Sri Aurobindo the Dharma Surya was eclipsed by Rahu, who unjustly accused him. The police—the serpent—thought of swallowing him. Is it possible for a serpent to swallow the Sun? So for a while it eclipsed him, then of its own accord it moved away.”