

# MOTHER INDIA

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MARCH 1982

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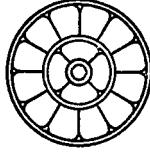
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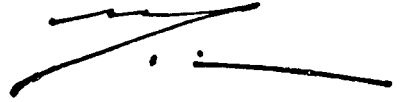


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXIV

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

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# ONWARD AND UPWARD

## POINTERS BY SRI AUROBINDO

WHATEVER the way may be, you must accept it wholly and put your will into it; with a divided and wavering will you cannot hope for success in anything, neither in life nor in Yoga.

\*

To know the highest Truth and to be in harmony with it is the condition of right being. To express it in all that we are, experience and do is the condition of right living.

\*

There is nothing that can be set down as impossible in the chances of the future and the urge in Nature always creates its own means.

# THE DIVINE, THE DIVINE'S WORK AND THE WORLD

## A TALK BY THE MOTHER TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN

... I CANNOT say that money goes spontaneously, freely, without effort there where useful things will be done most. No. The maximum of goodwill is to give money for something which one understands well (which is also easy to understand), to build a hospital, for example, or to open a crèche for little children. These are all works of goodwill that men understand. But if they are told that we want to change the human consciousness, we want to create a new world, oh! the first thing they say is: "Pardon me! Do not speak of God, for if it is God who is doing the work, well, it is God who will give you the means for it and you have no need for help." I have heard people saying: "If you represent the Divine upon earth you can do whatever you like; there is no need for us to give you anything." And how many among you are free from that idea (an aftertaste of that idea): the Divine is all-powerful, therefore, the Divine can do whatever he likes?

That is the first argument, that is the theory. The Divine is all-powerful, he can do whatever he likes; therefore he does not need anybody's help. And if you push your idea sufficiently far, you will see that if the Divine is truly all-powerful in this world and does always whatever he wants, well, I tell you, he is the greatest monster in the universe! Because One who is all-powerful and makes the world such as it is, looking with a smile at people suffering and miserable, and finding that all right, I would call a monster. It was the kind of thing I used to think about when I was five. I used to tell myself: "It is not possible, what is taught there is not true!" Now, as you have a little more philosophical mind, I shall teach you how to come out of the difficulty. But, first of all, you must understand that that idea is a childish idea. I simply call on your common sense. You make of your Divine a person, because that way you understand him better. You make of him a person. And then this person has organised something (the earth, it is too big, it is difficult to understand—take anything else) and then this thing the Divine has organised with the full power to do exactly as he likes. And in this thing—that he has made with the full power to do as he likes—there is ignorance, stupidity, bad will, fear, jealousy, pride, wickedness, and also suffering, illness, grief, all the pains; and a set of people who cannot say that they have perhaps more than a few minutes of happiness in the whole day and the rest of it is a neutral condition, passing by like a thing that's dead—and you call that a creation!... I call it something like a hell! And one who would make that deliberately and not only make it but look at it and say: "Ah! it is very good", as it is narrated in some religious books, that after having made the world such as it is, the seventh day he looked at it and was extremely satisfied with his work and he rested... Well, that never! I do not call that God. Or otherwise, follow Anatole France and say that God is a demiurge and the most frightful of all beings.

But there is a way out of the difficulty. (*To a child*) Do you know it, you? Yes,

yes, you know it! You will see all these conceptions and this idea that you have are based upon one thing, an entity that you call God and a world that you call his creation, and you believe these are two different things, one having made the other and the other being under the first, being the expression of what the first has made. Well, that is the initial error. If you could feel deeply that there is no division between that something you call God and this something you call his creation, if you said: "It is exactly the same thing" and if you could feel that what you call God (perhaps it is only a word), what you call God suffers when you suffer, he does not know when you do not know; and that it is through this creation, little by little, step by step, that he finds himself again, unites with himself, is realising himself, expressing himself, and it is not at all something he wanted in an arbitrary way or made like an autocrat, but that it is the growing expression, developing more and more, of a consciousness that is objectifying itself to itself.... Then there is no other thing but the sense of a collective advancing towards a more total realisation, a self-awareness of knowledge-consciousness—no other thing but that, a progressive self-awareness of knowledge-consciousness in a total unity which will reproduce integrally the First Consciousness.

That changes the problem.

Only, it is a little difficult to understand and one must make a little more progress. Instead of being like a little child that kneels down, joins its hands and says: "My God, I pray to Thee, make me a good child so that I may never hurt my mother...." That of course is very easy and indeed I cannot say that it is bad. It is very good. Only there are children with whom these things do not go, because they say: "Why should I ask You to make me good? You should make me good without there being any need of my asking You for it. Otherwise You are not nice!" It is very good when one has a simple heart and does not think much, but when one begins to think, it becomes more difficult. But if you had by your side someone to tell you: instead of that, instead of lighting a candle and kneeling down before it with your hands folded, light a flame in your heart and then have a great aspiration towards "something more beautiful, more true, more noble, better than all that I know. I ask that from tomorrow I begin to know all these things, all that I cannot do I begin to do and every day a little more." And then, if you throw yourself out a little, if, for one reason or another, you were put in the presence of much misery in the world, if you have friends who are unhappy or relatives who suffer or you meet any kind of difficulties, then you ask that the whole consciousness might be raised *all together* towards that perfection which must manifest and that all this ignorance that has made the world so unhappy might be changed into an enlightened knowledge and all this bad will be illumined and transformed into benevolence. And then as far as one can, as far as one understands, one wishes it with all one's heart; and indeed that can take the form of a prayer and one can ask—ask of what?—ask of that which knows, ask of that which can, ask of all that is greater and stronger than oneself, to help so that it may be thus. And how beautiful those prayers would be!

My children, in five years I shall take with you a study course of spiritual life.

I give you five years to prepare yourselves; what I am telling you now is just a little of the kind, as one would light a small candle to give you an idea of what light is. But I want you all to see that we do not repeat and say over and over again indefinitely all that nonsense which is uttered every time one turns towards something other than the ordinary life. Even as I have spoken here, in this book, of the confusion that is made between asceticism and the spiritual life,<sup>1</sup> well, one day I shall speak to you of the confusion made between what one calls God and what I call the Divine. This will be later on.

Collected Works of the Mother—Centenary Edition Volume 5, pp. 162-66.

<sup>1</sup> "Take, for example, the universal superstition, prevalent all over the world, that asceticism and spirituality are one and the same thing. If you describe someone as a spiritual man or a spiritual woman, people at once think of one who does not eat or sits all day without moving, one who lives in a hut in great poverty, one who has given away all he had and keeps nothing for himself. This is the picture that immediately arises in the minds of ninety-nine people out of a hundred, when you speak of a spiritual man; the one proof of spirituality for them is poverty and abstinence from everything that is pleasant or comfortable. This is a mental construction which must be thrown down if you are to be free to see and follow the spiritual truth. Once it is gone, you find something that is much higher than your narrow ascetic rule, a complete openness that leaves the being free. If you are to get something, you accept it, and if you are to give up the very same thing, you with an equal willingness leave it. Things come and you take them up, things go and you let them pass, with the same smile of equanimity in the taking or the leaving"

*Questions and Answers 1929 (19 May)*



# NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

## THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1982)

December 13, 1935

*There is again a quarrel between X and Y, and I am asked to intervene. If I don't, there'll be a row. What do you say?*

Permission for the row? I am utterly against rows. If sadhaks want them, it must be done on their responsibility.

*What about my intervening?*

I neither permit nor refuse.

*X says that she is suffering a lot. It seems to me at times that she is a being of another world and incompatible with this world. What is the cause of her suffering?*

Ego, foolishness, insincerity—a false claim that she is more noble and ideal than others—while in reality her vital is made just like any other human vital... I am afraid your idea that she is a superior being, from a more beautiful world (if that is what you think) can't hold water.

I am sorry for X, but she creates her own difficulties. She will not do what is necessary to have peace. If she went back from her ego, her demand on others, she would have peace soon enough.

*I hate to disturb you with all these stories. Is it an individual affair that one should decide for oneself?*

Surely it is an individual affair, being a clash of egos. There ought to be no such individual affairs in a Yoga Ashram, but ought and is are far asunder.

December 14, 1935

*About the individual affair, it may be so, but aren't most of the affairs that happen in the Ashram individual?*

That is why we never take sides in these "affairs".

*But have you not yourself said that very often when subtle planes are touched for transformation, all these impurities surge up in sadhaks?*

In that case there is nothing but touching and surging and if we go on touching by interventions there will be surgings for ever and ever.

*And these individual affairs are bound to be so long as our nature is what it is especially when we are allowed all sorts of freedom, a long rope. I am not justifying our weaknesses.*

If there is no freedom, there can be no change—there could only be a routine practice of conformity to the Yogic ideal without the reality.

*These individual affairs are sure to end ultimately by reaching you, for people will write letters from all sides; and your letters of pacification will follow.*

I have been answering such letters by more and more brief replies and now very few write to me.

I was speaking of course of quarrels when I referred to individual affairs. If I intervene, that means in practice 'I take sides' as people put it, by passing judgement. X herself has often accused me of refusing to protect her self-righteous and noble self against the wickednesses and unprovoked oppression of Y. If I support X, Y will be at once a candidate for departure and suicide. And yet you say I ought to intervene!

*X says that one should support her at least on the basis of old family relation.*

What a wonderful example of conduct for an Ashram! It might serve in Arabia, Corsica or ancient Greece.

*About X's novel affair, you said it is her individual concern. True, but poets and artists have to take their occupation as sadhana.*

There is no objection to that, but an egoistic quarrel is not sadhana.

*But you will say that it is a mixture of ego, desire for fame etc.*

The whole thing was that and nothing else.

*When the whole situation became too complex one had to seek for your advice.*

The people who quarrel don't come for advice, but for support against the other fellow.

You came for permission, but permission would have meant support from me to X. So my answer "I neither support nor refuse."

*As a consequence of all this, X is upset, causing a fall in her sadhana. One has then to approach you and explain why it is so.*

No doubt, but why should she expect a support for her ego which is the cause of her fall from sadhana, the affair being only an occasion for the said ego?

*Can you then silence me or be indifferent to my condition by saying that it is my individual affair?*

I did not say it was yours—it is not yours at all. It is individual to X and Y.

*If two of us quarrel and break our heads, will you keep quiet saying that it is an individual affair, look out for yourselves?*

Yes, certainly, I keep quiet. Formerly I used to intervene, the result was more and more quarrelling, each side either quoting me in self-justification or else abusing Mother and myself and doubting our divinity because we did not side with them. Now we have resolved not to intervene. When C, S etc. write about their quarrels (they do it very seldom nowadays), we say nothing about the quarrel, we only answer "Restrain your passions, overcome your vital and your ego. You are concerned with Yoga; don't be upset by what C (or S) says or does or anybody says and does." Or we keep quiet and answer nothing.

*You can say, "Karmayoga but no ego please."*

Karmayoga does not mean the free indulgence of ego.

*True, but through imperfections perfection has to be attained.*

Not by indulging the imperfections and calling for the Guru's support for them.

*A poem by Nishikanta. Amal has touched it up here and there, in a hurry.*

I was in a hurry too, so had no time to deal with N.K.

*To me the poem seems obscure at places owing to frequent use of 'ings'. Amal says that except for a few lines it is a jumble. How do you find it?*

Yes, English poetry can't bear so many ings.

On a cursory view Amal's judgments seem to me correct.

*December 16, 1935*

*Sending you one more poem by N.K. Seems a very interesting piece. If it could have been done well, it would have been very attractive and original.*

It is indeed a matter of which a fine poem can be made. Nishikanta has imagination and the ideas carry beauty in them, the language also, but he has not yet knowledge of the turns of the English tongue which make the beauty effective. I have tried to make it as perfect as an hour's work can do—but that is not enough, it might be better.

*But from the immensely profuse amount of corrections you have made and have to make, I wonder whether we are taking too much liberty with your precious Supramental time. But Supramental is beyond Time—that is the hope.*

If I have no time, I shall keep till I have. The poems are such good matter of poetry that it is worth the trouble.

*Amal says—you take very little time in these things.*

Usually, yes. A quarter of an hour is enough: but these last two took more time.

*If Nishikanta goes in for the proper technique at present, there may be a check on his flow, no?*

Possibly, though fidelity to metre can be a help as well as a check or it makes the God of Words more alert, skilful and subtle.

*About my metre, shall I approach Amal or Arjava? Amal is willing.*

Either.

*Everyone is doing something. I am only Tennysonning. Don't you feel pity for me, Sir?*

Not so much. If you were Browning[ing], I might. On second thought I keep the poem one day more.

*December 18, 1935*

*I have found that a poem may follow automatically, spontaneously with rich*

*images and expressions, though one doesn't know what will follow next. That gives a real delight and what comes is genuine stuff.*

That is the proper way of inspiration.

*I don't say that images, expressions may not sweep in, but one has to beat, beat and beat.*

Beat beating is not sweeping in.

*Two of my poems that you liked very much came in that way. But unfortunately all don't and one has to work hard. Sometimes there is success, at other times failure. Can you tell me on what these variations depend?*

It depends on whether the inspiration flows in or the fabricating mind labours. You are obliged to have a mixed method, part inspiration, part mental, because the inspiration is not yet free to pass through. Beat beating is the sign of the mind at work like a God-forgotten blacksmith; the flow is the sign of the Muse pouring down things at her ease.

*What's up with J? Trying to bring down the Supermind or going off the deep end?*

I fear he is wandering in the intermediate zone. How much is occultifying drama and how much is real aberration is the real question.

*I can't ask him to work when he's in such a mood.*

Don't.

*You can keep this note-book, but what about the one lying with you?*

I was returning it this morning, but I found one place all wrong and have been beat-beating at it—penultimate stanza 2nd and 3rd lines. Made something at last but not very very right.

December 19, 1935

*Two poems by Nishkanta enclosed: one old and the other new. But no use asking what the metre is. He has already begun learning it.*

All right, I think. Rereading it, I find it *très joli*. Congratulations to myself and Nishkanta with Nirod Talukdar in the middle.

*Why bother about the metre, precise English etc. ? They will come some day and in the meantime let him go on writing and learning by corrections, lessons, and so on.*

That's all right—but I rub in a bit of metre and stresses so that his ear may learn—and yours also. Judging by the last poem there is a distinct progress—but where is the credit? Corrected by Amal? or only by your sole poetic self?

*By the way you didn't like my Bengali poem or you hesitate to call it mine, because of so many corrections by Nishikanta? Others say that it is very fine.*

It was very good; mixed parentage does not matter, so long as the offspring is beautiful.

*How do you rhyme "hfe" and "clff", "smle" and "will", "came" and "whim" ? Are they all whims ?*

They are called in English imperfect rhymes and can be freely but not too freely used. Only you have to understand the approximations and kinships of vowel sounds in English, otherwise, you will produce illegitimate children like "splendour" and "wonder" which is not a rhyme but an assonance.

*December 20, 1935*

*Nishikanta has written:*

*"I am tuned in thy tremolo of dreamland, heaven and earth." Is the word tremolo all right ?*

It is rather strange but perhaps it will do.

*The credit of this poem goes entirely to him. You'll be glad to see that your effort at metrical lessons has proved fruitful.*

Evidently with a little care and practice Nishikanta ought soon to be able to handle English metre. He has the gift.

*I have no objection to being the trait-d'union in the 'mixed parentage', but for heaven's sake drop that appendage Talukdar, Sir. It is absolutely prosaic when I am trying to be poetic !*

All right. Only it is a pity—it was such a mouthful! It may be prosaic in Bengali, but to one ignorant of the meaning it sounds as if you were a Roman emperor.

*I send you two more offspring ! Nishikanta says that he tried anapaest consciously and would like to know how far the metre is successful.*

It is mixed iamb-anapaest. Quite good at that, except for irregularity in the number of feet and one line which does not go "Crystals at thy feet." which is not anapaestic but trochaic. I have explained in the margin.

*As for the next poem, it is as usual of mixed parentage. Please see if it has blossomed as a beauty! Nishikanta finds it one of my best, but when I completed it, I said "Won't do! Won't do!"*

Rubbish! It is exceedingly fine and your won't do is nonsense.

*If N.K. is right then my poetic sense is no good, or am I too self-critical?*

Your poetic sense seems all right when you judge N.K.'s or other poetry.  
Not self-critical, self-depreciatory.

*Whilst I was having a nap in the afternoon, I had a vision of a very beautiful woman sitting under the sun. The rays of the sun were either surrounding her or were emanating from her body—I can't precisely say which. The appearance and dress seemed to be more European than oriental.*

It is not a woman. A woman does not radiate and is not surrounded by rays either. Probably a Sun Goddess or a Shakti of the inner Light, one of the Mother's Powers.

*December 21, 1935*

*Z is of the opinion that too much colour and imagery conceal the thought-substance in poetry. It is better to be as simple and direct as possible.*

One can't make rigid rules like that. Wordsworth is as simple and direct as possible (not always though), Keats aims at word-magic. One can't say Wordsworth is a greater poet than Keats.

Whatever style is poetically successful, is admissible.

*Next point she makes is that it is better not to close a poem too often with a direct prayer.*

Too often, of course not. For then it becomes a mannerism.

*The last 2 lines of the poem I've sent you, are weaker than the preceding lines, because they are a prayer.*

They are weaker, but not because they are a direct prayer. Why can't a prayer

be strong? I will send you one day a poem of mine where there is a direct prayer.

*Can you not give some suggestions for improvement? Don't plead your ignorance of Bengali; surely you can point out the defects.*

I can tell my impression, but I can't say how it will affect a Bengali reader. My mind may be too international to coincide with the Bengali reader's. I may also miss fine distinctions which he can make. I mean shades of language, what is or is not possible, or is or is not native to the language.

*December 22, 1935*

*I seem to understand that trochees are to be avoided in an iambic-anapaest poem, but maybe I am wrong, for in a book on metre I find that the trochee is a common modulation of iambs, specially in the first line.*

*By the change you have made in the line "Crystals at her feet" into "Is a crystal at her feet", does it mean that in an iamb-anapaest poem every line must have at least one iamb-anapaest foot?*

Trochees are perfectly admissible in an iambic line as a modulation especially in the first *foot* (not first line), but also occasionally in the middle. In the last foot a trochee is *not* admissible. Also these trochees must not be so arranged as to turn an iambic into a trochaic line.

My dear sir, this is an instance of importing one's own inferences instead of confining oneself to the plain meaning of the statement. First of all the rules concerning a mixed iambic-anapaestic cannot be the same as those that govern a pure iambic. Secondly what I objected to was the trochaic run of the line. Two trochees followed by a long syllable, not a single iamb or anapaest in the whole! How can there be an iambic or an iambic-anapaestic without a single iamb or anapaest in 1.7? The line as written could only scan either as trochaic, therefore not iambic line, or thus  $\sim/\sim\sim/$ , that is a trochee followed by an anapaest. Here of course there is an anapaest, but the combination is impossible rhythmically because it involves three short syllables one after another—an unbearable collocation—one is obliged to put a minor stress on the "at" and that at once makes the trochaic line. In the iambic-anapaestic line a trochee followed by an iamb can be allowed in the first foot; elsewhere it is to be admitted with caution so as not to disturb the rhythm.

*About the modulations, any number can be crowded in, it appears; only the foot-numbers should be equal for the sake of harmony.*

What numbers do you mean? The rules are perfectly clear and intelligible, only of course you must know what are the accents and what modulations are or are not pos-



sible. That means that you must know something about the language, that is all.

I have given you however some rules for the modulations in iambic verse—they are not exhaustive. In modern verse one can pepper an iambic line with anapaests. I have done so myself in the sonnets. But one must be very careful how one does it. This license is not for beginners.

*If poets were to be guided by such metrical rules, they'd stop writing altogether!*

How did the English poets write then?

*The same word is stressed or non-stressed according to the combination. How can one then be guided?*

You mean the same syllable? It is syllables, not words that are stressed.

*What about the poem you promised yesterday? Golden chance, tomorrow being Sunday!*

What poem? Sunday is not a golden chance because I have any amount of work to do on that day—wiping off arrears. People also often choose to forget that it is Sunday.

*Don't you always tell the Mother what we write? She didn't know that the oculist was on leave.*

I told Mother what you said, but you gave no date for the oculist's leave, only put it in the future.

*(To be continued)*

# AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1982)

13

MYSELF: I am feeling after a long time that the difficulties are as if fleeting away from me. I am not sure, of course, whether it is the vital's consolation to me or not, but I am feeling less responsible about myself. Pray tell me whether all this which is coming to me is true or the obstinate part of the vital is trying to baffle me with these satisfying answers.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is all right. If you develop the inward truth as you describe here, the outward will follow. 4.7.1932

MYSELF: Mother, today I took my lunch at A's place. Was it a wrong step?

SRI AUROBINDO: If you keep the intensity it is all right—but you must see that the intensity continues and is not replaced by some other condition in which you only feel at ease and do not notice that the intense condition has gone—for if that happens, then small things may again begin to matter. 13.7.1932

MYSELF: Tell me frankly—is there anything objectionable if I go and read your *Prayers and Meditations* with D? He says he can explain it to me (there will be two or three other persons). If anyone else could explain *Prayers* I would equally be willing to take the help. Anyhow, I will do what you want me to do.

SRI AUROBINDO: We don't think that much depends upon that—your going or not going. It is the inner attitude and state that matters, the resolution to conquer, that is the thing important. 22.7.1932

MYSELF: What shall I do if I can't make the rejection completely? Everything comes to the same point.

SRI AUROBINDO: It would be easier when you bring down a settled peace and equanimity into that part of the being. There will then be more of an automatic rejection of such movements and less need of Tapasya. 27.8.1932

MYSELF: You have spoken of bringing down "settled peace" and "equanimity". But what is the way? Will you please tell me?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Mother's peace is above you—by aspiration and quiet self-opening it descends. When it takes hold of the vital and the body, then equanimity becomes easy and in the end automatic. 28.8.1932

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, this new place is very quiet, but I don't feel the atmosphere, the intensity that I was always feeling in the former house. I know all this depends on my inner condition. I am feeling calm and quiet but don't have the former joy and energy in every movement, the same heart-filling and soothing feeling which was constantly there. Guard me, Mother, from all that pushes me back towards the surface.

SRI AUROBINDO: It must be something in the vital that has come up and got in the way. You should find out what it is and reject it. 7.9.1932

MYSELF: Mother, I fail to know the reason. I am trying to keep the right attitude by remaining calm and quiet. Some days ago, I had an experience about the right attitude and I wanted to live in the consciousness of that attitude so that no excitement might come in. Yet it is true that still there was excitement at times. Now, please tell me what went wrong.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the effect of a wrong movement—a mixture of seeking after comfort and convenience and a certain vanity or self-esteem (it is difficult to get an exact word for the feeling) which you did not seem to have recognised sufficiently in your vital. It was an eager excited movement with the vital push behind—not the right thing. As it was connected with the house the effect came up when you removed to that house. We say this because you ask what it was,—but as it is now over, the best thing is to forget all about it and get back to your true condition. 7.9.1932

MYSELF: Mother Divine, Sri Aurobindo has mentioned my wrong movement. May I know when it came about? I am asking because I want to be clear about it. I remember that just before my shifting here I had the wrong movement and recognised it there, and I remember writing to you all about it. I also realised afterwards the wrong movement of all my ambitions etc. (what Sri Aurobindo has mentioned) and experienced what should be the right attitude and offered myself to be put anywhere in any way you decided. After this experience I was trying to remain in that consciousness, and about this also I wrote to you. After that I don't remember having any craving or eagerness for such things; on the contrary I was ashamed that I had written so many letters about them. That is why I am writing to you to know when the wrong movement stepped in. I mentioned in my letter of yesterday a rising of excitement sometimes, but that was of this character—to do what has to be done hurriedly—and I was always drawing myself back and trying to remain in that experience-consciousness. So is it the effect of *that* wrong movement that is still going on? Or did it appear again without my sufficient knowledge and recognition when I was moving to the new place?

SRI AUROBINDO: It was before when you were still in the other house, but something of it continued afterwards also—your excitement was the result of that feeling suppressed but still there, at least in the subconscious vital, and the desire to finish quickly is the result of a desire to get rid of the occasion of this want of the entire inner

clearness and quietude. You are not yet conscious of what is there in your physical and vital physical consciousness when it is not formulated to the mind and higher vital consciousness. 8.9.1932

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, in my waking consciousness I feel that I flow always in the stream of sadhana, but in my sleep I am quite a different person. I want to be changed in my sleep also. How to improve it? During sleep too I want to keep the constant contact with you. Will my sleep begin to change in due time? What must I do to make it change? Is there any process or has any personal effort to be made or should I simply call your help before I retire to bed?

SRI AUROBINDO: Aspire and want it always—that is the first thing. As for the methods perhaps the best is not to go to sleep straight in the ordinary way, but to meditate and through meditation pass into sleep.

At least before going to bed have a meditation. 13.9.1932

MYSELF: Let me know if I have done anything wrong in telling you what I suspect in the matter that has been going on for some days.

SRI AUROBINDO: Nothing wrong in telling, but the less these things are thought about, the better. By dwelling on them with the thought or speech, vibrations are set up which increase the chance of their developing. 27.9.1932

MYSELF: Mother, whenever I look at you, if I stare a little, I begin to feel the descent of your Force. Simply by looking at you, can we really receive anything?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course, you can. 1.10.1932

MYSELF: Mother, my Sweet Mother, tomorrow we shall have the opportunity to rest our heads on Your Feet. The eagerness, the joy, the inner push that I feel nowadays to go and see you—is it vital in character? I feel the movement starts from deep within myself and the whole of it remains and goes on deep behind my chest, nearly at the back. Is it merely a vital craving or desire? Or something deeper than that? I am unable to express exactly what I feel; it is some very strong and joyous movement.

SRI AUROBINDO: The original is not vital, it is psychic, it is only if disappointment comes in that there is evidence of the vital mixing in it some unruléd movement. The vital has to share, but in the psychic way. 4.10.1932

MYSELF: Mother, see what has happened! So long I was going on well, but today the memory of the past has been coming and going like pictures before my mind. I was almost pressed down by them. I got up to meditate, but failed. Then I tried to reject—no success. I couldn't separate myself at all. These things stop the progress and I feel heavy and exhausted.

SRI AUROBINDO: So long as you have not learned the lesson the past had to give you, it comes back on you. Notice carefully what kind of remembrances come, you

will see that they are connected with some psychological movements in you that have to be got rid of. So you must be prepared to recognise all that was not right in you and is still not corrected, not allow any vanity or self-righteousness to cloud your vision.

24.10.1932

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, shake me up again and again until I am able to succeed in this matter. I have experienced many times that for the first few days after a new experience I always happen to be very wakeful about what I experience, but slowly, if I am not sufficiently earnest about keeping what I gain, it gets lost behind the veil of inferior, ordinary or clouded movements of vision. So I pray, shake me up each time (whatever way you like) so that I may be able to keep these things present in my consciousness until they are removed.

Now kindly tell me afresh about my tea or food with others. I have found out that I am quite fond of tea; only, I was not admitting it. May I know what I should do if anybody offers tea or asks me to take food?

SRI AUROBINDO: As to taking tea or food with others, you must always remember that to be governed by these ideas is not at all an ideal condition, but if you have the impulse and are not able easily and naturally to reject it, you can take on condition you scrupulously inform the Mother both of the act and of the movement and state of mind accompanying it. Also often the desire may not be yours, but may come on you from outside, imposed on you silently with conscious suggestions by others; you must learn to see when it is like that and then you must reject it. Your aspiration must be for an inner change so that there will be no longer any need to indulge in the desires, because they will no longer have a hold on you. You must learn to watch yourself and know what is the true nature and source of the movement in you and report them carefully—as in fact you had begun to do when you first had the psychic opening and could see the movements in you or many of them at least very clearly.

26.10.1932

MYSELF: Mother Divine, I really did not know that I still had such craving for sarees, I never felt this sort of thing before, I was wondering how it could be so absolutely strong that I could ask you to give me more than one saree. I am feeling so bad, so miserable! I can very well see now that it was you who made me see that the movement was from the vital craving and also pointed out so clearly that I have taken a wrong direction.

Mother, I dare not ask, but I am feeling like offering the sarees to you with the craving that made me press you for them. If you graciously allow I shall be very much relieved to offer them. May I do so?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is better to keep them and get relieved. These things had been pressed down in you, but not got rid of. They were still lying there in the sub-conscious vital. That is why they now rise up with force to be got rid of more radically.

1.11.1932

MYSELF: Mother mine, what to write? My movement of the day is an absolute failure. This morning my attitude was good. I was quite reserved and kept quiet, at least I was very careful not to let myself go; but afterwards I found myself making foolish mistakes one after another. Each night, when I write to you, pray and take the resolution that from the next day I should carry out what I have been asked, I feel also an assurance within me that, yes, I shall be able to do so. But alas, the next day I see I can do nothing but fail! Only in the morning, after coming back from Pranam, for some time I feel strengthened, energetic and enthusiastic, I am happy and light and find all my being praying for your help.

Is it still that a part of my vital resists—or what is it, I wonder. Mother, save me from the influences that are carrying me here and there.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is simply the habit of the physical consciousness that is showing itself insisently—the want of control of the tongue especially,—don't get upset,—observe yourself and keep the will steady—it is not merely the vital but the habit of the physical mind and the body. 2.11.1932

*(To be continued)*

*(Translated by Nirodbaran from the original Bengali)*

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

*(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1982)*

## The Mother's Message

This is the  
interesting story of  
how a being Su-ava  
the Divine Life



8

ON the 6th March 1956 I received a telegram from my family, which I sent to the Mother. She wrote:

"I am enclosing (in the telegram) 2 blessings packets to send to Usha and the newborn child.

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

My younger sister got married just a week after my marriage.

It was incredible—I could not imagine my sister had got a son, because I always regarded her as a child. For, she was seven years younger than I.

In the evening I went to the Playground to see the Mother. She smiled at me, a slow warm smile which made her face look totally different. Gradually she closed her eyes and remained in a trance for a few moments. She lifted those compassionate eyes to meet mine. Solemnly she said:

“The Creator of the world sits with a big pot in front of him.

“Human beings, after they have finished their round of life, come back to the Creator. They are put into the pot from which they had been sent out. The Creator kneads their substance into new forms and flings them down on the earth. Endlessly human beings come back into the pot. Like this the process goes on and on like a cycle.

“Child, this is the human life.

“Indeed, there are very very few who really know the Divine Life.”

She laughed softly and ran an affectionate finger down the curve of my cheek. After receiving the various kinds of flowers and a kiss on my forehead from the Mother, I took my leave.

Her talk reminds me of a few lines of *Savitri*, p. 78:

“... A thinking being in an unthinking world,  
An island in the sea of the Unknown,  
He is a smallness trying to be great,  
An animal with some instincts of a god,  
His life a story too common to be told,  
His deeds a number summing up to nought,  
His consciousness a torch lit to be quenched,  
His hope a star above a cradle and grave.”

I love to read perpetually the beautiful and knowledge-packed books, which uplift my consciousness.

I read in *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilisation*, edited by Joseph Campbell, p. 52, the description of Brahmā, the Creator of the world:

“Brahmā is four-faced, and with his faces he controls the quarters and the whole field of the Universe.

“The lotus of Brahmā is called by the Sages versed in sacred tradition:



“ ‘The highest form or aspect of the earth’ .”

\*

To forget my sufferings and miseries, I took refuge in sleep. All the time I felt terribly drowsy—sometimes I slept even in the morning. I could not help it because of some strange pressure on my head—I just could not lift it. I tried to keep my eyes open by splashing cold water on them, but they seemed unnaturally heavy. I did not know the exact reason—all I felt was that this habit was not good. I informed the Mother and she answered:

“Yes, you can reduce your sleep if you feel like that. But do not use artificial means (like an alarm clock) to wake up because it is not good for the nerves.”

I asked her how the sleep could be diminished and she wrote:

“With the growth of the consciousness the need for sleep diminishes because the sleep becomes more quiet and more conscious, more restful—and thus the number of hours of sleep can be diminished. But to diminish the sleep by force so long as one feels sleepy is not good because it strains the nerves and makes them restless.”

“As for the food, you may try in the evening the diet you speak of.

“But if you feel hungry, you can take more.

“With my love and blessings.”

Yes, I asked the Mother whether I should take in the evening only a light diet like soup, plantain and milk instead of bread and curry. I thought that heavy food at night was not proper for me. In fact, I had lost the habit of taking food at night, because in the beginning I ate my food in the general Dining Room. To go there in the scorching heat made me lose my appetite. Afterwards, my lunch was brought to Golconde. In the evening the Dining Room opened twice for dinner. The first time it did so, I used to be with the Mother and therefore not free to go there. The second time, it got quite late since it opened only after the Mother had returned to her apartment from the Playground and I was too scared to go all by myself.

As I did not have any provision to eat at Golconde, still later I felt so hungry that I pressed my stomach and drank two or three glasses of water and went to sleep. But, frequently, sleep was driven away from my eyes by my hunger, the unbearable heat and an anguished and restless mind. I shed a few silent tears.

Once during this period I felt very sleepy in the course of the morning. On that day, too, I was terribly disturbed, both physically and psychologically, and to be oblivious of everything I slept soundly. When I got up, it was midday. I felt blissfully relaxed and peaceful and it was indeed a strange experience after all the restlessness.

That evening I went to the Mother. I thought she might chide me as the previous night I had written to her an unpleasant letter. On the contrary, I saw a deep tenderness in her eyes. To my sheer amazement she stretched out her arms to embrace me. I drew myself close to her with some hesitation.... She said with a smile:

“Today your soul came to me before midday. It was very beautiful. The soul clung to me like this.”

She crossed her arms and put her hands on her own shoulders.

“It remained with me for more than half an hour. I soothed your soul. Now come to me.”

And we embraced. The same comforting feeling enveloped me once again that I had experienced at midday. Then I visualised what the Mother had just told me. It was not an imagination or a fantasy but a concrete reality.

That night I sent a letter to the Mother :

“My Gracious Mother, will you please accept my prayer to help me in every way?”

“With love and salutations.

Your child  
Huta”

She answered the next morning:

“Certainly I accept your prayer and you can be sure of my full help.

“With my love and blessings.”

Much later by her Grace I could sleep and wake up according to my will.

\*

Truly, difficulties do not come one at a time—they crowd together like Shakespeare’s “sorrows”:

“When sorrows come they come not single spies,  
But in battalions.”

If I tried to stop certain parts of my being from listening to the evil forces, there were other parts which responded to them. No matter how hard I tried I always failed to recognise their treacherous acts. There are so many parts—I may even say so many beings—in ourselves and, therefore, such a multiplicity of conflicts!

The mist of confusion and doubt covered me and I did not really know how to

get out of this complex situation. I wrote to the Mother and she replied:

“I quite understand that you are meeting with great difficulties in your outer nature, and that there are in you two opposite parts that are in complete contradiction one with the other—one wanting the Divine and ready to give everything to reach the Divine, the other quite weak and selfish and refusing to collaborate in the aspiration of the other. But you are not the only person in that condition and many others who were like that succeeded in overcoming the difficulty and finally succeeded in reaching the Divine. So you must keep hope, especially now that my force and help are always supporting in you the part that is turned towards the Divine.

“With my love and blessings always.”

I did not feel convinced by her remarks. So I asked her why she allowed me to stay in the Ashram when my other part was not ready to participate in the spiritual seeking. I believed that the whole being should be prepared for this life and I was perplexed.

A beautiful card, on which a sparrow singing upon a branch of cherry blossom was depicted, brought her answer:

“I have read all your letters and can answer only one thing. From the beginning I knew how you are, and it is because your aspiration for the Divine is sincere that I allowed you to remain here. Now the only thing to do is to persist courageously until the opposing force is defeated.

“And you can always rely on my help, my love and blessings.”

I felt so ashamed of imperfections that some fear created in me the urge to hide myself from the Mother. When I expressed this to her, she wrote:

“Never feel ashamed or fear before me. You must come freely to me as a child to a Divine Mother. Because I never look at mistakes and faults—I only look at the soul, the psychic being, for it to come to the surface and to take the lead of the whole being.

“The psychic being is your true self and by opening your exterior being to it you will be able to receive the Divine’s help and to conquer.

“With my love and blessings.”

In another letter I stated my feeling to the Mother that I found the Integral Yoga very difficult but still I had a great aspiration to find the Divine. This was a challenge to which my soul responded gaily. That night I slept only in snatches and was fully awake before dawn. In the morning I got her reply:

“Certainly the path of Integral Yoga is not an easy one. To conquer the Divine is a difficult task—but with sincerity and perseverance one is sure to succeed.

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

Sri Aurobindo has said appositely in one of his writings, “The Way”, in *The Hour of God*, Cent. Vol. 17, pp. 39-40:

“First be sure of the call and of thy soul’s answer. For if the call is not true, not the touch of God’s powers or the voice of his messengers, but the lure of thy ego, the end of thy endeavour will be a poor spiritual fiasco or else a deep disaster.

“And if not the soul’s fervour, but only the mind’s assent or interest replies to the divine summons or only the lower life’s desire clutches at some side attraction of the fruits of Yoga—power or Yoga-pleasure or only a transient emotion leaps like an unsteady flame moved by the intensity of the Voice or its sweetness or grandeur, then too there can be little surety for thee in the difficult path of Yoga.

“The outer instruments of mortal man have no force to carry him through the severe ardours of this spiritual journey and Titanic inner battle or to meet its terrible or obstinate ordeals or nerve him to face and overcome its subtle and formidable dangers. Only his spirit’s august and steadfast will and the quenchless fire of his soul’s invincible ardour are sufficient for this difficult transformation and this high improbable endeavour.

“Imagine not the way is easy; the way is long, arduous, dangerous, difficult. At every step is an ambush, at every turn a pitfall. A thousand seen or unseen enemies will start up against thee, terrible in subtlety against thy ignorance, formidable in power against thy weakness. And when with pain thou hast destroyed them, other thousands will surge up to take their place. Hell will vomit its hordes to oppose and enring and wound and menace; Heaven will meet thee with its pitiless tests and its cold luminous denials.

“Thou shalt find thyself alone in thy anguish, the demons furious in thy path, the Gods unwilling above thee. Ancient and powerful, cruel, unvanquished and close and innumerable are the dark and dreadful Powers that profit by the reign of Night and Ignorance and would have no change and are hostile. Aloof, slow to arrive, far-off and few and brief in their visits are the Bright Ones who are willing or permitted to succour. Each step forward is a battle. There are precipitous descents, there are unending ascensions and ever higher peaks upon peaks to conquer. Each plateau climbed is but a stage on the way and reveals endless heights beyond it. Each victory thou thinkest the last triumphant struggle proves to be but the prelude to a hundred fierce and perilous battles....

“But thou sayst God’s hand will be with me and the Divine Mother near with her gracious smile of succour? And thou knowest not then that God’s

Grace is more difficult to have or to keep than the nectar of the Immortals or Kuvera's priceless treasures? Ask of his chosen and they will tell thee how often the Eternal has covered his face from them, how often he has withdrawn from them behind his mysterious veil and they have found themselves alone in the grip of Hell, solitary in the horror of the darkness, naked and defenceless in the anguish of the battle. And if his presence is felt behind the veil, yet is it like the winter sun behind clouds and saves not from the rain and snow and the calamitous storm and the harsh wind and the bitter cold and the atmosphere of a sorrowful grey and the dun weary dullness. Doubtless the help is there even when it seems to be withdrawn, but still is there the appearance of total night with no sun to come and no star of hope to please in the darkness.

"Beautiful is the face of the Divine Mother, but she too can be hard and terrible. Nay, then, is immortality a plaything to be given lightly to a child, or the divine life a prize without effort or the crown for a weakling? Strive rightly and thou shalt have; trust and thy trust shall in the end be justified; but the dread Law of the Way is there and none can abrogate it."

\*

I wondered whether the Mother heard the cry of my heart, because my outer being saw her as a human being and not as the Divine. My mind strayed in a dozen different directions of doubt and disbelief. The Mother must have laughed to herself when she answered:

"Always I hear your inner call, always I am with your true being, fighting all that opposes it—and with all my love and power I keep your true being and protect it against all the opposing forces until the Victory comes.

"With my love and blessings."

On the 16th March the Mother sent me a letter along with my pocket money:

"Here is your pocket money for this month—if you need some more you will let me know.

"With my love and blessings always."

I did not need more than I had received.

I was in the habit of buying books and photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. I also bought things to offer to the Mother—besides a few necessities for my personal use.

I had been suffering from a persistent headache.

I did not know the cause of it. I thought that the reason was that I washed my hair with diluted lime juice.

I had also been suffering from acute cramps in my stomach during the menstrual period.

When I could bear these aches and pains no more, I informed the Mother. She gave the answer:

“I never heard the lime juice gives headache—but surely the trouble with the wisdom tooth may. So it is better to show it to the dentist. About the period, the best way to avoid all pain is to take regular exercise. It helps the circulation.

“With my love and blessings.”

It was true that I was not doing regular exercise either at the Playground or in my room.

I saw the Mother in the evening at the Playground. As usual we exchanged flowers and smiles. I told her:

“Mother, I wish my period to be stopped for good, because in the spiritual life it is a great hindrance and nuisance. I want you to suggest some medicine to make it cease once for all.”

She opened her eyes wide and said forcefully:

“No, you must never go against Nature’s Law. When the time comes, it will stop automatically. Meanwhile keep absolutely calm and quiet and pain will go.”

I told myself: “Oh! God alone knows when this curse will stop—it may even take ages!”

Then she inquired about my tooth. I told her that I felt nervous to go to the dentist. She leaned a little forward and with a smile said: “Don’t be nervous. Would you like me to go with you to the dentist?”

I could not believe my ears. I immediately answered: “Please no. I will go myself.”

She said after a pause:

“I shall be with you when you go to the dentist.”

The dentist was named Mr. Coroth who, quite a number of years back, had treated the Mother’s teeth. This piece of information he gave me when I went to him. He was rather talkative.

There was nothing wrong with my teeth, he said.

The Mother also arranged for me to do some special exercise.

As regards the yogic asanas I asked the Mother whether I could do them. She

inquired why I wanted them. So I spoke with candour that I wished to master myself and achieve my goal.

She laughed and slightly shook her head. I wanted to say something, but she silenced me with a gentle smile, and said:

“No, child, asanas are not for you. Do light exercise.”

Somebody at Golconde suggested to me that if I learnt cycling it would do me a world of good, and I could go as far as I wanted. While I was about to take her permission, she asked me:

“Did you ever learn cycling before?”

I answered that I did not.

She said tenderly:

“No, your nerves cannot stand it, and I do not want you to learn cycling—I do not want you to go far from the Ashram on a cycle.”

So there was the end of my projected adventures!

I believed that without some definite and constant work my mind would rot and that I would indulge myself in all sorts of caprices!

The Mother wrote to me on the 19th March:

“Bonjour

to my dear little child Huta,

Now my stores are getting ready, and I intend to visit them on the 2nd April at 4 o’clock in the afternoon. Be there and I shall give you the work that you can do.

“With my love and blessings.”

The cleaning of the rooms was not enough for me. So I felt that now the Mother would surely give me the work which would enable me to express my true being.

Yet still so many days to go. I was really exhausted with wasting my time. I could see nothing before me except a great span of darkness.

The Mother consoled me while writing these luminous words:

“Bonjour

to my dear little child Huta,

“Sooner or later the Truth is bound to prevail.”

With my tired brain vainly endeavouring to grasp what she had written, I tried to rest but sleep eluded me. Once again a card came from her with these words:

“There is only one Truth as there is only one Divine.  
“Blessings—love.”

So in a single sentence she summed up everything. In spite of all the obstruction and rebellion, my soul implored silently to be one with the Truth-Consciousness. The Mother answered:

“Your prayer is heard with supreme compassion and Grace.  
“Let the Divine’s Will be done.  
“With my love and blessings.”

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I was not sure whether it was right to spend the money for myself which the Mother gave me every month. I felt uneasy and my conscience pricked me. In answer to a letter she replied:

“The money I am giving you is for you to spend *freely* as you wish to spend it and your conscience must not prick when you spend it because it is with my full consent and blessings that you spend—and when the money comes to you with my blessings, there can be no selfishness in your spending, because there is no selfishness in receiving whatever it is, from me.

“It is a very nice idea to purchase books and photographs for your parents—and I am sure they will appreciate.

“With my love and blessings.”

I was happy with her advice, and obeyed it.

I prayed to her to sign the books and photographs I had bought not only for my parents but for other family members.

The Mother wrote:

“I have signed the books and photographs—send them with my blessings.

“Love and blessings to you.”

On the morning of 27th March, I offered to the Mother the suit of salwar and kameez I had made. She admired it. Each gesture of hers was a caress. She smiled with loving eyes and said:

“I want you to spend money freely. It is fun to go to the bazaar and buy things.”



She gave a delightful laugh.

In the afternoon, I saw the Mother playing tennis in the same suit. Her charming smile touched the very core of my heart. The next morning she wrote:

“My love and blessings are always with you to give you strength, courage and joy.”

Ill-wishers never ceased to assault me whenever they found a chance. There was no end to their jealousy. I could not say anything to them, because I thought myself enormously inferior to them. Only because of the Mother could I stay among such people—because of her love which bound me.

The Mother sent me a beautiful card showing cactus flowers.

Together with it came my pocket money. She had written two lines on the card:

“The flowers on this card are the flowers of ‘riches’.

“Always with you.”

Good gracious! I wrote back immediately, saying that I did not want material riches because that was the root of all evil.

The same evening, before the French lesson, the Mother came out of her room and made a gesture with her forefinger, calling me to her. I went to her with mixed feelings of shyness and bewilderment. The Mother’s eyes held a glimmer of amusement as she said:

“Ah! my child, I did not mean material ‘riches’ when I wrote to you this morning, I meant spiritual riches.”

And she laughed softly. I heaved a sigh of relief.

That night I sent a letter to her expressing my true feelings towards the spiritual life and the next morning I received her answer:

“You are a very sweet child of mine; I love you, and with all my heart and will I want you to be free from all trouble and suffering.

“Remain confidently near me—everything will be all right.”

All the same, constant trouble with the hostile forces gave me no respite and there was no happy smile on my face. Frequently I concealed, behind a quick smile, my manifold anxieties. A strange depression often seized me and I felt concretely that every moment my whole being was thrown into the fire of purification.

*(To be continued)*

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# ENGLISH: ITS USAGE AND “ABUSAGE” —AND A SIDE-TRACK ON SPIRITUALITY

## A CORRESPONDENCE

From Morwenna Donnelly

February 11, 1951

Dear Mr. Sethna,

What a terrible grammatical hornet’s nest I seem to have disturbed! I am rather at a disadvantage, as I lent your article<sup>1</sup> to Hugh l’Anson Fausset to read, and he hasn’t returned it yet. All I can say about your phrase ‘understanding a little the supramental light’ is that it is utterly no use trying to bend your metaphysical Indian mind to the task of introducing a little logic into the English tongue! If you spoke like this to me in conversation I should think ‘How charming that broken English sounds’! It would simply not be fluent English, that’s all. Also you can’t bring such alluring things to your rescue as poetry—the requirements of prose and poetry are utterly different, and even so-called ‘poetical’ prose never uses the grammatical licences of poetry, only its quality. Telescoping and syncopation may be permissible in poetry, but precision, lucidity and perfect balance are the first requirements of aristocratic prose—don’t you agree? If a sentence needs another ‘had’ for clarity, and its addition makes too many ‘hads’—then cut the sentence into two or even three. When Herbert Read was ‘grooming’ my first novel for me, he observed that the great art of prose writing was knowing how to alternate short and long sentences. I was then under the spell of Charles Morgan—whom I still think a great prose writer but a phoney philosopher—and I think that was very wise advice. It’s still sinking home! I don’t really know what to say about using ‘forthcoming’ as a noun—it is legitimate, but the application of these things is so dependent on idiomatic usage. I mean, that when a native uses it as a noun he would only use it in certain circumstances—having learnt to use it in that way by ear. That is why it is not much use appealing to dictionary definitions. There are a thousand subtle prohibitions and sanctions in the living language as it is spoken and written that can only be learnt by ear. I’m dreadfully sorry not to be more logical and explicit, but there ’tis.

I was interested in what you had to say about the incorruptibility of the body, but I am in some doubt about your statement ‘the supramental light had nothing to do with it in the past’, simply because such statements seem to me to be dogmatic and open to question. We actually know so little about human history—what we do know, with the most insufficient information, only goes back with ‘accuracy’ some two thousand years—that I feel we have no *right* to advance opinions of this kind, but only to keep absolutely open minds. We know, for instance, next to nothing (except through esoteric tradition) about the attainments of the great Masters of the Middle East before the dawn of recorded history and what spiritual stratas they utilised. Even

<sup>1</sup> *The Passing of Sri Avrobindo. Its Inner Significance and Cousequence*

if Sri Aurobindo advanced this opinion without qualification, it still remains a truth of his experience about which we should retain entirely open minds until it becomes part of ours.<sup>1</sup> Don't you agree? This is something I feel terribly strongly about! I feel that the teaching of wonderfully illuminated people like Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is of a quite unsurpassed kind in sign-posting the way of spiritual development, but that it must never be appropriated illicitly; because each one of us has got to sweat every inch of the way for each one of these truths, and always with the proviso that if our own deepest and truest experience contradicts someone else's—however much we revere them—we must stick to our own. Berdyaev once said that if any one of the sayings of Christ was contrary to a spiritual truth of a man's own being, then he must disregard it. I don't think one can lift things wholesale into one's life simply because they have been propounded by spiritual princes. It's getting something for nothing—like baptism!—and psychologically it never works. I am afraid you will point all your guns at me for saying this—and I don't think perhaps it would be a bad thing if you did! You will doubtless think me a sceptical westerner who refuses to take anything on trust—and that is true—at any rate for more than a certain distance. But I must end, or you will begin to think that I am both tiresome and provocative.

P. S. Yes, one can say 'understand a little what I want' but *not* 'understand a little my central argument'—unless one is talking excitedly and getting one's words a bit jumbled up! But do not ask me why!

**From K. D. Sethna**

February 18, 1951

Dear Miss Donnelly,

Thanks for your very interesting letter. I don't know where to begin answering it. There are so many points in it on which I should like to say a few words—most of them pertinent, I hope, but some perhaps a little impertinent and others somewhat non-pertinent yet not without personal value between friend and friend.

You speak of my "metaphysical Indian mind." Well, I am rather a queer fish. I am not exactly an Indian. I am a Parsi—a Zoroastrian by birth. My people came to India about 1200 years ago from Persia. The general Parsi mind is not precisely metaphysical: it is more practical and its typical high reach is aesthetic, with a psychic influence far in the background, and on the religious side it derives from a consciousness part allied to the Assyrian, the Babylonian and the Egyptian temperament and part affined to the early Indian non-metaphysical and symbolising Vedic disposition. In some respects it has a colour that is Greek—semi-Platonic semi-Pythagorean. In still other respects it is close to the early Christian mind: in fact our religion is—except for the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement—a

<sup>1</sup> Of course it might be part of yours! but even then I feel that no created being really could be sure on such a point!

Christianity prior to Christ: we have God, Satan, one earth-life only, immediate Judgment after death, heaven, hell and purgatory, a *Dies Irae*, a resurrection, a final coming of God's representative to divide the sheep from the goats. But in the cult of Fire we link up with the ancient Middle East and with India. The metaphysical Indian mind has, no doubt, penetrated us and we cannot be too grateful for the penetration, but in the modern Zoroastrian there is a strong strain too of the West. We are the most westernised community in India and found little difficulty in mixing with the British when they arrived: we even enjoyed a privileged position under their rule and—to our shame—were not very good fighters for India's freedom. It may interest you to know that the only three persons from India who have sat in the House of Commons have been Parsis, the first and most famous being Dadabhoj Naoroji, whom a member of Parliament referred to as "a nigger" before seeing him but who proved on actual appearance more white-skinned than most Englishmen!

You will ask: "What has all this to do with the usage and 'abusage' of English?" Directly, nothing, and I am just indulging in a brief sketch of my psychological background. I may add that my twenty-three-years' association with Sri Aurobindo has, in an essential sense, made me more Indian than the majority of Indians, for the heart of the Indian consciousness is the Yogic turn, with a general metaphysical bent as a close subsidiary. Yes, in an essential sense, I am very Indian; but in every other sense I am hardly representative. My early philosophic training was along western lines and I came very strongly under the influence of western scientific agnosticism. Not one Indian language do I know intimately: even my Gujerati is mostly colloquial and it would never enter my head to try to express myself satisfactorily in it. English is for me the only expressive medium, as it is for most Parsis of my generation. There are also many Hindus today who feel themselves at home in English more than in any Indian tongue. A fair-sized group has come into being in India, which actually thinks in English. Its English is bound to be somewhat different at certain points from that of the Englishman proper. I don't believe it transgresses English usage very frequently, but now and then it handles the language with a little peculiarity. This peculiarity cannot always find favour with the ear of the British Islander. But isn't that ear offended at times—though perhaps less—also by the American, if not the Australian and the Africaner? The point is that English (owing chiefly to the growth of the Empire) is no longer a strictly British Islander's speech. Somehow it has become the language of other lands—it has even begun to flow in the blood-stream of other peoples. Often it comes out of these peoples' mouth in a somewhat fantastic form which does not deserve encouragement, for then the very genius of the language is cut across. But when the true genius is not hurt and there is only a certain occasional oddity of idiom, slight idiosyncrasy not quite native to the original home of the language and falling a trifle unfamiliarly on the typical English ear, should it be condemned as unEnglish? If the metaphysical Indian mind or any other that is not of wholesale British growth introduces some few novel nuances of usage into this language that has become in a very vital manner its own in spite of the original foreign-

ness of it, would the English ear be justified in considering these nuances as samples merely of charming broken English or English excited and a bit jumbled up? Please don't imagine I am against our English trying to be acceptable to the English ear. I am most anxious to correct whatever gaucheries may linger in my knowledge of this tongue. I do wish I had been given a chance to stay in England for a few years instead of making a brief visit when I was a mere six-year old. And I would be grateful indeed to you if every time I wrote something you found dubious you pulled me up. But, theoretically, there could be occasions when the pulling up might be due to forgetting that non-English people have begun to think in English and use it as if it were their mother tongue and that owing to English's being no longer the language of only the British Isles it cannot help having "natural" turns a shade different from a *pukka* Englishman's.

How exactly would the slight differences show themselves? You have yourself indicated two of the ways. When the metaphysical Indian mind creates in English it would on rare occasions introduce a little more logic into your tongue. Also, when the oriental mind writes prose it would not always function with an extremely marked change over from poetry, for in the oriental languages the dividing line is not of great sharpness. Here I may remark that even in English this line is not quite trenchant except as regards things like inversion. English has not a set tradition in prose of precision, lucidity and perfect balance—it has many temperamental elements, several streamers of poetic mist-thinking across it, a number of tendencies to liberty in formulation and manipulation. There are, of course, limits to the crossing of prose with poetic trends, but in view of the present extra-territorial status of English one may not fix the limits by only the "thousand subtle prohibitions and sanctions in the living language as learnt by the ear" listening in England. The very approach of the English-thinking people outside England to this speech is in a measure dissimilar to that of the islander. Somehow to these people the language which in its own home has become more or less shaped and beaten out by several centuries of use has still to a certain extent a virgin air, a newness that invites the shaping of it to the heart's desire, a challenge to creativity such as came naturally to Spenser or to the great Elizabethans and Jacobean. A word like "forthcoming" as a substantive is an example of one kind. It is to me not only legitimate but also essentially independent of idiomatic usage in England proper, free from the circumstances in which alone a native of England may use it. No doubt, some associations have to be regarded with extreme care: otherwise horrible bloomers will be committed. But not all associations are equally sacrosanct. For another example, take "contact" as a verb. You would perhaps hesitate to employ it, and I would agree that in many contexts it ought to be avoided, but I would not make a fetish of avoiding it. It is an Americanism against which we do not violently revolt and it seems to our non-English background a perfectly sound word whose utility need not be narrowly restricted. A phrase like, "to contact one's inner being" would hardly hurt my ear on general principles of usage.

I am afraid I have gone on tiresomely. To cut the matter short: we Indians

should be always willing to learn “English as she is spoke” in England and it is true that in a large number of cases we stand in need of correction where subtleties are concerned, but the fact of English being the language no longer only of the English people has also to be recognised with all its implications of new possibilities and peculiarities of the spoken and written word.

And I may add the question: Does not even a *pukka* Englishman come out a little queer at times with at least a *souppçon* of solecism? A well-educated Indian could easily pull up Sir Herbert Read, for instance, when the latter combines “both” with “as well as” instead of “and”. But I doubt whether Sir Herbert is really being unEnglish with such a turn of speech. English varies from place to place in England itself and what would pass as “natural” in the North may strike the Southern tympanum a wee bit strangely.

All this is a general statement on my part and does not necessarily mean that in the matters where you asked me to polish my verbal turns I was not mistaken. Except for “forthcoming”, I tried to alter whatever you had asked me to. Even the phrase “understanding a little the supramental light” I wanted to change into: “understand a little of what the supramental light means.” Unluckily I was too late: the booklet had already been printed. So now only in a second edition I can introduce the modifications.<sup>1</sup> But I have been reflecting on that “had” which you have advised. My sentence was: “Although the great illuminating letters had not quite ceased nor the fine humour forgotten altogether its leap and flash nor yet the wide look on the world’s movement turned away...” You wished me to put a “had” after the first “nor”. I agree that normal usage requires it. But what about the second “nor”? I am loth to bring it in there also. Logically there seems little reason to omit it. In your latest letter you advise that if too many “had”’s are necessary, one should change the whole sentence and cut it into two or even three. But this strikes me as rather desperate counsel. The whole compact movement of my utterance would be spoiled. I must use three “had”’s or else drop two. According to normal usage I can’t do the dropping. My own feeling when I wrote that sentence was that the close-knit unity and flow would be somewhat sacrificed if one were too prosaically grammatical. In defence of my construction may I say a few words? In poetry it would of course be absolutely justified. Shakespeare’s

Age cannot wither her nor custom stale  
Her infinite variety

is a turn of phrase in which “can” is dropped exactly as is my “had”. You would object that the requirements of prose and poetry are utterly different and even so-called

<sup>1</sup> Note in 1982. Among the various occurrences of “a little” that I have found during my reading over the years, I may cite one out of those that were particularly relevant: “.our tributes seeking to sweeten a little a history so marked by grievance ” (*The Times Literary Supplement*, December 1, 1963, p. 879, col 3, line 25).

"poetical" prose never uses the grammatical licences of poetry, only its quality. As I have already remarked, the Indian mind in me or the oriental strain in my consciousness would not be quite frightened by that "never" and would claim a greater right to the grammatical licences of poetry in prose and still hold that fluent English resulted—at least fluent Commonwealth English. But such English apart, I am inclined, if you'll excuse me, to question your very idea here. Is it a fact that the grammatical licences of English poetry are never used in prose? Obviously one cannot make a habit of transferring them from one medium to the other. But there are licences and licences and also occasions and occasions. The "had"-omission appears to me not such an extreme licence as to be condemned wholly if transferred to prose. The mood, the pitch, the tempo of the prose are, in my opinion, to be first considered. I observe that the common practice of putting the verb immediately after "nor" as in a phrase like "The animals do not sit in sackcloth and ashes nor have the trees any regrets" is disregarded not only in a line of verse like Gerald Bullett's

The fife does not suffer nor the drums have visions,

but also at times in the Bible's prose—and that is a prose very formative of subsequent style and usage, either openly or subtly. Take this phrase from the Book of Ecclesiastes: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain..." Here we should expect either the locutions "nor draw the years nigh" and "nor return the clouds after the rain" or else the locutions "nor do the years draw nigh" and "nor do the clouds return after the rain".<sup>1</sup> Just a step further than the Biblical licence above is mine of omitting those two "had"s and Shakespeare's of omitting "can" in the lines from *Antony and Cleopatra*. But you will perhaps challenge me by saying: "That further step takes you beyond the limit where prose can borrow or adapt the licences of poetry." Well, wouldn't such a ruling be somewhat arbitrary? Haven't those lines of Shakespeare's passed too much into the language for their turn to remain unassimilable by prose? I cannot at the moment quote you any precise precedent, but there are plenty of examples where at least the same subject (understood) in the "nor"-clause warrants the omission of the auxiliary verb. Thus it would be most natural to say: "Time had not affected his good looks nor impaired the sharpness of his mind." I see no particular reason why the auxiliary verb cannot be dropped when the subject is different in each clause. No doubt, one cannot always chop logic about a language, but logic is not entirely out of place—even with regard to a rather erratic language like English. Perhaps just because

<sup>1</sup> Note in 1982 Here are some more instances from English writers "In some harvestless dim field where no evening lets fall her mantle nor sun rises" (Virginia Woolf, Isa speaking in *Between the Acts*)—"Now that I am old and learned, the magic has not faded nor the poem grown to seem less wonderful"—"a topic on which the Russian researchers did not research nor the Russians comment" (*TLS*, October 3, 1968, p. 1095, Col. 1).

it is erratic we cannot affirm that its illogicality in one place calls for illogicality in all places.

Besides, the “nor” as used in my sentence is really a faulty substitute for “or”—the error of it is so common that it has become a part of modern usage. When a clause or a phrase is already negative by reason of a preceding one which contains a “not”, the “nor” introducing it unnecessarily doubles the negative. In such a case, wouldn’t the tendency be justifiable to form the clause as if one were using “or”? Would my sentence strike you as wrong if you read it thus: “Although the great illuminating letters had not quite ceased or the fine humour forgotten altogether its leap and flash or yet the wide look on the world’s movement turned away...”?

Please forgive me for writing at such length and for daring to argue with an English woman about English! Possibly there is a crushing answer to all my pleadings and you will enlighten me if you haven’t got fed up with the whole business. You have been kind enough already, giving so detailed an attention to my writing.

Let me turn now to a more important issue. But if, as you say, it is “something you feel terribly strongly about”, would I not offend you by anything I might state? Please don’t read me further if there is the least chance that I may spoil our friendship. I value that friendship highly and I cannot appreciate sufficiently your attitude to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and I wouldn’t for the world that any suspicion on your part of dogmatism by me or any other disciple came between you and such “wonderfully illuminated people” (to quote your own fine phrase). But may I venture to remark that, though it is true that we have no full information about all the spiritual achievements of the past, whatever is known disposes us to believe that the Aurobindonian Yoga is in a very special sense *sui generis* and a *terra nova*? Of course, every path of mysticism is of its own kind in certain respects, an untrodden territory, but they have all two aspects in common which render them subsumable under a single general head. These aspects are: a climb to the Beyond as the ultimate attainment and in consequence a relinquishment of earth-life in the last resort as something which can be much purified and enlightened and dynamised by the Spirit but never completely transformed and divinised. Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga affirms that a climb to the Beyond is not the ultimate attainment and that a total descent from above must be there, resulting in absolute divinisation of every member of our earthly instrument and that this divinisation can be compassed in a single life-time superbly concentrating what terrestrial evolution always gradually drives towards. And here we must not water down a term like “divinisation”: it must be taken in its extreme and most literal significance.

Now, the implication of all this is that the stratum of knowledge from which Sri Aurobindo sees life’s goal and works towards its accomplishment is different from the strata utilised by the old Masters. Not that his stratum was never even glimpsed. Traditions are there in India of the Truth-Consciousness, the Causal Body, the descent of the Godhead into the human form, the epoch-making Avatarhood. In the West there have been the Platonic intuition of the Archetypes, the *Nous* of Plotinus



and his world of the intermingling Gods, Christianity's Word become Flesh and its prayer for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth and its hope of the body's resurrection. But none of these things bring to a fiery focus the vision and power inherent in the stratum which Sri Aurobindo calls Supermind and therefore it seems legitimate to say that this stratum is possessed and utilised and rendered operative in a direct manner for the first time by Sri Aurobindo. It seems also legitimate to say that, if this is true, then that stratum had nothing directly to do with any spiritual occurrence in the life or death of any mystic in the past. Indirect action by it is not unlikely to have occurred, for whatever in the past has hinted at the Aurobindonian Yoga may have been a touch from that stratum through some intervening medium—at the highest the Overmind, to employ Sri Aurobindo's terminology. Direct action cannot be said to have been there, since it would have brought the typical Aurobindonian vision of life's goal and the characteristic Aurobindonian Yoga to attain it. We are free to believe that some Master of the Middle East or elsewhere knew that direct action. But, in the absence of any clue, would we be reasonable in jibbing at a statement like mine? Short of actual spiritual knowledge we can go only by intellectual observation and judgment. And they, as far as I can see, give no ground for keeping our minds so "open" as to grant the possibility of a thing when all available evidence points in the opposite direction. An unreasonably "open" mind can be as much an obstacle to truth as an unreasonable dogmatism.

I am at a loss to understand what exactly you mean by the words: "I don't think one can lift things wholesale into one's life simply because they have been propounded by spiritual princes." I suppose you mean that, until we ourselves have reached the Supermind and brought it down and found that the process had never been carried out in the past by anybody other than Sri Aurobindo, we should not accept his testimony on this score. But surely certain things we have to take on trust if we accept a Guru at all and elect to follow his path? Especially have we to do so when our own intellectual observation and judgment support what he says. In the present instance I fail to see what purpose can be served by withholding our trust. And it is to be remembered that Sri Aurobindo is a spiritual figure—a man of illumination—and therefore at home in the subtle realm of the inner and higher consciousness where all great approaches to the Supreme Reality beat out paths which remain as luminous guides. With his intense pursuit of an integral ideal he must have sought far and wide in that subtle realm for some help to himself from the great approaches in the past. One can imagine a pure *jñāni* or a pure *bhakta* or a pure *Tāntrik* missing certain tracks. But a genius of synthetic spirituality is not likely to be unaware of them, particularly with a mind that has a world-sweep and is equally at ease in the ancient western consciousness and the old middle-eastern and the consciousness of both medieval and modern times everywhere. Sri Aurobindo's own words in a letter on the method that has been "preconised" for achieving his purpose of total transformation in terms of the Supermind are: "I have not found this method (as a whole) or anything like it professed or realised in the old Yogas. If I had I should not have wasted my time in

hewing out paths and in thirty years of search and inner creation when I could have hastened home safely to my goal in an easy canter over paths already blazed out, laid down, perfectly mapped, macadamised, made secure and public. Our Yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.”

All things considered, I should regard your salutary western open-mindedness and scepticism as somewhat misdirected and misapplied in the matter in hand. And I think that the problem is not coolly and truly gauged when in a sort of reaction against the perhaps unduly categorical statement in my last letter you say: “I feel that no created being really can be sure on such a point!”

Now, have I gone and bristled you up unnecessarily? I'd be most sorry if I have shown any inconsideration to your susceptibilities. I know that there is not only one way of being an Aurobindonian and I have no right to expect you to fall into line with my way. Let me add that Sri Aurobindo himself thought it a trifling matter whether his Yoga and its aim and method were accepted as new or not. He wrote in the very letter from which I have quoted: “That it should be recognised as true in itself by those who can accept or practise it and should make itself true by achievement is the one thing important; it does not matter if it is called new or a repetition or revival of the old which was forgotten.” I shall be happy to hear from you again.

*(To be continued)*

K. D. SETHNA

## THE PATH OF ROSES

AGAIN my soul had found a frame  
to carry on its work on earth.  
I had forgotten whence it came  
and why it chose the human birth.

My parents welcomed me in tune  
with all their love and tenderness  
after I'd left the cosy womb  
to grow and rise in consciousness.

A cradle decorated blue  
served me as shelter for a while.  
I thought not yet of false or true  
and only used to eat and smile.

When it was nice and warm outside  
my mother took me in her arms  
and went with me down for a ride  
to make me plunge in nature's charms.

One day the sun had woken up  
the garden to its splendid life,  
with yearning filled each flower-cup,  
banned from its realm all hate and strife.

And suddenly I was aware  
of a sweet smell around my head.  
I saw red roses everywhere  
on top and on all sides they spread.

I felt deep joy and high delight  
through this intense experience  
at the new unexpected sight  
of roses lavish, rank and dense.

From then a certain longing stayed  
with me to find this scent again  
which was the soul's earth-built arcade  
to make communion with my brain.

The path of roses is a sign  
of destination in my days  
to follow after the Divine  
and soar on his descending rays.

## IN-TONES

THE temple is lit and the drums are resonant; the pilgrims are many. Incense clouds fill the dome and flowers are strewn, sweet-smelling, on your altar. But I know, O Peaceful One, that such a day you dread.

The crowd knows no intimacy of love. The crowd sees not your face but its own gaiety. In the silence of the night you are back again, and there kneeling in your presence I behold your radiant form.

\*

In the evening I sit by my door and watch the sunlight on my steps. Children play their games in the street. I watch their faces. Children laugh and scream in delight. I hear them. I know you are with them, happy that the dust spoils your dress, happy to fall, happy to feel the excitement of the game, happy to play hide and seek.

You are their abandon and their laughter.

\*

Many ask me about You, Secret One. How can they know You when their eyes are on their coffers? They love the tinkling of gold, they love the rich repose, they love their little selves which seek praise from other little selves.

But You are for the poverty-stricken who can know only the Light. The struggle can never blind him. You are for the pilgrim, for the wayfarer, for him whose life is a road, whose home is You, O Secret One.

\*

Hour after hour You have followed me, in waking and in sleeping, in sickness and in health. I have known Your steps whenever I turned on my path.

Year after year You have followed me through the changing seasons, through the fresh winds of spring, through the heat of summer, through the russet and gold of autumn and through the brooding silence of winter.

Age after age, my Master, You are behind me. Never for a moment let me miss the soft delicate footfall of Your faithful following.

EUGENE D'VAZ

## O FULL MOON

O FULL Moon, when I see you  
I think of a full stop  
Underneath a question-mark,  
A large dot that gives each question  
A kind of permanence.

As I watch you try veils of different hues  
I learn that life overcast with dark clouds  
Is nothing to be gloomy about.  
When light hides under a shroud  
It is just a game, Death and Life  
Are but different veils. O Moon,  
How like myself you are!

The self awakes in a sea of consciousness;  
Wild waves of sensuous joy,  
That hammer rocks of reason  
Into amorphous sand, attempt to reach beyond.  
But slowly out of that fury  
An order is built,  
The mighty waves curl, fold and pursue  
Till behind the deep centre they touch  
At the moment of their far inward reach  
The beyond, a mighty silence,  
Their secret ever-growing self.

O Moon, we need your force without and within  
To soar and plunge, to seek and to find.

DINKAR

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### NEWS

The Government of India has given one of the National Awards for Excellence in Printing and Designing of Books to Miss Huta D. Hindocha for

#### WHITE ROSES.

The President of India distributed the Awards at 4.00 p. m. on 15 February at Malvankar Auditorium, Rafi Marg, New Delhi. Miss Tara S. Jauhar of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch, was appointed by Miss Hindocha to receive on her behalf the Certificate of Merit.

# THE ENTRY TEXT IN THE TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD

## AN INTERPRETATION IN THE LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1982)

### 5. Shankara's Interpretation of the Entry Text: An Analysis

As we have already seen, Shankara resorts to a figurative interpretation of the entry text on the ground that literal interpretation of it is beset with contradictions. We shall now examine if a literal interpretation of the text really fails to convey sense.

We shall begin with an analysis of the first of the interpretations put on the entry text. It says that Brahman as the ultimate creative principle entered into the very world which it had created. Shankara points out that Brahman's entry into the created world is conceivable only on the assumption that at the time of creation Brahman did not enter into the world. But the assumption is baseless since creation itself is a process of entry into that which is created. Therefore he argues that a second entry of Brahman does not make sense. This is, in brief, the first argument against literal interpretation of the text.

Though Shankara's argument appears to be rational, it is not really so. It is true that when a cause is transformed into an effect, there is an entry of the former into the latter. To argue that a further entry of the cause into the effect is not possible may be true in the case of a finite cause or a finite object which is placed in the position of a cause. But it need not be true in the case of an infinite cause like Brahman. To say that a further entry of Brahman into the created world is impossible is inconsistent with the infinite freedom of Brahman. On the contrary, Brahman's infinite freedom must permit its re-entry. Its re-entry must be in fulfilment of a special purpose in view. Shankara misses this point as he is applying a logic based upon the operations of finite objects to the activity of the infinite Brahman. Shankara's illustration in support of his argument serves as evidence of how he applies a wrong measure to understand the activity of Brahman. He writes:

It is illogical that after the production of the effect (i.e. the world) the cause (i.e. Brahman) should enter over again into the effect as a separate entity, as though it had not done so already. *Apart from being shaped into a pot, the clay has no other entry into the pot, to be sure.*<sup>1</sup> (Italics mine)

Evidently, a logic built upon the limitations of the clay is applied to the creative activity of the illimitable Brahman.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the limitations of the clay are illegiti-

<sup>1</sup> See Shankara's Com. on the Taitt , 2-6-1. Tr. Swami Gambhirananda.

<sup>2</sup> See Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (1972), p. 327: "It is irrational to suppose that a finite consciousness and reason can be a measure of the Infinite; this smallness cannot judge that Immensity,

mately transferred to Brahman, making the latter's entry unintelligible. In reality, Brahman's re-entry into the world is neither a contradiction nor an impossibility. It is therefore evident that this argument of Shankara is not admissible except on false grounds.

Now it is not necessary to go into other forms of literal interpretation because they are given only as alternatives to the first which was rejected as nonsensical. Since we have shown that there is no contradiction in the first, the rest become irrelevant for our purpose. Likewise, the figurative interpretation recedes to the background and does not demand our attention because it is offered as an alternative in the absence of a valid literal interpretation.

## **6. The Entry of Brahman: An Interpretation in the Light of Sri Aurobindo**

Let us briefly state Sri Aurobindo's account of creation of the world so that we may be able to throw some light on the meaning and significance of the entry text.

Brahman is the ultimate source of the world. According to Sri Aurobindo, there are four powers by means of which Brahman creates the world—the power of self-limitation, the power of exclusive concentration, the power of self-forgetful absorption, and the power of evolution. All these powers affirm Brahman's absolute freedom of manifestation. The power of self-limitation is a power by which Brahman imposes a chosen limitation upon its self. By this power the formless Brahman becomes a source of endless forms. Once forms appear they have to be gradually separated. The power of exclusive concentration is a power by which Brahman concentrates exclusively on form so that forms could be isolated from one another. By this power forms which were originally indivisible become divisible. Still forms interpenetrate and, therefore, a further means of separation becomes necessary. The power of self-forgetful absorption is a power by which Brahman is so completely absorbed in form that it becomes forgetful of its self and other forms. By this power an effective separation of forms becomes possible. An incidental consequence is that the process of separation is carried to a point where no relations between forms could exist. As a result of this, forms enter into a chaos where they seem to have disappeared into some kind of non-existence. Now forms are separated, but it has been accomplished at the expense of the awareness of Brahman. To recover the awareness without losing the separative basis of formal existence another means becomes necessary. The power of evolution is a power which, while retaining the separative basis of forms, allows a gradual manifestation of Brahman in form. By this power different grades of forms come into existence corresponding to different levels of manifestation of the consciousness of Brahman.

Stated briefly, the creation of the world, according to Sri Aurobindo, takes place in two different directions. First, forms which manifest out of the formless Brahman

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this poverty bound to a limited use of its scanty means cannot conceive the opulent management of those riches; an ignorant half-knowledge cannot follow the motions of an All-Knowledge".

isolate themselves to a point of total separation where they seem to have disappeared into a chaotic condition. Second, through an evolutionary movement Brahman recovers from its extreme preoccupation with form without giving up the physical basis of separative existence.

In the evolutionary movement different variations are possible: while some forms participate in the upward movement of evolution, others continue to be in chaos; among the forms which are drawn into the movement of evolution, some develop a conscious centre and the rest do not; those which have developed into self-conscious entities fall into two groups—those which possess uncrooked qualities and the consciousness of unity, and those which possess crooked qualities and the consciousness of diversity. All these variations, when put together, constitute the practical world of different gradations.

We shall note that in the process of creation the power of self-forgetful absorption is of special importance, for it enables us to understand the true import of the entry text. When the Upanishad says that Brahman created the world, it refers to the creation of form out of Brahman by the power of self-limitation and to the separation of forms by the power of exclusive concentration. The subsequent act of entry into the created world refers to the descent of Brahman into form by the power of self-forgetful absorption. Creation of form and entry into form are two entirely different acts: in the former Brahman is transformed into formed entities, whereas in the latter Brahman simply plunges itself into form as if it is a being dominated by its formal existence. It is therefore wrong to argue, as Shankara does, that after becoming a formed entity, it would be superfluous for Brahman to enter into it. Not only is it not superfluous to enter into the created world but it is necessary, because otherwise a complete separation of forms is impossible.

The Upanishad speaks of different categories of forms that came into existence when Brahman entered into the world. They correspond to the various gradations of evolutionary forms. Some forms are called *sat* because they seem to exist only when they are drawn into the evolutionary movement; others are called *tyat* because they seem to be beyond the level of existence on account of their immersion in chaos. *Niruktam* refers to the former which are definable by the relations imposed by the evolutionary process, whereas *aniruktam* refers to the latter which are not so definable as they are involved in chaos. *Nilayanam* denotes the forms which have become a dwelling place for the evolving consciousness; the forms which do not serve as a dwelling place for any evolving principle are referred to as *amilayanam*. *Vijñānam* signifies the forms which possess the consciousness of unity; the forms which possess the consciousness of diversity are denoted by the word *avijñānam*. *Satyam* stands for the forms whose uncrooked qualities are expressive of the principle of knowledge, while *anṛtam* corresponds to the forms whose crooked qualities are expressive of the principle of ignorance. Since all these forms are ultimately expressive of the true powers of Brahman, they are generally called *satyam*.

Since the meaning of these terms (*sat*, etc.), which is otherwise obscure,



becomes intelligible in the light of Sri Aurobindo's theory of Brahman's entry into the world, the interpretation put on the entry text must be deemed quite appropriate and sufficiently valid.

The purpose of the entry text is to teach that all forms are materially one with Brahman, even though their qualities suggest to the contrary. It accords well with the central teaching of the Upanishad which says two things: 1) that by knowing Brahman one attains the highest *i.e.* one attains the highest knowledge that everything in the world is Brahman; 2) that not only the self but the form in which the self resides and which is constituted of different sheaths is an integral part of Brahman.

(Concluded)

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

CORRECTION

In the *Mother India* of February 21, on p. 141, para 2, line 1 the word *anna* should be read as *anya*.

## LIFE IN MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY PONDICHERRY

*(The street on which the Government House in Pondicherry has stood for over two hundred years is named "Rue Ananda Rangapoullé" (= "Ranga Pillai"). One has often wondered why. Who was this important resident of the erstwhile capital of the French Empire in India, what was the role he played and against what background? The following Paper presented by Ms K. M. Shantha, M. A., M. Litt., Ph. D, at the Seminar on Language, Culture and People of Pondicherry State (October 2-4, 1980), which was conducted by the International School of Dravidian Linguistics, Trivandrum, resuscitates him and his epoch.)*

ANANDA Ranga Pillai is the 'Chief Dubash' or 'native courtier' (*i.e.*, head of Indian subjects) to Joseph François Dupleix, Governor of Pondicherry. He is a shrewd businessman whose integrity and efficiency win the trust of Dupleix. Forts and jagirs are entrusted to him, and the high and low seek his advice. A devout and conservative Hindu, he knows many languages including Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Persian and French.

Ranga Pillai's famous diary spans the years 1736-61. He observes men and manners closely and records both trivial and historical events, essentially from an Indian's point of view. In the preamble he writes: 'I proceed to chronicle what I hear with my ears, what I see with my eyes; the arrivals and departures of ships; and whatsoever wonderful...takes place...'

The picture of the people of Pondicherry that emerges from the diary is that of a fun-loving, religious-minded folk. They are fond of pomp, processions and festivals. Their fortunes rise and decline under French rule, in tune with the changing lot of Dupleix and then his successors.

Leafing through the diary we find that Pondicherry witnesses many a feast and festival—both Hindu and Christian—of which both Europeans and natives have their share. There is a 'fire-festival', to participate in which Ranga Pillai leaves for his native Tiruvengadapuram village (Vol. I: 29.1.1741). It appears that this tradition extends even to the present day. A curious 'festival of Kaman' is also recorded by our diarist: 'This was observed as a gala day, in honour of Kaman' (*ibid*: 1.3.1741). Yet another unusual celebration is the 'hunting festival', when the night passes in rejoicing and houses are illuminated (Vol. III: 24.9.1746). The well-known Hindu festival of Shri Krishna Jayanthi is celebrated as the typical folk-festival of 'Uriyadi'. There are many 'car festivals' as well, in honour of the presiding deities of the temples of Pondicherry. The famous Villianur (or Villianallur as it was then called) car festival was an occasion for the display of religious fervour and excitement. Ranga Pillai writes: 'All the inhabitants of the town with the exception of one or two in each house, repaired to Villianallur, to attend the car-festival there. Consequently, all

the streets look deserted' (Vol.II: 3.6.1746).

Christians celebrate the 'bonfire' festival *viz.* the Nativity of St. John and the feast of the Epiphany, the latter to the beat of drums and rejoicing. February is the 'carnival season' in Pondicherry; as part of the rejoicing the Europeans dance in a masque. The 1st and 2nd of November are dedicated to the commemoration of All Souls; Governor Leyrit is recorded as having attended mass at the Capuchin's church and having been presented with a bouquet of jasmines by Ranga Pillai (Vol. IX: 1.11.1755).

Our diarist often describes the splendour of processions and the encounters of native princes or their emissaries with French governors. Salutations and negotiations are accompanied by magnificent gifts and ostentatious ceremonies.

At an annual function the Indian merchants renew their contracts to supply cloth to the Company for the following year. The merchants are in turn honoured with a thirteen-gun salute, given broad-cloths and gold chains, and accompanied from Government House to the warehouse by dancing girls and the beating of tom-toms (Vol. I: 16.5.1738). The diarist reveals the fact that each merchant has really supplied the chain beforehand, merely to rise high in the estimation of the onlookers!

Another account of Governor Dupleix's procession to Kalapettai presents a gorgeous picture of Dupleix in a palanquin with smaller palanquins, soldiers, horses, dancing women, tom-toms, horns, drums, pipes, clarionets and flags around him, winding along in the moonlight.

In Ranga Pillai's time Pondicherry is one of the focal points of trade in India. He describes the goods that are transported from ship to warehouse or *vice versa*. Exotic items punctuate the pages of this quaint diary. The Dubash himself negotiates the price of an 'ingot of Malacca gold' given by Dupleix to him: it is fixed at 272 pagodas (100 pagodas = 320 Arcot rupees). The minting of pagodas having 'the fineness of 8 touches' is sanctioned; they are to be legal tender in Pondicherry (*ibid*: 11.5.1739).

Ranga Pillai trades in areca nut, cotton thread, opium and piece goods (Vol. II: 15.6.1746). Dupleix is interested in pearls and enquires of his Dubash their market rate (*ibid*: 20.6.1746). Ships from Perak and Tenasserim arrive with rice and 'Mergui wood'; others are bound for China, laden with pepper, cardamom, etc. (Vol. I: 11.5.1738). Other ships laden with cowries, silver, gold, liquor and coral often arrive at Pondicherry (Vol. II: 8th and 9th July 1746). The Company's Indian merchants supply brown cloth, lungis and coarse blue and checked cloth.

Gift items offered to the Governor are quaint precious articles such as cloth of gold, cloth of silver, crimson and green velvet, silver and gold galloons; rose water, balm water, Hungary water, horses, gold caskets, etc. (Vol. I: 24.2.1739).

The administration of Pondicherry by the French is neither completely benevolent nor one devoid of virtue. In fact different governors make their own impact on the administration.

Deputy Governor M. Delorme '... made no distinction between rich and poor,

never took a bribe, and treated the native on a footing of equality with the European' (Vol. I: 4.10.1737). Governor Lenoir converts huts to stone houses and 'the town which stretched but a quarter of a mile before, became about 2 miles long' (Vol. IX: 23.11.1754). He also permits a new temple to be built, with a car and other means of festivities.

Ranga Pillai as the Chief Dubash of Dupleix is in control of the merchants supplying cloth to the company and advises the Governor on all important matters as the representative of the natives, as chief of protocol and as foreign secretary. The day-to-day administration is carried out in Tamil and French. A dialect of Portuguese, which was used in the 18th century between European nations and between Europeans and Indians, was also in vogue in Pondicherry.

Administration of revenue is either by letting out villages at a fixed rent to a 'tax-farmer' or else by placing them under the control of a trustworthy officer such as Ranga Pillai who accounts for all collections.

The French administration has many salutary aspects. The French are keen on the maintenance of cleanliness of the town. The people of Pondicherry consider it a severe measure when Governor Dumas proclaims that committing nuisance '... either on the beach or on the banks of the Upparu river... or on the public roads' is punishable with a fine of 6 fanams' (Vol. I: 11.6.1739). Under threat of war prohibition is enforced. Kidnapping and slave trade are checked (Vol. I: 25.6.1743). To promote the prosperity of the people tolls on adjoining areas such as Valudavur and Villiyallur are abolished in Governor Godeheus's time (Vol. IX: 9.2.1755).

During the latter's days the 'white' and 'black' towns of Pondicherry are demarcated: the council decides that 'Tamils should give up to Europeans houses east of the canal and west of the big garden at cost price...', they in turn being given lands and gardens in Pavalapettai (Vol. IX: 23.11.1754). Even a wall is to be built between the Tamil and European quarters. But the next governor Leyrit stops the forceful acquisition of Tamil Houses.

According to the Dubash ruin threatens the town because of the injustice Mme. Dupleix perpetrates for the sake of money, without Dupleix's knowledge. The people find it harder to bear than the shells poured upon them by Boscawen's mortars.

In later years conditions worsen. European inhabitants are unhappy and quite demoralised. And the Indian population is even more uncertain of the future, for Pondicherry is ruined by war. Most people flee elsewhere, cultivation is halted partly due to the failure of rains or other natural calamities such as hurricanes causing floods. Smallpox also decimates the population of the Carnatic.

Ranga Pillai believes luck to have been on the side of Dupleix who '... might tear his cloth but would be certain to find a use for the pieces...' (Vol. X). Later, people pray for a man who would establish '... peace throughout the country and restore content to the people' (Vol. IX). Ranga Pillai finds Pondicherry shorn of its beauty after the English siege of the town and natural disasters in 1756. When three years later the governing council resorts to forced loans, 'the peaceful inhabitants of Pondi-

cherry were harassed almost into riot', records our diarist (Vol. XI).

The diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai shows us a bustling town on the Coromandel coast as it captures for itself a place in the sun. At the zenith of its prosperity Governor Dupleix is 'Nawab of the Carnatic'. The town savours then of new glories. The impressions of the great Indian make it come alive for us. Pondicherry and its people remain essentially Indian in tone and character. Yet the French connection enriches it in varied ways.

K. M. SHANTHA

# THE AWKWARD ELEPHANT

## A SHORT TALE

ONCE upon a time there was an elephant. This in itself is not unusual as there have been many elephants in the world and will certainly be many more. What was unusual was that this elephant was brought up among horses and so for a while he thought he was a horse. How this happened is a little complicated, but I shall try to explain it as simply as possible.

It seems that the mother of our friend was quite sick at the time she gave birth because she had eaten some grass which had been poisoned by the local farmers who were trying to get rid of it so they could grow more crops. She wanted to move out of the area after she had eaten the grass, but she was so sick that she simply couldn't. Now usually it is the case that elephants look after each other and help with each other's problems, but our friend's mother was a very independent sort who needed to be on her own sometimes, not that she couldn't be helpful and loving of course. So she had gone off and then gotten sick. She hadn't told anyone where she was going, but her friends eventually found her scent and followed it over the mountains to a large valley. Far off down the valley they saw some people in a state of excitement. Unhappy as it made them, they had to go back since they couldn't take the risk of getting too close to the people.

What was making the people so excited was that they had come across a dying elephant which had just given birth to a strapping male calf. The people were willing to help in any way they could (they hadn't meant to poison the elephant after all) so they tried to nurse the mother and then when she died, they took the baby to the nearest farm. The farm happened to be owned by a breeder of horses and as horses eat pretty much what elephants do, the farmer thought it would be all right to leave the elephant to look after itself among the horses. And anyway, he had always wanted to have an elephant.

He of course supplied the baby with milk until the little one could eat, and was somewhat astonished to find out what happened to his milk bill and how long this process took. Horses nurse for a few months while elephants can continue for as long as three years and sometimes more.

This was the first problem our friend had to face. The young horses were happily eating grass and straw and grain after a few months while he was looking for milk long after that. The horses all assumed that he had some sort of mother-complex and sent him to one of their more knowledgeable elders who had been educated in the city.

"Why do you still need milk?" the Elder asked.

"I don't really know," Elephant answered. "I feel quite awkward about it, and I know it must be very difficult for our owner to pay the milk bill, but I just can't seem to digest anything else yet."

"But you are already much bigger than anyone else and certainly you must be

ready to digest hay and grass,” said the Elder who, after all, had an immense amount of experience in these things and should have known what was what.

“Well, I’ll try,” said Elephant, “but it really is rather hard for me.”

“Do you think about your mother often?” asked the Elder after a pause.

“Well, I don’t know who she is, so it’s a little difficult to think about her,” said Elephant innocently.

“Mmmm,” said the Elder wisely.

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At the next Council meeting the subject of Elephant (whom they had named ‘Large’) came up because he was getting to be a problem for the younger horses who were indeed getting mother-complexes. They wanted to have milk as long as Elephant did and were getting severely reprimanded by their mothers who felt quite ill at ease nursing longer than the normal time.

“But Large still gets milk,” the young horses would say.

“Well,” the mothers would answer, with considerable irritation, “he gets sick if he eats grass or hay, and anyway our owner keeps giving milk to him. Go eat your hay and stop bothering me.” This grumpiness was causing problems.

So the Council asked the Elder who had first spoken with Elephant to have two conversations a week with him to try to hurry him along, and in the meantime he should be fed his milk at night so the young horses wouldn’t notice.

“Well, that’s all right with me,” said Elephant to the Elder. “I certainly don’t want to cause any trouble.”

“Now about that thing on the end of your face,” said the Elder one day.

“What thing?” said Elephant, quite surprised.

“That long thing you go around sniffing and blowing with and holding onto people’s tails. It’s causing us some problems in the school.”

“Oh,” said Elephant, “it seems quite natural to me.”

“Like drinking milk until you are two years old.”

Elephant was silent. He felt very badly about the whole situation, but really didn’t know what to do or say about it.

“Well, the students want to know why you have one of these things and they don’t. It’s difficult enough for us that you are so big, but you could try a little harder not to be different as well. Just because you don’t know who your mother is doesn’t mean you have the right to be eccentric.”

Elephant tried his best to keep his trunk to himself. He didn’t blow or sniff with it and he stopped holding onto tails.

At another Council meeting someone who was a rather sympathetic sort said that maybe it was difficult not to have a mother, and instead of just reprimanding Large for being different couldn’t someone be given to him as his mother? After all, it was suggested, we all *know* our mothers. So a mare who hadn’t been able to have foals

for some reason was given to Elephant as his mother.

"This is your mother," said the Elder.

"Oh, that's nice. Hi, Mom," said Elephant. He instinctively reached for her with his trunk, then remembered and nuzzled her like everyone else. She was somewhat embarrassed, but nuzzled back.

Now in point of fact Elephant didn't have a problem about his mother—or lack of her—at all. Not in the least. He was quite independent by nature and could psychologically fend for himself. However, when this mare was presented to him as his mother, he was very happy to accept her.

But then he really did get a mother-problem. For she was quite impressed with her new role and used it as a means of making up for her lack of children. And the fact that Elephant was so different added to her pride.

So she undertook to make a real horse out of him because, although it was nice to have an unusual child, it would also be nice if he were a little bit more like everyone else.

The first problem she tackled was this horrendous noise that Elephant would make every once in a while. She could see that it only happened when he was very happy and exuberant, but still, horses have sensitive ears and loud is loud. Everyone's nerves would be shattered for the rest of the day when one of those trumpeting would occur. So Elephant's foster-mother tried to convince him to stop it.

"But it's so *loud*, dear."

"Doesn't seem loud to me," he would say, looking off into the distance.

"Well, everyone complains about it, much as they seem to like you otherwise. Even the owner's wife holds her ears."

"All right, I'll try to contain myself."

So with much effort he did contain himself and learned to neigh in quite a civilized and horsely manner. Only very occasionally, like once on his birthday, did he forget and then he would feel badly for weeks afterwards. (Why weeks, you ask? Well, elephants feel as slowly as they are large and so their feelings take some time to work through.)

The next thing Mom attempted was Elephant's eating habits.

"Largey, dear, could you just take the hay in your mouth and chew—like this?" And then she would show him how a *real* horse eats.

"Just throw that nose thing over your shoulder and eat properly," she would say when she was getting impatient.

He did quite well at eating until his tusks began to grow long. Mom didn't know what to do about this new development. He could see her frustration and began eating at night as he had before he was weaned.

"Expensive as it is, you'll simply have to go to an orthodontist," she said one day. "God knows the Elder costs me enough, but those teeth of yours simply must be straightened." And off he went to the orthodontist. Fortunately the orthodontist wasn't very good at his job and he advised Mom to just let Elephant be as he was.



This advice of course came after a year of futile—but lucrative—efforts.

The final attempt at propriety was Mom's attempts to teach Elephant to walk and run correctly. She had noticed that he didn't do too badly and could sometimes almost keep up with some of the slower horses on a full run, though he would take rather a dangerously long time to stop. But his walk was terribly deliberate and unhorse-like and his peculiar attempts to trot were painful if they weren't so amusing. In any case his trotting shook everything for miles around.

"What's that?" guests of the owner would say as the chandelier swayed and jingled.

"Oh, just Elephant practicing his trotting," the owner's wife would say. "Would you like some sugar in your tea?" Usually, on those days the guests left somewhat earlier than originally planned.

But eventually, Elephant did manage to get a rather horsely rhythm into his gait and trotted and walked almost properly. His mother advised him not to gallop unless he was sure of how much space he had in which to stop.

"Righto," he said, and went outside to be with his friends. He always had to be careful not to bump into the barn door frame as he knew how expensive it was to fix. Even though it was four years later, he still felt awful about the milk bill.

His mother watched with justifiable pride as he walked almost properly out to the field to be with the others. "My son the horse," she said fondly to herself as she went back into the barn to have brunch and play Mah-jongg with the girls.

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And I suppose that's how things would be to this day if it weren't for a particular course of events which occurred about a year later.

Elephant was out with the horses up on the rise above the house of the owner and his wife who, it happened, were having a luncheon party. Though Elephant wasn't grazing (he still ate only at night), he was enjoying the simple pleasure of being with friends on a sunny, warm, spring day. He would neigh gently when he saw someone he especially liked and then continue his stroll around the hill enjoying the view and the gentle breeze which blew from the mountains many miles away.

Along about lunch-time a young stallion—of whom Elephant was particularly fond—was stung on the rump by a bee and as the stallion was pointed down the hill at the time, he reared, screamed and galloped at full tilt towards the house. Elephant galloped after him, forgetting totally about his mother's advice, thinking simply that his stallion-friend was in difficulty and should be helped.

"What's that?" one of the guests in the house asked as the chandelier swayed and jingled.

"Oh, just Elephant practicing his galloping," said the owner's wife. "Shall we go in for lunch?"

I suppose you can guess the rest. The stallion turned well in time to end up

panting in the corral near the house, to which he had run by habit and the gate of which was open as everyone else was out grazing. But poor Elephant couldn't make the turn, nor could he stop. He and the guests arrived in the dining room at the same moment—the guests through the opening from the living room and Elephant through the wall at the opposite end.

Fortunately for the guests no one had actually entered the room and fortunately for Elephant he was going sideways when he hit the wall and knocked it down. From the vocal point of view, the guests reacted variously, but they all ran out as quickly as possible. The owner and his wife stood behind the entrance to the dining room and then looked in to see what was left.

What they saw was a very disconsolate elephant standing in the middle of a total wreck of a dining-room. The chandelier was on his back, its broken pieces falling off one by one. His last step had been onto the dining table which had collapsed immediately. Disaster was everywhere around him, and the roof behind him sagged precariously without its wall. There was a long silence during which no one moved.

Finally, the wife said, "I think he will have to live somewhere else."

"Yes, I suppose so," said the husband with a sigh. He had long ago learned to agree with his wife on domestic matters.

Elephants don't have tears and so no one noticed, but Elephant cried for fully one week. And he felt completely terrible for a month after that.

"Don't take it so hard, dear," his foster-mother would say. "Accidents happen." For she had come to quite love him.

"I've never been able to do anything really right," he would answer and then blow his trunk into the hay stack. Once the hay stack fell down and that made him feel worse.

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There was a game reserve over the mountains (from which the spring breeze had come) and it had a large herd of elephants in it, the very herd in fact from which Elephant's mother had come.

The day he left was really very difficult for everyone. Elephant did his best to be positive because he didn't want anyone to feel worse than they already did. But, although they don't have tears either, horses are very clear in their feelings and can't hide them in the least. You wouldn't have had to listen closely to hear Elephant swallowing hard as he got into the semi-trailer in as horse-like a manner as possible. The owner and his wife watched the whole process and watched until the truck was out of sight. Humans have tears.

Elephant's mother had said "goodbye" the day before because she didn't feel she could bear the departure itself. When she nuzzled him, he put his trunk over her shoulder in spite of himself, but she didn't mind.

\*

With his trunk as inconspicuous as possible and very hungry because it was ten o'clock at night which was his dinner-time, he got out of the trailer. As the truck was deep into the reserve, they just let him walk away.

"Don't walk like no elephant I ever saw," said the driver as he got back in the cab to drive off.

In the morning Elephant found the herd.

"Looks like a real weirdo, this one," said some.

"Seems to have rather gentle eyes," said others who looked more closely

"Maybe he had a difficult childhood," said another who had been raised in a zoo.

After quite some months, he realised that he could eat with his trunk in the day-time; he could blow as much dust and water as he liked, and someone pointed out to him that he never seemed to trumpet, but just made strange noises under his breath.

"Oh, I only trumpet on my birthday," he said.

"When's that?"

"Just past," said Elephant, looking at his feet.

But when he was a little away from the herd, he tried. At first he sounded like someone blowing his nose in a public-address system, but after a few tries he got quite good at it and even found himself to be quite musical. Those on the edge of the herd who could hear looked up and smiled to themselves.

He never really got rid of his horsely gait, but otherwise he became a very happy elephant with many friends. And it happened, as he got older, that others would come to him for his opinions on things because he always had a slightly different point of view which was usually very interesting and sometimes useful. He even became quite sought-after when a unique solution to a really complicated problem was needed.

And in the last few years he has become almost legendary—a great shaggy beast with a slightly bouncy walk (for an elephant). He can be seen alone in the mountains sometimes standing quietly, swaying gently as elephants do. Not in a horsely or elephantine way, however, but to a rhythm his own and the world's. His favourite time is sunrise, and if ever you see him then, swaying huge and golden in the light of a new day, you will, I'm sure, be deeply moved and changed.

DHRUVA

# THE LORD OF HORSES

## A NOVELLA

### Epilogue

*(Continued from the issue of January 1982)*

JUST then the eagle in the sky who had reminded me of Farhaj came down onto the glade. And I recognised him too. It *was* Farhaj. He was still the two Sages' Guide. And as soon as Farhaj touched the ground there appeared some men and women. Three men and three women to be exact.

The three men and the three women walked towards the Kinkars and towards the flower-animals. Smiling, the two Sages watched them come. While they watched they opened their arms wide. The three men and the three women stopped a few steps away from the gathering.

"You are welcome," the Sages greeted in the same sweet voice. "You are welcome among the Kinkars."

The whole gathering of Kinkars repeated the words of welcome. And the flower-animals greeted them too in their respective sweet tongues.

"Come," Pinky beckoned to me.

He started to toddle on his small pink legs. And I followed him.

"Welcome to you too, Horse."

The Sages had at last seen me.

And he whose eyes were the colour of gold looked at me intensely and with exceeding tenderness. On his lips lighted up a smile of great satisfaction.

"Yes," he took up the greeting once more. "Said, you are welcome."

Pinky turned towards me, astonished that the Sage with the golden eyes already knew my name. The Kinkars looked at me interestedly. The flower-animals scrutinized me with respect.

"We had given you a rendez-vous here," said he whose eyes were the colour of rain. "But we had given you this rendez-vous without giving you any indications, without even letting you know that you would meet us again. Because we did not wish to influence you on the path."

I understood what they meant. I lowered my head and tapped the ground with my hoof.

And then, addressing the gathering of Kinkars, the flower-animals and the three men and three women who were to become its new members, the two Sages said:

"This is Said. Said is like all of you. And like all of you he deserves to live among the Kinkars. For he has a heart that is pure and, like you, he has sought happiness and peace. Nothing has stopped him in this quest. He has crossed several countries before arriving here. And he has known many disappointments. But he did not cease

to believe in happiness and love. In this faith he is your kindred.”

Thus I entered the Society of Kinkars. So too did the three men and the three women. The two Sages praised them for their unshakable faith and their indomitable courage. And they took one flower from each of the Kinkars and the flower-animals, and made seven garlands out of them. And they offered one to each of the three men and the three women. The seventh garland they offered to me.

Then he whose eyes were the colour of rain declared in his sweet voice:

“Now that we are all united, we can move towards the sea for the Great Festival.”

At these words the whole gathering of Kinkars rose. The flower-animals did the same. And a veritable procession was formed. Leading the procession was he whose eyes were the colour of rain and he whose eyes were the colour of gold.

Then went the Kinkars two by two, followed by the flower-animals also in twos. The lion went with the deer. The tiger went with the lamb. The big brown bear had a svelt hare for companion. And even the elephant went accompanied by a gazelle who reminded me of Ghezala, the gazelle of my childhood days. And Pinky toddled with an exquisite vixen whose fur was red like the trunk of a sequoia.

But I, I was alone.

At the heart of this Society where love reigned supreme I was alone and without love.

And as the procession began to move I regretfully remembered Goldie, my beloved mustang in spite of her cruelty to me. For I had loved Goldie. And during the time I had loved her, I had not felt lonely.

I could not help grudging the two Sages who in spite of their wisdom had not foreseen a companion for me. I thought that perhaps their Society was after all not all that good, that perhaps some were more equal than others. They had announced that I was like the other members of the Society and like all the other flower-animals. But I *was* different because I was alone, with nobody to love.

I thought at one point of running away. I would have galloped very fast and rested little. I would have galloped very far away. But where would I have gone? Perhaps that was not important. Maybe I would return to my own country. Maybe I would find Ourida-the-Rose and ask her to forgive me for having abandoned her for so long. Maybe... but somehow I could not muster the courage to run away. For I was an adult and adults do not usually run away.

Perhaps I was being a little unfair to the two Sages and to the Society of Kinkars and of the flower-animals. It was true that I was alone but around me everyone was happy and I told myself that I should rejoice in others' happiness, instead of just envying them. For not to rejoice in others' happiness is to prove oneself incapable of enjoying one's own right to happiness.

So I followed the procession. The procession entered the forest of golden oak-trees and the fire-red sequoias. The Kinkars started singing the songs they had sung earlier and particularly the one I had liked so much:

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

And each golden oak and each fire-red sequoia seemed to answer the Kinkars' song. The branches gently swayed in that afternoon air. The leaves rustled as in a dream. And the procession moved slowly taking the road back on which I had come with Pinky.

Then we left the forest. And we found ourselves at the spot where I had met Pinky. In front of us the pink and white city rose. But none looked in its direction. And I thought that this pink and white city was like a tempting mirage that one had to conquer if one wished to preserve one's happiness.

Farhaj flew over the procession. He too was not alone. A dove with milky plumage flew beside him. I looked a long time at Farhaj and at the dove who guided us from the sky. They were leading us to the sea.

We crossed the countryside without even once breaking our singing. And I myself sang with the Kinkars. And I felt good, I felt peaceful. I felt happy at the heart of this procession where everyone was happy. And in gladness, lightly I shook my head to the rhythm of the songs.

On my neck I felt the garland roll, the garland that the two Sages had put around it.

Then we reached the sea. The place where we opened onto the sea was a vast deserted beach. The sand was rose like the sand of the Great Desert. And it seemed that the Great Desert emerged from the water, glided softly out of the blue mass of the ocean. The ocean itself was so beautiful with its glistening waves as high and grand as palaces. The waves crashed onto the beach with so much noise that one felt the sun had exploded. And the sun setting on the horizon reddened a part of the ocean and the other part was blue, dark blue. And gradually the sand changed from rose to an orange tint as of copper.

One after another we stopped at the sea-shore. And we sang louder to cover the generous sound of the waves. Then the Kinkars began to throw their flowers into the waves. And suddenly the two Sages cried out, a long cry of joy it was, a cry that sounded like a joyous beckoning. They called out:

"Shona. Come, Shona."

At once the ocean calmed down. The waves ebbed away and the water was perfectly smooth from the shore to the distant horizon. And after the Sages the Kinkars called out too:

"Shona. Come, Shona."

The flower-animals followed:

"Shona. Come, Shona."

In the middle of the listless ocean there suddenly appeared a huge fish. At once

I knew that it was a dolphin. I knew this because in the Great Desert the two Sages had spoken to me about the intelligence of dolphins. I was all eyes. And the dolphin danced in and out of the water, leaping and dipping, turning and twisting, twirling and ducking in the air.

Meanwhile the two Sages and the Kinkars and the flower-animals did not stop calling her:

“Shona, come, Shona. Shona, come, Shona.”

At a point they even said:

“Come, Sweetie, come.”

Only then did I realise that Shona was a dolphinet. And my heart began to beat with joy.

Shona now started swimming towards us. And I could see her better. For a fish she was really very big. Bigger than a very big man even. And her body was all a glowing grey like the blade of a dagger. Yes, her body was indeed the same grey as my coat. She had a sharp, intelligent nose and a big mouth that always wore a smile. Her extremely spirited eyes seemed very, very amused and like the rest of us she too had a garland. Her garland was made with sea-anemones that shone in the setting sunlight every time she leapt out of water.

Shona stopped a few metres away from the shore. She could not come any nearer as the water was not deep enough for her to swim. So the two Sages entered the water and walked up to Shona. When they stopped, there was water up to their chests. And just then Shona disappeared back into the sea. The two Sages smiled and called her in a singing voice:

“Shona. Come, Shona. Shona, come, Shona.”

And Shona gushed out of the water so high and so brusquely that for a moment she was transformed into a huge bird, a bird without wings in a twilight-red sky. Then she plunged back. A while later she was back again, back into the air. And the two Sages caressed her and told her that the Society of Kinkars had grown. It had six more members in its fold and among the flower-animals there now would live a supremely beautiful horse who had just arrived. And his name was Said.

Suspiciously Shona eyed the new members of the Society of Kinkars. Then she looked at me and smiled. The sweetness of her smile overwhelmed me and I was transfixed. Then she plunged back into the sea. It was then that I understood that Shona was like me, that she was alone and had in the Society of Kinkars nobody whom she loved a little more than the rest. I decided to remain on the beach.

When the two Sages bade farewell to Shona and came back to the shore and the procession got ready to leave, I broke away from the assembly. I let the procession go. Singing songs of love it disappeared in the distance. And the songs became fainter and no one turned back to ask why I was not returning with them to the Glade of the Kinkars. Because no one noticed that I was absent from their midst.

Evening drifted in. It was a mauve evening that descended that day over the sea. A long time I stood there watching the sea and the sky. And just before the sky turned

black, just before night engulfed the earth, I neighed with all my force and called out:  
"Shona, come Shona."

No answer came. But I did not lose heart. I called her name once again. And just when the moon spread its silver light over the water, I saw Shona emerge from the sea. She now wore beside the garland of sea-anemones a set of corals and oysters that revealed their pearls, as though she were a princess, a princess of the sea.

The moonlight left a silver trail on the sea. And Shona followed this trail to come swimming towards me. I entered the sea as I knew that the water was not deep enough for her to come right up to the shore. I started swimming towards Shona. And my mane floated above the silvery waters.

Sometimes Shona disappeared in the water. I would then turn my neck in the direction where she would come out. And as I followed her trail my nostrils were filled with the smell of the sea and of night.

Then finally we met. Shona and me. We were face to face and our faces were lighted by the argent atmosphere of the moon.

She looked at me intensely. I looked at her too. And we came very close. How lovely it felt! And in that magic moment I understood that I loved Shona and that Shona loved me. I understood that we were made to be together. It was to win this togetherness and this love that I had lived through all.

"Said," she at last spoke. "Said, I have waited for you so long. I did not even know that it was for you I waited. But today I know. And I also know today why I refused all who sought my love. I refused the porpoise. I refused the tunny. Even the whale went back dejected. Just because you were to come and I was waiting for you. I spent all my days swimming inside the sea with the hope that one day I'd find you here. And every time I saw a hippocampus I'd dream of you. And I only dreamt of meeting you. And today you have come."

I did not utter a word. I was so moved. My heart was brimming with emotion. I felt like crying. And if I would have wept I would have wept for joy. Shona broke the poignant silence once again with these very simple words:

"Thank you, Said. Thank you for having come to me. Thank you for not losing heart when you were alone."

And now I answered:

"Thank you, Shona. Shona, thank you for waiting for me so long. If it is your wish I'll remain with you for ever. And we will never be lonely again. And happiness will dwell in our hearts."

And so Shona plunged deep into the sea. Then she came out of the water laughing. And her laughter rose in the night and seemed to touch the silvery moon. It was as if the sky were laughing too on seeing us so happy, Shona and me.

Time passed, Night paled. And then it was dawn. A dawn of the lustre of pearls. And the sky was like the interior of pearl oysters with which Shona had adorned herself. Time rolled on. And Shona and I, we too floated and swam together. And she showed me the kingdom that was bigger and vaster than anything that existed on



earth: the kingdom of the sea. There were palaces made of violet and purple rocks, huge gardens full of parti-coloured flowers that rustled. There were fishes like the stars, like the sun and the moon.

And I fell in love with the sea and wanted to stay in this kingdom with Shona. But I was a horse. And a horse cannot live under the waves. But I was once told that nothing was impossible if one's prayer or wish was sincere. A horse could then live inside the sea too but his love had to be extraordinarily intense and pure enough to make the miracle possible. Because it is love and love alone that can do the miracle. The miracle of transforming a body completely. And then the whole world would be eternally happy. And living would be a perpetual joy.

The day moved on meanwhile. In the afternoon, the two Sages and the Kinkars and the flower-animals were seen returning towards the beach. They had noticed my absence and certainly they were sorry to have lost me. They thought that Shona could certainly tell them whether she had seen me.

As on the previous day, they threw flowers into the sea, and called out:

"Shona, come, Shona."

But in the middle of the sea they saw emerge this time not Shona alone. I emerged alongside her. They started to applaud and laugh with joy. And now they called us both together:

"Come, Shona. Come, Said."

We approached the shore. The two Sages and all the Kinkars and the flower-animals looked at us with eager pride: Shona was transfigured and so was I. The miracle had taken place. I was no more what I was, an earth-bound horse. I was now a horse that no one had ever seen before: a horse of the sea who could live in the deeps and a horse of the skies who could gallop across the prairies of the earth. And now Shona too could fly with me through the transparent air and play on the grass of the earth and, when she wished, she could swim through the dancing waters of the sea. We had both renounced all we were and all we had and everything was thus given to us. We had been given a new body, radiant bodies of love that shone in light. This was the ultimate Miracle. Because Love is all. On earth. In sea. And across the sky. And in reality, there was now neither earth, nor sky, nor sea. There was only Love.

*(Concluded)*

CHRISTINE & ARCHAKA

*(Translated by Maurice from the original French)*

# EUROPE 1974

## A TRAVELOGUE

*(Continued from the issue of October 1981)*

No. 48

“SUCH were the funeral rites of Hector, tamer of Horses:” with this line the Iliad ends. With the fall of Troy Aeneas, a Trojan prince and son of Venus, fled the flames swallowing up many-towered Ilium, and sailed away dreaming of finding a safe haven somewhere far off across the seas. He had rescued from the holocaust the Palladium which he now carried with him and which would be his guide and the protector of any new kingdom he might build in some distant future. Virgil has immortalised this Eastern princeling, founder of the Roman Empire, in his famous Aeneid.

Aeneas arrived at a place called Latium (Western Italy), a place very near Rome. The king gave him shelter and his daughter Lavinia to be his wife. Thus was laid the foundation of the Roman Empire. Then we can take a visionary flight and imagine the coming of Romulus and Remus, the foster children of a wolf. These two built Rome, a city on seven hills that would be a natural protection from invasion. This city in due time was to be the nucleus around which the great Empire was built. Rome, the Eternal city where the Caesars ruled and had, as religious head, the high priest title Pontifex Maximus. It was here that Napoleon crowned his son king of Rome. All roads lead to Rome, they used to say, and it was a fact.

The Romans built an Empire that lasted for four hundred years, an event that had never happened before and was never repeated in posterity by any European Imperial power. From Apamca (almost half of Turkey) in the East, to Colonia Agrippina (modern Cologne) in the north, the Roman boundary included within itself the whole of Gaul and Spagna up to Hispalis Gades (Gibraltar), and north Africa including Egypt. In Britain the Roman boundary stretched from Londinium to Vallum Antoni where eventually was built Hadrian's Wall on the Scottish border.

With the rise of Rome East-West interchanges and communications were renewed vigorously. Another very interesting chapter started where the East played an important part in a European set-up. For apart from its inherent tendencies, contact with the East coloured to a considerable extent the life and culture of the Romans. In all the countries where the Roman Eagle was victorious, the people the Romans met were either Semi-Westernised Orientals or Semi-Orientalised Greeks and all these people were as cultured as, if not more than, the Romans themselves. Pure Westerners defeated the East in arms. Ghirshman opines: “the conquered East subjugated the conquerors.” Contact with Egypt was less irksome. The population was pure Greek or Westernised autochthons. The Egyptian Queen Cleopatra had not a drop of Egyptian blood in her. She was a Macedonian Greek, descended from Ptolemy,

a general of Alexander the Great who took charge over the Eastern part of the Empire when Alexander died in Babylon in 323 B.C.

With the fall of Greece the ideal of simple living and high thinking was swept away forever in Europe. Rome started as a Republic shunning all ostentations and royal purple. The Romans' conception of greatness was of an abstract character. Duty to the State came first and service to the State and reward and recognition for it were the be-all and end-all of life. But with all the show of simplicity the Togas of the great Romans were lined with purple which came about very imperceptibly and implicitly. It was a dress of the free aristocratic Romans and a law was passed that no Roman could enter the Forum without a Toga on.

With the coming of Octavius—that is, Augustus Caesar—no disguise was necessary. The Republic became an Empire. Within a few years ideals of simplicity and high thinking became superannuated. All the things conducive to a rich and luxurious and ostentatious life were necessities now and commodities for it were mainly imported from the East. Under the Seleucid rule in Persia the ancient trade routes built by Darius were maintained and where necessary improved. Boats were plying to and fro to the East in the gulfs to facilitate trade where land routes were difficult. Rome with all its greatness made few technical improvements. In 38 B.C. China and Rome first became aware of each other. From the East flowed into Rome cotton, melons, olives, dates, oxen, lemons, figs, spices, perfumes, precious stones, metal ware and silk. Roman ladies simply exulted in being dressed in silk imported from the East. Silk was mainly woven in Syria and Persia. Steel made in China and India fetched a higher price in the Roman markets than the steel manufactured locally. I like the stories of Ian Fleming but when he describes Indian things it is a bit unpalatable. How unhappy he feels over the “dusty metal ware that no one wants to buy”. He does not know that this metal ware was highly prized by the Romans.

The Romans were very backward in horology. At first a very primitive sun-dial was used. Then the water-clock came into being. These were of various types and were called Clepsydra. They were used as stop-watches, very ingeniously. A certain amount of water was put in, when that got finished the speaker must stop at once. Pliny was allowed ten large Clepsydras, that is five hours, to speak. The Egyptians then were using a mechanical clock of some sort. It seems that when Caesar started a new Calendar for the Roman world he consulted the Egyptian astronomers. These were some of the shortcomings of Roman ingenuity.

To some historians the Roman Empire was a fearful example of heartless exploitation. With the Roman Generals came the Roman Legions and their standard the Roman Eagle. Soon the governors, and the tax-collectors, the traders, and the slave-dealers arrived to fleece the newly won province. In fact the Talmud writers say that the river Tiber used to be simply full of gold, for the conquerors threw the spoils and loot of the conquest into the river. Whether this is true or not one does not know but it is a fact that gold flowed into Rome like the swift and uninterrupted flow of the river Tiber.

Rome, the heart and pulse of the Roman Empire, became the symbol of Eternity and was known as the Eternal city of which Byron wrote:

Rome shall fall,  
And, when Rome falls, the world.

In any case Rome is still there, the marble city of fountains and statues. "When in Rome do as the Romans do" is the adage. I wonder whether we did that when we were there. But we had a wonderful time and the Romans were extremely nice to us. Ville Radieux was the name of the place we stayed in when in Rome. We were delighted to be transported from the humdrum of everyday life to Ancient Rome, Pagan Rome, Christian Rome, Rome of the Popes, Rome of the Renaissance period, Rome of Garibaldi and Mazzini.

*(To be continued)*

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

# THE BRAY THAT BETRAYED

## A FOLK-TALE FROM PONDICHERRY

A FARMER in a village wanted to buy grainseeds. One day he went to a far-off place, where he bought a few measures of them. When he was about to start for his village, he saw an animal wandering in the street. The farmer had never seen an animal like that in his life. And when it chewed and swallowed waste-paper lying here and there, the farmer wished to possess that interesting animal. He wanted to boast of his possession to his neighbours in the village. And so at night he stole the animal and took it to his village.

On the next day, the villagers came to see the strange animal. It was a donkey. They looked at it as though it was from another world. The farmer felt proud.

After a week, no one came to see the donkey, for they were fed up with it. The farmer too felt that it was an unwelcome burden. Finding no use for it, he took the animal to the hills. There he let it loose and came back with relief.

The donkey wandered in the forest, eating fresh grass and leaves. It was very happy to live in that place. One day a tiger noticed the donkey from its hiding place. It had never seen such an animal before and so wondered what sort of monstrous-looking beast it was. The tiger wanted to have a closer look. But the donkey's appearance and size frightened it. So it thought that the donkey was divine and kept a respectful distance.

One day the donkey while grazing chanced to see the tiger. The latter's murderous look frightened it. And so it brayed continuously out of fear. But the tiger hearing the sound thought the donkey was preparing to attack it. Trembling the tiger took to its heels.

Many days later the tiger fell asleep under the shade of a tree. The donkey happened to pass by that way and ran past the tiger, braying all the way at the top of its voice. The tiger woke up with a start. It observed that the donkey was not at all dangerous and the bray harmless. So it went near the donkey to have a closer look.

The presence of the tiger by its side made the donkey nervous. It stood still. The tiger emboldened itself to touch the donkey with its paw. The donkey remained silent out of fear. Encouraged by its silence the tiger took the liberty of playing with it. Losing its temper the donkey kicked the tiger with its hind legs.

The tiger was greatly pleased, because that was all the donkey could do. Wasting no time, it pounced on the donkey, killed it and had a very fine dinner. It went away satisfied.

The monkey on the top of a tree that was witnessing the tragedy from its beginning, said to itself: "Poor donkey! Had it not betrayed itself by braying and kicking, it would have been living. The ferocious beast would have kept at a distance."

P. RAJA