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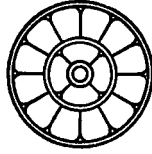
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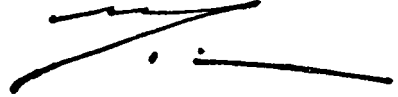


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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SOME MAY MESSAGES FROM THE MOTHER

TO A MONITRESS

As for your place in the universal manifestation, the Supreme alone will show it to you. 2 May 1957

The Supreme Lord has ineluctably decreed the place you occupy in the world concert, but whatever that place may be, you have the same equal right as everyone else to scale the supreme heights as far as the supramental realisation. 17 May 1957

What you are in the truth of your being is ineluctably decreed and nothing and no one can prevent you from being it; but the path you will take to attain it is left to your own free choice. 19 May 1957

On the path of ascending evolution, each one is free to choose the direction he will take: the swift and steep ascent towards the summits of Truth, the supreme realisation, or, turning his back to the peaks, the easy descent towards the interminable meanderings of endless rebirths. 23 May 1957

In the course of the ages and even in the course of your present life you can make your choice once and for all, irrevocably, and then you have only to confirm it at each new occasion; or else, if you have not taken the final decision at the outset, at each moment you will have to make a new choice between falsehood and truth. 23 May 1957

But even supposing you have not taken the irrevocable decision at the outset, if you have the good fortune to be alive at one of the extraordinary moments in universal history when the Grace is present, incarnate on earth, It will give you once again, at certain exceptional moments, the possibility of making a final choice that will lead you straight to the goal. 23 May 1957

TO THE CENTRE OF EDUCATION

You see, my child, the unfortunate thing is that you are too busy with yourself. At your age I was exclusively occupied with my studies—informing myself, learning, understanding, knowing. That was my interest, even my passion. My mother, who loved us—my brother and myself—very much, never allowed us to be bad-tempered or dissatisfied or lazy. If we went and complained to her about something or other and told her that we were not satisfied, she would laugh at us and scold us and say to us, “What is this foolishness? Don’t be ridiculous, off you go and work, and don’t take any notice of your good or bad moods! That is not interesting at all.”

My mother was perfectly right and I have always been very grateful to her for

having taught me discipline and the necessity of self-forgetfulness in concentration on what one is doing.

I have told you this because the anxiety you speak of comes from the fact that you are far too busy with yourself. It would be far better for you to attend more to what you are doing (painting or music), to develop your mind which is still very uncultivated and to learn the elements of knowledge which are indispensable to a man if he does not want to be ignorant and uncultured.

If you worked regularly eight to nine hours a day, you would be hungry and you would eat well and sleep peacefully, and you would have no time to wonder whether you are in a good or a bad mood.

I am telling you these things with all my affection, and I hope that you will understand them.

Your mother who loves you.

15 May 1934

Do what I explained to you yesterday—make your brain work by studying regularly and systematically, then during the hours when you are not studying, your brain having worked enough will be able to rest and it will be possible for you to concentrate in the depths of your heart and find there the psychic source; with it you will become conscious of both gratitude and happiness.

22 May 1935

Without concentration one cannot achieve anything.

18 May 1937

(You have asked the teachers "to think with ideas instead of with words". You have also said that later on you will ask them to think with experiences. Will you throw some light on these three ways of thinking?)

Our house has a very high tower; at the very top of that tower there is a bright and bare room, the last one before we emerge into the open air, into the full light.

Sometimes, when we are at leisure to do so, we climb up to this bright room, and there, if we remain very quiet, one or more visitors call on us; some are tall, others small, some single, others in groups; all are bright and graceful.

Usually in our joy at their arrival and in our haste to receive them well, we lose our tranquillity and come galloping down to rush into the large hall which forms the base of the tower and which is the store-room of words. Here, more or less excited, we select, reject, assemble, combine, disarrange, rearrange all the words within our reach in an attempt to transcribe this or that visitor who has come to us. But most often the picture we succeed in making of her is more like a caricature than a portrait.

And yet if we were wiser, we would remain up there at the summit of the tower, quite still, in joyful contemplation. Then after a certain length of time, we would see the visitors themselves descending slowly, gracefully, calmly, without losing anything of their elegance or their beauty and, as they cross the store-room of words, clothing themselves effortlessly, automatically, with the words needed to make them

perceptible even to the material house.

This is what I call thinking with ideas.

When this process is no longer mysterious to you, I shall explain what is meant by thinking with experiences. 31 May 1960

When you think with words, you can express what you think with those words only. To think with ideas is to be able to put the same idea in many kinds of words. The words can also be of different languages. This is the first, the most elementary thing about thinking with ideas.

When you think with experience, you go much deeper and you can express the same experience with many kinds of ideas. Then thought can take this form or that form in any language and through all of them the essential realisation will remain unchanged.

*

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

This too is useful as a preparation.

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

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

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

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

According to Sri Aurobindo, the remedy is quite different.

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

This is infinitely more difficult than running away or shutting our eyes so as not to see, but it is the only truly effective way—the way of those who are truly strong and pure and capable of manifesting the Truth. 29 May 1968

KARMA AND GRACE

FROM A TALK BY THE MOTHER

You have said...that we are "tied to the chain of Karma", but then sometimes when the Divine Grace acts, that contradicts...

COMPLETELY, the Divine Grace completely contradicts Karma; you know, It makes it melt away like butter that's put in the sun.

That is what I was saying just now. What you have just told me is another way of speaking. I was putting myself in your place and asking: There you are, if you have an aspiration that's sincere enough or a prayer that's intense enough, you can bring down in you Something that will change everything, everything—truly it changes everything. An example may be given that is extremely limited, very small, but which makes you understand things very well: a stone falls quite mechanically; say, a tile falls; if it gets loose, it will fall, won't it? But if there comes, for example, a vital or mental determinism from someone who passes by and does not want it to fall and puts his hand out, it will fall on his hand, but it will not fall on the ground. So he has changed the destiny of this stone or tile. It is another determinism that has come in, and instead of the stone falling on the head of someone, it falls upon the hand and it will not kill anybody. This is an intervention from another plane, from a conscious will that enters into the more or less unconscious mechanism.

So the consequences of Karma are not rigorous ?

No, not at all. In all religions there are people who have said that, who have given such absolute rules, but I believe it was in order to substitute themselves for Nature and pull the strings. There is always this kind of instinct that wants to take the place of Nature and pull the strings of people. So they are told: "There is an absolute consequence of all that you do..." It is a concept necessary at a given moment of evolution to prevent people from being in a completely unconscious egoism, in a total unconsciousness of the consequences of what they do. There is no lack of people who are still like that, I believe it is the majority; they follow their impulses and do not even ask themselves whether what they have done is going to have any consequences for them and for others. So it is good that someone tells you straight, with a severe look: "Take care, that has consequences which will last for a very long time!" And then there are others who come and tell you: "You will pay for it in another life." That, however, is one of those fantastic stories... But it does not matter: this also can be for the good of people. There are other religions which tell you: "Oh! If you commit that sin, you will go to hell for eternity." You can imagine!... So people have such a fright that it stops them a little, it gives them just a moment for reflection before obeying an impulse—and not always; sometimes the reflection comes

afterwards, a little late.

It is not absolute. These are still mental constructions, more or less sincere, which cut things into small bits like that, quite neatly cut, and tell you: "Do this or do that. If it is not this, it will be that." Oh! what a nuisance is this kind of life. And so people go mad, they are frightened! "Is it like that or rather this?" And they want it to be neither this nor that, what should they do?—They have only to climb to a higher storey. They must be given the key to open the door. There is a door to the staircase, a key is needed. The key, as I told you just now, is the sufficiently sincere aspiration or the sufficiently intense prayer. I said "or", but I do not think it is "or". There are people who like one better and others the other. But in both there is a magical power, you must know how to make use of it.

There is something very beautiful in both, I shall speak to you about it one day, I shall tell you what there is in aspiration and what in prayer and why both of them are beautiful... Some dislike prayer; if they entered deep into their heart, they would find it was pride—worse than that, vanity. And then there are those who have no aspiration, they try and they cannot aspire; it is because they do not have the flame of the will, it is because they do not have the flame of humility.

Both are needed. There must be a very great humility and a very great will to change one's Karma.

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 5, pp. 91-93)

THE SPIRITUAL TRUTH AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

A LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

To find the Divine is indeed the first reason for seeking the spiritual Truth and the spiritual life; it is the one thing indispensable and all the rest is nothing without it. The Divine once found, to manifest Him,—that is, first of all to transform one's own limited consciousness into the Divine Consciousness, to live in the infinite Peace, Light, Love, Strength, Bliss, to become that in one's essential nature and, as a consequence, to be its vessel, channel, instrument in one's active nature. To bring into activity the principle of oneness on the material plane or to work for humanity is a mental mistranslation of the Truth—these things cannot be the first or true object of spiritual seeking. We must find the Self, the Divine, then only can we know what is the work the Self or the Divine demands from us. Until then our life and action can only be a help or means towards finding the Divine and it ought not to have any other purpose. As we grow in the inner consciousness, or as the spiritual Truth of the Divine grows in us, our life and action must indeed more and more flow from that, be one with that. But to decide beforehand by our limited mental conceptions what they must be is to hamper the growth of the spiritual Truth within. As that grows we shall feel the Divine Light and Truth, the Divine Power and Force, the Divine Purity and Peace working within us, dealing with our actions as well as our consciousness, making use of them to reshape us into the Divine Image, removing the dross, substituting the pure gold of the Spirit. Only when the Divine Presence is there in us always and the consciousness transformed, can we have the right to say that we are ready to manifest the Divine on the material plane. To hold up a mental ideal or principle and impose that on the inner working brings the danger of limiting ourselves to a mental realisation or of impeding or even falsifying by a half-way formation the true growth into the full communion and union with the Divine and the free and intimate outflowing of His will in our life. This is a mistake of orientation to which the mind of to-day is especially prone. It is far better to approach the Divine for the Peace or Light or Bliss that the realisation of Him gives than to bring in these minor things which can divert us from the one thing needful. The divinisation of the material life also as well as the inner life is part of what we see as the Divine Plan, but it can only be fulfilled by an outflowing of the inner realisation, something that grows from within outwards, not by the working out of a mental principle.

*

You have asked what is the discipline to be followed in order to convert the mental seeking into a living spiritual experience. The first necessity is the practice of concentration of your consciousness within yourself. The ordinary human mind has an activity on the surface which veils the real self. But there is another, a hidden con-

consciousness within behind the surface one in which we can become aware of the real self and of a larger deeper truth of nature, can realise the self and liberate and transform the nature. To quiet the surface mind and begin to live within is the object of this concentration. Of this true consciousness other than the superficial there are two main centres, one in the heart (not the physical heart, but the cardiac centre in the middle of the chest), one in the head. The concentration in the heart opens within and by following this inward opening and going deep one becomes aware of the soul or psychic being, the divine element in the individual. This being unveiled begins to come forward, to govern the nature, to turn it and all its movements towards the Truth, towards the Divine, and to call down into it all that is above. It brings the consciousness of the Presence, the dedication of the being to the Highest and invites the descent into our nature of a greater Force and Consciousness which is waiting above us. To concentrate in the heart centre with the offering of oneself to the Divine and the aspiration for this inward opening and for the Presence in the heart is the first way and, if it can be done, the natural beginning; for its result once obtained makes the spiritual path far more easy and safe than if one begins the other way.

That other way is the concentration in the head, in the mental centre. This, if it brings about the silence of the surface mind, opens up an inner, larger, deeper mind within, which is more capable of receiving spiritual experience and spiritual knowledge. But once concentrated here one must open the silent mental consciousness upward to all that is above mind. After a time one feels the consciousness rising upward and in the end it rises beyond the lid which has so long kept it tied in the body and finds a centre above the head where it is liberated into the Infinite. There it begins to come into contact with the universal Self, the Divine Peace, Light, Power, Knowledge, Bliss, to enter into that and become that, to feel the descent of these things into the nature. To concentrate in the head with the aspiration for quietude in the mind and the realisation of the Self and Divine above is the second way of concentration. It is important, however, to remember that the concentration of the consciousness in the head is only a preparation for its rising to the centre above; otherwise one may get shut up in one's own mind and its experiences or at best attain only to a reflection of the Truth above instead of rising into the spiritual transcendence to live there. For some the mental concentration is easier, for some the concentration in the heart centre; some are capable of doing both alternately but to begin with the heart centre, if one can do it, is the more desirable.

The other side of discipline is with regard to the activities of the nature, of the mind, of the life-self or vital, of the physical being. Here the principle is to accord the nature with the inner realisation so that one may not be divided into two discordant parts. There are here several disciplines or processes possible. One is to offer all the activities to the Divine and call for the inner guidance and the taking up of one's nature by a Higher Power. If there is the inward soul-opening, if the psychic being comes forward, then there is no great difficulty—there comes with it a psychic discrimination, a constant intimation, finally a governance which discloses and quietly

and patiently removes all imperfections, brings the right mental and vital movements and reshapes the physical consciousness also. Another method is to stand back detached from the movements of the mind, life, physical being, to regard their activities as only a habitual formation of general Nature in the individual imposed on us by past workings, not as any part of our real being; in proportion as one succeeds in this, becomes detached, sees mind and its activities as not oneself, life and its activities as not oneself, the body and its activities as not oneself, one becomes aware of an inner Being within us—inner mental, inner vital, inner physical—silent, calm, unbound, unattached which reflects the true Self above and can be its direct representative; from this inner silent Being proceeds a rejection of all that is to be rejected, an acceptance only of what can be kept and transformed, an inmost will to perfection or a call to the Divine Power to do at each step what is necessary for the change of the Nature. It can also open mind, life and body to the inmost psychic entity and its guiding influence and guidance. In most cases these two methods emerge and work together and finally fuse into one. But one can begin with either, the one that one feels most natural and easy to follow.

Finally, in all difficulties where personal effort is hampered the help of the Teacher can intervene and bring about what is needed for the realisation or for the immediate step that is necessary.

DIVINE MOTHER AND SON

It was evening. After finishing my exercise and bath, I was happily resting on our small terrace paved with shining glazed tiles and waiting for our routine medical visit to Nolini. The service tree gently swayed above my head in the mild and cool sea-breeze. The air was balmy with the faint perfume of the golden flowers. I was almost in a Wordsworthian frame of mind when Dyuman, one of our Trustees, stepped out on the terrace. Startled, I stood up. It was such an unusual visit! "Don't get up," he said. "I have come to give you some information. André passed away on the 29th, midnight." I received a shock and exclaimed, "Oh!" The sad look in André's eyes during our last meeting flashed before me. Dyuman continued: "A telegram has come. Naturally, I have put it in Mother's room and made all other necessary arrangements." He said all this in a quiet, grave and matter-of-fact tone.

"Has Nolini been informed?" I asked.

"Yes, the telegram came to him and he sent it to me," he answered and left me to my reverie. Not for long, though; for it was time to go down to see Nolini. There the same news was waiting for us and it was delivered with a certain emotion by the attendants. When I came back and was alone with myself, thoughts and memories began to flow in, but other immediate activities called for my attention and the past was forgotten.

Morning came and brought Jugal who is in charge of our Higher Course students. He broached the subject, and I, confirming the sad news, said, "Yes, Jugal, he has left. Those of early days are now leaving us one by one. Pavitra, Amrita..." "Yes, Sisir, too", he said, adding, "What a blow that was!" "Quite true," I rejoined, and continued, " 'They have all gone into the world of Light' and now who is there of the old times with whom we can share some exchanges of the heart? Amal and, of course, Nolini and just a few others, that's all. It is as it should be perhaps. We are getting on in years. The young generation is coming up. They will be in your charge and perhaps things will take a better shape." "Let us hope the transition takes place smoothly," Jugal said pensively and left.

Some time later, Manoj, a member of our bright young generation, came and asked me to speak a few words to the students of our Centre of Education, who knew very little of André. He said Nolini had approved of the idea. If I agreed, the meeting could be held at 11 a.m. It was already 10 a.m.; I was preparing to have my usual cup of tea after the morning class. So there was very little time; still I accepted. He sped out to make the necessary arrangements. Meanwhile I went to Nolini, wanting him to help me with a few points, for he and André had been very closely associated. He said, "You know what André has done for the Ashram *vis-à-vis* the Government?" "Yes, that I know," I affirmed. "About the School, also?" When I replied that I didn't know much about it, he said, "Ask Manoj." I came away, noted a few points in my mind and headed for the school.

The School was packed. Remembering the Mother, I started to speak in brief

what follows in a fuller version:

“Children of the Mother, our elder brother, the Mother’s son by birth, passed away on the 29th March at midnight. We used to call him André-da. It is to offer our deep love and respect and gratitude to his departed soul that we have gathered here.

“29th March is a very significant day in the calendar of our Ashram, perhaps of the world. For, as you know, it was on this day the Mother met Sri Aurobindo for the first time and that meeting put the seal on their common divine destiny. For André-da to leave his body on that very day cannot but carry an inner import.

“I believe very few of us know much about him. I had the good fortune to have a cordial relation with him. Every time I met him—the times were not many—I had a feeling that here was a gentleman whose appearance and talk bore all the signs of a refined culture—a true French gentleman. In our talks on various Ashram topics, he was always impersonal; never a strong word of criticism or disparagement came out of his mouth. Nobility, dignity and sweetness breathed through his demeanour, and one always felt the presence of the Mother in his quiet company. It would seem that in this respect the son fulfilled in himself what the Mother had wanted of him, for she did not crave any greatness either for herself or for her son. Like her own mother, her aspiration for her child was that he should be noble and true. Every time I met him I came away with this impression.

“This son whom the Mother had left behind as a child grew up, knowing perhaps very little of the Mother or having only a dim recollection of her. The first time he visited India, we heard that he had given a talk on the Mother at the request of the people of the Calcutta Path Mandir. Hearing the news, the Mother remarked with a laugh: ‘What does he know of me?’ When she was told the gist of the talk which contained his childhood reminiscences, I believe she was satisfied and said, ‘Then it is all right’. We have seen a painting in which the portrait of André-da was done as a child of about five years old, along with the Mother. The same child grew up, as I said, in the absence of the Mother, to be a man who passed out of the French Polytechnique, a most prestigious institution, as a highly qualified engineer, just as Pavitra-da and the Mother’s own brother had done. He married and established himself well in Paris’s cultured society and came into contact with the Mother by correspondence. We are quite sure that the Mother, though she had left him behind, had always sustained and protected him throughout his worldly life by her spiritual power. A series of letters beginning in 1927 and ending in 1938 have come out in *Prochain Avenir (The Near Future)* of April 1978, in which the Mother informs him of the growth and development of our Ashram and the life of yoga pursued by the sadhaks under her charge. In one letter the Mother is pleased to learn from him that he considers the Ashram to be an ideal place of repose. The Mother sends him a very beautiful reply to the effect that people who are agitated and excited could have here a cure of perfect repose. She also tells him there is the beautiful sea, the vast country-side and the small city at whose centre is the Ashram, an energetic and

active condensation of peace so that those who come from outside have an impression of finding themselves in another world.

“In the last letter the topic of Hitler is raised. André asks the Mother if it was a question of a dangerous bluff or if ‘they have averted the catastrophe’. Giving a long explanation, the Mother ends the letter saying that at any cost war must not be and that is why it has been averted by Sri Aurobindo and her...for the moment. We catch here an echo of Sri Aurobindo’s voice. He said to us also that the war was pushed back because it did not suit their purpose.

“Now, the son was coming to meet the Mother for the first time in the late forties after a separation of more than 30 years. It was sensational news, and the Mother seemed quite excited about it. Often she spoke of him to Sri Aurobindo. As the arrival day was approaching, she said to him that she wanted to meet André all alone, but couldn’t find a suitable place. Finally it was decided that Golconde would be the best place and a room was made ready there for the purpose. She also doubted whether her son would be able to recognise her after so many years! However, on the appointed day Sri Aurobindo’s lunch was finished earlier than usual, since the Mother had to get ready and be on time. There was plenty of time in hand, but she liked to go much in advance and wait for him. That was very typical of the Mother in all cases where she had some important thing to do. In fact, she waited for more than three or four hours before André arrived. We don’t know what passed between Mother and son during that first dramatic reunion. I am sure she hugged him close and kissed him as well. I was strongly reminded of Buddha’s famous meeting with his son, of which there is a lovely picture—one that Sri Aurobindo has marvellously interpreted. Buddha the great spirit meeting his son whom he had left at his very birth, and the Mother, also a great soul, leaving the world and meeting her son after so many years! The parallel need not be drawn further. Strange it is that the call of the imperative Unknown made such a demand throughout the ages after the Vedic times on our great seekers to leave their hearth and home to pursue their luring quest. Fathers and mothers have left their children, husbands and wives each other. But we see Sri Ramakrishna’s making his wife live with him after his great realisation. And now the Mother has pulled down the traditional iron bars behind which women had to be confined with the most humiliating label stuck on the walls: ‘Woman is the gateway to hell.’ The Divine had to come in the form of a woman to undo it. She has made the Ashram a home for all, irrespective of sex, caste, nationality so long as there is a real urge in them for the Divine.

“To come back to the point. The Mother made all possible arrangements for André’s comfort. He was to take his meals with Nolini, Amrita and Pavitra. Some houses which were well known for good cooking were asked to invite him for lunch or dinner. In this and many other ways which the Mother’s inventive genius could find, she made him feel at home. Champaklal has recorded how the Mother in glowing terms introduced him to André. The visit was a short one, I believe. I came to know him long afterwards. We had heard that the Mother was doing through him

her work in France, which gradually expanded and became a distinguished centre for radiating the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's Light.

"I became familiar with him only later on, though he was paying frequent visits to the Ashram after Sri Aurobindo's passing. In fact, it was when the Mother fell seriously ill that my contact with him started. I have recorded the incident in my book, *The Mother—Sweetness and Light*. He had by that time become an important figure in our Ashram life. He was working in close contact with Pavitra and they were really like two complementary souls. When Pavitra fell ill and could hardly walk, he would go to the Mother's room with André's support. More than once I have seen him coming down after seeing the Mother, leaning on André's shoulder. It seems that when he fell seriously ill, he was very anxious that André should come and take up his work as Director of the Centre of Education and he could not leave his body unless he was assured of the fact. This is how André became the *de facto* Director of the Centre of Education and the Mother gave all directives through him. He was also the channel of communication between the Mother and Auroville. We used to observe the Aurovilians holding regular sittings with him. His days were thus kept very busy whenever he visited the Ashram. He had to go back once a year to look after his own affairs in Paris. He was a Director of many business concerns, we were told.

"My closer contact with him started in the very last years of the Mother's life on the earth when I was given the opportunity of reading to her the manuscript of my book *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* every evening. In fact, it was after I had finished reading it and resumed reading the correspondence or *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* that we started going together to the Mother. I used to observe the Mother enquiring about his health and whether the seat he had taken was comfortable, etc., etc. All these minor touches I noticed avidly. Sometimes she would draw his attention to some remarks of Sri Aurobindo in my book and they would appreciate them together. Later on the Mother suggested to me that if I had no objection I could come to see her on alternate days since André had to leave soon for France and he would like to discuss and settle many problems with her before he left. Naturally I agreed. Here André proposed that on his days I could come, do my pranam and go. This consideration on his part touched me deeply. In 1973, the Mother's last year when all interviews had come to an end and none was allowed to be with her except the attendants, André still had daily access to her, but it was mostly a silent visit. There was hardly any talk. I used to inquire from time to time about the Mother's condition; his answers were not hopeful. He said that she seemed to have given up the fight. On the last day, as is well known now, things in the Mother's room were very tense indeed. I noticed André coming down, a grave silent picture of sadness at about 8 p.m. His health in those days could not bear much strain. I wondered why he was leaving with a heavy countenance. Was everything over then? I could not believe it, but it was so.

"The story now changes considerably and runs a different course. Our internal

condition was none too bright for the moment. André used to come from France once a year; his work now becoming less and less, he would go back after a few months' stay. But his presence brought fresh air to many of us, as if he carried the Mother's atmosphere with him. I had occasion to meet him and discuss our school problems. As Kireet had left, he had much to do with them. He kept us on the right path. (Over Auroville affairs he had no control and was very sad indeed.) Once he was requested to speak about his early life to the students. An extract from the report in *Prochain Avenir* of his speech is very revealing. He says:

It was in 1904 or 1905 when Mother was living in Paris. The house was sufficiently big. It had a garden which was very rare to have at that time and in this garden there was an artist's studio where Mother and my father used to do their paintings. At this time she had also gathered a small group of friends and philosophers. The group was called 'Idéa'.

Every week they met and talked on a particular subject, exchanged ideas and arrived at conclusions which would be useful to the group. *Paroles d'autrefois* she had started writing at that time. This studio was connected with the first floor of the house by a kind of very pretty wooden bridge so that one could easily pass either way. I was five or six years old and was made to sleep in the room which opened to the bridge. I was very much piqued to know what was going on in the studio in the evening. I was supposed to be asleep. One day I could not sleep. I got up in my night-dress and crossing the bridge reached in front of the studio at the top of the staircase. I was quite hidden by the banisters but could observe the people talking inside the room. Naturally I could understand nothing, but it amused me a lot. All of a sudden someone saw me and, pointing me out to Mother, said: 'Hallo! who is there?' Then I ran away like a hare, entered my room and tried to sleep.

Later, I don't remember if it was that night or the next morning that Mother came to see me. She said: 'Oh, you had no need to get up to know what was going on there; you had only to go out of your body and come.' Ah, it appeared to me something extraordinary. Then she explained in brief that a human being is not limited by his body, there are parts from which one could come out and specially one could go for a walk and see what was going on elsewhere. I did not understand very well, of course, but all the same I was sufficiently struck by it to remember it even after 70 years.

"Whenever André came, he used to keep close contact with Nolini and discuss various things. Nolini's word was to him final in all matters. I had heard that he had been doing a good deal of work in Paris for the Ashram, particularly regarding the *Agenda* imbroglia. We know that he was not at all happy over the way the *Agenda* was coming out. He told us that the Mother had entrusted him with its publication and had wanted that nothing should go to the press without his or Nolini's supervision.

“He had already suffered a stroke and a heart-attack. The former affected one of his legs and the Mother used to take much care of his health. His penultimate visit to us ended with a mild attack of influenza. He had to go back to France before he was completely restored. At this time our position with the Government was strained. As he was to go *via* Delhi, Nolini wanted him to meet the Prime Minister and explain to her our internal situation. He gave him a letter of introduction. As a result the Prime Minister was very pleased to meet him, especially as he was the Mother’s son. She is said to have been much impressed by his refined and cultured manners and his unassuming personality. Our tension was smoothed out and a cordial relation established. This was one of the great services that André rendered to the Ashram.

“During his last visit a few months back we heard that he was not keeping well and preferred to confine himself to his daughter’s house for the time being. After his recovery he came to see Nolini once a week. When I went to meet him I found him very weak; the quiet glow in his face was replaced by signs of pallor. He asked me about the school and matters in general. ‘Well, whatever the condition may be, you people are there’—this was the note on which he ended. My farewell meeting was rather sombre. Very little talk, his eyes wearing a calmly sad expression. Now I understand what it meant.

“There are some persons in this world who bear outwardly no insignia of greatness or brilliance. But as soon as you meet them their deep composure, refined deportment and the serene glow on their faces speak of their soul-purity and you never forget them. Their contact and memory are a cool bath to our souls.

“Such was André, such was Pavitra and such is Nolini.

“Let us now observe ten minutes’ silence as the expression of our love and gratitude to our elder brother, the Mother’s worthy son, André.”

NIRODBARAN

THE PRIME MINISTER'S TELEGRAM TO NOLINI ABOUT ANDRÉ

GRIEVED at sad news of Mr. Morisset's death. Deep sympathy and condolences to his personal family and the larger family of the Ashram and Auroville and the Mother's many devotees — INDIRA GANDHI

A STRIKING DREAM

It was the 29th March, an auspicious day, an anniversary of the Mother's first arrival in Pondicherry in 1914. I went to bed as usual. I had a dream in which I entered an exquisite and attractive two-storeyed building. There was a garden in front of it with a prominent orchid plant. When I climbed to the first floor, which was of a type I had never seen before, I saw a group of extraordinary, luminous, charming people with glowing faces. They were talking among themselves but I could not follow the language in which they spoke. I stayed in that fragrant and exalting atmosphere for some time.

Then I passed on to the second floor. On just entering it I breathed a very calm grave atmosphere. There was a big well-furnished hall. The very moment I stepped into it I found a radiant white-robed middle-aged woman sitting with a child about one year old on her lap. In a solemn voice she said, "The child has passed away."

At a distance of nearly fifteen feet from her I saw clearly Sri Aurobindo (exactly as in the photograph hanging on a wall of my room) standing very quietly and calmly. Then he came forward and lifted the child into his arms from the lap of that lady and pressed it vigorously against his own chest.

Suddenly I woke up and looked at my clock. It was 1.30 a.m. After waking I felt a strange sensation throughout my body.

The dream-experience stayed with me all during the day. In the evening when I went to the Ashram for my regular meditation I came to know that our beloved André-da, the Divine Mother's son, had passed away on the 29th March at about midnight in Paris.

A SADHIKA

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1982)

December 25, 1935, 6.30 a.m.

Guru, I hope this letter will catch you before you start for the Supramental sleep!

At about 5 a.m. I was called by P as K was vomiting blood. R was also there with his medicines. I don't know what R thinks about it; but at first sight he said it was vicarious menstruation. Anyway he gave her medicines. The bout subsided and she slept quite peacefully. Then again she had blood-vomiting. R told me that he would write to you and give her into my charge as he was busy with many other cases, and his temporary treatment wouldn't clash with mine.

I don't know what to do now. I am at Thy service, Sir.

If you and R don't agree as to diagnosis, it is better to send for a third person (Dr. Valle is indicated, I suppose), to consult and advise. It is necessary to know what she has. We are informed that K had this once in Gujarat. You can ask P about this and, if it is correct, find out what was the diagnosis and treatment.

I suppose in any case (if it is lung trouble, also) food and nourishment have to be given and it is only if it is liver or stomach that it would be otherwise.

By 'allopathic-homeopath' I meant a homeopath who having studied allopathy, would have a very sound basis in Medicine. All homeopathy schools are now teaching pathology etc.

They may all study pathology, but I don't think they all bind themselves to the same conclusions as the allopaths. If they did, they would not be able to have an entirely opposite system.

Do you hope that a "blue moon" will ever rise in my heavens?

I trust that a blue moon will rise in everybody's heaven who has on one side the patience to go through and on the other no fundamental and self-expulsive wickedness in his nature. Even for those others a blue moon will rise one day, though later, if they have once sought for it.

I don't deny that personality is a big factor though I don't know exactly whether hope, faith etc., operate physically more or bring some occult forces into the field.

You have only to admit that the mind and vital can influence the body—then no diffi-

culty is left. In this action of mind and vital on the body faith and hope have an immense importance. I do not at all mean that they are omnipotent or infallibly effective—that is not so. But they assist the action of any force that can be applied, even of an apparently purely material force like medicine. In fact however there is nothing as a purely material force, but the action may be purely material when it is a question of material objects. But in things that have life or mind or mind and life one cannot isolate the material operation like that. There is always a play of other forces mixed with it in the reception at least and for the most part in the inception and direction also.

I don't understand why I came into this world with doubts and Co. whereas others did so with self-confidence, why some people go on patiently, honestly etc. and still end their days in misery, why frauds etc. flourish so well! I would say Kismet. You may say blessed Karma—it is only another name.

Well, the frauds are capable and clever in their fraudulency, I suppose. And why should not capacity have its results? The others are only moral and the reward of morality is not worldly success but the satisfaction of a conscience at rest. Virtue is its own reward—it can't ask for success in life also!! What would the poor frauds do if having the torments of a bad conscience (?) they had no success to soothe their tortures?

Karma is not luck, it is the transmission of past energies into the present with their results.

December 26, 1935

You have seen Valle's observations about the patient K. My intuitive diagnosis is then correct; only the intuition was distorted by the mind in misjudging the side affected by the lesion.

It was intuition? I thought it was the result of a prosaic examination.

Still I am not sure that her right side is free; but that can be ascertained by X-ray. R had that 'vicarious' impression to the last.

Why not pool results and say it was a vicarious menstrosity that produced a lung lesion in the middle left together with the right apex? Excuse [the] levity—the temptation of a joke at doctors has always been too much for any lay resistance.

History and symptoms were so obvious that Valle negatived R's impression at once.

But what was the history? I asked for it and you have not told me. Mother was informed it had already happened in Gujarat.

It is because of such instances, Sir, that my faith in his drug treatment, gets shaken.

I don't know. There are several people besides S and G with whom he seemed to me to have a remarkable success.

If a homeopath went by symptoms only, he would perhaps cut off the leaf but I am afraid the roots would flourish as strongly as ever.

That is what A told G, that homeopathy only gives a transient palliation followed quickly by a worse catastrophe. But after all, if it can raise up a man at the last gasp condemned by a rally of the whole allopathic faculty almost with the sentence "No more can be done" and send him walking about for a few more days of cheerful life, it is a rather big palliation. Moreover, in some cases I have watched, I have seen R's drug produce not only a rapid, even an instantaneous improvement, but in the end what seems up to now a lasting one and this in cases of illnesses of ancient standing. However that does not cover K's case which looks more like a lung affair (Mother always was apprehensive that she might be a consumptive case) than a vicarious menstruation or monstrous vicaration one. R however says that it is his principle to make a diagnosis and never change it or say anything more about it but just go and prove his case by a cure! What say you to that, sir? Confidence, if you like! However what bothers me about diagnosis is that if you put 20 doctors on a case, they give 20 different diagnoses (in S's we had three doctors with three quite different theories of the illness)—and such jokes as a doctor shouting "Appendix", opening up a man, finding illness neither of appendix nor volume nor chapter and cheerfully stitching him are extremely common. So if a layman's respect for allopathic pathology and diagnosis is deficient sometimes and R's sneers at doctors' diagnoses find occasionally an echo,—well, it is not altogether without "rational" cause.

A had mild diarrhoea; his relatives made a great fuss over him by caressing, fondling and surrounding him all the time!

Killed with kindness?

I hear that R has prescribed butter-milk for X. Valle himself prescribed light food.

I hope you don't prescribe "absolute repose." R wants her to move about, do light sedentary work not involving any pull on the body and, generally, so arrange that she may not throw herself seriously invalided. This has always been the Mother's principle in dealing with illness, or she approves that wherever possible.

(To be continued)

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1982)

15

MYSELF: Dear Mother, this desire of mine to remain all alone—has it arisen from a fixed mental idea? To keep quiet, to go within, cutting off social contacts—does this stress come from a pre-formed notion of the sadhana and does it want me to follow it? Or am I being pushed towards it as a genuine call coming from you? Is it all imagination? If it had been a wrong path I was choosing, surely you would have pointed out the mistake. Or perhaps you didn't want to do so.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not *kalpana* [imagination]. Mother herself stresses in these things wherever possible not from any mental preference but because it is seen that these habits keep the sadhaks here in a light externalised ordinary consciousness open to all kinds of doubts, self-indulgence, carelessness about the aim of yoga. If there is a stress in you it is her stress in you. Follow it quietly but keep it for yourself alone as each has to find it out for himself in his own time. 22-2-1933

MYSELF: Very often we refuse to admit our wrongs but try to seek self-justification and thus don't see the truth. We indulge these habits which really we should abandon. In arguments too, do we not want to prove "I am right"? Isn't the ego at the root of all this?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, self-justification keeps the thing going because it gives a mental support. Self-justification is always a sign of ego and ignorance. When one has a wider consciousness, one knows that each one has his own way of looking at things and finds in that way his own justification, so that both parties in a quarrel believe themselves to be in the right. It is only when one looks from above in a consciousness clear of ego that one sees all sides of a thing, also their real truth. 2-3-1933

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, again depression! Not very strong, not swallowing me up. I have realised concretely the truth that each depression makes the resolution for the Divine more firm. I am sending my experience of this in the form of a sentence, expecting Sri Aurobindo to correct it. The last time he did it so well!

(This is how Sri Aurobindo put it now: "Each depression overcome kindles a new aspiration in the heart, consolidates the mind's resolution, opens up a new, a more elevated relation with the Mother.")

SRI AUROBINDO: There may be something in a half subconscious form which

causes the mechanical vital repetition of old thoughts, but can no longer take a strong mental or vital shape: so even if it is there, there is no necessity to trouble much about it—it can be left to fade out. The depression may have been largely atmospheric and of the mechanical physical kind—that can be more easily thrown away. 11-3-1933

MYSELF: Mother, I am feeling so happy that Sri Aurobindo has corrected my sentence. I also felt that the depression was atmospheric, since all the other inmates had slight depression. As regards the mental movement I spoke of, there too I felt that it would slowly vanish; so I didn't take much notice of it. When Sri Aurobindo wrote, "It can be left to fade out", I felt a great support within, understanding that it would one day leave me for good. 12-3-1933

MYSELF: Mother, you know very well that I have the bad habit of letting out whatever I hear; I can't hold back anything. Now there has come a strength in me not to speak to anybody all that you write to me, for, as I cannot reproduce things correctly, much misunderstanding and confusion are created.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is better to keep what is written in the book for yourself. If people could be relied on to receive or interpret rightly, it might not be perilous to tell them to others, but they cannot. Besides things kept for oneself have a greater power than if one lets them out to others. 13-3-1933

MYSELF: What has hurt me ~~much~~ is certainly due to my sentimentality, but how to protect myself?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is only from the vital and sentimental point of view that it had any value—but that ought now to belong to the past—the standard now ought to be different. 22-3-1933

MYSELF: Mother, do give me a strong support; otherwise the downward pull makes me suffer intensely. Now it is the last tie; let it be rent asunder. So far the movement was downward; now it seems to be looking up towards the Light. I pray to Sri Aurobindo to keep his touch constant. Whenever I turn towards the Light, he stops writing. This touch along with your touch and smile enables me to fight. Otherwise I would have been finished long ago.

SRI AUROBINDO: My touch is always there; but you must learn to feel it not only with the outward contact as a medium—a touch of pen—but in its direct action on the mind and heart and vital and body, there would then be very much less difficulty—or no difficulty at all. 27-3-1933

MYSELF: I am ready to give up all contact with X. You know that. I am aware that I shall suffer for it, but still I hope that your grace will make me come out of this weakness. I have suffered no less for this weakness. But there is no other way.

SRI AUROBINDO: All that you write in this letter is quite correct. It is useless

to go through the old kind of reconciliation—it will bring back the same futile circle—for he will act in the same way always (until he changes spiritually in the vital and that means a turning away from all vital relations) and you would be flung back into the same reactions. To cut away is the only thing—the best for him, the best for you. As for the feelings excited in him—more hurt self-esteem than anything else—they will fade out of themselves. The first necessity of both is to free yourselves from the old relations and that cannot, it is very clear, be done by going back to any remnant of the old interchange.

For the rest keep to your resolution. Do not discuss him with anybody, do not interest yourself in what he does or does not do; let it be his own concern and the Divine's, not yours. Expect nothing personally from him—you may be sure that your expectations will be disappointed. His nature is not yours and his mental view of what should or should not be done is quite different—incompatible with yours. By retaining anything of the old feeling you will only invite pain and farther disillusionment—you gain nothing and pay a heavy price for that nothing. It is only by becoming oneminded in the sadhana that you can escape from this painful circle.

31-3-1933

(To be continued)

(Sahana's letters translated by Nirodbaran from the original Bengali)

TODAY

No yesterday—no tomorrow,
 Only a keen and tranquil Today!
 Let this fluttering bird caught in my chest
 Grow quiet and full of bliss after years of fray.
 Let this secret bliss flow through every pore of me,
 A glorious vision even with eyes closed fast—
 An all-embracing assuring love,
 A mighty glimmering Present—oblivion of future and past—
 The certainty and strength of Your Force
 At every passing moment, in wakefulness or sleep,
 Drowning all noise of disturbing thought.
 I seek Your Vibration—a Talisman to keep.

MINNIE N. CANTENWALLA

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1982)

The Mother's Message

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



10

It was a moonlit night and I strolled in the garden of Golconde, asking myself, "Why did I come here? What is the purpose behind all my suffering and difficulties? How long shall I have to struggle? What does the Mother really will for me?" Flowers, trees, pond, water-lilies—everything was hushed. Who could ever know the Will

of the Supreme? The moon was still bright among the stars when I went to my room.

The next morning the Mother sent a beautiful card of painted roses together with these lines:

“Bonjour to my dear little child, my very sweet Huta whom I love very dearly. For her I want peace, joy, strength and a complete Victory over all obstacles and all difficulties, ending in a complete union with the Divine.

“I keep you in my arms with all love and blessings.”

In spite of my unconsciousness, the Mother was organising my whole being and giving my soul enough strength to persist in its aspiration.

The hostile forces were still at work, however. I had been suffering from severe headaches. All the same, I never stopped my work. I was busy decorating my idol—Mahalakshmi. During the silent hours of the night I sewed the dresses, made ornaments, garlands and painted the face. I enjoyed my work enormously because I felt strongly that the idol was living and there was some mysterious and subtle communication between us, and I forgot myself totally while I worked. I remembered Sri Aurobindo’s words about the Mahalakshmi personality of the Mother, which are found in the Centenary Ed., Vol. 25, pp. 30-31:

“...She throws the spell of the intoxicating sweetness of the Divine; to be close to her is a profound happiness and to feel her within the heart is to make existence a rapture and a marvel; grace and charm and tenderness flow out from her like light from the sun and wherever she fixes her wonderful gaze or lets fall the loveliness of her smile, the soul is seized and made captive and plunged into the depths of an unfathomable bliss. Magnetic is the touch of her hands and their occult and delicate influence refines mind and life and body and where she presses her feet course miraculous streams of an entrancing Ananda....”

The Bhagavata thus describes Lakshmi:

“Holding in her hand a lotus garland around which hummed the bees, she turned her gracious face, made lovely by the smile of modesty, and with cheeks against which sparkled beautiful earrings, her two breasts beautifully matched and close together covered with powdered sandalwood and saffron, her waist so slight that it was scarcely visible, her every step was accompanied by the tuneful jingle of the anklets which adorned her feet, and her whole body was like a golden *liana*.”

*

Yet the headaches persisted and made me miserable, so I went to the Mother and told her about it. At once she put her hand on my forehead and said:

“Oh! it is too hot—it is burning....”

Then she held my head in her hands and concentrated for quite a long time. After that, she massaged my forehead gently and said:

“It will go....”

Sri Aurobindo has written about the headache in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 24, p.1641:

“The headache if it comes is only a result of the body not being accustomed to the pressure or else to some resistance there. The difficulties of course rise up, but it is not always in the beginning. Sometimes the first effect is such that one feels as if there were no difficulties,—they rise afterwards when the exultation wanes and the normal consciousness has a chance to assert itself against the flood of power or light from above. There is a resistance that has to be fought out or worked out—fought out if the nature is unsteady or insists violently, worked out if the will is steady and the nature moderate in its reactions. On the other hand if there has been a long preparation and the resistances of the nature have been already largely dealt with by the psychic or by the enlightened mental will, then there are no primary or later aggravations but a steady and quiet pushing through of the change, the remaining difficulties falling away of themselves as the new consciousness develops, or else there may be no difficulties at all, only a necessary readjustment and change.”

The next morning, the Mother sent a card accompanied by these lines:

“I hope the nasty headache has gone. I want it to go for ever. It is these adverse forces of ignorance, unconsciousness and division which are making this world such a miserable place full of injustice and suffering. But the Divine is at work to overcome these forces and the Victory of the Divine is certain whatever time it may take.

“Keep a living hope and faith—I want this Victory to come soon.

“With all my love and blessings.”

As usual I went to the Mother’s stores and did some cleaning but I could not concentrate. I felt unwell and had a sense of foreboding. I wrote a letter to the Mother in the afternoon and, in the evening before the French class, I went to her. She knew at once what was going on in me. She said:

“If you listen to the devil, then surely he will spread his power over your being. When his suggestions pass through the heart and brain, you become miserable and upset.

“I can read your thoughts—I can read the thoughts of everybody. Some are thinking that I do not love them, or care for them and so on. By all these wrong thoughts they are kicking the Divine out of their hearts. Then the devil becomes happy and sucks their blood and their energies and makes them thinner and more miserable; no wonder people become pale and weak.

“If you really want to be completely all right, you must do one thing: when wrong suggestions and thoughts are ready to enter your consciousness, at once kick them out and call me immediately, for I *always* hear the call. I have had thousands of experiences when people were surrounded by adverse forces and when they called me sincerely, I went instantly to their aid.

“When the devil finds the chance, suddenly he enters and steals all the energies of your vital being by pumping them out. It is obviously your own fault—otherwise it would never happen. Why should you ask the devil, ‘What did you say?’ On the contrary you must say strongly, ‘No, I do not want to listen to anything you say—go away.’ Then of course everything will disappear and you will feel happy. You must know also that the Mother has put strength and will into each and everyone. And these are powerful enough and able enough to fight against all opposite forces—whatever they may be. Thus you can avoid all false suggestions. Then naturally you feel at ease. Otherwise you can never realise anything wonderful and new in your life. On the contrary, by accepting falsehood you build a huge wall between the Divine and yourself. So you must *never* listen to the devil who will definitely say, ‘The Mother cannot do anything, why are you here?’ etc., etc. But there is certainly no truth in it.”¹

Thoughts crowded thick and fast into my mind as I listened to the Mother. She had voiced exactly my feeling at the time. I presumed that the Mother was all-powerful, but why could she not save me soon by destroying the dark forces? Was she really the Divine?

When she looked at me intently, I felt her shining eyes mocking the thick shadows of the hostile forces which had thrown up a barrier between us and were preventing me from benefiting by her Love and Grace.

The next day she wrote to me:

“Remember all that I told you yesterday. Do not listen to the devil’s suggestions—he is trying to take you away from me.

“Do not let the mud of ugly thoughts and low feelings stain your consciousness and take you out of my protection.

“And write only when the devil is far away from you—only when you believe in my love and compassion.”

¹ I need not repeat that all the talks of the Mother have been seen and confirmed or corrected by her.

I answered her letter at once and she wrote back:

“I am glad you remember your promise of yesterday, never to write any more nasty letters and I accept your assurance that you will abide by your promise.

“I received also your nice flowers, ‘faithfulness’, and feel sure that henceforth you will be thoroughly faithful to the Divine. To achieve that, it is not enough to abstain from writing bad letters—you must abstain also from sheltering in you bad thoughts and feelings—because it is by these bad thoughts and bad feelings that the devil is trying to ruin your life and to take you away from the Divine.”

Deep within I did promise her, but my outer being was not bold enough to keep the promise. I was weak and helpless in the hands of that set of hostile forces which misled me in more ways than one. I lacked confidence and faith. The devil was so wily, he managed to make wrong things seem right and right things wrong.

Sri Aurobindo has stated in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 24, p. 1734:

“The hostile forces have a certain self-chosen function: it is to test the condition of the individual, of the work, of the earth itself and their readiness for the spiritual descent and fulfilment. At every step of the journey, they are there attacking furiously, criticising, suggesting, imposing despondency or inciting to revolt, raising unbelief, amassing difficulties. No doubt, they put a very exaggerated interpretation on the rights given them by their function, making mountains even out of what seems to us a mole-hill. A little trifling false step or mistake and they appear on the road and clap a whole Himalaya as a barrier across it. But this opposition has been permitted from of old not merely as a test or ordeal, but as a compulsion on us to seek a greater strength, a more perfect self-knowledge, an intenser purity and force of aspiration, a faith that nothing can crush, a more powerful descent of the Divine Grace.”

On 20th April 1956 the Mother wrote:

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

“A tout à l’heure—that is to say that I shall see you this morning at 11 o’clock.

“With my love and blessings.”

I went to the Mother at the appointed time to show the idol of Mahalakshmi. She looked at it and, with a lovely smile, said that it was very good. When I left her, I went straight to the stores to put the idol in a glass-cupboard, and took another—the idol of Maheshwari—for decoration.

As usual I saw my family. I had a talk with Laljibhai about the idols and the Mother's Stores where I worked. He expressed his wish to see the Stores. I asked the Mother about it. She answered:

"I shall think of you and my Consciousness will be with you while you will go to the stores with Laljibhai.

"With all my love and blessings."

Laljibhai saw everything in the Stores and was appreciative. He was interested in my work.

I still felt uneasy. For some reason my mind seemed hazy and my heart restless, so I wrote to the Mother. The next day she sent me these words:

"I have received your letter and at once sent you all force and protection.

"Let the Truth be born in you, become conscious of your soul."

Once again she wrote:

"Yes, after *darshan*, when people are less, I shall call you one morning so that you may say what you have to say.

"I told you that the idol is quite good, there is nothing wrong to change—on the contrary it is very nicely arranged and it has become very pretty. I am sure that the other one also will become very nice.

"As for the flowers I have given you, after some time, when they are quite old, they can be buried in Golconde's garden and thus they will be useful giving life, food and strength to other plants."

(As I was in Golconde the Mother has referred to its garden. It does not mean that only the Golconde-garden is the place. Any garden will serve, even a roof-garden.)

I indeed relished my work of decorating the idols. But the materials for the decoration started increasing according to my work. It was a problem to keep so many things in a small cupboard along with my clothes.

I informed the Mother. Her reply came thus:

"I am ordering your small cupboard.

"With my love and blessings."

I was pleased, because extra things would now be easily accommodated in the new cupboard.

Here I may recount that as years passed by my work with the Mother increased immensely. Now my present house is packed with many steel cupboards in which

rest all the treasures which the Mother gave me graciously through the years.

Besides, she gave me two rooms in Golconde. There remain intact 1000 paintings, along with other things, in 10 cupboards.

In 1956 I never imagined I would possess such splendid gifts from the Mother.

*

Once again I was attacked by the inferior forces who put in my mind all sorts of suggestions such as: my people would soon leave after the April Darshan, I would be lonely, would I find the Divine, how long would I have to remain in the same mode of life?...

Each and everything appeared most humdrum. What a turmoil assailed me! I closed my eyes, re-living the horrible frustration and unhappiness of the past and I did not know what sort of letter I must have written to the Mother while in this state of mind. She replied:

“I am sorry I could not answer immediately your letter of this morning. But truly I had not a minute to sit down and write. Moreover I told you many times that if I do not write it does not mean that I am not doing the needful to help you. In fact, writing a word is nothing; the true help I am giving is the one I give silently, present or not present, and that work is most effective even when people do not feel it or acknowledge it....

“But truly you must be a little more patient and enduring and a little more confident also that I am doing for the best.

“With my love and blessings.”

In the evening I could not resist going to the Mother in the Playground. The pain and tension in me had reached out to touch her heart. I saw only infinite kindness and understanding in those blue-grey eyes of hers. Slowly she closed them for a while and then said:

“These days—February to April—are good for everybody to make progress. So you must understand everything clearly, disregard all lower elements and make a firm resolution to progress. Then only can you be free from all opposition and know happiness. What I am telling you is right.”

She remained silent for a moment or two. Then she said with an amused gleam in her eyes:

“Child, if you don’t listen to the devil, you will surely become happy and healthy. You see, I do not want the devil to become fat!...”

And she laughed. A quick smile flickered on my face at the word 'fat'. She continued:

“Truly, if you do not respond to him, you will certainly progress little by little—one step at a time towards the realisation—to your goal.”

Then she put her hands on my temples and pressed them firmly but tenderly. I hardly took the trouble to find out the true meaning of her powerful words. I was involved in a physical and a psychological struggle, and life seemed completely disorganised.

On the 23rd April, the Mother sent an attractive card with a quotation from one of her messages:

“It is the Divine Presence that gives value to life. This Presence is the source of all peace, all joy, all security. Find this Presence in yourself and all your difficulties will disappear.”

She continued on the same card, referring to the 24th April:

“Let this day of Supramental New Birth put an end to all the past obstacles and inaugurate for you a new life and a new consciousness exclusively consecrated to the Divine.”

The marked date—23.4.56—once again held an occult significance. The next day, the Mother distributed this message:

“The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality.

“It is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it.”

Here I recall what Sri Aurobindo says about the Supramental:

“The Supramental is a truth and its advent is in the very nature of things inevitable.”

(To be continued)

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WHY?

WHY does the mosquito bite or the bee sting?
There is something sweet in your blood,
Something in your cells that responds,
A complement to the spirit behind
The bite and the sting.

You can walk covered in a transparent veil
Or smear odors all over your face,
May have wire-mesh-fence all around
Or befriend a bee or its like.
You may even learn to enjoy the sting.

A better way is to learn your chemistry,
Recognise the hidden guests in your cells,
If you ask nicely She will give the knowhow
And the microforceps with which to extract
The molecules that react and hence invite
The bite and the sting.

Still better is to rekindle the occult sparks
That are Her concentrate force within you,
And Her light and love will slowly unveil
Your self, and that would widen and pervade
Till 'That' and you become one.

But this would be far away,
Much earlier the hum of bees
Would be replaced by the rhythm
And faint sound of AUM and the tune
Of His flute, masked and filtered
Though it may come at first
Through your awakening heart and mind.

DINKAR PALANDE

TOWARDS FREEDOM AND PERFECTION

TWO PERSONAL LETTERS

I

YOUR experience of the Yoga-meeting is very good. The sense of spiritual presence between the eyebrows accompanied by a golden light shows you have a natural bent for inner vision under a spiritual protection which will guide you. The middle-of-the-brow centre is also connected with will-power and effective activity. I am glad that the state of trance you speak of was not a switch-away from consciousness: it was a deepening of it and tended to free you from the hold of the external mind, even the hold of the physical body. The perception of “Jesus” calling you out of your body signifies a movement towards having your centre of being in an inner dimension which is independent of physical existence yet without necessarily any rupture with it. Our true Self is always free of embodiment though we are not commonly aware of its freedom. To become aware and then to rule the outer life is what all “Jesus”-presences—whether in the form of gurus or by contacts from the Beyond—want us to do as part of our development. Gradually the rudimentary free Self—the Purusha—has to grow more and more extended in feeling until there seems to be a large and luminous and tranquil consciousness at the back of all one’s thoughts and desires and volitions—a deep standing-apart with

A wide unshaken look on Time’s unrest.

Along with this single Background of everything, the inmost heart must awake, the true individual Soul with its spontaneous devotion to the Personal Godhead and with its constant gesture of offering everything, including itself, to the Supreme Lord, the Divine Mother. The true Soul, the “psychic being” as Sri Aurobindo terms it, keeps us also in relationship with our fellows, warm and intimate but with a sense of the Inner Deity in each one and a love going forth to the human as a child of the Divine, the human in its potentiality to become through all its wanderings united in a manifold way with the Perfect, the Plenary.

Don’t be puzzled by my speaking separately of Self and Soul. Our Self is that which is above birth and death, uninvolved in terrestrial evolution though presiding over it—our Soul is that which is immortal within birth after birth and death after death, the evolving entity. They are two aspects of our ultimate reality.

You don’t have to apologise for not getting down to pen and paper. I feel your nearness and often get the sense of reaching out to you. Don’t think of my dying. I have no intention of getting disembodied very soon, though occasionally a great desire arises to be with Sehra where she permanently nestles in the Mother. At rare moments I come into touch with her in a very concrete way—not mere dreams—and

I note down the experiences. Sri Aurobindo always seems to convey to me that I should be calm and patient and carry on whatever work I feel impelled from deep within to do. I am in fairly good health. Only my legs are not responding very well. I am not too disappointed since there are no horses here to make me feel my incapacity overmuch. When the Mother once told me that one day she hoped to cure my legs the first thought that came to me was: "Now I shall be able to have a glorious horse between them!"

I am glad that the Ashram days are still very much with you. They will never leave you, for Grace once given is given forever. It is for you to see that you do not recede from it. I don't think you will.

Savitri is to be read in small quantities—two or three pages at most each time. And read it not with your eyes alone but also with your ears. Let its sound permeate you. It has the power to build you anew nearer to the Divine's conception of you. By "conception" I do not mean "idea" in however high a significance along mental lines. I mean "the Life of life" the Divine has given you in the depths of eternity—the "immaculate conception" in the ultimate sense which has to be realised in the form of our ordinary life. If we speak in terms of "idea" at all, we must refer to the Platonic "Idea", the archimage, the ideal model eternally existing and waiting to cast its reflection in the flux of time. Yes, poetry like *Savitri* is an illuminating and transforming power. Don't try to grasp it with your mind: let your mind be grasped by it and learn to open to its supreme

Sight's sound-waves breaking from the soul's great deeps.

What you call its "metaphors and symbolism" which baffle you are not an imaginative play: they are shining shadows cast by inner realities. In all genuine poetry the first thing is to feel and see and let the feeling and seeing bring about the understanding. The inner layers of our being have to be stirred and the intellect has to catch their vibrations and light up. With *Savitri* this holds true all the more. Perhaps it will be best if you read Sri Aurobindo's Sonnets first. They are written in a more accessible tone and will prepare you for the profounder reverberations of the Infinite that sweep through the Legend and Symbol of Sri Aurobindo's epic. Then there are prose things to read. I believe I advised you to keep always with you the small book called *The Mother*. It is one of the most enchanting no less than revelatory compositions of Sri Aurobindo.

I am deeply touched by your desire to ask me to give you a name. It implies that something in me knows the quintessential You. Perhaps it does but so far you have been a part of the Ineffable. I have to wait until the Flesh becomes suddenly the Word in the core of my regard for you. As soon as this happens I'll let you know. Today at the Samadhi I'll send up a prayer for you and ask for your true name. It has to be born in some response within me to that invocation of Sri Aurobindo's to the "Rose of God":

Passion-flower of the Nameless, bud of the mystical Name!

12.2.1982

2

I am sorry I have again indulged in the Amalism of not replying soon. Thanks a lot for your donation to *Mother India*. It was thoughtful of you to send me a fair copy of your poem about the mosquito and the bee, on which I had commented: "I like the whole piece. It has both depth and piquancy and a living movement." A poem of yours went with the April matter. So the bite and the sting will entertain your readers in May.

The Mother's whisper to you, "Accept and smile", is an injunction not only of wisdom but also of love. The sage smiles because his true self is above all hurt. The devotee smiles because all hurt is—in Shakespeare's language—"as a lover's pinch" or—in Palandesque phrase—the bite of the deific Mosquito and the sting of the beatific Bee. The Kiranic mind would like to irradiate these metaphors and reveal their secrets. With a slight shift in the pronunciation it cries out: "O the mosque we must quit if we are to find the infinity of Allah, the real dimension of the deity. The Be-all must be captured if we are to reach the End-all, to which the soul's invocation always goes:

Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life Beatitude's kiss!"

I may add that the smile the Mother commands from you should be on the surface no less than in the depth. You mention "an unusual peace" and "a room inside" but add that the "surface" feels some disturbance and gets thrilled or bored or interested. Why this discrepancy between the inward and the outward DP? The furrowed brow and the quivering or yawning mouth have no place in the Integral Yoga. The mind's cool perception and the heart's calm sensation of the ups and downs of life are the only things ultimately permitted, so that attentiveness plus practical action and sweetness cum sympathetic gesture may issue along with the surrounding serenity of the inner beings' repose in the Eternal.

It seems a mistake to believe that the surface cannot but react in the ordinary way in order to get things done and relationships established. This is another form of the misconception which the Gita seeks to correct—namely, that activity will cease if we give up desire: Sri Aurobindo explains that activity can proceed not from desire but from will. Karmayoga's instrument is "the intelligent will" which sees a situation tranquilly and channellises a higher inspiration into effective deed. Perhaps "the intelligent will" may strike you as excluding all movement of the heart. Actually it need not. The Karmayogi is not called upon to be a cold fish

In the ocean depths and breadths of the Infinite.

The proper demand on him is to be a dolphin of “the soul’s great deeps”, bringing a human touch without being involved in the all-too-human fret and fever. The heart, in contact with the psyche behind it, has the capacity of an equable “feel” of the truth of each circumstance and must add its intimate insight to the wide vision of the *buddhi*. In fact the vision cannot be wide enough without drawing upon the psyche’s intuition which enables one not only to grasp the truth from all around but also to clasp it from within. That at least, to my understanding, is the overstanding of matters in the Aurobindonian Karmayoga. I say “overstanding” not out of the impish ingenuity which appears to be an ineradicable element of my erratic walk through life—“imp” being a perfect rhyme to “limp”. That strange coinage is necessary to Sri Aurobindo’s Karmayoga which always shades off at one end into the Yoga of Jnana and at the other into that of Bhakti until finally “the many-splendoured thing” fuses with the Yoga of Self-Perfection.

15.2.1982

AMAL KIRAN

A FULL-FLAMED ROSE

A FULL-FLAMED Rose, a splendid sunrise
 Burst into view with a thousand rays,
 Illumines the Earth with pink and gold—
 Her mountains and rivers, her vistas and ways.
 The sparkling plains with a million pearls,
 The singing trees and the dancing leas
 Welcome their Lord—the blushing flowers
 And rushing waves of delighted seas.
 The pangs of the Night, her waiting suspense
 Are transformed into a day of delight,
 The creation is thrilled and filled with joy
 In the amorous arms of the Infinite.
 The aspiring prayer of the despairing Night
 Is answered by the Grace of the Lord of Light.

BHANUSHANKAR BHATT

THE DIVINE'S UNEXPECTED ANSWER

A TRUE INCIDENT

WHEN we love the Mother we love her in everything. Her love is also so deep and intense and lasting that it goes on increasing day by day. The law of diminishing utility of economics does not apply to it. In our ordinary human relations love is sometimes changed into hatred and hatred into love. But here love is changed to more love. Every disciple feels that the Mother has a special love for him or her.

This was my condition 30 years back, *i.e.*, in 1952, when I was a student of XII class. In that golden year of my life I had the opportunity to see the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's photos in Agra. The photos were so living, beautiful, magnetic that I kept looking at them constantly for about 3 hours. I also felt that some blissful force was coming out from the Mother's eyes and was entering into the abyss of my heart. These photos I saw in the room of my uncle who had resigned from Government Service and was doing his M.A. from Agra University. When I asked whose photos were those, he replied that Sri Aurobindo was a great Yogi and the Mother was his follower and co-worker. My inner being accepted the statement about Sri Aurobindo but did not accept what was said about the Mother. Later on I came to know that all the four powers Maheshwari, Mahalakshmi, Mahakali and Mahasaraswati had incarnated in her.

I requested my uncle to give me the photos. He told me that to get such photos was not so easy. He advised me to become a subscriber to the Ashram's monthly periodical *Mother India*. He added that sometimes photos of the Mother and the Master were published in special issues. I also searched all the book-stalls and other stalls of Agra but I could not find the photos nor the literature of Sri Aurobindo. I finally became a subscriber to *Mother India*. In one special issue beautiful photos of the Mother and the Master appeared and I got them framed and kept them in my room. At that time it was not possible for me to understand the articles published in *Mother India*. But even then I used to feel some peculiar joy in the depths of my heart when I got my copy from Pondicherry.

Days and months passed. In the beginning of 1954 a message of the Mother was published with her signature. Her signature caught my attention. I do not know why I liked it so much. I thought that people sought signatures of great political leaders, actors, actresses, sportsmen and writers. What a great thing it would be if I could get the signature of the Divine Mother! But how to get it was the problem. Moreover, there was the question: why should the Mother oblige a layman like me? Still, there was a strong desire from within.

I told this desire to my uncle and my professor who had done Ph.D. on Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution. But they rejected the idea with the remark that the Mother was very busy with the Ashram's work and did not have any time for such petty things. I kept quiet. In *Mother India* somewhere I had read that the Mother

could see one through the eyes of her photo. I believed it without any doubt. One day I stood before the Mother's photo, looked into her eyes and prayed that I might get her signature. By that time the subscription for *Mother India* became due. I sent the subscription in the name of the Editor. After a week the postman came with the money-order receipt and handed it to me. I saw the receipt and was astonished. I could not believe it. I rubbed my eyes again and again and looked. I saw that this money-order had been received by the Mother herself! On the receipt there was a beautiful signature in ink of the Mother with a very clear stamp below it: "The Mother, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry."

I rushed to my room with tears of joy in my eyes. The Mother was so gracious that for many years the subscriptions for *Mother India* were being received by herself. This is how this great magazine helped me to establish a silent and concrete relation with the Mother. My sadhana started. Others also might have had such experiences. I always remember the following lines of *Savitri*:

She has lowered her heights to the stature of our souls
And dazzled our lids with her celestial gaze.

Book One Canto II

NIWARAN CHANDRA

AN EXTRAORDINARY OLD MAN

...LET me tell you about walking the dog with Mr. Tayer.

When I was about thirteen, I used to run down Park Avenue in New York City, late for school. I was a great big overgrown girl, and one day I ran right into a rather frail old gentleman in his seventies and knocked the wind out of him. He laughed as I helped him to his feet and asked me in French-accented speech, "Are you planning to run like that for the rest of your life?"

"Yes, sir," I replied. "It looks that way."

"Well, bon voyage!" he said.

"Bon voyage!" I answered and sped on my way.

About a week later I was walking down Park Avenue with my fox terrier, Champ, and again I met the old gentleman.

"Ah," he greeted me, "my friend the runner, and a fox terrier. I knew one like that many years ago in France. Where are you going?"

"Well, sir," I replied, "I'm taking Champ to Central Park."

"I will go with you," he informed me. "I will take my constitutional."

And thereafter, for about a year, the old gentleman and I would meet and walk together in Central Park. His name, as far as I could make out, was Mr. Thayer or Mr. Tayer.

The walks were magical and full of delight. Mr. Tayer had absolutely no self-consciousness and would suddenly fall on his knees and exclaim to me, "Jeanne, look at the caterpillar! What does the caterpillar think? Does he know what he is going to become? Eh, Jeanne—feel yourself to be a caterpillar. What will you be when you become a butterfly? The next stage, Jeanne. The next stage! Metamorphosis! It is so exciting."

His long, gothic, comic-tragic face would nod with wonder.

"Eh, Jeanne, look at the clouds! God's calligraphy in the sky! All that transformation—moving, changing, dissolving, becoming. Eh, Jeanne—are you a cloud? Be a cloud."

Or there was the time that Mr. Tayer and I leaned into the strong wind that suddenly whipped through Central Park, and he told me, "Jeanne, sniff the wind. The same wind may have once been sniffed by Jésus Christ, by Alexander, by Jeanne d'Arc. Sniff the wind once sniffed by Jeanne d'Arc. Sniff the tides of history!"

It was wonderful. People of all ages followed us around, laughing—not at us, but with us. Occasionally Mr. Tayer would give short comical addresses on the history of the Central Park rocks. More often he would address the rocks directly. "Ah, my friend the mica schist layer, do you remember when...?" He seemed to know an awful lot about old bones and rocks.

He seemed to know a great deal about spirals, too. Once I brought him the shell of a snail, and he waxed ecstatic for the better part of an hour. Snail shells and galaxies and the meanderings of rivers were taken up into a great hymn to the spiraling

evolution of spirit and matter. When he had finished, his voice dropped, and he whispered almost in prayer, "Omega... omega... omega...."

But mostly Mr. Tayer was so full of vital sap and juice that he seemed to flow with everything. Always he saw the interconnections between things—the way that everything in the universe, from fox terriers to mica schist to the mind of God, was related to everything else and was very, very good.

I remember coming home once and telling my mother, "Mother, I met my old man again, and when I am with him, I leave my littleness behind." For Mr. Tayer looked at you as if you were God-in-hiding, and the love with which you were regarded was unconditional. In his presence one felt empowered to be who one really was.

And then one day I didn't see him any more. I would frequently go and stand outside of the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola on Eighty-fourth Street and Park Avenue, where I often met him, but he never came again.

In 1961 someone lent me a copy of a book titled *The Phenomenon of Man*. The book, from which the jacket had been removed, was strangely familiar in its concepts. Occasional words and expressions loomed up as echoes from my past. When, later in the book, I came across the concept of the "omega point," I was certain. I asked to see the jacket of the book, looked at the author's picture, and, of course, recognized him immediately. There was no forgetting or mistaking that face. Mr. Tayer was Teilhard de Chardin, the great priest-scientist, poet, and mystic, and during that lovely and luminous year I had been meeting him outside the Jesuit rectory of St. Ignatius, where he was living at the time.

(With acknowledgements to *Life Force*, pp. 218-20, by Dr. Jean Houston)

APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION

INTEGRAL education, in practice at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, has been drawing the attention of educationists and parents interested in providing better education to future generations. Many parents, when they fail to get their children admitted to this centre, try to have other institutions built according to the principles of integral education, so that their children may get better education. Again, people in their eagerness to bring to the masses the principle of integral education start various institutions and name them as integral education institutions. These types of schools that have sprung up at different places in our country are not branches of the Centre of Education at Pondicherry, but are independent institutions run by private managing committees or trusts, in some of which people connected with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram may have found a place.

Besides these types of proclaimed integral education schools, there are schools and colleges named after the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, but not claiming to have applied the principles of integral education in their programmes. Sometimes these types of institutions create confusion among the general public. A layman, who has not visited the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, considers these types of integral education schools as branches of the main centre at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. This is an error. When the layman does not find any distinct programme of integral education—physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual education—he takes it for granted that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have not brought out a definite philosophy of education, and takes the main centre at Pondicherry to be one of these types of institutions functioning at different places. While one should clearly point out their limitations, one should also make some loud thinking on how the principles of integral education can be applied in various schools.

Aim

The aim of an integral education school should not be to prepare its children for any degree or diploma of any existing school board or a new board of integral education. Trying to have a new school board of integral education is a great error. The nation nowadays is moving towards an open education system that has been the ideal of the Centre of Education at Pondicherry. Now, we have universities where previous qualifications are not necessary for a candidate to appear at a particular degree or diploma examination. In such situations, if these so-called integral-education schools try to have a separate board, they will be trying to undo the work of the forces acting for the betterment of our education. Educationists everywhere realise the evil effects of the examinations specially conducted for awarding degrees, diplomas or certificates, but they continue to endorse them, as pointed out by the UGC Committee on Examinations, so that they earn considerably and also distribute favours. The

Mother always resisted the requests of parents to award certificates. She gave the following prayer for the students:

“It is not for our family, it is not to secure a good position, it is not to earn money, it is not to obtain a diploma, that we study. We study to learn, to know, to understand the world and for the sake of the joy that it gives us.”

Similar types of ideal prevailed in Santiniketan, during the lifetime of Rabindranath. But after his death the institution became one of the many universities.

Management

An integral-education school should be a school managed by teachers. It is impossible to have a good school with paid teachers. If a person wants to have a school, he should have a batch of dedicated teachers and leave the affairs of the school to them. These teachers should run the school with collaboration of the parents of the concerned school children. There should not be provision for tuition-fees but the parents may contribute to the maintenance of the school. There should not be any stress on the formal training received by the would-be teachers. Rather, because of deterioration of the standard of present-day teacher-education programmes, a person who has not received any formal teacher-training and is sincere in his job should be preferred. Such teachers need not be exposed to the advices of the so-called teacher-educators of the teacher-education institutions or educational administrations, as the ways in which teaching problems are to be tackled will vary. For, an integral teacher will draw inspiration from within himself, to tackle the problems seen in his or her students or in teaching-learning situations.

Such a school should be preferably a residential school. Where it is not possible, it should be at least a full-day school. All of its teachers need not be full-time teachers, and all students need not be full-time students. This type of school should be for the community, of the community and by the community. It should form a base of community living and growth.

The Teacher

The teacher occupies a key-position in the system of integral education. According to the Mother, a good teacher is a good yogi. The level of perfection in teaching is related to an individual's level of perfection in yoga. All good yogis can be good teachers. But all good teachers, working in the schools, not imparting integral education may or may not be yogis and therefore may not be useful for imparting integral education. An integral-education teacher should know his own psychic being, try to know the psychic beings of the children, know their past and design educational environments so that the children are helped to grow into the future, in harmony with the progress achieved by their psychic beings in this life and past lives. This is

the ideal that has to be kept continuously in front of every integral-education teacher. When such a teacher faces problems in his teaching, he should go within himself to find the answer. It is his inner being who is his Guru for making him a better teacher. The level of consciousness of these types of teachers will determine the quality of the integral-education schools, if they are to be started elsewhere.

Conclusion

Starting an integral education school is a very risky work. The Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, has been the source of inspiration for educationists throughout the world. Hence let the inspiration being thus provided be not diluted by opening so-called integral-education schools and creating confusion among the masses. Proper and profound understanding of this inspiration is the basic *sine qua non*.

SUNIL BEHARI MOHANTY

THE RUSSIAN SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT

IN Russia, as elsewhere in Europe, the Symbolist movement started as a reaction against the positivism and utilitarianism of the preceding epoch. The eighties and the early nineties were periods of pervading rationalistic thought. Dostoevski and Turgenev were dead. Tolstoi had withdrawn from literature to expound his dogmatic, rationalistic Christianity. The poetry of the so-called civic poets had sunk to the lowest possible level. It was the "autumnal" period of Russian literature.

The term *Symbolism* assumed by the Russian originators of the movement meant to them essentially what it meant to their French prototypes. It signified, first of all, that ordinary descriptive language failed to convey unique personal feelings and emotions; that these could be conveyed only suggestively through association of ideas and carefully constructed imagery. In the second place, it implied a transcendental world view, as expressed, for example, by Vladimir Soloviev, in the following lyric:

Dear friend, do you not see
That everything we see is but
Reflections, shadows of that which is
Invisible to our sight?

Dear friend, do you not hear
That life's reverberating noise
Is but the altered echo of
Transcendent harmonies?

Dear friend, do you not sense
That nothing in the world apart
From this exists: that one heart speaks
Mutely to another heart?¹

But in a deeper psychological sense Symbolism, in its origin, was a spontaneous revolt against all social and moral values. The leader of the new movement, Briusov, describes it in the following terms:

The most valuable thing in the new art, is the eternal thirst, the anxious search ... The reign of positive science is passing... We feel crowded, we are stifling, we can bear it no longer. We are oppressed by society's conventions; we are suffering from the conditional forms of morality, from the very conditions of knowledge, from all that is superimposed upon us.²

¹ Vladimir Soloviev, "Mily drug al ty ne videsh ..," *Stikhotvorennia* (Moscow, 1915), p.III.

² Valeri Briusov, *Kovsem, ktoishchet*, Preface to a poem "Lestvista" by A. L. Miropolksi (Moscow: Scorpion, 1902), pp 7-12.

It was a credo of nihilism, a complete denial of all values.

From the beginning Nietzsche and Dostoevski supplied the amoral and apolitical tone to the movement which later acquired a great variety of forms. But it was the group of French Symbolist and Parnassian poets which exercised in the nineties the greatest influence on the young generation of the Russian poets.

"We need a new tongue!" Rimbaud had cried in 1870, and in 1893 Briusov felt the impossibility of expressing in the language of Pushkin the sensibilities of the *fin de siècle*.¹ The new poetry was to be a poetry of suggestive indefiniteness, of half-tones as opposed to the old poetry of full tones; its aim was "to hypnotize the reader and to invoke in him a certain mood."² There were to be no distinctions between the perceptions of the different senses. "Les parfums, les couleurs, et les sons se répondent" was learned from Baudelaire and Poe; the striving to approximate in poetry the effects of music, from Verlaine; the wilful obscurity and instrumentation of words, from Mallarmé.

Technically, classical Russian syllabism was abandoned. *Vers libre* and other verse forms and devices new to Russian prosody were introduced. But the most bizarre innovation was imagery: "windows of meaningless dreams," "the music of roses," "silken gardens," "violet hands on enamelled walls," and especially the line, "Oh, cover your pale feet!"—resulted in accusations of mystifications or insanity. A hopeless pessimism pervaded the new poetry. Despair, boredom, and a "cosmic loneliness" were then the new poets' prevalent moods. Like most of their contemporaries in the West, they fled from the social and political life of their time and sought refuge in the unusual, the artificial, and the occult.

The new poetry was revolutionary for Russia. In form and content nothing could be further removed from it than the classicism of Pushkin, the Schilleresque romanticism of Lermontov, or the pallid didacticism of the "civic" poets. The cultivation of form for its own sake was an ideal foreign to Russian literature, and the consequent reaction of the new poets against the traditionally social and moral content of literature was more violent in Russia than elsewhere in Europe. Yet, while excessive pessimism, artificiality, and the striving for unusual effects were characteristic tendencies of contemporary European poetry, in Russia they represented a phase of adolescent rebellion and were not the expression of ripe age or lives as tragic as those of Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Rimbaud.

In the nineties, Briusov, Balmont, and Sologub were the three most original exponents of the new school. These three, particularly Briusov, fought the battle of Symbolism. In the next decade, with the outstanding talent of Blok and the amazing versatility of Bely, the battle was finally won, and the renaissance of Russian poetry was nearly accomplished.

Briusov was the first to introduce and popularize the aesthetic ideals of Poe and Baudelaire. As one of the founders of the publishing house, Scorpion (1899), and the

¹ *Ibid.*, *Dnevnik* (Moscow, 1927), p. 13.

² *Ibid.*, *Russkie simvolisty* (Moscow, 1894, 1st issue), Preface of this editor.

editor of the Symbolists' principal review, *Vesy (The Scales)*, his influence on the younger generation of poets was paramount. But when Symbolism became generally accepted by the public and the critics, Briusov's place as leading theoretician of the movement was taken by Bely, for whom it remained to transform the Symbolist method into a complex metaphysical philosophy.

Briusov's own poetry fell short of the precepts he taught. His craftsmanship was always careful and often brilliant; but excessive erudition and lack of musical quality withheld it from the level of great poetry. At its best, it is gorgeous and majestic; at its worst, cold and rhetorical. His favorite themes were meditations on the history of civilizations, the mystical aspects of carnal love, and evocations of the life of modern industrial cities, similar to those of the Belgian poet, Verhaeren. Like his poetry, his prose is predominantly cold, erudite, academic. *The Fire Angel*,¹ a semi-fantastic, historical novel of sixteenth century Germany, dealing with witchcraft trials and black magic, is a characteristic attempt to reproduce a historical epoch while at the same time endowing it with a general metaphysical significance.

Briusov was primarily an aesthete. He had a sharp intelligence and a vast field of knowledge. His mystic and religious preoccupations were mostly ephemeral and academic, but his place in Russian literature as the initiator of an important literary movement is definitely assured.

Soon after the Revolution Briusov joined the Communist party (1920) and occupied a number of important educational posts. In spite of what he himself called his "return home", he remained a typical representative of the *fin de siècle* generation of poets. To his last days he was preoccupied with literary and philosophical theories foreign to the spirit of Marxian ideology, but his poetry was long since dead.²

Konstantin Balmont is a direct antithesis to Briusov. He was probably the least "intellectual" poet of the time, but he had a lyric gift of considerable spontaneity and power. His pantheistic outbursts of joy, his hymns to the sun, fire and the planets, his exoticism, and above all his musicality and rhythmic inventions, expanded and enriched the poetic consciousness of the time. Balmont was all radiance, youth and exaltation—

Like the sun ever youthful will we
tenderly fondle flowers of flame.³

His new message of daring and pagan joy found a quick response in the young generation:

I would be bold, I would be daring
And of the clustered grapes weave crowns...⁴

¹ Valeri Briusov, *Ognenny Angel* (Moscow: Scorpion, 1908).

² Cf. *Valeri Briusov v avtobiograficheskikh zaписakh*, ed. by N. Ashukin (Moscow, 1929), ch. XII, pp. 376-400.

³ Konstantin Balmont, "Budem kak Solntse vsegda moldoe. . ." *Polnoe Sobranie Stikhov* (Moscow: Scorpion, 1908), p. 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, "Khochu byt dorzkm . . ." p. 120.

were lines recited by thousands of his admirers.

Balmont's inspirations, like those of Briusov, were chiefly foreign: Wilde, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Shelley, and Whitman. The latter two he translated into Russian. Nietzsche's influence was also reflected in Balmont's amoralism and in his cult of "daring." His Symbolism was simple, non-metaphysical; the sun, the earth, fire, bright colors, and precious stones were his favorite images. Balmont's gift was purely lyric, and his best poems are found in the collection, *Let's Be as the Sun* (1903).

Although Balmont continued to write poetry profusely, his talent and influence declined after the end of the first decade of the century. In 1920 he left Soviet Russia, discouraged and broken. Even in emigration he continued to write and publish, but the Balmont of the nineties and early nineteen hundred was dead.¹ When interviewed recently in Paris, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his literary activity, Balmont said with bitterness: "Now, I do not like sunshine, only night is dear to me, and silence...."²

Intuitively to comprehend reality and to express it in symbols was to Sologub an inward necessity, not a literary theory. And we find in him a curious combination of extreme egotism and amoralism, with a transcendental world view entirely his own. He was probably the most essentially Russian among the decadents and the most decadent of the Russians. In all his poems, novels, stories, and fairy tales, dreams and reality coalesce. Sologub's poetry may be described as a circle, "a fiery circle," in the center of which is the "I." He had a sharp, burning sense of his ego, amounting to solipsism—"For in all and everything there is only I, and there is no one else, never was, and never will be."³

The outward world to Sologub is madness, suffering, and cruelty; it has no meaning and no structure. The only escape is within one's self where one can find unity, calm, and beauty. In Sologub this idealism is wedded to a perverse sensuality and to something akin to satanism. God is identified with the creator of the earthly and evil world, Satan with the world of inward calm and beauty. Hence, his sarcasm and irony and perpetual references to sorcery, witches, and demons. Sologub's poetry is highly conscious and perfect in workmanship. He uses words in their secondary, not ordinary, sense, as symbols of his own Manichaeian philosophy. Most of his poetry is quite untranslatable into English. In prose, Sologub's best known work in Russia and abroad is the semi-fantastic novel, *The Little Demon*,⁴ or in French, *Le démon mesquin*. It is both realistic and symbolical. Outwardly it is the life of a schoolmaster (Sologub was himself a schoolmaster) in a small provincial town who gradually becomes insane. The hero, Peredonov, is probably the most repulsive creation in all literature, and his name has entered the Russian language to express the acme of vul-

¹ Cf. Konstantin Balmont, "Mysl' o tvorchestve," *Sovremenniaia Zapiski* (1920), I, 51-64; IV, 285-296.

² Cf. Philéas Lebesgue, "Un grand poète slave," *Revue Bleue*, XV (1931), 460-465.

³ S. A. Vengerov, *Russkaya literatura XX veka* (Moscow, 1915), II, pt. I, 18.

⁴ *Melki Bes* (St. Petersburg, 1907).

garity, hypocrisy, and cruelty. Inwardly the novel is permeated with a lyric quality and the language is superb in its clarity and balance. When the critics, upon its appearance, identified the hero with the author, Sologub replied: "No, my dear friends, it is not I, it is you."¹

Sologub was closely associated with the second, metaphysical, stage of Russian Symbolism. There was little of the aesthete in him; he saw all art as symbolic, as "a window into eternity."² Like all Russian Symbolists he remained non-political, an extreme individualist to the end. Neither the revolutionary movement of 1905, nor the Bolshevik revolution elicited from him the slightest response. His creative output after 1917 gradually diminished, and in the last years of his life he ceased to write. It is said that he repeatedly tried to leave Russia, but received no permission. Soon after the suicide of his wife, Sologub died in Moscow, December 5, 1927, embittered and broken in spirit.³

Briusov, Balmont, and Sologub renovated Russian prosody and extended the range of poetic consciousness. But it was, as usual, the minor poets who best typified the atmosphere and sensibilities of the time. The life and work of a minor Symbolist, Alexander Dobroliubov, is an example, though perhaps extreme, of the Russian *fin de siècle*. This Russian prototype of Huysmans' Des Esseintes lived in a black coffin-shaped room, smoked hashish, and preached suicide to young school girls. Like Rimbaud, he soon abandoned literature altogether, joined a religious sect, and wandered on foot throughout Russia, in chains, clad as a simple peasant and living on alms. His collection of verse, entitled *Natura naturans—Natura naturata* met with ridicule, but Briusov recognized his talent and, after Dobroliubov's disappearance from literary circles, published a collected edition of his work. Dobroliubov's poetry and rhythmic prose evince a deeply mystic nature and a genuine lyric gift. He used, with considerable success, a variety of verse forms, especially *vers libre*, and experimented in writing symphonic compositions, with musical terms, such as *andante*, *scherzo*, and *allegro*. After the beginning of the century this strange poet-monk was never heard of again.⁴

Closely associated with the tendencies exemplified by the early Symbolist poets was an aesthetic revival in the arts. The alliance of literature and the arts is best represented in Diaghilev's *Mir Iskustva* (*The World of Art*). Although primarily devoted to art, this review (1898-1904) accepted contributions from the Symbolist poets and philosophers. An exceptionally brilliant group of artists contributed to *Mir Iskustva*: Benois, Bakst, Nouvel, Roerich, Sudeykin, Grabar, and others, over whom presided the guiding genius of its founder, Diaghilev. Reproductions of the best foreign and native painters and of original designs by contemporaries, exceptionally able art criticism and the high level of the prose and poetry combined to

¹ V.S. Khodasevich, "Sologub," *Sovremennyya Zapiski*, xxxiv (1928), 359.

² For Sologub's definition of Symbolism see *Zavety* (St Petersburg, 1914) ii, 71-84.

³ Cf. Khodasevich, *op. cit.*, pp. 361-362.

⁴ Cf. S.A. Vengerov, *op.cit.*, I, pt. III, pp. 265-288.

make the magazine a unique cultural event. The aim of the review was to raise the standards of the artist, and to train the public to appreciate what was best in modern and ancient art.

No phase of art was left unaffected by the *Mir Iskustva* group of artists. Nikolai Roerich's mystical symbolism and Scythian researches; Benois' discovery of the Italian *barocco*, Bask's orientalism, Sudeykin's colorful genre motifs contributed later to the international success of the *Ballet russe*, and to the technical innovations of Tairov's and Meyerhold's productions. In literature the review awakened interest in mythology and folklore, both native and foreign. The best direct expression of Symbolism in painting was perhaps achieved by Roerich. No better illustrations than his symbolic paintings could have been provided for the poems of a Blok or a Soloviev.

Extreme individualism, combined with the cult of pure beauty, led to a complete emancipation of the artist from social duties and obligations. Nowhere in Europe has the abyss between the artist and society, with all that it implies, been so profound as in Russia at the end of the century. The poets of 1890-1900 despised all social and moral values, hated the mob, and needed no public. They sang of themselves and to themselves. Inevitably, like the majority of Western poets at the end of the century, they reached a psychological impasse and began to search for new values. Foreign culture, it was said, could not satisfy Russia, and the doctrine of art for art's sake was false; it was a snake biting its own tail. Literature and life must be reunited, and religion alone could accomplish this. The second phase of the Russian Symbolist movement combined the aestheticism of the preceding decade with powerful religious and mystical influences. It was a period of Messianism and of intense striving for a synthesis of art and religion.

Various influences produced this new orientation of Russian Symbolism. First came the Religious Philosophical Society founded by the Merezhkovskis in 1902.¹ The meetings of this society attracted tremendous interest throughout Russia and were attended by all the most advanced representatives of the intellectual and artistic world. The Messianic role of Russia, Pan-Mongolism, the death of Western civilization, cosmic consciousness, and similar philosophical and metaphysical problems were the daily subjects of debates and discussions. Blok, Bely, Ivanov, and other Symbolist poets, as well as religious philosophers such as Rozanov and Berdyaev, were *habitués* of these meetings. Their effects upon literature were to divorce it even more completely from political and social actualities, and to make it in content predominantly esoteric and mystical.

Another source of inspiration for the second phase of Russian Symbolism was the personality and the teachings of Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900), poet, mystic, theologian, one of the most original thinkers that Russia had produced. In the nineties Soloviev published a collection of poems which dealt with his mystical experiences. As a youth he had had several visions of Sophia, the Divine Wisdom, and later in his

¹ The Society published a review, *Novy Put*, to which many of the Symbolists contributed.

life he had a strange mystical communion with the Finnish lake Saima. These experiences he recorded in a series of lyrics, genuinely mystical throughout and characteristically interwoven with humorous irreverence. These lyrics exercised a powerful influence on subsequent Symbolist poets, especially on Blok and Bely.

To Soloviev more than to any other Symbolist the outward world was a *forêt de symboles*. Reality could be perceived neither by the senses nor by the intellect, but could only be revealed to us, and the poet for Soloviev was the sole possessor and revealer of reality. The poet's function could thus be expressed in the words of Rimbaud: "Le poète définirait la quantité d'inconnu s'éveillant en son temps, dans l'âme universelle."¹

We shall not go into Soloviev's gnostic philosophy and metaphysics, except for mentioning two of his ideas which held particular fascination for Russian Symbolists. One, an extension of the old Slavophile doctrine, was belief in the pre-ordained superiority of the Russian nation and her special mission in bringing about a religious and cultural synthesis of the East and the West; the other, unrelated to the first, was a strangely concrete faith in the Antichrist, who also figured in Soloviev's work as a symbol of evil and the forerunner of universal destruction. The latter idea was accepted literally by Merezhkovski and was carried to absurdity by his public prophecies of the approaching end of the world. But to the greatest of the Symbolist poets, Blok, Soloviev's ideas served merely to reinforce his own intuitions of Russia's approaching catastrophe, which he foretold time and again with an uncanny foreknowledge. Another poet-philosopher, Ivanov, found in Soloviev the inspiration for his revolutionary philosophy, known as Mystical Anarchism, which preached revolt against all external conditions of life and complete emancipation of the spirit. During the early years of the revolution (1917-20) Soloviev again seems to have been the principal inspiration of another movement—the revolutionary Messianism of Ivanov-Razumniak, who welcomed Bolshevism as a purifying and destructive force, identifying it, at the same time, with Christianity.

(To be continued)

DIMITRI VON MOHRENSCHILDT

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¹ Arthur Rimbaud, *Lettre à Demeny*, 15 mai 1871, *Lettres de la vie littéraire* (Paris, 1931), p. 65.

WILL CHUANGTSE CLIMB UP THE MOUNTAIN?

CHUANGTSE is climbing up the mountain that has no ledge,
He is climbing up to the sky that has no north and no south,
He is climbing up where there is no beginning, no end;
Through the shrubbery and the oak-trees and the forests
He is climbing up from realms below to the mystic unity.
There is no bamboo-tube to look through at the strange stars,
There is no awl with which to index the world for his wife.
Gone are for him the digital markers and the wind-cocks,
Gone is the green valley, heard is no more the bee-crooning,
Gone are the hillocks, gone are the altitudes of thought.
Chuangtse is climbing up the mountain that has no trails,
Chuangtse is conquering the snow-white peaks of utter silence.
He has reached the grandeur of the dimensionless point,
He has out-winged distances of the mysterious bird of Time.
Suddenly he has become the blue ether of the luminous Self,
Suddenly he has become the expanse of a superconscient glow,
Suddenly he has become one with the infinity of the All-Alone.
There is no bamboo-tube telescope, no awl of imagination,
There are no river-beds, no estuaries, no lakes, no swans,
The landscape has vanished and there are no wheels of revolution.
He is what yin and yang gave him, he is simply the son of Tao;
Chuangtse is drowned in the Autumn flood of a hundred streams.
The waterfall has become quiet—yet the Unknown is beyond.
Will Chuangtse then climb up the mountain to be the mountain?

R. S. DESHPANDE

IN-TONES

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1982)

WHY do you silently sit in the deserted audience hall, Master Musician? Every day I hear Your song. Harsh voices of the city drown this sweet soul-filling music.

Every day I come to Your Hall to learn the touch of the strings and my soul ever quivers at my fingertips.

*

The smile of the beloved is Your smile. You sit behind her eyes. The touch of her soft fingers is an unforgettable delight, for it is You, Sweet One, who inform every thought in love.

You are the beauty that sleeps around, that spills with the moonbeams, that dances on waves and palm leaves. You are the rapture of the young lovers in their embrace. You are their dreams, their expectations. If it were not for You, what is there to sing about in Love? What is there to look for in the eyes of each other? You fill their fountains; you bring them the promise.

*

The Older people see You in Law, but I tell them that You are not a taskmaster. How can you be found in that which cracks the bones and tires the will?

The Younger people see You in Love, in the joy that gives its whole being and asks nothing in return. They see You in their dreams and their convictions and in the priceless nature of their youth.

Pity the Old, whose leaves have withered, who invent laws for You who are opposed to every law that governs from without.

*

O Faultless One, what is Your jest to worry me with this thought of imperfection? Is it that I may seek You in the meshes of the myriad-coloured world? I know it is Your jest to leave things unexplained.

There is the perfection of rising and falling notes in everything I perceive within and without.

Me you cannot deceive. I hear Your song. I see the perfection of Your shapes.

EUGENE D'VAZ

LOVE FOR THE DIVINE

A LITTLE yellow honey-bee
has sipped from many flower-cups.
She buzzed and searched incessantly
from dawn to night with downs and ups.

In winter she felt sad and cold,
not able to fly out the hive,
she lay in her tight fitting mould,
no blossom left where she could dive.

In spring the warm rays of the sun
tickled her nose, and she crawled out;
again she had much joy and fun,
but soon anew came up some doubt.

The flowers in her bounded realm
were common with no special taste,
not sweet enough to overwhelm,
she found her plod a pretty waste.

Therefore she mounted in the air
and asked a bird to be her plane.
After some days they stopped to fare
and landed near a mystic fane.

A fragrance never smelled before
enchanted here the honey-bee
on this unknown and distant shore;
was it a spell of destiny?

Slowly, still a little shy,
she dipped her snout into a rose
and thought, if now I had to die,
my leave would be to Heaven close.

The nectar of the rose she drank
flowed straight into her heart's pure shrine
where it down to the bottom sank
and met her love for the Divine.

URSULA

RUBAIYAT OF BABA TAHIR

(TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL PERSIAN DIALECT)

(1)

DISEASE of Death has not a remedy;
Minister or king, it sways all ruthlessly;
 A food of insects lies the king who held
Till yesterday wide Kirman's sovereignty.

(2)

My fate is but to shed my tears and cry,
To-night peace-lost, lost to all sense am I;
 For yesterday's few moments' mirthfulness,
These lamentations are a penalty.

(3)

Thou hast not found the knowledge crystalline
Nor sought the inn of pure ethereal wine;
 Thou knowst not gain and loss, O fie on thee!
How wilt thou reach the saints' abode divine?

(4)

"True," yesterday my horse spoke wittily,
"Thy stable is in regions heaven-high,
 There springs no water, grass or grain, for it
Is angels' place and not for beasts like me."

(5)

No flowers without thee, Love, in garden sprout,
No one may smell, if ever they come out;
 Never man's heart may leap sans Thee in mirth
Or else its blood may stain his face throughout.

(6)

My heart and eyes have caught a fantasy,
All that eyes view, heart puts in memory;

A dagger I shall make, a point of steel,
And thrust it in my eyes and set heart free.

(7)

A ravening hawk I went in search of game,
A black-eyed Love shot at my wings with flame;
Unconscious wander not on mountain-tops,
A careless saunterer grows an arrow's aim.

(8)

Wassailler by birth, friar my name I keep,
No house have I, no tents, no goods I heap.
With the glow of sun I set about to roam,
With fall of dark, my head on stone I sleep.

(9)

Thy charming grace from mind I fail to out-throw,
Nor shift from memory thy cheek's blush-glow;
Around my eyes I'll build a fence of lids
So that thy thought with blood-tears may not flow.

(10)

O God, this heart of mine is a store of pain,
All night and day in anguish I remain;
I wail and for my ceaseless wails I weep,
Let someone take from me this heart, my bane.

(11)

Dawn-dusk in wilderness I wake and sleep,
Forevermore my eyes in tears I sleep,
Fever nor ache have I nor malady,
I know but this: I weep, I weep, I weep.

(To be continued)

THE SELLER OF HAIR

A SHORT STORY

SOME people there are in this world who by dint of being so monolithically themselves unconsciously cause others around them to turn away from the futility of being other than themselves. They cannot be imitated, these monoliths, they cannot be explained, each one being *sui generis*.

Such a one was Arun Chandra of Calcutta who in his thirtieth year found a way to make his fortune. Born and bred in the slums he had had little education, had been a tea-boy, a bell-boy in a second class hotel, then in a five-star hotel which had opened horizons for him. He was not a lovable bell-boy and if he was given tips it was because he was an intimidating one. He did not know how to share jokes with the American tourists nor smile winningly out of melting Bengali eyes. In fact his eyes were small and his chin square, and for a Bengali the whole face was remarkably expressionless. But he knew how to observe. And what he saw was how rich the rich people really were and yet how in small things money stuck to their palms. He also observed how little being rich liberated one from the human condition. American, French, Italian, German and Japanese millionaires, politicians and film stars were always contracting dysentery and there are few things that render one so helplessly and vulnerably human as dysentery though this was not a conclusion at which Arun Chandra arrived consciously as he ran to the chemist to buy entero-vioform or mexaform for improvident tourists.

There is no rule for the age at which brainwaves come to businessmen. Mathematicians are early-maturing and swimmers often hit their peak before twenty but Arun Chandra first decided to buy and sell human hair when he was thirty. He read an article in a magazine on the temple of Tirupathi and he saw photos of the women going in with rich hair flowing to their knees and even to their feet and coming out shorn and bald. Not being a religious man he decided that if women would do that in order to propitiate the gods and win their favour they would do it for money. And he was right. Hair, he read, was exported and made lakhs and lakhs of rupees for the temple. And why not? What would the gods or the priests or anybody else do with those mountains of hair? And if the Americans would buy hair from the priests then why should they not buy hair from him?

Within eight years Arun Chandra had a three-storeyed enterprise in one of the poorer quarters of the city but from everywhere women of all castes and classes came to it, many at night (there was a side entrance to receive them and three barbers). There were also a dozen agents who went from door to door discreetly leaving cards and explaining how they belonged to an organisation prepared to help ladies in need, specially Brahmin widows for whom it was obligatory to shave their heads anyway. In few other cities in the world are there so many needy as in Calcutta and while a woman's hair is there considered, more than in most countries, her crowning glory

and thus makes such an acceptable offering to the gods, you would be astonished at how many women who had never thought of shaving their heads had done so within a few weeks of knowing that their hair would bring several kilos of grapes for a beloved son or grandson recovering from a terrible illness, or the price of a train ticket to see a dying relative in some other part of the country or the price of a train ticket to Benaras which is where they wanted to die, so that it mattered little to them whether they had their hair or not. There were those who needed the money to redeem pawned jewels or pay off the interest on a loan. In modern girls the hair was cut up to their shoulders for the price of a much coveted sari or something which they could not tell their parents about. Women sold their hair for all the possible reasons that exist in all the countries of the world, from the noblest to the most shameful, medicines for a dying husband, money for the abortionist. Husbands had been known to bring their shy and gentle wives in to sell their hair for the price of a month's rent or a new suit of clothes needed in an interview for a desperately needed job and they might both go off weeping, the wife pulling her sari tightly over her head and holding it under her chin, and some went off grinning, or brazenly swinging their now fashionable hair that hung in lovely half-bells above their shoulders.

But whether shameful or noble or frivolous Arun Chandra was not interested in the motives, which was a good thing for his peace of mind, for by far the greater part of these hairless heads were caused by the tragic need of the women of Calcutta and indeed if Chandra had had more imagination and feeling he might not have been able to sleep nights. Anyone more vulnerable would have heard the terrible tales the heads of hair whispered to each other in the store room. It is said that a man's whole history lies in a single cell of his body, even in a single cell of a single hair. Yes, anyone more sensitive might have had nightmares, woken screaming in the heart of suburban Calcutta. But not Arun Chandra. He slept well in his airconditioned room. And why not? The race is to the swift, which is exactly what Arun Chandra would have answered had he been asked, which he never was.

Why should he be?

In time he had a perfectly respectable front for his business. Literally a front, a row of shops on the ground floor with one of them a hairdresser's and many a young lady who came in to have her hair cut never knew that what was cut, that is the length from shoulder to buttocks, would be carefully gathered up, tied, washed, combed, disinfected and put in a plastic bag prior to being shipped to America.

As for others who did know, they were hardly going to speak about it.

For the poorer or more secretive women, there was, as has been said, a side entrance.

All ran smoothly. The organisation was masterly. Of course human hair is a highly human thing. And when dealing with it certain little contre-temps are bound to occur, which might have been embarrassing to anyone more easily embarrassed than Arun Chandra. No one quite knew how the tiny corpse of a new-born male child had found its way into a pile of hair, brought in by one of the agents whose job

it was to make the rounds in certain villages. It was not unknown for mummified rats to find their way into these piles of hair, to say nothing of smaller insects. Cockroaches were seldom lacking and lice almost never. From the hair of the outcasts of such low rank that even the other outcasts couldn't have touched their hair these vermin migrated to that of the poor widow of the highest caste of priests, so that in the store rooms of Arun Chandra there reigned a grand democracy which probably existed in no other place in India. And the agent could hardly be held responsible: his tour sometimes took more than a month. He often had to ford rivers holding aloft two huge plastic bags full of human hair, with several coolies in tow holding similar bundles. He had to sleep in hovels or temples. Even if Arun Chandra had paid him an adequate salary he could hardly carry his precious booty into a five-star hotel. So that as he prospered Arun Chandra neither questioned too closely nor wanted to know exactly the hows and whys and wheres of his agents' movements. And this was perhaps the single flaw and weakness in the organisation.

Twice, outraged letters had been written to the newspapers, once about the hair of the postulants of a poor convent, and on the second occasion about the contract that an undertaker had made to sell the hair of the Christian corpses which, hidden in caskets under black velvet, did not have the advantage that the exposed Hindu corpses lying exposed on the litters had. In answer to the first letter Arun Chandra had his public relations man write three letters to the paper, signed by three different names to the effect that in India all religions should be free and that if we did not understand the religion of the Catholics we should not therefore condemn them, that India had always been a spiritual home of all faiths. The second letter said that the poor nuns were doing wonderful work looking after the orphaned children of whatever religion, and whatever money they had made out of selling their hair was sure to go towards the milk bill for the poor children and finally a third letter said that Hindu fanaticism had reached such heights that Catholics were in danger of constant harassment. Readers ended up confused as to the issue. The second letter about the undertaker was dealt with in an equally efficient way. The police did once come to the side door but before they could get beyond the waiting room they had been served tea and *rasagullas*, been handsomely rewarded for their distractions and shown round to the front to the row of shops including the hairdresser. Then they were ushered into Arun Chandra's Mercedes and driven away.

At forty-eight Arun Chandra, living with his wife and two children, a girl aged nineteen and the boy seventeen, in his palatial home in one of the most expensive suburbs of the city, with a Gurkha at the gate and two Alsatian watch dogs, seemed invulnerable and impenetrable with the protection that money and caution can buy.

Inside his home Arun Chandra was a devoted and doting father. And why not? There was nothing inherently cruel in his profession. Not a single hair had been torn out of a living head and, excepting from the skulls of corpses, all had been voluntarily offered. If the guards of concentration camps, as we have been told, could be loving fathers and husbands and patted the dogs before going off to the torture chambers,

and if they cried over their canaries when they died, why shouldn't Arun Chandra, who after all supplied a demand and made dollars for his country to boot, be a loving and indulgent father?

The girl, Tara, was a charming lovely thing. Lithe and lovely, she had the special grace of a Bharat Natyam dancer and her hair which had never been cut swung in a heavy rope down to the back of her knees, so that when she danced she had no need for the artificial hair which, with its gold binding and red tassels, is joined on to the plait of most Bharat Natyam dancers and which swings so enchantingly in the opposite direction to the dancer when she jumps around in certain movements like those in the *alaripoo*.

But one day Tara decided to cut her hair. The father who had never crossed her was outraged. But Tara, mischievous and humorous, said in her cultured convent-bred English, "But why, Daddy? I'll give it to you for nothing. You can even put it in your window."

It was part of Tara's charm that, unlike her brother Arup, she was not ashamed of her father's profession. She spoke of it openly to her friends, giggled about it and even told the stories of the dead rats and the baby. All of which made her inviolable. And she was the one person who could allow herself, because she really did think it was a joke, to ask her father when he came home at night what the price of hair was and what he would do when all the American women shaved their heads as one fashion magazine predicted. She could usually cajole her father into anything. But in this instance Arun Chandra became rigid with protest. He threatened to stop paying for her dance lessons. She threatened to shave her head and send it to the agent through one of her friends and thus the firm would have to stop buying hair from practically anyone to avoid buying hers. They would never know if they had bought her hair or not. So dancing lessons were continued and Arun Chandra promised to buy his daughter the thoroughbred mare which he had considered dangerous, if she never mentioned the subject again. But the most she would agree to was one year. Anyone who has struck this sort of a bargain knows that such a year is spent thinking of only one thing. And now Tara had a much more subtle weapon, all the sharper because it turned out to be based on the truth. She was getting headaches. She sweated terribly around the head when dancing and afterwards caught cold when exposed to the slightest breeze. And the doctor had advised her to have her hair cut.

Her father was for the first time plunged into a dilemma caused by the threat of a yard of hair being cut from a single individual. It was no good saying to himself that millions of women had cut their hair for him and had been none the worse for it. He was not a man given to arguing with himself. He only knew that this must not happen.

"But," said his wife timidly, who never said anything, "The girl's health is at stake. What can it matter? What good will it do for a corpse to have a full head of hair?" Her husband shivered.

"A nice corpse she would make with the hair flowing to the ankle." Arun Chan-

dra for the first time in his life slapped his wife across her face for this remark and then while he was wringing his hands heard this same mild orthodox and entirely submissive wife declare that she too would cut her hair. He went into the study which a decorator had furnished with books with beautiful gold-lettered leather spines but which were hollow inside. He shut himself in and phoned the office that he would not be there for two days. Since he enjoyed cast-iron health this was the first time that this had happened in his career.

What happened to Arun Chandra while he sat staring at his Nile-green walls, his Kashmir persian-type silk carpets and the spines of his empty books, it is difficult to describe. But something happened. Though trays of food were set outside the door three times a day he ate no more than a chappati and a little curd. He drank many cups of tea. He lost two kilos in weight. He paced the room and tried to work out with the help of his calculator how many heads of hair had been shorn to his benefit in the past eighteen years. Was it not possible that fate, for he was not a religious man, or Mother Kali, for his dilemma was pushing him to the fringes of religion, might be demanding the hair of his child from him?

And what if it was so? A head of hair was not a head, as he was still lucid enough to see. But something in him acted as though it were. As though through the hair of his daughter everything was being required of him. He now perceived that Tara's exceptional tresses had always been to him a symbol of his success. Those who cut their hair were desperate women, women in need. And why after all had he built up his business? Yes! He had enjoyed the exercising of his ingenuity, the knowledge that he had had an idea in a million, and that he had had the strength and energy and imagination to make it work. He had even liked the accumulation of hollow books and bronzes. But finally he knew that none of these things would have kept him working in the way he had. What then had it been? And he now saw that it was all in order to protect his own children from the sordid needs of poverty and specifically from what he, being no fool, recognised as the debasing need to cut one's hair. It was no good telling himself, as he did nonetheless, that in Tara's case there was no debasement. That she did it because she wanted to and for reasons of health. In his mind shorn hair was inextricably wound up with and tangled in a thick sordid mat of unspeakable want and disgrace, which he had never allowed to move him, to come close to him or even to demand any sort of judgement upon it. He had forbidden himself any recoil, sitting in meditation twice a day to help maintain an unruffled serenity. That had fled. He was like Abraham of whom God had demanded his only begotten son in sacrifice. And at the end of two days in his terribly muddled and confused mind he had a vision of the Black Kali, her tongue protruding far out, her eyes bulging, a necklace of human heads around her neck and holding her bloody sword in one hand and a freshly cut head firmly grasped by a long luxurious plait in the other. The head was the head of Tara.

And in front of this vision he saw another figure, that of the man who weighed the hair that was to become a wig, for the hair was sold by weight. In the one plate of

the scale once again was Tara's head and in the other was something blurred and enormous which he could not at first, since it reached to the ceiling and beyond, make out. And then he saw that it was all the mountains and mountains of hair that had ever come to him. For yes, he now saw it. Each and every hair had been beckoned by him and each was alive with its unspeakable story. Hopes and fears and happy childhood memories, and earnings, desertions and unrequited love and the death of children and parents and happy things, marriage celebrations and jayanthies and, always, sudden need or sudden greed, which had caused the hair to be weighed in his scales, against iron. But how could he have ever imagined that it was iron that you weighed against? It was something else and he no longer wanted to buy and even less did he want to sell.

The next day Tara had her hair cut in the hairdressing establishment of a five-star hotel. And Arun Chandra closed his business not knowing what to do with so much money. He tried to give it to institutions which catered for women who might otherwise need to sell their hair, but this was not possible. There are no such institutions. There will always be a bunch of grapes to buy, a coveted sari, or other secret needs for which no institution caters.

Arun Chandra, had he only known it, had run quite a good institution as Tara told him. "It's a shame you shut up shop, Daddy. Now the poor creatures will have nowhere to go to, I think I'll open the business up again myself."

MAGGI LIDCHI

NAKED TRUTH

A PLAYLET

(Lady Godiva, also known as Godgifu, and Peeping Tom are bywords for a woman of kindness and a scopophiliac respectively. The story dates back to the Anglo-Saxon world, that is, the eleventh century A.D.)

Scene One

(Market place in Coventry; business hour. Two citizens of Coventry stand near a vegetable shop.)

I CITIZEN: Taxes. Taxes. We have almost become hunchbacks under the ever-burdening taxes. Will not a new sun rise to free us of the long load of them from fearful morning to weary night? Our sleep is the only time of happy rest.

II CITIZEN: Ay! Control your emotions. Let not the sharp ears of this gossipy street catch you speaking thus of sleep. Our Lord Leofric may find yet another chance to burden us and call it 'Sleeping Tax'!

I CITIZEN (*contemptuously*): Leofric! Our Lord! An inhuman in human shape. A ferocious beast at least may show mercy on walking skeletons like us, but Leofric with all his might will continue preying on us whom he has reduced to skeletons.

II CITIZEN: But we are just barking dogs. Who has the guts to question Leofric? Who dares him to stop enjoying himself with our hard earned money? Yet the time is not far...the time is not far...a day will dawn....

(The two citizens leave. A beggar enters.)

BEGGAR: Merciless villain...blood-sucking leech...curmudgeon! For every three-pence I beg, two should go to the churlish earl. Beggar of beggars! I beg but he eats. Shower mercy on me, increase my income, Lord Almighty, lest the clodhopper should set his foot on my ever-hungry stomach.

Scene Two

(Lord Leofric's abode. Lady Godiva, Leofric's wife, her heart going pit-a-pat, awaits the arrival of her valet.)

GODIVA: What is the cause? What is the cause? Why should the mob ever stand

before my gates and shout? What does all this havoc portend for Coventry? My Lord Leofric is out to the royal dinner. And what have I to do with this unruly mob? (*Enters a valet*) Come! Come! What's all this hullabaloo about?

VALET: Madam! A mob of distressed women are thronging to see your ladyship. They have grievances to put forth and beg you to request the Lord to relieve them of their heavy taxes.

GODIVA: Holy Mary! How long can they withstand? Will not their blood boil when they deliver unto the Lord Leofric two-thirds of what they earn? I always thought of a revolt and to my great surprise it is the fairer sex taking arms. Go, my valet, and throw open the gates. I give them full permission to enter my abode and let them throw open their hearts. I will see what best I can do for them.

VALET: I obey, Madam. (*Exit*)

GODIVA: Pious at heart, my Lord Leofric once made many donations to the monasteries at Stow, Lincolnshire and Coventry. With what devil did he barter his heart for a stone? I can't imagine whatever he does with the revenue he amasses by way of taxes.

(Enter a loud mob with all praises for Lady Godiva)

THE MOB: Long Live our Lady!
 Mercy from the Almighty!
 Blessings, blessings from the Creator!

GODIVA: Welcome, welcome! My sisters, welcome! I am here with my sensitive ears to hear you speak and I promise to do all that a woman of my rank can. Do not check even a single word gushing from your hearts. Now let me listen to your frank words.

I WOMAN: Corn is so dear as no woman remembers before. My children have nothing to eat but the waste thrown by the vegetable-vendors.

II WOMAN: A sester of wheat goes up to sixty pence and further. But after the toil and sweat of the day my husband pockets just twenty pence. Imagine, Madam, how we thrive with our young babes.

III WOMAN: The tax distresses all the people of Coventry-with the exception of the well-to-do. The poor have nothing to give but salty tears to their needy children.

IV WOMAN: Taxes. Taxes. We are oppressed with taxes. Taxes. With starving stomachs, our men are unable to attend to their work.

THE MOB: Save us! Our Lady of Mercy! Save us from the ever-burdening taxes. Save us in time before the whole country turns a graveyard.

(The women weep and sob)

GODIVA: No! No! Do not shed tears. Have peace. I will beg and cringe to my Lord to relieve your backs of the heavy load. I will set even my life at stake and I am ready to perish happily to see you all happy. You may rest assured that everything possible will be done. Now I bid you good-bye.

V WOMAN: We have enough faith in you, our Lady. Why else would we approach you?

THE MOB: Farewell, Madam. Remember our starving children wandering in the market place to gulp the garbage cast at random by the vendors. Remember our empty stomachs. *(Exit the mob)*

GODIVA: Poor people! I can't see these needy women and their bony children cry for food. Even at the peril of my life, I'll make my Lord help the poor.

Scene Three

(The bedroom in Leofric's abode. Lying on his bed, Leofric is found humming to himself. Lady Godiva enters the room and sits by the side of her husband.)

GODIVA: My Lord! I've a request to make.

LEOFRIC *(smiling)*: Bedrooms have the magic power of turning even the silliest of women into a highly tactful one and the most adamant of emperors into a foolish slave. This room grants all requests and there is no denial of any. My sweet knave! Your request is granted. I promise.

GODIVA: The request is not personal, my Lord! It is connected with the welfare of the public.

LEOFRIC: A request on behalf of the public! What have you to do with them? Speak sensibly whatever may be the common cause.

GODIVA: Relieve the heavy taxes of the people of Coventry. I cannot see them starve.

LEOFRIC: The poor should starve if the rich have to flourish. It's destined so. By the way, don't you think it is below your dignity to speak for the poor?

GODIVA: Relieve the heavy taxes of the people of Coventry. I cannot see them shed tears.

LEOFRIC: But how can I lift the taxes that bring us revenue? Without those taxes how can you dream of living luxuriously and supporting the train of valets at our command? What respect shall we have before our King Edward the Confessor, if we are penniless? I am the greatest of all Edward's noblemen. You should not forget it.

GODIVA: Relieve the heavy taxes of the people of Coventry. I cannot see them suffer.

LEOFRIC (*under his breath*): Stubborn wench! I know how to make you withdraw your request. Prudence is another name for Leofric. (*loudly*) My love! I am ready to lift the taxes as you wish, if you do what I want you to do.

GODIVA: Command me. Do you like me to jump into a smoking volcano or break into pieces by hurling myself from the top of a mountain or drink my own blood by making a gash in my body? Command me. You have every right.

LEOFRIC: Godiva! My love! Why do you pour out such detestable words? Shall I live to see you die? Am I so corrupt at heart? How can you ever imagine that I shall be base enough to command you so?

GODIVA: My Lord! Pardon me. My words express nothing but my love towards the poor and the needy of Coventry. Command me what I should do.

LEOFRIC (*laughing*): Ride naked through the streets of Coventry at noonday! I'll relieve the heavy taxes of the people of Coventry.

GODIVA: Jesus! Do you mean what you say, my Lord?

LEOFRIC: I'll relieve the heavy taxes of the people of Coventry.

GODIVA: I would have obeyed you if you had asked me to drink a cup of hemlock. But you are laying your hands on my honour. I am yours and how can you think of exhibiting me!

LEOFRIC: Do obey my words if you are really interested in relieving the taxes of the people of Coventry. No more, no less.

GODIVA: I can see through the game. You think you are asking the impossible. But, if their lost joy can be restored to the people through a naked ride, I am ready to do it. So tomorrow exactly at twelve noon, I'll start riding through the streets of Coventry.

LEOFRIC (*to himself*): My God! Will she dare to ride naked through the public streets or will she change her mind at the last moment? Unexpected decision! I never dreamt that she would side with the poor. How can so chaste a wife value her honour like mere dust? Let me wait and see.

GODIVA (*aside*): A most coarse, ill-mannered and disagreeable man! My auburn hair, when let down, falls down to the floor. And I with the help of this boon will never be naked though without man-made garments.

Scene Four

(*Morning. Market place. Business hour. Enters a town-crier beating his drum. The citizens gather to hear him.*)

TOWN-CRIER: This is to inform the inhabitants of Coventry that our Lady Godiva has accepted the challenge of her Lord Leofric and that her ladyship would ride naked through the town exactly at twelve noon today, just to relieve the heavy taxes imposed. Our Lady Godiva hereby requests the inhabitants of Coventry to remain indoors behind drawn blinds and shutters and that no one should look out till the noon is past. Full co-operation in this regard is expected. (*Exits*)

I CITIZEN: Is she a woman or a Goddess? See, how unselfish is Lady Godiva! The new sun has risen for us to beacon our dark path.

II CITIZEN: Our Saviour has come once again in a feminine splendour. Satan Leofric is tamed at last.

THE CITIZENS (*in chorus*): We should obey her commands and none should have the slightest temptation to look out at the heavenly woman. If anyone dares to disobey her commands, united we will tear him to pieces.

Scene Five

(*Coventry Town. The main street. Lady Godiva rides naked on a white horse.*)

GODIVA: Clothed with nothing but chastity and my long hair I have ridden through every street, byway, lane and alley of this town and I ride now through the thickly populated main street. How nice and cooperative the inhabitants are! Every street

remains deserted. Shutters and blinds are drawn as if it were winter and no creature, not even a pet dog, stirs out. Surely they deserve what I am fighting for.

(As Lady Godiva passes, Tom, the tailor, peeps through a shutter kept ajar from inside the house)

TOM: What a lovely sight! What great fools the citizens make themselves by remaining indoors and missing this heavenly wonder. My God! She is exceedingly beautiful and finely built. No virile man will fail to have at least a glance, even risking his life. What extraordinary elegance and symmetry of form! What is life worth unless we live to enjoy it? God created charm and beauty not to keep them in sacred places and worship them from a distance. What a voluptuous bust! What an incomparable sight! O, what an ecstasy! Today I've fully lived my life and tasted it to the lees.

Scene Six

(Evening. Leofric's abode.)

LEOFRIC: Your nude act is an unexpected one. By your ride you have cut short my revenue. I have sent the town-crier to inform the citizens that they are relieved of their taxes. My Godiva! My love! I underestimated your love but you have carved a niche in the hearts of the poor multitude. You have been an embodiment of what the sages have called "Naked Truth"! You have revealed that ultimate reality, the soul. I thank you for the lesson to my power-drunk mind.

GODIVA: I will eat, drink and dance with my people, for they will be celebrating this day—the day of joy, of freedom from their blood-squeezing taxes.

LEOFRIC: I too will join you. You will be remembered as long as the pens of historians and writers speak of the glory of the Anglo-Saxon period. My name and tax will also find a place as the incentive to your naked ride and the future will note that I kept my word in admiration of your courage and compassion. My darling! Aren't we an inseparable two? *(Enters a valet)*

GODIVA: What's all the news?

VALET: My lady! Tom, the tailor, has been struck blind. Groping his way, blind Tom has come here. He seeks your permission to meet you and beg your pardon.

GODIVA: Guide his entrance. Let's look into the matter. *(The valet exits and reappears bringing in blind Tom)* Oh! Where are your eyes? What happened, Tom?

TOM (*weeps and kneels down*): Forgive me, my lady, forgive me. I had eyes till this morning, for I never misused them. But today I misused them. I can never misuse them any more, for I have none now. There was a flash of lightning—an ephemeral one. And my eyes went away with it. The wages of sin are death. But I earned worse than that. Would that I had controlled myself, as others did, and not peeped out. Oh! For a moment's pleasure, I have to grope my way through an eternal darkness. Such is enraged Heaven's justice. (*He gropes his way and exits*)

GODIVA: Weak Tom! Peeping Tom! Blind Tom! Poor Tom! Evil actions, like noble ones, have the power to make people remember. Peeping Tom will remain a by-word to all whose minds are like sewers. So, my lord, aren't we an inseparable three?

(*Curtain*)

P. RAJA