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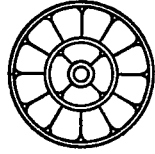
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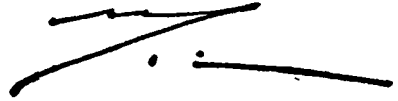


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXIV

No. 8

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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A MESSAGE FROM THE MOTHER

REVISED BY HERSELF

pour le moment, ce qui est important c'est de cultiver cet élargissement
et cet approfondissement de la conscience qui te permet ^{trist} de sentir ma
présence constante auprès de toi, le sentir d'une façon ^{permanente} ~~constante~~ et
concrete qui t'apportera une paix immuable.

for the moment, what is important is to cultivate that widening and
deepening of the consciousness which enables you to feel my constant
presence with you, feel it in a ^{permanent} ~~constant~~ and concrete way that will
bring you an immutable peace.

SOUL, REBIRTH, KARMA

SOME PUZZLING POINTS TOUCHED UPON BY THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

Q: Sri Aurobindo says that some time after death the vital and mental sheaths dissolve, leaving the soul free to retire to the psychic world before it takes up new sheaths. What becomes of the Karma and of the impressions—Samskaras—on the old sheaths? Do they also dissolve without producing any result, good or bad, which they should according to the theory of Karma? Also, what becomes of the vital and mental beings after the dissolution of the vital and mental sheaths?

THE outer form only dissolves, unless that too is made conscious and is organised round the divine centre. But the true mental, the true vital and even the true subtle physical persist: it is that which keeps all the impressions received in earthly life and builds the chain of Karma.

(Collected Works of The Mother, Vol. 15, p. 134)

*

The soul takes birth each time, and each time a mind, life and body are formed out of the materials of universal nature according to the soul's past evolution and its need for the future.

When the body is dissolved, the vital goes into the vital plane and remains there for a time, but after a time the vital sheath disappears. The last to dissolve is the mental sheath. Finally the soul or psychic being retires into the psychic world to rest there till a new birth is close.

This is the general course for ordinarily developed human beings. There are variations according to the nature of the individual and his development. For example, if the mental is strongly developed, then the mental being can remain; so also can the vital, provided they are organized by and centred around the true psychic being; they share the immortality of the psychic.

The soul gathers the essential elements of its experiences in life and makes that its basis of growth in the evolution; when it returns to birth it takes up with its mental, vital, physical sheaths so much of its Karma as is useful to it in the new life for further experience.

(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 22, p. 433)

*

For past lives, are there any general rules, broad outlines, or is everything possible?

All depends on the category to which one belongs, and the degree of the psychic being's development. If the psychic being is in an advanced stage, near maturity, the choice before death, about which I spoke to you the other day, is quite real and this choice means that everything is possible; but in other cases, the rebirth takes place almost automatically. The will of the psychic being is not developed and it does not choose. Hence, there are no rules. It depends very much on circumstances, and especially on the line of formation which the psychic being will follow, and that depends on its origin. It is difficult to say. In the matter of sex, that may vary for a long time. As the consciousness grows and gains some unity of action, of consciousness, it can choose to follow one line to the exclusion of another, but before this choice, through innumerable creations you have been undoubtedly of different sexes. That is why perhaps some women have a masculine character, and vice versa, or have tendencies opposite to their sex. But at the time of the "choice" one may decide to belong to the creatrix Consciousness or to the immobile Witness. That depends upon the origin.

*

Have all psychic beings the same origin?

This is how things happen. The origin of the psychic life, the divine Presence in Matter is one and the same, that's understood, but there are beings in the higher world who have never taken body upon earth and who want to act there, have a terrestrial action. So they wait till some psychic beings attain their full development and unite with them to do some work according to their nature. Their consciousness is added to the psychic consciousness upon earth. These are beings who have never taken birth here, beings who materialised themselves more and more as the creation proceeded. They are perhaps the first emanations, beings sent into the universe for special reasons—men call them "gods" or "demi-gods". So, one of these beings may have chosen, for some special reason, a psychic being in formation—he helps it, follows its development and, when this psychic is sufficiently ready and sufficiently strong to be able to support the identification, he unites with it, identifies with it to do some work upon earth. This is not very frequent, but it has happened and still happens. You find stories in ancient traditions about gods incarnating upon earth; some mythologies speak of them. That corresponds to something true. But all psychic beings are not necessarily united with a being of the higher planes.

(Collected Works of The Mother, Vol. 4, pp. 183-4)

THE PRESENT TENSION AND THE FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

ONE thing seems obvious, humanity has reached a certain state of general tension—tension in effort, in action, even in daily life—with such an excessive hyperactivity, so widespread a trepidation, that mankind as a whole seems to have come to a point where it must either break through the resistance and emerge into a new consciousness or else fall back into an abyss of darkness and inertia.

The tension is so complete and so widespread that something obviously has to break. It cannot go on in this way. We may take it as a sure sign of the infusion into matter of a new principle of force, consciousness, power, which by its very pressure is producing this acute state. Outwardly, we could expect the old methods used by nature when she wants to bring about an upheaval; but there is a new characteristic, which of course is only visible in an *élite*, but even this *élite* is widespread—it is not localised at one point, at one place in the world; we find traces of it in all countries, all over the world; the will to find a new, higher, progressive solution, an effort to rise towards a vaster, more comprehensive perfection.

Certain ideas of a more general nature, of a wider, perhaps more “collective” kind, are being worked out and are acting in the world. And both things go together: a possibility of a greater and more total destruction, a reckless inventiveness which increases the possibility of a catastrophe, a catastrophe which would be on a far greater scale than it has ever been; and, at the same time, the birth or rather the manifestation of much higher and more comprehensive ideas and acts of will which, when they are heard, will bring a wider, vaster, more complete, more perfect remedy than before.

This struggle, this conflict between the constructive forces of the ascending evolution of a more and more perfect and divine realisation, and the more and more destructive, powerfully destructive forces—forces that are mad beyond all control—is more and more obvious, marked, visible, and it is a kind of race or struggle as to which will reach the goal first. It would seem that all the adverse, anti-divine forces, the forces of the vital world, have descended on the earth, are making use of it as their field of action, and that at the same time a new, higher, more powerful spiritual force has also descended on earth to bring it a new life. This makes the struggle more acute, more violent, more visible, but it seems also more definite, and that is why we can hope to reach an early solution.

There was a time, not so long ago, when the spiritual aspiration of man was turned towards a silent, inactive peace, detached from all worldly things, a flight from life, precisely to avoid battle, to rise above the struggle, escape all effort; it was a spiritual peace in which, along with the cessation of all tension, struggle, effort, there ceased also suffering in all its forms, and this was considered to be the true and only

expression of a spiritual and divine life. It was considered to be the divine grace, the divine help, the divine intervention. And even now, in this age of anguish, tension, hypertension, this sovereign peace is the best received aid of all, the most welcome, the solace people ask and hope for. For many it is still the true sign of a divine intervention, of divine grace.

In fact, no matter what one wants to realise, one must begin by establishing this perfect and immutable peace; it is the basis from which one must work; but unless one is dreaming of an exclusive, personal and egoistic liberation, one cannot stop there. There is another aspect of the divine grace, the aspect of progress which will be victorious over all obstacles, the aspect which will propel humanity to a new realisation, which will open the doors of a new world and make it possible not only for a chosen few to benefit by the divine realisation but for their influence, their example, their power to bring to the rest of mankind new and better conditions.

This opens up roads of realisation into the future, possibilities which are already foreseen, when an entire part of humanity, the one which has opened consciously or unconsciously to the new forces, is lifted up, as it were, into a higher, more harmonious, more perfect life.... Even if individual transformation is not always permissible or possible, there will be a kind of general uplifting, a harmonisation of the whole, which will make it possible for a new order, a new harmony to be established and for the anguish of the present disorder and struggle to disappear and be replaced by an order which will allow a harmonious functioning of the whole.

There will be other consequences which will tend to eliminate in an opposite way what the intervention of the mind in life has created, the perversions, the ugliness, the whole mass of distortions which have increased suffering, misery, moral poverty, an entire area of sordid and repulsive misery which makes a whole part of human life into something so frightful. That must disappear. This is what makes humanity in so many ways infinitely worse than animal life in its simplicity and the natural spontaneity and harmony that it has in spite of everything. Suffering in animals is never so miserable and sordid as it is in an entire section of humanity which has been perverted by the use of a mentality exclusively at the service of egoistic needs.

We must rise above, spring up into Light and Harmony or fall back, down into the simplicity of a healthy unperverted animal life.

When this talk was first published in 1958, Mother added the following note on the "uplifting" of an entire part of humanity by the action of the new forces.

But those who cannot be lifted up, those who refuse to progress, will automatically lose the use of the mental consciousness and will fall back to a sub-human level.

I shall tell you about an experience I had which will help you to understand better. It was shortly after the supramental experience of the third of February,¹ and

¹ The experience of the supramental boat recounted in the talk of February 19, 1958. (Editor)

I was still in the state in which things of the physical world seemed so far off, so absurd. A group of visitors had asked permission to come to me and one evening they came to the Playground. They were rich people, that is, they had more money than they needed to live on. Among them there was a woman in a sari; she was very fat, her sari was arranged so as to hide her body. As she was bending down to receive my blessings, one corner of the sari came open, uncovering a part of her body, a naked belly—an enormous one. I felt a real shock... There are corpulent people who have nothing repugnant about them, but I suddenly saw the perversion, the rottenness that this belly concealed, it was like a huge abscess, expressing greed, vice, depraved taste, sordid desire, which finds its satisfaction, as no animal would, in grossness and especially in perversity. I saw the perversion of a depraved mind at the service of the lowest appetites. Then, all of a sudden, something sprang up from me, a prayer, like a Veda: "O Lord, this is what must disappear."

One understands very well that physical misery, the unequal distribution of the goods of this world could be changed, one can imagine economic and social solutions which could remedy this, but it is that misery, the mental misery, the vital perversion, it is that which cannot change, doesn't want to change. And those who belong to this type of humanity are condemned in advance to disintegration.

That is the meaning of original sin: the perversion which began with the mind.

That part of humanity, of human consciousness, which is capable of uniting with the supermind and liberating itself, will be completely transformed—it is advancing towards a future reality which is not yet expressed in its outer form; the part which is closest to Nature, to animal simplicity, will be reabsorbed into Nature and thoroughly assimilated. But the corrupted part of human consciousness which allows perversion through its misuse of the mind will be abolished.

This type of humanity is part of an unfruitful attempt—which must be eliminated—just as there have been other abortive species which have disappeared in the course of universal history.

Certain prophets in the past have had this apocalyptic vision but, as usual, things were mixed, and they did not have together with their vision of the apocalypse the vision of the supramental world which will come to raise up the part of humanity which consents and to transform this physical world. So, to give hope to those who have been born into it, into this perverted part of human consciousness, they have taught redemption through faith: those who have faith in the sacrifice of the Divine in Matter will be automatically saved, in another world—by faith alone, without understanding, without intelligence. They have not seen the supramental world nor that the great Sacrifice of the Divine in Matter is the sacrifice of involution which must culminate in the total revelation of the Divine in Matter itself.

19 March 1958

FOR SLIDES SHOWN IN BOMBAY IN AUGUST 1949

COMMENTARY

THIS is *Sri Aurobindo*, who has found the Supreme Truth and who has become the living embodiment of it and who is determined to make humanity realise a divine destiny. Look at the deep and calm splendour of his eyes. There you have the vision and the power of a new and perfect world.

But Sri Aurobindo did not come straight like this from heaven. He came like one of us, with all the burden of our mortality. But he developed in a different way, showing and proving to us that God is within all of us and can be manifested in earthly life. As a young boy he was educated in England. This is a picture of him as a school-boy—a schoolboy with a smiling yet searching look.

Growing up, he went with a Senior Scholarship to King's College at Cambridge. This is *King's College*. Here a brilliant academic career was his, but in the midst of influences which for all their fineness were far from the true spirit of India—India that he did not see for years. Yet that spirit dwelt within him. He joined the revolutionary party in England, whose emblem was "Lotus and Dagger". And once at the age of 14, in a sudden experience, he had a glimpse of the inner greatness that is the wide spiritual presence spoken of by our rishis.

No wonder he evaded the I.C.S. career for which he was being trained. Back to India he came, and here he is *in Baroda*, in the Gaekwad's service, preparing himself for both the political and the spiritual regeneration of his country. Like any common Baroda-man he put a turban or pugree on his head; but that head was Sri Aurobindo's, the most extraordinary in the land.

The next two pictures are of places where Sri Aurobindo lived for a while. This is *Shankar Chetty's house*. And this is *Majumdar's residence*, on the upper floor of which Lele the Maratha yogi gave some instructions which led to Sri Aurobindo's getting within a few days the tremendous experience of Nirvana. Lele was amazed at the rapidity and the immensity of the result. Actually, Nirvana had not been his aim.

Soon after, Sri Aurobindo plunged into the political fight. We first see him as Principal of the National College. Then as Editor of "Bande Mataram," that nationalist paper which with a voice of thunder awoke the dormant soul of our country and set us on the path to freedom. This *picture* shows you at once the strength and the dedicatedness in the expression on his face.

Many difficulties he encountered in his political fight, the most memorable of them was his detention in the Alipore Jail because of the Government's suspicion that he had been involved in the Muzzaferpore Bomb Conspiracy. But it was in the Alipore Jail that he saw fully what even in the Baroda days he had felt—and in the long loneliness of his cell and in the midst of the epic trial which made history, with C.R. Das successfully defending him, he got the final "adesh", the decisive command of

Sri Krishna. Look at *Sri Aurobindo*, the British Government's prisoner. The eyes seem to be in half trance, the face is lit up with Yoga. No government on earth could subdue the freedom of this soul or frustrate the mission with which it was charged.

Guided by Sri Krishna's command, he withdrew from British India to Chandernagore and then moved to Pondicherry. Here is a view of this capital of French India. We see, from where the long pier starts, the *lighthouse* and some other buildings. In Pondicherry, for nearly 40 years, Sri Aurobindo has lived, developing a dynamic Yoga which combines and completes all the spiritual inspirations of the past and leads to a new and entire fulfilment of man's labour on earth. He has worked to bring a divine life, a Golden Age, a Satya Yuga. During the early years of his stay in Pondicherry he published a philosophical monthly, the *Arya*. We have here a *picture of him at his table writing*, as if with intensity and ease combined, one of those essays that are masterpieces of spiritual vision and intellectual exposition.

Some of his political followers came with him to Pondicherry. They were the first few of the increasing band which developed into the famous Ashram. But there could have been no organised Ashram if the luminous personality whose picture we are showing you now had not been there. This is *the Mother*, who as the Divine Shakti came to help the Ishwara in Sri Aurobindo to achieve the unique ideal of a life divine. Without him she could never be, but without her his manifestation would remain unaccomplished. Hers the profound motherly insight and compassion and creativity that preside over the Ashram and guide it to perfection.

We have here a glimpse of *her room* which her disciples have tried to make tastefully comfortable. But the Mother hardly rests. She works almost the whole day and night, with an inexhaustible energy.

More and more the Ashram has grown. We see here the *main entrance* to it. And this is a view of *one of the compounds*. There are nearly 700 inmates at present. And on the four darshan days in the year, thousands come from all over India and even from abroad to stand before Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and take their silent blessings. *Krishna Prem* once Ronald Nixon, now garbed in a sannyasi's robe, is here shown on a visit laughing with Dilip Kumar Roy, the Bengali musician and author who is an inmate of the Ashram.

Let us give you a glimpse of the *people gathering* to go up to the room where the Master and the Mother are sitting on the darshan day. In a most orderly fashion, with a quiet happiness, *the devotees await* the darshan that can change their whole lives.

In the room where the darshan takes place, there is a *seat* set up by the disciples. They have lavished their skill upon it to make it beautiful and majestic. Here Sri Aurobindo and the Mother sit through hours while the stream of thousands passes on before their compassionate eyes. It is a little throne built to show that the true king and queen of the world are Divine Wisdom and Divine Love.

The Wisdom and Love that are enshrined in this Ashram have made it grow very different from our ordinary conception. Sri Aurobindo believes in an all-round

evolution of human capacities, both inward and outward. Hence you do not find thatched cottages and isolated recluses. You find people busy, carrying on various activities and diverse vocations,—but, of course, with an inner attitude of consecration. Here, for example, we see a young sadhika *kneeling* before a picture of Sri Aurobindo in what is called the Reception Room, before going on to her work.

The Ashram *Library* is now before you, with the librarian sitting, ready to help all whose intellects want nourishment. Here is the *Reading Room* where the inmates of the Ashram keep in touch with world-events through newspapers. Here is the *Dinning Room*, an example of spotless cleanliness and co-operative efficiency. People sit in rows at small tables after collecting their dishes. After finishing their simple but nutritive meals they hand over their dishes for washing. Look now at the *Ashram's Electric Workshop*—and now at the *Carpentry Department*—and then at the huge *Printing Press* from which wonderful literature comes out month after month and goes to all the corners of the world. Now the Ashram *Dispensary* is before you—and the *Laundry*—and the *Embroidery Room*—and the *Sewing Class*—and the *Granary*. Here is the *Bakery*. And here, out in the open, you see the *threshing* and the *harvesting*. Nothing is excluded from the Ashram's programme and all modern scientific means are readily accepted wherever available. The whole life is being reorganised, with room for all talents and aptitudes.

Take a glance now at the great building erected for the residence of visitors to the Ashram. It is called *Golconde*. It is one of the finest specimens of intelligent modern architecture, it is in plan and style one of the rarest in all India.

The Ashram is not only for grown-ups. It has children too among its members. And here is the children's school—the *Montessori Class*. And now the little ones are shown at their simple prayers in the morning. Various are their activities and both their minds and their bodies are carefully developed to make them free individuals enlightened and resourceful, unhampered by fear and dull routine and rigid convention, capable of independent initiative and strong enough to work out in the world the beautiful dreams of the deep heart. The picture here is of the Ashram *playground*. And now we are watching the children at their exercises. The *girls are drilling* and marching. The Mother personally attends to all the children's development. She understands their needs, encourages and helps them along the lines proper to each one's nature. Sometimes, as in April 1947, they enjoy special favours. We see them here, in full uniform, *going to have special darshan of Sri Aurobindo*.

The Mother works incessantly to look after the new world which is taking shape under her eyes. Here she is seen *standing on the balcony* of the building in which she has her room. Men and women—her spiritual children—are marching past, giving her the soul's salute. Here now is a picture of the young people of the Ashram *holding a flag* of the most profound significance. And now they are *marching* with it. It is the *flag* of India's spiritual mission—a golden lotus with a double row of petals upon a background of silvery blue, the dynamic divine creation flowering out of the Spirit's immutable infinity. This flag symbolises the fulfilment of India's destiny.

It stands for the lovely and luminous manifestation of God's truth on earth. In that truth are the real unity of India as well as of the world, and the great victory by which evil and ignorance shall be no more. In that truth's manifestation all the difficulties and perplexities of man shall end in the smiling certainty of the soul that has become a child of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

AMAL KIRAN

HIS LUMINOUS FACE

THE Sun, the moon and the stars their light,
 The flowers their sweetness, the clouds their rains,
 They give their all without reserve;
 I offer in verse my pleasures and pains.

The birds their voice, the streams their shimmer—
 They give their all, they save no gains,
 The One Supreme they rejoice to serve;
 To serve Him I offer my humble quatrains.

I feel His presence in all around;
 His breath in air, His touch in light,
 His support in Earth, in space His embrace,
 In the waves of the Ocean His dancing might.

He lives in all, we are happy to be,
 To live for all I pray for His grace;
 He shines in all, I aspire to see
 In one and all His Luminous face.

BHANUSHANKAR BHATT

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of July 1982)

January 7, 1936

[In the medical report I wrote *Achanchar* instead of *Achanchal*.]

Is this *r* or *l*? If *r*, please transform into *l*.

I don't understand at all, Sir, what to make of your reply on Art!

If you did know, it would mean I had committed myself which was just what I did not want to do. Or shall we put it in this way "Each of the great arts has its own appeal and its own way of appeal and each in its own way is supreme above all others"? That ought to do.

N reports just now his "sciatica" has increased and asks me to inform you. But when I advised him to take some external medicine—Well, how can he do that without your permission?

He has full permission, but he is very particular in having it in so many precise words written to himself. I will see what he has written today. What external medicine do you want to give? And what about his constipation?

January 7, 1936

I have no objection to N's eyes being treated by R.

It is not a question of his eyes. If R treats him he will forbid all allopathic medicines for his other ailments. That is the point I put to N which he seems not to understand at all.

If it is l and not r why do they pronounce Achanchar? Is it like our saying আম (mango) instead of আম? Oh, the very word আম takes you, Sir, to the land of—!

God knows! I have not heard their pronunciation. But it is *l* all right. *R* and *l* are however supposed to be phonetically interchangeable since the beginnings of human speech.

January 10 1936

Is it true that poetry leads to the realisation faster than music, painting etc. ?

What the deuce is meant by leading to the realisation?

About poetry or any literary work, you have said that very often one's inner being comes to the front, and that is used by a higher Power.

Don't recognise the quotation or recall the context. But the inner being can come to the front under any provocation, why of Poetry alone?

Venkataram says that he feels something when he takes up music—something different from what he feels in his other activities.

It all depends on what the something is.

About art, now say something in order to say nothing. Or do you think it risky ?

Very.

Whatever little experience I have of sadhana through works, makes me incline to the view that work as sadhana is the most difficult.

Why argue from your present experience great or little and turn it into a generalisation? A great many people (the majority perhaps) find it the easiest of all.

Is it true that physical work opens one more than, say, literary occupations, to the Mother's action ?

Many find it easy to think of the Mother when working; but when they read or write, their mind goes off to the thing read or written and they forget everything else. I think that is the case with most. Physical work on the other hand can be done with the most external part of the mind, leaving the rest free to remember or to experience.

It is only by thinking of you that one can compose poetry; in that case Music should have the greatest gift.

Why?

I won't dilate any more on the subject, but ask you to do it.

Why should I dilate either—at the risk of bursting? Besides tonight I have other

dilatations (I can't call them delectations) occupying me.

January 12, 1936

...Where is the crux of my trouble?

In the self-delusion of the vital. Human love is mainly vital, when it is not vital and physical together. It is also sometimes psychic+vital. But the Love with a dominant psychic is rare.

What is then the sign of real love?

What is real love? Get clear of all the sentimental sexual turmoil and go back to the soul, then there is real love. It is then also that you would be able to receive the overwhelming love without getting the lower being into an excitement which might be disastrous.

January 13, 1936

*Like a flame of flowers on yonder tree,
Like the rippling waves of the sea,
Dance, dance, O my soul, thou playmate of Light
Winging the sapphire height.*

*Into the luminous calm of skies
Uplift my leaden eyes
And on a widening vision pour
The sun-wine of thy soar.*

A small poem, the first stanza came quite easily, but got stuck after that. Then Amal hopped in and helped me in with the second stanza. Trickle? Opinion, please. Soul dancing too much?

I have no objection to the soul dancing, but to make it dance and wing a height at the same time is a little acrobatic. Also to pour wine (even of a soar, though what the wine of a soar may be I don't know) on the eyes would hardly be beneficial to the vision—in most cases. I admit however that these are perhaps rather too prosaic and Johnsonian objections to the sun-wine of your or Amal's dancing soar.

Here are some new lines:

*Trickle, trickle, O mighty Force Divine.
Pour, pour thy white moon dreams*

*Into my stomach, heart and intestine
In little silver streams.*

Two most damnable blunders, sir. "Intestine" is stressed on the second syllable and pronounced *intéstin*, so how the blazes is it going to rhyme with divine? A doctor mistressing "intestine"—shame! How are you going to cure people if you put wrong stresses on their anatomical parts?

Second blunder—

Yogically, psycho-physically etc., etc. stomach, heart and intestine lodge the vital movements, not the physical consciousness—it is there that anger, fear, love, hate and all the other psychological privileges of the animal tumble about and upset the physical and moral digestion. The Muladhara is the seat of the physical consciousness proper. So you have to emend the third line into "Invade the

{	mournful
	yearning bottom
	yearnful

 of my spine". That will make it poetically beautiful and psycho-physically correct.

January 14, 1936

Nishikanta has written a poem from a vision. He says that he is going to paint his vision of the violet stream and the golden cup; so he would like you to illumine him regarding its significance.

"Violet" is the colour of benevolence or compassion, but also more vividly of the Divine Grace—represented in the vision as flowing from the heights of the spiritual consciousness down on this earth. The golden cup is I suppose the Truth-Consciousness.

Almost all whom I know have come here solely for the Divine, while I have just glided in. I don't know that I was actuated by the sole motive of drowning myself in the Divine.

The push to drown oneself in the Divine is very rare. It is usually a mental idea, a vital fumbling or some quite inadequate reason that starts the thing—or else no reason at all. The only reality is the occult psychic push behind of which the surface consciousness is not aware or else hardly aware.

I don't see any vestige of a yogi in me. It will be three years in February, since I have come here, and I haven't seen even three signs! It is your letters, Sir, that have bound me.

What the deuce is three years in Yoga? There are people who have to wait twice or

three times or four times that time before they get the real sign. A child of nine might say, "Look here, I have been studying for two years and yet nobody has decided to propose me as the Vice Chancellor of the Calcutta University."

You have had signs that you can get Ananda, that a channel can be made through your physical brain (your poetry) for something that was not there before. That's sign enough.

*I hear J jumped down from the train when it was leaving ! He still seems uncertain.
A problem indeed !*

Everybody is a problem in his own way—the world itself is a problem and so are all the creatures in it.

January 15, 1936

I send you a letter of my friend J. B. He wants to know if any general correspondence can be sent to him.

It can be done sometimes.

Or can he write to you personally ?

The difficulty would be about the answer. If I had to do it myself, he would get an answer every three years.

What does he mean by 'the overmental and supramental stages' which he doesn't want to leave ?

I am puzzled by the sentence.

I suppose he takes anything beyond mind as Overmind and Supermind and that he feels some dynamic force working in him.

I suppose so, people always do at first. But even so, I don't understand why he writes of it as a stage he does not want to leave. What he has is not of course overmind or supermind, but some sense of the cosmic Force of the Mother behind the action of the personal being.

He feels that he hasn't clung to the Divine, the Divine has clutched him.

That is very often felt.

*People outside feel that we are having great experiences, while we feel a vacuum.
Glory to God!*

Lots of people feel that outside or similar things. Also they feel a bhakti and faith outside which is spoiled or gets rude shocks if they come and stay for some time in the Ashram and converse with its enlightened sadhaks. But that I suppose is all in the game. At any rate it used to be like that. Nowadays I notice some improvement—let us hope that soon it will be an entire change.

Do you really think that I have done something in poetry? People say that one can't take your remarks on poetry, painting etc. too literally, because you want to encourage us.

A very good beginning. Not yet Homer or Shakespeare, of course!

Mother is giving us doctors very good compliments, I hear! that we confine people to bed till they are really confined!

Yes. Mother did pass on that epigram. Doctors were born to hear such remarks.

January 16, 1936

Why are you so afraid of P's screams? Surely yogis ought to be able to bear a little suffering and you ought to encourage or allow, Sir!

She is not that kind of Yogi. She would only scream and get as wild as Durvasa and stop going to the dispensary—apart from copious weeping etc.

R is all right. I thought she has been doing some work, but now I find she is enjoying a holiday.

True, she is very lazy. You can perhaps tell her that work now ought to do her good and recommend it as part of the treatment.

January 17, 1936

Jyoti is suffering from eczema. Don't know what to do except go on experimenting.

Mother can't say. Her experience is that strong medicines are not good for these skin things—toilet products are more effective, but this is only a general observation. I myself cured mine by spiritual force and stinging hot water, but I don't know if it would work for others.

January 18, 1936

If you have cured yourself by that method why not apply the same here ?

Can't say if it will succeed. Differs with people. Sahana cured hers once by icing it.

January 19, 1936

I realise at every moment that I am not made for the path of the Spirit, neither for any big endeavour in life. I know I shall be unhappy, but are all men born to be happy ?

Man of sorrows! man of sorrows!! Knock him off, man, knock him off!!

Man of sorrows ? Knock him off ? Well, he is too cryptic or brief for me. I'm not much satisfied with the answer. The most fundamental difficulty I find in me is that I can't believe that the Divine will do everything for me. My experience shows, say for instance in writing poetry, that I have to labour a lot to deliver even a small poem. Where then is the Divine help ? You yourself had to concentrate four or five hours a day for many years, before things flowed in a torrent. Dilip also had to concentrate a lot. But I am neither Sri Aurobindo nor Dilip. I don't feel, except very rarely, any descent of Force, either. I can't meditate, I can't pray, I can't aspire, and without these things how am I to do Yoga ? Sometimes I think I should not bother my head at all. Let me go on reading novels like Amlkumar (I don't mean any offence, though) who can read throughout the night. But how can he ? He must have got something. I can't do it, for it would not give me peace and progress in sadhana. So in short my condition is: I can neither make effort myself, nor can I believe that you will do everything for me. Please give an answer that will pierce the mind-soul.

As there are several lamentations today besieging me, I have very little time to deal with each separate Jeremiad. Do I understand rightly that your contention is this, "I can't believe in the Divine doing everything for me because it is by my own mighty and often fruitless efforts that I write or do not write poetry and have made myself into a poet." Well, that itself is *épatant*, magnificent, unheard of. It has always been supposed since the infancy of the human race that while a verse-maker can be made or self-made, a poet cannot. "*Poeta nascitur non fit*", a poet is born not made, is the dictum that has come down through the centuries and millenniums and was thundered into my ears by the first pages of my Latin Grammar. The facts of literary history seem to justify this stern saying. But here in Pondicherry we have tried, not to manufacture poets, but to give them birth, a spiritual, not a physical birth into the body. In a number of instances we are supposed to have succeeded—one of these is your noble self—or if I am to believe the man of sorrows in you, your abject, mi-

serable, hopeless and ineffectual self. But how was it done? There are two theories, it seems—one that it was by the Force, the other that it was done by your own splashing, kicking, groaning Herculean efforts. Now, sir, if it is the latter, if you have done that unprecedented thing, made yourself by your own laborious strength into a poet (for your earlier efforts were only very decent literary exercises), then, sir, why the deuce are you so abject, self-depreciatory, miserable? Don't say that it is only a poet who can produce no more than a few poems in many months. Even to have done that, to have become a poet at all, a self-made poet is a miracle over which we can only say 'Sabash! Sabash!' without ever stopping. If your effort could do that, what is there that it can't do? All miracles can be effected by it and a giant self-confident faith ought to be in you. On the other hand if, as I aver, it is the Force that has done it, what then can it not do? Here too faith, a giant faith is the only logical conclusion. So either way there is room only for Hallelujahs, none for Jeremiads. Q.E.D.

By the way what is this story about my four or five hours' concentration a day for several years before anything came down? Such a thing never happened, if by concentration you mean laborious meditation. What I did was four or five hours a day Pranayam—which is quite another matter. And what flow do you speak of? The flow of poetry came down while I was doing Pranayam, not some years afterwards. If it is the flow of experiences, that did come after some years, but after I had stopped the Pranayam for a long time and was doing nothing and did not know what to do or where to turn once all my efforts had failed. And it came not as a result of years of Pranayam or concentration, but in a ridiculously easy way, by the grace either of a temporary guru (but it wasn't that, for he was himself bewildered by it) or by the grace of the eternal Brahman and afterwards by the grace of Mahakali and Krishna. So don't try to turn me into an argument against the Divine; that attempt will be perfectly ineffective.

I am obliged to stop—if I go on, there will be no Pranam till 12 o'clock. So send your Jeremiad back tonight and I will see what else to write. Have written this in a headlong hurry—I hope it is not full of *lapsus calami*.

January 20, 1936

I send you the "Jeremiad", Sir. My observations are reserved. Anyway, you have succeeded in almost chasing away the clouds of depression.

To continue. The fact that you don't feel a force does not prove that it is not there. The steam-engine does not feel a force moving it, but the force is there. A man is not a steam-engine? He is very little better, for he is conscious only of some bubbling on the surface which he calls himself and is absolutely unconscious of all the sub-conscious, subliminal, super-conscious forces moving him. (This is a fact which is being more and more established by modern psychology thought has got hold only of the lower forces and not the higher, so you need not turn up your rational nose at

it.) He twitters intellectually (=foolishly), about the surface results and attributes them all to his 'noble self', ignoring the fact that this noble self is hidden far away from his own vision behind the veil of his dimly sparkling intellect and the reeking fog of his vital feelings, emotions, impulses, sensations and impressions. So your argument is utterly absurd and futile. Our aim is to bring the secret forces out and unwallled into the open so that instead of getting some shadows or lightnings of themselves out through the veil or being wholly obstructed, they may "pour down" and "flow in a river". But to expect that all at once is a presumptuous demand which shows an impatient ignorance and inexperience. If they begin to trickle at first, that is sufficient to justify the faith in a future downpour. You admit that you once or twice felt a force coming down and delivering a poem out of you (your opinion about its worth or worthlessness is not worth a cent, that is for others to pronounce). That is sufficient to blow the rest of your Jeremiad into smithereens; it proves that the force was and is there and at work and it is only your sweating Herculean labour that prevents your feeling it. Also it is the trickle that gives assurance of the possibility of the downpour. One has only to go on and by one's patience deserve the downpour or else, without deserving, stick on till one gets it. In Yoga itself the experience that is a promise and foretaste but gets shut off till the nature is ready for the fulfilment is a phenomenon familiar to every Yogin when he looks back on his past experience. Such were the brief visitations of Ananda you had some time before. It does not matter if you have not a leechlike tenacity—leeches are not the only type of Yogins. If you can stick anyhow or get stuck that is sufficient. The fact that you are not Sri Aurobindo (who said you were?) is an inapt irrelevance. One needs only to be oneself in a reasonable way and shake off the hump when it is there or allow it to be shaken off without clinging to it with a leechlike tenacity worthy of a better cause.

All the rest is dreary stuff of the tamasic ego. As there is a rajasic ego which shouts "What a magnificent powerful sublime divine individual I am, unique and peerless" (of course there are gradations in the pitch), so there is a tamasic ego which squeaks "What an abject, hopeless, worthless, incapable, unluckily unendowed and uniquely impossible creature I am,—all, all are great, Aurobindos, Dilips, Anilkumars (great by an unequalled capacity of novel-reading and self-content, according to you), but I, oh I, oh I!" That's your style. It is this tamasic ego (of course it expresses itself in various ways at various times, I am only rendering your present pitch) which is responsible for the Man of Sorrows getting in. It's all bosh—stuff made up to excuse the luxury of laziness, melancholy and despair. You are in that bog just now because you have descended faithfully and completely into the inert stupidity and die-in-the-mud-ness of your physical consciousness which, I admit, is a specimen! But so after all is everybody's, only there are different kinds of specimens. What to do? Dig yourself out if you can; if you can't, call for ropes and wait till they come. If God knows what will happen when the Grace descends, that is enough, isn't it? That you don't know is a fact which may be baffling to your—well, your intelligence, but is not of great importance—any more than your supposed

unfitness. Whoever was fit, for that matter—fitness and unfitness are only a way of speaking; man is unfit and a misfit (so far as things spiritual are concerned)—in his outward nature. But within there is a soul and above there is Grace. “This is all you know or need to know” and, if you don’t, well, even then you have at least somehow stumbled into the path and have got to remain there till you get haled along it far enough to wake up to the knowledge. Amen.

(To be continued)

DARSHAN

THE ground is a-tremor!
 The blooms shiver with an expected delight.
 The courtyard resounds to Your soundless tread—
 Our beings thrill to a dazzling Sight!

We sit, trance-heavy with ecstasy,
 Guarding a secret in our Darshan-laden eyes—
 Your Presence revisiting our waiting world—
 An inner pressure on us of Your closeness, Your sweet ties.

24 April 1982

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of July 1982)

MYSELF: Mother, the last two days I wake up at night with a kind of twisting pain in my chest. The feeling at that time is like this: "What has happened? Why has it so happened?" Everything appears strange. In my waking consciousness, there is no such perception of pain. It comes in sleep, and when I am awake I drive it away; but at the same time the mind keeps on thinking that still there is some attachment in the subconscious and I feel bad about it. I can't free myself from the brooding concern that the attachment is lingering still, the result being a short period of depression. Why should this happen?

SRI AUROBINDO: You need not attach too much importance to it. It is an impression left in the subconscious—necessarily a strong impression because the feelings were acute—which as it can no longer affect the waking state comes up in dreams. It is a common experience that long after one has got rid of things in the waking state, e.g., sex, family attachment or any past preoccupations that no longer exist, they return from time to time in dreams. Your self-liberation is quite recent, so it is not surprising that the impression comes up in this form. You have to reject it very quietly and without concern—if it is not fed in the waking state it will die away.

6.6.33

MYSELF: My ego has found so much support from me in everything that it now doesn't want to leave me so easily. It must stay either in front or behind, openly or in secret. What I see clearly, or am aware of and about which there is no doubt—even there the ego peeps! What a dismal aspect of human nature!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is so with everybody, because the human consciousness is permeated in all its past ideas with this substance of egoism. It is only by a constant quiet vigilance and increasing consciousness that it can be got out—for if it is not allowed to play openly, it conceals itself and takes subtle and disguised forms.

8.6.33

MYSELF: Mother sweet, an attitude of indifference that I should no longer defend myself has now come upon me. To justify and defend myself constantly to others appears so disgusting. Since you have made me conscious that all these movements are born of ego, enable me then to remain in that consciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO: This indifference or equality will be a great progress towards getting the true spiritual attitude.

12.6.33

MYSELF: Mother dear, this seems to be a vital movement in me, for to feel like singing all the time as a result of some pressure of ananda, as if I were under some intoxication, can't be a sign of the psychic. Besides, I myself understand clearly that it is a vital movement, because there is no control. The psychic is accompanied by a sense of quiet and collectedness whereas the vital is under excitement and restlessness. Am I not right, Mother? I should have restrained myself, I feel. That I became too impatient is a clear sign of the vital movement. It was a mistake to yield to it, isn't it so?

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously, when there is that inability to control and over-eagerness, it must be the movement of a vital nature. The vital can take part in a movement but it must not be in control—it must be subordinated to the psychic.

18.6.33

MYSELF: Again stark darkness, and a surge of weeping. No concentration at all. That I can't move forward towards you is what is most depressing. It is true that the things I loved once are dropping off and that gives joy, but if it is not followed by an intimacy with you as a result, if I can't advance forward, then what do I gain? What I felt to be the greatest obstacle on the path has been removed, but I remain where I am and consequently within there is a terrible dryness. That I can't look at the relation between so and so in a better light is also galling to me. The vital nature refuses to come under control; the upshot is that my mind is shattered. I am carrying my own self like a burden—a lifeless corpse.

SRI AUROBINDO: What you have felt is a revival or return on you of the lower vital with its demands and desires. Its suggestion is "I am doing the Yoga but for a price. I have abandoned the life of vital desire and satisfaction but in order to get intimacy with the Mother—instead of satisfying myself with X and the world, to satisfy myself and get my desires fulfilled by the Divine. If I do not get the intimacy with the Mother and immediately and as I want it, why should I give up the old things." And as a natural result the old things start again—"X and Y and Y and X and the wrongs of Sahana." You must see this machinery of the lower vital and dismiss it. It is only by the full psychic relation of self-giving that unity and closeness with the Divine can be maintained—the other is part of the vital ego movement and can only bring a fall of the consciousness and disturbance.

20.6.33

MYSELF: Reading Sri Aurobindo's letter, I got terribly upset and felt that I wouldn't be able to do sadhana. I have left everything for you alone; still if I feel sad that I don't get the intimacy in the way I want it and you call that sadness a vital demand, then how should I want it? I do want you and, for that, I am trying my best to follow your directions, but if that does not bring me closer to you, and the intimacy within doesn't deepen, then it is quite natural that I should feel sad and be in despair about myself. It is clear that I am not able to do what should be done.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was from your description of the reaction that I said there

was a vital demand. In the pure psychic or spiritual self-giving there are no reactions of this kind; no despondency or despair, no saying "What have I gained by seeking the Divine," no anger, revolt, abhiman, wish to go away—such as you describe here—but an absolute confidence, and a persistence in clinging to the Divine under all conditions. That is what I wanted you to have; it is the only basis on which one is free from troubles and reactions and goes steadily forward. 21.6.33

MYSELF: If to want you is desire, then what is called the aspiration of the soul? The discontent that issues from my inability to want you heartily was, I thought, discontent of my soul, the soul's aspiration. That was something pure in me, I believed. Now, alas, it is not so; it is impure, it is desire! How helpless am I still before my lower nature and when I see this the despair comes with double force.

SRI AUROBINDO: But are such feelings a sign of the soul's self-giving? If there is no vital mixture how do these things come when I write to you and as the result of my writing and trying to show you the way?

MYSELF: Now I feel very much better. Though the attitude is clear, there is still a heaviness within. I don't know how Sri Aurobindo's letter evoked a spirit of revolt and came like an attack. And yet when I read this letter again, I found that there was nothing to produce this revolt. My head was all on fire!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the first movement of this part to revolt when it is shown its own nature and asked to change. 21.6.33

MYSELF: Mother, please, don't put me off by simply saying "Dismiss" and all that. Tell me just what I can do. I am quite willing to work hard, but the things you say or ask are so difficult that I feel as if I am lost on a wide sea, and the word "impossible" is all that I can utter.

SRI AUROBINDO: Difficult? It is the first principle of our sadhana that surrender is the means of fulfilment and so long as ego or vital demand and desire are cherished, complete surrender is impossible—the self-giving is incomplete. We have never concealed that. It may be difficult and it is; but it is the very principle of the sadhana. Because it is difficult, it has to be done steadily and patiently till the work is complete. 21.6.33

MYSELF: Mother, why at times do things appear so difficult? Again, the more they are difficult the greater is the joy in surmounting them. This is a very pathetic condition: swaying between the possible and the impossible. Now to get out of the grip of the lower vital is the problem I have to answer.

SRI AUROBINDO: You have to go on rejecting the vital mixture every time it rises. If you are steadfast in rejecting, it will lose more and more of its force and fade out. 21.6.33

(To be continued)

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

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of July 1982)

The Mother's Message

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



I STILL harboured in my consciousness the feeling of impossibility in reaching my destination. Some parts of my being simply refused to accept the certitude and the promise that the Mother had given me. My thoughts rambled on, I was seized with a sensation of sheer loneliness. There were too many complexities in me.

Usually on Sundays, the Mother was a little freer than on other days. So one Sunday evening I went along to see her. She received me with all her Love and Compassion. Then she looked into my eyes while holding my hands. After that she went into a trance for a few seconds. Then she spoke serenely:

“Child, you can be free from all difficulties when you make a total surrender to the Divine. I know very well that many people remember their past and their old habits and then they become miserable. Instead they should leave all these thoughts and feelings to the Divine. What He wishes, let that be done. What He wants them to be, let them be that.

“Whatever things come from the Divine—either pleasant things or unpleasant ones—people must understand that there is some purpose behind His Will and His Work. They must accept it fully and must not revolt. If this is done, they will surely progress.

“If they want peace and divine happiness, they must surrender completely to the Truth. Indeed, this is not an easy task, but it is quite possible and my help is always there for it. But there must not be any contradiction in their minds—that they want the Divine and at the same time other things as well. There must not be any attachment to their families or anything else. If they keep one leg here and the other there—in two different boats—it is impossible to reach the goal. Naturally their lives become painful.”

I thought whatever she told me always applied to me exactly. I seemed to have a genius for doing the wrong thing!

“Child, there are always two ways—one goes to the Truth and the other goes to the Falsehood. Worldly pleasure cannot lead anywhere. The best way is to make a total surrender. If various types of forces come and you cannot discriminate between them, you must enter into your heart and ask yourself, ‘Are they good or bad?’ The heart will answer either ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. Then only can you go forward. You have to put a strong will on the wrong forces and drive them out of your mind. In case you cannot do this you can always call me and I will at once remove all the lower forces.

“It is understood that if people feel happy in their hearts, they do not mind what happens—either bad or good; but when wrong things come up in them, they feel everything upside down, although in fact the cause of all these happenings were hidden in their own nature....”

Then she lapsed into silence. Meanwhile, numerous thoughts shuffled and reshuffled in my mind. I took both her hands into mine and said: “Mother, whatever you have said and written is absolutely right but it is not easy to keep my consciousness stable and straightforward. When it is utterly blurred by the darkness of evil

forces, I cannot even concentrate on my heart or call you for help. I keep on telling you that I will not listen to the dark forces, yet still I respond to them. I am really ashamed. Besides, you already know that I have been suffering from my awkward nature and ever-changing moods, and the assault of the nether forces takes me by surprise—all these things make me very unhappy and sometimes I feel like running away from here. I do not know yet how many more ordeals still await me....” And hot tears surged to my eyes as I poured my agony before her.

I saw a warmth of compassion in her eyes. She said soothingly:

“I know it is difficult to keep your consciousness steady and in order. If you look at the Truth and reject the Falsehood, then it helps to keep the consciousness stable. But there are so many parts of the being. At times some of them come in front and you feel happy and express your love and devotion to the Divine. This means that these parts of the being have come under the psychic influence and received the Divine’s Light. But all the parts are not in the same state and they are changing and moving constantly in a cycle.

“Very often the hostile forces come and try to catch hold of your consciousness by making various suggestions—but then, at once, you have to pull all of them into the Divine’s Light to see whether they are true or false. If they are false, reject the falsehood and accept the Truth by constant aspiration, remembrance of the Divine and call for the Divine’s help. Surely, if you learn to reject the adverse forces, they will never enter your consciousness and you will realise the Truth.

“Once the consciousness falls from a certain height you have to start all over again. Naturally you cannot reach your goal at once, and you return again and again to the same miseries.

“Child, you must surrender. You have to pay the full price to the Divine, and collaborate fully in His work—without collaboration the Divine’s work cannot be done. Your nature clings to its old habits and desires and resists the new consciousness—that is an obstacle in the Divine’s work. There must not be any room for the lower elements. If you participate fully in the Divine’s work, you will progress rapidly.

“If people go from here and start living the ordinary life, then truly they will get nowhere and their lives will become ugly. I do not want this to happen to you or anyone.”

I tried my best to understand every word she spoke to me but at that moment it was too hard to put into practice what she explained. I was sunk deep in the physical consciousness. There was always a struggle between the spiritual Power and the material Nature.

A few lines from *Savitri* illustrate how twin forces, good and evil, clash:

A blindfold search and wrestle and fumbling clasp
 Of half-seen Nature and a hidden Soul,
 A game of hide-and-seek in twilit rooms,
 A play of love and hate and fear and hope
 Continues in the nursery of mind
 Its hard and heavy romp of self-born twins.

Birth Centenary Edition, Vol. 28, p. 141

The next morning, the Mother threw more light on the subject in a letter:

“Little child of mine,

“It is the conflict in you between the two tendencies (of which I spoke yesterday) which is spoiling your health and making you so tired. It is urgent to make a final decision and impose it on your whole being. And as the higher cannot bow down to the lower, it is the lower that must surrender and give way to the higher.

“My love and help are always with you to help you in accomplishing this and my blessings too are always with you.”

It was beyond my capacity to fathom the mysteries of the inner life, the Mother’s working in me and her wonderful teaching. I wrote to her that I left the whole thing in her hands and she answered on 29th March 1956—an anniversary of her arrival in Pondicherry in 1914:

“I have just read your very nice letter and can assure you of our final victory over all difficulties. Hold tight to me and I shall lead you to the goal—the Divine Realisation.

“This card is a hand-painted view of Golconde’s garden. I send it with all my love and blessings.”

As usual I went to the Mother in the evening and she asked me with a delightful laugh :

“Did you receive my card of this morning? Child, you must hold me tight as a baby monkey does its mother. If you loosen your grip you will fall, and it will be your responsibility....”

I held her hands and said spontaneously: “Oh no! Mother, I would rather be like a baby cat than a baby monkey, because it is always safe....”

I saw a gleam of amusement in her remarkable eyes and she went into another ripple of laughter. Then she gave me a deep look, and suddenly put her hand on my neck and made a gesture as if she was pulling me. Then she said tenderly:

“See! I will take you like this as a cat takes its kitten....”

Slowly I sank my head into her lap and closed my eyes for a moment or two with an immense relief. She laid her hand on my hair, gently stroking it. I felt that her heart was moved....

Ever since then she has taken me along as she promised me, in spite of my tantrums, stupidities and revolts.

The Mother has stated in her Cent. Ed. Vol. 4, p. 94 about the baby monkey and the baby cat:

“...Ramakrishna says, either the path of the baby monkey or that of the baby cat. The baby monkey holds to its mother in order to be carried about and it must hold firm, otherwise if it loses its grip, it falls. On the other hand, the baby cat does not hold to its mother, but is held by the mother and has no fear nor responsibility; it has nothing to do but to let the mother hold it and cry *ma ma....*”

*

I used to send a note-book to the Mother, in which I put down all that she had said.

It was the last day of May 1956. The Mother wrote on a card showing yellow flowers. Underneath the picture she inscribed:

“This is Iris, flower of noble beauty.”

She continued on the same card:

“I am sending back your book on what I told you yesterday.

“It is quite good and correct. You remember very well.

“For Maheshwari I have put instead of ‘All her knowledge’ her all-knowledge in one word meaning her knowledge of everything.

“With my love, Grace and help and my blessings always with you.”

The summer was in full blaze. After my work I had lunch and went to my room to rest. I was a little tired and did not realise how quickly I fell asleep. Suddenly I was awakened in my subtle body by a peculiar sound. Then my eyes fell on two huge snakes—like dragons—of a very strange shape. One was golden and the other black. They were fighting fiercely—their enormous teeth locked together. They made the most horrible hissing sounds.

Above the foot of my bed, there was hung a calendar with a picture of the Mother coming down the staircase to give her blessings. From this picture, a brilliant White Light was thrown ceaselessly in powerful rays on the golden snake.

The strife was so vivid, so real and forceful, that I was simply terrified. I cried out in my sleep and woke up with a start—my heart pounding. I pressed my hands

to my eyes and imagined I had not witnessed that dreadful scene. But the vision was very concrete and I could not possibly forget it. It all happened at about 2.30 in the afternoon.

In the evening I was a little late going to the Mother. She was waiting for me with flowers in her hands near the threshold of her other room because her living room was under repair. She led me in and gave me the flowers with a light kiss on my forehead.

That day was her French class but I could not resist telling her what I had seen in the afternoon. When I started to say with some hesitation, "Mother, I saw...", she at once interrupted me, saying:

"Yes, I know all about the vision you had, but I wish to hear it from you. Go on...."

I was astonished. Then I told her everything in detail and she asked me, half-laughing:

"Ah! but did you see the end? Which snake won?"

I answered: "No, Mother, I was too horrified to watch any longer—so I did not see the end. I am sorry." She lifted her forefinger and said with an assured smile:

"But I know the end—the golden snake will win."

Sri Aurobindo has given in the Cent. Ed. Vol. 15, p. 83 a succinct description of the Mother's White Light such as I saw streaming from her picture:

"The lights are the Mother's Powers—many in number. The white light is her own characteristic power, that of the Divine Consciousness in its essence."

The next morning was the new month, 1-6-56, and the Mother sent me a card showing red flowers—*Sesbania*. Underneath the picture she wrote: "*Beginning of Realisation in the physical.*"

"This card will tell you that we have now started on the way and that I expect we shall go on nicely in our progress.

"My love, help and strength are always with you and my blessings surround you."

She alone knew what she meant by this Realisation; I only knew with my physical consciousness what happened around me. Why, I wondered, since the Divine was upon earth, should there be any injustice, violence, restlessness, disharmony,

disorder and falsehood? There were clashes of subtle vibrations too—even in the Ashram.

I asked the Mother about it when I went to see her in the evening. She went into herself for a while and then said in a solemn voice:

“Human beings and their natures are the same everywhere. But I am not looking at their faults and defects—I am looking at their possibilities. I know everyone of them is full of ignorance. Truly it takes time to improve and make them perfect. Justice, Truth, Peace, Harmony, Order—all these things cannot be realised in a day. Nevertheless, everyone has to transform himself and that is why all these defects and falsehoods of nature come out and show themselves for the Divine Consciousness to act upon them. If everybody had been perfect, why should I have come upon this earth? I could have remained in my Heaven....”

I raised my eyes suddenly to her face in sheer amazement. She laughed tenderly and went on:

“Child, do you know this story? Once some people were throwing stones at a woman whom they condemned as a sinner. Christ happened to be there and he asked the people what right they had to throw stones at her. Further, he said, ‘Let that one among you who is faultless throw the first stone.’ Nobody dared to do so. Christ himself said to the woman, ‘Neither do I condemn you. Go in peace and sin no more.’

“Here the Divine Consciousness and Strength are working. Everything has been given to people and if they do not make the most of these boons, I do not know what to say or what to do. Remember, all here are not yogis. The Divine’s Grace, however, is everywhere and in everything in the Ashram; that is why everyone remains here.”

She passed into a trance for a second or two and then said:

“Storms always come, but at that time you must keep very quiet by taking shelter in the Divine’s arms and let the storms pass.”

Then she took me into her arms and continued:

“You must take refuge in my arms like this.”

The Mother’s words still ring in my ears:

“If everybody had been perfect, why should I have come upon this earth? I could have remained in my Heaven”.

Sri Aurobindo has described the sacrifice of the Supreme Mother in his book *The Mother* pp. 24-25:

“The Mother not only governs all from above but she descends into this lesser triple universe. Impersonally, all things here, even the movements of the Ignorance, are herself in veiled power and her creations in diminished substance, her Nature-body and Nature-force, and they exist because moved by the mysterious fiat of the Supreme to work out something that was there in the possibilities of the Infinite, she has consented to the great sacrifice and has put on like a mask the soul and forms of the Ignorance. But personally too she has stooped to descend here into the Darkness that she may lead it to the Light, into the Falsehood and Error that she may convert it to the Truth, into this Death that she may turn it to godlike Life, into this world-pain and its obstinate sorrow and suffering that she may end it in the transforming ecstasy of her sublime Ananda. In her deep and great love for her children she has consented to put on herself the cloak of this obscurity, condescended to bear the attacks and torturing influences of the powers of the Darkness and the Falsehood, borne to pass through the portals of the birth that is a death, taken upon herself the pangs and sorrows and sufferings of the creation, since it seemed that thus alone could it be lifted to the Light and Joy and Truth and eternal Life. This is the great sacrifice called sometimes the sacrifice of the Purusha, but much more deeply the holocaust of Prakriti, the sacrifice of the Divine Mother.”

He has also stated in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 26, p. 450:

“...If we had lived physically in Supermind from the beginning nobody could have been able to approach us nor could any Sadhana have been done. There could have been no hope of contact between ourselves and the earth and men. Even as it is, Mother has to come down towards the lower consciousness of the Sadhaks instead of keeping always in her own, otherwise they begin to say: ‘How far away, how severe you were; you do not love me, I get no help from you etc., etc.’ The Divine has to veil himself in order to meet the human.”

These beautiful verses from *Savitri* are indeed apt:

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

I cannot resist quoting Sri Aurobindo once again—what he has written in

Collected Poems, p. 99:

Coercing my godhead I have come down
 Here on the sordid earth,
 Ignorant, labouring, human grown
 Twixt the gates of death and birth.

*

June had just started. The heat was unbearable. I could not sleep. Late at night I gave the finishing touches to the idol of Mahasaraswati which I was to take to the Mother in the morning.

Sri Aurobindo explained beautifully about Mahasaraswati in his book *The Mother*, pp. 33, 34, 35:

“Mahasaraswati is the Mother’s Power of Work and her spirit of perfection and order. The youngest of the Four, she is the most skilful in executive faculty and the nearest to physical Nature. Maheshwari lays down the large lines of the world-forces, Mahakali drives their energy and impetus, Mahalakshmi discovers their rhythms and measures, but Mahasaraswati presides over their detail of organisation and execution, relation of parts and effective combination of forces and unfailing exactitude of result and fulfilment. The science and craft and technique of things are Mahasaraswati’s province. Always she holds in her nature and can give to those whom she has chosen the intimate and precise knowledge, the subtlety and patience, the accuracy of intuitive mind and conscious hand and discerning eye of the perfect worker. This Power is the strong, the tireless, the careful and efficient builder, organiser, administrator, technician, artisan and classifier of the worlds. When she takes up the transformation and new-building of the nature, her action is labourious and minute and often seems to our impatience slow and interminable, but it is persistent, integral and flawless. For the will in her works is scrupulous, unsleeping, indefatigable; leaning over us she notes and touches every little detail, finds out every minute defect, gap, twist or incompleteness, considers and weighs accurately all that has been done and all that remains still to be done hereafter. Nothing is too small or apparently trivial for her attention; nothing however impalpable or disguised or latent can escape her.... Nothing short of a perfect perfection satisfies her and she is ready to face an eternity of toil if that is needed for the fullness of her creation. Therefore of all the Mother’s powers she is the most long-suffering with man and his thousand imperfections.... A mother to our wants, a friend in our difficulties, a persistent and tranquil counsellor and mentor, chasing away with her radiant smile the clouds of gloom and fretfulness and depression, remaining always of the ever-present help, pointing to the eternal sunshine, she

is firm, quiet and persevering in the deep and continuous urge that drives us towards the integrality of the higher nature. All the work of the other Powers leans on her for its completeness; for she assures the material foundation, elaborates the stuff of detail and erects and rivets the armour of the structure.”

On the morning of June 2, the Mother sent me a printed card of a yellow chrysanthemum and these lines followed on it:

“This is the ‘energy’ to choose the Light (the golden snake), to endure the inconveniences and to reject the wrong movements (the black snake).

“My help is always with you.”

As previously arranged I went to her later, to show her the idol of Mahasaraswati and to offer the dress I had made for her. She greeted me with a warm smile. The Mother touched the image, looked at it minutely and was pleased with my work. When she saw the dress of blue birds which I had painted, she opened her eyes wide in surprise, pressed my hands and said enthusiastically:

“This is very good. If I teach you how to paint, will you learn from me?”

I answered, “Yes, of course I will learn.” At that moment I did not in the least realise that the painting she intended to teach me was not on the ordinary level but something higher and occult.

She smiled and went on:

“Very well, but first you must see my paintings in order to get certain ideas. I will call you one day in the morning and then we shall see....”

I was happy to observe her wearing on several occasions the white dress with the blue birds painted on it.

Here I would like to quote one of Sri Aurobindo’s poems, from Vol. 5, p.104—
The Blue Bird:

I am the bird of God in His blue;
Divinely high and clear
I sing the notes of the sweet and the true
For the god’s and the seraph’s ear.

I rise like a fire from the mortal’s earth
Into a griefless sky
And drop in the suffering soil of his birth
Fire-seeds of ecstasy.

While painting the birds I had felt that the work of painting was somehow familiar to me. I remember distinctly all that the Mother revealed to me of my past births one day after our meditation in her room in the Playground. One of the births, she said, was that of a well-known award-winning artist in France—this she actually saw in her vision. It could be the portraitist Madame Vigée-Lebrun she saw because as the painter in me developed I found myself extremely inclined to doing portraits. From 1957 I started imaginary portraits with crayon and later I painted several people. The Mother remarked:

“Child, you have the capacity to bring out souls when you do portraits of people.”

I may quote a passage from Sri Aurobindo Centenary Edition, Vol. 22, p. 457:

“The Mother only speaks to people about their past births when she sees definitely some scene or memory of their past in concentration;...”

I was curious about the life of Madame Vigée-Lebrun. So I went to the Library and looked up the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and found in Vol. 23, pp.145-146 the following:

VIGÉE-LEBRUN, MARIE ANNE ELISABETH

1755-1842

“French portrait painter, a general favourite at the courts of Europe, was born in Paris on April 16, 1755, the daughter of a painter, from whom she received her first instruction, though she benefited more by the advice of Gabriel François Doyen, Jean Baptiste Greuze, Joseph Vernet and others. When only 20 years of age she had made her name by her portraits of Count Orloff and Duchess of Orleans. In 1776 she married the painter and art critic Jean Baptiste Pierre Lebrun, and in 1783 her picture of ‘Peace Bringing Back Abundance’ (Louvre) gained her membership in the French Academy. When the Revolution broke out in 1789 she escaped first to Italy, where she worked in Rome and Naples. In Rome she painted the princesses Adelaide and Victoria, and at Naples ‘Lady Hamilton as Bacchante’. She then visited Vienna, Berlin and St. Petersburg, returning to Paris in 1802. In April 1802 she went to London, where she painted Byron and the Prince of Wales. She was a great traveller, and her portraits are to be found in the collections of many countries. She died in Paris at the age of 87, having been widowed for 29 years.

“Among her many sitters was Marie Antoinette, of whom she painted over 20 portraits between 1779 and 1789. A portrait of the artist is in the hall of the

painters at the Uffizi gallery, Florence, and another at the National gallery, London. The Louvre owns two portraits of Mme. Lebrun and her daughter, besides five other portraits. A full account of her eventful life is given in her *Souvenirs* (1835-37), which was translated by Lionel Strachey, *Memories of Madame Vigée Lebrun* (1903)”

After seeing the vision of the “fighting snakes”, I became more and more conscious of myself—I watched my outer being, its nature and imperfections. I did not have a moment’s rest or peace in this terrible battle between the two gigantic Forces. The strain and tension affected my health.

The Mother sent me a card showing the Gul-Mohur, “Realisation”, with these lines:

“I see that the fight between the golden and the black snake is still going on—but finally the golden snake will be victorious.

“With my love and blessings.”

(to be continued)

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A VISION-EXPERIENCE

A TRAITOR assuming the mask of innocence was leading a group of sincere people towards a catastrophe of which this group knew nothing.

They were heading for a magnificent-looking building, by the sight of which they were thrilled. The treacherous leader was telling them:

“Go in. You will find happiness and peace. All of you will feel relaxed.”

In the meanwhile I looked up at the top storey of the building. My heart missed a beat at what I saw. At a window a huge monstrous being was desperately beating against the panes in order to break out and pounce upon us. The traitor-guide was still at his job of inducing and urging the group to enter the house. Suddenly I exclaimed to my companions:

“Turn back—quick—and run for your life.”

The monster succeeded in what he was trying to do. With a tremendous crash he fell out of the window.

By some intervention of the Divine Grace he fell right upon the traitor, instantly killing him.

All of us were thus saved and we fled from the scene.

*

For few days after this vision-experience I felt extremely fatigued as if from that running away at full speed.

It is my conviction that the forces of falsehood will come to a clash among themselves and get nullified. And there will be the Victory of the Supreme Truth.

HUTA

THE EGO CAN EXIT

WOULD it were true
I had senses keen
To read every sign
Of your coming,

Soft steps, whisper of your breath
And shadow of your secret face!

You come from deep within
Or the vast space without,
Unseen, unheard, unfelt,
And usurp my kingdom as soon as I awake.

Only in dreams unremembered
I am the king, as also in early dawn
When the silver curtain dips
Between wakefulness and sleep.

But now She assures
That by using Her Will I can
Force you to leave and be myself
Awake or asleep, acting or dreaming.

And slowly the doors will open,
The long closed dark shrine
Deep in the heart's cave come alive
As She will breathe life and light
And delight that spreads itself.

DINKAR

AGNI IN THE RIG-VEDA AND ASWAPATHY IN SAVITRI

SOME REFLECTIONS APROPOS OF A TERM COMMENTED
UPON BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

I

IN the *Mother India* of August 15, 1976 Nolini Kanta Gupta has given a very pointed and appealing interpretation of a term in *Savitri* which had puzzled Huta and me and led us to consult him. The term occurs in the course of a description of the Yogic development which Aswapathy, Savitri's father, undergoes. The context runs:

A Seer was born, a shining Guest of Time.
For him mind's limiting firmament ceased above,
In the griffin forefront of the Night and Day
A gap was rent in the all-concealing vault;
The conscious ends of being went rolling back:
The landmarks of the little person fell,
The island ego joined the continent:
Overpassed was this world of rigid limiting forms:
Life's barriers opened into the Unknown.

(Book One, Canto Three, p. 25, 1970 ed.)

Nolini, after reminding us that the Griffin is "Golden Hawk—Winged Lion", explained the symbol as standing for "The piercing eye of soaring aspiration+ Upsurging energy of the pure vital" and asked us to remember "Vishnu's Garuda+ Durga's Lion". Finally, he wrote : "With these twin powers you cross safely the borderland between the lower and the upper hemispheres—the twilight world (Night and Day)—Griffin is the guardian God of the passage—*dvārapālaka*."

All this strikes me as illuminatively correct in its central bearing. What I may venture to add are a number of ideas that have occurred to me while reading Sri Aurobindo's translations of the Rig-veda and his comments at a certain place. These ideas may call for a slight shift of perspective in the last part of Nolini's gloss but mostly they will serve to enrich that gloss with a few shades borrowed from an ancient symbology to mingle with Sri Aurobindo's own immediate esoteric vision. I wish to suggest that together with this vision Sri Aurobindo had in mind a group of Vedic associations. My thesis is that his "griffin" holds, fused in itself, some of the powers and functions and forms the Rig-veda ascribes to the Fire-god Agni.

To every reader of the Rig-veda the designation and image in the first line of our passage—

A Seer was born, a shining Guest of Time—

is bound to recall several verses in the hymns to Agni translated by Sri Aurobindo in their spiritual sense:

“O thou who shinest out with thy lustres; O great luminousness, O Seer...” (X.140.1).¹

“I voice the Shining One..., the guest in whom is nothing hostile...” (X.122.1).²

“...he is the seer and he lights up the sky...” (X.20.4).³

“Head of heaven and traveller of the earth a universal Power was born to us in the Truth, a Guest of men, a seer and absolute King...” (VI.7.1)⁴

The second line of our passage, with its sense of a breakthrough of the infinite—a sense linking up with all that follows the “griffin” line—has also affinities with what is said about Agni’s work:

“Thou art he who breaks through, thou openest to us the luminous impulsions; open to us the conquest of the great Riches, O Fire” (VIII.23.29).⁵

“From thy place in the supreme region break through to those who are below.”
...(VIII.75.15).⁶

That the true power of Agni should particularly manifest in Aswapathy is hinted pretty clearly in proximity to our passage, by the very designation given to him by Sri Aurobindo when, after recounting at some length the stages of man’s spiritual ascent and liberation, he illustrates them in the case of that human aspirant:

This now was witnessed in that son of Force,
In him that high transition laid its base.⁷

The Rig-veda brings us again and again the same expression for Agni as Sri Aurobindo uses here for Aswapathy. For example, III.14.1 has “Fire the son of force”; the 4th and 6th verses of this hymn have “son of Force”; while IV.2.2 reads “O Son

¹ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, Vol. II of the Birth Centenary Edition, p. 431.

² *Ibid.*, p. 429.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 397.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

⁷ *Savitri*, p. 24.

of Force..."¹ Agni in his explicit aspect would thus naturally occur in the course of Aswapathy's progress.

But when we come to the line—

In the griffin forefront of the Night and Day—

can we still think of Agni acting a special role or do the words take us quite out of the Agni-universe of spiritual discourse? The last part of the phrase, commencing from "forefront", has a very strong echo of the Veda. We may begin with recollecting utterances like:

"Shine through the nights and the days... Thou art by night and day inviolable" (VII.15.8 and 15).²

"...thou art beloved of the great Dawns and thou shinest in the dwelling places of the night" (VIII.19.31).³

Then we may proceed to consider the opening hymn of the Fifth Mandala⁴ and one particular gloss by Sri Aurobindo on a passage there. As almost everywhere else, Agni in the hymn is called "the seer, manifold in his fixed knowledge" (verse 6) and "that illumined seer, who achieves perfection in the pilgrim-sacrifices" (7) as well as "our benignant guest" (8) and "wide of light...the beloved guest of human beings" (9). But most important for us is to note verses 4 and 5 and Sri Aurobindo's comments on them. The relevant portions of the verses are :

"...when two dawns of different forms give birth to this Fire the white Horse is born in front of the days.

"He was born victorious in front of the days, established in established things..."

Sri Aurobindo's comments not only draw out the meaning of these statements within their own context but also exhibit through them the Veda's general sense as may be read from other passages of similar import. An instance of such analogues may be cited:

"Darkness and Dawn we desire, two mighty Mothers of the Truth...increasers of our spacious being" (V.5.6).⁵

Sri Aurobindo's comments go:

¹ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, pp. 134, 135, 166.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 312, 313.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-03.

⁵ *The Secret of the Veda*, pp. 376-77.

“Night and Dawn are the two unlike mothers who jointly give birth to Agni, Night, the *avyakta*, unmanifest state of knowledge and being, the power of Avidya, Dawn, the *vyakta*, manifest state of knowledge and being, the power of Vidya. They are the two Dawns, the two agencies which prepare the manifestation of God in us, Night fostering Agni in secret on the activities of Avidya, the activities of unilluminated mind, life and body by which the god in us grows out of matter towards spirit, out of earth up to heaven, Dawn manifesting him again, more and more, until he is ready here for his continuous, pure and perfect activity. When this point of our journey towards perfection is reached he is born, *śveta vāji* [‘white horse’] in the van of the days. We have here one of those great Vedic figures with a double sense in which the Rishis at once revealed and concealed their high knowledge, revealed it to the Aryan mind, concealed it from the un-Aryan. Agni is the white horse which appears galloping in front of the days,—the same image is used with a similar Vedantic sense in the opening verse of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad; but the horse here is not, as in the Upanishad, *aśva*, the horse of vital and material being in the state of life-force, but *vāji*, the horse of Being generally, Being manifested in substance whether of mind, life, body or idea or the three higher streams proper to our spiritual being. Agni therefore manifests as the fullness, the infinity, the *brhat* of all this sevenfold substantial being that is the world we are, but white, the colour of illumined purity. He manifests therefore at this stage primarily as that mighty wideness, purity and illumination of our being which is the true basis of the complete and unassailable *siddhi* in the yoga, the only basis on which right knowledge, right thinking, right living, right enjoyment can be firmly, vastly and perpetually seated. He appears therefore in the van of the days, a great increasing state of illumined force and being,—for that is the image of *ahan*,—which are the eternal future of the mortal when he has attained immortality...

“This divine force is born victorious by its very purity and infinity over all the hostile forces that prevent, obstruct, limit or strive to destroy our accomplished freedoms, powers, illuminations and widenesses; by his victory he ushers in the wide days of the *siddha*, for which these nights and dawns of our human life are the preparatory movements.”¹

We have here the picture of a divine Presence that establishes itself in the human consciousness, turning that consciousness into a figure of divinity. We have pointers to the light of a Seer-Guest being “born victorious” in one who was so far a mental creature. As a result, “fullness”, “infinity”, the vastness (*brhat*) of the spiritual existence are realised. And by the help of this light the realised “freedoms, powers, illuminations and widenesses” are guarded. Also, the light comes from both Night and Day and moves “in front of the days” in the symbolic shape of a supernatural animal—a White Horse of illumined power—by whom or in whom our Night and Day are transcended and a greater lustre of knowledge revealed beyond them.

¹ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, pp. 498-99.

We may add that the Veda, on more than one occasion, has even a couple of successive verses which unite the idea of a gap or passage or portal as in Nolini's remarks on the "griffin"-line as well as on the line,

A gap was rent in the all-concealing vault,

and the idea of Agni's connection with and manifestation from both Night and Day. We have already quoted verse 6 of V.5. Now we may repeat it with the verse preceding it :

"Swing open, ye Doors divine, and give us easy passage to our expanding...

"Darkness and Dawn we desire, two mighty Mothers of the Truth,... increasers of our spacious being" (V.5.5-6).¹

A similar context has the very terms "Night and Day" employed in translation by Sri Aurobindo for the birth-givers of Agni :

"Widely expanding may they spring apart making themselves beautiful for us as wives for their lords; O divine doors, vast and all-pervading, be easy of approach to the gods.

"Let night and day come gliding to us and, queens of sacrifice, sit close together in their place of session..." (X.110.5-6).²

In the lines from *Savitri* all these phenomena of spiritual progress appear to be projected and by the Vedic evidence on Agni, including the symbol of a supernatural animal, the "griffin forefront" should be the Seer-and-Guest's own position as part of a gap or passage or portal formed by Night and Day, those two "divine doors" seen by the occult eye of the inner sacrificer. What they lead to in the Vedic vision—"the wide days of the *siddha*", as Sri Aurobindo puts it—is reflected in some later *Savitri*-lines closing the account from which we have been quoting:

Freedom and empire called to him from on high;
Above mind's twilight and life's star-led night
There gleamed the dawn of a spiritual day.³

But here we are faced with the intriguing question: Can Agni Vedicly lend himself to the "griffin"-image?

Agni, as we have observed, is pictured in the Veda as a White Horse. Sometimes he is called a Bull, as in "the bull of the thousand horns" (V.1.8.)⁴ and "the luminous

¹ *The Secret of the Veda*, pp. 76-77.

² *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 425.

³ *Savitri*, p. 26.

⁴ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 202.

Bull” (VIII.75.6).¹ It is seldom realised that the ancient scripture can actually tend Sri Aurobindo to see him as a griffin.

Nolini has spoken of a Hawk as a component of the griffin. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1964, p. 541, col. 2) describes the griffin as “Fabulous creature with eagle’s head & wings & lion’s body.” This would suit Nolini quite well since he brings in “Vishnu’s Garuda”. Now, hawk and eagle and falcon are kin birds. If any one of them can be found Vedically associated with Agni, half of our case would be rendered credible. At the very start we may mention that, even when Agni is called the White Horse (named Dadhikravan), the horse’s movement is linked to the sense of an eagle in flight. Sri Aurobindo translates IV.40.3 which continues the picture of Dadhikravan: “When he runs, when he speeds in his passage, as the wing of the Bird is a wind that blows about him in his greed of the gallop; as the wing that beats about the breast of the rushing Eagle, so about the breast of Dadhikravan when with the Force he carries us beyond.”² In X.11.4 Sri Aurobindo has the rendering about Agni: “Now the Bird, the missioned Hawk, has brought the draught of the great and seeing Wine to the pilgrim-sacrifice.”³ In various hymns we have descriptions of Agni like: “Forth I flew, with rapid speed a Falcon” (IV.27.1)⁴—“The Falcon took and brought the Soma” (IV.26.7)⁵—“Agni, Falcon of the sky” (VII.15.4).⁶ Either an Eagle or a Hawk or a Falcon is conjured up in general terms in X.91.14: “Fire the nectar-drinker who bears on his beak the Soma-wine.”⁷ There is no doubt that one-half of the griffin-image is perfectly amenable.

What about the other half—the lion? Sri Aurobindo’s translation of X.79.6 about Agni reads: “In his play unplaying a tawny lion, eating only to devour...”⁸ Nor is this the only instance. III.9.4 compares Agni to a lion couched in his lair,⁹ while III.2.11 tells us that he is “born as a lion.”¹⁰ Then there is I.95.5 where also the lion-image for Agni occurs: Tvashtar’s two worlds are said to “turn to him and reverence the lion”.¹¹

If Agni is both lion and eagle or hawk or falcon, Sri Aurobindo could justifiably join the two creatures and set Agni as a griffin acting like the more frequent horse in the forefront of both Night and Day. Night and Day, with Agni in their van, would not be exclusively or altogether the worlds of Divine Knowledge and human ignorance. Nor would they constitute simply a twilight mid-world, with a griffin-guarded

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 197-8.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 393.

⁴ *The Hymns of the Rgveda*, Translated with a Popular Commentary by Ralph T. H. Griffith (The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 1974), Vol. I, p. 429.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 14.

⁷ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 424.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 413.

⁹ Griffith, Vol. I, p. 329.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

portal, across which one passes from the lower hemisphere of existence to the higher. Besides being, in an ultimate sense, the material inconscience or ignorance on the one hand and the Supreme Light on the other, they would be the dark and the bright sides of mental consciousness itself, within both of which Agni, the ever-wakeful, functions and beyond both of which he goes as their leader towards the infinite and eternal. He serves, in the form of the griffin, as the new-born Seer in man, the shining Guest hailing from eternity into man's time-existence, through whom or in whom there comes about "a gap...rent in the all-concealing vault". The rending of this vault by means of Agni's established presence is pictured again a little later in the lines:

All the grey inhibitions were torn off
And broken the intellect's hard and lustrous lid.¹

The last phrase here indicates that the bright no less than the dark is a portion of the human intellectuality that has to be cloven with the help of the freshly arrived and established Fire-God who in the Rig-veda is simultaneously the mortal's visitor from heaven and his immortal in-dweller, purifier, guide, mediator, liberator.

As already suggested, Agni may himself be looked upon as the break, the gap, in the lid or vault formed by the human mind. In that aspect he is at once the portal and its guardian *à la* Nolini, poised between the two hemispheres. Further, since Vedicly every god is also all the gods under this or that particular face and since Agni especially is the bringer or revealer or fashioner of all the gods in man—"in thee are all the gods" (V.3.1)²—the identification of him with Vishnu's Garuda and with Durga's Lion is quite in order. Hence what Nolini has said stands substantially unchanged. Even his "twilight world" may be accepted in the sense that the bright and the dark of the human intellect, at play together in the same psychological domain, make a mixture of Day and Night. Has not Sri Aurobindo himself spoken of "mind's twilight" along with "life's star-led night"? If our vision is correct, only certain nuances of explanation undergo a change owing to the griffin, as well as the Seer and the Guest, being identified with Agni and recognised as in essence emergent from Vedic symbology.

It is even possible to discern Agni at work in the long passage preceding the one with which we are concerned. The Seer-Guest is born as the final expression of a number of moulding movements by a Divine Power upon and within Aswapathy. We may quote the lines between

In him that high transition laid its base
and
A Seer was born, a shining Guest of Time.

¹ *Savitri*, p. 25.

² *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 206.

These lines run:

Original and supernal Immanence
 Of which all Nature's process is the art,
 The cosmic Worker set his secret hand
 To turn this frail earth-engine to heaven-use.
 A Presence wrought behind the ambiguous screen:
 It beat his soil to bear a Titan's weight.
 Refining half-hewn blocks of natural strength
 It built his soul into a statued god.
 The Craftsman of the magic stuff of self
 Who labours at his high and difficult plan
 In the wide workshop of the wonderful world,
 Modelled in inward Time his rhythmic parts.
 Then came the abrupt transcendent miracle:
 The masked immaculate Grandeur could outline,
 At travail in the occult womb of life,
 His dreamed magnificence of things to be.
 A crown of the architecture of the worlds,
 A mystery of married Earth and Heaven
 Annexed divinity to the mortal scheme.¹

As parallel to this picture of a masked cosmic Worker, Form-maker and Craftsman travelling with his mighty hands to prepare earthly mortality for perfection and joining it to heavenly divinity, we may cite a few verses about Agni from the Rig-veda:

"This is the universal godhead who by his greatness labours in all the peoples" (I.59.7).²

"This is the one god who envelops with himself the grandeurs of all the gods" (I.68.1).³

"...the satisfying fullness of thee becomes all-pervading in its greatness along both the continents, Earth and Heaven" (II.1.15).⁴

"The Flame is the head of heaven and the navel of the earth and he is the power that moves at work in the two worlds" (I.59.2).⁵

"He holds in his hands all might: sitting in the secret cave he upholds the gods in his strength" (I.6.72).⁶

¹ *Savitri*, p. 24-5.

² *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 51.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

“He forms within us the seer-wisdoms of the eternal Creator holding in his hands many powers of the godheads. May Fire become the treasure-master of the riches, ever fashioning all immortal things” (I.72.1).¹

“...come to be with us like a Form-Maker coming to the forms he has to carve” (VIII.102.8).²

“Thou art Twashtri and fashionest fullness of force for thy worshipper” (II.1.5).³

“O Fire, thou art the craftsman Ribhu, near to us and to be worshipped with obeisance of surrender” (II.1.10).⁴

“A skilled craftsman, a god knowing all the manifestations of knowledge, he forms the beautiful and desirable Name, the luminous seat of the being in the movement of the peace...” (III.5.6).⁵

Summing up Agni’s functions in the spiritual career of the aspirant, Sri Aurobindo writes:

“Agni manifests divine potentialities in a death-besieged body; Agni brings them to effective actuality and perfection. He creates in us the luminous forms of the Immortals.

“This he does as a cosmic worker labouring upon the rebellious human material... But it is in proportion as we learn to subjugate the ego and compel it to bow down in every act to the universal Being and to serve consciously in its least movements the supreme Will, that Agni himself takes form in us. The Divine Will becomes present and conscient in a human mind and enlightens it with the divine Knowledge.”⁶

With these words we come back to the sense of Agni the Seer being born in Aswapathy as—to quote a phrase from Sri Aurobindo’s *Rose of God*—“Guest of the marvellous Hour”.⁷ And well indeed might Aswapathy be linked with Agni. He may be considered as Agni himself putting forth a human vehicle out of his being for world-action. Not only is he called, like Agni, “Son of Force” but his very name “Aswapathy” means “Lord of the Horse”, reminding us of Dadhikravan and of the Rig-vedic sloka:

“Increase for us, O Fire, the acquisition and the growth of those who are men that are illuminates and...who...have achieved the power of the horse” (V.10.1-2).⁸

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

² *Ibid.*, p. 371.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁶ *The Secret of the Veda*, pp. 268-9.

⁷ *Collected Poems* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1972), p. 584.

⁸ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 221

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At this juncture the objection might be raised: "The natural construing of the lines—

A Seer was born, a shining Guest of Time.
For him the limiting firmament ceased above—

would make the pronoun 'him' refer to 'Seer' and 'Guest'. If that is so, the 'Griffin-forefront' cannot be related to the Seer-Guest, for the line immediately after the one mentioning the Hawk-Lion—

A gap was rent in the all-concealing vault—

merely elaborates the phenomenon of the limiting firmament's cessation and therefore must be understood to differentiate the Seer-Guest who experiences the gap from the strange creature who is located in the forefront of the Night and Day. Moreover, the forefront-position is observed rather than taken by whoever is 'him', whoever experiences the gap. The two cannot be the same being under different aspects. If 'him' connects with the Seer-Guest the griffin-forefront cannot stand for the latter entity. Your whole interpretation here misfires—unless you can justify what amounts to an identification by you of 'him' with Aswapathy. A straightforward reading of the syntax rules out such an identification completely, even though your study of the Agni-symbolism in the Veda as well as in the passage concerned may strongly suggest it by relating the griffin to the Seer-Guest. Can you ever render conceivable a syntactic reference to Aswapathy in that 'him'?"

I believe that an answer can quite convincingly be given. We may commence with the simple remark that there is a full-stop after the line on the Seer-Guest. After this closure by the punctuation, a reference to Aswapathy, directly continuing the lengthy narration of his development, which precedes this line, is perfectly conceivable. All the more is it so because, in the context from which our quotation derives, the Divine Power, variously named "Original and supernal Immanence", "the cosmic Worker", "the Craftsman of the magic stuff of self" and "the masked immaculate Grandeur"—is not the only referent of a cognate to the word "him": the possessive pronoun "his". Aswapathy too is often denoted by the same vocable.

Let us briefly note the sequence of the human aspirant's progress. "His soil" is prepared and "his soul" is built into the statue of a god. "His rhythmic parts" are modelled "in inward time" by the World-Craftsman. Then suddenly divinity enters the human formation. There is the birth of a Seer, Time receives a shining Guest. It is the being of Aswapathy that holds the Seer's birth and acts host to that luminous visitor from beyond time. The phrase "in him" is inevitably to be understood when the Seer-Guest is born. The line about this deep-visioned heaven-sent Splendour is a link in the story of the spiritual growth taking place within Aswapathy and

sums up the culmination of the process which starts with the verse:

In him that high transition laid its base.
So the line—
For him the limiting firmament ceased above—

can very naturally be regarded as picking up the thread of the account about Aswapathy and as opening a report of the consequences—for this human aspirant—of what has been recorded immediately before as having happened in his being.

This eminent possibility gains further strength from the verb “ceased” in the next line. “Ceased” is highly suggestive of a condition previously continuing for whoever is “him” and afterwards coming to a stop. But how could a just-actualised Seer-Guest from the Timeless have such a history? Only Aswapathy could earlier experience “mind’s limiting firmament” and then its cessation due to his harbouring a recent Seer-Guest in himself. Again, the later line—

The landmarks of the little person fell—¹

can scarcely agree with a “him” implying the new-born Seer-Guest. This entity was never “the little person”. Aswapathy knew that state once, and subsequently found its landmarks falling because he had by then realised in himself something very far from it.

Such a view is supported by the fact that after nine lines from the end of our passage—lines in which the narration of the experiences begun in our passage is prolonged and completed—we have the statement:

His march now soared into an eagle’s flight.
Out of apprenticeship to ignorance
Wisdom upraised him to her master craft
And made him an arch-mason of the soul...²

It is certain that “his” and “him” here refer to the same agent who is “him” in our passage. So we have to ask: “Who is it whose march now soared eagle-like?” It cannot be the Seer and the shining Guest. It must be someone who marched in the past differently from “now”: in the past his marching was not “an eagle’s flight”. Surely, Aswapathy’s new experience in contrast to his old one is being spoken of. The Seer, the shining Guest, who has just appeared cannot be this being with a past of another kind than his present. Nor could he have known “apprenticeship to ignorance”. In that case “the griffin forefront of the Night and Day” would not be other than a position of the new-born Seer-Guest. Besides, the “eagle’s flight” may join up with one half of the griffin-image: it is a state which can align that image with the great Advent into Aswapathy’s being.

¹ *Savitri*, p. 25.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.

Both the aptness of the phrase about the Seer-Guest to Agni and the aptness of the phrase about the “forefront” to the same god may be considered amply supported. As a result, “For him” should belong to the same universe of discourse as the initial “In him”: that is, it should denote Aswapathy. Of course, the Seer-Guest too is part of Aswapathy, his own freshly found divine reality and therefore himself as a deep-visions heavenly Splendour; but he has another part also, which he transcends by discovering this reality. Simultaneously he is divine and human. Not the divine side but that double individuality, which still retains the human side, is intended by the locution we are interpreting.

A complete confirmation of our reading emerges when we go a little backward and examine the statements on man’s general ascent and liberation, with which Sri Aurobindo prefaces the sequence of Aswapathy’s inward and upward movements. The terminal transfiguring step in that ascent and liberation corresponding to what we have been discussing for Aswapathy is presented. There is a futile-seeming “endless spiral”

Until at last is reached the giant point
Through which his Glory shines for whom we were made
And we break into the infinity of God.
Across our nature’s border line we escape
Into supernature’s arc of living light.¹

Quite clearly, a distinction is suggested between the one whose “Glory shines”—“A Seer..., a shining Guest”—through a “giant point” of development—“a gap ...rent in the all-concealing vault”—and us the human aspirants, like Aswapathy, who cross “over nature’s border line”—“mind’s limiting firmament”—and arise into “Supernature’s arc of living light”, a beyond which is figured in our context by the later lines:

Truth unpartitioned found immense sky-room,
An empyrean vision saw and knew;
The bounded mind became a boundless light...²

The inference to be drawn is that what stands in our passage for the “Glory” must be distinguished in some sense from what stands for the “we” who break into supernature’s light by escaping from nature’s constricting border-line. That “Glory” is indeed the fulfilment of our own being since “we were made” for Him to whom it belongs, it is the Seer, the Shining Guest, born in our temporal existence as our own divine self-realisation, yet it is a celestial entrant into us and we are also the all-too-human self which is now being exceeded. In short, “For him” applies to our composite being, the Aswapathy that we are, and not to the luminous Visitor who is the higher half of us.

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *Savitri*, p. 24.

² *Ibid.* p. 25.

WHO WERE THE ANCIENT DRAVIDIANS?

V. Chandra Mouli, I. A. S., Director, Ministry of Labour, has a very important passage on this subject in his article, "Social Anthropology of Hindu Education—Its Message to World Unity" in World Union (Pondicherry), January 1979, p. 17. With acknowledgement to that periodical we are quoting this passage here, hoping to set at rest a long-drawn-out controversy and clear a lot of confusion.

'DRUMA' in Sanskrit means 'a tree'. Even in Greek 'druis' means 'tree'. The Oxford Dictionary gives the Indo-Germanic equivalents as dru, daru, taru and tree. Hence the word 'deva-daru' or the deodar, a kind of cedar. The King Cobra is called 'ophiophagus' because it eats the rat-snakes. It is also known as the 'hamadryad' meaning 'of the same tree', because of a Greek myth referring to a wood-nymph fabled to live and die with the tree she inhabited. Even the Roman word 'Druid' meant only a tree-worshipping priest amongst the ancient Celts of Gaul, although in native Irish and Welsh legends it also meant a stone-worshipping sorcerer or soothsayer.

Thus, any tree-worshipping people were always called in the Indo-Germanic languages only as 'Dramida' or 'Druida'. Even today, tree-worship is extremely popular in India, especially in the South, where even ancient Tamil kings had a sacred tree, cutting which, was tantamount to conquering his territory.

From the foregoing account it is clear that 'Druma' (tree) and 'Ida' (worship) denoted the 'Dramida' 'Dravida' group of people who worship trees. Tree worship is an ancient Hindu ritual and those people amongst whom tree-worship was very popular were called Dravidas. A priest is one who worships the fire, says the Rig-veda. 'Agnim *Idae* Purohitam.' Here the word 'Id' means worship. This word survives to this day, even in Muslim festivals like Bakr-*Id* or *Id*-Mubarak. Connection of the word '*Id*' to the Greek word 'idol' is lost in antiquity, although Greek 'Idos' refers to 'form'.¹ Just as the early Hindu caste labels had no relevance to birth, so also the word 'Dravida', meaning "a tree worshipper", had no relevance whatsoever to any race or language.

¹ Editor's note : Strictly the original Greek words are 'Eidolon' and 'Eidos'. 'Idol' is a derivative through the Latin 'Idolum'.

HOW I BECAME A HINDU—2

(Continued from the issue of July 1982)

I HAD a brief encounter with the Sthanakavasi Svetambara sect of Jainism at about the same time. The school in which I was a student was a Svetambara Jain school. The relative with whom I stayed was also a Jain. There was a daily period in our school for teaching the elements of Jain dharma. But the Jain community which I saw from close quarters was too decadent, self-centred and morose for my taste. The lectures of some Jain sadhus which I attended in the local sthanuka were narrow and sectarian and never made any sense to me. What scandalised me most was the Jain version of Sri Krishna who was portrayed as a crook. I was told that Sri Krishna had descended into the fifth hell for the killings in which he had indulged and that he was still there. I had to wait for years before I came to understand Bhagavan Mahavir and Jainism *via* my understanding of the Buddha and Buddhism. Both of them, I found, had scaled the same Himalayan heights of the soul.

A friend and classmate one day gave me the biographies of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda written by Romain Rolland. I was enthralled and felt strongly drawn towards Vedanta. The library in Delhi which I frequented had the complete works of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ram Tirtha in 8 volumes each. I read all of them. But my gain was very little indeed. The mistake I made was to imagine that the mystic consciousness, which alone could witness the truths of Vedanta, was a matter of mental, at best intellectual, attitudinising. Both Ramakrishna and Vivekananda were to come back to me in later years as embodiments of our great spiritual and cultural traditions.

Five paise of the old currency was not exactly a small sum for me. But I gladly parted with it for a small-sized copy of the *New Testament* which a pavement bookseller had in his collection of old books. I did not know at that time that I could have acquired a much better edition—and that for the asking—if I had approached some Christian church or mission. I did not know any at that time. I read the gospel part of the *New Testament* immediately. The rest of it did not interest me. But the personality of Christ fascinated me so much that I bought a picture of Christ on the cross and put it on the wall of my small cell along with the pictures of Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ram Tirtha. The Sermon on the Mount intermingled and became one with the message of Mahatma Gandhi.

It was at about this time that I came in contact with Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh also. Some of my classmates were members of this organisation of which I had never heard so far. They invited me to a function held in Gandhi Grounds on the occasion of Vijayadashami. I was very much impressed by the mass drill and the torchlight procession that I saw. But the speech by Sri Vasantarao left me aghast. Amongst other things he said: “It is a sin and a crime to be weak. The Vedas had prescribed that a lion should be slaughtered in one of the sacrifices. But who could catch

a lion? So the poor goat was substituted for it... Why? Simply because the goat was weak." I had often joined in singing Surdas's famous song *nirbala ke bala Rama*. Jesus had also told me that the meek shall inherit the earth. This denigration of the weak and glorification of the strong, therefore, scandalised me at that time. I had to learn a lot from history, past and present, before I realised that Sri Vasantarao was stating a great truth. It is indeed a sin and a crime to be weak. It is only the strong who can fight for *dharma* and practise *kshama*.

But as my moral and intellectual life was preparing to settle down in a universe of firm faith provided by Mahatma Gandhi, my emotional life was heading towards an upheaval which I had not anticipated. Let me hasten to clarify that this upheaval had nothing to do with love or romance. The dimensions of this disturbance were quite different. I started doubting, first of all slowly and then rather strongly, if there was a moral order in the Universe at large and in the human society in which I lived. The sages, saints and thinkers whom I had honoured so far were sure that the world was made and governed by a God who was *satyam*, Truth, *shivam*, Good, *sundaram*, Beauty. But all around me I saw much that was untrue, unwholesome and ugly. God and His creation could not be reconciled.

This problem of evil arose and gripped my mind partly because of my personal situation in life. In spite of my pose of humility learnt from Mahatma Gandhi, I was harbouring a sense of great self-esteem. I was a good student who had won distinctions and scholarships at every stage. I had read a lot of books which made me feel learned and wise. I was trying to lead a life of moral endeavour which I thought made me better than most of my fellowmen. Standing at the confluence of these several streams of self-esteem, I came to believe that I was somebody in particular and that the society in which I lived owed me some special and privileged treatment. All this may sound ridiculous. But people who take themselves too seriously are seldom known for a sense of humour.

My objective situation, however, presented a stark contrast to the subjective world in which I loved to live. I was very poor and had to lead a hard life. My learning, whatever it was worth, did not seem to impress anyone except my teachers and a few classmates. Most people around me thought that I was a bookworm and a crank. My interest in Arya Samaj, the freedom movement and Harijan uplift had alienated the family elders in the village. I had even suffered physical assault from one of them. But the unkindest cut of all was that whenever I visited the home of some city classmate who liked me, his family people made it a point to ignore me as a village bumpkin outside the ken of their class. I was always so poorly dressed as to be mistaken for one of their servants. It took me a long time to forget and forgive the father of a close friend who chided his son in my presence for having fallen into bad company. I did not know at that time that our upper classes are normally very uppish and that their culture and good manners are generally reserved for their social superiors.

Over a period of time I found that I was getting overwhelmed by a great sense of loneliness and self-pity. This black mood got intensified by my voluminous read-

ings of the great tragedies from Western literature. Thomas Hardy was one of my most favourite novelists. I read almost all his works. The comedies of Shakespeare I always gave up midway. But I lapped up his tragedies. I know by heart all the soliloquies of Hamlet. And I thought that my situation was summed up by the following stanza in Gray's *Elegy*:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

I was sure that I was one of those gems and flowers which would never get the appreciation they deserved by virtue of their brilliance and fragrance. I translated the whole poem into Hindi verse.

But, by and large, the problem of evil was occasioned by the cruelty, oppression, high-handedness and injustice which I witnessed in the world around me. I shall describe only one of the many instances which revolted me. Our village had a large population of Harijans who, besides other occupations, worked as agricultural labourers also. Several other villages in our neighbourhood ran short of agricultural labour at harvest time. These villages, therefore, promised better wages than those paid in our village. Harijans from our village naturally started going to the neighbouring villages, which was not to the liking of peasant proprietors in our village. A band of these strong men descended on the Harijan *basti* one day, demolished several Harijan houses and threatened to rape Harijan women if their menfolk did not agree to work exclusively in our village for wages determined by the village panchayat in which the Harijans had no representation. I happened to be in the village that day and went on a visit to the *basti* along with boys from the Harijan Ashram. I could not suppress my own tears when I saw a newly married Harijan bride stunned into tearless silence by the terror of it all.

At this critical juncture in my life, I made great friends with a classmate who was a student of philosophy which was not my subject. He was very well read. But what was more, he had the gift of the gab. His company came as a godsend at a time when I was in great need of it. It became our daily routine to go for long walks along the Jamuna or on unfrequented roads outside Delhi, which was a rather small city at that time. During these walks, he gave me lessons in inductive and deductive logic, ethics, psychology and the various systems of Western philosophy. It was all very fascinating and a new world of thought and perception opened before me. I still regard him as one of my two great *gurus*.

In between, however, he would express his own views and judgments on subjects about which I thought I had already arrived at final conclusions. We had a violent argument one day when he denounced the marriage institution and opined that a man and a woman should be free to live together as long as they liked each other.

But I felt murderous in spite of my devotion to non-violence when one fine morning he declared that Gandhi was the embodiment of all reaction. This was a new term for me. He asked me to read Yashpal's *Gandhivada ka Shavaparikshana* and find out for myself. I had never heard of Yashpal nor did I care. I never read the book till I became a communist several years later. My friend was not a communist at that time and never became even a Marxist in his life. But he was an admirer of the revolutionaries whom, he said, some people wrongly described as terrorists. I knew nothing about any revolutionaries or terrorists except Bhagat Singh whom Mahatma Gandhi had described as a misguided patriot.

My mental defences in support of Gandhism were giving way one by one under assault after assault mounted by this philosopher friend whom I loved as a remarkable human being and to whom I conceded a superiority of intellect and knowledge. But I refused to share his conviction that this world was created and controlled by the Devil who off and on spread some grains of happiness over his net in order better to trap the helpless human beings. I was not prepared to give up all hope so fully and finally. But the evolutionistic explanation of the world, inanimate and animate, which I had read in H.G. Wells's *Outline of History* a year or two before, now suddenly started coming alive in my consciousness. So far I had remembered only some unconventional observations made in this big book, namely, that Ashoka was the greatest king in the annals of human history, that Alexander and Napoleon were criminals and that Mohammed was some sort of vagabond. Now I started wondering whether this world was really a chance concourse of atoms with no purposive consciousness leading it towards a Godly goal and no moral order governing at the heart of its matrix.

Another nail in the coffin which Gandhism had now started becoming for me was driven by the book *Gandhism Versus Socialism* which attracted my attention at the Sasta Sahitya Mandal book-shop. Till that time I knew nothing about socialism. The controversy between Gandhiji and Subhash Chandra Bose had brought this term to my notice for the first time several years ago. I had referred the matter to my friend in the Harijan Ashram. He had told me that the socialists belonged to the Bomb Party and believed in violence. That had settled the matter for me. But as I read this book, socialism underwent a tremendous transformation in my eyes. In the debate between a number of leading Gandhians and socialists, the Gandhians had lost the contest. I was struck by the fact that while the Gandhians were on the defensive all along the line and were trying to prove that Gandhism was also socialism, the socialists were on the offensive and saying in so many words that Gandhism was not socialism but something reactionary and revivalist instead.

Now I was in a desperate hurry to get a good knowledge of the doctrine of socialism. It was prescribed reading also for my next year's course in the history of Western political thought. But I did not want to wait till the next year. The Syllabus for B.A. Hons. had Harold Laski's *Communism* at the top of the list recommended for advanced reading on socialism. I borrowed a copy of this book from the university library and sat down on the lawn outside to read it. Never before in my life had a

book fascinated me as this one did. I was still reading it when it grew dark and I could read no more. I brought it home and it was late in the night when I finally finished it. It was comparatively a small book. When I woke up next morning, Gandhism was lying in shambles all around me.

Laski led me straight to two more books in quick succession. Both of them were proscribed by the British government at that time. But our professor of political science had both of them and gladly agreed to lend them to me on the condition that I carried them wrapped in a newspaper and opened them only in the privacy of my room. One of these books was *Theory and Practice of Socialism* by John Stratchey. The other was *Red Star Over China* by Edgar Snow. I found them as absorbing as Laski's *Communism*. Stratchey was later to leave communism and join the British Labour Party. Edgar Snow was to be denounced by the Chinese communists as a C.I.A agent. But these two books, while they lasted with the reputations of their authors intact, made more communists in India than any other books.

A desire to read Karl Marx now became irresistible. First, I read the *Communist Manifesto*. It was simply breathtaking in the breadth and depth of its sweep over vast vistas of human history. It was also a great call to action to change the world and end exploitation and social injustice for all time to come. What was most reassuring was that revolutionary action was only an aid to the evolutionary spiral of social forces towards an ultimate resolution of all class contradictions, inevitably and in spite of all opposition. I need not have read any more of Marx to become a Marxist. But I did read two volumes of the *Das Capital*, page to page. The meticulous and painstaking scholarship of Marx in the age-old and true German tradition taxed my mental capacities to the limit. But I was left in no doubt that he had built his case against capitalism and for the Labour Theory of Value on a solid foundation of recorded facts and figures and by an exercise of razor-sharp logic which left no loopholes and no loose ends.

I do not remember if I read any more communist classics or any other communist literature at this time. I certainly did not read any Lenin or Stalin. Mao had not yet emerged as a communist theoretician. Nor did I know anything about the existence of a communist or socialist movement in India. Day-to-day and practical politics had no interest for me. I hardly ever read the daily newspaper in those days, leave alone any party periodicals. The *Harijan* was the only periodical I had ever read regularly so far. But that was not because of any political interest. The Mahatma's preoccupation with moral problems was the prime source of my attraction towards his weekly. Marx had provided me with what I thought was a deeper solution of moral problems. An individual could not be moral in the midst of an immoral society.

Then came the great confusion which I think must have happened in many other cases. From being a Marxist, I became a communist, that is, an admirer of the Soviet Union. I had not read a single book about conditions of life in Soviet Russia. Yet I concluded deductively that the millennium promised by Marx after the prole-

tarian revolution must have started, sprouting in a country which was known to be communist. As I look back I am amazed at the imbecility of my mind with regard to concrete facts while it was so alert with regard to theoretical questions. But the ideological swindle did take place very smoothly without any resistance from any part of my intellect. So when the 'Quit India' movement was launched by Mahatma Gandhi, I found myself on the other side of the fence. I had no sympathy for the freedom fighters who were being killed by British bullets or being herded into British jails. My eyes were fixed on the great battles being fought across the vast expanse of the Soviet Union. I had started reading the daily newspapers.

At the same time I concluded that God as a creator of this world could be conceived only in three ways—either as a rogue who sanctioned and shared in the roguery prevalent in his world, or as an imbecile who could no more control what he had created, or a *sanyasin* who no more cared for what was happening to his creatures. If God was a rogue we had to rise in revolt against his rule. If he was an imbecile we could forget him and take charge of the world ourselves. And if he was a *sanyasin* he could mind his business while we minded our own. The scriptures, however, held out a different version of God and his role. That version seemed supported neither by experience nor by logic. The scriptures should, therefore, be burnt in a bonfire, preferably during winter when they could provide some warmth.

There was a comic sequel to this declaration of my new credo in a small assembly of interested intellectuals in our village. As I was unfolding my new vision, someone reported that the president of the Arya Samaj had left his home with a strong stick in his hand. The president had also heard of what I was now preaching publicly. And he was convinced that I was bound to see God in a new light and change my opinion about God's role in the world as soon as the top of my head had had a taste of his stick. I must confess that I was not prepared for this test. I, therefore, turned tail and left the village that very day. I hoped that the president's temper would cool down in due course. It did. And I was more careful in giving expression to my militant atheism before village audiences.

(To be continued)

SITA RAM GOEL

MY LORD

THE Mother once told us that when She had come to India for the second time—now from Japan, not France—and Her ship had been still several miles away from Pondicherry on the Bay, She had sensed the presence of a Great Divine Being living somewhere on the shore. There had been a subtle light and even the physical atmosphere had been spiritually surcharged. It was an amazing revelation for all of us. It virtually meant that the Lord, when He is on earth, automatically or perhaps intentionally radiates light or force or energy far and wide to reach other beings He had known before, who are strong enough to do his work, and those who were with Him when He had manifested in other Ages and in other climes. It is a widely known bit of knowledge that when the Lord chooses to come down on the earth other great souls come down all in a rush to be with the Lord and do His work.

India knows this. It has been an Indian idea to divide time into four great Ages: Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali. It has also been very widely thought that the Kali Yuga was almost at an end and that the Kalki Avatar was scheduled to come and manifest now. Astonishing as it may sound, India, although knowing all this, took no heed of the fact. Perhaps she was too preoccupied with the problem of Independence and had no time to look around. No one cared to search consciously for the Great Descent. No one asked if this prediction was coming true. The Mother, born in the West, has (apart from other things) the unique honour of first recognising the Yuga Avatar. What luck for humanity that She did not miss Him, for without Her the Lord would not have manifested. Small wonder the Lord wrote such pieces as the *Hour of God*. In the ancient time, how such mishaps were guarded against is shown by the beautiful story in the Bible of the Virgins who kept their lamps burning even when everything looked hopeless and the Lord failed to appear in time. But the Lord is never late, for He has his own time. Long ago I remember someone commenting, "The Mother is late for the Balcony Darshan." When this was reported to the Mother She said, "I am never late." So we may conclude that God comes to those who know how to wait.

Long before we are conscious of our need to find the Divine the force of the Lord and the Mother reach us and touch us to temper us for the future work. Unconsciously we are drawn towards them. One of the most delightful sentences written by the Lord is: "He who chooses the Infinite is chosen by the Infinite." Sanat's story is very pertinent here. He had a very brilliant academic career, and scholarships and prizes came his way very often. He told me once that at seventeen he unnerved his Vice Chancellor by asking as part of his prize-money *Essays on the Gita* by Sri Aurobindo. "You mean to say that you have read this book and that you understand it?" was the query. "Yes, mostly," was his simple answer. It took Sanat twenty years to come to the Lord. My case was different. As a little girl I had heard of Sri Aurobindo from my family. But it was something about his political activities. On the other hand, two beings appeared to me every now and then, one came in a shower

of rainbow and gold and said he loved me. The other had eyes reaching from horizon to horizon. She said something but at that time I did not understand what she said. Later, much later, when I read Wordsworth I unconsciously associated with my vision his lines about Nature and Lucy: "This child I to myself will take,/ She shall be mine and I will make/A lady of mine own." Whatever good things came my way and they came much too often I think, I always thought they were the gifts of the Beings of my visions. So much so that when I got married to an Imperial officer and a very amicable person to live with I thought that all this was the gift of those two. I had all that a girl could possibly ask for and to me all was their gift.

That year Sanat and I planned a South-Indian tour, and of course Pondicherry was included in the list of places we intended to visit. Meeting the Mother in the Ashram went off delightfully. Now the day came for the Darshan. I was very serious, not knowing how the Lord would receive me. "There is a friend for little children above the bright blue sky" was the line of a hymn we had learnt in school, but its real meaning dawned on me after my first Darshan. "Look at the Mother first, and when she will have released you, then only look at the Lord" was Ila-di's instruction to me before Darshan. I did as I was told. The Mother was all love and smiles. Yet my heart went beating like a drum. Lo! there was the Lord—"majestic-mild, immortally august" but a friend. I had no intention of smiling but to my utter surprise I was smiling. He nodded but I would not move: I stood there staring like a spoilt child who wanted more sweets and candy. The Lord nodded again and then I realised that I ought to give place to the next person in the line. I wept profusely in the passage and looked back for another glimpse of the Beloved Figure. Most probably He was occupied with the next person, yet I thought He smiled and said, "God be with you." Surely, He must be the person who appeared to me in my childhood vision in the shower of rainbow and gold.

In 1950 we were not allowed to touch the Lord, that is, to do pranam to Him. But Sanat and I were given the unique gift of hearing His voice. Sanat, as the Indian Consul to French India, used to take papers to the Mother to be read to Sri Aurobindo. One day something urgent required an immediate answer. The Mother said, "Shall I take it to Sri Aurobindo now?" Sanat was delighted. The Mother went straight to the Lord's room and—an act of unique Grace—left the door ajar. She said something and Sri Aurobindo answered. Perhaps Sanat, hearing the nectareous Voice, thought of Sri Aurobindo's own verse:

I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine.

CHAUNDONA S. BANERJI

THE RUBAIYAT OF BABA TAHER

(TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL PERSIAN DIALECT)

(Continued from the issue of May 1982)

(12)

IF ever once I flap my wings of fire,
In one eye-wink the world shall burn entire,
Or if a painter limns my form on wall,
The whole house shall upblaze a flaming pyre.

(13)

Art thou a panther or a lion, O heart?
On me forever furies from thee dart;
I'll shed thy blood once fallen to my hands
So that I know of what strange hue thou art.

(14)

Black-robed am I, O Love, removed from thee,
I bear thy royal train of agony,
Thy glimpse I vaunt like morning's pride of sun—
This one instant and everlastingly.

(15)

Guilty I feel when "We are Thine" I say;
My sins are more than leaves the treetops sway,
My head all stooped in shame I'll speechless stand
When the Book of Deeds is read on the Judgement Day.

(16)

I know not, who, of whom am I, O God!
How long will drip my eyes with tears of blood?
Men drive me from their doors, I turn to Thee,
Pushed far from Thee, where shall I seek abode?

(17)

Homeless and bare, O God, where shall I go,
To whom turn desolate eyes? I do not know!
They drive me away from them, I seek thy door;
Where shall I go, if Thou too push me fro.

(18)

O love-burnt hearts, let's sit in company,
 Lighten and bare our loads of agony,
 Let us a balance bring and weigh our griefs,
 The more woeful, the heavier one will be.

(19)

Let's meet and weep, O heart, thus burnt in Love,
 In separation from the Rose, commove
 Our hearts and weep and with the nightingale mourn;
 If she grieves not, ourselves we'll weep in grove.

(20)

An ocean, I contain myself in bowl,
 Existing in the Word a point so small,
 A giant soul comes every thousand years,
 In thousand years I have come that giant-soul.

(21)

If charmed am I by love's mysterious art,
 Forbid me not, enticed am I in heart,
 O cameleer, go slow for the sake of God,
 I'm left behind from friends, left far apart.

(22)

I string my rebec with thy locks of snare.
 Dost thou desire worse than this worst I bear?
 If thou must keep thyself away from me,
 Then why night after night in dream appear?

(23)

Illume my house, Beloved, illume but one
 Night; spare from separation's pain, O sun!
 Since we have parted, by thy brows I swear,
 Anguish has grown my sole companion,

(To be continued)

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

THE CHEAT

A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY

THE sun had set. The day's work was over. The deer, a servant of the king, after the toil and sweat of the day in the cornfield, washed himself clean in the nearby stream. Smearing holy ash on his forehead and body he plodded his way to the palace to report the progress of work. Pleased with the deer the king gave him a bowl of porridge.

Half an hour later, the fox came panting and boasted of his work in the field. He was completely muddy and looked very tired. The king who always had a soft heart for the sincere workers took pity on the fox. He patted his back in appreciation of his service and said, "Good fellow! I am glad that you are very sincere in your assigned work. You must have worked all day long without a minute's rest. Your muddy body betrays it." Then giving mutton pieces and tasty food to the fox, the king bade them go to their respective places of rest.

The honest deer was unhappy over the partial treatment of the king. Sad at heart he mumbled, "From dawn till dusk I work without rest in the cornfield. And for the hard labour I do, the king rewards me with a little bowl of porridge. The cunning fox spends his day joyfully in the marshy lands trapping crabs and fishes, but he is rewarded with fine mutton pieces and good food. Is this justice? My God! Is there no one to question this injustice?"

The deer had no courage to speak frankly to the king and so the bold fox enjoyed life at the expense of the poor deer.

One evening when the king was making his rounds in disguise he happened to pass by the cornfield. To his great surprise he saw the deer sweating at his labour on the ground without a minute's break. The king searched for the fox but the cunning animal was not seen. He looked around. He was taken aback to find the fox pouncing on the crabs and eating them.

The king stood there witnessing the entire drama. The deer after sunset washed himself clean in the stream, smeared holy ash on his forehead and body and started walking towards the palace. The fox, after a fine dinner of fish and crabs, smeared mud and dirt on his face, legs and body. He then rolled in the muddy waters and ran towards the palace.

The fraudulent acts of the fox infuriated the king. He felt extremely sorry for having ill-treated the honest and poor deer. So he resolved to punish the fox and thereby teach him a lesson.

The next day the king, disguised as a beggar, took with him a parcel of fine food and a heavy stone. He climbed up a big banyan tree that stood very close to the cornfield, and sat hiding himself amidst the bushy branches.

The deer, tired of hard work, came to rest for a few minutes under the shade of the tree. Stretching his limbs, he looked up and yawned. Down fell a parcel of food. Attracted by the smell, the deer opened the parcel and began enjoying a nice meal.

From a long distance the fox saw the deer munching food. He ran towards the deer and asked, "How did you get hold of this delicious dish? The smell is so nice, you see, I came running."

The deer without any delay replied, "Ah! It's by sheer luck. I just stretched my limbs, looked up and yawned. Down fell the parcel from the tree."

The fox, pleased with the reply, said, "So simple! If a poor innocent and ignorant deer like you could get such a delicious dish, I will no doubt get a fairly sumptuous dinner."

Then the fox stretched his limbs, looked up and yawned. To his great shock he saw the angry-faced king aiming to throw the heavy stone at him from the tree. Startled, he sprang up to run for his life, but the king was quick in his action.

The heavy stone fell on the mouth of the fox and broke his jaws and teeth. Bleeding heavily, the fox took to his heels. He was unable to open his mouth to give vent to his agony.

P. RAJA

Students' Section

A MEETING WITH DADA (PRANAB) REGARDING THE ASHRAM FILM SHOWS

V L'A¹—Why did The Mother start showing films in the Ashram?

Dada—Why did She start? Well, that will come afterwards. Let me first tell you how it started.

In the year 1945, one day in the month of July, after our Physical Education Programme was over, I was called in the evening at about 9 p.m. by Amrita-da. I met him and he told me that Mother wanted me to take the children to a film show the next morning in Salle Jeanne d'Arc, near our Ashram Press.

At that time, there were not many children in the Ashram. Their number was perhaps thirty or forty. I made a list of them, went from house to house and told the children to come to the playground the next morning and I would take them to a film show.

Next morning, at about 6.30 a.m., I took the children to the show. The film was "Pinocchio". The children enjoyed it very much. Then I brought them back to the Ashram.

Those days, Mother was seeing the children at mid-day, in the hall just above the meditation hall. I also would go there. All the children came there and sat on the floor in rows. Then Mother used to come, move from child to child, and give them flowers, small cold tomatoes or sweets.

That day, too, we had all collected in that hall at mid-day. Mother came, enquired all about the film and told me to narrate to Her the story of it, which I did. That was our first experience of a film show here.

Later, on two occasions, we went to see two films in outside cinema halls. Mother accompanied us both the times. One was on Rodin and his sculpture, in Salle Jeanne d'Arc, and the other was on the Russian May Day Parade, in a Cinema Hall—Olympia—which used to be where the Tata cloth-shop now stands. These visits were in the last part of 1948 or in the beginning of 1949. I do not remember exactly. We booked the whole hall. The money was paid by Amrita-da.

From the year 1945 to 1950, we had 16 mm film shows in the playground from time to time. These films were brought by people from the French, English or American embassies. They used to come with their films and projectors and give the shows. Mother started coming out of the Ashram main building in the afternoon from 2nd of December 1946. First it was occasionally, and then regularly, when She started playing Table Tennis at Nanteuil and taking keen interest in Physical Education Activities. On several occasions She also saw the films with us.

¹ *Vers l'avenir*, students' magazine of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

When my father Dakshinapada came here permanently, he brought a 16 mm silent projector with him. Before coming, he showed his projector to the person in charge of the film division of the British Embassy, got his approval that all his sound films could be shown on this particular silent projector without damaging the sound tracks, and made an arrangement with him that he would send us some films from time to time for our shows here. We had our shows, and we all, with Mother, used to see for hours the sound film run on a silent projector. Then, observing our inconvenience, Dyumanbhai got us two 16 mm sound projectors, one after the other, and a regular screen. Mother had given the charge of showing the films to Vishwanath-da. Those days, he did not have so many assistants as he has now. He showed the films himself. Arun Kumar was a little boy at that time. He started helping him. Mother was always present for the film shows. Once, we had several film shows one after another. Mother made a joking comment, "We are becoming film-sy (flimsy?)." She enjoyed these shows very much. Once we were to see a film called "Puss in Boots". Early morning, after getting up from Her bed, Mother told me in a child-like happy mood, "Today we shall see 'Puss in Boots'."

After a few years, Shri Ajit Bose of Calcutta came here with a 35 mm projector and some films. He offered this projector to Mother. A thatched room was made on the terrace where our projector room is, and this projector was installed there. We had several shows. Mother saw all the films with us up to December 1958. The thatched room was turned into a 'pucca' projector room. Our film show in the Ashram became a regular feature.

Now, why did Mother start showing films in the Ashram? It was simply because of their educative value. When Mother started taking children into the Ashram, She opened the school and then the playground for their education. In films She must have seen educational possibilities. So She started to show them. In Her own words, "...Films are permitted in the Ashram not as an amusement but as part of education...."

Though in the early part of our film shows, She had sent us to outside cinema halls and on two occasions She had accompanied us, She did not like our people to go to commercial Cinema Halls. The reasons She gave were: (i) the conditions in the Cinema Halls are not hygienic, (ii) they carry an atmosphere which is not suitable to our way of life in the Ashram and (iii) there will be no control over the suitability of the films for our children. So She made a good arrangement of film shows in the playground.

V L'A—Did The Mother see the films before they were shown in the playground?

Dada—Yes, She did. During the 16 mm era, She was seeing all the films Her-self. She would see the films where She was taking Her classes for elderly people. We turned the place into a Gymnasium room when She stopped taking Her classes in December 1958, and it became Shrikant's room for 16 mm French film shows afterwards.

Later, when we got our 35 mm projector, She was not seeing the films beforehand. She told me to see the film and tell Her all about it and I would do so. On hearing from me, She would decide whether the film should be shown or rejected.

V L'A—Can you give us some examples of what kind of films She rejected?

Dada—Films which showed too much of passion, vulgarity, bad taste, cheap comedy, crude violence, and all that She considered contrary to our way of life.

One day, we were to show a 16 mm film on the life of Chopin, the musician. She saw the film and rejected it. She explained to us that whenever She heard the music of Chopin, She felt sick. After seeing the film She understood why She was feeling so. In the latter part of his life Chopin was an extremely sick man when he was composing and playing his music. His sickness was vibrating into his music and so whenever Mother heard his music all his sick vibrations came to Her. That was why She felt sick. She did not want children to receive those vibrations and so She rejected this film.

On another occasion, we were to show a 35 mm Hindi film, produced by Tarachand-ji. It was a film centred around "Rebirth". After seeing the film, when I narrated the story to Mother, She said that all that the film showed about rebirth was not true. So she rejected the film. Similarly She rejected the film "Othello", though it was a great artistic creation, only because She thought it was not good for the Ashram atmosphere. She was more concerned with the message or the central theme that the film conveyed. If She found these suitable for our way of life, She allowed the films to be shown, otherwise She rejected them.

V L'A—Did Mother tell you how to censor a film?

Dada—Well, from my previous narration you must have understood how we saw Her censoring the films. After seeing each film She would tell me the good and bad points of it. Often I questioned Her to clarify certain points and She did so. Many times we had long discussions about certain films. So, She has actually taught me how to censor a film, and I try to do it to the best of my ability.

V L'A—You don't see whether a certain film is an artistic film or....

Dada—Artistic films? Well, art is a means to an end, it is not complete in itself. It tries to express a central theme or an idea. Good art will express it nicely and bad art will express it badly. All depends on what it is trying to express. Cinema art is composed of acting, photography, music, make-up and dressing, editing, laboratory work, directing, etc. All that may have been done very nicely in a film. But we have to see whether the central theme or the story of the film is suitable for us or not. If the story is suitable for us, it is accepted. If the story is not suitable for us, then whatever artistic quality the film may have we have to reject it. That is how I have learnt to see.

V L'A—Can you specify in detail what kind of films you reject?

Dada—By now, from my earlier talks, you must have understood how I try to see whether a certain film is suitable for us or not. I try to keep the same standard. When it is obvious that the film is not suitable for us, the matter is very easy. But sometimes it is just on the border line. You can neither straightway reject it nor can you show it without certain unpleasant feelings. In these cases, sometimes I pass these films. I cannot be too strict always. Then we have only a few shows. Good films, like all good things, are very few. We do not allow our children to go to outside cinemas. So we have to give them something here. If a film is not very good but I find nothing strongly objectionable in it, I pass it. Sometimes I do heavy editing to make the film tolerable, and show it. But, you see, my job is a thankless one. If I do not pass a film, I am cursed. If I pass a film which some of our people do not like, then also I am cursed. But I try to execute my responsibility as best I can. That is all.

V L'A—From where do you get all the films?

Dada—All the Indian documentary films we get from the Films Division of India at a very low charge. Say about 50 paise per reel of 1000 feet, plus the return charge. All the 16 mm documentary films we get free of charge, with only the returning expense, from the embassies of the different countries. All the English 35 mm feature films we obtain from the different foreign commercial distributors on a payment basis. Previously it used to be Rs 40/- Rs 50/- or Rs 60/- for a show. But now they charge us a minimum of Rs 400/-. We get money for these films from our friends who want to give us shows for some birthdays, marriages or similar occasions. Wilfy contributes quite a good amount from his business. And all the Indian feature films we get free of charge from some Indian commercial distributors or producers, who are friendly to us and who have a great regard for Mother, Sri Aurobindo, Their Ashram and Their work. Shri Ajit Bose of Calcutta and Shri Tarachand Barjatya of Bombay supply us with a good number of films. Shri Madhukar Munim of Bombay also sends us many films regularly.

V L'A—Who are the people who see the films with you?

Dada—Well, Gopinath runs the projector and Nirmal Poddar assists him. For the English films I call Wilfy. For the French films I used to call Tanmaya; now I call Purna. For the Bengali films Ranju used to come before. He has left this work because of his eye-trouble. Now I call Manoj Das Gupta. Vasudev used to come for the Hindi and Gujarati films formerly. Now he has stopped coming because of his eye-trouble. I call instead Gajaraj, who sees with us the Hindi and Marathi films. Anuben and Chimanbhai the teacher see with me the Gujarati films. For the Tamil films I used to call Yamuna or Gauri; now I call Vijayalakshmi. For the Telugu films I call Kameshwar. For the Kannada films I call Kailash or Keshavmurti. For the Oriya films I call Manoj Das, Prapatti or Pratigna. So, you see, I see every film with somebody who knows the language of the film well. Besides, Gangaram sees the film

with me. Lately Swadhin also comes. And sometimes Matriprasad sees the film with me.

This is all that I have to say. I have been doing this film work for a long time, about 37 years.... I hope it is O.K.

V L'A—Thank you, Dada....

5.6.82

Revised and corrected by the author from his informal and casual tape-recorded talks with two students of the Centre of Education.