MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

OCTOBER 1983

Price: Rs. 2.75

A SMALL RAISE IN INLAND SUBSCRIPTION RATES FROM JANUARY 1983

Owing to increased costs the inland rates cannot help being raised a little—amounting only to 40 paise more per month.

INLAND
Annual: Rs. 30.00
Life Membership: Rs. 420.00

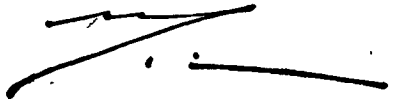
OVERSEAS
Sea Mail:
Annual: $11.00 or £5.50
Life Membership: $154.00 or £77.00
Air Mail:
Annual: $32.00 for American & Pacific countries
£14.00 for all other countries
Life Membership: $448.00 for American & Pacific countries
£196.00 for all other countries

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.



All correspondence to be addressed to:
MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India
Editor's Phone: 4782
Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor: K. D. SETHNA
The Late Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR
Published by: P. COUNOUMA
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY - 605 002
Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI
at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry - 605 002
PRINTED IN INDIA
Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No. R. N. 8667/63

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXV No. 10

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

CONTENTS

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Sri Aurobindo and The Mother

		Rs.
The Problem of Rebirth (Sri Aurobindo)	bd. 20.00	15.00
Fifty Poems of Nirodbaran (with Corrections and Comments by Sri Aurobindo)	bd. 50.00	40.00
Mantras of the Mother		30.00
What is Yoga? (Compilation)		2.50

Other Authors

Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual		15.00
Sri Aurobindo Circle Annual 1983		15.00
The Book of Beginnings (M. P. Pandit)	bd. 50.00	40.00
Yoga of Perfect Sight (R. S. Agarwal)		18.00
Deep Footprints (Minnie N. Canteenwala)		25.00

FRENCH

Sri Aurobindo (Monod-Herzen)	De luxe 100.00	60.00

GERMAN

Briefe uber den Yoga—Band 4	110.00

SANSKRIT

Balanatakani (Pujalal)	10.00

BENGALI

Yoge Deeksha (Anilbaran)	4.00
Champaklal Bolechhen	25.00

HINDI

Gita ki Bhumika (Sri Aurobindo)	4.00
Mataji, Nirgun ka Sagun Rup	4.00

GUJARATI

Rajnoyog ane Rahasyamaya Jnan (Sri Aurobindo)	10.00
Prashna ane Uttaro 1954 (The Mother)	45.00
Prashna ane Uttaro 1955 (The Mother)	45.00

MARATHI

Sri Arvindanchi Jeevan Katha (Vimal Bhide)	8.00

TELUGU

Divya Jeevanamu — Sri Aurobindo	24.00
Sri Aravinduni Geetavyasamulu Apoorvata Parichayamu (Sri Aurobindo)	1.50
Divya Jeevanam Sangraham (Ch. Nageshwar Rao)	2.50

SRI AUROBINDO BOOKS DISTRIBUTION AGENCY
PONDICHERRY 605 002

OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE—7

EXTRACTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO'S WRITINGS

(*Continued from the issue of September 1983*)

Shastra, Dharma, Yoga

THE business of the ancient Rishi was not only to know God, but to know the world and life and to reduce it by knowledge to a thing well understood and mastered with which the reason and will of man could deal on assured lines and on a safe basis of wise method and order. The ripe result of this effort was the Shastra. When we speak of the Shastra nowadays, we mean too often only the religio-social system of injunctions of the middle age made sacrosanct by their mythical attribution to Manu, Parasara and other Vedic sages. But in older India Shastra meant any systematised teaching and science; each department of life, each line of activity, each subject of knowledge had its science or Shastra. The attempt was to reduce each to a theoretical and practical order founded on detailed observation, just generalisation, full experience, intuitive, logical and experimental analysis and synthesis, in order to enable man to know always with a just fruitfulness for life and to act with the security of right knowledge. The smallest and the greatest things were examined with equal care and attention and each provided with its art and science. The name was given even to the highest spiritual knowledge whenever it was stated not in a mass of intuitive experience and revelatory knowledge as in the Upanishads, but for intellectual comprehension in system and order,—and in that sense the Gita is able to call its profound spiritual teaching the most secret science, *guhyatamam śāstram*. This high scientific and philosophical spirit was carried by the ancient Indian culture into all its activities. No Indian religion is complete without its outward form of preparatory practice, its supporting philosophy and its Yoga or system of inward practice or art of spiritual living: most even of what seems irrational in it to a first glance, has its philosophical turn and significance. It is this complete understanding and philosophical character which has given religion in India its durable security and immense vitality and enabled it to resist the acid dissolvent power of modern sceptical inquiry; whatever is ill-founded in experience and reason, that power can dissolve, but not the heart and mind of these great teachings. But what we have more especially to observe is that while Indian culture made a distinction between the lower and the higher learning, the knowledge of things and the knowledge of Self, it did not put a gulf between them like some religions, but considered the knowledge of the world and things as a preparatory and a leading up to the knowledge of Self and God.

All Shastra was put under the sanction of the names of the Rishis, who were in the beginning the teachers not only of spiritual truth and philosophy,—and we

may note that all Indian philosophy, even the logic of Nyaya and the atomic theory of the Vaisheshikas, has for its highest crowning note and eventual object spiritual knowledge and liberation,—but of the arts, the social, political and military, the physical and psychic sciences, and every instructor was in his degree respected as a *guru* or *acharya*, a guide or preceptor of the human spirit. All knowledge was woven into one and led up by degrees to the one highest knowledge.

Indian thought took for granted,—though there are some remarkable speculations to the contrary,—the ethical nature of man and the ethical law of the world. It considered that man was justified in satisfying his desires, since that is necessary for the satisfaction and expansion of life, but not in obeying the dictates of desire as the law of his being; for in all things there is a greater law, each has not only its side of interest and desire, but its Dharma or rule of right practice, satisfaction, expansion, regulation. The Dharma, then, fixed by the wise in the Shastra is the right thing to observe, the true rule of action. First in the web of Dharma comes the social law; for man's life is only initially for his vital, personal, individual self, but much more imperatively for the community, though most imperatively of all for the greatest Self one in himself and in all beings, for God, for the Spirit. Therefore first the individual must subordinate himself to the communal self, though by no means bound altogether to efface himself in it as the extremists of the communal idea imagine. He must live according to the law of his nature harmonised with the law of his social type and class, for the nation and in a higher reach of his being—this was greatly stressed by the Buddhists—for humanity. Thus living and acting he could learn to transcend the social scale of the Dharma, practise without injuring the basis of life the ideal scale and finally grow into the liberty of the spirit, when rule and duty were not binding because he would then move and act in a highest free and immortal Dharma of the divine nature. All these aspects of the Dharma were closely linked up together in a progressive unity. Thus, for an example, each of the four orders had its own social function and ethics, but also an ideal rule for the growth of the pure ethical being, and every man by observing his Dharma and turning his action Godwards could grow out of it into the spiritual freedom. But behind all Dharma and ethics was put, not only as a safeguard but as a light, a religious sanction, a reminder of the continuity of life and of man's long pilgrimage through many births, a reminder of the Gods and planes beyond and of the Divine, and above it all the vision of a last stage of perfect comprehension and unity and of divine transcendence.

The system of Indian ethics liberalised by the catholicity of the ancient mind did not ban or violently discourage the aesthetic or even the hedonistic being of man in spite of a growing ascetic tendency and a certain high austerity of the summits. The aesthetic satisfactions of all kinds and all grades were an important part of the culture. Poetry, the drama, song, dance, music, the greater and lesser arts were placed

under the sanction of the Rishis and were made instruments of the spirit's culture. A just theory held them to be initially the means of a pure aesthetic satisfaction and each was founded on its own basic rule and law, but on that basis and with a perfect fidelity to it still raised up to minister to the intellectual, ethical and religious development of the being.

Indian painting, sculpture and architecture did not refuse service to the aesthetic satisfaction and interpretation of the social, civic and individual life of the human being; these things, as all evidences show, played a great part in their motives of creation, but still their highest work was reserved for the greatest spiritual side of the culture, and throughout we see them seized and suffused with the brooding stress of the Indian mind on the soul, the Godhead, the spiritual, the Infinite. And we have to note too that the aesthetic and hedonistic being was made not only an aid to religion and spirituality and liberally used for that purpose, but even one of the main gates of man's approach to the Spirit. The Vaishnava religion especially is a religion of love and beauty and of the satisfaction of the whole delight-soul of man in God and even the desires and images of the sensuous life were turned by its vision into figures of a divine soul-experience. Few religions have gone so far as this immense catholicity or carried the whole nature so high in its large, puissant and many-sided approach to the spiritual and the infinite.

The great rule of the culture was that the higher a man's position and power, the larger the scope of his function and influence of his acts and example, the greater should be the call on him of the Dharma. The whole law and custom of society was placed under the sanction of the Rishis and the gods, protected from the violence of the great and powerful, given a socio-religious character and the king himself charged to live and rule as the guardian and servant of the Dharma with only an executive power over the community which was valid so long as he observed with fidelity the Law. And as this vital aspect of life is the one which most easily draws us outward and away from the inner self and the diviner aim of living, it was the most strenuously linked up at every point with the religious idea in the way the vital man can best understand, in the Vedic times by the constant reminder of the sacrifice behind every social and civic act, at a later period by religious rites, ceremonies, worship, the calling in of the gods, the insistence on the subsequent results or a supraterrestrial aim of works. So great was this preoccupation, that while in the spiritual and intellectual and other spheres a considerable or a complete liberty was allowed to speculation, action, creation, here the tendency was to impose a rigorous law and authority, a tendency which in the end became greatly exaggerated and prevented the expansion of the society into new forms more suitable for the need of the spirit of the age, the Yuga-dharma. A door of liberty was opened to the community by the provision of an automatic permission to change custom and to the individual in the adoption of the religious life with its own higher discipline or freedom outside the ordinary so-

cial weft of binding rule and injunction. A rigid observation and discipline of the social law, a larger nobler discipline and freer self-culture of the ideal side of the Dharma, a wide freedom of the religious and spiritual life became the three powers of the system. The steps of the expanding human spirit mounted through these powers to its perfection.

...the whole general character of the application of Indian ideals to life became throughout of this one texture, the constant, subtly graded, subtly harmonised preparation of the soul of man for its spiritual being. First, the regulated satisfaction of the primary natural being of man subjected to the law of the Dharma and the ethical idea and beseiged at every moment by the suggestions of religion, a religion at first appealing to his more outward undeveloped mind, but in each of its outward symbols and circumstances opening to a profounder significance, armed with the indication of a profoundest spiritual and ideal meaning as its justification. Then, the higher steps of the developed reason and psychical, ethical and aesthetic powers closely interwoven and raised by a similar opening beyond themselves to their own heights of spiritual direction and potentiality. Finally, each of these growing powers in man was made on its own line of approach a gateway into his divine and spiritual being. Thus we may observe that there was created a Yoga of knowledge for the self-exceeding of the thinking intellectual man, a Yoga of works for the self-exceeding of the active, dynamic and ethical man, a Yoga of love and Bhakti for the self-exceeding of the emotional, aesthetic, hedonistic man, by which each arrived to perfection through a self-ward, spiritual, God-ward direction of his own special power, as too a Yoga of self-exceeding through the power of the psychical being and even through the power of the life in the body,—Yogas which could be practised in separation or with some kind of synthesis. But all these ways of self-exceeding led to a highest self-becoming. To become one with universal being and all existences, one with the self and spirit, united with God, completed the human evolution, built the final step of man's self-culture.

(*Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 14: 166-171*)

(*To be continued*)

APROPOS OF CHILD PRODIGIES

FROM A TALK OF THE MOTHER ON OCTOBER 3, 1956

RECENTLY, in one of the Wednesday classes, we talked about child prodigies. Some say that the number of child prodigies is increasing considerably, and some—even among Americans—say it is the influence and work of Sri Aurobindo, and others say it is a result of atom bombs! But the fact is that there is a fairly large number of child prodigies. I did not want to speak about it in much detail, for I did not have any proofs in hand, that is, I did not have any good examples to give. It happens that since then someone has brought me a French book written by a child of eight.[1] Naturally there are people who dispute the possibility, but I shall explain to you later how such a thing is possible.

The book is remarkable for a child of eight. This does not mean that if the age of the child were not known the book would be considered wonderful; but there are, here and there, some sentences in it which are quite astonishing. I have noted down these sentences and am going to read them out to you. (Mother skims through her book.)

A little phrase like this: "If we truly love one another, we can hide nothing from each other".... Obviously this is fine.

And then something else written to a boy with freckles—you know what freckles are, don't you? She writes to him: "You are beautiful, yes indeed, your freckles are so pretty; one would say that an angel had sown grains of wheat all over your face so as to attract the birds of the sky there." Surely this is very poetic.

And finally, something really fine which opens the door to the explanation I am going to give you: "I am only an ear, a mouth; the ear hears a storm of words which I cannot explain to you, which an immense voice hurls within me, and my mouth repeats them and nothing of what I say can compare with the streaming of light which is within me."

Obviously this is very beautiful.

It seems that here and there in her poems—she has written many—one can find reminiscences of Maeterlinck, for instance; so people have concluded that it was not she who had written them, for at the age of eight one doesn't read Maeterlinck, that it must have been someone else. But in fact there is no need at all to suppose a hoax, and the publisher indeed declares that he is sure of what he is about, that he knows the child very intimately—in fact he was in a way her adoptive father, for her father was dead—and can guarantee that there is no deception. But it is not at all necessary to suppose a deception in order to explain this phenomenon.

Authors, writers, who were inspired and serious in their creative work, that is to say, who were concentrated in a kind of consecration of their being to their literary work, form within themselves a sort of mental entity extremely well-constituted and

[1] Minou Drouet, born in 1947, author of *Arbre mon ami*.

coordinated, having its own life, *independent of the body*, so that when they die, when the body returns to the earth, this mental formation continues to exist altogether autonomously and independently, and as it has been fashioned for expression it always seeks a means of expression somewhere. And if there happens to be a child who has been formed in particularly favourable circumstances—for instance, the mother of this little girl is herself a poetess and a writer; perhaps the mother herself had an aspiration, a wish that her child would be a remarkable, exceptional being—anyway, if the child who is conceived is formed in particularly favourable circumstances, an entity of this kind may enter into the child at the time of birth and try to use him to express itself; and in that case, this gives a maturity to the child's mind, which is quite extraordinary, exceptional and which enables him to do things of the kind we have just read.

We could say, without fear of sounding quite absurd, that if what she has written surprisingly resembles certain things in Maeterlinck or has the characteristics of his writings even with certain almost identical turns of phrase, we could very well imagine that a mental formation of Maeterlinck has incarnated in this child and is using this young instrument to express itself.

There are similar examples, for instance, among musicians. There are pianists who have individualised their hands and made them so wonderfully conscious that these hands are not decomposed—not the physical hands: the hands of the subtle physical and vital—they are not decomposed, do not dissolve at the time of death. They remain as instruments to play the piano and always try to incarnate in the hands of someone playing the piano. I have known some cases of people who, as they were about to play, felt as though other hands entered into theirs and started playing really marvellously, in a way they could not have done themselves.

These things are not as exceptional as one might believe, they happen quite often.

I saw the same thing in someone who used to play the violin and another who played the cello—two different cases—and who were not very wonderful performers themselves. One of them was just beginning his studies and the other was a good performer, but nothing marvellous. But all of a sudden, the moment they played the compositions of certain musicians, something of that musician entered into their hands and made their performance absolutely wonderful.

There was even a person—a woman—who used to play the cello, and the moment she played Beethoven, the expression of her face completely changed into Beethoven, and what she played was sublime, which she could not have played unless something of Beethoven's mind had entered into her.

Mother, isn't this exceptional faculty harmful for the persons who play?

Why do you suppose it would do them harm? It does them good!

It is always good to make a progress or to exceed oneself.

But for the child?

I don't understand. For the child?

Yes. She is already fully mature at the age of eight. But it is something wonderful to be at the age of eight the expression of something which surpasses the intelligence! In what way do you suppose it could harm her? I don't quite understand your question.

No. You mean that what often happens is that a child prodigy is no longer a prodigy at all when he grows up. But, precisely, those who have studied these cases say that what is exceptional about the things happening now is that child prodigies become, as they put it, prodigious men, that is, the exceptional faculty remains in them and becomes more firmly established as they grow up.

But I don't see how it can be bad, it can only be good. In what way can it be bad? It is as if you said, "If one has a beautiful soul, that is bad!"

When something of a higher nature enters into you, it is a grace, isn't it?

(Questions and Answers, 1956, pp. 317-321)

THEE...

THEE to love and adore,
Thee to serve,
My soul has taken birth
Upon this ignorant earth.

Grant me the constant Grace
Never from this aim to swerve.
Hold my hand firm
All through the devious days.

Lord of my life and heart,
Be to me all in all, not only a part.

LALITA

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of September 1983)

Sri Aurobindo's Letters

IT is certainly quite true that the psychic contact can exist at a distance and that the Divine is not limited by place but is everywhere. It is not necessary for everybody to be at Pondicherry or physically near the Mother in order to lead the spiritual life or to practise the yoga, especially in its earlier stages. But that is only one side of the truth, there is another. Otherwise the logical conclusion might be that there was no necessity for the Mother to be here at all or for the existence of the Ashram or for anyone to come here.

The psychic being is there in all, but in very few is it well developed, well built up in the consciousness or prominent in the front; in most it is veiled, often ineffective or only an influence, not conscious enough or strong enough to support the spiritual life. It is for this reason that it is necessary for those drawn towards this truth to come here in order that they may receive the touch which will bring about or prepare the awakening of the psychic being—that is for them the beginning of the effective psychic contact. It is also for this reason that a stay here is needed for many—if they are ready—in order that under the direct influence and nearness they may have the development or building up of the psychic being in the consciousness or its coming to the front. When the touch has been given or the development effected, so far as the sadhak is at the moment capable of it, he returns to the outside world and under the protection and guidance even at a distance is able to keep the contact and go on with his spiritual life. But the influences of the outside world are not favourable to the psychic contact and the psychic development and, if the sadhak is not sufficiently careful or concentrated, the psychic contact may easily be lost after a time or get covered over and the development may become retarded, stationary or even diminished by adverse influences or movements. It is therefore that the necessity exists and is often felt of a return to the place of the central influence in order to fortify or recover the contact or to restore or give a fresh forward impulse to the development. The aspiration for such nearness from time to time is not a vital desire; it becomes a vital desire only when it is egoistically insistent or mixed with a vital motive,—but not if it is an aspiration of the psychic being calm, deep and without clamour in it or perturbing insistence.

This is for those who are not called upon or are not *yet* called upon to live in the Ashram under the direct pressure of the central force and Presence. Those who must so live are those called from the beginning or who have become ready or who

are for some reason or other given a chance to form part of the work or creation which is being prepared by the yoga. For them the stay here in the atmosphere, the nearness are indispensable; to depart would be for them a renunciation of the opportunity given them, a turning of the back upon the spiritual destiny. Their difficulties are often in appearance greater than the struggle of those who remain outside because the demand and pressure are greater; but so also is their opportunity greater and the power and influence for development poured upon them and that too which they can spiritually become and will become if they are faithful to the choice and the call. 7.10.1931

This is the true reply. To remain within, above, and untouched, full of inner consciousness and the inner experience,—listening, when need be, to X or another with the surface consciousness, but with even that undisturbed, not either pulled outwards or invaded, that is the perfect condition for the sadhana. 8.12.31

It is true that one has to try to keep the inner condition under all circumstances, even the most adverse; but that does not mean that one has to accept, unnecessarily, unfavourable conditions when there is no good reason for their being allowed to go on. Especially, the nervous system and the physical cannot bear an excessive strain as well as the mind and higher vital; your fatigue came from the strain of living in one consciousness and at the same time exposing yourself too much to prolonged contacts from the ordinary consciousness. A certain amount of self-defence is necessary—so that the consciousness may not be pulled down or out constantly into the ordinary atmosphere or the physical strained by being forced into activities that have become foreign to you. Those who practise yoga often seek refuge in solitude from these difficulties; that is unnecessary here, but all the same you need not submit to being put under this kind of useless strain always. You need not waste time and exhaust yourself by chat with M and P and N's being with you for the greater part of the day is excessive. The best thing would be for you to fix a limited time for seeing others and not go beyond it—you can say that the Mother has asked you to do so.

19.2.32

There is nothing wrong in your experience or insincere in your expression of it; to write is helpful and it is our wish that you should go on doing it. An occasional sinking of the consciousness happens to everybody. The causes are various, some touch from outside, something not yet changed or not sufficiently changed in the vital, especially the lower vital, some inertia or obscurity rising up from the physical consciousness. When it comes, remain quiet, open yourself to the Mother and call back the true condition and aspire for a clear and undisturbed discrimination showing you from within yourself the cause of the thing that needs to be set right.

4.3.32

It is quite true that rising into a higher consciousness than the ordinary human consciousness is the right way towards transformation. Merely to remain in the ordinary lower consciousness and try to reject from there the wrong movements can produce no permanent or complete result. But there are several points here which you must note or this perception may be accompanied by an error.

(1) As you have yourself subsequently seen, all the parts and personalities that constitute the being must share in the higher consciousness, otherwise the old movements under various pretexts will intervene.

(2) You speak of rejecting the lower vital, but it is only the unregenerated lower vital movements that can be got rid of, you cannot get rid of the lower vital itself, for it is a necessary part of the manifested nature, like the higher vital or the mind. It has to be changed in the power of the higher consciousness, not left to itself or dropped from you.

(3) If you do not so change it, if you simply remain content by living in the psychic or other higher consciousness internally then you run the risk of doing like those who are satisfied to have experiences and some inner quietude or Ananda, but leave the external nature and surface active movements unchanged, either thinking them of no importance or justifying them under the plea that there is the psychic or spiritual consciousness behind them.

I asked you to look for the cause of the abatement of energy or zeal (utsāha), because it is evident that there must be some resistance somewhere, otherwise there would not be these constant headaches and this less intense condition. If the physical consciousness is open the headaches should disappear or at least diminish in frequency and force, and if the lower vital is all right, the intensity ought to continue.

Certainly you should go on writing and tell Mother everything that is happening in you. My not answering was due to want of time. 6.5.32.

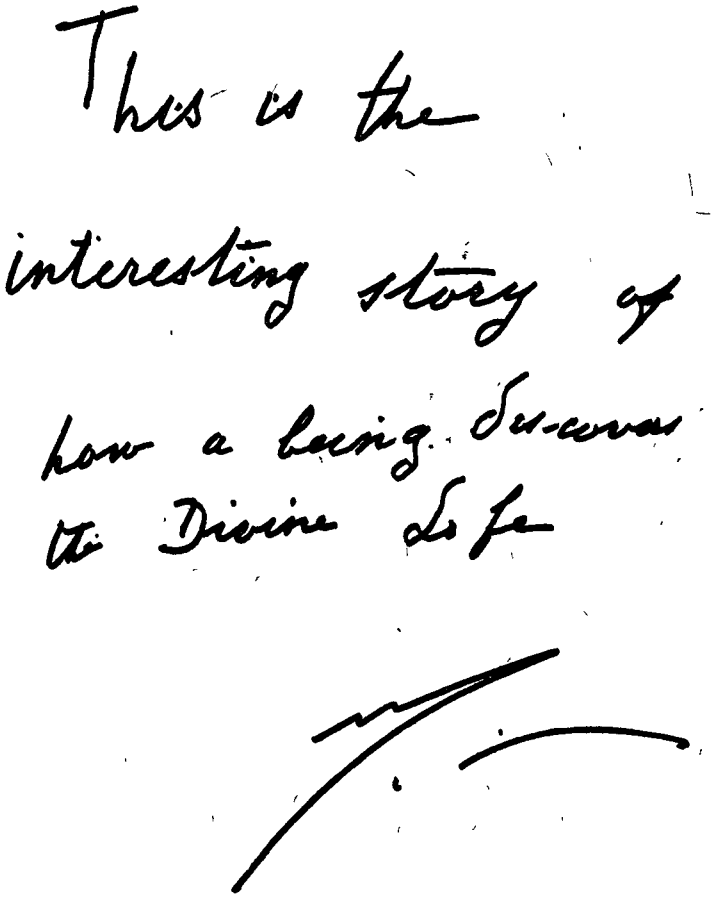
(To be continued)

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(*Continued from the issue of September 1983*)

The Mother's Message



(27)

IT was Monday, 21st January 1957. A card picturing red roses was sent by the Mother along with these charming words:

Bonjour

to my dear little child to my sweet Huta. These beautiful roses come to

you with all my love and blessings and the assurance of the constant Presence of the Divine Grace.

It was not possible for me to paint that day because of my acute backache. I gave white-colour coats to hardboards to make them ready for new pictures.

In the evening the Mother met me in her room at the Playground. She was concerned about my health, and concentrated for a few seconds. Then she gave me various flowers and a kiss on my forehead. She said smilingly:

"Child, tomorrow I will send a pretty vase for you to paint."

I could not sit in her French translation class. I went to Golconde. When the Mother came back from the Playground to her apartment in the Ashram I saw her again.

On the morning that followed, she wrote on a lovely card showing three pink roses:

"I am sending you the vase I spoke to you about yesterday. It is big but you can reduce it and paint it on a small board. It has a beautiful colour and will look very nice on a pale green background. Give more the *impression* of it than enter into many details."

Ah! she had said it! I had to give only the impression. I took quite a shine to this sort of painting. I was thrilled.

It was a Kashmiri vase. I got totally absorbed in painting it, forgetting the pain in my back, and lost the sense of time till Laljibhai called me for lunch.

We had our lunch in Golconde. As always the Mother had sent me "Prasad" which I shared with Laljibhai and Maniben who usually took her food with me.

The Mother saw the painting in the evening. Her eyes twinkled with joy when she said:

"Oh! this is good! I can see your sincerity when I concentrate on the painting. It is a promise that you will do fine things in future.

"Gradually you will become bold enough to use colours freely, and this means that you will get skill to use the exact stroke and the proper colour at the proper place."

After a pause she spoke again:

"I met Laljibhai before you. He told me how hard you work at your painting. He is leaving for Africa this evening."

I said: "Yes, Mother, he is going. Day after day, time and again, he has watched me painting."

My heart was filled with despair at Laljibhai's departure. Tears surged in my eyes.

The Mother put her hands tenderly on my head and moved them slowly down to my ears and cheeks, caressingly. Her compassionate gesture soothed me enormously.

In the evening once more Laljibhai and I met before he left for Africa. I could not bear one of my family members leaving me alone. But I could not help it. Weak tears slid out of my eyes and oozed onto the pillow. I dropped off into an uneasy sleep that was once again peopled with things, creatures, fears and worries, which terrified me.

The succeeding morning an attractive card arrived revealing pink-gold roses, which charmed my heart. These luminous words of the Mother on it overwhelmed me:

> "These pretty roses will tell you my confidence in your realisation, and bring you my love and blessings, along with the Presence of the Divine Grace which never leaves you."

Her assurance gave me courage and made me go on.

Along with the card the Mother had sent me a dahlia to paint. I finished the painting ahead of the scheduled time. I sent it to the Mother at 11 a.m. She returned the painting together with a note saying:

> "This is exquisite with a charmingly light technique. It is just this kind of dahlia I was thinking of yesterday. You have done *exactly* what I suggested and perfectly well. This picture is indeed very, very good—Bravo!"

The Mother expressed her delight when we met in the evening. She further said:

> "Ah! tomorrow I will send you a French box for painting. It is very pretty, made out of porcelain."

The following morning she wrote on a card illustrating orange-coloured roses. These were her words:

> "I am sending you the box I spoke of yesterday. It will be nice on a pale green background. Place it on a table a little below your eyes, so that you can see a little of its top."

On top of the box beautiful nude children were painted. She wanted me to copy them also.

I painted the box. But as I had no knowledge of perspective, I failed to bring out accurately the shape of it. In addition to this, the Mother teased me when she viewed the painting. She remarked:

"O you have done a modern painting as modern artists do."

And she ruffled my hair with a soft laugh. I told myself: "Well, this was my second masterpiece after the silver vase! I cannot paint otherwise!"

I smiled shyly at the Mother. What else could I do?

Then she did several sketches of the box from different angles in order to make me understand fully.

She pointed to the box which I had taken with me along with my painting of it, and said:

"This box must be green and on top you must put a layer of blue colour to give the effect of the turquoise shade."

I thought: "This is another new technique which I am not aware of."

As if she had divined my feeling, she said:

"I shall send you flowers. Paint them first. Afterwards paint the box. Thus you will have some change in painting."

I marvelled at her consideration.

In the booklet *Art: Revelation of Beauty*, p.27, the Mother has written about Modern Art:

"Modern art is an experiment, still very clumsy, to express something other than the simple physical appearance—the idea is good—but naturally the value of the expression depends entirely on the value of that which wants to express itself."

The Mother also said in *Questions and Answers, 1950-1*, pp. 262-3-4:

"I have known artists who were great artists, who had worked hard and produced remarkable things, classical, that is, not ultra-modern. But they were not in fashion because, precisely, one had not to be classical. When a brush was put in the hands of an individual who had never touched a brush, and a brush was put on a palette of colours and the man had never touched a palette before, then if this individual had in front of him a bit of canvas on an easel and he had never done a picture before, naturally he daubed anything at all; he took the colours and threw them in a haphazard way; then everybody cried out 'admirable', 'marvellous', 'it is the expression of your soul', 'how well this reveals the truth of things', etc.! This was the fashion and people who knew nothing were very successful. The poor men who had worked, who knew their art well, were not asked for their pictures any longer; people said, 'oh! this is old-fashioned,

you will never find customers for such things.' But after all they were hungry, you see, they had to pay their rent and for their colours and all the rest, and this is costly. Then what could they do? When they received rebuffs from the picture-dealers who all told them the same thing, 'But try to become modern, my friend, look here, you are behind the times', as they were very hungry, what could they do?...I knew a painter, a disciple of Gustav Moreau; he was truly a very fine artist, he knew his work quite well, and then... he was starving, he did not know how to make both ends meet and he used to lament. One day, a friend intending to help him, sent a picture-dealer to see him. When the merchant entered his studio, this poor man told himself, 'At last! here's my chance', and he showed him all the best work he had done. The art-dealer pulled a face, looked around, turned over things and began rummaging in all the corners; and suddenly he found....Ah! I must explain this to you, you are not familiar with these things: a painter, after his day's work has at times some mixed colours left on his palette; he cannot keep them, they dry up in a day; so he always has with him some pieces of canvas which are not well prepared and which he daubs with what are called 'the scrapings of palettes' (with supple knives he scrapes all the colours from the palette and applies them on the canvases) and as there are many mixed colours, this makes unexpected designs. There was in a corner a canvas like that on which he used to put his palette-scrapings. The merchant suddenly falls upon that and exclaims, 'Here you are! my friend, you are a genius, this is a miracle, it is this you should show! Look at this richness of tones, this variety of forms, and what an imagination!' And this poor man who was starving said shyly, 'But, sir, these are my palette-scrapings!' And the art-dealer caught hold of him: 'Silly fool, this is not to be told!' Then he said, 'Give me this, I undertake to sell it. Give me as many of these as you like; ten, twenty, thirty a month, I shall sell them all for you and I shall make you famous.' Then as I told you, his stomach was protesting; he was not happy, but he said, 'All right, take it, I shall see.' Then the landlord comes to demand his rent; the colour-man comes demanding payment of the old bill; the purse is quite empty, and what is to be done? So though he did not make pictures with palette-scrapings, he did something which gave the imagination free play, where the forms were not too precise, the colours were all mixed and brilliant, and one could not know very much what they saw, those who understood nothing about it exclaimed, 'How beautiful it is!' And he supplied this to his art-dealer. He never made a name for himself with his real painting, which was truly very fine, but he won a world-reputation with these horrors! And this was just at the beginning of modern painting, this goes back to the Universal Exhibition of 1900; if I were to tell you his name, you would all recognise it[1]....Now of course, they have gone far beyond, they have done much better. However he had the sense of harmony and beauty and his colours were beautiful. But at present, as

[1] Monsieur Henri Morisset.

soon as there is the least beauty, it won't do at all, it has to be outrageously ugly, then that, that is modern!"

The colours and palette remind me of a piquant joke:

A visitor gushed over the painting of a famous artist: "Ah! what original talent! what charm! what beauty! she exclaimed. "I wish I could take those glowing colours home with me!"

"Madam, you are certainly going to get your wish," replied the artist, "you are sitting on my palette!"

The very night I practised perspective from the Mother's drawings of the French box.

The next day she wrote:

"Yes, to copy exactly is the *sincerity* of the artist and it is only when you do visions or dreams that you must use your imagination.

"Tomorrow you will do once more the box as I have explained and I am sure it will be all right.

"For today I am sending you a beautiful dahlia which surely you will find interesting, if you paint it on a white background."

Oh! again white on white! Actually the Mother sent me white chrysanthemums instead of a dahlia. Perhaps she found these flowers more suitable.

When I had almost finished the painting, a sudden gust of wind made the whole composition of the objects before me fall down in a split second. Everything was completely displaced.

I retrieved the flowers and the vase from the floor. However, I finished the painting from memory.

The mischief of the invisible entities is beyond comprehension. Their actions are quick, visible and concrete. They amuse themselves enormously at the cost of human beings. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo have written much about these entities.

The Mother saw the painting and said with a smile:

"You have now got the right technique, the flowers are living."

I raised my eyebrows and was mystified at her comment. For, I knew how it had been done!

After that we discussed the French box which I had found extremely tough to paint.

She spoke of a book on perspective. It was essential for me to learn perspective, otherwise I would go in for modern art and that was not my line.

The next morning a card came, depicting painted ships floating on a blue-green

sea with the golden dawn reflected on it. I felt as if the gentle waves had brought the Mother's words:

"Until I get back the book on perspective of which I spoke to you, I am sending you one book in which there are the first explanations on how to draw objects—it might help."

I turned the pages of the book. My brain grew dizzy. I thought to myself : "Oh! how many more things have I to learn just to do painting? How boring are these theories, methods created by reason!"

The figures reminded me of geometrical theorems which I really loathe. I had got away from this subject including algebra and arithmetic in my matriculation; instead I had taken Civics and Administration which unfortunately were not taught in my school. I studied at home, took exams and passed. But now again I had to tackle perspective!

I tried once more to draw and paint the box but without avail.

I was already suffering from a backache. To crown it, I suddenly got an acute headache. I could not even lift my head. In fact, this strange kind of headache had persisted for two years.

It was Saturday. I did not see the movie. I wrote a letter to the Mother informing her of my pain.

She answered the next morning on a card showing red roses:

"I am sorry for the headache, but bad habits in the body take time to overcome. Yet you can be sure that one day it will go for good.

"For the painting, you can put a white background behind the box—it will look nice and the colour of the box will appear more clearly.

"My love and blessings are always with you, in all circumstances."

Now back to the French box! At last after a great struggle I had finished painting it. I showed it to the Mother in the evening. She remarked:

"You have done it nicely."

I said with a smile: "Mother, I am glad you like it."

I added: "Unhappily, I am so much engrossed in painting that I grow oblivious of my goal and the Divine.

The Mother then classified all the Yogas in a nutshell.

Bhakti Yoga: You offer yourself to the Divine, you love and worship the Divine.

Karma Yoga: You should feel that you are doing the Divine's work and

the Divine is doing work through you. Whatever you do, you should offer each and every thing to the Divine by constant remembrance of the Divine. Of course, your brain will go on working but the true self will remember the Divine, call for help and every moment offer the work to the Divine.

Jnana Yoga: Yoga of knowledge, you seek for the Truth and consider that the Divine is the Truth and the rest is all Falsehood. You have to practise feeling that, 'I am neither this nor that nor anything else in nature.' Then remains only the Divine and your true self and when the true self also unites with the Divine, you can say, 'I am That.'

"These three Yogas lead to the Integral Yoga. They are the essence of the Yogas. You can choose any of them to start with. The best thing is to try to do the three together and then your whole being can be transformed."

She looked at me fondly and said:

"Child, Bhakti Yoga is more in your line than any other Yoga. It suits you. You will start from that."

I thought: "My God! What have I been doing here so far if not doing Yoga?" Sri Aurobindo has written in Cent. Ed., Vol. 23, p. 776:

"The nature of Bhakti is adoration, worship, self-offering to what is greater than oneself; the nature of love is a feeling or seeking for closeness and union. Self-giving is the character of both; both are necessary in the yoga and each gets its full force when supported by the other."

"Bhakti is not an experience, it is a state of heart and soul. It is a state which comes when the psychic being is awake and prominent."

He has also stated in Cent. Ed., Vol. 20, pp. 33-34:

"The path of Devotion aims at the enjoyment of the supreme Love and Bliss and utilises normally the conception of the supreme Lord in His personality as the divine Lover and enjoyer of the universe. The world is then realised as a play of the Lord, with our human life as its final stage, pursued through the different phases of self-concealment and self-revelation. The principle of Bhakti Yoga is to utilise all the normal relations of human life into which emotion enters and apply them no longer to transient worldly relations, but to the joy of the All-Loving, the All-Beautiful and the All-Blissful. Worship and meditation are used only for the preparation and increase of intensity of the divine relationship...."

Sri Aurobindo has been quoted about the Integral Yoga in *Bulletin*, Nov. 1978, p. 4:

"What is the integral Yoga?

It is the way of a complete God-realisation, a complete Self-realisation, a complete fulfilment of our being and consciousness, a complete transformation of our nature—and this implies a complete perfection of life here and not only a return to an eternal perfection elsewhere.

This is the object, but in the method also there is the same integrality, for the entirety of the object cannot be accomplished without an entirety in the method, a complete turning, opening, self-giving of our being and nature in all its parts, ways, movements to that which we realise.

Our mind, will, heart, life, body, our outer and inner and inmost existence, our superconscious and subconscious as well as our conscious parts must all be thus given, must all become a means, a field of this realisation and transformation and participate in the illumination and the change from a human into a divine consciousness and nature.

This is the character of the integral Yoga."

Sri Aurobindo has said about the Integral Yoga in Cent. Ed., Vol. 26, p. 99:

"My Yoga can include indeed a full experience of the other worlds, the plane of the Supreme Spirit and the other planes in between and their possible effects upon our life and the material world; but it will be quite possible to insist only on the realisation of the Supreme Being or Ishwara even in one aspect, Shiva, Krishna as Lord of the world and Master of ourselves and our works or else the Universal Sachchidananda, and attain to the essential results of this Yoga and afterwards to proceed from life and this material world conquered by the Spirit. It is this view and experience of things and of the truth of existence that enabled me to write *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. The realisation of the Supreme, the Ishwara, is certainly the essential thing; but to approach Him with love and devotion and *bhakti*, to serve Him with one's works and to know Him, not necessarily by the intellectual cognition, but in a spiritual experience, is also essential in the path of the integral Yoga."

I was still brooding over the Bhakti Yoga which the Mother had explained. Meanwhile, she ran a gentle hand over my forehead and said jokingly:

"For your headache, you must either eat fish or do meditation."

I gaped and said: "Eh! Mother, I would rather do meditation than eat fish! Not that I know very well how to meditate. You know already about my fiasco when

I tried to meditate the way you had indicated. And how you laughed when I related the incident to you."

A flash of amusement crossed the Mother's face and laughter rang out sweetly. I suddenly found myself better. She patted my hands and said:

> "Sit in an easy-chair, remain absolutely quiet, relax and open yourself—that is to say, imagine that you are opening your head to the Divine's Light, Grace and Force and let them work in you. You should do this every day for about fifteen minutes—perhaps twice or three times a day. Naturally, then you will feel that the blood is going up and down freely in the head. Thus you will never get a headache. Not only that; by this practice you can have true understanding. You should put yourself entirely in the hands of the Grace and call the Divine while relaxing."

Referring to my problems she remarked:

> "Child, if one's life is too easy and simple, then there is no charm in it."

But oh, the cost of the charm!

The Mother looked at me searchingly, which made me feel always that she penetrated into the very core of my heart seeking for something and bringing it out.

Slowly she closed her eyes as a lotus closes in the twilight. She remained in that state of trance for some time. Then she woke and said happily:

> "Just now I saw You in a vision. You were completely indrawn. Your head opened in the form of a red lotus, and the white divine light from above was pouring in it."

Afterwards she drew a sketch of her vision and gave it to me.

She embraced me warmly and kissed the top of my head.

Sri Aurobindo has written about the white Light in Cent. Ed., Vol. 25, p. 84:

> "The white light is the Mother's Light. Wherever it descends or enters, it brings peace, purity, silence and openness to the higher forces."

The Mother's Grace never fails. She has sown the seed which will flower one day.

(To be continued)

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND THE INDIAN SPIRIT

(*Continued from the issue of September 1983*)

From Kathleen Raine

THIS is my last day in Greece—or rather tomorrow is—and I take this last opportunity to answer your letter on hallowed soil. Mount Meru may be the summit of the world, but Delphi still remains its aged navel. And each night we see the sun set over Parnassus, sinking as it were into Delphi and its darkness. I was much moved by the herb blessed for me by the Holy Mother. Please thank her. I will keep it always God willing. It is now in my copy of the Upanishads (Radhakrisnan's edition) which I cannot of course read in the Sanskrit, but to have the words there is something. I thank you also. It was still faintly fragrant. I wonder if in this life I shall smell the soil of India, and if its fragrance is comparable with the earth of Greece, which is unlike anything I have known.

I always thought I had been an Athenian too. Perhaps we met there. I think I was a nun in France, and perhaps died young—at all events I knew as I remembered that I know more now, although I was happy in that life. But what these sudden memories mean who knows?

What you feel about the English language interests me greatly. Perhaps it may as you say become a language again in India, and there produce work that unites the knowledge of Indian spirituality with the polymorphous potentialities of English. But that surely cannot happen for a very long time. I have read no poetry by an Indian that does not seem to an English reader to be written by a foreigner. This I find even with Tagore, certainly with Sri Aurobindo: and also with most of your poems. I think I like the poems of yours that I do like best simply because they seem least like poems written in a foreign idiom. The theme of all is the same, and of course the only theme—it is only a question of style. Perhaps if India is supreme in spirituality, the western sense of the embodied form is stronger, at the present time. Or maybe English occupation in India has left many problems, linguistic among others, that only time can sort out. You seem to have been influenced by AE at one time. I too admire him much, though chiefly as a writer of prose.

To return to your thoughts on the mysteries of these sympathies of our inner lives, it is all as you say profoundly mysterious. It may be that we are like instruments tuned, as it were, to a certain pitch so that we respond to certain other souls, present or past, without necessarily having been or even known them. We meet many people after all even in this life who remain alien however often we may meet them. To such communication there is perhaps no barrier, as you say, except lack of intensity in ourselves. Perhaps a perfect being—the Buddha or Jesus—can know what is in all souls. But certainly there are a few—even many—who seem even to us like

other selves. Curiously enough I feel more identity—though less admiration—with Coleridge, Wordsworth and Dorothy than I do with our maker of the Tyger. If I was ever anyone I was Dorothy. In a manner of speaking, that is. I have also I think been often born in the Highlands of Scotland, perhaps also in Ireland, and once nobly born, and have from that incarnation retained the pride of greatness, even though this time I have not had wealth or state to maintain it. But I hate and despise vulgarity, I love peasant people but detest the bourgeoisie, small and great. I feel most at ease and at home with the great, and with others seem always to be acting a part—going as it were incognito. I do not admit to being "there" necessarily because for the moment I am at a certain place or with certain people. I am like a caged animal, quite quiet and well behaved, but I belong to my own wild places, and they never knew me or I them. This must make me hard to understand or like, and I am constantly hearing of people I am supposed to have met, but I have no memory of having done so, and I feel in a curious way affronted by their notion that they "know" me. I seldom give very much of myself, never everything: therefore I am always outwardly patient and civil, even kind: why not? I am not THERE at all!

However, why give you this outline of my character? I wish it had been possible to meet you, I wish I had been able to visit India. No matter. (1. 10. 1961)

From K. D. Sethna

The Upanishads are indeed a fitting book to enshrine the "Tulsi" spray, particularly if the original Sanskrit words are there. I say "particularly" not only because those words are luminous and wide-winged, with their home in the same high ether that envelops all the movements of a person like the Mother. I say so also because much of the original Sanskrit is in a world quite different from the intellectual air in which most of the English translations float. I am afraid a rendering even by Radhakrishnan would be no exception. Not that the seizable mental meaning is devoid of spiritual suggestion in an English version, be it ever so inadequate: the Upanishads' spirituality cannot be buried anywhere, it will glow through. But there is a mighty difference between their substance getting seen by the mind in the mind's light and their revealing their own body by a self-shining that floods the mind with

White spaces of a knowledge beyond thought.

What makes this mighty difference is the quality and rhythm of the individual words, and the ensemble at once massive and intense of revelatory significance which the words make by conveying the inner vibration, the life-thrill of the spiritual state expressed. Unless something of the Upanishadic Mantra is caught in the translation, the self-shining of the Divine Body will be missed. Not the vision alone but the very language has to come from what Sri Aurobindo calls the "overhead planes": the form itself and not just the content must be brought from there. Where is that

language, where that form in even the rendering by Yeats, in collaboration with Purohit Swami, of, say, those two famous *slokas* in the Mundaka Upanishad about the Transcendent Divine and the Cosmic Divine? Yeats gives us:

> Neither sun, moon, star, neither fire nor lightning lights Him. When He shines, everything begins to shine. Everything in the world reflects His light.
>
> Spirit is everywhere, upon the right, upon the left, above, below, behind, in front. What is the world but Spirit?

I suppose such a translation would serve pretty well for a text on which to write a philosophical thesis expounding deep truths—and one might justify it by pleading that it imitates the pithiness of the Upanishadic utterance. But the sound of the original has nothing of the clipped and the bare: a sonority accompanies the pithiness and there is a quality of intonation which communicates a vastness of depth that is plucked up into concentrated points. Not philosophical insight by itself but a surge of supra-intellectual experience which yet carries a philosophical vision in it: this we have to pass through the English rendering by a special skill in phrase-formation and sentence-construction in order to capture without perpetrating bombast the inner and outer resonance of the original. A certain degree of poetic re-creation is also required: one is then faithful in essence but not uncouthly literal. I may illustrate in an indirect manner what I mean, by taking a couple of phrases from English poetry which have the ample breath of the Upanishadic Mantra, the full "overhead" afflatus, and comparing them to statements such as the Yeats-Purohit translation provides us with. Would you guess from the words "Thoughts which explore Eternity" the music of immeasurable overtones sweeping into us in Milton's

> Those thoughts that wander through Eternity?

Or would you be as affected by the turn "The World-Soul predicting the future in its dreams" as by the fathomless harmony of Shakespeare's

> the prophetic soul
> Of the wide world dreaming on things to come?

If we are to have a proper sense of what poetry-*cum*-philosophy lies at the back of the Yeats-Purohit product from the Mundaka Upanishad, we should set beside it Sri Aurobindo's version with its attempt to re-create in English something of the Overmind-symphony of the Sanskrit original:

> There the sun shines not and the moon has no splendour and the stars are blind. There these lightnings flash not nor any earthly fire. For all that is bright is but the shadow of His brightness and by His shining all this shineth.

All is this eternal and immutable Brahman. The Eternal is before us and the Eternal is behind us and to the south and to the north of us and above and below and extended everywhere. All this magnificent universe is nothing but the Eternal.

Apart from the Mantric communication, there is also the question of proper exegesis. The Rishis of the Vedas and the Upanishads lived in the realisation of certain truths which have got obscured or confused with the growth of the intellectual side of humanity, even Indian humanity. The climax of this confusion is in the latter-day attitude to the Vedas. The term "Veda" means "Knowledge" and the Vedic Rishis call themselves seers and hearers of the Truth that resides in the highest ether of being where all the Gods are seated. Rishi Dirghatamas clearly asks apropos of this ether a question which no commentator on the Vedas can afford to forget: "One who knows not That, what shall he do with the Mantras?" Yet most commentators have gone without knowledge of That, and so we have the ironical situation that the Rigveda, the Book of Knowledge, is considered the Book of Works, a manual of complicated primitive ritual designed to secure by praising and petitioning the Gods worldly goods—cattle, off-spring, land, gold, victory in battle, etc. The high symbolism built by the psychological allusions and by the vibrant visionary tone has been quite obscured. European exegetists have sought to read archaic history and a fantasy-shot naturalistic religion behind the ritual: they see the Rishis as imaginative barbarian priests of Aryan invaders, worshipping the physical fire and sun and rain-clouds and rivers, and often in a state of bardic wrath against black flat-nosed broken-tongued aborigines figured as demons or their instruments. The Upanishads, as also the Gita, have suffered less ignobly at the hands of indigenous or foreign interpreters; but even great minds like Shankara and Ramanuja have done wrong to them by trying to run their seas of light, *divers et ondoyants*, into narrow channels of this or that particular kind of Yoga. Shankara and Ramanuja are not travesties of the Indian spirit but they are part of the later development of Indian spirituality, truly Indian according to this or that characteristic of their own ages yet hardly representative of the many-sided comprehensive vision the early scriptures had of the One who is multi-present and holds in Eternity the secret of Time and in Time the manifestation of Eternity. If you wish to get the precise significance of the ancient Indian wisdom you should read the clear yet profound commentary by Sri Aurobindo on the Isha Upanishad. It is very easy to read and grasp, thanks to its simple and systematic mapping out of the more-than-Apollonian "realms of gold".

I felt extremely interested in what you have written about yourself. Especially, when you write in regard to certain people—"I am like a caged animal, quite quiet and well behaved, but I belong to my own wild places, and they never knew me or I them"—I cannot help a strong sense of identity with you. But I may add that belonging to wild places does not preclude me (nor surely you) from living, on one side of the self, always with

The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

If I didn't live thus and if you also didn't, neither of us could feel, as we do, the close sympathy with Wordsworth and Dorothy. More than Blake, or Keats, or even Shelley, it is Wordsworth of the time of *The Prelude* (mostly early version) who makes in the English language the poetic world in which I should like to live—next, of course, to the world which the poetry of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* makes. And this is so because actually—in the midst of his individual accent and the breath of his age and country (or countryside)—this Wordsworth who wrote *Three Years She Grew*, *Tintern Abbey*, the Immortality Ode, the great passages in *The Prelude* and several snatches of Nature-communion in other poems is perhaps the first clearly disengaged voice, in English verse, of the spirit most potent in the ancient Indian scriptures and therefore distinguishable as the Indian spirit. He is the authentic presage, in the English consciousness itself, of what I have called the destined Indo-Anglian apocalypse which I firmly believe has already taken place in the 23,812 lines of *Savitri* whose first impact on H.O. White of Trinity College, Dublin, led him to write, after examining for Ph. D., a thesis on the poem by Prema Nandakumar, daughter of the distinguished critic K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar: "I...greatly appreciated the privilege...of making the acquaintance of *Savitri*, a truly remarkable poem... I may add that I was immensely impressed by the extraordinary combination of East and West in the poem, of ancient Indian lore with the thought and experience of the modern cosmopolitan world" (21 July, 1961). Herbert Read too is fairly complimentary, though a bit more overwhelmed than enthusiastic. He wrote to my friend Purani: "It is undoubtedly difficult to find readers for poems of the length and sustained creative power of *Savitri* and the fault must be in the nature of our present western civilisation" (June 5, 1958). The verdict, "sustained creative power", is rather significant.

Except for almost accidental phrases like the two I have quoted from Shakespeare and Milton, there is nothing in English poetry before Wordsworth—not even to any appreciable degree in Blake—like the sheer spiritual seerhood, the Upanishadic vision and word, embodied again and again in the so-called pantheistic expression of the young Wordsworth. Something of this strain lingered on in his later phase too: the two lines I have taken from *Brougham Castle* verge on the later period and one of the most astonishing in *The Prelude* was put in when he was well on in age. It is hardly an Englishman writing in the Immortality Ode:

The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep.

English critics have either construed it to be a peculiar way of saying

The Winds come to me from the fields asleep

or else boggled, sensing some wonderful visionary thing but themselves feeling out of their depth. And what is the general English mind to make of that other phrase—on a child—from another stanza:

> Thou, over whom thy Immortality
> Broods like the Day...?

The verse about the fields of sleep catches the precise life-sense of the superconscious Unknown (called Sushupti, "Sleep", in the Mandukya Upanishad) that is the hidden height of our secret inmost being and from whose expanses of eternal bliss and rapt truth-sight the most profoundly re-creative inspiration wafts into us. Note how well the suggestion of the high spiritual mystery pressing upon the poet from across in-drawn distances is prepared by the three preceding lines:

> The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
> No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
> I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng;
> The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep...

The physical reality imaginatively caught up into the semi-symbolic meets us in the opening line. A subjective turn enters in the next, putting the poet's grief into relation with something living and vocal in the season, something evidently blissful, against whose presence all grief would be an ungrateful rebellion. Then the physical sounds from the steep, descending and spreading in space, are mentioned in a rarefied form as "Echoes" gathering in lofty places, hovering for the poet like a remote remembrance of some looming range and recess of existence, both without and within. Then we get the last movement with its subtle leap beyond all Nature-hints of the spiritual into pure mysticism and Mantra. Not that Nature is annulled: the fields of Cumberland on a "sweet May-morning" are still there, but the breath, simultaneously vague and powerful, of Supernature has broken out through them and wakened in the poet the thrill of some ultimate soulscape. The Mantra is not so rhythmically intense in the phrase about the brooding Immortality, yet a strong life-sense of the same Superconsciousness is again felt, now not in its secret inspiration so much as in its lordly and luminous revelation of the inherently Deathless poised on its "overhead" plane and silently nourishing, protecting, ruling, enlightening the child-soul which is still aware of its divine source and of that source's all-seeing immensity.

The old Rishis find voice in both the phrases, bearing Wordsworth beyond the European *Zeitgeist* at work through Rousseau or Schelling or even Coleridge. And perhaps these ancients are at their grandest in what I consider the most Wordsworthian passage of all—the fragment discovered by E. de Selincourt in a *Prelude* MS:

> One interior life
> In which all beings live with God, themselves
> Are God, existing in the mighty whole,
> As indistinguishable as the cloudless east
> At noon is from the cloudless west, when all
> The hemisphere is one cerulean blue.

There, with a mounting Mantric intensity, a single-selfed Within is conveyed in its vastness as well as in its ultimate oneness with an illimitable Beyond of Spirit-space uniformly clear in its blissful beauty and swept by an All-light at once omnipresent and sovereignly centred. This is Indo-Anglian poetry in a prefigured self-consummation.

Less openly so in conception but essentially as climactic in its Indo-Anglianness is Wordsworth's description of Newton in Roubiliac's sculpture of him at Cambridge:

> with his prism and silent face,
> The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.

Surely this is not quite the historical Newton, majestic and far-reaching intellect though he was, with a strong religious basis even to his scientific speculations. This is not merely the explorer of the secrets of the physical universe with a masterly mind. That Newton receives the highest panegyric, from a poetic vision which the normal Englishman responding to inspiration would immediately recognise as proper and intelligible, in Pope's famous transfiguration of wit with the Biblical "sublime" praised by Longinus —

> Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night:
> God said, "Let Newton be!" and there was light.

The figure whom Wordsworth gives us is much more than a scientist of the physical cosmos: he is a disguised super-scientist of the In-world, turning within from without, plunging his masterly discoverer intellect into a spiritual trance—the In-world whose very vibration of wideness on mystic wideness starts faintly with the rhythm and vision of "silent face" and gathers momentum with "a mind for ever" and emerges in plenary force in the whole last line—once more the typical Mantra. I dare say something of the idea-substance of it may have come into English poetry long before Wordsworth (*e.g.*, Marlowe's "Still climbing after knowledge infinite"): I have the impression that a critic has shown several components of even the image-substance in a pre-Wordsworth versifier. But the fusion of all idea and image in a revelatory sight which gives to things a value and figure received direct from a superhuman plane of awareness—and, above everything else, a sound-substance filling

both idea-substance and image-substance with an overtone and undertone of infinite suggestion as if the word-rhythm were a snatch from some fundamental creative movement by which Time was born out of Eternity—this is a new naturalness in English with the advent of Wordsworth's spontaneous Vedanta. Few Englishmen, in spite of the penetrating subtleties to which Shakespeare may have accustomed them, in spite of centuries of familiarity with "the rude imperious surge", would feel very much in their element here except in a general way which imaginatively enjoys some sort of sense of the unfathomable because it relaxes and soothes the too-questing mind and the too-palpitant heart of the modern Western individualist.

Wordsworth himself appears to have been not always at ease in his own Wordsworthianness—at least a part of him was rather qualmish and even apologetic about his pantheism no less than his sense of prenatal existence. I am not quite certain whether he realised in full the implications of his "Winds"-line or his line on "strange seas". I even believe that on one occasion he thought he had written a heart-breaking "Lucy" lyric when actually he had expressed with a deep intimacy his own spiritual trance of identification with the earth's being, such as he can be conjectured to have had from phrases, either included or omitted, of the first version of *The Prelude*! This lyric is *A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal.* I have a mind to make a thorough thesis about it, demonstrating how a highly inspired poet may mistake the drift of his inspiration if all of him is not attuned to its mystic motive. Everybody knows how Wordsworth's somewhat ponderous, if not pompous, intellect interfered with his insights and exaltations: here his Dorothy-haunted heart has misread what his soul had really spoken. Either movement reflects a flaw in the rare kind of genius with which he was endowed. The flaw increased with the years and the marked egoistical streak in his nature deepened it until the Kohinoor of the ancient Indian consciousness, that was his genius, split. One reason why the flaw could increase was that the ancient Indian consciousness which from beyond his surface being was awakening or erupting was not sufficiently assimilated by the average Englishman in him.

A similar reason with a different slant of action was responsible, in my view, for the too dissolving flux of Shelley's poetry which was again the same consciousness, crossed with the Platonic mood, in a more colourful and impetuous form. While Wordsworth's defect was mainly an intellectual rigidity that did not let the higher light come through intensely enough, Shelley's was an emotional laxity that diffused this light too much. Neither the one poet nor the other could quite live up to the power of the In-world and Over-world pressing upon them from the ether in which the Mantras of the Vedas and the Upanishads beat eternally their starry wings. But wherever their work is successful in a novel ultra-"romantic" mode they show the marvellous possibility of the English language being charged with and moulded by a non-English and profoundly Indian spirit.

I may add that this spirit has operated also through other poets after Wordsworth and Shelley—most markedly through two in two different manners. Whitman was its stormy oceanic medium under a large foam-fury of Americanism. AE was its quiet

streamlike channel under a fine iridescent quiver of Celticism. AE, of course, is a much smaller poet than the other three—smaller because of a more limited range and a certain monotony of technical movement as well as a misty facility of expression. But with all deference to Yeats I am positive that—more often than the compiler of the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* allowed—he wrote very subtle and original pieces, and they were essentially expressive of the Indian spirit, though, technically speaking, not quite with a Mantric ring. To write from an inner mystic source in affinity with this spirit is what would be natural to one who was the first poet in English doubled with a Yogi in the true sense.

All this brings me by a detour to your point that poems in English by Indians seem always to be written in a foreign idiom. But I have tried to indicate that there has been an undeniable preparation, by English poets, of a union of the Indian spirit and the English language and, according to me, this phenomenon is the reverse of the same thing whose obverse would be the writing of poetry in English by Indians who are moved by the deepest layer—the soul-layer—of the Indian consciousness. You would protest that after all Wordsworth, Shelley, Whitman and AE, whatever essential Indianness might have poetised itself through them, were singing in their own tongue, whereas Indians are using an acquired one and hence their treatment of it is always as by a foreigner. But what exactly is meant by writing as if in a foreign idiom? Is the English at fault? Is the idiom unnatural to a greater degree than it is in all poetry as contrasted to prose? Perhaps you mean, with Middleton Murry reviewing Manmohan Ghose's poems, that English words are being employed to express what they were never born for? But surely you have yourself spoken of the polymorphous potentialities of English? The only interpretation I can give to your phrase is that Indians don't know enough English to be able to write inwardly, as one must in poetry. But, granted that one is poetically gifted, would not the literary inwardness come if one knew English, as spoken among Englishmen, from one's early childhood—as, for instance, did Sri Aurobindo no less than his elder brother Mamnoham Ghose, both of whom never knew Bengali or any other Indian language until they came from England to India in their twenties? Or would you go so far as to assert that one who has English blood in his veins can alone have that literary inwardness? But then no pure Irishman can be a poet in English. And is there anything like pure English blood? "Normans and Danes and Saxons are we," sang Tennyson. There are other strains too—and quite convertible into the strains of poetry, as in the case of Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti who were Italian. Would you deny their achievement? If the former is felt as exotic, he still remains a genuine poet in English. And poetic exoticism did not begin or end in England with *The House of Life*. Spenser, Shelley, Keats, Francis Thompson, the early Yeats have all been charged with exoticism.

What evidently is necessary for poetic success in English is an intimacy somehow won with the language. And the way it may be won is itself a complex question. As I have tried to suggest in my last letter, there may be factors of the inner being

which, in order that one may be a master of English, do not always call for the very conditions under which Englishmen learn their own language. Something within can transcend the accidents of race and place. If one can feel a mysterious sympathy, even a sense of identity, with people of other races and places, as you too admit, why not with the languages of those people? I think that in consideration of all that I had said in my letter you have allowed the theoretical possibility of successful Indo-Anglian poetry: else you would not grant that one day Indo-Anglian poetry that is both truly Indian and English might get written. So your criticism has to be taken as applying really to present practice: it simply finds that so far Indians have not composed authentic poetry in English because they have invariably written Indian English. But, if you didn't see an Indian name under a poem, would you *infallibly* know that its English was not by an Englishman? Please forgive my queries if they appear a little impudent, but I am sincerely concerned to understand and learn.

Possibly what you mean is illustrated by Yeats's dealings with a prose-poem of Tagore's which, together with another, he included in the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*. Two sentences of Tagore's—the last paragraph—are semi-reminiscent of one of the Upanishadic *slokas* I have quoted in this letter. The whole piece originally ran:

> Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.
>
> O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is thy love that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours.
>
> There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand bearing the wreaths of beauty, silently to crown the earth.
>
> And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by herds, through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of peace in her golden pitcher from the western oceans of rest.
>
> But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night; nor form nor colour, and never, never a word.

Yeats touched up Tagore thus:

> Thou art the sky and thou art the nest.
>
> O Thou Beautiful! how in the nest thy love embraceth the soul with sweet sounds and colour and fragrant odours!
>
> Morning cometh there, bearing in her golden basket the wreath of beauty silently to crown the earth.
>
> And there cometh Evening, o'er lonely meadows deserted of the herds, by trackless ways, carrying in her golden pitcher cool draughts from the ocean-calms of the West.
>
> But where thine infinite sky spreadeth for the soul to take her flight, a stainless white radiance reigneth; wherein is neither day nor night, nor form nor colour, nor ever any word.

Well, what do you say? In the very last paragraph a tightening up and a closer connectivity have been achieved; also a kind of adroitness of construction, and perhaps a more telling defunctive music at the end. But isn't there a slight artiness too, and a *soupçon* of stiffness in the phrase as a whole? And is Tagore's original couched as if in a foreign idiom? What strikes me is that in tone and structure the original Tagore in this paragraph is more or less like the early Yeats, and what Yeats has produced by his correction is in the same respect more or less like the later Yeats. As with several of Yeats's modifications of his own poems of the Celtic twilight, something of the spontaneity, something of the vague far cry that is of the essence of the expression, have been lost. To my mind, here is hardly a question of English English and Indian English. It is merely a question of technical tempers. And no Yeats was specially needed to make the change. Several Indian professors of Literature at St. Xavier's College, Bombay, where I studied, could have done the job equally well if asked to introduce a bit of tautness and a bit of semi-Biblicism. Even some of my fellow-students could have managed it. One cannot say, either, that Tagore himself was incapable of Yeats's close: "nor ever any word". At the end of another prose-poem in the same collection, *Gitanjali*, we read: "...and the joy that throws everything it has upon the dust, and knows not a word." If Tagore didn't write in this place, "and knows never, never a word", he knew that such an effect was out of tune with the mood and the motif. But in the other dying cadence he may have wanted a specific stressed suggestion of everlasting silence and he may have wanted the suggestion to stand out by itself and not be tagged on to the run of statements linked by "nor" 's.

As for the rest of the piece, the verbal turns seem to vary in Yeats from Tagore according to nothing else than personal preference and individual sense of style. In one or two places I feel that Yeats has overdone things and a certain chasteness and reticence have been sacrificed. Take Tagore's

> O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is thy love that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours.

I think Yeats has brought in a rhetorical note as well as a grossness or obviousness in his version:

> O Thou Beautiful! how in the nest thy love embraceth the soul with sweet sounds and colour and fragrant odours!

Somehow I recoil just a trifle from that "how" and the "embraceth" and "sweet" and "fragrant". The Tagorean crystallinity has been tarnished. And isn't Yeats's nineteenth-century "o'er" in the fourth paragraph artificial? The repeated archaism of the "eth"-termination of verbs in nearly every paragraph jars again on my ear. I find also a shift of suggestion for the worse when Tagore's "western oceans of rest" are converted into "ocean-calms of the West", though possibly Tagore's "western"

and "rest", are not a very happy marriage of sounds. On the other hand, the omission of the last two words from Tagore's "cool draught of peace" may be an improvement and perhaps the transposition of "in her golden pitcher", from after "cool draughts...", to before it, is a better sequence of ideas. Further, I can appreciate the skill with which the "there" has been diversely disposed in the different paragraphs, but I don't know whether it was quite required by the mood and movement of Tagore's rhapsodic ingenuousness as of a seer-child. Several other small strokes of conscious dexterity in the structure may similarly be unnecessary. In the case of "where" followed soon after by "wherein" in the final paragraph, one wonders whether it is actually dexterity or gaucherie. All in all, I can't say that the language has been manipulated with a more genuine sensitivity, a more appropriate literary inwardness, by Yeats. (11.10.1961)

TIME

EVERY yesterday is as unknown
as the hidden far-away future.
We know not what is on those shores
still unexplored
Nor do we comprehend the purpose
of those we left behind.
As a word in a sentence, an act in a play
Can't explain itself,
Until we unveil the whole,
So past and present
will unfold their mystic and divine purpose
when out of the reach
of present desires, actions and reactions
their truth will rise
submerging the ego.
Only then the radiant future
will link itself to the pregnant past
And we shall know that the one
was a prelude and the other a finale
of a destined God-willed march through the present.

SHYAM KUMARI

ALTERNATIVES OLD AND NEW

SOME THOUGHTS ON INDIA AND THE ALTERNATE CULTURE OF THE WEST

To discuss the possible impact of the so-called counter-culture of the West on India requires firstly that we understand what this counter-culture is; next that we understand what the current moment in India's long history represents to her, and lastly how these two streams—one a vast river, the other a new rivulet—might be expected to blend.

The Counter-culture of the West

In the West, and particularly in America, there have been and will continue to be many relatively small groups of people with unpopular or unassimilable ideas. These splinter groups as they are called are the seasoning of any culture and very often provide the main movement of the culture with new ideas which, when developed and de-radicalised, can become important ingredients in its over-all development. However, in the early 1960's in America, and especially in California, something qualitatively different seemed to happen. What started as a relatively insignificant revolt by the students at the Berkeley campus of the University of California became the seed of a complete rejection by almost the whole population between 18 and 25 years of the values of mid-stream America.

It is significant that these are the people of University age, for the University represents the bulwark of Western values as no other institution does. Whether in the Soviet Union, America or Europe, it is here that the full flowering of the strand of perception developed by Aristotle in Greece takes place. It is here that the rational and specialist-oriented education reaches its complete expression. With a student population of around 35,000, the Berkeley campus had come to symbolise de-humanised and assembly-line learning. The mechanisation of man's mind was coming to its full development and then something in the students stirred.

At about the same time America was getting involved in Vietnam. To say that Vietnam was traumatic for America is to understate seriously the matter. By 1965, the coffins and the veterans were coming home in large numbers and the people who were becoming the Hippies were watching the war on television as they ate their dinner. As has been pointed out, if the wars of humanity were all digested with dinner in living colour two days after the events, there would be fewer wars and they would be much shorter. This war did many things to America and means many things. Among these is the failure of the rational and logically developed attitudes and technology to cope adequately with the much subtler and more determined national spirit of a much smaller Asian nation. America had 'saved' liberal democracy twice before, but in Europe. She had 'saved' South Korea, but under a U.N. mandate and

against a zealous but inefficient army which fought in the conventional way. The films now being produced of the Vietnam War indicate the fundamental difference which that war expresses from others in which America has been involved: all the films have deeply penetrating psychological themes.

And at about the same time the Beatles happened. A new music and a new poetry. And then, as if to break completely the rational string, LSD came and made the picture whatever you were beneath or beyond your cerebrum. A whole culture began to teeter on the edge of psychosis as it was overwhelmed by values and perceptions it had long denied.

*

There are two fundamental themes of development in America. One is represented by J. P. Morgan, the Rockefellers, the large and extremely competitive business houses which have made America the technological leader in the world. This technology in the beginning was developed by individuals and they apparently held within themselves an immense capacity and even genius for organising the material world to release new energies for man. But the cost was high in terms of the very well-being which these new energies were supposed to serve. Thus the development also in the West of an equally if not more materialistic social vision which was collectively oriented. Marx reacted to the over-individualised and competitive materialism of the 19th century by accentuating the materialism and logical inevitability of certain historical movements. Marx was a victim too of his age and culture and remained interested in the mainly material and rational solutions to the problems of human suffering.

The other theme in American culture is represented by Thoreau, Emerson, Walt Whitman and others who were concerned in developing America's other resources. Even now the power of the American landscape is immense and cannot help but touch a person of even the slightest sensitivity. To this softer vision the people of the 1960's turned, often unconsciously. Though Emerson was also deeply influenced by India, these people tapped the Asian traditions completely, at least as far as they could understand them. And moving to the countryside when they could, they began to try to meditate, to live collectively, to find what they thought might be God.

All the casualties were not on the battlefields of Vietnam. Many were in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, or the lower East side of New York. There, rents were low and the need for money minimum because half a dozen people could live on one person's unemployment cheque. The radical solution to an over-rationalised society in the form of Marijuana and LSD and whatever else would break this horrible cycle of boredom and mechanisation also destroyed many people who could not cope with the sudden break-down of their linear minds, minds which had been taught to reason, not dream, to think, not see.

But many either did not submit to drugs or, if they did, saw through the door that was opened and walked on to other things. Many simply suffered quietly in their

ordinary or not so very ordinary jobs, trying to find meaning where and when they could, but in a much less dramatic and compulsive fashion. It is the latter group which has formed what could be truly called a counter-culture in both America and Europe. 'Counter-culture' is an apt term, for the values of this minority are certainly counter to those of the main stream of the cultures of the West whether collective or competitive in their socio-economic systems. But they have produced some major changes, at least on the surface. Industries can no longer simply dump toxins into rivers and into the air; atomic power plants are no longer built with no awareness of their dangers or of the irony of building something which lasts for forty years and produces wastes which last for up to 250,000 years. The music changed (not always for the better), the diet and dress changed, the attitudes softened and have become perhaps a little more humane. We now have the possibility of 'appropriate technology' instead of only massive and expensive industrial development.

And there was a strong turn to Asia. Traditional China and traditional India became 'source-cultures' for a mass-plunge into the occult and spiritual worlds which opened up in front of the rejection of rationality and mass-production. A sort of unrealistic spiritual romanticism, immature and uncritical far more often than not, possessed many of the people at the heart of this counter movement. The archetype behind the Indian sannyasi took hold of many and poverty and the unclean seemed to become a rather dusty part of the process.

However, many turned to Asia quietly and sincerely, looking for its Truth and its Way. And some even found what they were looking for.

The Culture of India

For some people in the West traditional China holds the promise of as much release from the materialism and rationality of modern life as does traditional India. However, we are limiting ourselves to India for the obvious reason that this is where we are. There is a deeper reason also. India at the moment is struggling for a sense of who and what she is in the modern world. As perhaps the oldest culture on the planet, the problems of the confrontation with modern values seem acute and for many very painful. China has resolved its identity problem by plunging wholesale into an ideology ironically borrowed from the West and adapted with more or less success to its own practical genius.

India, because of the diversity and suppleness of her history and also, it would seem, because of her essential character, has not done this. India has chosen a much more difficult but ultimately more fulfilling approach. She is trying to retain the suppleness and flexibility and let the new identity, her new personality, evolve externally while retaining her essential identity within. In the short run this process seems to produce the worst of both worlds. She neither remembers very well how to express her old personality nor is she yet very creative at molding or maintaining the new one.

On the surface we can say that it is fortunate that India's industrial development has lagged far enough behind that of the West so as to afford the country the opportunity of learning from at least the more gross errors of Western technology. In fact some have even suggested that 'Third World' countries (isn't there only one world?) should avoid almost entirely the heavy industrial approach which has so heavily polluted the planet and wait for the full development of the new solar-electrical and 'soft' technology now being evolved in the so-called developed countries.

But these are superficial issues and do not touch the heart of the problem. In the minds of many in the West, India stands for something. Recently, even Mr. Reagan mentioned 'the mystique of India' and how he had been aware of it since childhood. But what is this mystique and on what is it based? In the popular mind of the West, India is associated with hatha yoga postures, fakirs, poor people, rich gurus and seemingly endless capacity to endure in spite of everything. The last is obviously the most important, but what is it that endures? A land, a people, a culture, a line of history—what?

When many Westerners come to India, the culture-shock is profound. The petrol bunks look the same; there are trucks and buses and cars (older and fuller, but they do the same things); you can go to a five-star hotel and get the same food as in New York, Paris or Moscow, but something is essentially different and what is it? How do all these people get up in the morning and get through the day in conditions like these? What gives them meaning in a world which for most Westerners would be more than ample reason for either abject despair or immediate revolt? Some turn around and go home, shaken but unchanged. Others take a deep breath and stay to find out.

And some of them find what they are looking for.

If European culture tries to base itself on the Greek ideal of mental refinement and the Christian ethic of salvation through faith and work, and if America is founded on 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness', India is founded on the search for Truth. 'Satyameva Jayate'. This pursuit explains most if not all of the anomalies of India. The tolerance of even the intolerable is perhaps based on the extraordinary assumption that everything and everyone somehow contains or represents some bit of this truth and so must be endured or, if not endured, then used in its very rejection as a means for a deeper inclusiveness. If Manu gave India a 'perfect' social order, its collapse into rigid norms reminds us that perfection itself evolves and grows. If Buddha points us to the fact that nothing is as it seems, that desire corrupts even those who are direct representatives of the search for Truth, then the Islamic invasions will show us the need for vitality and external conviction. If the individual injustices of a rigid caste system have survived so long, it perhaps is needed as a foil to the fact that the only acceptable escape from it has been into the spiritual quest.

If only we can endure long enough, we can find the Truth which each situation, each person holds. And, if we can endure long enough, the pain, the suffering, the weight of being alive will gradually or suddenly, but surely and forever, give way to

the fundamental light and bliss at the heart of everything, even in the heart of the cruellest person or most abject injustice.

If we fight, it is to protect this need for endurance, not only out of a petty need for personal or social survival, but because this land and its people somehow symbolise this utterly basic need in the human being for the right to pursue perfection and Truth.

The name Bharata comes from two sources in Sanskrit: from the root *bhṛ* which means 'to sustain, nourish, support', and from *bhaḥ*, 'light' plus *rata*, 'invested or engaged in'. So Bharata can be said to mean 'that which nourishes by being invested in light'. The very name of the country implies the search for Truth. (And why do we keep calling it 'India' in English?) To the extent that Bharata does *not* sustain this search, is *not* tolerant of all the peculiar forms which this sometimes tortuous and sometimes glorious quest can take, she is not being herself. She is not being the expression of The Mother who resides within and supports her people in all that they must live through in order to maintain this land as the home of those who need light and truth as their food.

India's external poverty is perhaps the symbol for Man of the poverty of his present world culture, a culture based on power and the quest for dominance, whether ideological or physical. Mother India suffers because she is neglected in her essential being. To give she must have those who want her gifts, and how many of us really want the Truth? How many of us really want to be nourished by the light? And so she languishes. Not able to be motivated, not able to be really interested in what seems to interest so many people in the world today: short-term profit, long-term dominance and immediate pleasure.

So her new politics, her new economy, her new arts and sciences are more often than not a poor imitation of the West. Why? Perhaps to show that if politics are in fact the quest for individual and group power rather than the quest for truth in governmental forms and intentions, then India will generate a fissiparous political system which challenges even the amoeba's imagination so that each aspirant for power can have a chance to rule *something*. If art is expression rather than the search for molds of Truth, then India will produce the most outlandishly expressive and naive works so that everyone can play.

India, Bharata, will show to Man that the current values are shallow and must be in the service of something greater. Negatively, she does this by pushing them to their extremes of superficiality; positively she will do this by resuscitating her traditional vision and giving it new forms. For her heart is in the Eternal and cannot die.

The Traditional and the Modern World Views

Throughout the ancient world, whether in Egypt, India or China, there was a vision held in common by the temple élite or the spiritual adepts. It is important to be aware of this vision, for it is the values emanating from it for which in a new form the

alternate culture is blindly groping, and which India, as the only living culture with a continuous link to its ancient past, must rebuild. These values came to permeate the ancient cultures in a way not conscious for any but those who were aware of the need to maintain them as the basis for the development of an eternal Man in permanent search for a wider and fuller truth upon which to base his life.

It is easiest to present these values in a list which places them against their opposites from the modern world culture mainly emanating from the West.

Traditional	*Modern*
Wholeness	Classification
Synthesis	Analysis
Symbolism	Rationality
Symbolic perception	Sensory perception
Synchronicity	Causality
Energy primary	Structure primary
Subjective values	Objective values
Introverted	Extroverted
Myth	History
Time as quality	Time as quantity
Spiritual values	Material values
Eternal Truth	Progressive truths

There are other aspects to the expression of the difference between the ancient and the modern world-view, but these will suffice. To discuss this issue completely is of course a large work in itself, but perhaps a few short sentences on each pair will be enough to give an idea of the assumptions which seem to direct our attitudes in today's world.

Wholeness and classification differ in that while the one view sees all, or tries to, the other attempts to see the parts. Wholeness knows by identity, classification by relationships of pieces. Union is the motivation behind wholeness, division behind classification.

Synthesis is the action of uniting related parts; analysis is the action of understanding the relationships between parts after first having perceived the pieces, usually by a conscious process of dis-assemblement.

Symbolism is the capacity to see what a given fact or reality represents, that is, re-presents, to us. It is based on the conception that Reality is unknowable and manifests through its symbols. The word 'symbol' probably comes through Greek from the Sanskrit *sam* (together) plus the root *bhal* (to perceive or describe), thus the sense is 'to perceive and describe together'. Rationality assumes that disparate facts are comprehensible in themselves through their linkages and that these linkages are mentally establishable. Rationality is more significantly related to *ratio*, the comparison

of two fractions of things and with *ration*, a measure of something. The comparison and value of these two is a complex subject ranging deep into the consciousness of Man.

The symbolic perception is a reflex dependence on seeing the symbolism of a fact rather than being satisfied with the perception of the sensory fact itself as is the modern scientist. The astrologer and the astronomer differ in that the former wants to know for Man and people the meaning of the astronomical facts while the latter is happy to know only the physical facts themselves.

Synchronicity and Causality are two of the most abstract qualities in the differentiation of the traditional from the modern mentality, but also two of the most important. Causality suggests that meaning is generated by the fact that if I drop an egg, it will break on the floor. That is, the dropping causes the breaking. Synchronicity suggests that meaning is generated by an awareness of what is happening within or without at the same time as the egg drops and breaks. Thus, synchronistic disciplines such as astrology, oracles and omens were important in the ancient world.

The primacy of energy over structure was also important in the ancient world as all the science of those times was concerned almost entirely with energy manifestations rather than structural formations, except as the latter are an expression of the former. This was particularly true in the field of medicine.

The subjective and therefore introverted values of dreams, feelings and individual meaning are considered more important traditionally than the objective patterns of behaviour as such. Behaviour is important for what it represents internally, not for what it is in itself. In the traditional view duty is a manifestation of an opportunity for love, not simply a mechanical act performed because that is what one is *supposed* to do.

Myth as the collective dream of a culture was far more important for the ancients than the recording of what physically happened. If records were kept, it was mainly to give a reflection of the symbolic acts performed by the kings who were considered to be the point of focus of the energies and consciousness flowing throughout the society.

The quality of time, the feeling of morning different from noon, or spring from summer, or the new moon from the full, and the manner in which time was used, was far more important than the quantity of time and how much physical work could be gleaned from a given time period. Only cultures dominated by a concept of time as a quantity could produce the concept of men working on an assembly line.

The spiritual values can be said to be those which compensate for partiality, which are unitive and harmonising, which manifest through the subjective experience of unshakable calm and tranquillity. The material values demand constant change and development, a need for a constantly growing sense of having access to more and more energy and things, to a quicker and more efficient utilisation of the material world. The spiritual values tend toward a wider sphere of poise and wholeness, the material values toward a wider sphere of need and agitation.

And the faith in the reality of an Eternal Truth to which all existence refers and of which all is an expression is fundamental to the ancient cultures. For example, in Egypt the mathematicians did not permit the use of any number but 1 for the numerator of a fraction, so the mind would remain focused on unity. That is, existence (the denominator) is always considered as some fraction of the One, the Eternal. For us in the modern world 2 is composed of a 1 added to another 1, but for traditional mathematics 2 is 1 divided in half because there can be only one 1. 20 apples are the multiple manifestation of the single archetypal Apple. The progressive truths of the rationalistic mentality are based on an additive concept of existence where the physical apples are all that exist or have meaning, where the accumulation of profits in the market place or physical convenience is the primary concern behind the development of knowledge.

The Relation of the Alternate Culture of the West to India

Yet we cannot deny the importance or relevance of the technological revolution based on the modern values. Man is changing and so must India.

Obviously, we cannot return to the past as many in the West try to do in their attempt to express their disgust with the excesses of materialist culture. Nor can we reject wholesale all the material advances made in the last two hundred years or so. If the extremes of empirical positivism do not in their technological expressions destroy us through war or pollution or psychological disintegration or some or all of these, the material changes which have developed can certainly be utilised. Man can become freer and more genuinely creative through being released from the repetitive labour which has bound him almost since his birth some five million years ago somewhere in Africa.

As pointed out in the beginning of this article, the counter-culture is a compulsive reaction to a highly partial world view. That reaction was generated in times of stress and boredom in a very young culture, the youngest on the planet. India is perhaps the oldest and (whatever the economists might say) certainly one of the most developed cultures on the earth. It has learned the value of growing mainly through absorption and assimilation rather than through conflict and clash.

But India cannot simply submit to the materialist culture and try to become only a world power like any other. She can, if she wills and we assume she does, solve her enormous problems through an original and creative synthesis of the traditional and the modern values. Her history in all fields suggests the capacity to do this, but she could now do it positively and consciously. She could now take up this work as a national scheme or programme which is worthy of her immense and opulent past. She could maintain her commitment to the Eternal and give that commitment new form and new energy. She could absorb and give meaning to the remarkable material knowledge gained at the expense of so much painful specialisation in a young world, a young world apparently kept almost blinded to the depth and resilience of

a culture built on wholeness and the search for a harmonising Truth.

But what can the alternate culture give to this effort of India? Perhaps simply a reminder to the people of India that the linear and rational values which produce atomic fission or solar electricity will, if carried to their extremes, produce a deep reaction. Perhaps Indians need that reminder at the moment so that they may actively seek for the true synthesis of India's essential history with her difficult and complex present. Many of the younger people who identify with the values of the alternate culture in the West sense deeply the paucity of their own background and they come to Asia if they can. Few stay, but perhaps they all represent for Indians a reminder: "Don't forget who you are and what you have known, for the world needs you badly and, consciously or unconsciously, we have come here, so it will be easier for you to remember."

DHRUVA

I OFFER YOU THE FALSEHOOD

NOT the beauties now with their radiant girth
And all the pleasures with their measured mirth,
But the pains and stains and darkness of the earth
I lay forever on Your golden berth.

Where is my hope if I cling only to light?
Where is my mastery if I grip not the night
And lay its ugliness at the seat of God,
And appeal for the mercy of the Truth-chastening rod?

O Might who dwell on the peaks unknown,
Blaze down from Your heights and dizzying Throne
The thunderbolt of purity and soul-ensnaring Fire,
That I might know Your sanctity in the pit of evolving mire.

P. P.

THE SILVER PINES

A SHORT STORY

Editor's Note

We are publishing this story not only for its literary value and its psychological significance but also for its unusual interest as the work of three hands. The brief opening part is by one pen, left without a sequel yet in too suggestive a form to be kept so. It engaged the imaginative powers of two different minds which still had a common end in view. So there are alternative versions of the second part, each having its own peculiar beauty and truth sparked off by the original fragment. In the course of the version immediately following the latter, there was a creative exchange of ideas between the authors of the two parts. The other version took shape independently.

All the three writers wish to remain anonymous. The only secret the editor takes the liberty to whisper out is that the ineffable trinity is feminine.

I

OUR cottage stood on the borders of the forest of A— at the foot of the Hansagiri in the Himalayas and all who came down the steep slopes from the dark interior—though few indeed ventured there and fewer came back—spoke of a grove of pine trees with peculiar silver leaves and an extraordinary kind of resin. The leaves when cut up, they said, emitted a blue-white silver light and the resin crystallised into a sort of yellow precious stone which, however, could be dissolved and drunk like wine. For those who wished to make the ascent to the snow-covered peak of the Hansa, this resin and these leaves were indispensable, it seemed. The thick fresh juice served as a drink and, when used as a coating for the body, made an admirable protection against the sharp blasts of the winds; the leaves provided a waxen pulp which could serve as food. So reported the rare ones who had been up to the peaks. It seemed a fairy tale, the usual traveller's tall story. The only strange thing about it was that every traveller who returned confirmed it, as though there had been a general conspiracy. So I began to give a little credence and think about it rationally and practically.

These trees could make the fortune of any man who could go and bring back their products. We were a poor family. I, indeed, had come to the cottage wounded and penniless in my wanderings in 19—, and had stayed there ever since. The woman of the family, Bhumi, had taken to me; she was kind and gentle, homely, hard-working, practical, unimaginative. My wanderlust of old she could not understand, she had not let me go. And now I too had fallen into a lethargy and let myself stay. The man was a mountaineer who had bound himself by oath to her never to venture

up the mountain. There were three children.

The man tilled a small plot, grew some vegetables, cut wood on the skirts of the forest, took his load to the town of K— some two miles away and managed to earn enough for his needs. I had helped him these five years in his work. Of why he had chosen to stay there so far out not a hint had escaped him. Only once I had heard him remark in general terms to his wife: "Well, my dear, you know, don't you, how men give up their true heritage for women's sake." Bhumi had shrugged her shoulders: "They do so wilfully, for their pleasure, then blame the women." That was all. A more or less common story, common conversation between man and wife when they quarrel. I had never asked any questions; they were both fond of me but had never given me such intimacy. Indeed, sometimes when I thought of it I hardly knew why I myself was there. I had just lived on, unquestioningly—existed. The place was beautiful, comfortable, human affection and natural loveliness surrounded me. It seemed a man hardly needed anything more. My wound had held me imprisoned long enough for my wanderer's heart, my true being, to have died within me.

Yet it was not dead. Every time a traveller from the deep forest or the mountain-tops returned with his strange story, the hidden wanderer cried within me, cried and marvelled and yearned for flight. But the men went away as they had come, and the children came to me with their soft loves and the woman brought me my daily food, and the magic moments passed. And I lived on as before. It seemed I could live on thus for ages and ages unstirring, half-asleep.

One day however another traveller came, his face all aflame,—had he applied the resin on his way here too? I wondered—his eyes aglow, his speech more powerful than all I had heard before. He spoke of the pine forest, the gleaming resin, its sweetness, of the phosphorescence of the leaves, he spoke of the beauty and wonder that haunted the peaks of eternal snow. The wanderer in me woke once again and this time I determined to go. My mind was made up that night, but I did not speak a word. The traveller however seemed to have read my thoughts, for gazing intently at me he said: "The slopes are very dangerous, but one who has fire in his heart can always try and succeed." Then casually turning to the others he remarked dreamily, "Indeed, all men could try, it is worth it. Only one needs to be fearless." He looked at the children then and said, "They are young and strong and uncramped by worldly fears, for them it would be easier." We went to bed then, but his radiant face swam before my eyes and I longed to go the way he had gone. Then it struck me that I had not even asked him which way to go; but almost simultaneously the self-confident old globe-trotter in me laughed and said, "What need have I to ask? Haven't I been through perils enough in unknown places?" Still, I faintly thought I would ask him next morning and self-satisfied I fell asleep. But when I woke the man had already left.

It did not matter. Nothing mattered now but to go—to go and find those trees, to climb that peak of wondrous light. Bhumi, indeed, wept. But she brought out my old knapsack, cleaned the outfit, prepared my meals. The same day I went to K—

to make some purchases and the next day I was ready to go.

And now I am going to report my journey—the most fascinating I have ever made. It will sound like a dream tale to some, to some a fairy-thriller. But there are those who will acknowledge its truth.

Well, I started, I remember, in February 19—, my knapsack slung across my shoulder, my staff in my hand. I was one of the millions of travellers who go down the ages. But now in my heart was a new fire, I had a purpose, a goal. The usual aimless pleasure-trips and wanderings had no more lure for me. I must find the pines, I must reach Hansagiri, the Peak of the White Swan.

2

Looking back I wonder if I would have ever undertaken this arduous journey into the unknown if I had had the least inkling of the trials and hazards, mental and physical, the hardships which often appeared to be unsurmountable and the hundred doubts which assailed my mind about the existence of the Silver Pines. Now indeed, I know I would have gladly gone through all these ordeals and more because the reward begins when accomplishment ends—if there can be an end...

I was by no means a religious person, having lived from day to day without giving much thought to the more profound intricacies of life and creation. But at the end of the pilgrimage... All through, this journey I felt someone guiding me and often the face of the 'traveller' who had set me off appeared before me encouraging me when I was despondent, and then all the obstacles seemed to vanish as if by magic.

So on that memorable day in February, as I said, long before dawn with airy and sure steps I embarked upon my quest. Hastily and briskly I climbed the first low foothills, and almost immediately a different world seemed to open before me—a world of beauty and delight. A new vibration was in the air; everything was filled or touched with some other light. Wild flowers of delicate tints and fresh green ferns and mosses decked and bejewelled every rock and crag; gentle cascades of purity glided down the slopes, birds twittered and sang songs of a new dawn, accompanying the soft murmuring music of the mountain-streams. The intense loveliness of the scene sank deep into my soul: I felt vast, free,—free of all the old daily stupidities and commonplaceness, the bondage of Bhumi; the small shackles of earth fell from me. Another life seemed to have begun.

I don't know how far and how long I must have walked when I realised—having recently led an easy life I was out of practice for trekking—that my legs were very tired and sore. I rested for a while on a small hillock, opened my knapsack and ate meagerly of the food I had brought and quenched my thirst from the clear running waters of a stream. Then I resumed walking and went on till the shadows lengthened and night suddenly descended as it does in the mountains. I looked around for shelter to spend the dark hours; it was not difficult, soon I found a hollow in the hill surrounded by boulders and feeling absolutely safe lay down to sleep peacefully.

The next day and many others passed with the same regularity, trudging during daytime and resting at night. The region changed gradually and the mountains became more rugged and rocky and the land was dry and barren. Looking down a valley I saw that it was sparsely inhabited, just a shepherd here and there tending his flock. Now I was getting into my stride, so to say, and though a bit footsore and weary at times, I covered great distances as long as the light lasted. Often when the weather was fine I stayed out at night just under the open sky near some stream and gazed at the stars and constellations and marvelled at the splendour of the creation. I was used to solitude but this eerie, dire silence was rather overpowering and I longed for some company. Great calm and peace were all around me no doubt but I felt lost without companionship.

I hadn't the least idea how many days had elapsed or whether I was going in the right direction, for I had no map with me; I seemed to move spontaneously, as though directed by some inner guide on whom every day I came to rely more and more. One day I would trek for miles and at the end of it remain fresh; at other times within a short distance my legs would turn into lead and refuse to budge. I started analysing the vicissitudes of my journey and made many discoveries.

One night the weather was particularly inclement and I took refuge in a cave, not without some treipdation; it was dark and dingy and from it some strong fetid smell exuded. Was it the lair of some animal? I wondered. Nevertheless, so tired was I that I lay down and dozed off. After a time, I felt someone entering and heard soft footsteps; I opened my eyes: two bright points were peering at me in that stygian darkness and the smell became unbearable. Was it a wolf or a bear? Petrified with fear I remained motionless; I had heard also that animals do not attack objects that are absolutely still... Gradually I fell asleep again but I was troubled all through the night. Strange oppressive dreams seemed to suffocate me.

When I woke up light was streaming into the cave and there was no one there, only the smell left behind by the midnight prowler persisted. I felt unclean, went out in search of a stream and plunged into its limpid waters to wash off the horrible effects of the night's visitation.

I must here relate another incident which left a deep impression on me. I remember I was particularly thirsty one afternoon and in search of water to relieve my parched throat; I was climbing up a dry nullah and a rock wall to reach some huge boulders standing against each other, for I was sure I would find a stream there, when suddenly I slipped and fell heavily. I must have lain there long, I guess, but when I came to myself I saw someone stooping over me with deep concern on his face; he was splashing some water on mine and bathing it to revive me. I had seen no human being for many a day, so you can imagine my amazement... Soon after he had helped me up and I was feeling strong enough to continue, the kindly stranger disappeared as suddenly as he had come. I was wonderstruck. My memory seemed to catch some resemblance in him to "my" traveller...

I had run out of food already and lived on herbs and berries I found by the way-

side—often they were sweet and luscious and seemed to give me strength and energy. But as time went by I became somewhat despondent. There was no turning back now nor was there any sign of the goal. A cry would surge up from my heart, "Is there no end to this seeking? Will I ever find...?"

Then one bright day at some distance I saw snow-covered peaks and as I approached them the atmosphere changed: though the winds howled all around and the chill and cold pierced my very bones, a vibrant expectancy filled the air. I suddenly felt more light-hearted than I had done for several days; my weary legs seemed to have found new strength and I hurried forward as one would to meet one's beloved. Still there remained a long route to traverse, but light in mind and heart I seemed to fly.

Now the scenery too changed rapidly. I saw flowers of rare beauty, most exquisite and strange, as though of some other planes; even the trees and plants and shrubs were of a different kind and birds of marvellous plumage flitted among them. Was I approaching some new world? My heart-beats quickened and yet there was great peace and calm within me.

I walked on and on and on in heightened excitement, drinking in the celestial beauty of the surroundings, so light and fresh, I was completely unaware how far I had come. Suddenly a silver-green glow burst upon my sight. The Silver Pines! At last! My whole being was filled with rapturous quietude and I paused breathless for a few minutes. Now some sweet intoxicating scent came wafted on the air; I hastened on eager and excited but once again came to a dead stop. Before me lay a narrow but deep creek gaping between me and the silver grove. Ah, so near yet so far, so alluring yet so unattainable...

Was I to be thwarted at this stage from realising my purpose? Was there no way across? Desperately I was preparing to plunge into the icy unknown waters when looking around, at some distance I saw a gleaming object floating on the creek. I raced to it as night was fast approaching and found that it was a fallen pine tree with its glimmering needles forming a sort of a bridge over the creek. I did not stop to think: immediately I stepped on it but unexpectedly with my weight the tree bobbed up and down and would have thrown me off my balance and into the water had I not quickly gone down on all fours and gripped the trunk with my hands and thus managed to slowly crawl along. After many anxious moments I at last reached the other side, stood up and with a swift leap landed safely. I walked slowly into the forest grove lost in deep thought; gentle snowflakes rained on me like a benediction from the wintry skies. A serene peace enveloped me and pulling my mantle over me I lay down to sleep full of hope, "dreaming on things to come."

Before daybreak I was up and began strolling through the grove. I felt that these marvellous pine trees flourished by drawing the purest mountain air, the crystalline light and the splendour of the snow. Clustered at the end of the twigs the bright blue-green needles radiated in bunches of five. What beautifully coloured patterned barks! Curious little dew-drops of resin on the leaves scintillated as dawn broke. Gracefully

curved cones were lying on the ground and overhead in the branches, near the top, were younger ones with their ripening seeds. In the midst of this silver galaxy stood two "standard-bearers of the sky-line" with trunks streaming up nearly 200 ft. and branches spreading out 8 or 9 ft. across. Gazing up, what a rare sight I beheld: the topmost branches had caught the rays of the morning sun and turned into a golden shimmering dome. I was enthralled! The atmosphere was charged with beauty and deep peace and I sat down and fell into silent contemplation. There was no sense of the passing of time, but when I emerged I felt a strange vibration around me and looking up I saw the most extraordinary being I had ever met. It was very difficult to tell his age, there was such a radiance about him... He looked at me benignly, an almost imperceptible smile on his lips. All my being thrilled with a surge of joy. As if he had expected me, he held out to me two bowls. I got up at once and took them from him. I found that one of the bowls (carved from pine wood) contained some kind of food and the other some yellow golden liquid. I ate the food as if it were sacramental and drank the liquid and within moments I experienced an unusual exhilaration and well-being and strength flowed through my tired body. Then he led me to a shanty and said, "You may stay here as long as you wish; stay and learn." He signed to me to enter; I stepped in and turned round expecting him to follow, but he had disappeared.

So contented was I in this sylvan retreat that I wanted to remain here always. I took long walks through the woods admiring all their varied beauty and discovering many new marvels. I recalled what the 'traveller' had said, and when I was hungry and thirsty I dissolved the resin of the pines in water and drank it up and immediately felt invigorated. Experiences crowded on me day after day and new vistas opened before me. There was neither past nor future, for me now only the present existed. Or so I thought... I often felt the presence of the radiant being and caught a fugitive glimpse of him once in a while in this vast forest cathedral. Later I discovered that he was not the only person there. I met from time to time several other beings, seekers like myself, who had come for knowledge to this place of Light. Always there was a deep quiet communion among us, and a great joy of recognition flowed as though we had known one another from all eternity. Often I heard strains of the most ethereal music, rich harmonies at times, at times deep chantings or the clear call of a flute.

One day as I lay under the shade of a young pine I fell into a fitful sleep and dreamt of Bhumi and the children calling me back. I woke up with a start, all kinds of desires suddenly attacking me. Hadn't I come here to make my fortune? I had such an easy chance to take away the products of these pines; I would become so rich and famous. As these thoughts of greed and avarice passed through my mind, I heard a sharp rustling in the trees, the trunks rocked, the branches swayed, there was a commotion as if the whole forest was chiding me... I returned to my true consciousness with a shock and the pricks of a hundred needles. It was long before peace returned to me and perfect calm was restored once again. I had received my absolution. ...

One moonlit night through an opening in the pines, I saw the distant peaks of

Hansagiri flooded with an unearthly beauty and I instantly realised within me why I was here and felt a strong call from the mountain. I went back to my shanty but I could not sleep. I was seized by a mingled feeling of sadness and joy: on the one hand, I was reluctant to leave this serene and lovely place which had brought me such happiness; on the other, there was the overwhelming lure of Hansagiri... What was I to do? Mentally I was already making my plans... I pulled out my knapsack to see whether I had all my mountaineering equipment—ropes, sling, pitons, hammer, etc.

Next day, earlier than was my habit, I went out into the pine grove, and just then the luminous guardian of the Silver Pines stepped out from between the two aged giants and beckoned to me. I went to him, and, as if he had divined my thoughts, in his soft tranquil voice he began to tell me that the time had come for me to climb the peak and reach the top. And immediately he set himself to prepare me for the ascent. He rubbed the thick fresh juice of the pines all over my body to protect me from the icy blasts of the winds and handed to me a small packet of the pulp of the leaves to serve me as food. Then he gave me some instructions for the journey.

Finally he took me by the hand and led me to a clearing in the forest and pointed out the way. I lifted up my head towards the far heights of Hansagiri, and suddenly a great fear and misgiving seized me. I murmured, "It is too high for me." Gently he laid his hand on my shoulder and said: "Nothing is too high for one who tries; have courage, the Help will always be with you." Then he looked into my eyes long and deep and folded me in a warm embrace. I choked with emotion and could find no words to express my gratitude, but he had understood my feelings. Silently he turned round and walked away and I stood watching him till he had faded out of my sight. With a fond farewell to my beloved Silver Pine abode, where I had found such a world of rich treasures, I set off on my upward journey to "A high vast peak whence spirit could see the worlds..."

The ascent was by no means easy. Like other mountaineers before me, I had to face great hazards. But was I not specially protected? I will not give here all the details of the climb—that would make another story—but describe the journey very briefly.

On the first day, after climbing endlessly, the slopes became more and more steep and to move forward demanded a tremendous effort of the will.

When the ice became hard I had to cut steps with heavy blows of the hammer and I stuck ice-pitons into the rocks and belayed myself with the rope. Often I had to cut hand-holds as well as foot-holds. I was dead beat and every step became an eternity. I suddenly remembered the packet of the pulp and carefully pulled it out and ate some of it—and new vigour flowed into my veins and I felt myself becoming strong again...

Night descended very fast and I looked around for some shelter. Soon I came upon a crevasse, which was heaven-sent, and crept into it, otherwise I would have been frozen to death on the treacherous icy mountain.

The next day the ice-fall increased and taxed all my energy. Often I would sink into the soft snow but I persevered doggedly with all my determination, stopping

now and then to regain my breath. Yet the sense of an unseen help was always with me.

How the wind shrieked! The noise was ear-splitting and often columns of dust whirled up in the air. But I seemed to be almost untouched. Through all this I was struck by the "carnival of beauty that crowds the heights"—the blue sky, the very deep purple of extreme altitude, so dark that I thought I saw some stars. The silence seemed to be eternal, it was awesome and yet thrilling. Sometimes in the distance I could hear the dull, heavy thuds of an avalanche. But I knew I would not be caught in one. ...

After what seemed aeons of struggle and perilous climbing, I was on top of Hansagiri and I thought my heart would stop beating with the utter joy of fulfilment. A prayer of gratitude welled up from my depths. I was beyond all Time, beyond all Space. The infinite beauty that met my eyes—was it worth all the risks that I had taken, all the battles that I had fought? Yes, a million times yes. ...

What an experience to attain one's goal! I could not contain my happiness—so intense and yet so pure. I lost all sense of awareness and was merged with Hansagiri—I became one with It. Gradually I stirred out of this rapt state. Was this the end? Distinctly deep within me an answer came, "No, this is just the beginning, you have much work to do, go back."

So I began my descent much richer in consciousness, a totally different person from the one who had started off in February 19—, ready to face the new life with much humility. My footsteps became so light as I went down that I often had to check my speed for fear of falling. Yes, I had to go down to the forest of A— and share my experiences with Bhumi, and all the other people of the valley. Perhaps one day we would all be able to create a grove of Silver Pines—a world of sheer beauty and harmony.

Alternative Version of the Second Part

2

On my first day out I was so enraptured by the sense of freedom, the briskness of the mountain air and simple beauty of the many-colored flowers along the way that I nearly forgot about the silver pines and let myself flow with the exhilaration of new adventure. The surroundings were not really so new to me, having lived near the mountain so long, but this day I was more receptive, feeling that I had cut ties with the past and was now almost another person, no more daily chores to capture my energies, no more Bhumi to pamper or prod me, no more small and easy life to keep me tied to sameness. The road was unknown, the path tried by few, and I was alone, or so I thought.

When evening came I sat down in a small clearing to rest and glancing to my right, above some big boulders, I thought I saw an orange cloth go by in a flash and disappear into the cave in the rock. A strange feeling came over me, not of fear, but

of a kind of interested expectancy which I quickly dismissed with a thought, "Oh it must be one of those ascetics we have heard about who have left everything and everybody to live in these caves, God knows why." This thought disgruntled me and covered over my first inner feeling, but before going to sleep I felt I should not leave the district without seeing this person and that perhaps he could help me in my quest.

The day dawned bright and clear and a few minutes after awaking I looked up and was startled to see the Yogi sitting on the boulder above me, smiling broadly. I couldn't say a word, then he began, "I always know when someone new has come. I am not like the other cave-dwellers of Hansagiri who stay to themselves and are interested only in their own salvation. When sincere seekers come this way I always come out to meet them. It is my way of keeping contact with the world and of helping them in their *true* quest which is often different than their avowed intention in coming up here. I know why you have come—you are seeking the silver pines." I gulped—he laughed at my amazement and then continued:

"I have to tell you right away that you have a wrong idea about the trees. What you have heard about their existence high up the mountain and all of their wonderful and useful properties is quite true—there is even more than you know—but they are not there for the 'profit' of man, to be desecrated or manipulated for a monetary benefit of any kind."

"But my family is poor, as are so many others in this country," I protested. "It is only for that that I thought of bringing back the leaves and resin."

"My child," the Yogi said softly, in a voice full of compassion, without any trace of disdain, "your family is poor because their consciousness is poor. They are not living for the Spirit, for the Divine. Here I live with almost no man-made products at my disposal and yet I feel that I am among the richest people on earth. The sun, the air, the trees and flowers, the eternal snows are my wealth. I commune with them in gratitude and without fear and they reward me with their bounty of Truth and Peace."

"But all could not come to such a life—there isn't even space for it," I said.

"It is not necessary that people leave where they are, but I can tell you that if they began to contemplate the Divine that is everywhere and in all things and became One with that Divine in their consciousness, they would never think of taking the silver pine products from the mountain, for they are meant only for those who make the journey to the Hansagiri peak. For ordinary people in the ordinary world, they would actually do harm because their potency is too great for those unprepared to receive it. I won't speak further on this, for you will soon experience it for yourself and tell me the result on your return.

"You have so many things to learn, my friend. I must tell you a few of them before you embark on this *real* Journey, so you can have a basic knowledge that will guard you through everything and bring you swiftly to your destined goal."

He spoke with such certitude I could not question him but only follow meekly

as he led me down a long path of soft grass and flowers in the deepening mystery of this morning's hush. At last we came to an azure lake where numerous swans gracefully floated on the crystal water. "Each of these swans represents a soul that has travelled up Hansagiri. A new baby swan is born each time a sincere one visits this place on his upward journey," the Yogi said. "As long as these people keep up their aspiration for the Highest, the swans live content, but if a being leaves the path, a swan dies. There are now 35; when the population reaches 100, there will be a new divine manifestation on earth, the beginning of a real divine life here."

"There is a secret I must tell you," he continued. "Your soul is a living golden-pink fire within you that you must feed with all of your thoughts, feelings, and actions so that it blazes higher and higher. You can learn to listen to its dictates and get an infallible guide which will lead you through all circumstances. You can even come to know the Eternal and live in abiding peace."

As he spoke, at first my heart beat faster and faster and then suddenly calmed as if a hand were inwardly soothing it and I felt a spark of something behind my heart, of something new and strange. He motioned for me to sit with him in the cool grass by the lake. Without a word he took me deep inside myself until I felt that psychic flame he described, and then suddenly I had no longer any sense of myself. It was as if I had become all the trees, the rippling water and the sky, and yet more than them, as if I were their essence and had always been that. I felt the sense of the Eternal and Everlasting, just as he had promised. When I came back to my ordinary awareness, the Yogi smiled and said tenderly, "This is a first experience only. Now you must work steadily within for it to become a constant realisation. Our most ancient Forefathers, those who lived even before the time of the Vedas knew and lived in this Eternal Truth. To them each day was a symbol of Eternity, each activity a sacrament, every aspect of Nature a cause for adoration and praise. We must win back now this sacred spiritual heritage and you are privileged to be one of those who can take part in it. When you ascend to the Forest of the Silver Pines and from there to Hansagiri's highest peak, you will come to know your complete destiny and the exact role you are to play in the Great Work. In coming here you thought yourself almost an ordinary man of the world or perhaps one a little more adventurous than the rest, but you will come to discover that you have a momentous spiritual calling, an inevitable part that you must play in the transformation of the world. I have been able to tell you all this so quickly and lead you right away to a touch of the Highest and Best because you are already a very advanced soul who just needed a touch of reawakening. Tomorrow you will leave for the Pine Forest and will be guided from within for each step of the way. You can expect the unexpected," he said, laughing. I turned with him to go as the white heat of the mid-morning sun spread itself over the adjacent meadow. I was born into a new life and felt the serenity of a perfect security. The Unexpected and the Unknown held only promise of a brighter Day. I would soon come to know the real Reality of this Divine Protection in an unforgettable way.

The following day I began the trek up the mountain into the higher snowfields and by evening it began to snow heavily with winds whipping into greater and greater furore. I had come to a district where there was only sheer rock along the pathway and no shelter in view. At first I began to panic as the weather became more and more blistery and there seemed to be no refuge anywhere. Then I remembered the inner flame that I had been trying to keep alive since I first discovered it, and concentrated deep within, calling in an ardent prayer for deliverance. Suddenly all fear was gone, a deep peace settled within and I found myself virtually blown around the bend of the path and before an opening in the rock. In a moment I was inside and safe and weeping in my heart with gratitude.

I slept for I don't know how long and awoke to an amazing sight. A soft golden-white light had filled the cave and within its aura was a beautiful woman with golden hair and a long flowing white gown, mounted on a swan. She smiled and said softly, "I am the deity of this mountain. I have come to tell you that you are welcome here and that henceforth the weather will be kinder to travellers because you have come carrying within you the flame of the Divine Presence."

"All this without my asking," I said in amazement. "Yes, it is my boon to you," she replied, "because the Divine is all-powerful, and we gods cannot resist its overwhelming influence. I will leave a light with you until the morning," she said, and disappeared, leaving a glowing golden white orb suspended in mid-air over where she had been. Its soft luminosity seemed to be almost murmuring through the long night until the break of Dawn.

The third day I continued on with a new courage and wonder in my soul, knowing now, beyond all doubt, that behind so-called inanimate things there are mighty living Presences whom one can communicate with and receive their help. I knew also that I should always pray directly to the Supreme Divine and that gods and goddesses would then be sent to my aid as need be. I saw there is a great infallible Plan that carries us through all circumstances and is something always beneficent and wonderful to those with a simple faith.

Now on this day, even through the heavy new snows I was able to pass with ease and I felt an intuition that I was about to discover the long-dreamed-of Forest of the Silver Pines. It seemed to be calling me from not very far off. By evening my feeling was justified. From about 50 metres away I saw the blue-white silver radiance above the trees and a concentrated tranquillity penetrated my being, almost to the very cells. I had never felt such an intense inner power gripping me. I sat for some time at a distance, watching the evening light play over the trees and waited for the inner impulsion to go forward and explore this marvellous place.

I walked slowly into the first grove of trees and knelt in the center where there was an aperture in the canopy overhead, opening on the deepening twilit heavens. I remained in an indrawn reverie for quite some time and then felt a distinct Presence to my right and turned to see the face and form of the most beautiful boy I have ever seen. He looked to be about 15 years (although I do not know if he was a human being)

with yellow-gold hair and a kind of golden radiance about him. He smiled and I felt a rush of Bliss fill my whole being. Then I felt myself swathed in an irresistible peace and drawn down into the depths of a luminous sleep. It was the most refreshing sleep I ever had—truly as if I had been in heaven.

In the early hours of the dawn I awoke and began walking about in this "enchanted" forest, looking at the tiny multi-colored flowers, ferns and mosses and absorbing the intense vibrations of Silence. Soon that remarkable boy appeared again from the opposite side of the grove and held out to me a food preparation in his left hand, evidently made from the silver leaves, and in his right a yellow liquid in a hollow of bark. "You have heard about this," he said, smiling, "Take, eat, it will give you the power to see what I want to show you."

I took the food and drink with full faith and experienced a kind of inner exaltation, as if all my cells were full to overflowing with Light and Joy and that I had no longer any bodily limits. I seemed to float as we walked along the flower-strewn path to a promontory overlooking a deep, beautiful valley. "There is a valley like this many miles to the south where there is a hill and a deep, flowing river," he said, gesturing in a wide sweep. "It is destined to be the place of a divine city that we call Nagara-Jana (The City of Delight), a place where everything will be in its right place and where all the attributes of the Universal Mother will be manifested in perfect harmony. You may not understand what I mean, so I will show you," he said, and tapped the crown of my head lightly with his left hand.

I then found myself looking from above on a miniature of this city which was in the shape of an open lotus of 12 petals and had a high wall around it. I saw within the walled area first a ring of residences with small gardens for each one, then the 12 main zones of the town [which I was to learn later were named Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Light, Life, Power, Wealth, Harmony, Youth, Progress, Utility and Perfction]. Closer to the center then came 4 large areas of virgin forest with magnificent flowers and waterfalls, and at the very center a simple yet magnificent house on top of the hill, radiating a subtle golden Light, which was evidently the Power that was running the town. There were many activities going on in all the zones, but, I was told later, it was not for providing necessities of life, but for bringing down a divine manifestation on earth and to make Matter more subtle and receptive to the higher spiritual forces streaming in. All food and other products needed by the residents were provided by the two groups living outside the walls, one in an agricultural sector, the other industrial. All the buildings, people and activities that I saw in the town were too much to tell here. But I saw it in all its detail. It was splendid, and of an incomparable perfection.

When I returned to my outer consciousness, I found the boy sitting serenely beside me. He looked intently into my eyes and spoke. "I am to tell you that you will one day take part in the work of Nagara-Jana. Yet, that day is far off and you must first undergo a rigorous training, for it is only those who have reached a height of perfection in their realisation who will be able to participate in the life of the inner

town. Today you are to take rest here, nourishing yourself from the silver pines and then set off in the morning for the highest part of the climb. At the peak you will discover your specific role for the immediate future and be blessed beyond your expectation." On saying this he disappeared and I never saw him again but found a supply of the special food several times that day beneath the tallest pine in the wood, and an extra stock of pulp and resin for the journey on the following day.

The trip to the peak took several days and even though the circumstances were often perilous and the way unknown, I found myself carried easily through everything with the help of the miraculous food to sustain my energies and the power of the inner flame to guide and protect me. Here is what happened to me at the Peak of the White Swan—

I arrived in the late afternoon when there was still some sunlight on the snows and I stood enraptured at the vistas around me, peak after peak of sheer white, heads jutting up to meet the azure sky. My heart was full and my soul aflame with all this majestic beauty—and then I saw Her, enshrined in an aura of white and gold, trailing a cape that seemed to cover the entire world. I had no sense of my body or even of my soul, I just cried out "O my Mother" and prostrated myself in the snow.

That night I had a vivid dream. The Yogi whom I had met near the foothills' lake appeared to me and announced that he had decided to leave his body in order to help better from the other side, and he wanted to tell me the work I had to do. I knelt before him and he drew my head gently to his heart, and said, "You will take up my work here as the guardian of Hansagiri, but it is time that it took on an added dimension to what it has so long been. You have tasted the food of the Silver Pines and felt its glow within. Now it must be used more consciously than just as an aid to mountain travellers. It has the power to calm your nerves and change your body if you take it with a will and prayer—'May this food bring to the cells and atoms of my body Thy All-Knowledge, Thy All-Power, Thy All-Kindness.' Teach this to the sincere seekers who come to Hansagiri and have each one bring you some of the food from up there. I will help from the subtle world and you will always feel me near. The Work will go on well, I assure you, and we will all be made ready in due time for the Age of Gold. The Mother is on the peaks and in the valleys. You will meet Her everywhere. Blessings, my child, my friend, my brother. Come home soon."

I awoke exultant in the morning and raised my arms in gratitude and praise over the rooftop of the world. Then I turned my steps for the descent and walked courageously into a joyous Day.

LORD OF ETERNAL LIGHT

O, WHAT a compassion beams on earth
from those soft, soothing and meditative eyes!
And the Avatar-body is aglow
with Supernal Light...

A red-gold lustre bathes
the pair of divine feet...
And my obscure being yearns in adoration
to prostrate itself before them.

I do not know my own self,
nor do I understand Thee!
Blindfold I grope around
fettered in cobwebs of desires.

Aimlessly I float on the tides of life;
wrestle with death from dawn to dusk!
And suffer pangs of separation
at the advent of night.

Deep and unfathomable are Thy eyes!
They are the source of all lights.
Let them pierce straight into my heart
and kill all futile longings.

Thou art vast and boundless;
unparalleled art Thou!
I invoke Thee, O, Lord of Eternal Light!
Come, install Thyself within.

Let the Supramental Sun
Shed splendid rays into nether regions
and the immortal Lotus bloom
on the stalk of the subconscious mind.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

SPEAKERS

SOME COMMENTS BY HEARERS

HE gives you in length what he lacks in depth.

When he finally finishes his speech, there is a great awakening.

He can usually rise to an occasion, but he doesn't know when to sit down.

Only one man applauded; he was slapping his head to keep awake.

He speaks straight from the shoulder. Too bad his remarks don't start from higher up.

He doesn't put enough fire into his speeches. It would be better if he put his speeches into the fire.

He gave a moving speech—long before he finished his audience had moved out into the hall.

He needs no introduction—what he needs is a conclusion.

His audiences not only keep looking at their watches, they shake them.

He hasn't a watch with him to time his talks. He should look at the calendar on the wall behind him.

Listening to his speeches, you can't help wondering who writes his im-material.

THE CHETTIYAR'S SON

A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY

PEOPLE belonging to diverse castes lived in a big village. At its centre was a big shop that sold sundry items. It was owned by a wealthy man. He was known to the entire village as Chettiyar, since he belonged to that caste. His shop was known as Chettiyar's shop and his house adjacent to it was known as Chettiyar's house. His wife and son were called Chettiyar's wife and Chettiyar's son respectively, since there was only one Chettiyar family that lived in the village.

The hero of our story is the Chettiyar's son for he had brought everlasting fame to his caste, and people who belong to other castes often say, "None can outdo a Chettiyar." Let us come to the story.

The Chettiyar's son was a clever boy. With a tuft on his head he looked a little odd, but his deeds were meaningful.

Once it so happened that the son of the Chettiyar's neighbour went mad. Every day when the sun was in the mid sky the mad boy's actions became uncontrollable. And he pelted stones at the customers who came to the Chettiyar's shop. Many became angry and shouted at the mad boy only to be pelted again with another stone. Some avoided coming to the shop and some took a roundabout route to reach the shop. Customers began to dwindle and the Chettiyar was unhappy over it. He complained of the matter to the mad boy's parents. But they refused to listen to him. The Chettiyar took the matter to the village headman. He inquired about the matter and finally said: "This is the insensible act of a mad boy. It has to be ignored. And the mad boy has to be forgiven."

The Chettiyar's son understood the plight of his father. On the morning of the next day when the shop was opened, he stood as a guard, his attention rivetted to the mad boy's house. Whenever a stone came rushing towards the shop, he managed to catch it with his hands and threw it into his own house. He was so alert that he never missed a stone that came from the mad boy's house. He remained at his place till the time the shop was closed. Every day the Chettiyar's son collected fifty to seventy stones and hoarded them at home. The affair continued.

One day some six stones came rushing in succession towards the shop and the Chettiyar's son managed to catch them all and throw them into his own house. There was an interval. And our hero was very vigilant.

A little later, the mad boy came out of his house and grinned at the Chettiyar's son. He then threw a little packet at him and disappeared into his house. But when the Chettiyar's son realized that he was holding a packet he opened it to see what it contained.

It was a pleasant surprise. It contained a golden chain, a pair of ear-studs and a necklace studded with precious stones. He took it inside his house and hid it inside a bag of rice.

When he came back to take his position in front of the shop he saw the mad boy's parents come hurrying towards him. They demanded the packet of gold jewels which was thrown at him by their mad son.

The Chettiyar's son replied that he had received only stones but not any packet. But the mad boy's parents refused to believe him and took the matter to the village headman.

He heard the complaints of both clients and clearly understood the matter.

The audience eagerly awaited the verdict. Silence ruled the place. Even the cawing crows and the chirping birds remained silent as if they too were interested in the verdict. The village headman looked at the audience. His lips parted to utter the verdict.

"Come. Let us go, father," interrupted the Chettiyar's son. "He is a very perfect judge," he complimented the headman and continued, "He will not give a different verdict this time... What he said earlier holds true now also...' 'This is an insensible act of a mad boy. It has to be ignored. And the mad boy has to be ignored. And the mad boy has to be forgiven.' "

The village headman was cornered. He was unable to give a different verdict. And that is why we say "It needs extraordinary intelligence to out-Chettiyar a Chettiyar."

Collected & Retold by P. RAJA

EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

47

THE Bay of Naples is another tourists' paradise. On the other side of the blue expanse a strip of land encircles the bay, on which are small white-washed houses that make it look like a string of pearls. Against this breathtakingly beautiful scene one can see far away, covered with mist and haze, the outline of the cone of Vesuvius, the volcano that has never been truly dormant for the last two thousand years.

Once upon a time Vesuvius was a mountain covered with Mediterranean fauna and flora right up to the top. On the lower slopes were farmsteads and hamlets under the luxuriant foliage and over an earth covered with lush green grass. Two places made the district important: Pompeii the rich and busy inland town, and the port Herculaneum. The local people did not realise that they were living under the shadow of a volcano. Then (as even now) earthquakes were frequent occurrences in this part of Italy but that did not bother anyone.

On a bright summer's day in August in A.D. 79 the people of Pompeii were in a festive mood. They were celebrating one of their many days in the year when they used to offer oblation to their deities. They had felt a few insignificant tremors of the earth but they paid no heed to them. Suddenly with a tremendous thundering sound that may have drowned the sound of many an atom bomb, the mountain split in two and, without ceremony or warning, super-heated steam, white-hot rocks and ash blotted out the brilliant sun. From the blackened sky rained down on Pompeii lethal detritus of the eruption. Within a short time Pompeii was covered up and buried under the scalding ash and pumice. It was as if Nature had played "musical chairs" with the people of Pompeii; the difference was that the music never started again and was quiet for all eternity.

Some people fled, no doubt, but many remained thinking all would be well as soon as the ash and rocks stopped pelting down. But there was no opportunity to wait. At one instant life was going on in full swing, at another everything was dead. The ash-blanket over Pompeii hardened and earth accumulated as the ages went by and grass grew on top and people forgot that there had been a prosperous city somewhere there. Later the area came to be known as La Civita but the people did not know why. Seventeen centuries went by before people started thinking that there was something there worth excavating. In history there is no story parallel to that of Pompeii. Archaeologists have never encountered a site like it before or after. For wherever they dug they found walls and halls and baths and temples and palaces, but at Herculaneum all was abandoned either as if in face of an enemy-attack or because the people had found the place unsuitable for some reason or other and left in a hurry or slowly but deliberately. Nothing worthwhile was left behind. In Pompeii

the archaeologists found people in the streets and shops, in homes and barracks. Shops well-stocked with merchandise, kitchens full of vessels still on the stove, fruits and cakes on the table left by one who was about to have his meal but departed in a hurry. A mother striving to shelter her daughter and a dog trying to loosen his chain. And the most remarkable thing modern science could do is to inject liquid plaster into some of these ash-figures and thus produce statues of people who lived two thousand years ago. Some of these statues could be seen in the Museum nearby.

Pliny the Younger was holidaying in a place called Misenum very near Pompeii. He naturally saw something of the magnitude of the destruction. So when Tacitus wrote to him from Rome to describe in a letter what had happened in Pompeii he readily did it. His letter or letters and the descriptions of some of those who had gone out as a rescue party under Pliny's uncle, these are the only records we have from the ancient world of Pompeii. The Government in Rome did not try to rebuild, for the destruction was too complete and Vesuvius was still fuming and foaming and any reconstruction might have been futile.

By the end of the 18th century excavation became fashionable. The nobleman to whom this area belonged at this time thought it paying to do some excavation. By and by several attempts were made to clear up Pompeii. But this was the period of smash-and-grab tactics. The idea was to get hold of *objects d'art* and distribute them throughout Europe. Statues and furniture and frescoes torn violently away were removed; in fact any movable thing that they could put their hands on. In 1738 Rocco Alcubierre was given charge to excavate Pompeii. He came across Pompeii proper and did some very good work but he was still wedded to the smash-and-grab method. It was Johann Winckelmann who first expressed disapproval of this most infamous procedure. Thieves also made their appearance, and loot and plunder was the fashion of the day. An Academy of Science and Fine Arts came into being in Naples at this time. But the idea that Pompeii should be cleared not for loot but to be preserved for the world to see how the ancient Romans had lived two thousand years ago was still not there.

In 1860 Naples became part of United Italy and an archaeologist named Fiorelli was appointed to excavate Pompeii. His was a kind of work that no archaeologist was ever called upon to do. He did not have to deal with rocks, bricks and stones. He had to deal with ash and lava, wood, vegetable matter and papyri which crumbled down at the slighest touch. For, houses where the roof had not been destroyed yielded rare treasure of all kinds. Everything was minutely listed, photographed before removal. In the houses of the rich whole libraries were found with innumerable papyrus-books. Fiorelli moved very cautiously, reconstructed where he found it to be suitable. Naturally modern methods of excavating helped him considerably. Early excavators used pick-axes and blasting powder but now Fiorelli could use electric drills and mechanical shovels. His gift to humanity is unique. But he could only do half. A vast area still remains to be excavated.

The mansions of the rich had all a spacious square in the middle of the house

and a fountain obviously to keep the house cool. This place was called the atrium and it generally had frescoed walls. There was a garden inside the house which was again surrounded by a larger garden. Flowers and vegetables, pools and cages for singing birds adorned the gardens. To the utter amazement of the onlookers some of these gardens have been replanted exactly as they were two thousand years ago. Scientists, by examining the carbonised remains of the holes in the ground left by the roots, have been able to identify the plants, and recreate the gardens as they were originally.

As for Vesuvius there is a funicular railway almost right up to the top. The last few hundred feet one has to go on foot. It erupted very violently in 1929 and 1944. At the present moment only gas and ash that could be dangerous at times come out. Travellers to Italy should never miss seeing Pompeii and making a trip to Vesuvius.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI