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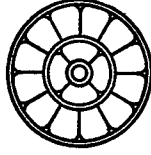
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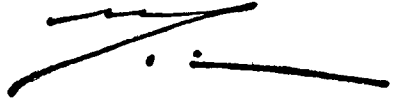


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE—9

EXTRACTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO'S WRITINGS

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1983)

Indian Culture and the Life of Man (Contd.)

A NATION tends to throw out its most vivid types in that line of action which is most congenial to its temperament and expressive of its leading idea, and it is the great saints and religious personalities that stand at the head in India and present the most striking and continuous roll-call of greatness, just as Rome lived most in her warriors and statesmen and rulers....

The Rishi in ancient India was the outstanding figure with the hero just behind, while in later times the most striking feature is the long uninterrupted chain from Buddha and Mahavira to Ramanuja, Chaitanya, Nanak, Ramdas and Tukaram and beyond them to Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and Dayananda. But there have been also the remarkable achievements of statesmen and rulers, from the first dawn of ascertainable history which comes in with the striking figures of Chandragupta, Chanakya, Asoka, the Gupta emperors and goes down through the multitude of famous Hindu and Mahomedan figures of the middle age to quite modern times. In ancient India there was the life of republics, oligarchies, democracies, small kingdoms of which no detail of history now survives, afterwards the long effort at empire-building, the colonisation of Ceylon and the Archipelago, the vivid struggles that attended the rise and decline of the Pathan and Mogul dynasties, the Hindu struggle for survival in the south, the wonderful record of Rajput heroism and the great upheaval of national life in Maharashtra penetrating to the lowest strata of society, the remarkable episode of the Sikh Khalsa. An adequate picture of that outward life still remains to be given; once given it would be the end of many fictions. All this mass of action was not accomplished by men without mind and will and vital force, by pale shadows of humanity in whom the vigorous manhood had been crushed out under the burden of a gloomy and all-effacing asceticism, nor does it look like the sign of a metaphysically minded people or dreamers averse to life and action. It was not men of straw or lifeless and will-less dummies or thin-blooded dreamers who thus acted, planned, conquered, built great systems of administration, founded kingdoms and empires, figured as great patrons of poetry and art and architecture or, later, resisted heroically imperial power and fought for the freedom of clan or people. Nor was it a nation devoid of life which maintained its existence and culture and still lived on and broke out constantly into new revivals under the ever-increasing stress of continuously adverse circumstances. The modern Indian revival, religious, cultural, political, called now sometimes a renaissance, which so troubles and grieves the minds of her critics, is only a repetition under altered circumstances, in

an adapted form, in a greater though as yet less vivid mass of movement, of a phenomenon which has constantly repeated itself throughout a millennium of Indian history.

...it must be remembered that by virtue of its culture and its system the whole nation shared in the common life. In all countries in the past the mass has indeed lived with a less active and vivid force than the few,—sometimes with the mere elements of life, not with even any beginning of finished richness—nor has modern civilisation yet got rid of this disparity, though it has opened the advantages or at least the initial opportunities of a first-hand life and thought and knowledge to a greater number. But in ancient India, though the higher classes led and had the lion's share of the force and wealth of life, the people too lived and until much later times intensely though on a lesser scale and with a more diffused and less concentrated force. Their religious life was more intense than that of any other country; they drank in with remarkable facility the thoughts of the philosophers and the influence of the saints; they heard and followed Buddha and the many who came after him; they were taught by the Sannyasins and sang the songs of the Bhaktas and Bauls and thus possessed some of the most delicate and beautiful poetical literature ever produced; they contributed many of the greatest names in our religion, and from the outcasts themselves came saints revered by the whole community. In ancient Hindu times they had their share of political life and power; they were the people, the *visah* of the Veda, of whom the kings were the leaders and from them as well as from the sacred or princely families were born the Rishis; they held their villages as little self-administered republics; in the time of the great kingdoms and empires they sat in the municipalities and urban councils and the bulk of the typical royal Council described in the books of political science was composed of commoners, Vaishyas, and not of Brahmin Pundits and Kshatriya nobles; for a long time they could impose their will on their kings, without the need of a long struggle, by a single demonstration of their displeasure. So long as Hindu kingdoms existed, something of all this survived, and even the entrance into India of Central Asian forms of absolutist despotism, never an indigenous Indian growth, left some remnant of the old edifice still in being. The people had their share too in art and poetry, their means by which the essence of Indian culture was disseminated through the mass, a system of elementary education in addition to the great universities of ancient times, a type of popular dramatic representation which was in some parts of the country alive even yesterday; they gave India her artists and architects and many of the famous poets in the popular tongues; they preserved by the force of their long past cultures an innate aesthetic sense and faculty of which the work of Indian craftsmen remained a constant and striking evidence until it was destroyed or degraded by the vulgarisation and loss of aesthetic sense and beauty which has been one of the results of modern civilisation. Nor was the life of India ascetic, gloomy or sad, as the too logical mind of the critic would have it be. The outward form is more quiet than in other countries, there is a certain gravity and reserve before strangers which deceives the foreign

observer, and in recent times asceticism and poverty and an increase of puritanic tendency had their effect; but the life portrayed in the literature of the country is glad and vivid, and even now despite certain varieties of temperament and many forces making for depression, laughter, humour, an unobtrusive elasticity and equanimity in the vicissitudes of life are very marked features of the Indian character.

The whole theory of a want of life and will and activity in the Indian people as a result of their culture is then a myth.... That history has not been recorded in the European fashion; for the art of history and biography, though not entirely neglected, was never brought to perfection in India, never sufficiently practised, nor does any sustained record of the doings of kings and great men and peoples before the Mussulman dynasties survive except in the one solitary instance of Cashmere. This is certainly a defect and leaves a very serious gap. India has lived much, but has not sat down to record the history of her life.

...it is supposed that India was so much absorbed in the eternal that she deliberately despised and neglected time, so profoundly concentrated on the pursuit of ascetic brooding and quietistic peace that she looked down on and took no interest in the memory of action. There is another myth.... the greatness and activity of the past life of India reveals itself and comes out in bolder relief the more the inquiry into her past unearths the vast amount of material still available.

Will-power and personality have not been wanting in India, but the direction preferably given to them and the type most admired are of a different kind. The average European mind is prone to value or at least to be more interested in the egoistic or self-asserting will which insists upon itself with a strong or a bold, an aggressive, sometimes a fierce insistence; the Indian mind not only prizes more from the ethical standpoint,—that is found everywhere,—but is more vividly interested in the calm, self-controlling or even the self-effacing personality; for the effacement of egoism seems to it to be not an effacement, but an enhancement of value and power of the true person and its greatness... in literature also just as in actual life it has the same turn. This European mind finds Rama and Sita uninteresting and unreal, because they are too virtuous, too ideal, too white in colour; but to the Indian mind, even apart from all religious sentiment, they are figures of an absorbing reality which appeal to the inmost fibres of our being. A European scholar criticising the Mahabharata finds the strong and violent Bhima the only real character in that great poem; the Indian mind on the contrary finds greater character and a more moving interest in the calm and collected heroism of Arjuna, in the fine ethical temperament of Yudhishtira, in the divine charioteer of Kurukshetra who works not for his own hand but for the founding of the kingdom of right and justice. Those vehement or self-asserting characters or those driven by the storm of their passions which make the chief interest of European epic and drama, would either be relegated by it to the se-

cond plan or else, if set in large proportions, so brought in in order to bring into relief the greatness of the higher type of personality, as Ravana contrasts with and sets off Rama. The admiration of the one kind of mentality in the aesthetics of life goes to the coloured, that of the other to the luminous personality. Or, to put it in the form of the distinction made by the Indian mind itself, the interest of the one centres more in the rajasic, that of the other in the sattwic will and character.

Whether this difference imposes an inferiority on the aesthetics of Indian life and creation, each must judge for himself, but surely the Indian is the more evolved and spiritual conception. The Indian mind believes that the will and personality are not diminished but heightened by moving from the rajasic or more coloured egoistic to the sattwic and more luminous level of our being. Are not after all calm, self-mastery, a high balance signs of a greater and more real force of character than mere self-assertion of strength of will or the furious driving of the passions? Their possession does not mean that one must act with an inferior or less puissant, but only with a more right, collected and balanced will. And it is a mistake to think that asceticism itself rightly understood and practised implies an effacement of will; it brings much rather its greater concentration. That is the Indian view and experience and the meaning of the old legends in the epics,... attributing so enormous a force, even when it was misused, to the power gained by ascetic self-mastery, Tapasya. The Indian mind believed and still believes that soul power is a greater thing, works from a mightier centre of will and has greater results than a more outwardly and materially active will-force.

... it will be said that India has valued most the impersonal and that must obviously discourage personality...this...—except for the negative ideal of losing oneself in the trance or the silence of the Eternal, which is not the true essence of the matter,—involves a misconception. However paradoxical it may sound, one finds actually that the acceptance of the eternal and impersonal behind one's being and action and the attempt at unity with it is precisely the thing that carries the person to his largest greatness and power. For this impersonality is not a nullity, but an oceanic totality of the being. The perfect man, the Siddha or the Buddha, becomes universal, embraces all being in sympathy and oneness, finds himself in others as in himself and by so doing draws into himself at the same time something of the infinite power of a universal energy. That is the positive ideal of Indian culture.... Not to be as the common man, that is to say, as the crude natural or half-baked human being, was indeed the sense of this ancient endeavour and in that sense it may be called an aristocratic culture. But it was not a vulgar outward but a spiritual nobility which was the aim of its self-discipline. Indian life, personality, art, literature must be judged in this light and appreciated or depreciated after being seen in the real sense and with the right understanding of Indian culture.

(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 14, pp. 187-195)

(To be continued)

THE SENSE OF IMPOSSIBILITY

FROM A TALK OF THE MOTHER ON DECEMBER 12, 1956 TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN

STRAIGHTAWAY we are leaping into the greatest difficulty! I believe this one paragraph alone will be enough for this evening:

“What I cannot do now is the sign of what I shall do hereafter. The sense of impossibility is the beginning of all possibilities. Because this temporal universe was a paradox and an impossibility, therefore, the Eternal created it out of His being.”

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. Vol. 16, p. 378

Do you know why this seems paradoxical to you? It is simply because Sri Aurobindo has not put in the guide marks of the thought, hasn't led you step by step from one thought to another. It is nothing else. It is almost elementary in its simplicity.

And I am simply going to ask you a question—but in fact I expect no answer—to tell you something very simple: When does something seem impossible to you?—It is when you try to do it. If you had never tried to do it, it would never have seemed impossible to you.

And how is it that you tried to do it?—Because it was somewhere in your consciousness. If it had not been in your consciousness, you would not have tried to do it; and the moment it is in your consciousness, it is quite obvious that it is something you will realise. That alone which is not in your consciousness you cannot realise. It's simple as that!

Only, instead of telling you the thing in this way, Sri Aurobindo puts it in a way that stimulates your thought. That is the virtue of paradoxes, they compel you to think.

Then, Sweet Mother, what does “impossible” mean?

There is nothing impossible in the world except what is outside your consciousness. And as your consciousness can grow, as what is not in your consciousness today may be in your consciousness after some time, for the consciousness can become wider, so in the eternity of time nothing is impossible.

At the present moment—I have explained this to you once—at the present moment, at a given moment, in certain circumstances, there are impossibilities. But from the eternal point of view in the infinity of time, nothing, nothing is impossible. And the proof is that everything will be. All things, not only those which are conceivable at present, but all those which at present are inconceivable, all things are not only possible, but will be realised. For what we call the Eternal, the Infinite, the Supreme, the Absolute—we give him many names, but in fact He is eternal, infinite,

absolute—contains in himself not only all that is, but also all that will be, eternally, infinitely; and therefore nothing is impossible. Only, for the consciousness of the temporal and objective being, all things are not possible at the same time; it is necessary to conceive of space and time to make them possible. But outside the manifestation, *everything* is, simultaneously, eternally, potentially, in its possibility. And it is this All, inconceivable, for He is not manifest, who manifests in order to become conceivable.

And this is what Sri Aurobindo tells us. This temporal universe, that is, a universe which is unfolding, a universe which does not exist all at the same time at the same place outside time and space, a universe which becomes temporal and spatial, which is successive—for That which is beyond the manifestation it is truly an absurdity, don't you think so, and a paradox; it is its very contradiction. For the temporal consciousness, it is That which is unthinkable and incomprehensible, and for That, which is incomprehensible to the temporal consciousness, this temporal consciousness is incomprehensible.... we cannot conceive of something which is not in time and space, for we ourselves are in time and space; we attempt an approximation to attain some small understanding of a "Something" which is not expressible and is simultaneously everything, eternally and beyond time. We may try, yes, and we use all sorts of words, but we are not able to understand it unless we go outside time and space. Well, to reverse the problem, for That which is beyond time and space, time and space are something paradoxical and incomprehensible: "Because this temporal universe was a paradox and an impossibility, therefore the Eternal created it out of His being", that is, He changed his non-existence into existence—if you like to put it humorously, in order to know what it is! For so long as He had not become time and space, He could not know it!

But if we go back to the beginning, then it becomes extremely practical, concrete and very encouraging.... For we say this: in order to have the idea of the impossible, that something is "impossible", you must attempt it. For example, if at this moment you feel that what I am telling you is impossible to understand (*laughing*), this means that you are trying to understand it; and if you try to understand it, this means it is within your consciousness, otherwise you could not try to understand it—just as I am in your consciousness, just as my words are in your consciousness, just as what Sri Aurobindo has written is also in your consciousness, otherwise you would have no contact with it. But for the moment it is impossible to understand, for want of a few small cells in the brain, nothing else, it is very simple. And as these cells develop through attention, concentration and effort, when you have listened attentively and made an effort to understand, well, after a few hours or a few days or a few months, new convolutions will be formed in your brain, and all this will become quite natural. You will wonder how there could have been a time when you did not understand: "It is so simple." But so long as these convolutions are not there, you may make an effort, you may even give yourself a headache, but you will not understand.

It is very encouraging because, fundamentally, the only thing necessary is to

want it and to have the necessary patience. What is incomprehensible for you today will be quite clear in a short time. And note that it is not necessary that you should give yourself a headache every day and at every minute by trying to understand! One very simple thing is enough: to listen as well as you can, to have a sort of will or aspiration or, you might even say, desire to understand, and then that's all. You make a little opening in your consciousness to let the thing enter; and your aspiration makes this opening, like a tiny notch inside, a little hole somewhere in what is shut up, and then you let the thing enter. It will work. And it will build up in your brain the elements necessary to express itself. You no longer need to think about it. You try to understand something else, you work, study, reflect, think about all sorts of things; and then after a few months—or perhaps a year, perhaps less, perhaps more—you open the book once again and read the same sentence, and it seems as clear as crystal to you! Simply because what was necessary for understanding has been built up in your brain.

So, never come to me saying, "I am no good at this subject, I shall never understand philosophy" or "I shall never be able to do mathematics" or... It is ignorance, it is sheer ignorance. There is nothing you cannot understand if you give your brain the time to widen and perfect itself. And you can pass from one mental construction to another: this corresponds to studies; from one subject to another: and each subject of study means a language; from one language to another, and build up one thing after another within you, and contain all that and many more things yet, very harmoniously, if you do this with care and take your time over it. For each one of these branches of knowledge corresponds to an inner formation, and you can multiply these formations *indefinitely* if you give the necessary time and care.

I do not believe at all in limits which cannot be crossed.

But I see very clearly people's mental formations and also a sort of laziness in face of the necessary effort. And this laziness and these limits are like diseases. But they are curable diseases—unless you have a really defective cerebral structure and lack something; if something was "forgotten" when you were formed, then it is more difficult. It is much more difficult, but it is not impossible. There are people like that, really incomplete, who are like an ill-made object—logically it would be better if they didn't continue to exist; but still (*laughing*) it is not the custom, it is not the ordinary human way of thinking. But if you are a normal person, well, provided you take the trouble and know the method, your capacity for growth is almost unlimited.

There is the idea that everyone belongs to a certain type, that, for example, the pine will never become the oak and the palm never become wheat. This is obvious. But that is something else: it means that the truth of your being is not the truth of your neighbour's. But in the truth of your being, according to your own formation, your progress is almost unlimited. It is limited only by your own conviction that it is limited and by your ignorance of the true process, otherwise...

There is nothing one cannot do, if one knows how to do it.

(*Questions and Answers, 1956, pp. 383-387*)

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1983)

Sri Aurobindo's Letters

NOTHING had happened between yesterday and this morning, there was no new accusation against you, no fault that you had committed, no displeasure of the Mother against you. There was no bad look of the Mother on you, nor any refusal of her smile. On the contrary, as the Mother told me this morning before getting your letter, she saw that there was something wrong with you, a darkness and depression, and she did her best to remove it, but she could not get any smile from you in response. It is clear that once more you came with a preconceived idea or else an expectation in your subconscious, born of your sleepless night and self-tormenting thoughts and of X's behaviour and saw and interpreted everything according to your expectation. All the surge of doubts and painful thoughts of which you speak have therefore no basis whatever in anything we have thought or done.

As to your going away for a time in order to get rid of your difficulty with X, a difficulty can never be overcome by your running away from it. And if you cannot overcome it with the direct and immediate help we can give you and have always been giving you and the support of our presence, I do not see how you are going to do it at a distance, and without our immediate help and presence.

It seems to me all this comes from your having taken a wrong way with yourself in meeting the consequences of your trouble. It is not by tormenting yourself with remorse and harassing thoughts and sleepless nights that you can overcome. It is by looking straight at yourself, very quietly with a quiet and firm resolution and then going on cheerfully and bravely in full confidence and reliance, trusting in the grace, serenely and vigilantly, anchoring yourself on your psychic being, calling down more and more of the love and Ananda, turning more and more exclusively to the Mother. That is the true way—and there is no other. 20.5.1933

It is not a question of ordinary life. In ordinary life people always judge wrongly because they judge by mental standards and generally by conventional standards. The human mind is an instrument not of truth but of ignorance and errors. 25.8.1933

It was indeed a microscopically small cause for so strong an upsetting, but really it is the whole difficulty of this raw and unreasonable sensitiveness which cropped up with this very infinitesimally small excuse—and that sensitiveness is one of the most persistent obstacles of many sadhaka here.

There are two remedies for it—the psychic's confidence in the Mother and the surrender that goes with it, i.e. "Whatever she wills is best for me" and the vastness which you feel now,—it is the wideness of the true self of the true mental vital, physical being also, from which such things fall like dust, for they are of no importance to it whatever.

It is the one thing to do, to get permanently into the wideness, peace and silence and let the ego dissolve in it and the attachments fall away. 28.8.1933

Yes, this is the time when you have to persist till you are quite settled in the inner consciousness and the persistence of the silence and peace is a sign that it is now possible. When one feels this kind of silence, peace and wideness, one may be sure that that is of the true being, the real self, penetrating into the mind and vital and perhaps also the physical consciousness (if it is complete). The restlessness of the physical is probably due to the peace and silence having touched the physical but not yet penetrated the material or body consciousness. The old restlessness is there in the body struggling to remain, although it cannot invade either mind or vital or even in a general way the physical consciousness as a whole. If the peace descends there, this restlessness will disappear.

The sex-sensation came from the subconscious. When it is unable to manifest in the waking consciousness, it appears from the subconscious in sleep. The mind must not allow itself to be disturbed—it will go out with the rest. 20.9.1934

It is good that you were able to observe yourself all the time and see the movements and that the intervention of the new consciousness was frequent and automatic. At a later stage you will no doubt get a guidance in the mind also as to how to do things you want to get done. Evidently your mind was too active—as well as the minds of the others also—and so you missed your objective, owing to the excessive multitude of witnesses! However— 4.10.1934

Yes, it is a very encouraging progress. If you keep the wideness and calm as you were keeping it and also the love for the Mother in the heart, then all is safe—for it means the double foundation of the yoga—the descent of the higher consciousness with its peace and freedom and security from above and the openness of the psychic which keeps all the effort or all the spontaneous movements turned towards the true goal. 10.10.1934

Yes, it was what the Mother meant.

The attraction of the emotional and sentimental feeling naturally passes away when one grows inwardly from the vital basis into the maturer psychic stage but there is an interval when that has gone and the deeper psychic feeling has not yet found its seat or its form or expression. Even when it does, it may find fewer to appreciate it. 31.1.1935

From what you describe it seems that you have got into contact with the mechanical mind whose nature is to go on turning round in a circle on the thoughts that come into it. This sometimes happens when the thinking mind is quiet. This is part of the physical mind and you should not be disturbed or alarmed by its rising up but see what it is and quiet it down, or get control of its movements. The one serious difficulty is about sleeplessness—that must stop, for it weakens the nerves and the body and produces fatigue and inertia. You must try and receive the Force and get back the sleep. With sleep and rest the other things ought soon to disappear.

What you propose about seeing the Mother at will is not physically practicable and whenever in a few cases it has been allowed in the past, the results have not been helpful. What you should do is to write every two days or so a few lines until the difficulty is over. You must especially let me know about the sleep and the nervous condition. In fact you ought to have let me know at once although correspondence was stopped and still is till further notice, I had said that important or necessary communications could be sent.

3-3-1935

(To be continued)

TOWARDS PERFECTION

A GLEAM from the gloom of a moonless night
 Is born to draw a crescent's arc;
 Its horns of faith a-dream enjoy
 A circling outline, Perfection's mark.

From the womb of despair hope's ray is born,
 Truth from the sheath of untruth peeps out,
 From the mist of weakness rises strength,
 From crystalised death life's tissues sprout.

From chaos's depth all shapes emerge,
 From the rough vague a beautiful face,
 A smile forms dimples its grace to enhance,
 An inward peace is soul's loveliness.

The being unfolds till Perfection is reached,
 The soul is drawn to the Oversoul, bewitched.

BHANUSHANKAR BHATT

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1983)

The Mother's Message

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



(29)

ON 6th February 1957 an exquisite card came from the Mother with a reproduction of St. Anne together with these words:

“This is a painting from Leonardo da Vinci; is it not a beautiful image of Divine Love and compassion? the compassion that effaces all errors and wipes off all mistakes?”

“My love and blessings and the Presence of the Divine Grace are constantly with you.”

The image was so entrancing that I could not turn my gaze from it. I adore all the paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, who was an emanation of Sri Aurobindo. I would like to quote here all about him.

The Mother has written in *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 110:

“A man like Leonardo da Vinci was a Yogi and nothing else. And he was, if not the greatest, at least one of the greatest painters—although his art did not stop at painting alone.”

Sri Aurobindo has stated in *Cent. Ed.*, Vol. 22., p. 408:

“What Leonardo da Vinci held in himself was all the new age of Europe on its many sides...”

Referring to what is called the Renaissance, the Graeco-Roman civilisation revived not in its life-aspects but in its intellectual aspects, Sri Aurobindo mentions Leonardo as a central figure facing the future from the heart of the Renaissance:

“A supreme intellectual... who... summarised in himself the seeds of modern Europe.”

I have read in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica—Micropaedia—Ready Ref. & Index*, Vol. VI, p. 151:

“Leonardo da Vinci (b. 1452, Vinci, Italy—d. May 2, 1519, Cloux, France), famous for the range of his genius, excelled as a painter, sculptor, architect, and engineer. His note-books reveal a spirit of scientific inquiry into the workings of the human body and physical and natural laws as well as a mechanical inventiveness that were centuries ahead of his time.

“Leonardo was apprenticed to the sculptor Andrea del Verrocchio, receiving a many-sided training, and painted in Florence till 1481. He worked (1482-99) in Milan as artist and technical adviser on architecture and engineering, already displaying his amazing versatility. After short visits to Mantua and Venice (1499/1500), he returned honoured to Florence, remaining there until 1506, though he visited Rome during 1502 & 1503. Again in Milan (1506-13), he later went, by way of Rome (1513-16) to France at the invitation of King Francis I. Leonardo’s ‘Last Supper’ (1495-97) and ‘Mona Lisa’ (1503-06) are among the most widely popular paintings of the Renaissance.”

I came across very interesting passages in the book, *The Phoenix Fire Mystery*, p. 249:

“Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). Italian painter, sculptor, architect, musician, engineer, inventor, mathematician, anatomist and scientist.

To this amazing catalogue of Leonardo da Vinci’s talents we should add ‘writer’ as his Notebooks, from which we quote, include over 4,000 pages, although a number contain drawings. In the Notebooks there are several passages that clearly reveal that Leonardo accepted the preexistence of the soul, thus discounting the orthodox view of a special creation of souls at birth. Here is one:

“Behold now the hope and desire to go back to our own country, and to return to our former state, how like it is to the moth with the light!... this longing is the quintessence and spirit of the elements, which, finding itself imprisoned within the life of the human body, desires continually to return to its source. And I would have you to know that this very longing is that quintessence inherent in nature, and that man is a type of the world.”

However, in three other passages, Leonardo seems to appreciate that there is a need for earth life, and in one of these he even intimates that he will return occasionally to this world:

“The soul desires to dwell in the body because without the members of that body it can neither act nor feel...”

“The soul can never be infected by the corruption of the body, but acts in the body like the wind which causes the sound of the organ, wherein if one of the pipes is spoiled, the wind cannot produce a good result in that pipe... ‘Read me, O Reader, if you find delight in me, because very seldom shall I come back into this world; and you know that the power of such profession is found in just a few who want to recompose similar things afresh. And come, men, to see the miracles which through such studies one can reveal in Nature.’”

The manuscript was probably written mainly between 1497 & 1503.

I cannot restrain quoting about Leonardo from the magazine *Courier*:

Leonardo, however, was not just a painter, he also did sculpture. Earlier on he had modelled a number of human heads and a Via Crucis. Later on he was to sculpt an enormous horse. He was also a musician. He could play the flute and the lyre, and people who knew him have recorded that he ‘sang exquisitely.’

He studied the way rivers flow, and made plans for canals that ships could sail down. He read history books and books about the art of warfare, then he promptly sat down to invent strange new war engines. He studied buildings closely, among them the Cathedral of Florence where Verrocchio had placed an enormous ball of copper on the lantern (the open structure on top of the dome) designed by the great architect Brunelleschi, he thought up extraordinary machines that could lift and transport huge weights in the air. He watched the way that birds fly and dreamt of a machine that would allow men to fly through the sky.

He analyzed the sea-bed and could already picture a frogman's suit and mask in his mind's eye. He watched men at work, and anticipated modern cybernetics and 'time and motion' studies by working out machines that could cut out some of their movements and save them trouble.

He read the works of Greek and Latin philosophers, until he could discuss their ideas in such a way as to impress his listeners. He was not rich, but the generosity of those who appreciated his genius meant that he could live in the style of a prince. He was handsome, tall and strong: with his hands he was capable of bending a horseshoe. Yet he was also gentle and refined, full of help for others and never boastful.

He appreciated everything about life, and knew how to pick out the good side of things, the most noble and attractive side to life. He was a great lover of Nature: nowadays we would call him 'ecologist.' He even planned an ideal city with lots of greenery and criss-crossed by canals, the streets carried overhead and the houses tucked underneath.

He also loved animals. Whenever he saw birds in a cage, he would buy them in order to let them go. He considered everything to be a 'wonder of the universe', and whatever he set eyes on seemed to him to reveal the hand of its creator, God, whom he called 'The Prime Mover.'

Leonardo, then, was a man of the future, the first and most deeply convinced citizen of the world....

*

I was still contemplating the lovely painting of St. Anne, and thought to myself: "Will I ever be able to do a marvellous picture like this?"

The Mother and I had a peaceful meditation in her room at the Playground. Then she said:

"Child, next you will paint a cloth of satin."

After I had gone to Golconde, I wrote a letter expressing my feeling towards true art.

Her answer came the succeeding morning along with a bouquet of white roses:

“I have received your nice letter—yes, we are going towards a painting that will be able to express the supramental truth of things.”

Goodness me! what a colossal phrase—“supramental truth”!

Sri Aurobindo has written aptly in the booklet *Art: Revelation of Beauty*:

“Not only to enlarge Art towards the widest wideness but to ascend with it to the heights climbing towards the Highest is and must be part both of our aesthetic and our spiritual endeavour.”

In the evening before the translation class the Mother made me understand by means of a sketch what the effect of satin could be like. Then she looked at her own sketch and said:

“For satin or any silken cloth, you should give the exact stroke according to the nature of the cloth in order to make it shine.

“A straight stroke should be given. You can also give a sharp stroke with white colour to show the folds—give the strokes gradually according to the light and shadow on the cloth.

“You see, once I did just the fold of a cloth and it took me two hours because of the details. Then and then only can you get the exact impression and effect.”

Now she was late at the class which she used to take twice a week.

I had marked that many a time she was engrossed in the work of painting which she truly loved and she was late either for the class or for the interviews. People imagined that it was I who took up the Mother’s time and gave her trouble. Some thought that I was going nuts and the Mother was trying to cure me in her room!

I told the Mother about people’s chance remarks. Her laughter tinkled merrily when she said:

“Let them think so. Child, if you are mad, the Divine is the maddest of all.”

We both laughed.

This quotation from Sri Aurobindo is quite apposite (Cent. Ed., Vol. 17, p. 133):

“They say, O my God, that I am mad because I see no fault in Thee; but if I am indeed mad with Thy love, I do not wish to recover my sanity.”

The morning after, she sent me an enchanting card showing a vase and tiny yellow flowers. She had written on it:

“I am sending two cloths for painting so that you can choose. The satin one is the best as cloth and as colour. Its shade is very pretty and would make a very nice painting, but unhappily it has folds and needs ironing.

“There was no time to iron it before 8 o’clock this morning. So I am sending it as it is. You will see what you can do. In case you cannot manage with the satin one, I am sending the pink one but the cloth is not so good and it has not also the same shining effect as the satin.

“As for coming to show your painting on the lesson day, you can continue to do so—I shall only manage to come back a little earlier from the tennis ground, and in that way I shall not be late for the lesson.”

I ironed the satin-cloth and did the painting on a pale green background. The Mother saw the painting and liked it. But I felt that it was not up to the mark. I had to go a long way to achieve perfection.

The Mother closed her eyes and plunged into a profound meditation. I tried to follow suit. But, unfortunately, after a few moments Pranab came rushing into the room and then went away like a whirlwind!

I stirred a little. The Mother was so sensitive that instantly she opened her eyes and looked at me questioningly:

I said: “Mother, when we meditate, how can anyone come without warning?” She said smiling:

“Never mind. You see, I put an occult curtain when we meditate, so everything is and will be all right.”

And once more she slid into a trance. But according to my human nature, I could not possibly believe it. I felt annoyed and upset at the disturbance.

The following morning I received a card along with a shell which had an iris hue. The Mother had written on the card:

“I am sending you the shell which has been changed into a basket. On a white background it will be all right. I am sending enclosed a sketch of the position in which it must be painted.”

I started the painting but it was not coming nicely on the board. So I left it half done. I showed the Mother the result. But she was not discouraged. She said:

“Paint again on another board. If you start doing painting on a board and you feel that it does not come out nicely, you can always remove the colours with a palette knife, and put again a layer of white colour on the canvas board for another painting.”

She was very practical. Not only did she teach me painting but also taught me many other things directly and indirectly which have been very useful in my life.

Then, of course, I did another painting of the same shell-basket, which the Mother saw, and she remarked:

“It is excellent—the colours are soft and nice.”

As usual she took me into her arms and kissed me on my forehead, and gave me flowers with her luminous smile.

*

It was Sunday. In answer to my letter to her, the Mother wrote:

“Certainly you can ask me what you want when you come this afternoon at the Playground.

“My love and blessings along with the Presence of the Divine Grace are constantly with you to help, guide and protect you.”

O I wished to tell the Mother so many things when I went to her. But my lips were sealed—my silence spoke volumes. She knew what I had aspired for. She held my hands. Her powerful touch set my whole being vibrating like a harp in the wind. Then she and I meditated together in the midst of her divine atmosphere.

The next morning she wrote:

“I am sending you a big Japanese vase,—it is big but you can paint it on a reduced scale.

“It is a fine vase and will look beautiful on a white background.”

I started painting in the morning and finished at 5 p.m. I was completely exhausted. But when I went to the Mother with the painting, her loving welcome with a smile effaced my fatigue. She saw the painting and said:

“You should alter the shape of the vase. The bottom of the vase is wide, so naturally the top must be a bigger round. The rest of it is excellent.”

After that she showed me the correct shape by doing its sketch.

*

There was in me an overwhelming disappointment, a sense of disillusionment and bitterness. But my true being persisted to go on. No matter how many hideous phases and setbacks I had to face, I would not budge from this life.

I expressed my feeling through the letter which I sent to the Mother at night. The following morning I received from her a fine card depicting a vase full of red and yellow roses. They brought the Mother's answer full of fragrance:

"Indeed I am very glad of your resolution, the firmness with which you carried it out and the strength of your will. I fully agree with your nice letter and appreciate the decision you have taken.

"You can rely entirely on the Divine Grace as well as my love and my blessings that will lead you without fail to your goal."

In my heart of hearts I was fully aware that this Integral Yoga was not easy. In spite of all the resolution and firmness, I was likely to waver at any time, because of the dreadful illusion of life and the trickery of the hostile worlds.

Nevertheless, the pure flame of the aspiration to reach my destination was constantly there in my heart and was never extinguished. I was totally conscious of my soul's yearning and I clung to that truth. Of course, at times I was dragged away by the flood of the Universal Nature but, thank God, not for good.

After our meditation in the evening, the Mother told me that she would send me something interesting to paint. Meanwhile I should finish painting the Japanese vase.

I altered the vase in the painting that very evening and sent it to the Mother's apartment through Dyuman who was always kind enough to take my paintings.

I was in time at the Playground to receive the groundnuts which the Mother distributed to people.

The next morning she wrote on a card which indicated an artistic arrangement of diverse flowers in a vase:

"This morning I went to the 'Vitrine' to pull out the Chinese bowl, the lock refused to work and the door could not be opened—so, I had to take a vase from the other 'Vitrine'. It is a Chinese vase also—you can try that one on a pale green background, until I can get at the bowl another day."

That evening I showed the Mother my drawing of the Chinese vase, which she approved.

Then we meditated together. It was nice to be with her even for a few seconds.

The following morning I received from her a Japanese card on which she had written:

"Here is the view of a beautiful Japanese temple which I have seen when I was in Japan."

Japan was very dear and near to the Mother. She has said numerous things about

this country. She gave a striking message for the Sri Aurobindo Centre in Japan on 16th October 1972:

“Japan was in the physical world the teacher of beauty. She must not renounce her privilege.”

Sri Aurobindo has written in *Cent. Ed.*, Vol. 27, p. 282:

Japan with her periods of splendid and magnificently fruitful progress and activity when she is absorbing new thoughts and new knowledge, followed by periods of calm and beautiful conservation in which she thoroughly assimilates what she has absorbed and suits her system,—Japan with the unlimited energy and personality of her individuals finely subservient to the life of the nation is an instance of a fundamentally rajaso-tamasic nation which has acquired by its assimilation of Indian and Chinese civilisation the immortalising strength of Sattwa.

The Mother has expressed her impressions of Japan in *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 148-50.

You ask me for my impressions about Japan. To write on Japan is a difficult task, so many things have been already written, so many silly things also... but those more on the people than on their country. For the country is so wonderful, picturesque, many-sided, unexpected, charming, wild or sweet; it is in its appearance so much a synthesis of all the other countries of the world, from the tropical to arctic, that no artistic eye can remain indifferent to it... [Japan] possesses the vitality and concentrated energies of a nation which has not yet reached its zenith.

That energy is one of the most striking features of Japan. It is visible everywhere, in everyone; the old and the young, the workmen, the women, the children, the students, all... display in their daily life the most wonderful storage of concentrated energy. With their perfect love for nature and beauty, this accumulated strength is perhaps the most distinctive and widely spread characteristic of the Japanese. That is what you may observe as soon as you reach that ‘Land of the Rising Sun’ where so many people and so many treasures are gathered in a narrow island.

But if you have—as we have had—the privilege of coming in contact with the true Japanese, those who have kept untouched the righteousness and bravery of the ancient Samurai, then you can understand what in truth is Japan, you can seize the secret of her force. They know how to remain silent; and though they are possessed of the most acute sensitiveness, they are, among the people I have met, those who express it least. A friend here can give his life with the greatest

simplicity to save yours, though he never told you before that he loved you in such a profound and unselfish way. Indeed he had not even told you that he had loved you at all. And if you were not able to read the heart behind the appearances, you would have seen only a very exquisite courtesy which leaves little room for the expression of spontaneous feelings. Nevertheless the feelings are there, all the stronger perhaps because of the lack of outward manifestation; and if an opportunity presents itself, through an act, very modest and veiled sometimes, you suddenly discover depths of affection.

This is specifically Japanese; among the nations of the world, the true Japanese—those who have not become Westernised—are perhaps the least selfish. And this unselfishness is not the privilege of the well-educated, the learned or religious people; in all social ranks you may find it. For here, with the exception of some popular and exceedingly pretty festivals, religion is not a rite or a cult, it is a daily life of abnegation, obedience, self-sacrifice.

The Japanese are taught from their infancy that life is duty and not pleasure. They accept that duty—so often hard and painful—with happy submission. They are not tormented by the idea of making themselves happy. It gives the life of the whole country a very remarkable self-constraint, but no joyful and free expansion. . .

Each form, each act is symbolical, from the arrangement of the gardens and houses to the famous tea-ceremony.... Japan is essentially the country of sensations; she lives through her eyes. Beauty rules over her as an uncontested master; and all her atmosphere incites to mental and vital activity, study, observation, progress, effort, not to silent and blissful contemplation. But behind this activity stands a high aspiration which the future of her people will reveal.

The Mother brought many things from Japan when she came to Pondicherry in 1920. Among them there were varieties of Japanese cards. Many of them she gave to me. How well she had preserved them all those years!

It was interesting to know that, when the Mother was in Japan, she happened to meet Rabindranath Tagore who requested her to help him organise and develop his Ashram at Santiniketan, near Calcutta. But she was not keen on his offer. For she had in her consciousness a greater plan of the world's future. In her talks to Japanese women she had disclosed the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the New World.

Once she said that sometimes she used to stay in Japanese temples, sleeping on a tatami.

The Mother told me a lot of things about Japanese arts and beauty. Among her talks about Japan I found this striking:

“The tea ceremony in Japan is famous. The Japanese perform it so beautifully and with such grace that one likes to see it again and again. The girls are charming and immaculately dressed in Kimonos and their hair-do is so elegant. They

serve the tea and cakes harmoniously with a smile. It is a delight to watch them serve tea.”

She was fascinated by the abundance of Nature’s glory. Here I quote from the Mother’s *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 358:

Once more, everywhere I see cherry trees; Thou hast put a magical power in these flowers: they seem to speak of Thy sole Presence; they bring with them the smile of the Divine.

My body is at rest and my soul blossoms in light; what kind of a charm hast Thou put into these trees in flower?

O Japan, it is thy festive adorning, expression of thy goodwill, it is thy way of saying that thou dost mirror the sky.

And now here is a magnificent country, of high mountains all covered with pines and richly tilled valleys. And the little pink roses this Chinese brings, are they a promise of the near future?

To sum up in one sentence: The Mother’s Consciousness was full of Japan.

(To be continued)

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MAGIC MOMENT

QUIETLY, O quietly
Thoughts go by.
Hush, O hush,
Desires mine.
Come, O come,
Peace Divine,
All of me
In Thy arms
Entwine.

SHYAM KUMARI

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND THE INDIAN SPIRIT

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1983)

From Kathleen Raine

I HAVE asked Bowes & Bowes to post you my *Collected Poems* and I hope you will find some there that speak to you, as some of yours did to me.

On such a large question as the use of English in India I am obviously unqualified to speak, as it is very largely a political issue. Doubtless there were, and are, strong *political* forces at work that make the use of English as a common second language in India desirable. But alas the motives of politics are not those of poetry; power and commerce do not speak words as poets and the common people use them, with feeling and love. Besides the positive objection—that words are in their nature (except when abstract, or commercial) restricted to a tribe and its land and landscape and subtleties of feeling and observation—which of course does not prevent the poetry written by the bards of the tribe from reaching any depth of feeling or thought, as poets of all languages have proved, not only Wordsworth—there is a negative objection as well, i.e., the very desire to use an alien language reflects a break with tradition, in those who are infected with such a wish. The words of the ancestors come to us loaded with their experience of the earth as they have known it. In disowning our language, do we not disown ourselves?

Sri Aurobindo was uprooted, as I understand, and in any case doubtless wished to write in English for the instruction of English readers—whose need is certainly great, in philosophic matters, and who should therefore be grateful to him. But his poetry is certainly not on the same level as his philosophic writings.

To wish to write in an alien language, therefore, seems to me, for a poet, a failure to perceive and experience that which poetry is, the “minute particulars” of words in their feeling-content and their local sense-impression. There is involved, in such a wish, a separation of abstractions from words—the very antithesis of poetry. However, the course of history must go on, and India no doubt will lose its tradition as the modern West has all but lost its tradition, until our terrible civilisation (one of the most barbarous there has ever been) destroys itself, or the world, or both. I do not know enough about Indian metaphysics, but both Christian and Moslem scriptures envisage a decline of the world towards its end and final destruction. However, even on the last day, those who can must bear witness to the divine. One must look up, not down, or we lose heart, hope, and courage. (22.II.1961)

I have no objection to your publishing extracts from our exchange if you think they might be of interest: I seem to remember writing some more in my last letter, saying that the use of a foreign language revealed a loss of the sense of our own words, as well

as an inadequacy in the use of the adopted language. But, then, you see, I do not like this whole world tendency to reduce all differences to one uniform race and culture, which will have none of the treasures of any of its components, but only this mass tele-culture that infects the whole world now with its sub-humanity. Maybe the tendency is irresistible but if it is one may wonder if literacy of any kind will survive; communication will all be by newsreels and through the eye, and the human vocabulary be reduced to a few counters necessary for the exchange of such meagre ideas as can survive under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, whether Russian or American style—for the differences are less great than the similarities, and even in the last three or four years “the filthy modern tide” has been rising fast in England. The social tendency is no longer a movement upwards from below, but an assimilation, in thought, dress, speech and manners, downwards to the lowest, as you may see in any play at the Royal Court Theatre, or in the *Observer* any Sunday. A remote language might be a positive protection against this tide. If you lived in England you would be aghast, as I am, at the eagerness of traditional civilisations where they remain (I saw it in Greece) to imitate and adopt a form of civilisation that has been disastrous to human values wherever it has spread, and which now seems to threaten the existence of the very earth itself. Perhaps that is the least serious aspect of its results. I know that Indians are said to be fatalists—or at least you take views so very long that the waxing and waning of planets is of small account—but the Indian haste to exchange the Vedas for Dr. Leavis and the New Criticism, and the immemorial skill of humanity for the machines is incomprehensible to me; or for that matter knowledge of the true nature and destiny of the soul for social welfare.

But this is too like politics, about which I know little and care less. I only know the kind of ignorant ugliness that revolts my soul, and that is what you will inherit with “westernisation”. But maybe it is inevitable and one should not waste emotion on it.

I hope my poems reach you for Christmas if not before. All my good wishes for the time of the Nativity. It is the most glorious of Christian symbols, and the only hope of our fallen and terrible world and our fallen and terrible humanity.

(11.12.1961)

From K. D. Sethna

Your letter dated November 22nd has just reached me—nearly a month and a half after posting. You appear to be still troubled by the war-menace. I am not surprised: it must be very difficult to live in Europe and not be haunted by thoughts of the end of the world. But I have the faith that the barbarism which you rightly see in our lop-sided and discordant civilisation will not get the better of all that on the other hand promises in certain elements of this same civilisation to serve as a stepping-stone to a sweeter and brighter future. What both Christian and Moslem scriptures envisage—as also do the Zoroastrian which are more ancient and, in this as well

some other matters, must have influenced them—would most probably come true at least so far as the history of our particular civilisation is concerned if there were not a new Light, greater than any of the past, at work in its midst to counteract the catastrophic tendency. I believe that a small but sharp inner touch of this Light has restrained Père Teilhard de Chardin from the pessimism that has infected most Europeans: he brings, for all the mixing which as a Jesuit he couldn't help of the old with the new, a genuine little flash of the Aurobindonian vision when he sees the future as leading progressively towards a luminous outbreak of God in a unified humanity. If this outbreak which he calls Omega Point is also a burning of the world, the end of history, the end is not a catastrophe but a going up in glory.

Apropos of the question of Indo-Anglian poetry, I quite understand the *a priori* force of what you have said. But I have already from my side written all that I can in theory against its unconditional acceptance. Your theoretical position goes very far and holds in great generality, but I think that the arguments in my previous letters should show how it falls short of absoluteness: room remains, even on *a priori* grounds, for brilliant exceptions. And, if I may judge both by what you have quoted Herbert Read as saying and by what we have from him in black and white on Sri Aurobindo's *Ilion*, an unfinished epic sequel of more than 4,000 lines to the *Iliad*, he agrees with you very strongly on the general rule but unmistakably grants—without the slightest reservation—at least one exception. His words are worth quoting: "It is a remarkable achievement by any standard and I am full of amazement that someone not of English origin should have such a wonderful command not only of our language as such, but of its skilful elaboration into poetic diction of such high quality." These words, occurring in the same letter (June 5, 1958) which spoke of *Savitri's* "sustained creative power", convey that though theoretically he would regard an exception as impossible he cannot deny the actual amazing and overwhelming presence of it. For him, the *a priori* has stood at the bar of the empirical and found itself contradicted.

And, after all, is it not an empirical test that would finally settle the issue? The crucial question is: Do competent Englishmen find any Indo-Anglian work authentic poetry? The answer is: "Some Englishmen don't and some do." Interestingly enough, those who do are not recent ones only but date back to the very dawn of Indo-Anglian verse. One day, in 1876, Edmund Gosse strolled idly into the *Examiner's* office. The Editor put in his hands a shabby little volume, *A Sheaf Gleaned from French Fields* by Toru and Arun Dutt. It had come all the way from Calcutta. "There!" said the Editor, "see whether you can't make something of that." Gosse opened the book. His eyes fell on the lines translated from Hugo:

Still barred thy doors! the far east glows,
The morning wind blows fresh and free.
Should not the hour that wakes the rose
Awaken also thee?

All look for thee, Love, Light and Song—
 Light in the sky deep red above,
 Song in the lark of pinions strong,
 And in my heart true Love.

Gosse was at once captivated. He could hardly believe that such verse in English could stream from an outlandish source like the Saptahiksambad press at Bhowani-pore. In spite of awkwardnesses of matter and grammar in some places he hailed the book with enthusiasm; and a few years later, when Toru, the more gifted of the two young poetesses, died at the age of 21, he wrote about her: "When the history of the literature of our country comes to be written, there is sure to be a page in it dedicated to this fragile exotic blossom of song." H. A. L. Fisher, another critic of the day, also welcomed her into "the great fellowship of English poets".

I am afraid Gosse as well as Fisher was too generous with Toru on the whole, but the possibility of true poetic expression in English by an Indian was certainly shown by her, though as yet on a very limited scale of notes. Sarojini Naidu soon followed with a subtler and more magical music and Gosse accepted her too as a genuine lyrist in the English language. Even Sarojini's expression lacked in sufficient range, but in addition to her success, in Gosse's opinion, within the small colourful field she covered, a fact of the greatest significance in relation to his attitude to her is what he told her apropos of her very early work which had many English associations. He said that she could hope to be a true English poet only if she wrote truly with the Indian mind, expressing all that was most deeply or intensely alive to her. According to this pronouncement by an English critic who was fairly sensitive though not always very profound, there should be no bar in one's Indian birth or temperament or experience to using English poetically. And it was not only Gosse who, when Sarojini sang the iridescence and passion of oriental life, praised her inspiration: Arthur Symons, perhaps a finer critical touchstone, added his approval.

About Manmohan Ghose, Sri Aurobindo's elder brother who, like Sri Aurobindo, spent his most receptive years of youth in England—Oscar Wilde, reviewing the book *Primavera* in which some poems of Manmohan's had first appeared together with those of his English friends, remarked: "Mr. Ghose ought some day to make a name in our literature."¹ Laurence Binyon has found his work so genuinely charged with English moods and impressions, side by side with the Indian tone and temper, that he has wondered whether this poet would figure more as English or Indian! His multi-faceted summing-up goes: "No Indian had ever before used our tongue with so poetic a touch, and he would coin a phrase, turn a noun into a verb with the freedom, often the felicity, of our own poets. But he remains an Indian. I do not think that an Indian reader would feel him as a foreign poet, for all his western tastes and allusions. Yet to us he is a voice among the great company of English sing-

¹ *Songs of Love and Death* by Manmohan Ghose, edited with an Introduction by Laurence Binyon (Oxford): Introduction, p. 12.

ers; somewhat apart and solitary, with a difference in his note, but not an echo."¹

Both Binyon and Symons—and, among lesser names, Fowler-Wright, editor of *Poetry and the Drama* in the 'thirties—welcomed and praised the work of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Sarojini Naidu's brother, whom, apart from Sri Aurobindo, I consider the most outstanding poetic genius from India to have written in English.

As for Sri Aurobindo himself, there is not only Read's comment on *Iliad*: there is also what Christopher Martin, Assistant Editor of *Encounter*, wrote to us of the same work: "I certainly am impressed by this masterly achievement in hexameters" (9.12.1959). And I have already quoted to you H. O. White of Trinity College, Dublin, on *Savitri*: "a truly remarkable poem." C. F. Andrews, a co-worker of Tagore, used to cite that long-short poem *The Rishi* as particular proof of his description of Sri Aurobindo as a great poet. Ronald Nixon, known in spiritual circles as Sri Krishnaprem and author of one of the best books in English on the Gita, admires Sri Aurobindo's poetry very much and finds in it abundantly the rare quality of overtones. Arthur Moore, who distinguished himself for years as editor of the *Calcutta Statesman*, is another admirer. Banning Richardson who reviewed Sri Aurobindo's *Collected Poems and Plays* at some length in *The Aryan Path* (March, 1944) wrote: "These two volumes are rich in beauty and suggestiveness... Though the works are by no means of uniform quality—indeed what poet's are?—they reveal a true poetic spirit, and sometimes ascend to heights of great beauty and power. What will strike the English-speaking reader is the amazing mastery of the English language that the writer has attained." We may note the word "amazing", the very one that Read has used, implying that actuality, the empirical fact, has given the lie to theoretical considerations. That gifted Irish poet and thinker, James H. Cousins, who has written a book of extraordinarily acute and condensed criticism, *New Ways in English Literature*, surveying a large field of modern verse in English up to 1919, refers to Sri Aurobindo's early publications and speaks of his "unimpeachable English" and, while calling some of the poetry "poor minted coin of the brain", speaks of the poem *Revelation* as "a wholly delightful thing...which stands self-existent in its own authenticity and beauty"², and points to "the veritable alchemy of the imagination of the first four stanzas of *In the Moonlight*"³—a passage about which he further remarks: "That, despite a couple of well-worn rhymes, is superlative. We look towards its author for more and more of its kin."⁴

One may be sure there was quite a lot of "more and more" by 1951 when Sir Francis Watson, discussing "English Poetry from India" in the B.B.C.'s "Third Programme", spoke thus of Sri Aurobindo as well as Manmohan Ghose after a bit of diffidence about some other Indian poets: "With Manmohan Ghose we can at any rate forget all reservations, the question of thinking in one language and writing

¹ *Ibid.*: Introduction, p. 21.

² *New Ways in English Literature* (Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1919), p. 29

³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

in another, the doubtful dichotomy of east and west. Oscar Wilde, Lionel Johnson and Ernest Dowson were among his companions, and Wilde remarked that he gave a welcome distinction to Christchurch. I do not know that I would call his poetry ninetyish, though some of it is mannered. It is entirely English, sophisticated, yet deeply suffused with the intimate love of nature, of the countryside, the English countryside, *his* countryside for eighteen formative years. He went back to India, but he had made up his mind to return to England, when he died. Many of his poems remain unpublished in the Calcutta University Library. Those that have appeared, notably in the selection made by his schoolfellow, Laurence Binyon, seem to me too good to be forgotten. Aurobindo Ghose, like his brother, shows a distinguished technical mastery: he was deeply interested in prosody. He is the one Indian poet whom Yeats singles out as writing creatively in English (although it was Manmohan for whom Yeats found a corner in the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*). Aurobindo the poet has been overshadowed by Aurobindo the seer, the yogi, the transcendental philosopher—if indeed you can separate him into these two characters, which I doubt. The craftsmanship which he developed before he retired to the Pondicherry ashram has since been used as the most perfect instrument he could find for the communication of spiritual discovery: but unless you are prepared to respond to that discovery in some degree you will hardly enjoy the poetry. It is a message all right, but from a point so elevated that the sundering Suez Canal is invisible. It is the kind of message which most theories of poetry sanction, and which for Sri Aurobindo it is the poet's highest function to deliver."

What Sir Francis Watson says touches on several issues raised by you: *e.g.*, "Can an Indian employ English with the inwardness needed to write true poetry? Is not Sri Aurobindo the poet to be distinguished from Sri Aurobindo the philosopher? Can his poetry be at all considered to be on the same level as his philosophic writings?" Perhaps the most significant and momentous of Sir Francis's words are those in which he refers to Yeats's opinion of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. I remember your allusion to Yeats's scepticism about the ability of Indians to write poetry in English. And Sir Francis too is well aware of Yeats's general position. For, at almost the very beginning of his long broadcast he quotes an outburst wrung from Yeats by the submission to him, through a sympathetic party, of some English verses by a young Indian. Sir Francis tells us: "Yeats once exclaimed that the introduction of English for the higher education of Indians was Britain's greatest wrong, 'making a stately people clownish, putting indignity into their very souls'." So, when Sir Francis cites him on Sri Aurobindo, he knows very well and makes us also know to the same degree that Yeats's pronouncement was no facile or gracious patronage but an admission wrested from him in spite of himself.

I may stop now and close my muster of English opinions. No doubt, the critics I have mentioned differ sometimes among themselves, just as critics have differed even about English poets including names as eminent as Milton and Shelley; but their admiration or amazement constitutes a very positive body of evidence that by

the empirical test Indo-Anglian poetry is indeed far from being a failure. Of course, there are not and there cannot be a large number of Indian poets with striking work in English to their credit. But the thinness or thickness of their ranks should make no odds to the essential point. And we may note that not all the critics subscribe even to a theoretical refusal.

I may add that the case I have presented would stand in its fundamentals no matter if we assumed that every favourable verdict quoted in it was somehow a mistake. For, still there would be the fact that competent Englishmen have been *prepared* to see true poetic achievement in Indo-Anglian work. Thus at least the possibility, if not the actuality, of such achievement is whole-heartedly granted in practical criticism.

Would I then be in error to hold that when fine minds like you resist so strongly, it is because of some doctrinaire influence from an over-Englishness of temperament and an excessive sense of local tradition?

In closing, I may make a few remarks on your statement about Indian writers like me: "In disowning our language, do we not disown ourselves?" In my own case, there was no real question of disowning any language in order to adopt English as a medium for writing. As soon as I came to know English enough I found I could write no language better. And as time went on, I found it the most natural thing to use it for all significant purposes. Nor can I be said to have disowned myself by being different from my ancestors—though hardly from my own father—in the language I employed. I certainly am not all made by my ancestors: I am an individual soul with my own distinctive characteristics in the midst of many points in common and my inner affinities go beyond the nation or the country to which I belong by physical birth. However, in being such a soul I have not lost any basic national qualities: I have only reoriented them. And, if I use English in India not as a mere convenience but as a necessity of heart and mind and with a living communion with centuries of English literature, am I in a radically different situation from an Englishman born and bred in India, who has never had English sense-impressions? Perhaps a better comparison would be with an American of European extraction whose family has spent several generations in an English-speaking milieu and who has used English from childhood yet has had non-English local sense-impressions or feeling-responses. Has not such an American the possibility of being as mighty and profound a poet in English as Whitman or one as subtly intense as Emily Dickinson?

Can even an Indian writer like Sri Aurobindo, who in early life was "uprooted", be said to disown his Indianness? Was he not a master of Sanskrit in which the very soul of India had been concentrated in the past? And is not his poetry no less than his philosophical prose charged with the mystic and spiritual light that was the soul of that soul? If the early uprooting which made English his "mother-tongue" could really mean an uprooting from what fundamentally constitutes the Indian consciousness, would he centre his Ashram of Integral Yoga in India instead of in England?

What can be said rightly of Sri Aurobindo is that by being the truest embodiment of historical India he has in a supreme measure the splendid universalism which is organic to the original Indian genius and something of which India preserved even when in her decline she grew over-conservative and which was encouraged in a novel manner in Sri Aurobindo by his familiarity from boyhood with Greek, Latin, French, Italian, German and, above all, that most polymorphous, assimilative, multi-minded, subtle-toned, depth-evocative, mystic-suggestioned and therefore, in its inward reaches, that most Indian-souled of modern tongues, English. (4.1.1962)

I have received your *Collected Poems*. Several of them have "spoken" to me very intimately and I should like to write to you something about them as well as about your poetry in general. In none of the opinions cited on the back of the dust-jacket do I find any precise pointer to either the core of your poetic vision or the essence of your poetic art, nor is there any sign of discrimination between the various levels or ups and downs of your inspiration. Perhaps the opinions are too briefly represented to allow anything except broad sweeping statements, but I don't seem to remember having read a really penetrating review of your work. I have a faint recollection of a review in *The New Statesman and Nation* several years ago when your collection came out, a review which I rather liked, but I am not certain whether it too showed genuine insight into your insight. I am told by a professor at Annamalai University, my friend V. Seturaman, that a Scandinavian critic has written very perceptively and I shall soon be getting hold of his essay. I can't claim to be able to say the last word on you, but I have a few impressions which I think come to some sort of grips with your substance as well as your form and it will be a pleasure to organise them and put them down. But what value can they have for you? From an old letter of yours to another friend of mine—Kishor Gandhi—I understand that to your mind no Indian, even if educated in English from very boyhood and possessed of rare cultural sensibility, is capable of responding to anything else than mere "ideas" in English poetry. To entertain such a notion seems rather fantastic, but logically it must lie at the back of the other belief that nobody except an Englishman can enter into the subtle spirit of the English language sufficiently to write genuine poetry. For, the moment one acknowledges that an Indian can have access to something more than the "ideas" in an English poem one will have to grant the possibility that the entry thus shown into the subtle spirit of the English language may lead him to sit within that spirit and become himself creative.

This point brings me to your second letter which came by surface mail. Yes, the world-tendency you deplore—to reduce all differences to one uniform race and culture—is really deplorable and I don't know why you think I favour it. Some kind of "one world" is both inevitable and desirable—as an outer reflex of the world's inner spiritual unity; but that does not at all mean a drastic and insensitive rubbing out of all vital and significant differences, racial and cultural. What is being done in either Russia or America is very far from what we Aurobindonians have in mind:

surely it can't be even what Teilhard de Chardin predicts and hopes for. Sri Aurobindo laid as much emphasis on diversity as on unity and was extremely careful to distinguish unity from uniformity just as he was particular to draw a line between diversity and an exclusive narrowness of difference stewing in its own juice and ever on the boil to scald others. Even in the political field of India he was all for linguistic provinces, the development of numberless local cultures, each with its fine sharp individuality and uniqueness in the midst of a subtle basic communion with its fellows, constituting ultimately with them that polyphonic harmony of life and spirit which is the true India. Within this harmony, and in tune with the native many-languaged moods of the country on the one hand and on the other with the many-mooded native language of England, there would be the novel adventure of Indo-Anglian prose and poetry arising from the fusion here of England and India for nearly two hundred and fifty years—an adventure which has nothing to do essentially with the sort of mass tele-culture which you rightly abhor. On the contrary, as I have repeatedly said, its most typical and fundamental character would be a highly spiritual literary efflorescence which would be farther away from all that you can associate with the Dictatorship of the Proletariat than even any traditional civilisation which seems to you worth preserving could be. This efflorescence would make for no exchange of the Vedas for Dr. Leavis and the New Criticism, or the knowledge of the true nature and destiny of the soul for social welfare. In fact, its influence would go a long way towards reversing the pernicious process which has been on of blind “westernisation” and even the West itself will be slowed down in its “ignorant ugliness”. And need I add that the efflorescence I am speaking of will be no side-shoot merely repeating the creativity of the English genius but something rich and strange on its own in the English language, just as it will be a sharply individual and unique explosion of the soul's colour and odour in the midst of India's innumerable local cultures?

No doubt, it will have something more wide-spread and universal than they—by virtue of the English speech that is now all over India—spoken ill for the most part, spoken well enough among the literati, spoken amazingly well in a small group whose members are scattered everywhere in the country and which is “small” only in relation to the mass of nearly four hundred million Indians and would be quite substantial in relation to a considerably less teeming country like England. Yes, Indo-Anglian literature is necessarily more an all-India phenomenon than any other literary product of the Indian consciousness, but that cannot reduce its problems to purely political terms, as you appear to believe. English in India has certainly an important political aspect, national as well as international; but it is also sought to be preserved and encouraged for ends much nobler. Its deepest *raison d'être* is, as Sir Francis Watson has noted, “a special sort of literature”. Sir Francis says, in the broadcast to which I referred in my last letter: “In November 1945, when the Indian centre of the P.E.N. Club held its big conference at Jaipur, I was at first a little surprised by the prominence of English among the sixteen modern Indian lit-

eratures that were reviewed... English was treated as one of sixteen languages in which Indian literature was written—and let me add that there was and is no doubt about the vitality of many of the other languages.” Whenever English is seriously considered in India, it is always as a literary medium and not as a plaything or a convenience of politics or else of salesmanship. So you need not fear, as you did in the letter before your last, that all that would come to us of this language would be words which power and commerce use. The language that is alive and dear to many Indians, through their education and reading, is the one which English poets and the common people of England have used with feeling and love and which these writers themselves mould to their own heart and sense with a linguistic empathy characteristic of the Indian genius at its keenest and almost unimaginable by the Englishman. In her *Anatomy of Prose*, Marjorie Boulton, after quoting a passage from Jawaharlal Nehru’s *Autobiography*, gives a footnote (p. 91) aimed at the Englishman’s lack of this “linguistic empathy”. She says: “English people who will not trouble to write their own language well ought to be shamed by reading the English of such Indian writers as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, his sister Krishna Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, D. F. Karaka, Professor Radhakrishnan, and a number of obscure Indians to be met with in British universities.”

Let me thank you for your permission to publish extracts from our exchanges. Of course, I shall include all you have recently written. I should like very much to include the brief but very effective and beautiful self-revelation you have made apropos of Wordsworth and Dorothy. But, of course, the self-revelation would fall short of its full effect and value if it were anonymous and not known to be Kathleen Raine, not recognised for what it is and in terms of its uncommon source—not recognised in its brief bright appearance to be something like what you touch upon in the first line of your poem, *A Strange Evening*:

A little rain falls out of amethyst sky...

(4.2.1962)

(*To be continued*)

THE RED CARAVAN

LIKE a phantom it moves across the desert rim, the red caravan of wagons of vague shape and faces never seen, like a family of invisible neighbours who are ever present but never known. Day after day, month after month, it travels to an unknown destiny, yet never lapses in its journeying, never tires in its pace. Its rhythm is as regular as the heart-beats and it carries the whole world on its relentless path. It is the physical consciousness of man, trooping across the centuries.

Time and civilisations and continents have seen it pass. It presses on undaunted and unchanged and yet now, on the clearest of nights, sometimes one can see an added something which was not there before. Beginning at twilight and increasing through the evening hours into the deep dark, there is now a faint aura of white illumination that begins at the head of the train and spreads slowly rearward, giving a sense of awe and eternity to the whole thing. It is a sort of melody of light that can be heard by the subtle ear as a growing harmony. It gives the assurance that the caravan will one day reach its destination and then find its earthly redness intermingled with the Supramental's Gold.

On each full-moon day the leader of the caravan comes out and stands before it with arms upraised in prayer and begins speaking in tongues, speaking a language unknown to the mind of man but which flows directly from his soul and spirit. It is by this regular invocation that the souls of the members of the caravan are continually reinvigorated to carry on their daily tasks with faith. For they do not know what lies ahead but they are carried on the stream of destiny and allow themselves to be led through the strange and the unknown.

In a hallowed peace this Work goes on. None questions or turns back but goes safely, surely on. For those who see, there is an even greater Mystery. From beyond the stars the red caravan of Man is entwined round and round by a golden thread drawn gently and precisely by a Heavenly Hand.

P.

INNER AWAKENING

WITH roots deep in the nourishing mire
The lotus
Is about to open its adoring petals.
I already hear the sound from a distance
Of the divine bee
Approaching, and smell tomorrow's fragrance
Of the hidden honey.

A deep contentment
Pervades, a sign that destiny
Nears a fulfilment
And is about to change its course
And open
All spaces to the walled-in epiphany.

Eager to leave
The outer world I await the command
To surge up
From my depths with all parts yielding
To the Infinite Energy
That will take up the steering
From my hands
And the clutch and the brake
From my feet
While the heart would throb with love
And the mind
Would delight in witnessing the descent
Of deep silence.

Then the miracle would unfold,
The infinite Energy
Would become the vehicle and the driver
And the eternal journey.

DINKAR PALANDE

THE RUBAIYAT OF BABA TAHIR

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL PERSIAN DIALECT

(Continued from the issue of September 1983)

(57)

A CANDLE am I with tears of molten fire!
Would not a burnt heart's tears such heat acquire?
I burn all night, through all the day I weep,
Thus do I pass my days and nights entire.

(58)

My eyes in tears remain, fiery my soul,
And heart's blood ever fills my pleasure's bowl,
After my death, if pass thou by my grave,
Thy scent shall be for me Revival's Call.

(59)

Black-fortuned am I , O my destiny
Is topsy-turvy—what Time's conspiracy!
O God, this heart of mine to ruins may go,
By its mountain-love a moteling made am I.

(60)

O since the day You brought me to this earth,
Throughout have I indulged in sinful mirth,
By the name of the Twelve Blessed Ones I pray:
Absolve my sins, and question not my worth.

(61)

I'm doomed to bear a whole world's agony,
My cure's hope lies alone in alchemy,
All find relief from their ills after all,
Now ruin is of my heart sole remedy.

(62)

My fresh-checked Love, now where dost thou reside,
Sun-brilliant face and fair, collyrium-eyed?

Life-breath is stuck in Tahir's gorge, O Friend,
Departure's nigh, O where dost thou abide?

(Concluded)

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NIVEDITA, SRI AUROBINDO AND THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

A CORRECTIVE COMMENT

SANKARI Prasad Basu, littérateur and Sahitya Academy Award winner of Bengal, has recently written a series of articles, "Nivedita and the National Movement", in a popular Bengali journal, *Desh*. In one of them he describes the part Sri Aurobindo played in association with Nivedita in the Revolutionary Movement. Mentioning briefly their common agreement and ideal qualities, he dwells at great length upon their differences in various fields. He revives some old issues upon which Sri Aurobindo already gave his verdict in the compilation *Sri Aurobindo On Himself* in the early 'forties and even before that in journals and letters. We thought the ghost had been laid once for all. But Basu, in spite of having read the book, says that he has discovered some letters of Nivedita which, according to him, challenge Sri Aurobindo's verdict or at least reopens the questions for a fresh investigation. He also raises some new issues which are of capital importance in relation to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga.

The old issues involved are Sri Aurobindo's "Open Letter to My Countrymen" and its effect on the question of his deportation by the Government, and his departure to Chandernagore according to an *adesh* he received from above. Nivedita seems to contend—and the writer tacitly supports her—that it was due to her persistent effort through her friends in England that the Government abandoned the plan to deport Sri Aurobindo. Also we are told that Sri Aurobindo left for Chandernagore at her suggestion. Both these claims Sri Aurobindo had refuted emphatically. The copious letters that have been reproduced give no clear proof of the friends' success in England; they did not write a single letter relevant to Nivedita's point. It was all her assumption or, in the words of Basu, "at least she thought so." What value does this *assumption* have in the face of Sri Aurobindo's clear-cut denial? On the other hand, Uma Mukherji and Haridas Mukherji have reproduced in their Bengali book *Sri Aurobindo and the Revolutionary Movement of Bengal* a communication that passed almost immediately after the publication of the "Open Letter" between the Bengal and Central Governments and resulted in the Centre's decision that it would be highly injudicious to arrest Sri Aurobindo on the charges that had been framed. It confirms Sri Aurobindo's intuitive feeling that the "Open Letter" would produce the intended effect. The joint authors comment that even after the publication of the said letter Sri Aurobindo moved freely in Calcutta for nearly six months and that his subsequent departure to Chandernagore had no connection with Nivedita's much earlier advice to him to go away for some time. So Basu's claim gets no support.

About the second issue, the writer has produced a number of witnesses in support of Nivedita, a few of whom were juniors and subordinates working under Sri

Aurobindo as their leader. Sri Aurobindo himself invalidated their testimony in the book *Sri Aurobindo On Himself*, particularly the testimony of Ram Chandra Majumdar who was actually present at the time of his departure for Chandernagore. Not only Sri Aurobindo, but Nolini Kanta Gupta and Suresh Chakravarty who were also present refuted his evidence in the Bengali journal *Prabasi* in 1945. Basu has quoted a number of lines which were supposed to have been dictated by Sri Aurobindo to Ram Majumdar after his meeting with Nivedita: they are on the very face of it absurd. The lines are: "Be rare in your acquaintances. Seal your lips to rigid secrecy. Don't breathe this to your nearest and dearest." One who is at all familiar with Sri Aurobindo's ways cannot help laughter over such dramatic and rhetorical expressions being ascribed to Sri Aurobindo particularly at the crucial moment of his departure to Chandernagore. Apropos of them Sri Aurobindo says in the third person: "all that is of a character foreign to his habits e.g. his alleged Shakespearean and Polonius-like recommendation to Ramchandra himself while departing to Chandernagore. He may have enjoined silence on Ramchandra but not in that flowery language."¹

Apart from Ramchandra the accounts of other witnesses the writer has collected are hardly worth mentioning, for none of these men were present on the scene. Therefore they are all romantically fanciful and at variance with one another. Any intelligent reader will see through the whole game. Suresh Chakravarty who was another witness present at the actual scene and took a leading part with Majumdar in guiding Sri Aurobindo to the Ghat gave us as long ago as the nineteen-twenties in A. B. Purani's *Evening Talks*—published later on—the same authentic account as recorded by Sri Aurobindo in the nineteen-forties. Hence Basu's plea that events which had happened long ago could not be remembered in the 'forties does not stand.

Besides, we do not understand why, even if Nivedita had given the suggestion, Sri Aurobindo could not have received the command from Above at the same time.

There are many other major and minor points of difference. In fact the whole article is an attempt to show these differences and to imply deftly that Nivedita was in the right.

They are not, however, my main topics. The truth will be adjudged by time. It is the difference between Sri Aurobindo and Nivedita on the religious-*cum*-political plane which the writer has brought out that has a great significance for us. It gives us a glimpse of Nivedita's fundamental outlook and bears out Sri Aurobindo's remark that she had a Western mind. I think Vivekananda also at one time held the same view.

I found a typical instance of this mind of hers in an article written by Dinesh Chandra Sen, a renowned historian of Bengali literature. He wanted to translate his work into English and asked for Nivedita's help. She readily agreed. When the chapter dealing with *Mangala Kavya*, part of the ancient literature of Bengal, came up,

¹ It seems Sri Aurobindo sent Ramchandra to Nivedita to seek her advice as to what he should do on getting the news that his arrest was imminent.

Dr Sen, faithful to the text, had to send one of the two queens into exile in the forest at the command of the king. The queen was quite innocent and suffered much at the hands of the other queen who had actually incited the king to exile her. She bore all her distress and suffering with the right attitude. In fact, she was a goddess fallen from heaven because of a curse for some serious fault, and was supposed to return there after her long expiation through suffering. Although knowing all this, Nivedita insisted that the episode must be left out, for it was not fair: western readers would not understand it and would have a wrong impression of India. Dr. Sen tried hard to make her understand that he would falsify tradition by cutting it out and submitted many other reasons. But she was adamant and gave an ultimatum that unless it was left out, she would wash her hands of the undertaking. Poor Dr. Sen had to comply.

Sri Aurobindo had, however, a high esteem for Nivedita on several grounds and has told us India cannot be too grateful to her for what she did for our country.

To continue our theme: here is what Basu says: "After her return from Europe [*in* 1909] Nivedita warned Sri Aurobindo not to speak openly in meetings [about Boycott, etc.]. But she saw that he believed himself to be inspired by God. (She had not learnt by then about Sri Aurobindo's vision of Vasudeva in the jail.) Nivedita did indeed believe in divine inspiration, but conceived at the same time like Voltaire that some small doses of arsenic poison of practical wisdom added to the political work make it more effective. She did not consider politics to be a purely spiritual matter and, to her, Sri Aurobindo, in spite of his spiritual fervour, was no more than a revolutionary leader. Therefore she could not suppress a little laughter at his attitude. Then the writer quotes her own words: "A new paper called *Karmayogin* has come out in place of *Bande Mataram*. Aurobindo is lecturing widely—I think unwisely. But he believes himself divinely impelled and therefore not to be arrested. Of course, many of us do strange things, for reasons known only to ourselves. We care [for] no other. But certainly God gives no promise of indemnity! Joan of Arc is a perpetual witness to the contrary. It is when we have suffered all that we sometimes say, 'Yes, my voices are of God.' Meanwhile, religious experience and strategy are by no means the same thing and ought not to be confused."

Coming from Nivedita, this is a very surprising statement. We hear an echo of the Moderate Party in it. That religious experience and strategy are not the same thing at present is self-evident. Whether they can be made one—in other words, whether spirituality can take up politics—is the question. Sri Aurobindo's view is that it can and he has shown it. But before entering into the discussion, let us try to understand and interpret Nivedita's statement which appears to us not a little puzzling. What does she mean by "He believes himself divinely impelled and therefore not to be arrested"? First of all, it was not merely a belief. After his major experience, in the jail, of cosmic consciousness and the seeing of Krishna everywhere, not to speak of his earlier Nirvanic experience, he said that he was being guided by Krishna and that he had surrendered himself entirely to His guidance. He would therefore be ready for any eventuality. Therefore the question of arrest does not

arise. Sri Aurobindo was even sure that he would be declared innocent in the Alipore Bomb case. If he raised that point in his speeches, we are not aware of it. Quoting further the example of Joan of Arc Nivedita states: "God gives no promise of indemnity." Does it mean that Joan of Arc misguidedly believed that God had promised security to her? As far as we know she did not expect any such promise nor did Sri Aurobindo for himself.

Then follows Nivedita's philosophic reflection which is devoid of a clear meaning. Does it suggest that only when, after a great suffering, we look back we realise that the suffering was intended by God? The lives of saints and sadhus do not bear out that point. At least Sri Aurobindo confesses that he was at every step led by the Divine. So was Ramakrishna, I believe. Now comes the astounding generalisation, almost an admonition: "Religious experience and strategy are not the same thing and ought not to be confused."

This view challenges and contradicts Sri Aurobindo's own conception and practice of politics. Not only his politics, his entire philosophy of yoga stands convicted. I may go farther and add that it goes against the very Indian conception of politics. It is particularly the Western view and, followed to its logical conclusion, it will lead us to Mayavada. Spirituality must voyage all alone seeking its own release in God and the world must be left bound to its wheels of Karma, as has been done for centuries. Or if it is at all taken up, the arsenic of practical wisdom in small doses must be added to spirituality.

One can quite understand that if a traditional yogi, having no political sense and considering life as Maya, takes up politics he is bound to land himself and the country in utter ruin. Perhaps Nivedita's dictum is aimed at such people. But since the utterance was made with reference to Sri Aurobindo, it cannot be denied that he had enough political sense and that he had gained sufficient experience of the country, people and the Government before he launched into politics, not like Nivedita about whom Vivekananda was supposed to have said at one time, "What does she know of India and Indian politics that she would go into politics?"

Now, Sri Aurobindo holds strongly and has shown by his own example that spirituality can take up politics and that a politician should take up spirituality to transform politics. Otherwise the latter will ever remain a field of dark and dangerous forces and humanity will be ruled and dominated by them. Let us present his view, albeit at length, of the matter. He says: "My whole life and Yoga since my coming to India has always been both this-worldly and other-worldly without any exclusiveness on either side. All human interests are, I suppose, this-worldly and most of them have entered into my mental field and some, like politics, into my life, but at the same time, since I set foot on the Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not divorced from this world but had an inner and infinite bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time, I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with in-

fluences and an effect from them upon the material plane, so I could make no sharp divorce or irreconcilable opposition between what I have called the two ends of existence and all that lies between them. For me, all is Brahman and I find the Divine everywhere.... In my yoga I found myself moved to include both worlds in my purview—the spiritual and the material—and to try to establish the Divine Consciousness and the Divine Power in men's hearts and earthly life, not for a personal salvation only, but for a life divine here. This seems to me as spiritual an aim as any and the fact of this life taking up earthly pursuits and earthly things into its scope cannot, I believe, tarnish its spirituality and alter its Indian character. This at least has always been my view and experience of the reality and nature of the world and things and the Divine."

At another place he writes in the third person: "The very principle of his yoga was not only to realise the Divine and attain to a complete spiritual consciousness but also to take up all life and all world-activity into the scope of this spiritual consciousness and action and to base life on the Spirit.... In his retirement Sri Aurobindo kept a close watch on all that was happening in the world and in India." We may note that Sri Aurobindo came out directly for the Cripps Proposals, even though he had withdrawn from the political field for a higher purpose.

It will be interesting to observe how Sri Aurobindo who said once, "For me, the country first and the rest nowhere," was induced to take up yoga and how the two fields, politics and yoga, so different and alien to each other in appearance, could become fused in him and with what aim he combined the two disparate professions. When he wrote the famous articles in *Indu Prakash* in 1894 I believe he had no intention of doing yoga; even when he had the striking spiritual experience as soon as he landed at Apollo Bunder, Yoga was far from his mind. He had three other experiences, but "these were inner experiences", he said, "coming of themselves and with a sudden unexpectedness, not part of sadhana." When his friends in Baroda prompted him to take up yoga, he refused because he thought that yoga was life-negating and he was not willing to give up life and politics.

These are his words, "... I did not know what God was. Deshpande at that time was doing Hatha Yoga, Asana and other such kriyas and as he had a great proselytising tendency he wanted to convert me to his view. But I thought that a yoga which required me to give up the world was not for me. I had to liberate my country. I took to it seriously when I learnt that the same tapasya which one does to get away from the world can be turned to action. I learnt that yoga gives power and I thought why the devil should I not get the power and use it to liberate my country?... It was the time of 'country first, humanity afterwards and the rest nowhere.' It was something from behind which got the idea accepted by the mind, mine was a side-door entry into the spiritual life."

Along with his practice of pranayam, he started his secret revolutionary work, continued his official duties in Baroda till he left his service and came over to Bengal to join openly the political movement. He became editor of the *Bande Mataram*

at the same time. The pressure of work increased so much that his pranayam became irregular, he fell seriously ill and was on the point of being "carried off"! We have no precise idea as to how far his public and secret activities had been influenced by his yoga, or were they two separate streams running side by side without any connection between them? The accounts given by him do suggest, however, some indirect influence of yoga on his public activities. He sums up the result thus: "My experience is that the brain becomes Prakashmaya—full of light. When I was practising pranayam at Baroda, the mind worked with great illumination and power. At that time I used to write poetry five or ten lines a day. After the pranayam, I could write two hundred lines within half an hour. I could write prose and poetry with a flow. That flow has never ceased. I grew stout and strong, the skin became smooth and fair and there was a flow of sweetness in the saliva. I used to feel a certain aura around the head...."

Apparently, these results have very little to do with his political activity, but the increased health and outflow of energy, especially the power and great flow of writing in the *Bande Mataram* columns, must be attributed however partially to the power of Pranayam.

In 1905 when the partition of Bengal was announced, Sri Aurobindo wrote from Baroda to the revolutionary workers in Calcutta: "This is a fine opportunity. Carry on the anti-partition agitation powerfully. We will get many workers for the movement." It was around this time that Sri Aurobindo wrote his famous revolutionary booklet *Bhawani Mandir*. There we find that the revolutionary movement must be based on the cult of Shakti. Politics which has been so long a secular movement was given a religious or spiritual turn. Sri Aurobindo speaks of India's greater need of spiritual regeneration. He says, "All great awakenings in India, all her periods of mightiness and most varied vigours had drawn their vitality from the fountain-heads of some deep religious awakening.... The persistence of this phenomenon is proof that it is ingrained in the temperament of the race. If you try other and foreign methods we shall either gain our end with tedious slowness, painfully and imperfectly, or we shall not attain it at all."

Again, near about this time Sri Aurobindo wrote a letter to his wife Mrinalini where for the first time he speaks of three madresses, and his turn towards God or spirituality comes to the forefront. "By whatever means," he says, "I must have the direct vision of God, must meet him face to face. Within a month I am experiencing in myself the signs of which [the Hindu religion] speaks."

The next madness is that he locks upon his country as the Mother; he adores, he worships her as the Mother. At a later time he wrote in a letter: "... I am not a materialist. If I had seen India as only a geographical area with a number of more or less interesting people in it, I would hardly have gone out of my way to do all that for the said area." In another letter to Mrinalini, Sri Aurobindo speaks of his utter surrender to the Divine and that he had no individual will since the surrender. He would go in whatever direction of activity the Divine led him. In fact, in his talks

in the nineteen-twenties as well as in a letter he says that he was led into politics by the divine Command.

We have traced the history of Sri Aurobindo's yogic life in order to show that all through his political activities his yoga was also being pursued with equal sincerity and vigour. Whatever may have been the practical results of his yoga in politics, he was not a politician of the current conception, but a yogi politician. And it was when he was involved in the whirlpool of politics that he had the crowning experience of nirvana, not in retirement as happened in Buddha's case and in those of many other yogis. This could not but be a culmination of his long yogic practice along with his worldly activities—a thing unheard-of before. This demonstrates at once what Sri Aurobindo has professed as his principle that there need not be any opposition between the two fields. It would be naive to contend that his spirituality had no effect on politics. It is a well-known fact that he raised politics and the political movement to what has been called Religion of Nationalism and his vivid perception of India as the Divine Mother herself was at the root of this new approach. That is what he has indicated in his booklet *Bhawani Mandir*. In his actions, writings and speeches he has insistently and untringly reminded the people of our country that God was the leader of the movement and that it was His force that was acting among them. From the *Bande Mataram* columns this was the mantric force that went abroad and created the great awakening in Bengal and in India. If Nivedita fell under the spell of those fiery writings and wanted them "to be kept bound in a volume", it was because their inspiration came from the divine source. As was the writing, so was the man. One single person lifted up the whole race. This was the common evidence of all his illustrious contemporaries. Rabindranath has translated into a living expression the Truth that he saw in Sri Aurobindo. Lastly, Sri Aurobindo himself has reiterated to us that all his achievements spiritual or otherwise were the results of Yoga. As to what is Yoga and what transformations it brings about in life is a matter of common knowledge in India. Only that it can be applied effectively in politics was left to Sri Aurobindo to demonstrate. After this exposition what would be the meaning of Basu's statement that to Nivedita "Sri Aurobindo, in spite of his spiritual fervour, was no more than a revolutionary leader"? If so, one can understand why Nivedita "could not suppress a little laughter."

By the way, Sankara Prasad's story, that Sri Aurobindo was attracted to yoga by Vivekananda's book *Raja yoga* offered to him by Nivedita during her visit to Baroda, cannot be accepted as true, for, if it had been true, Sri Aurobindo who had so great a reverence for Vivekananda would have certainly related it.

Thus "he started yoga by himself without a Guru, getting the rule from a friend; it was confined at first to assiduous practice of pranayam (at one time for 6 hours or more a day). There was no conflict of wavering between yoga and politics; when he started yoga, he carried on both without any idea of opposition between them. He met a Naga Sannyasi in the course of this search, and he was confirmed by him in a belief in yoga-power when he saw him cure Barin, in almost a moment, of a violent

and clinging hill-fever by merely cutting through a glassful of water crosswise with a knife while he repeated a silent mantra. Barin drank and was cured. He also met Brahmananda and was greatly impressed by him, but he had no helper or Guru in yoga till he met Lele.

But he kept his yoga all to himself. Very few persons except his close associates knew about his inner life. It was only after his experience of Nirvana that he made it known. To quote his own words, "From the time I left Lele, I had accepted the rule of following the inner guidance implicitly and moving only as I was moved by the Divine. The spiritual development in the jail has turned it into an absolute law of the being..." Such a categorical statement leaves no room for doubt that for the two years after this experience Sri Aurobindo was guided and moved by the Divine even in whatever he did in politics and life. Nirvanic experience being almost the summit—realisation of one of the traditional paths—one can imagine that Sri Aurobindo lived always in its high divine consciousness and that it created by the stilling of the mind the condition in which all his movements flowed from a beyond-mind Power. Anyone who has perused his speeches after 1908 and those who have heard them were profoundly struck by their new tone and the new vision held forth in them. This became much more intense and pervasive after his second major experience, that of Vasudeva, in the jail, but it would be baffling to those who were used to move in the field of the mind and reason.

I venture to suggest that such was the case with Nivedita. With all her brilliance of mind and sincerity of purpose, there was a wide gulf of consciousness between herself and Sri Aurobindo so that very often she misunderstood his ways and purpose. There I presume was the crux of their differences. If my surmise is accepted, then her utterances I have quoted before appear no longer surprising. If she had realised fully the significance of Sri Aurobindo's Vasudeva experience, I believe her reaction would have been different.

The fact of her not having any inkling of Sri Aurobindo's inner condition is in a way understandable. For, Sri Aurobindo has said that their association was restricted to the political field and his manner of living and going about like a man of the world may have veiled his true personality. Still, if Ramsay Macdonald, Nevinson and others could speak of his spiritual or mystic atmosphere and of his patriotism as a mystic doctrine, Nivedita should have been in a position to do likewise.

This mystic doctrine, the nationalism that Sri Aurobindo spiritualised, was the dynamic cause of the awakening in Bengal. Almost all the great leaders of the time perceived something of the glowing spiritual fire and dynamism of his personality and hailed him with one voice "as the brightest star in the political firmament of India" and "the voice incarnate, free, of India's soul". Tagore's magnificent tribute was given not to the revolutionary leader so much as to the chosen instrument of the Divine. Not only was Sri Aurobindo himself a yogi, many prominent leaders were also yogis or disciples of yogis. And the awakening was so tremendous that had it been any other country there would have been a great revolution.

Sri Aurobindo's politics, as we have stated, was not of the western type. He followed our true Indian tradition in which politics is considered as a part of *Dharma*. It was called Rajdharma and the kings and rulers of India sought the advice of the Rishis in all matters of life, politics included. Not so long ago, Shivaji, disciple of Ramdas, ruled, fought and conquered, inspired by his great Guru. Sri Aurobindo's principle and vision were to revive the Indian tradition and his dream was to "apply the ancient ideal of the *Sanātana Dharma*, as it has never been applied before, to the problem of politics and the work of national revival. To realise that ideal, to impart it to the world is the mission of India. She has evolved a religion which embraces all that the heart, the brain, the practical faculty of man can desire, but she has not yet applied it to the problems of modern politics. This therefore is the work which she has still to do before she can help humanity."

We have before us the shining example of Sri Krishna the Avatar, which utterly demolishes Nivedita's dictum that spirituality and strategy are two things apart. Farther, at the other extreme, Joan of Arc, who did not know the A.B.C. of politics and was just a shepherd girl without any practical wisdom, was commanded by the Divine to liberate France and was guided at every step till victory was won.

Here are two instances which disprove Nivedita's and Basu's utterances. I do not need to discuss separately Basu's statement of Nivedita's views. For one thing, it is too involved and, for another, it may not be authentic. Sri Aurobindo has shown by his own glorious example how spirituality can take up politics. If nothing else, one thing is undeniable. His entry into politics raised it into a higher and purer atmosphere and so long as he was in the field it seemed as if a truth and Light of the Divine Consciousness had been brought down into the life of the people and politics had changed its old Machiavellian character.

This was Sri Aurobindo's mission in politics. The Mother said that life is one, but because India made the division between life and spirit her fall began. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother came to bridge the two and that is the gospel of *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and the epic *Savitri*.

NIRODBARAN

INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY INHERENT IN INTEGRAL YOGA

IN THE WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1983)

So Far Thus

PSYCHOLOGY continues to be divided into many schools, there is no agreement even regarding its subject matter and its method. But is it really necessary? Human personality with all the fields of human personality—conscious, unconscious, super-conscious and ranging over our behaviour, external reactions, etc.—are of interest to us, as needed to understand our life. Consciousness is obviously the central fact and then introspection must be the central method. And we cannot limit ourselves to the empirical only. Physics itself is going beyond the empirical. With the advance of knowledge all sciences are bound to go beyond the empirical to be able to explain the world more satisfactorily. Phenomenon and Reality are, after all, one piece and cannot be arbitrarily separated. In the West, at one time it was found necessary and science chose to limit it itself. In India, the unity of all knowledge has always been stressed.

The definition here propounded explicitly covers consciousness, its states and operations in nature as also possibly its relations with facts beyond nature. The scope marks out very many domains and spheres of consciousness not distinctly known to psychology, but recognised and repeatedly verified by Yoga.

Again, consciousness cannot be an epiphenomenon as 19th century materialism took it to be in Europe.

Consciousness or awareness is a primary, most vivid, decisive fact of human living, felt and known directly like all primary qualities of experience. It is more primary than the primary qualities of colour, taste, smell, etc., as these depend on it. It is not a matter of inferential knowledge. It is also not identical with its reactions as is ordinarily believed, since it can be quite immobile too. Such immobile consciousness is, however, a matter of a special effort of self-dissociation from the superficial involvements of life and of seeking a poise of depth. This effort is difficult, but it is highly rewarding as then a consciousness immobile and self-existent becomes a surprising vivid fact. And, what is more important, consciousness strikes one as real, as ultimate.

The passages from Sri Aurobindo on consciousness are an elaborate exposition of what consciousness essentially is in man and in the universe and how it stands interrelated in them. Obviously psychology and metaphysics get intermixed and we need to be careful, recognise the relatively separate field of psychology and also its deeper and wider relations with the total reality.

In this instalment we venture upon an elaborate mapping out of Integral personality.

INDRA SEN

Our Ordinary Make-up¹

To the ordinary man who lives upon his own waking surface, ignorant of the self's depths and vastnesses behind the veil, his psychological existence is fairly simple. A small but clamorous company of desires, some imperative intellectual and aesthetic cravings, some tastes, a few ruling or prominent ideas amid a great current of unconnected or ill-connected and mostly trivial thoughts, a number of more or less imperative vital needs, alternations of physical health and disease, a scattered and inconsequent succession of joys and griefs, frequent minor disturbances and vicissitudes and rarer strong searchings and upheavals of mind or body, and through it all Nature, partly with the aid of his thought and will, partly without or in spite of it, arranging these things in some rough practical fashion, some tolerable disorderly order,—this is the material of his existence. The average human being even now is in his inward existence as crude and undeveloped as was the bygone primitive man in his outward life. But as soon as we go deep within ourselves,—and Yoga means a plunge into all the multiple profundities of the soul,—we find ourselves subjectively, as man in his growth has found himself objectively, surrounded by a whole complex world which we have to know and to conquer.

The most disconcerting discovery is to find that every part of us—intellect, will, sense-mind, nervous or desire self, the heart, the body—has each, as it were, its own complex individuality and natural formation independent of the rest; it neither agrees with itself nor with the others nor with the representative ego which is the shadow cast by some central and centralising self on our superficial ignorance. We find that we are composed not of one but many personalities and each has its own demands and differing nature. Our being is a roughly constituted chaos into which we have to introduce the principle of a divine order. Moreover, we find that inwardly too, no less than outwardly, we are not alone in the world; the sharp separateness of our ego was no more than a strong imposition and delusion; we do not exist in ourselves, we do not really live apart in an inner privacy or solitude. Our mind is a receiving, developing and modifying machine into which there is being constantly passed from moment to moment a ceaseless foreign flux, a streaming mass of disparate materials from above, from below, from outside. Much more than half our thoughts and feelings are not our own in the sense that they take form out of ourselves; of hardly anything can it be said that it is truly original to our nature. A large part comes to us from others or from the environment, whether as raw material or as manufactured imports; but still more largely they come from uni-

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1955), pp. 84-86.

versal Nature here or from other worlds and planes and their beings and powers and influences; for we are overtopped and environed by other planes of consciousness, mind planes, life planes, subtle matter planes, from which our life and action here are fed, or fed on, pressed, dominated, made use of for the manifestation of their forms and forces.

Our Fuller Personality¹

Our visible life and the actions of that life are no more than a series of significant expressions, but that which it tries to express is not on the surface; our existence is something much larger than this apparent frontal being which we suppose ourselves to be and which we offer to the world around us. This frontal and external being is a confused amalgam of mind-formations, life-movements, physical functionings of which even an exhaustive analysis into its component parts and machinery fails to reveal the whole secret. It is only when we go behind, below, above into the hidden stretches of our being that we can know it; the most thorough and acute surface scrutiny and manipulation cannot give us the true understanding or the completely effective control of our life, its purposes, its activities; that inability indeed is the cause of the failure of reason, morality and every other surface action to control and deliver and perfect the life of the human race. For below even our most obscure physical consciousness is a subconscious being in which as in a covering and supporting soil are all manner of hidden seeds that sprout up, unaccountably to us, on our surface and into which we are constantly throwing fresh seeds that prolong our past and will influence our future,—a subconscious being, obscure, small in its motions, capriciously and almost fantastically subrational, but of immense potency for the earth-life. Again behind our mind, our life, our conscious physical there is a large subliminal consciousness,—there are inner mental, inner vital, inner more subtle physical reaches supported by an inmost psychic existence which is the connecting soul of all the rest; and in these hidden reaches too lie a mass of numerous pre-existent personalities which supply the material, the motive-forces, the impulses of our developing surface existence. For in each one of us here there may be one central person, but also a multitude of subordinate personalities created by the past history of its manifestation or by expressions of it on these inner planes which support its present play in this external material cosmos. And while on our surface we are cut off from all around us except through an exterior mind and sense-contact which delivers but little of us to our world or of our world to us, in these inner reaches the barrier between us and the rest of existence is thin and easily broken; there we can feel at once—not merely infer from their results, but feel directly—the action of the secret world-forces, mind-forces, life-forces, subtle physical forces that constitute universal and individual existence; we shall even be able, if we will but train

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1955), pp. 205-207.

ourselves to it, to lay our hands on these world-forces that throw themselves on us or around us and more and more to control or at least strongly modify their action on us and others, their formations, their very movements. Yet again above our human mind are still greater reaches superconscient to it and from there secretly descend influences, powers, touches which are the original determinants of things here and, if they were called down in their fullness, could altogether alter the whole make and economy of life in the material universe.

(To be continued)

I HAVE FOUND THEE OUT

I HAVE found Thee out, O Lord of Mystic Dreams!
 I have found Thee in Thy treasure-cave of everlasting schemes,
 Plotting to make me immortal, co-eval with the suns,
 A mystic dancer in dream-hyphened ways
 Where only the god-men have walked unslain.

What would you have me do, O lucent Laughter?
 Where abides, whilst you play, your tune unsung?
 How would you have me wait for you
 In this life I've hardly begun?

Spin on thy word-weft a Song
 In which the Immortals long,
 Then bring out to earth's dumb scene
 A parable in green.

P.

THE DARSHAN*

A NOVELLA

“PAPA, papa, why don't you wait for me on the verandah today?”

Kunjanath was all joy at the sweet and tender voice. He had been sitting alone for a long time on the verandah of his small stone-house at the foot of the wooded hill. It was the end of the day. The western sky was decked with red and gold by the departing kiss of the setting sun. The clouds around the hill-top looked like the tawny matted hair of Lord Shiva. The plumes of the home-coming birds glittered with a golden hue. The spraying fountain water resembled a big butterfly whose many-coloured wings were aglow as if by the magic touch of a rainbow. Nature seemed to be busy enacting an evening gold-festival. In fact hills, rivers, trees, flowers, fountains, the earth and the air were surcharged with a magnificent golden splendour.

But Kunjanath was quite oblivious of his surroundings. The sublime beauty of nature could make no impact on him. His eyes were fixed on the brick-way across the jungle leading to the main road.

He held a silver dish in his right hand with fresh fruit and sweetmeat. But he did not eat a bit out of them. He was too absorbed in thought to make use of the delicacies. Or did he mean to offer them to a deity?

Suddenly the Image of Vishnu came floating into his vision and the golden jar at the top of the Vishnu temple in the town signalled to him, as it were.

He fidgeted, got up, advanced a few steps along the brick-way and then, as if struck by a new thought, came back and walked around his house with searching eyes. Taking a turn he sighed and lowered his head for a while and then as he raised it his eyes fell on the glorious disc of the setting sun. He was startled and quickly folded his hands in adoration and murmured, “Going! go then. We shall meet tomorrow again. But now I am too worried to spare a moment more...”

He hurried into the stone-house, kept the dish on a table and brooded, “Oh, still not coming! What has happened to her today? Never before has she been so late like this! It's going to be dark soon. I have none except her to call my own...” Kunjanath was in the grip of confusion and despair.

Just then he heard a sweet and tender voice. He turned round and made a move towards the door. A fair girl of about ten flung herself into his outstretched arms. “I was on the verandah so long, why are you so late today?” he asked.

“Papa, a funny thing happened after school. The girls dragged me to the playground. I refused, I told them, ‘No, I won't go, my father will be waiting for me, he will be anxious.’ But they wouldn't listen, they simply dragged...”

“Oh, but I thought... I thought...” he hesitated.

“What did you think, papa?”

* Adapted by the author from his own story in Bengali.

"Nothing," he smiled, "let it go, what game did you play?"

"Game? No, I didn't play any game at all."

"Didn't play? What then?"

"I simply ran and jumped. Well, papa...."

"Yes."

"They say that my running is very good. In a competition I can even come first with only a little practice daily."

"Is it so?" Kunjanath removed a fringe of curly hair from the girl's fair forehead and wiped her sweaty face with the corner of his dhoti.

"But, my sweet mother, to run with an empty stomach and return home so late, no, no, it's not at all advisable. However, now take your tiffin. Don't you feel hungry?" He handed her the silver dish from the table.

"Hungry? O yes, very much. But, papa," she frowned, "should I take the same tiffin every day?"

"Why, are these things bad—raisin, apple, apricot, sandesh, rasgolla? Tell me how many of your friends take such a tiffin."

Banchhita reflected, "Yes, of course it is true, these are healthy things." She smiled and said, "But I don't increase in weight at all. They are so healthy but I am as thin as ever."

"It matters little. Health doesn't depend on weight. Besides, you are still very young. When you will fully grow up you will see how fine and beautiful a body you will have." He looked affectionately at his daughter's tall, slim figure. Banchhita's face glowed and her eyes glittered at the prospect of her body's future perfection.

*

That day, Banchhita was sitting on the verandah of their stone-house. Returning from school in time she did not find Kunjanath at his appointed place. She hurried inside the house, searched every nook and corner but he was not there. She came out, took a turn round the house to have a look but could not find him. She walked along the brick-way a little and peered into the bushes on both sides but in vain. Kunjanath could not be found even there.

Disappointed, she came back and sat on the verandah and reflected, "What's the matter with him? Where has he vanished, a big man like him?" Strange, she had never before seen the house without her father! She was hungry now, very hungry. Who would give her food? Whom could she ask for her tiffin? She had nobody here except her father. The town was quite far away, the village still further in the opposite direction. Should she go back to school? But that also was not near, it was just on the outskirts of the town. Moreover, by now it was closed. The sky was cloudy, it was already dark and might rain at any moment. Oh, what should she do, where would she go? She was puzzled and felt empty within. Her chest heaved, and tears rolled down her cheeks....

Thak, thak, thak... Banchhita was alerted on hearing a gradually approaching peculiar sound. She stood up, wiped her tears and stepped down onto the brick-way. She cocked her ears and strained her eyes to have a look at the dusky way ahead. A shadowy figure was just visible. It seemed to advance slowly. But the sound? She waited. The figure was to some extent clearer now. It was that of an old woman. She moved forward supporting her curved body on a stick which made the sound 'thak' each time it touched the road....

"Kunjanath, O Kunjanath," a trembling voice, "Kunjanath, why don't you speak?"

"Papa is not at home," replied Banchhita in a broken voice.

"Not at home? He hasn't returned from work then?"

"Work! Where does he work?"

"Why, you, quite a big girl, don't you know that?"

Banchhita kept quiet. She did not like the manner of the old woman's utterance. Still after a while she answered softly, "How can I know if he doesn't tell me?"

"Oh, he hasn't told you? Let me tell you then. He works in the town under Sinhababu."

"Under Sinhababu! Oh, I know him. Each student of our school knows him. He is the founder of our school."

"Is it so? Very good. But it's already dark. How will Kunjanath return in such darkness?" She looked around with an air of helplessness.

"Shall I go with a lantern to fetch him home, granny?" asked Banchhita.

"Oh yes, why not? You are really a good girl. In the meantime let me watch over your house," her voice trembled more than ever.

With brisk steps Banchhita crossed the brick-way and reached the main road. She had a lantern in one hand and an umbrella in the other. The road was somewhat lonely. Rarely a person or two passed by but none was her father. Banchhita was very anxious to see him and the more she proceeded the more anxious she grew and her speed increased.

"Where are you going, my little one?" Suddenly someone addressed her from behind. Before she could reply the man overtook her. Then Banchhita replied, "Nowhere, I am out simply to show a light to my home-coming father from the town."

"Oh, how nice of you! You are a sweet little girl indeed." He moved ahead. Banchhita tried to keep pace with him but failed. He was too fast for her. She lagged behind panting but pulled on anyhow and got after a while to the foot of the big and high iron-bridge over the canal full of swiftly flowing water. She stood still and did not know what to do.

She was always afraid of crossing the bridge. But while going to school and coming back she had managed somehow as her schoolmates had kept company with her. But now she was alone and it was night. What would she do? Would she wait for her father to come? It would be very good, no doubt, if she could do that. But it was simply impossible for her. The giant Shimul trees on both sides had assumed

a ghostly appearance. A ghostly air hovered over the whole area. She would simply collapse out of fear if she waited here any more....

So with a tremendous effort of will she gathered courage and started scaling the bridge. But as soon as she reached the topmost part of it a sudden gust of wind put out the lantern. Terribly afraid and nervous, she hurried down the bridge and ran as fast as she could. Suddenly she stumbled and got hurt on her knees, stomach and chest. Her umbrella and lantern swung out of her hands. With much difficulty she stood up and prepared to move. Just then two strong arms clasped her tightly and she lost consciousness....

*

Three masked men carried someone with tied-up hands, feet and mouth towards the aforesaid stone-house. The old lady who had assured Banchhita that she would keep a watch over the house was no longer old or a lady now. She had stripped off her disguise and was now a masked short young man. He hurried to join hands with his comrades to help carry the captive inside the house. They dropped him down on the floor and panted for breath.

"Oh, what a solid and stone-heavy body!" remarked one of them.

"No surprise at all. Do you know his daily diet?" added another.

"My lord, just see his biceps!" exclaimed the third one.

The fine large eyes of the captive were red with rage and hurt. He cast a piercing look at each of them one by one and finally fixed his gaze on the short man, the one who had assumed the disguise of the old lady. His eyes seemed to ask, "What do you mean by all this, you ruffians? What do you want from me?"

Instantly one of them came forward and removed the band from his mouth. A learned and cultured face was revealed. His well-shaped chin and thin lips bespoke a firm will and sharp intellect. But they hardly gave any indication of his age though he did not seem to be very young.

"Kunjanath, the keys of the Vishnu temple are not found on you. Where have you kept them?" asked the leader of the four.

Kunjanath did not speak. His eyes flashed fire and a hiss expressed his anger. He simply muttered to himself, "You cowards, you have taken me unawares from behind or else I would have taught all of you a very good lesson."

"What? Why don't you speak?" the man urged.

"Where is my daughter?" a thunderous outburst from Kunjanath. All four shook a little at the sudden query and did not know what to reply. The short man gathered courage at last and said, "Your daughter! From where have you procured a daughter, eh? You haven't married yet!"

Kunjanath clenched his teeth in anger and then mentally pierced the mask of the man. Who was this? Seemed to be known, was he Tarafdar, that thief who...

"We allow you three minutes to tell us about the keys, otherwise be ready for..." the leader's voice threatened.

“Ho, ho, ho... ready for what? You want to kill me? Kill me then. You won't get the keys.”

“No, we won't kill you, we are not fools, but we will inflict such punishment that you will remember us every moment of your life hereafter.”

“What do you want the keys for?” asked Kunjanath gravely.

“You don't know what for, eh? Or are you feigning ignorance? How about the Idol of the temple, three feet high and all gold?”

“What of that?”

“We want to have the Idol. Now give us the keys without making any further fuss. Do you hear?”

“What?... You scoundrels!”

“Look at him, he even dares scold us,” shouted the short man. “Look here, old fool, if you repeat such words I shall knock your nose off your face.”

Kunjanath did not pay any heed to the threat and muttered on, “Want the Idol, eh? As if it were a child's plaything, a puppet. Listen, idiots, the Image is the family deity of the Sinhababus from time immemorial. Not only that, it is the object of love and adoration of thousands as Vishnu, the lord of the universe. He is the soul's support and refuge of seekers and devotees from all quarters. Daily they gather in front of the temple to have the Darshan of the Idol and worship it and...”

“Enough of that nonsense,” interrupted the short man. “Object of adoration, Lord of the universe, rubbish! Gold is also our object of adoration. Can you guess the price of the gold embodied in your Lord?”

“Can you yourself guess the value of devotion and aspiration attached to the Image from ancient ages?”

The short man was taken aback at Kunjanath's sharp and enigmatic question. He paced up and down for a while and then abruptly burst into mocking laughter, “Ho, ho, ho... Kunjanath, from what day have you turned such a big devotee? Who doesn't know that your father, a famous pundit and a Sanskrit scholar, was forced to kick you out of his house for your agnosticism and ugly deeds? And then you went and took refuge with Dr. Mondal, a rogue and rascal of a man. You joined hands with him to cut and dissect dead bodies to locate and ascertain the centre and source of love and devotion, etc...”

Kunjanath was taken by surprise and thought, “Oh, my assumption is not wrong then! He must be that Tarafdar who was caught red-handed for theft and punished by Dr. Mondal.” And to be doubly sure he remarked bluntly, “Tarafdar, after all you have come down to this level, eh? Dr. Mondal's treatment couldn't cure you then!”

The short man jumped upon Kunjanath in no time and sitting comfortably on his chest pressed his throat and shouted, “Kunjanath, speak out at once where you have kept the keys, otherwise...”

He could not finish, Kunjanath's bound legs raised up from behind hit him tremendously on his back. As a result the man toppled over and rolled on the floor like a kicked football.

In the meantime one of the other three hastened to tie Kunjanath's mouth but was thrown aside by his double-fisted punch. The short man after jerking himself up, neared Kunjanath again and hurled a right-handed hook at his jaw. Unlucky Kunjanath got a little upset no doubt and before he could steady himself the four together managed to fix the band nicely across his mouth.

*

A dilapidated building amidst bushes, and big trees. It was about midnight and there was darkness all around except for a flickering candle in one of the rooms of the building where on a worn-out bedstead a girl was lying absolutely quiet and motionless. It was difficult to judge if she was unconscious, asleep or dead. Suddenly an old lady appeared beside her bed, as if from nowhere. She stooped and caressed the girl's forehead.

The girl moved a little and made a feeble sound and then slowly opened her large, tired eyes. The old lady held a tumbler before her, telling, "Take this and drink, my little one. You will feel refreshed." The girl obeyed and sipped the contents quietly. But while returning the glass she exclaimed, "Granny, it's you! Could you meet my father? I couldn't get any trace of him. On the contrary.... Oh, where am I? Who has brought me over here?..."

"Be quiet please, my dear. Don't speak. Now take this and eat."

"How is this, granny?" She sat up on her bed, "This tiffin, this silver dish! Where did you get them? Then surely you have met my father...."

"My child, please don't speak. Now eat and sleep. Call me if necessary, but beware, don't try to go out of this place."

The words were soft excepting the last phrase which betrayed a suppressed harshness. Banchhita was shocked and perplexed. She eyed the lady searchingly but soon turned her face away. She shivered in fear and murmured within herself, "O my God! what a face, what eyes, cruel like a wild wolf, fierce like a hungry hawk..."

And then for the first time in her life she remembered her mother, became sad and felt like weeping. She brooded, "Why have I no mother? I had only my father and know none but him as my own. He is all in all to me. He has occupied my being fully and made me oblivious of the void created by the absence of my mother. All my needs and requirements, thirst for love and affection have up till now been fully met by him alone. It's only now that I feel an acute yearning for my mother, and I wonder how I was unaware so long of such a big gap in my life. Oh, had my mother been with me, perhaps such a calamity as this would not have taken place! I wouldn't be under the grip of that beastly woman..." Thinking thus Banchhita fell asleep without her knowing it.

A pleasant morning. It was just the beginning of autumn. Earth, air and sky were vibrant with the footsteps of the oncoming guest. The sun-rays had turned soft and tender with the touch of a special fervour. There was a silvery hue over the

green grasses, leaves and paddy fields with a sparkle of gold resembling the shy smile of a newly married bride.

A black road curled out like a huge lizard from the foot of the wooded hill and ran towards the town nearby. The road was lonely and almost silent but for the chirping of birds—and the sound of two pairs of slippers.

Dev and Deepa were returning to the town after their daily morning walk. Behind them was the shadowy forest and in front shone the bright summit of the Vishnu temple and over them hung the vast blue of the sky like an endless canopy.

“Dada, can you tell me why I recall dadu so often this morning?” Deepa broke the silence.

“Because dadu thinks of you. Don’t you know that they are coming to see you.”

“To see me? Who are coming to see me, why and when?” Deepa was surprised.

“Who? I don’t know. When? Perhaps within a day or two. Why? To see you and select you as a bride. Dadu wants you to be married soon.”

“Oh, it’s a revelation! It’s very strange, dada, that dadu still remains as oldish as ever though we tried a lot to modernise him. Hee, hee, hee...dada, do you remember, in our childhood, during the morning walk, dadu used to move so fast that to keep pace with him we had to run? Hee, hee...” Deepa laughs, lightly thinking of the long past episode.

“Oh, yes, yes, how funny were the days then, eh? But now he cannot even toddle properly. He spends most of the time sitting or lying down.”

“He is quite old, dada; what will you yourself do at his age? Just think!” Dev’s remark about dadu touched a soft corner of her heart for the once fast-walker.

“What a fine morning! Have you marked it, Deepa?” Dev understood his folly and changed the topic. He looked around, stretched his hands in the air, raised his face and sniffed a while to have the feel of the atmosphere and then added, “It’s chilly but not cold, a bit warmish but not hot. As if nature wrapped within a muslin dress were boiling water for tea!”

“Hee, hee, hee.... splendid,” and then Deepa herself added, “And listening at the same time to the tune of shehnai coming from afar.”

“Quite right. But shehnai is not new over here, it is played every morning at the temple-gate.”

“Yes, but today I experience something new and novel in it. Well, dada, you are a student of History, can you tell me who built that almost broken-down temple on the top of the hill behind and in which century?”

“Ho, ho... what an idea! As if a student of History must know all these things! Well, may I ask you why you are after the old temple instead of Economics, your own subject?”

“I shall tell you why,” Deepa turned grave abruptly. “I don’t know why I feel today that the tune of shehnai from the town directly goes to that old temple and is knocking at its door incessantly.”

"No question of feeling, it's a fact. It's actually knocking at that door. Because it is the law of the sound waves."

"Law, yes. But I don't speak of scientific laws. I speak of faith and feeling and that also not only in terms of space but in terms of time as well. In fact it seems to me that this tune of shehnai gets finer and finer and gradually recedes, goes still farther back in terms of time and mingles itself with that of the remote past when that temple was not as old as it is now, but fine, fresh and vibrant with the hymns of priests and the prayers of devotees. Now I feel that this united music is knocking at the door of that dilapidated temple. But why, it is beyond my power to explain to you."

Deepa stopped and there was silence and the sound of sandals as before.

"Dada, you don't say anything," Deepa broke the silence after a while.

"No, simply I wonder why you have taken Economics instead of Literature or Philosophy..."

"Oh dada, look at them," suddenly Deepa pointed towards the school. By then they had crossed the iron bridge and got to the outskirts of the town.

Three strangers dressed all in white—dhoti, punjabi and chaddar—came near them from the school corner and one of them asked Dev, "Which is the way to 'Sinha Mansion?'" Dev got amused, looked askance at Deepa and smiled.

"Oh, you are also newcomers and don't know the way?" remarked the man.

"Oh no, not at all. Well, have you come to see Sinhababu's granddaughter?"

"To see whom? Granddaughter! No, no, you are mistaken. We have come to see the image of Vishnu."

"I am sorry. You are here for the Darshan and will worship too, I hope? But why so early? The temple will not open before ten. However, just follow this way and at the second crossing turn to the right, go straight and you will get to the temple-hall. Take rest, be comfortable, all arrangements are there."

"We haven't come to worship but only to see the image."

"Doesn't matter, it's all the same. The priest should come with the keys to open the doors. He doesn't come before ten."

"Doesn't Sinhababu keep a second set of keys with him?"

"Dadu? I don't know that."

"Dadu! That means Sinhababu is your grandfather. Well, then why don't we go directly to him and ask about the keys?"

Dev scented something unusual about the matter. He fumbled, "You see, at this odd hour... perhaps, however, come along. Let's see." He was reluctant.

At the gate of 'Sinha Mansion' the fat watchman was dozing. The sound of a number of shoes at a time made him stand up abruptly and salute even without opening his eyes. Dev smiled and pressed his shoulder to bid him sit down.

"Deepa, go upstairs and inform dadu, meanwhile let us go to the sitting room there," he directed.

Sinhababu, a tall, fair old man with white hair and beard, was stooping over the

fresh newspaper spread upon the tea-table. But he did not read anything. In fact his interest now-a-days was only in advertisements for brides and bridegrooms. Ministers, smuggling, price-rise, etc., didn't interest him at all. But that day he could not concentrate even on advertisements. Every now and then he turned his face towards the open door behind and muttered, "Oh, still they have not come! What has happened to them today?"...

(To be continued)

CHUNILAL CHAUDHURY

EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

(48)

I shall now write something about Switzerland. A land-locked Alpine country with some fine scenic beauty, it has attracted Europeans from times of yore, so much so that it is said six million tourists visit Switzerland every year. We approached it through the Jura mountain with the Vosges mountain in the north. Jura is covered with oak, chestnut and beech. Here in the small villages can be seen a cluster of typical Swiss chalets. Good wood and garnet, readily available clocks and watches and also optical equipments are made here. They adorn the show-cases of Geneva. The population is of French descent—those that fled Alsace-Lorraine during enemy occupation. The Gruyère cheese that our Mother liked so much is made in the valleys of the Jura. Germany, it seems, produces enough white coal on the Rhine and sells it to Switzerland by transferring it from its own grid to the Swiss grid.

Geneva, called by the French Genève and Genf by the Germans, is after Zurich, the largest city. Incidentally Switzerland has no *lingua franca* of its own. French is spoken in the west, German in the north and Italian in the south. Geneva is the citadel of Presbyterian Calvinism. Knox took shelter here when hunted by other countries. The old town is steep with narrow streets where one can easily get lost. Here somewhere a gloomy little house is shown as the house where Calvin once lived, and further away in Number 18 Rousseau was born. From this sombre atmosphere we arrived at Boulevard Plainpalais, an open square where there were small restaurants in which we were served tea. There were, however, nicer places and ancient churches to visit. The Palace that once housed the League of Nations still stands and is used for various international conferences and meetings.

The history of Switzerland is a very simple one. In the middle Ages various parts of Switzerland belonged to various rulers: German and French and Austrian, etc. About the time the Magna Carta was signed in England three leaders met in Rutli above Lake Lucerne and swore to make Switzerland free. Soon all the twenty five Cantons got together and united for the first time as a nation. And no matter what trend the events of Europe took, Switzerland always kept itself neutral. This neutrality was assured to her by the Treaty of Vienna in 1815. In 1848 her first Constitution was drawn up. Neutrality being the policy, Switzerland has allowed roads and railways to be built. From Basle Trans-European Expresses run out in every direction to all the capitals of Europe. This neutrality has been disliked by many great men. Napoleon is reported to have said of Switzerland, "That splendid traitor." But this neutrality has kept Switzerland out of wars. The result is that it is a rich country with a high standard of living. What helped it further was her great Banking system. Zurich seemed to be the centre of all great banks. Vevey is a place near Geneva: it is here that the Nestlé factory is situated. Charlie Chaplin too lived in Vevey.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

THE INVISIBLE DIMENSION

SPEECH BY DR. C. V. DEVAN NAIR, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE AT THE CELEBRATION OF SRI KRISHNA'S BIRTHDAY AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE ON 6 SEPTEMBER 1983

EXCELLENCIES, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The on-going public discussion on the promotion and cultivation of intelligence, talent, skills and expertise of all kinds, which go into the making of a successful modern technological society, is surely important, indeed vitally so. For we do well to realize that tomorrow begins today, just as today is the cumulative result of all our yesterdays. There can be no argument on this score. We must today prepare for tomorrow, in particular the tomorrows of our children.

In doing so, we need to take care not to omit intangible factors which are not measurable and quantifiable. I refer to the realm of values which make for qualities of high motivation, of selfless commitment to the well-being of one's fellow human beings, of kindness, courtesy, tolerance and forbearance.

This is what may be called the invisible dimension in life. It is a dimension which makes all the difference between those who work with devotion, dedication and selfless commitment, and those who work with indifference, or only with selfish eyes fixed entirely on mundane rewards. It makes the difference, for example, between the qualified teacher who teaches from his lesson notes, and the equally qualified teacher who, apart from his lesson notes, also gives a good deal of himself. The one earns only his salary. The other earns his salary PLUS the gratitude, affection, respect and sometimes even the reverence of his students.

The universities and tertiary institutions do not offer doctoral programmes in the invisible dimension. We have Bachelors, Masters and Doctors of Law, Letters, Economics, Medicine, Engineering, Computer Science, Political Science and so on. There are no doctorates in goodness, kindness, selflessness and compassion. The political, ideological, social, economic and technological fish-bowls or cages we live in are essentially three-dimensional. At most, four-dimensional, if we take the time factor into account. They prepare us for jobs, professional careers, and equip us with productive skills of various kinds—all no doubt very important; for we have to cope with the exacting demands of a technological age and its numerous disciplines.

But we will exclude the realm of values only at grave social peril. Strangely enough, the great messages of devotion, faith, courage, sacrifice, unselfishness and goodness seem always to come from beyond the social-political-economic-technological fish-bowls and cages in which we normally live.

The Sermon on the Mount, which humanised Western culture, was delivered on the shore of the Sea of Galilee to the humble, the lowly and the lost, by the divine Nazarene, who did not have a penny to his name, let alone a Ph.D. or even a D.D.

An ochre-robed monk, who renounced a kingdom in favour of a begging bowl

and staff, gave to the millions of Asia the Noble Eight-fold Path. And the luminous discourse of Krishna on the paths of work, devotion and knowledge was delivered, not from any university podium, but on a tense and grim battlefield. And if our lives in our various fish-bowls and cages have thereby been qualitatively transformed for the better, it is to these messengers of the invisible dimension that we owe our good fortune.

Shelley referred to poets as "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind." It would have been more appropriate to refer to the saints and prophets of all lands and climes as such. For there have been good poets as well as lesser ones. But a bad saint is an obvious contradiction in terms.

It took a Mahatma Gandhi to tell us the simple truth that "You cannot do good unless you ARE good". And he had in mind people in all stations in life, from Ph.D's to labourers.

It took the sage Sri Aurobindo to tell us the equally simple truth that the best way to begin to improve this sorry world of ours is to start with oneself.

Again, it was not the pundits and politicians who best exemplified in practice the spirit of tolerance and goodwill for those who differ from us in creed, culture or colour. There is the account of the Prophet Muhammad, who received a Christian delegation in the Najran district of Arabia. After week-long discussions until Saturday, the Christians requested leave for Sunday. They explained that they had to go into the desert to pray since it was their Sabbath. The Prophet told the Christians that there was no need to go into the hot desert for their observance. They were welcome to use a corner of the courtyard in the mosque to say their prayers.

Since we are observing today the birthday of the divine cowherd whose legend has so richly endowed us with the deepest, the most beautiful and the best in Indian music, art and philosophy, it is permissible to offer a few relevant and topical observations about his teachings in the Bhagavad Gita. Among many other things, he revolutionised the concept of work, and the attitude to work. Religion was not escape from work and life. "Yoga," said Krishna, "is skill in works." To do one's duty well, without thought of recognition and reward, was part of the ideal he put before us.

To preserve one's equanimity in pain or pleasure, in gain or loss, in victory or defeat, in reputation or in obloquy, may seem an unattainable goal for most of us. But we can readily acknowledge it as a wholly admirable attainment in those who do manage it. History records several such instances.

In short, we are taught to regard whatever work we do as worship, as an offering to That which is most sacred in us and in all creatures. Translated in terms of normal practical life, it means the use of power, knowledge and wealth for unselfish ends.

In the absence of the saving graces of the invisible dimension of individual and social values, it is easy to see how intelligence, talent and skills of all kinds might be used for unworthy ends. Do we really need to remind ourselves that any number of scoundrels are also talented and possess high IQs? Goering, Goebbels, Himmler,

Ribbentrop and other evil geniuses who were Hitler's chief lieutenants before and during the Second World War were not morons. They were men of great intelligence and talent, who unleashed on the world, not an age of enlightenment, but the most cruel and devastating war in history.

The commendable efforts being made in Singapore in the field of moral education and religious studies is an attempt to infiltrate into the private and working lives of Singaporeans the values of the invisible dimension. Needless to say, this cannot be done entirely with the help of textbooks. In and by themselves, textbooks never made anybody moral and upright. Indeed, they can sometimes be boring. At best, textbooks are useful instruments in the hands of teachers who have to impart and inculcate attitudes and values more by example than by precept. It is a tall order, certainly, but only inspired beginnings can lead to desirable ends.

The results of the invisible dimension are by no means invisible. They can be seen and felt in the conduct and attitudes of those who sincerely strive to practise in their private and public lives, in homes, schools, factories, offices, hospitals and elsewhere, what others merely preach or prate about.

Most of us recall with gratitude the few teachers who left indelible marks on our lives through the examples of dedication and devotion which they set. We encounter such people in all walks of life. There are doctors and nurses who seem to heal as much by their touch and presence, as by the drugs they administer or by the scalpels they wield. There is the occasional surgeon who treats the tissues of his patient with reverence. There are those who give solace and comfort in times of stress and suffering. And there are those who communicate quiet courage in adversity.

Those who lived through the Japanese occupation remember with awe several anti-fascist resistance fighters who refused to betray their friends and supporters to the dreaded Kempeitai, the military secret police, even though they had their fingernails and toe-nails torn out. I can testify that I would not be here today if one of these incredibly brave men, an illiterate Tamil labourer in a rubber plantation in Johore, had squealed under the most gruesome torture. I will never be able to discover whether I would have been equally safe if it had been a Ph.D. instead of an unlettered rubber tapper who had been involved.

Such persons, illumined or inspired by flashes from the invisible dimension, are more numerous than we think, but fewer than we would like. They are the salt of the earth. For they provide that extra something which transforms the quality of our lives, and may yet help to transfigure existence.

The teachings of Lord Krishna, whom we celebrate today, will be lost if we regard them merely as a lot of words. He was not just another lecturer. They are teachings which can be lived and practised, or tried and tested on the infallible anvils of personal experience and experimentation. And those who respond better to the call of beauty may strive to hear the strains of an enchanting flute.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo Circle — Thirty-ninth Number. Sri Aurobindo Society Annual — 1983, Pages: 118. Price: Rs. 10/-

THIS Annual, as usual, carries an album of admirable photographs of the Mother. When one is wondering what Sri Aurobindo has to do with the title of the Annual, since there is not even one photograph of Sri Aurobindo, the contents page shows that it carries a selection from the writings of the Yogi's Yogi. His estimate of the Superman, his ideas on Social Reform, his appreciations of Indian Art all find their respective places here. He unravels the secret of Karma Yoga and brings to light the purpose of its discipline.

People the world over interested in Yoga know that the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is an institution for the practice of yoga. Yet many ask: "Does the yogic practice followed in the Ashram conform to the strict requirements of the discipline of scientific research? Are the results obtained by this practice of value only for the inner spiritual liberation of its sadhaks or have they any dynamic effect for progressive changes in various spheres of outer practical life also? And even if they have this effect, is it meant for the exclusive benefit of the small Ashram community or is it intended for a wider extension in the world outside for the general humanity?" Kishore Gandhi, while answering these questions, tells us about the distinctive nature of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy and the unique aim of his system of integral yoga. His short but revealing essay introduces the readers to Sri Aurobindo's life-enriching and earth-fulfilling yoga.

'The Future of Homo Sapiens' by Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar is a very intimidating piece. 'Neutron'—we hear him say the word and we tremble. He further frightens us with the following words: "What is now at stake is the future of Homo Sapiens, the fate of our space-ship earth itself." Horrified we ask him: "What is our future? What is the remedy?" He answers: "Either... Or", which means "death or life." Drawing profusely from the perennial fountains of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, he gives us hope and courage. Finally he informs us: "The 'big change' is coming, 'Next Future' is almost knocking at our doors and the hour of God is upon us already. The only question is—Are We ready?". In another essay 'The Epic Beautiful', K. R. S. Iyengar gives his scholarly comments on '*Sundara Kanda*' of Valmiki's *Ramayana*. Why is it called '*Sundara Kanda*'? Why the 'Epic Beautiful? His various explanations are extremely satisfactory and his verse renderings of a few passages are admirable.

K. D. Sethna's 'Buddhism and the Creation of World-Values' is a reply given to one who argues with him that we can be stimulated to create world-values by only a clear realisation of world-purpose. This letter unravels the world-purpose, sees Buddhism under two aspects, explicates the world-values as created by a mystic and suggests that world-values do not necessarily spring from a logical envisaging of

the world as a reality. Finally in this scholarly essay K. D. Sethna analyses the philosophies of Sri Aurobindo and Buddha only to affirm: "Sri Aurobindo the supramental yogi will be more creative of world-values than Gautama the Buddha..."

Gathering pearls from the collected works of the Mother, A. S. Dalal strings them together and shows the readers the healing power of peace. Sisir Kumar Ghose's 'Ideas Have Consequences' is the second part of a long review article on Richard M. Weaver's book of the same title. The first part has already appeared in the previous Annual.

Dr. Prema Nandakumar in her "Sri Aurobindo's Interpretation of Indian Culture: the Upanishads" tells us of the power and the glory of the mystic syllable AUM and interprets it in the light of Sri Aurobindo's solid work *The Foundations of Indian Culture*. She speaks highly of the *Katha Upanishad* and tells us about Nachiketa in the abode of Lord Yama. In the final part of this highly readable essay, she leaves us a message, which is certainly the need of the hour: "Man must learn inner renunciation... One should learn to live in harmony with Nature's rhythm."

Manoj Das in his highly informative essay sketches the spiritual background of the Indian Renaissance. Giving an account of the part played by Raja Rammohun Roy in the Indian Renaissance, he says, "A great champion of India's heritage, though he wanted Indians to learn English. This was only a sign of his urge to lead his nation out of an obscured and oppressed state into the light of an international outlook." Certainly this essay is a very useful one for the students of Indo-Anglian literature.

This deeply interesting Annual, thanks to its scholarly contributors, provides enough food for thought.

P. RAJA

Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual—1983. Published by *Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir*, Calcutta. Price: Rs. 15/-

This Annual provides no reading material for the first twenty pages. But every page entices us and we are tempted to turn to these pages again and again. Yes. Twenty photographs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother adorn these pages. What follows this treasure-house of photographs is a selection from the writings of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother and Nolini Kanta Gupta.

The first of the three sections contains Sri Aurobindo's notes, drafts and fragments on yoga and yogic philosophy and psychology written from the years 1910 to 1950. The complete text of 'The Psychology of Yoga' wherein Sri Aurobindo proudly declares: "What science could not provide India offers." After the scholarly essays on Theosophy, a fragmentary essay dealing with Hinduism and the Mission of India follows. In the fragmentary writings we read about the Indian Renaissance, the Congress Movement, National Education and the Origin of Genius. We are also shown where exactly we stand in literature. A note of appreciation on Madhusudan Dutt's *Vranganā Kavya* and a fragmentary answer to a critic are of immense interest

to lovers of literature. Finally the seven hymns from the eighth Mandala remind us of Sri Aurobindo's words: "Our life on this earth is a divine poem that we are translating into earthly language."

In the second section which is comparatively small consisting of the writings of the Mother, we are provided with mantras for fifteen days. The mantra for every day is divided into three sections, viz. 1. Thought for the day, 2. Words for the day, and 3. Prayer for the day. Here Thoughts, Words and Prayers certainly perform the function of the kindly light that leads men groping in darkness. Then there follows the Mother's explication of her words: "I am with you." She explains: "This is not a mere phrase, not simply words, it is a fact. I am with you in a very concrete manner and they who have a subtle vision can see me."

The last section carries Nolini Kanta Gupta's Vedic writings, originally composed in Bengali. 'The Hymn to the Forest Range' is an outstanding piece and one can always read it for its sheer poetic excellence. As an eminent littérateur he brings to light the subtle difference between prose and modern poetry in his essay titled 'Modern Poetry', and tells us the significance of the story of Rishi Yajnavalkya who had the confidence that there was none to equal him in the matter of learning and wisdom.

This Annual has something to offer to the followers of Sri Aurobindo. The common reader too will find very readable material here.

P. RAJA