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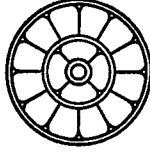
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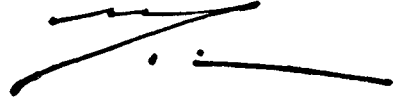


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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NAVAJATA

VAJATA passed away on the morning of 19 January at the age of 61. The name which he bore signifies "One who is new-born". It was given to Keshav Deo Poddar the Mother when he decided to put himself and all who were of the same mind in his family—which meant the whole of it—at her feet.

His had been a life of manifold activity in business. When hardly in his mid-twenties, he was made the head of a corporation of investors with the power to sign a pinch a cheque of two crores. From the midst of such responsibilities, which entailed also dangers, he came to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for permanent settlement in the peaceful atmosphere of the Mother's presence. It was for him not a change from work to rest: it was the beginning of still more expansive work than before but which took shape against a background of self-dedication to the mighty cause of the Mother. This new poise evoked from her the deeply suggestive name with which she blessed him. And in its wake he proved again and again a source of plenty to the Ashram's life.

Not that his devotion to her started only when he became an inmate of the Ashram. He had been visiting it ever since he was a boy. His father Ramnarayan used to bring him along year after year and he has known numerous darshans of Sri Aurobindo.

Before Sri Aurobindo left his body, Navajata had already conceived the idea of a journal which would look at all world-problems from the height of the Master's vision. Both the Master and the Mother approved of the idea and, when he proposed the name of K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran in the Ashram) for editor, they concurred. On 21 February 1949, a birthday of the Mother, the journal was launched as a fortnightly under the caption *Mother India*. In 1952, this Review of Culture, which Sri Aurobindo once called "my paper", turned into a monthly.

Navajata's next venture was the founding of the Sri Aurobindo Society. With the Mother's full assent it was intended both to bring extensive financial help to the Ashram and to propagate the teaching of Sri Aurobindo throughout the world. What fundamentally stood for is clearly expressed by the Mother in the Message she wrote on 2 May 1971 for it and for a sister organisation:

Sri Aurobindo's Action and Sri Aurobindo Society

are equally working for the manifestation of the truth in the immediate future; and to help both equally is to work for this realisation.

And my blessings are with all help and good will.

The most far-reaching experiment with which Navajata was linked arose out of the functioning of the Sri Aurobindo Society. In a long talk of the Mother published

several years back in *Mother India*, it was disclosed by her that from her early she had wanted to establish an international city for World Unity on a spiritual but that this scheme had remained unactualised for want of material support. recounts how she mentioned it to Navajata and he at once came forward to be the support needed. The Mother accepted his offer, for she knew that nobody in her circle could match the genius he possessed for bringing financial aid. The "Auroville, the City of Dawn", took birth on 28 February 1968 with a ceremony attended by representatives of a score of nations.

It can be said without exaggeration that there would have been no land Auroville without Navajata's service for the Mother's vision, land bought with Mother's consent in the Sri Aurobindo Society's name for the benefit of humanity. Whatever the problems that cropped up in the course of the years as a result of divergent views or interests and whatever the present state of the Dawn-City name will ever be associated with him whose dynamic zeal and collection of substantial funds under the Mother's inspiration made it possible. The Mother's wish to render her Dawn-City an internationally known and encouraged entity was fulfilled when Navajata put Auroville with her help on the world-map by making its project a part of the ideals of UNESCO.

Every eminent worker in any field is bound to meet with criticism in one respect or another—criticism at times valid and at times illegitimate. But in this world of difficulties and of human ignorance aspiring towards divine knowledge we have to rise above natural shortcomings and look at the shining positive achievements Mother has brought into view through one in whom she achieved the profound of being "new-born".

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MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXV

No. 2

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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THE OPENING SECTIONS OF THE 1936-37 VERSION OF SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of January 1983)

PART ONE: EARTH *(Contd.)*

Book I *(Contd.)*

The Book of Birth

4. *(Contd.)* As thus he journeyed through self-dungeoned realms
And smote from him their clinging influence,
All vanished, blotted, lost in a black haze.
Alone was his spirit now with python Night.
A darkness grim and cold benumbed his heart,
A whispered grey suggestion chilled his mind,
Dragged towards extinction and bleak vacancy,
Life clung to its seat by cords of gasping breath;
And serpent dangers coiled around his feet.
Near him he felt the creeping slow approach 880
Of an implacable eternity
Of pain inhuman and invincible
No rescue could relieve, no respite soothe.
Now, circling round him like a stealthy foe,
The huge-winged emptiness had become a gulf
As of some swallowing throat and belly of Doom
And, lapping his body with its tenebrous tongue,
Imposed on every tense and aching nerve
A nameless and unutterable fear.
Yet he endured, calmed the vain tremor, broke 890
The smothering wall of agony and affright,
And saw, his eyes piercing the sevenfold gloom
That guards it from the spear-points of heaven's stars,
Coiled like a larva in the obscurity
A violent fierce and formidable world
That lives by death and falsehood is its truth
And good a specious bloom of native ill,
And suffering there is Nature's daily food,
And Thought, a priestess of Perversity,
Reading by opposite signs the eternal script, 900

In darkling aisles with lurid cresset fires
 Performs the ritual of her Mysteries.
 It was the gate of a false Infinite,
 An ancient womb of vast calamitous dreams,
 A thicket of Existence' gods of prey,
 In which a monstrous Evil keeps her lair.
 Out of the Abyss, when first life's breath began,
 A nameless Power, a shadowy Will arose,
 Something that sprang from the stark Inconscient's sleep,
 Unwillingly begotten by the dumb Void: 910
 Immense and alien to our universe,
 Disharmonizer of the cosmic style,
 Disfiguring the fair intended plan,
 It pressed its fierce hegemony on the earth.
 An Adversary governed brain and nerve:
 Her goad compelled the reason and the flesh
 And drives like cattle the half-conscious race.
 Incalculable are her strength and ruse;
 Her touch is a fascination and a death;
 For her the world runs to its agony, 920
 Who slays her victim with his own delight.
 Assailed, surprised upon the ill-lit ways,
 Intoxicated by a¹ burning grasp
 And amorous grown of a² destroying mouth,
 Offering its all to a vague stupendous Force,³
 Our self of Life yields up its instruments
 To Titan and demoniac Influences
 That aggrandise earth-nature and disframe.
 Once the grim Pythoness has mastery,
 No longer shines the white spiritual Ray 930
 And hushed for ever is the secret Voice;
 A name is rased from the recording book,
 In ruin ends the epic of the soul.
 For terrible agencies the Spirit allows,
 And there are subtle and enormous Powers
 That shield themselves with the covering Ignorance
 To lay their yoke on the world's groping Mind.
 All mounting life a wager and battle is
 Between these tortuous and deceiving Might

¹ her.

² her.

³ Power.

And the occult uplifting Harmonist. 940
 Along all Nature's lines they have set their posts;
 Haters of Light, intolerant of peace,
 Wherever the Gods act they intervene.
 Accepted by the ill-led thought and will,
 Admitted to control and form and guide,
 Long have they filled earth's days with dole and bane.
 To exclude the dwindling chances of the Gods,
 They load the dice of doom with lie and wile,
 And since with falsehood they have stamped the globe,
 They count creation as their conquered fief 950
 And deem themselves the iron Lords of Time.
 Adepts of the illusion and the masque,
 The artificers of Nature's fall and pain
 Have built their altars of triumphant Night
 In the clay-temple of terrestrial life.
 Theirs are the reredos and the mitred priest,
 For them the ceremony and the rite,
 While twixt the incense and the muttered prayer
 All the fierce bale with which the world is racked
 Is mixed in the foaming chalice of man's heart 960
 And poured to them like sacramental wine.
 Assuming forms divine they seize and rule.
 A siege of fire and shadow are their seats.
 There bastioned in their massive walls of gloom
 Against the sword of flame, the luminous Eye,
 Calm and secure in sunless privacy,
 Armoured, protected by their lethal masks,
 As in a studio of creative Death,
 The giant sons of Darkness sit and plan
 The drama of the earth, their tragic stage. 970
 All who would heal the suffering earth must pass
 Under the dangerous arches of their power:
 For even the radiant children of the Gods
 To darken their privilege is and dreadful right.
 A warrior in the dateless duel's strife
 Challenging the Shadow with his luminous soul,
 He traversed the ambush of the opponent Snake
 And faced the enchantments of the demon Sign,
 Assaults of Hell endured and Titan strokes,
 Bore the fierce inner wounds that are slow to heal, 980
 And walked entangled in the pathways drear;

Cast in their grim morass of swallowing doubt
 And shut into pits of error and despair,
 He drank their poison draughts till none was left,
 Or pinned to the black inertia of our base,
 In Matter's dumb denial gaoled and blind,
 Kept still intact his spirit's radiant truth,
 Till, hurried to the last subconscious floor,
 He found the secret key of Nature's change.
 A Light went with him, an invisible Hand; 990
 It broke the stereotypes of the Ignorance,
 It tore the formats of the primal Night,
 Imposed upon dark atom and dim mass
 The diamond script of the Imperishable,
 The Name, foundation of Eternity,
 The song of the celestial joy of Space,
 And wrote on each transformed exultant cell
 The message of the superconscient Fire.
 The Life beat pure in the corporeal frame
 And the ensnaring gloom misled no more. 1000
 Hell split across its huge disrupt façade,
 Night opened and vanished like a gulf of dream,
 As if a magic building were done.
 Around him was a wide felicitous sky,
 Regions of the heart's happiness set free,
 Unmined by the alarm of fleeting Time,
 Untouched by grieving fear of the shocks of Fate,
 Breathing in sweet secure unguarded ease
 Beyond the danger zone of stumbling Will.
 It was a realm of the rich satisfied sense, 1010
 The birth-claim won of feelings glad and pure,
 And like a spotless flaming flight the immune
 Life-impulses' fair-winged magnificent race.
 There could the unfettered spirit of delight
 Pasture his gleaming sun-herds and moon-flocks
 Along the lyric speed of griefless streams
 In fragrance of the unearthly asphodel.
 Under that arch of smiling glory and peace
 Traveller on plateau and on glimmering ridge
 He moved in a drift of many-coloured scenes, 1020
 Mountains and violet valleys of the Blest,
 Deep glens of joy and crooning waterfalls,
 And saw below like glowing jewelled thoughts

Rapt dreaming cities of Gandharva kings,
 And heard the harping heavenly minstrels pass
 In the white-blue moonbeam air of Paradise.
 Apart upon Elysian nameless heights,
 The summit and core of all that marvellous world,
 The shining Edens of the vital Gods
 Received him in their deathless harmony. 1030
 Of their sweetness ardent and immaculate
 No lower note could break the unending charm:
 Life's hopes are there achieved, her aureate combs
 Caught by the Honey-eater's darting tongue,
 Her burning guesses changed to ecstasied truths
 And liberated all intense desires.
 There Love fulfils her gold and roseate dreams
 And Strength her crowned and mighty reveries.
 Pain's self compelled transforms to potent joy,
 Curing the antithesis twixt heaven and hell. 1040
 There by the magic flow of sorrowless hours
 His warrior spirit healed its wounded limbs
 In the rewarding arms of Energies
 That brook no stain and fear not their own bliss.
 In scenes forbidden to our pallid sense
 Amid miraculous scents and wonder hues
 He met the forms that divinise the sight;
 Music that can immortalise the mind
 And make the heart wide as eternity
 Hearing, he captured the inaudible 1050
 Cadences that release the occult ear,
 Mixed in the radiant pastimes of the Unborn
 And, thrilled with the supernal Influences
 That build the substance of life's deeper soul,
 Recast his being's aura in joy-glow.
 A scale he found that climbed some fiery height
 Of unimagined happiness and even,
 In passionate responses half unveiled,
 Sometimes the unreached Beyond was mirrored there.
 A hint could come of white beatitude. 1060
 In sudden moments of revealing flame
 A touch supreme surprised the beating heart:
 The invasion of immense felicities,
 The dire delight that would shatter earthly flesh,
 The rapture that the Gods sustain he bore.

Immortal pleasure cleansed him in its waves
And turned his strength to an undying power.*

(Incomplete)

*** From Sri Aurobindo's Notes**

"I have been once more overwhelmed with correspondence, no time for poetry—so the Mind Worlds are still in a crude embryonic form and the Psychic World not yet begun . . . the whole thing has been lengthening out so much that I expect I shall have to rearrange the earlier part of *Savitri*, turning the Book of Birth into a Book of Beginnings and lumping together in the second a Book of Birth and Quest" (5.1.1937).

“EARTH-MEMORY” EXTERIORISATION, SOMNAMBULISM

THE MOTHER’S TALK OF FEBRUARY 19, 1951

To be able to enter the “earth-memory” consciously, a discipline is needed. What discipline?*

A discipline much more difficult than the discipline of yoga! It is an occult discipline.

First of all, one must learn to go out of one’s body consciously and to enter into another more subtle body; to use one’s will to go where one wants to go, never to fear and sometimes to face unexpected and even terrible things; to remain calm, to develop the mind’s visual sense, to accustom one’s mind to be altogether peaceful and quiet.... You know, the list is long and I could continue like this for hours!

Who among you has had the experience of going out of the body—going out and knowing about it? I do not even speak of doing it at will, for that is another stage.

Once I went out of my body but got back into it immediately!

You did not take the opportunity of going for a little walk, did you? Well, you are not inquisitive!

How can one know that one has gone out of the body?

You see it immobile on your bed. There are other means of knowing also.

I went out of my body under the effect of chloroform. I saw my body on the table and I witnessed the operation.

So too I knew quite a remarkable clairvoyant. One day she had to undergo an operation and she was chloroformed; she went out of her body. Suddenly she began to see what was going on in the minds of the people who were there. She had the habit of talking, even while asleep, and she began to speak out quite aloud: she said that so-and-so had worries, that another had a problem to solve, and that its solution was such and such a thing.

This was an exceptional case—that happens only to gifted persons and there are not many of these. But the number of persons who remain conscious under chloroform is greater than one thinks; but generally, when one wakes up from chloroform one feels pretty uneasy and remembers but vaguely his experiences outside the body.

* See the talk of 15 February 1951.

Is there anyone here who has fainted suddenly, as if by accident? You see your body, don't you? and you ask yourself, "But what is it doing there in that ridiculous position?" And you rush back into it! That happened to me once in Paris. I had been treated to a good dinner, and then I went to a conference hall, I believe. There were many people, it was very hot, I was standing there with the good dinner in my stomach, and suddenly I felt ill at ease. I told the person who was with me, "I must go out immediately." Once outside (it was in Trocadero Square) I fainted away completely. I saw my body there, stretched out, and I found it so ridiculous that I rushed into it and I gave it a good scolding, saying, "You must not play such tricks with me!"

Many people faint like this and see themselves. There is one condition for this: the organ of sight in the subtle physical body or in the most material vital must be developed.

I must tell you that this kind of capacity may come spontaneously, without effort—one may be a born clairvoyant. They are not necessarily very intelligent people, their vital consciousness may be mediocre, but they are born clairvoyant. It is not a sign of a great development—it comes from something else, from a capacity of the parents, of past lives, etc. But if you are not born clairvoyant, and if you do not carry in you the other extreme, I mean a psychic being wholly conscious and fully developed which leads its own independent life in the body, and you want to learn to see and have visions, then it is a very long, very slow discipline and there are very few people who have the necessary patience and endurance to go to the end of the training.

It is interesting but it is not essential, one can do without it. It is the same as with dreams. But if you can develop this capacity, it can make your life more rich, it can make your consciousness progress more quickly.

*You say there are two categories of people: those who are asked to meditate and those who are not asked. How to know to which category one belongs?*¹

You are told.

So, can we ask you?

Certainly, I am here for that!

At times when one goes out of the body, the body follows the part which goes out.

¹ "A discipline in itself is not what we are seeking. What we are seeking is to be concentrated on the Divine in all that we do, at all times, in all our acts and in every movement. There are some here who have been told to meditate; but also there are others who have not been asked to do any meditation at all. But it must not be thought that they are not progressing. They too follow a discipline, but it is of another nature. To work, to act with devotion and an inner consecration is also a spiritual discipline."

You are speaking of a somnambulist? But that is quite another thing. This means that the part which goes out (whether a part of the mind or a part of the vital) is so strongly attached to the body, or rather that the body is so attached to this part, that when this part decides to do something the body follows it automatically. In your inner being you decide to do a certain thing and your body is so closely tied to your inner being that without thinking of it, without wanting to do so, without making any effort, it follows and does the same thing. Note that in this matter, the physical body has capacities it would not have in the ordinary waking condition. For instance, it is well known that one can walk in dangerous places where one would find it rather difficult to walk in the waking state. The body follows the consciousness of the inner being and its own consciousness is asleep—for the body has a consciousness. All the parts of the being, including the most material, have an independent consciousness. Hence when you go to sleep dead tired, when your physical body needs rest absolutely, your physical consciousness sleeps, while the consciousness of your subtle physical body or your vital or of your mind does not sleep, it continues its activity; but your physical consciousness is separated from the body, it is asleep in a state of unconsciousness, and then the part which does not sleep, which is active, uses the body without the physical consciousness as intermediary and makes it do things directly. That is how one becomes a somnambulist. According to my experience, the waking consciousness goes to sleep, for some reason or other (usually due to fatigue), but the inner being is awake, and the body is so tied to it that it follows it automatically. That is why you do fantastic things, because you do not see them physically, you see them in a different way.

It is said that somnambulism is due to serious preoccupations and cares. Is this true? Tartini composed a sonata in this state, and when he got up in the morning, he wrote down the whole thing.

Somnambulism is not always due to preoccupations and cares! Yes, there are people who write wonderful things when in somnambulism. But Tartini was not a somnambulist—it was in the dream-state that he wrote sonatas.

The other state is always a little dangerous, always. Unexpected things can happen, an accident to the vital, for instance.

How can one be cured of somnambulism?

Quite simply, by putting a will upon the body before going to sleep. One becomes a somnambulist because the mind is not developed enough to break the inner ties. For the mind always separates the external being from the deeper consciousness. Little children are quite tied up. I knew children who were quite sincere but could not distinguish whether a thing was going on in their imagination or in reality. For them the inner life was as real as the external life. They were not telling stories, they

were not liars; simply the inner life was as real as the external life. There are children who go night after night to the same spot in order to continue the dream they have begun—they are experts in the art of going out of their bodies.

Is it good to leave the body asleep and go out rambling? Can one go back into the body at any moment one likes?

It is dangerous if you sleep surrounded by people who may come and shake you up, believing that something has happened to you. But if you are alone and sleep quietly, there is no danger.

One can get back into the body at any time and generally it is much more difficult to remain outside than to get back—as soon as the least thing happens, one rushes back quickly into the body.

If one goes out of the body leaving it on the bed, can someone else enter it?

That can happen but it is extremely rare, once in a hundred thousand cases.

“Someone” cannot enter—a human being cannot enter the body of another unless he has quite an exceptional and unique occult knowledge and in that case he will not do it.

But if a human being does not enter, at times there are beings of the vital world who do not have a body and want to have one for the fun of the experience, and when they see that someone has gone out of the body (but he must go out very materially) and is not sufficiently protected, they can rush in to take his place. But it is such a rare thing that if you had not put the question I would not have spoken about it. Still it is not an impossibility.

People who have nightmares of this kind should always protect themselves occultly before going out of the body—it can be done in many ways. The simplest way, one which needs no special knowledge is to call the Guru or, if one knows somebody who has the knowledge, to call him in thought or spirit; or to protect oneself by making a kind of wall of protection around oneself (one can do many things, can't one?); this can prevent such beings from entering.

If you have a disposition for exteriorisation and if you follow a yoga, you are always asked to protect your sleep: by some contemplation, a mental movement, any movement—there are many ways of protecting oneself. But I think there is no such danger for you; perhaps not for everybody, but still one would have to be terribly ambitious, terribly insincere for such a thing to happen; one would have to be in relation with truly wicked entities, for, a being who lives in orderliness and truth will never rush into the body of another, that is an act of disorder and it is not done.

Is it the psychic being which goes out or some other part of the being?

If it is the psychic being which goes out, one would not be aware of it, the more so as most of the time it is not within you! Very few people carry their psychic being within them because the dwelling-place is not ready. What goes out is sometimes the subtle physical, this is when one sees one's body stretched out—for the physical vision to remain conscious, it must be a very material part of the being which goes out; one must go out very materially in the subtle physical body or in the most material vital. But usually it is the vital which goes out and still more often the mental being; but when it is the mind which goes out one is not aware of it at all, for the mind is like the psychic, it is very rarely within you. If you think of something or somebody, one part of your mind is immediately there—the mind is a vagabond, it roves, it comes and goes, it enters and goes out. There are very few people who have organised their mind sufficiently to keep it within them, close-packed, and prevent it from gadding about.

At times I seem to go out of my body and see it dead.

But that is a mere dream; probably you did not go out of your body at all. There are people who dream they are dead. But that is of no importance.

When one goes out of the body, one must try to rush towards you—I think everybody does that, don't they?

Not one in a hundred!

If you did that, very interesting things would happen to you. I knew someone in France who used to come to me every evening in order that I might show him some unknown region and take him for a ramble in the vital or mental world, and actually I used to take him there. At times there were others also, at times this person was alone. I showed him how to go out of the body, how to get back into it, how to keep the consciousness, etc., I showed him many places telling him, “There you must take this precaution, here you must do such and such a thing.” And this continued for a long time.

I do not mean that no one among you comes to me in the night, but there are very few who do it consciously. Generally (you will tell me if I am wrong, but that is my impression), when you go to sleep and have decided to remember me before going to sleep, it is rather a call than a will to “rush” to me, as you say. You are there on your bed, you want to rest, to have a good sleep, remain in a good consciousness; then you call me rather than have the idea of going out of the body and coming to see me.

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of January 1983)

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo, the editor Lilabati Nag of *Jayasri* is constantly writing to me for some articles. Once I sent with your permission a poem, after which I heard that the Mother and yourself had forbidden it. As I haven't sent any reply, she goes on writing, and will even give some remuneration, she says. Not to take notice of her letters would amount to rudeness, I think. Is there any harm in just replying to her letter? The paper seems to be supported by many literary figures and national leaders. So it may not matter much if I don't contribute. Would you like to have a look at the paper? Jyoti and I would like however to know what you want us to do.

SRI AUROBINDO: I told Jyotirmoyi she could reply and then gradually allow the correspondence to drop, you can do the same (without giving any reason for the dropping off). The public Men in India are not circumstanced like the Ashram. For us also if it were a personal matter it would not matter. But if a report goes from the British or French police that the Ashram is associated with revolutionaries in Bengal or with a paper run by a Terrorist, that will be a note against us in the record (which is at present quite clear) and any future Governor or party in power here, if hostile to us, may use it in a report or complaint to the ministry in Paris. In that case any such Governor or party would be able on that ground alone to dissolve the Ashram by a stroke of the pen—the Governor is all powerful and can do such things by a single order of decree. It is no use running the Ashram and the work into danger for a trivial reason which has nothing to do with our work. That is why the Mother is so careful not to give any ground for hostile representations and that is why she wants no connection of this kind between the people in the Ashram and suspects there.

MYSELF: Mother, the songs I am singing for gramophone recording are not turning out at all well. My throat is also bad. Besides, those who have come for recording believe that the old songs I used to sing before in Calcutta would have been better. I told them "That won't do, I feel no inspiration for singing such songs." I don't regret the songs being unsuccessful, but since they have come from a great distance and have spent so much for it I would be happy if they didn't incur any loss on my account.

SRI AUROBINDO: If the condition of your voice had been brought to our attention in time, we would have tried to set it right before these people came. Even as it is, if you can shake off the nervous hesitation and get the impulse from within, the

voice may come back suddenly and maintain itself long enough for the purpose of the records. Afterwards with rest and the necessary improvement of the condition of the throat, it can permanently recover.

(Note: The following letter of Sri Aurobindo is apropos of my wanting to return some money sent by a distant relative.)

SRI AUROBINDO: It is hardly possible to return the money once it has been sent, in view of your past relation with him; but you can consider it as an advance on any money that may fall due to you after the expenses of the book have been met. Your mistake was to say that you were in need of money—his sending is a natural result; but once sent, if you send it back, it will be throwing back his gift in his face—which cannot very well be done.

MYSELF: In connection with some particular matter, a lower trait of my nature has been very rudely exposed to my view and I am filled with shame and disgust to see that even now such possessive instincts are lurking in me. What a shame, what a repulsion! It had hidden itself so cleverly that I could not detect it at all. Dear Mother, I want not detachment alone, but wideness as well. Do cleanse my entire being. I can't bear to see these ugly figures of the lower nature any longer.

SRI AUROBINDO: In a certain sense it is good that it has risen and you have seen clearly and got disgusted with it. Only give no justification, support it in no way, be resolute to finish with it altogether. You will get all the help we can give you.

MYSELF: I seem to be engrossed in writing. Is it all right? Have I understood your views exactly regarding the novel I want to write? There must be somewhere something amiss, otherwise why this unease? If so, I shall give up the writing. I was hurrying up with the work with the thought that I would be able to offer you the book on my birthday if it could be finished in time.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother does not disapprove of your writing a book—what she does not like is your being so lost in it that you can do nothing else. You must be master of what you do and not possessed by it. She quite agrees to your finishing and offering the book on your birthday if that can be done. But you must not be carried away—you must keep your full contact with higher things. 1.5.34

MYSELF: What you have written about writing is clear to me, but I don't know how to carry it out. As soon as I sit to write I am lost in it. Suppose I stop writing for two days; the thoughts still go on spinning in the brain. How to stop them, regulate them, harmonise them? If the mind is preoccupied with these thoughts, then what good accrues from it? So it may be better to suspend the writing for the time being; I didn't want my sadhana to be jeopardised at any cost. You have done well by sending a note of warning, otherwise I would have thought that other writers too suffer in this way.

SRI AUROBINDO: If you cannot get rid of the ideas it may be best to finish off the thing. 3.5.34

MYSELF: I observe that I have a softness towards my own writing, which does not seem good to me. So I decided to give it up. Why should there be such a strong attachment? One day perhaps the book will be finished or it may not. What does it matter? I haven't come here for writing. So today I feel light. It is up to you to say if I am right or wrong.

SRI AUROBINDO: I think you are right. There should be no attachment to the work—if it is to be done it will be done hereafter as well as now. 4.5.34

MYSELF: For the last few days, I have been passing through a dryness. A dissatisfaction has shown itself regarding my aspiration. If the aspiration does come, it is in a very small dose. At times, my mind says that even if I don't realise you in this life, it is no small thing to be able to pass this life under your shelter at your feet with your blessings. It is not a sign of aspiration, I know; but it is better than allowing the mind to run into a worse condition. But there is no satisfaction in it; on the contrary a discontent. And no sign of detachment either; perhaps I don't want it sincerely.

SRI AUROBINDO: Thoughts like these should never be accepted—they come to lower the condition or keep it lowered. When there is a cessation, dryness or other difficulty as understood, then something has come up which has to be changed, remain quiet and call down the Force to change it. 12.5.34

MYSELF: Instead of gathering myself, I am dissipating myself all the while. If I could cut off all connection with others inwardly, or feel myself all alone, perhaps then I could do sincerely what I have come for. My mind tries always to plunge itself in petty things.

SRI AUROBINDO: You must gather yourself within more firmly. If you disperse yourself constantly, go out of the inner circle, you will constantly move about in the pettinesses of the ordinary outer nature and under the influences to which it is open. Learn to live within, to act always from within, from a constant communication with the Mother. It may be difficult at first to do it always and completely, but it can be done if one sticks to it—and it is at this price, by learning to do that, that one can have the siddhi in Yoga. 5.6.34

MYSELF: Another thing I notice is that my family-feeling has become uppermost in my consciousness. I quite understand that it has to go. I see that at first something crops up from within, then I become conscious of it, then follows the resolution, but to carry it out needs time. This is the habitual trend in many other things. In this matter it is clear that I have to give it up now. There is will and determina-

tion. But they are not put in action. Perhaps some time has to be given as in other cases. Am I right?

SRI AUROBINDO: The habitual movement in the consciousness which persists or revives from time to time has to lose its hold and disappear. 6.6.34

(To be continued)

LIKE ANXIOUS MOTHS

Like anxious moths
that dimly sense the light
we batter nervously

this side the roof
against the top
of our own minds

until half mad
we crack the neat and cosy tiles of thought...
survive
and lift in flight
to gain the other side
and immolate ourselves:

Delight, delight.

MAGGI

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of January 1983)

The Mother's Message

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



19

It was 18th September 1958. A card indicating a branch of red flowers—Gul Mohur—came from the Mother with these encouraging words:

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

“Here is a branch of ‘Realisation’ for you... along with my love and blessings and the Grace that is constantly with you.”

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Now I kept myself fairly busy with various activities. One of them was my writing the Mother's Teaching in note-books, which I really enjoyed though I was not a scholar.

Yet it was a greater joy to meditate with the Mother. Of course, I would not claim to be proficient in trances.

It was Tuesday. I thought that there would be a long meditation with the Mother since there were no classes. And indeed she was totally indrawn. I opened my eyes to see her expression which gave me a feeling of vast serenity and silence.

The Mother repeatedly said to me:

“Child, if you go deep within yourself, you will find the Presence and Peace of the Lord there.”

Truly these lines from Sri Aurobindo are apt:

“A calm that cradles Fate upon its knees;
A wide Compassion leans to embrace earth's pain;
A Witness dwells within our secrecies,
The incarnate Godhead in the body of man.”

The morning after, the Mother sent me a card displaying the flowers *Ipomoea acuminata* and these lines followed:

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

This is ‘artistic taste in work’. It suits you nicely.

“My love and blessings along with the constant Presence of the Grace, never leave you.

“Your book is not yet ready.”

However, in another place on the card the Mother had jotted a last-minute sentence:

“I have just finished it. It is *very good*. I am sending it back with love.”

When I saw the Mother in the evening in her room at the Playground, I said: “Mother, I am having strange and startling dreams.”

Musingly she went into a trance for a few seconds, then said gravely:

“If you see a dream and, if your consciousness is linked with the Higher Consciousness, you can see the whole dream in perfect order. Then it cannot be called a dream but an experience. When you see a dream with a wandering mind, the dream is disorderly and you see something quite chaotic.

“One part of the being goes to some plane and sees things. There are many people who try to remember these types of experiences but they cannot possibly recall them. People give the name ‘dream’ to everything one gets while sleeping, but, as a matter of fact, it is occasionally not a dream but a concrete experience.

“Your consciousness is connected sometimes with the Higher Consciousness—that is why you get wonderful experiences in your dreams and it is truly good to have such experiences.

“With the growth of consciousness, dreams gradually become exact. There is not a single person in the world who does not have dreams. Usually, the morning’s dreams are more conscious. When a person is conscious in sleep and enters into Sachchidananda he immediately gets rest—an hour or two of such sleep is enough. But when a person is not conscious, he gets rest after many hours.

“Indeed, Sri Aurobindo explains that once peace is established in the heart and quietness spreads all over the being, a person feels at ease—he also feels a sweetness and warmth in his heart. Meditation is one of the processes to bring about this wonderful state.”

That same evening the Mother rested longer than usual, while the Ashramites did gymnastic marching. We all started to wonder.

The next morning, she sent me a card of painted red flowers—Scarlet Sage—together with these lines:

“Here is the material being consenting to be spiritualised. We are on a good way towards it.

“My love and blessings along with the constant Presence of the Grace never leave you.”

That evening I saw the Mother. It was the day of her French lesson. With a twinkle in her eyes and half laughingly, she told me:

“Child, do you know what happened last evening while I was taking rest? I had gone to Sachchidananda. That is why I got late for the general meditation. You see, usually, I fix the time to return from my rest, but last night I did not do so.”

Now I knew the real cause. My imagination took wings. I tried to feel and follow her experience. I was drawn out from my absorption when she framed my face with her soft and yet strong hands. Then she looked directly into my eyes and said with a bright smile:

“One day I will take you to Sachchidananda.”

And her eyes flickered with merriment when I caught my breath on a sigh of pleasure—my heart leapt with happiness. I gave a cry of joy and said, “O Mother, I would love it! You are sweet!” She smiled and stroked my hair tenderly.

The same night before retiring, I sat in my arm-chair and contemplated endlessly on Sachchidananda. It was not possible to get into that state. Once again despondency engulfed me, and two big tear-drops fell from my eyes.

The next morning I received a card from the Mother. On it she had written:

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

“This morning I am very busy with a visitor. I shall correct your book later on.”

Yes, the previous evening I gave her one of my note-books for correction.

I believed that the visitor was none other than Surendra Mohan Ghosh M.P., who used to come from Delhi to the Mother. For, he was a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Besides, he served as an intermediary between the Ashram and the Central Government. He was a thorough gentleman as well as a politician of rare insight. The Mother had a high regard for him.

Sri Aurobindo has been quoted on politicians in the book *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* by Nirodbaran:

“Our politicians have some fixed idea and they always go by it. Politicians and statesmen have to take account of situations and act as demanded by them. They must have insight.”

An extraordinary thing always happened in the Ashram. One could notice that whether a man or a woman was a VIP or a common person, all were equal before the Mother’s physical Presence and Consciousness. Nobody felt that one was superior or inferior—all were the Mother’s children. This was exactly what the Mother wanted us to realise and live. When there was a feeling of big and small, all the conflicts and clashes started. Her ideal was and still is Harmony, Unity and Peace.

Mention of VIPs reminds me of an amusing episode.

One day, after my work in the Mother’s Stores I went for a wash to Golconde. A man had just come out of the ladies’ toilet. I told him sharply:

“How dare you enter this place? Can’t you read the plate?”

He was taken aback and said apologetically that he was sorry; he would not commit the mistake again.

At that moment Mona Pinto happened to pass. I told her: “Mona, look, this

man went into the ladies' toilet, which he was not supposed to do. You must now put up a notice as you have been doing often in Golconde for various reasons”.

I found her totally perplexed. With a slow smile she told me that it was all right, he did not know. I myself was puzzled now and looked at their faces in turn. Later Mona told me that he was a dignitary. I thought to myself: “Now, so the dignitaries are given all the privileges in the world!”

Several years later Udar Pinto introduced me to the same person. We looked at each other and nodded. I am sure both of us recollected the piquant scene in Golconde.

In the evening the Mother and I met as usual. I said to her:

“Mother, you told me about Sachchidananda. But while scanning my present state of consciousness and obstinate defects, I wonder whether the state of higher Consciousness can ever be achieved. Surely, I am quite aware of my aspiration and feel within me what I should do. But the dark clouds of unconsciousness cover my true being and I forget all about the Divine Life. At the same time I am in dead earnest to realise the Supreme.”

She patted my hands and went into a trance for a while and then said softly:

“You pick up some defects because your exterior being is so weak—you have no courage, confidence, faith, and you tremble. But these weaknesses are in all human beings. You have to overcome all difficulties and obstacles.

“Indeed, in your true being there is a heroic strength, courage, confidence, full faith and so many other good qualities. Child, you will have to manifest your true self on the earth—this is your mission.

“I agree that there are many defects, oppositions and impurities in human nature. But you will have to fight against all these falsehoods and come out victorious from all ordeals. Then all difficulties will become like thin shadows.”

The Mother kept charging my true self with her Light and Force, and gave me the constant hope of their intense working.

I have come across these lines in *The Life Divine*, the Cent. Ed., Vol. 18, p. 92:

“That which has thrown itself out into forms is a triune Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, Sachchidananda, whose consciousness is in its nature a creative or rather a self-expressive Force capable of infinite variation in phenomenon and form of its self-conscious being and endlessly enjoying the delight of that variation. It follows that all things that exist are what they are as terms of that existence, terms of that conscious force, terms of that delight of being....”

The Mother also says in the book, *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part Six, pp. 111-112:

“The Divine exists in three modes: (1) Existence, (2) Consciousness and (3) Bliss. Pure existence, pure consciousness and pure bliss—Sachchidananda—these are the three fundamental elements out of which the world is made; they are everywhere in all things, in all beings, in all domains and levels of being. Sachchidananda is the supreme reality that is behind all, even here below, behind the mind, behind the life and behind the body too and behind each form in each of these domains. It is that which upholds and sustains everything. Therefore in order to realise it, it is not necessary to mount up, leaving behind the mental, the vital and the physical existence and go beyond. Usually when one seeks Sachchidananda one looks for it outside the universe, above and beyond the creation, in the transcendent. In reality, however, one can meet it from any place where one happens to be, either in the mind or in the vital or even in the physical; one has only to withdraw and sink down, or get behind: it is there always. To meet Sachchidananda in and through the physical existence is not very much more difficult or rare a thing than the other ways; it is more difficult and rare to maintain it there constantly and consciously, to make of it a dynamic physical possession. That is the work to be done and for which Sri Aurobindo came.”

The next morning the Mother sent me a card indicating bunches of painted flowers. Underneath the picture she had inscribed:

“Emotional movement aspiring for the Divine’s Light.”

On the same card she carried on:

“I am sending your book back of the day before yesterday. Yesterday’s one I shall correct afterwards.

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

It was Saturday. Everyone seemed to be in a “filmy” mood. It was indeed a pleasure to see movies in the Mother’s physical Presence.

I went to the Mother in the Playground. When I entered her room, she received me with a broad smile. After we had exchanged flowers, I said to her: “Mother, for the last few days I have been feeling a strange kind of tightness and heaviness in my heart. Many a time tears come to my eyes.”

She looked deeply into my eyes and said:

“My child, if you feel your heart so tight and suffocated you must do this: Try to open it to the Divine so that the Divine can pervade you with His Force and Presence in order to efface your unhappiness and loneliness.

—“Physically you cannot open your heart but you can imagine it by taking the example of flowers—as they open to the sun, so must your heart open to the Divine.”

I was touched almost to tears at this incredible explanation. She understood perfectly my emotional state.

Sri Aurobindo has explained about emotion in *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*:

“Emotion is a good element in yoga; but emotional desire becomes easily a cause of perturbation and an obstacle. Turn your emotions towards the Divine, aspire for their purification; they will then become a help and no longer a cause of suffering.

“Not to kill emotion, but to turn it towards the Divine is the right way of the yoga.

“Awake by your aspiration the psychic fire in the heart that burns steadily towards the Divine; that is the one way to liberate and fulfil the emotional nature.

“It is only the ordinary vital emotions which waste the energy and disturb the concentration and peace that have to be discouraged. Emotion itself is not a bad thing; it is a necessary part of nature and *psychic emotion*, bringing tears of love for the Divine or tears of Ananda, ought not to be suppressed: it is only a vital mixture that brings disturbance in the sadhana.

“The deeper the emotion, the more intense the Bhakti, the greater is the force for realisation and transformation. It is oftenest through intensity of emotion that the psychic being awakes and there is an opening of the inner doors to the Divine.”

Before I went to bed, I sat for a long time in a chair of the Golconde basement where people sit and relax or take snacks. At 3 p.m. tea is served. Compared to Gujarati tea this tea was weak—just water with a few drops of milk! However, I was not taking tea with others in the basement but in the kitchen by special permission. I detested chatting—especially with visitors. Moreover, my English was insufficient and I was terribly nervous lest anybody should ask me any question.

The darkness of the night was deepening. Everywhere there was a hush except that the famous frogs croaked from time to time and from the distance the occasional bark of a dog could be heard. An errant breeze cooled the air. Reluctantly I went to my room to retire.

I received a flower-card from the Mother in the morning. Underneath the painted flower was the sentence:

“The emotional movement opening to the Divine's Light.”

The Mother proceeded on the same card:

“I am sending you back your book; it is good.

“My love and blessings and the constant Presence of the Grace never leave you.”

The Mother and I meditated for a long time in the evening. For, it was Sunday.

I do not remember exactly but there was a distribution of potato-wafers in butter-paper bags. The Mother looked at me for a few seconds, pressed my hands and gave a bag.

As on distribution days, there was the music of one of the greatest composers. I relished the *prasad* and the music.

A line from Sri Aurobindo's *Collected Poems* came to my mind:

“All music is only the sound of His laughter.”

*

The Mother sent me a card showing a painted flower—*Allamanda*—and underneath she had written “Victory”. These words followed:

“I am sending you back your book—these dreams are all interesting and some are indeed very good.”

That night I turned the pages of my book in which I had written down my dreams, and the Mother had made remarks about them. My dreams were the reflections of my inner movements. Here are three dreams, which served me as precious indications.

A huge ship sailed on a vast sea and cut through gigantic waves at high speed. Then to my horror it climbed mountains, glided over rough ground—it went on at random. I felt as if my stomach had turned over—a cold shiver ran down my spine. I had a strong sense of the ship's wreckage, but it proceeded rapidly.

The Mother's remark about this dream was:

“Good—it means that you are advancing quick on the way towards the Divine.”

Another dream:

There were some strange beings walking with me. Then they went off one by one and left me all alone. As I moved, I saw various kinds of weapons—very peculiar in shape—I wondered how they happened to be there. Just then many dreadful forms of hostile forces rushed on me—each assumed a different mask and I felt the blood running chilled through my veins. At once I closed my eyes and repeated

several times the name of Mother Kali. Then gradually I opened them and there was no sign of the dark forces. I grew ice-cold as I walked a little further. Now the horrible force descended upon me again and caught me by the throat, petrifying me with fear. My eyes fell on a monstrous being which emerged from the abyss. I gathered from his appearance that it was the devil himself. He was very dark, ugly, hairy, fat and short. Two sharp teeth stuck out from the corners of his mouth. He wore only a piece of dull-red cloth about his loins. He laughed loudly and gobbled something—his mouth dripped with blood.

By hook or by crook he tried to kill me but he failed. On my side I never ceased repeating the Name of the Supreme Mother. Meanwhile, he shot an arrow at the middle of my forehead. I fainted for a while. Then I regained consciousness, and opened my eyes slowly and made sure that I was still alive. Yes, the Great One had saved me. I lifted my eyes to see whether the devil was still there. He was there all right. The arrow he had shot had gone back into his hands. His pride was wounded. His eyes flamed upon me like balls of fire. He shouted at the top of his voice in sheer fury. He could not ruffle my poise. Then he gave a bark of laughter and told me: "Now you will see, kitten, I will use another dangerous weapon to destroy you. Then I will see how your so-called Mother will rescue her dear little child!"

The Mother remarked:

"Good—there is nothing to fear. The adverse forces always boast."

In spite of the Mother's courageous words and support, I felt that these dark forces carried on quite well upon earth their devil-given mission by joining themselves with one another in an endless chain. Thus they put a barrier between the Divine and the soul. Also, their actions and vibrations were strong and powerful enough to kill any human being if the Divine were not there to intervene.

Now the third dream:

There was a vast turbulent sea. In the midst of the swirling waves there was a narrow path swept with foam, which led to the peak of a steep mountain, from where bright sunlight fell on the path. Otherwise the whole atmosphere was dangerously gloomy. I saw some people, who were treading the path, slip from a height and fall into the sea—never to return.

The fate of these human beings reminds me of one of my *Savitri* paintings and these lines by Sri Aurobindo are quite apposite, speaking of creatures:

"Or a castaway on the ocean of Desire
Flung to the eddies in a ruthless sport
And tossed along the gulfs of Circumstance...."

To resume the dream: I too walked on the same path as they did. Then suddenly from the near distance I heard the scream of a woman who had fallen into the sea and was struggling desperately to come out of it. At the same time from afar I

heard another cry—that of a man who also tried to save himself by calling out to the woman for help.

Now I turned fully to regard the awful scene. I felt as if my feet gave way and were about to slip. I pulled myself together and wished to continue on my way. But the inner voice told me not to go any further. So I changed my mind. The sight was really pitiable and it was too much for me. I felt peculiar sensations in the pit of my stomach as I plunged into the sea. There was a constant utterance of the Divine's name on my lips, and in that consciousness I stretched my arms to rescue the woman. Then I cast my eyes on the ocean in order to see the man but he had already disappeared in the dark gulfs. Then the woman and I started our journey on the sunlit path.

The Mother's remark about this dream was:

“This is an excellent dream showing *your true strength and courage* behind your apparent weakness.”

My memory went back to one of her earlier talks:

“Indeed, in your true being there is a heroic strength, courage....”

*

One of my brothers—Paroobhai—came to the Ashram for a few days. He brought for me a good foreign typewriter named *Imperial*, which I am still using. He also brought a set of Parker pens—my name engraved on them. He remembered to bring lovely things for the Mother. Among them I remember a bale of rich red velvet cloth with a golden design painted on it.

One evening the Mother saw me with my brother. She asked him to sit on a pouf. He sat instantly. I thought to myself: “Why, he should have sat near the Mother's feet as I did.” In fact, he was so overjoyed and dazed that he forgot everything! The Mother read my thoughts. Our eyes met and both of us burst into laughing. My brother's face was a study!

The Mother was extremely kind to him and appreciated a great deal the gifts he had offered to her.

He left for Bombay to join his family. After they had visited several places in India, he was to bring his family to the Ashram before they flew to Africa. He had asked me to accompany him on his travels in India. I refused. But when he left, I felt a sudden catch at my heart, a strange loneliness closed on me ruthlessly. Now and then the memory of my family flitted through my mind. I tried often to fight clear of the obstinate attachments and emotions. But my head went round and round and round like a spinning top. Once again I lapsed into unconsciousness of my soul.

I could restore my composure a little after a quiet meditation with the Mother. Those gleaming bright eyes radiated comfort and there was an intimate warmth in them.

Then she led me to her writing-table and gave me a pile of cards. After she had sat down on a pouf, she asked me to pass each card to her to sign it. These were to be distributed among people who had taken part in the athletic competitions. She asked me to go on putting them together in the right order after she had signed each of them. I did so. After that I gave to the Mother the arranged cards. She was pleased. She got up from the pouf and gave me flowers and embraced me tenderly. I loved her divine touch which was soothing and sweet.

The next morning to my sheer amazement the same type of card as she had signed the previous evening came from the Mother. The card depicted a lion. Underneath there was a quotation from the Mother's writing:

"The true power is always quiet. Restlessness, agitation, impatience are the sure sign of weakness and imperfection."

On that very card she had written:

"This is the lion of Durga bringing true quiet strength and the power that comes from quietness.

"I am sending back your book corrected—it is all right."

I was still feeling restless. The remembrance of my family haunted me. I could not concentrate in the Mother's translation class. After the lesson, I went to collect from her room the flowers which she had given me. Quietly the Mother stood behind me. When I turned back, smiling she held my hand and gave me some more flowers.

During the marching of the groups the Mother took rest after taking some light refreshment like soup or fruit juice. Then she came out of her room and began the usual collective meditation.

Everyone was rapt in the divine atmosphere.

On 28th September 1956 the Mother wrote to me:

"These days I am finishing my article for the Bulletin—but the second of next month, that is next Tuesday at 10.30 a.m. I shall be glad to see you and hear what you have to say.

"My love and blessings and the Grace are always present with you."

I understood her abundance of work. Every Darshan day the periodical *Bulletin of Physical Education* was published. This contained the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, photographs of the Ashram activities, notes on the visits of distinguished people and various reports of the progress of the Ashram.

It was Saturday. I received a card from the Mother along with a bouquet of white roses and these lines:

“Bonjour to my dear little child to my sweet Huta,
“I am sending back your book corrected; it is interesting.”

The day passed in the usual manner. Everybody was absorbed in their own activities. But each one assembled in the Playground to receive the Mother’s Force, Grace and Love according to their receptivity and openness.

On Sunday, the 30th, the Mother wrote on a pretty card:

“Some inspiring words from Sri Aurobindo.
“With my love and blessings and the Divine Grace always present near you.”
“Love in all forms of adoration is a spiritual force. Love of the highest and the total surrender are the straight and swift way to the Divine oneness.”

In the evening I took my typewriter to the Playground in order to show it to the Mother. She liked it very much. I told her that I would type all her letters and talks. She was happy.

Her luminous glance and smile surrounded me and suddenly with them everything was right again with me.

We meditated for fifteen minutes or so. She gave me flowers and a kiss on my forehead. While I was about to leave, she asked me whether I could carry the heavy typewriter with one hand. For, in my other hand there were lots of flowers. I smiled and nodded.

When I came out of her room there were quite a few people waiting for their interviews with the Mother. They all watched me going. I felt really embarrassed.

Once again I went to the Playground from Golconde after my light meal. There were marching, distribution and music. I saw the Mother again in the Ashram when she returned from the Playground. I was really exhausted. I slept as soon as my head touched the pillow.

(To be continued)

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DARSHAN DAY

O SMILING Mother, Mother sweet!
Bestow Thy Bliss Divine!
Now we have gathered round Thy feet;
Let Thy Light Eternal shine!
O mighty Lord! proclaim Thy reign!
The world belongs to Thee.
All pilgrims come with hope to gain
Thy vast Benignity.
We long to see Thy glorious face,
Let misty veils be torn!
Thy advent starts a model race
Of Angels earthly born.
Let the Victor banner be unfurled,
High Heavens touch the soil!
Let Love's gold shafts anon be hurled
To end all bootless broil!
Thy Grace is poured through a deathless sun
On happy aspiring souls;
From joy to joy our lives now run
To reach our long-sought goals.
Our vision is stretched to infinity
In which all worlds are found;
No breach is there in the ethereal sea
That knows no mortal bound.
Ready are we to now surpass
Our death-bound human state;
O Mother, come and walk with us,
Teach us the Immortal's gait!

SILEN ROY

THE PATH OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

A LETTER TO CLEAR SOME CONFUSIONS

I HAVE yours of 12.10.80 before me, a discovery from a pile of overlooked papers. The questions you have asked are of persisting importance. So it is not too late for a try to answer them, with, of course, an apology for the inordinate delay of nearly 2 years. I hope the length of my answer will make up for the length of the time elapsed.

You begin: "A great deal of confusion can result if we read Sri Aurobindo directly and read the opinions of his disciples on spiritual matters. Some time ago Lalita wrote in *Mother India* about a dream-experience in which the Gods of the Overmind attempted to impede her advance and tried to prevent her from going to the Mother. Compare this with the Mother's statement: 'I am sure that these Gods will help Man to realise the Supramental Truth in future'—or words to that effect."

I think you have really presented not a contradiction but a pair of possibilities. The Gods of the Overmind have their own splendid plane of a satisfied divine life. They do not turn in self-surrender to the Supermind. Theirs is a typical world and, like all typical worlds, it is self-sufficient and it has a self-sufficiency of the finest kind possible because it is a plane of the greatest spiritual experiences short of the utter Transcendence static or dynamic. It is not the natural business of the Overmind Gods to lead to the Supramental and, actually, whichever rare Yogis have reached the Overmind have felt they had attained the supreme Divinity, so marvellous and manifold are the vastnesses of light and bliss and power there. Indeed India in the past missed the secret of the Supermind which had been known to the Rigveda and the early Upanishads because she came to believe that the Overmind was the highest reach of spirituality before the ultimate Unknown, the sheer Supracosmic. Those Yogis found nothing in the Overmind pointing them to the Supramental Dynamism. No Overmind God showed a guiding finger towards a grander Beyond. It is not the work of a typical plane to carry us further: its work is to encompass us with its own magic and magnificence and mystery. To put it negatively, it cannot but stand in the way of what is above it. On a spiritual level like the Overmind this is not done in a hostile manner: it is done by the very *dharma* of a typical level. And when we realise that the Overmind has itself a tremendous divine richness any sort of hostility to the essentially spiritual is unthinkable about it. But we cannot deny, either, that it is not in the least concerned to take us to the Supramental. How can it be concerned when it is itself not so formed as automatically to surrender to the Transcendence that is the Supramental? So you must not be surprised by the turn you observe in Lalita's expression in recounting her dream-vision. In her experience the self-sufficiency or typical limitation of the Overmind Gods got translated in this form.

On the other hand, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have the power to secure the assistance of Overmind divinities in taking the disciples to the Supramental. They

would not coerce these divinities but they can enlist their help: one of the significances of the Siddhi or Victory Day—24 November 1926—is precisely that the realisation of the Overmind Consciousness in the very physical being would be a step towards the descent of the Supermind into the body. Sri Aurobindo got by that realisation the possibility of the Overmind Gods co-operating in his supernal venture. However, from this we cannot conclude that the whole activity of the Overmind would be mobilised in all its modes to serve the Aurobindonian mission. Each of us by rising to or drawing down the Overmind can certainly make use of it as a stepping-stone towards the Supramental, yet the nature of the Overmind as a typical plane is bound to act as if that plane were a terminus. Many an aspirant is so dazzled even by spiritual levels below the Overmind as to think he has attained the Supramental. Whether the Overmind serves as a passage conducting one to the Supermind or as a golden “blind alley” depends on the aspirant’s state and attitude.

It depends also on what entity he contacts. There is Krishna, for instance, who, according to Sri Aurobindo, manifested the Overmind Consciousness on earth and whose Consciousness was said to have descended on 24 November 1926. But he is not thereby classified as a God of the Overmind like Shiva or any other. Although working through that level and through its divinities, he is really the transcendent Godhead, the Purushottama Himself, one with the Supramental Self of Sri Aurobindo inasmuch as he is, as Sri Aurobindo has said, the Anandamaya Purusha, the Supreme Spirit who is the source of all Avatars. Krishna can be a direct co-operator with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. That is why Sri Aurobindo writes in a letter to Narayan Prasad, who was a Vaishnavite by inclination, that what is done in the Ashram is Krishna’s work and that therefore no contradiction exists for a follower of Krishna in accepting the Mother. But, of course, here we should guard against the fallacy of thinking that all traditional worshippers of Krishna are all the time doing the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, which surely goes far beyond traditional Vaishnavism. Krishna’s work today, as distinguished from his work in the past, is the Aurobindonian Yoga: this is how we have to interpret the letter I am speaking of. To follow Krishna without surrendering to the Mother is to be confined to Krishna’s past work.

This point is very momentous and provides the key to your next puzzlement. You write: “The Mother, questioned about a certain popular religious leader, remarked: ‘One spiritual Guru does not pronounce on another.’ Yet going to other Gurus is disapproved by Ashram people in general.” Then you wonder how one reconciles “this One-Guru attitude” with Sri Aurobindo’s words¹ about the ideal sadhaka: “...it is necessary that he should...cast from himself that exclusive tendency of egoistic mind which cries, ‘My God, my Incarnation, my Prophet, my Guru’, and opposes it to all other realisation in a sectarian or a fanatical spirit. All sectarianism, all fanaticism must be shunned; for it is inconsistent with the integrity of the divine realisation. On the contrary, the sadhaka of the integral Yoga will not be satisfied until he has included all other names and forms of Deity in his own conception, seen his

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953), p. 74.

own Ishta Devata in all others, unified all Avatars in the unity of Him who descends in the Avatar, welded the truth in all teachings into the harmony of the Eternal Wisdom." If you properly probe my statement on Krishna's present work as compared to his past one, you will get the true angle from which the Mother's remark and Sri Aurobindo's words are to be viewed. The Mother simply refrained from passing judgment: she did not set on a basis of equality the teaching or even the status of all Gurus. Also, the policy of "Live and let live" is adopted. But surely she never implied that a disciple of Sri Aurobindo might just as well go to another teacher as live under Sri Aurobindo: the utmost she can be taken to imply is that different people are drawn to different Gurus and one should not pass depreciatory verdicts or expect everybody to become an Aurobindonian straight away. Neither do Sri Aurobindo's words indicate that instead of wanting the reader to attend to the multifaceted system explained in *The Synthesis of Yoga* he let the seeker loose among all the old systems as if all were of equal importance as what he was setting forth. Furthermore, there was no Ashram as such at that time: Sri Aurobindo was writing in 1914 in his monthly magazine *Arya*, 12 years before the establishment of the Ashram with the Mother in charge. The crucial experiment of—to utilise the terms I have chosen—carrying Krishna's work forward in a practical, detailed, regular way under the Mother's Guruship had not started. Once you grasp what this "forward" signifies, you will not pose against each other the specific Aurobindonian mission and the wide-visioned stance Sri Aurobindo and the Mother always take in general.

What does it mean to carry Krishna's work forward? It means that the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo—the Supramental Yoga—goes beyond all tradition not only of a sectarian kind but also of the kind Sri Aurobindo reads in the Gita, a union of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti Yogas reaching a climax in a call to abandon all Dharmas—in the sense of formulated laws or disciplines—and take refuge in the Purushottama who is above every one of them and holds the secret of some total realisation. Yes, a step beyond the farthest that was hinted at in the past—and necessarily so since no Yoga of old could be designated "Supramental" in the connotation intended by Sri Aurobindo. Doubtless, many traditional movements are included in the new Yoga, but as a whole it is intimately bound up with the quest of something which has never before been deeply explored and fully mobilised. Sri Aurobindo found in the subtle domains where tracks remain of all endeavours no sign of what he searched for and arrived at: the plenary possession of the ultimate creative and transformative power of the Transcendent Divine, the power that alone can re-create mind and vitality and body in the image of their perfect originals and lead the evolving psyche here and now to its status of being a flawless child of the Supreme Mother with its mental, vital and physical instruments an unobstructed channel of Her Truth-Consciousness and Truth-force at world-work. Breaking away on the whole from tradition even while assimilating into a new use many of its Godward elements, the Aurobindonian Yogi has to take great care not to be entrapped in the ancient formulas, be they ever so flaming and felicitous.

This does not imply that he cannot be on friendly terms with the adherents of other Yogas. You have cited the example of Kapali Shastri "visiting many Great Souls like Ramana Maharshi, Vasishtha Ganapathy Muni as well as the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and yet being a true child of the Mother and having an exemplary surrender". Then you ask: "How is it that his personal relations with Maharshi continued although he had chosen the Path of Sri Aurobindo?" You have not properly assessed these relations. Kapali Shastri was originally a follower of Ramana Maharshi and closely connected with Ganapathy Muni who too was a disciple of the latter. So it was natural for him not to cut adrift from them altogether, especially as they were, as you say, "Great Souls". But don't you see what radical inner break there must have been if after having followed Ramana Maharshi he actually became a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and took up permanent residence in their Ashram? It is not just as if after being originally an Aurobindonian he made contacts with other spiritual Masters in a casual way. His example is exactly of one who makes a fundamental turn which involves total inner exclusive adherence to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. A turn like that rules out any mixing up of the old with the new. And such a turn is indeed necessary in some form or other for an Aurobindonian.

An Aurobindonian does not ever look down upon past spiritual achievements. How can he when they have to be part of his own sadhana? He has respect for every spiritual seeker's object of devotion. In fact he will not make it his job to win converts. Proselytisation is never his function. He puts before others what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have revealed and made accessible and, if somebody is really interested, he tries to guide him towards his Masters. Yes, he is not a fanatic of a faith suffering from a superiority-complex. But, at the same time, he has to keep burning in himself the sense that a special influence has been brought by his Gurus and a special inner path has been hewn out by them, which should not be allowed to feel pulls from past spiritualities. The work undertaken by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is a very difficult one and it has two obstacles to meet in its dissemination. On the one side, the materialism of the West with its triumphant science brushing aside the traditional religious instinct and all inward turn towards Soul and Spirit and God. On the other side, strange as it may seem, the spirituality of the East with its stupendous achievements, its fulfilling experiences of a beatific Beyond, compared to which earth and its life and its projects seem a bagatelle. Not that Western science and Eastern other-worldliness are to be entirely shunned. The Aurobindonian Yogi accepts science's stress on terrestrial concerns and its vision of a long evolution looking forward to a more and more effective life. He also accepts, with the spiritual giants of the East, the reality of other worlds than the physical and their culmination in some superb of infinity and eternity. But he insists on bringing all the Beyond to bear upon the earth as the scene of spiritual fulfilment and he insists on evolution flowering in an ever greater consciousness of inner realities, in the light of which earth-concerns are to be evaluated and developed both individually and collectively. In consequence he has to guard against being invaded by

the common temper of modern science and the general trend of ancient Yoga.

Having opened wide the doors of his inner self to the supra-terrestrial forces he needs to be particularly vigilant about this trend, for he is more likely to be penetrated by it than by that temper. Hence, while fighting free, as the passage you quote from Sri Aurobindo puts it, "of that exclusive tendency of egoistic mind which cries, 'My God, my Incarnation, my Prophet, my Guru'", he will still be profoundly mindful of not being inwardly inundated by whatever sweep somebody else's God, Incarnation, Prophet, Guru may bring, no matter how beautifully, towards an Ideal which finally looks away from the earth-scene to some far-away deific Heaven or an all-absorbing Brahman-Nirvana. The encroachment of conventional fervours and popular practices which take the name of the Creator but have no true sense of the mighty self-conversion and self-exceeding demanded by the Aurobindonian Yoga has also to be resisted. Although the best elements of these fervours and practices, such as devotion and worship and prayer, are inevitably present in this Yoga which centrally aspires towards the Personal Divine who alone can ultimately perfect the human person, they have "suffered a sea-change" and are attuned to a different call of divine distances, another oceanic rhythm of the Blissful Beloved's heart. The doer of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga cannot afford to let his arduous undertaking be diluted even by the finest and highest of the past and present. That is all that is asked of him—and legitimately asked. It does not contradict the wide understanding, the warm valuation, the sympathetic assimilation at a radical level of all pursuits of God by man, which Sri Aurobindo in that passage from *The Synthesis* expects of those who take to his Integral Yoga. But a catholic outlook should never make them lose sight of the innovation both in aim and in overall process that this Yoga definitely brings and which has to be protected from a tug by the power of the God-pursuits extant around them.

Such a proviso convicts of a partial yet serious misapprehension the person you refer to—"a senior devotee of the Ashram living in Bombay" who told you: "The idea that this Yoga is superior to others is nonsense! There is One Divine but many manifestations of the Divine." He has the catholic outlook I have mentioned and he is right in pooh-poohing terms like "superior" but he seems utterly insensitive to what Sri Aurobindo has made plain¹—"the bringing in of a Power of Consciousness (the supramental) not yet organised or active in earth-nature, even in the spiritual life, but yet to be organised and made directly active" by means of a Yoga which "aims not at a departure out of world and life into Heaven or Nirvana, but at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object", this object being "not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth-consciousness here, a cosmic, not solely a supra-cosmic achievement". Sri Aurobindo has added that a method has been openly put forth—"preconized" is his unusual interesting word, meaning "openly or publicly declared"—for "the to-

¹ "Letters on Yoga", *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 22, pp. 100-01.

tal and integral change of the consciousness and nature, taking up old methods but only as a part action and present aid to others that are distinctive", a method which he has not "found...(as a whole)...professed or realised in the old yogas".

With all this in the background you have to understand the statement you quote that "Sri Aurobindo's Path includes all other Paths, it is like an Ocean" and the report you submit of A. B. Purani having said in Bombay that "Sri Aurobindo's Path is like a vast 'Maidan' [=open field] and one cannot truly say that it is a separate Path". Purani's meaning is that there is no exclusiveness about the Aurobindonian Path, stipulating that only such and such persons can take to it or that only this or that particular religio-spiritual school can enter it. Being on one side a quintessence, as it were, of all past and present Godward endeavours, it can draw together persons of all kinds and accept approaches from all religio-spiritual schools—provided that we realise the other side of it which calls towards something beyond the various starting-points. Purani was too well aware of Sri Aurobindo's thought to have meant that the Aurobindonian Yoga was merely an *omnium gatherum* (to use a dog-Latin expression). His true drift may be traced to some words of the Master himself:¹ "I have never said that my yoga was something brand new in all its elements. I have called it the integral yoga and that means that it takes up the essence and many processes of the old yogas—its newness is in its aim, standpoint and the totality of its method." Purani knew that this "newness" amounted to something really revolutionary, entitling Sri Aurobindo to declare:² "Our yoga is not a re-treading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure."

A spiritual adventure on an immense scale, fraught as it is with diverse surprises and unprecedented challenges, demands a great deal of care and caution and concentrated wakefulness. Absence of sectarianism and fanaticism, presence of sympathetic synthesis of whatever is fine and sincere and progressive in the history of aspiring humanity do not justify a facile plunging into a species of eclecticism, a reckless glancing here and leaning there, an irresponsible running along "old walks", as if every road led to Pondicherry. Even "seemingly allied ideals and anticipations—the perfectibility of the race, certain Tantric sadhanas, the effort after a complete physical siddhi by certain schools of Yoga, etc., etc."³—even these that justify, for Sri Aurobindo, "the view that the spiritual past of the race has been a preparation of Nature not merely for attaining the Divine beyond the world, but also for this very step forward [namely, the triple transformation, psychic, spiritual, supramental] which the evolution of the earth-consciousness has still to make"⁴—even movements appearing similar to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga require a judicious approach, for they had other dynamisms behind them than the one which Sri Aurobindo has set going. Much more discreet have to be our contacts with prolongations of religio-spiritual seekings from times gone, however great those times and however genuine the prolongations and however deserving their propagators may be of being considered as possessing—in the phrase you cite from your "senior de-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

² *Ibid.*, p. 101.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

votee"—"the cosmic consciousness" (which, by the way, for all its wonderfulness is far indeed from the Supermind of the Aurobindonian revelation). Without any airs of superiority and without discouraging sincere followers of other disciplines, we have still to keep inwardly clear of what you term "multiple influences".

You have written to me: "Recently when I asked a veteran disciple of the Ashram about going to other Gurus, he told me clearly to avoid going to them as it would result in confusion. Even M. P. Pandit told me so—stressing the danger of countercurrents and crosscurrents of spiritual forces." You have the right advice here. A "disciple living outside the Ashram" may be tempted to come in touch with spiritual teachers near at hand and he may fear that, as you say, he may "stagnate otherwise". I would suggest your creating inwardly a protective zone around you with the Mother's secret presence: then there can be no stagnation and you will pass through environmental enticements safely.

As to your query—"Is it that when one is drawn solely to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, one is guilty of narrow-mindedness, arrogant airs and trying to create a new religion?"—the full answer has to exceed your specific terms and run: "A true Aurobindonian, although infused with religion's essence and core which is spirituality, is always wide, calm, considerate, free from the clutch of dogmatism which popularly and superficially marks off one religion from another. Living in the inmost mystical heart of religion, he still does not aim at creating a new religion alongside the old ones and similar to them, any more than he aims at founding a new system of spiritual philosophy and practice on a level with those in the field or even a new school of Yoga comparable and competing with the existing ones. Serenely he reflects the dimension of a time to come. He regards everything around him with a comprehending, appreciative and in some respects assimilative eye, and in that sense he can be deemed a person widely religious, philosophical, spiritual, Yogic standing together with all that is present; yet he keeps untouched a crystalline centre in himself, for he never forgets that he is beckoned to a future hitherto undreamt-of not only by any path so far named religious but also by those which in distinction may currently be styled philosophical, spiritual or Yogic."

10.7.1982

AMAL KIRAN

HOW I BECAME A HINDU - 8

(Continued from the issue of January 1983)

I HAD to leave Calcutta for good and return to Delhi on account of my health. I had spent twelve long years in that great and stormy centre of Bengali culture and politics. I had participated in Calcutta's politics in a way. It was my misfortune that I did not drink equally deep at the fount of Bengali culture which had, in the recent past, become synonymous with India's reawakening to her innermost soul. Bengal herself was turning away from that great heritage and towards an imported ideology which was leading her towards spiritual desolation.

But I did make a lasting contact with Bengali literature which I consider to be one of the greatest literatures of the world, leave alone India. I thought that while Gurudev Rabindranath was the greatest poet of modern times, Bibhuti Bhushan Bandopadhyaya could rub shoulders with any great novelist the world had known. And I was greatly drawn towards Vaishnava and Baul poets whose *padavali kirtan* and mystic muse were still a living tradition in Bengal. I had the privilege to attend some sessions of these singers of the soul's striving towards divinity.

My new job in Delhi gave me a lot of leisure. I could read and think and take stock of my situation as I took long walks along the lonely avenues of New Delhi. But what mattered most was that I could now spend all my evenings with Ram Swarup. I could see that his seeking had taken a decisive turn towards a deeper direction. He was as awake to the social, political and cultural scene in India as ever before. But this vigil had now acquired an entirely new dimension. Political, social and cultural movements were no more clashes or congregations of external forces and intellectual ideas; they had become projections of psychic situations in which the members of a society chose to stay. His judgements had now acquired a depth which I frequently found it difficult to fathom.

Ram Swarup was now spending long hours sitting in meditation. His talks now centred round the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, the Mahabharata and the Buddha. He invited me to sit in meditation with him sometimes. I tried off and on. But I was too restless to sit in a single pose for long, close my eyes to the outer world and peep into the void in search of some new perceptions. I had a strong urge to write and pour myself out in strong comments on the current political situation. But who was there to publish what I wrote?

It was at this time that Sri K.R. Malkani, the soft-spoken and ever-smiling editor of the *Organiser*, extended the hospitality of his weekly to me. I wrote more or less regularly in the *Organiser* for several years. One of my long series was devoted to a political biography of Pandit Nehru which ultimately cost me my job. Some friends frowned upon my writing for the *Organiser*. My invariable reply was that one paid court at the portals of the so-called prestigious papers only *if one had nothing to say* and if one's only aspiration was a fat cheque. I found Sri Malkani to be a very con-

scientific editor. He never crossed a 't' or dotted an 'i' of whatever I wrote, without prior consultation with me.

Another great man I met in Delhi at this time was Sri Gurudatta, the noted Hindi novelist and exponent of Hindu Culture. It was rather timidly and in a casual tone that I mentioned to him a novel which I had finished. His response was instantaneous and very warm-hearted. He invited me to write whatever I felt like and assured me that he would see to it that it was published. He kept his promise, even though I eventually involved his publisher in some losses. But what fascinated me was the tender human being hiding behind that tough exterior. He is my senior by more than twenty years. He has been a vigilant witness to a long cultural and political history since the twenties of this century. He has also developed a systematic critique of events and personalities in his own ideological perspective. But I never saw him impose the weight of his years or his wisdom on others. I always found him ready to change his own judgement if he felt convinced by an opposite statement of facts or logic. His capacity to become young with the younger generation is simply marvellous.

I was using my spare time during these 3-4 years to brush up my Sanskrit. I made quite a headway because I relinquished the help of Hindi or English translations and broke through some very tough texts with the help of Sanskrit commentaries alone. At last I was able to read the Mahabharata in its original language, the *Girvana Bharati*. The 4-Volume text published by the Gita Press came in quite handy. It was an experience unparalleled in the whole of my studies so far.

In the long evenings I spent with Ram Swarup I compared with him my notes on the Mahabharata. But Ram Swarup's way of looking at the Mahabharata was quite different. He related it directly to the Vedas. He expounded how the mighty characters of this great epic embodied and made living the spiritual vision of the Vedic seers. What fascinated me still more was Ram Swarup's exposition of *Dharma* as enunciated in the Mahabharata. To me, *Dharma* had always been a matter of normative morals, external rules and regulations, do's and don't's, enforced on life by an act of will. Now I was made to see *Dharma* as a multi-dimensional movement of man's inner law of being, his psychic evolution, his spiritual growth and his spontaneous building of an outer life for himself and the community in which he lived.

The next thing I did was to read and re-read the major works of Sri Aurobindo and discuss his message with Ram Swarup day after day. Sri Aurobindo would have remained an abstract philosopher for me in spite of all his writings on Yoga, had not Ram Swarup explained to me how this seer was the greatest exponent of the Vedic vision in our times. Sri Aurobindo's message, he told me, was in essence the same old Vedic message, namely, that we are gods in our innermost being and should live the life of gods on this earth. He made me see what Sri Aurobindo meant by the physical, the vital, the mental and the psychic. He related these terms to the theory of the five *kosas* in the Upanishads.

But Sri Aurobindo was not an exponent of Vedic spirituality alone. He was also

a poet, a connoisseur, a statesman and a superb sociologist. His *Human Cycle* was an interpretation of history which placed man's striving for spiritual perfection in his inner as well as outer life as the prime mover of the world matrix. His *Foundations of Indian Culture* made me see for the first time that our multifaceted heritage of great spirituality, art, architecture, literature, social principles and political forms sprang from and revolved round a single centre. That centre was *Sanatana Dharma* which was the very soul of India. Sri Aurobindo had made it very clear in his *Uttarpara Speech* that India rose with the rise of *Sanatana Dharma* and would die if *Sanatana Dharma* was allowed to die.

Another great writer who led me on at this stage was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. I had read all his novels but had never been able to understand why he had been honoured as a *rishi*. I myself was a novelist and had already written several human stories. I thought that a novelist dealt with dimensions of human character and mapped the heights it could scale and the depths to which it could sink. Why should we foist the title of a *rishi* on this poor fellow? That way *rishis* will be available a dime a dozen. My doubts about Bankim Chandra being a *rishi* were removed when I read the second volume of his *Collected Works* in Bengali. His insights into the innermost core of Hindu culture were a revelation. His *Ramayanaer Alochana* made me see the monstrosities of modern Indology more than ever before. I immediately translated this masterpiece of an essay into Hindi.

In my earlier days I had read the biography of Sri Ramakrishna written by Romain Rolland. I had read the talk which Vivekananda had delivered long ago about "My Master". I had visited Sri Ramakrishna's room at Dakshineswar. I had also seen a Bengali film on his life. But what brought me in an intimate and living contact with this great mystic and *bhakta* and *shakta* and *advaitin* was his *Kathamrita*. He had not used a single abstraction nor discussed any of the problems which pass as philosophy. His talks embodied expressions of a concrete consciousness which had dropped every trace of the dirt and dross and inertia which characterise what is known as normal human consciousness. The metaphors which sprang spontaneously from this purified consciousness were matchless in their aptness and illumined in a few words the knotted problems which many voluminous works had failed to solve. I was now having my first intimations of the immortality towards which Kabir and Nanak and Sri Garibdas had inclined me earlier.

The final breakthrough came with the publication of Ram Swarup's long article, *Buddhism vis-à-vis Hinduism*, in the *Organiser* some time in 1959. The Buddha's parable of the man struck by an arrow and refusing medical aid until a number of his intellectual questions and curiosities were satisfied struck me in my solar plexus, as it were. I had spent a lifetime revelling in intellectual exercises. What was the nature of the Universe? What was man's place in it? Was there a God? Had he created this cosmos? Why had he made such a mess of it? What was the goal of human life? Was man free to pursue that goal? Or was he predetermined and destined and fated for a particular path and towards a particular goal by forces beyond his

control? And so on and so forth, it was an endless cerebration. The Buddha had described it as *Drishhti-Kantar*, the desert of seeking. Ramakrishna had also ridiculed the salt doll of an intellect which had gone out to fathom the great ocean but got dissolved at the very first dip.

I was now sure that the quality of questions I raised was controlled by the quality of my consciousness. And, in turn, the quality of my answers depended on the quality of my questions. Ram Swarup told me that what we called the normal human consciousness had to be made passive before one could establish contact with another consciousness which held the key to the proper questions and the proper answers. Wrestling with and stirring the normal consciousness with all sorts of questions and curiosities was the surest way to block the way for a purer and higher consciousness which was always waiting on the threshold.

I now requested Ram Swarup to initiate me into the art of meditation. He told me that no very elaborate art was involved. I could sit and meditate with him, whenever I liked, wait and watch, go within myself as far as I could manage at any time, dwell on whatever good thoughts got revealed in the process and the rest would follow. I acted upon his simple instructions with some measure of scepticism in my mind. But in the next few days I could see some results which encouraged me for a further endeavour.

One day I meditated on Ahimsa which had remained an abstract concept for me so far. After a while I found myself begging forgiveness from all those whom I had hurt by word or deed, or towards whom I had harboured any ill will. It was not an exercise in generalities. Person after person rose into my memory, going back into the distant past and I bowed in repentance before each one of them. Finally I begged forgiveness from Stalin against whom I had written so much and upon whom I had hurled so many brickbats. The bitterness which had poisoned my life over the long years was swept off my mind in a sudden relaxation of nerves. I felt as if a thousand thorns which had tormented my flesh had been taken out by a master physician without causing the slightest pain. I was in need of no greater assurance that this was the way on which I should walk.

One day I told Ram Swarup how I had never been able to accept the *Devi*, either as Saraswati or as Lakshmi or as Durga or as Kali. He smiled and asked me to meditate on the *Devi* that day. I tried my best in my own way. Nothing happened for some time. Nothing came my way. My mind was a big blank. But in the next moment the void was filled with a sense of some great presence. I did not see any concrete image. No words were whispered in my ears. Yet the rigidity of a lifetime broke down and disappeared. The Great Mother was beckoning her lost child to go and sit in her lap and feel safe from all fears. We had a gramophone record of Dr. Govind Gopal Mukhopadhaya's sonorous *stuti* to the *Devi*. As I played it, I prayed to Her.

There were many more meditations. My progress was not fast; nor did I go far. But I now felt sure that this was the method by which I could rediscover for

myself the great truths of which the ancients had spoken in Hindu scriptures. It was not the end of my seeking, which had only started in right earnest. But it was surely the end of my wandering in search of a shore where I could safely anchor my soul and take stock of my situation.

Ram Swarup warned me very strongly against letting my reflective reason go to sleep under the soporific of inner experience, howsoever deep or steep. This was the trap, he said, into which many a practitioner had fallen and felt sure that they had found the final truth even when they were far away from the goal.

The tragedy of semitic prophets, particularly Moses and Mohammed, was still greater. They had no inkling of the yogic method of deepening, enlarging and purging the human consciousness of its inherent impurities. They passed under the spell of some external though passionate idea, internalised it by a constant and fanatic preoccupation with it, confused the voice of this idea with the voice of God and ended by claiming a monopoly of truth for themselves and a monopoly of virtue for their followers. Jesus Christ was not a semitic prophet in this sense. He was a mystic and a spiritual seeker. But his universal message was soon eclipsed by the exclusive theology of St. Paul and other founding fathers of the Christian Church. They were also seized by a similar external though passionate idea.

The soul's hunger for absolute Truth, absolute Good, absolute Beauty and absolute Power, I was told, was like the body's hunger for wholesome food and drink. And that which satisfied this hunger of the human soul, fully and finally, was *Sanatana Dharma*, true for all times and climes. A votary of *Sanatana Dharma* did not need an arbitrary exercise of will to put blind faith in a supernatural revelation laid down in a single scripture. He did not need the intermediacy of an historical prophet nor the help of an organised church to attain salvation. *Sanatana Dharma* called upon its votary to explore his own self in the first instance and see for himself the truths expounded in sacred scriptures. Prophets and churches and scriptures could be aids but never the substitutes for self-exploration, self-purification and self-transcendence.

I had come back at last, come back to my spiritual home from which I had wandered away in self-forgetfulness. But this coming back was no atavistic act. On the contrary, it was a reawakening to my ancestral heritage which was waiting for me all along to lay my claim on its largenesses. It was also the heritage of all mankind as proved by the seers, sages and mystics of many a time and clime. It spoke in different languages to different people. To me it spoke in the language of Hindu spirituality and Hindu culture at their highest. I could not resist its call. *I became a Hindu.*

(Concluded)

SITA RAM GOEL

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE SURAT CONGRESS (1907)

Author's Note

Keeping the ethics of historical writing in mind, this article has used both the names Sri Aurobindo and Aurobindo. The material of the paper was mostly collected from the Sri Aurobindo Library, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

THE Indian National Congress in its long history of struggle for independence seldom presented a composite picture either of ideology or of method. In its kaleidoscopic mosaic it held together many schools of thought and in the process of its growth it witnessed distinct groups within its own political structure. The first of the series of this kind was the Surat Split of December 1907. Here the moderates and the extremists who were also known as the nationalists divided the Congress while it was still in its youth. The Surat Congress was otherwise also a dividing line; it was held when the political agitation over partition was at its height and there was a general unrest against foreign rule. It was followed by a period of repression and reforms as well as a toning down of the new resurgent spirit. The nationalist movement was more or less a mild affair for eight years till the Home Rule Movement superseded it.

Sri Aurobindo, who had played a vital role in the Surat Episode, recalled:

“History very seldom records the things that were decisive but took place behind the veil; it records the show in front of the curtain. Very few people know that it was I (without consulting Tilak) who gave the order that led to the breaking of the Congress and was responsible for the refusal to join the new-fangled Moderate Convention which were the two decisive happenings at Surat. Even my action in giving the movement in Bengal its militant turn or founding the revolutionary movement is very little known.”¹

This raises a twofold problem, reassessment of Sri Aurobindo's role and a reexamination of the Congress programme.

It is necessary to refer to Aurobindo's early political career here. Six months after his return from England Aurobindo's words in the *Indu Prakash* (“New Lamps for Old”, August 1893) constituted one of the earliest critical notes on the Congress.² He questioned the worthiness of the petitions and constitutional methods adopted by the Congress. He referred to the people as the source of any movement, and decried the Anglo-Indian class which clamoured for more jobs in the name of greater participation in administration. In this Aurobindo was not alone. Tilak, Pal, Laj-

patrai and a host of others also had realised the need for a mass-based movement. Activities of the Arya Samaj, the 'plague' in Bombay and the controversy over the Consent Bill had surcharged the time. The Partition of Bengal came to add fuel to the fire. Bengal was soon a boiling pot, Bipin Pal, Surendranath Banerjee led the movement on the Congress front; P. Mitter, Sister Nivedita and others of the Anushilan Samity tried to co-ordinate the works of various small secret societies that had come up.³

At this stage Aurobindo entered the fray. He established his earliest link with the Anushilan Samity through Jatin Banerjee who had gone to Baroda for training in the army.⁴ He had also sent Barin, his younger brother, to organise secret societies in the early years of the century.⁵ He had also become one of the Vice-Presidents of the Anushilan Samity. At the instance of Barin he had written 'Bhavani Mandir' which envisaged a religio-political organisation for regeneration of the nation. In the wake of the Anti-Circular Movement the National Council of Education was born (1906) and Aurobindo was invited to become the Principal of the National College. This provided him with a permanent footing in Calcutta. The resolution to enforce boycott was adopted in the historic Town Hall Meeting of 7 August 1905 at Calcutta.⁶ The measure for the Partition of Bengal was passed into law on 16 October 1905. On 22 October the Carlyle Circular was issued against students' participation in politics. On 8 November 1905 the first Nationalist School came up at Rangpur.⁷ The first move for a National College was made on 9 November 1905. The National Council of Education came into being on 11 March 1906 and the college opened with Aurobindo as the Principal on 14 August 1906.⁸ The Benares Congress in December 1905 adopted a resolution declaring that the boycott movement in Bengal was justified under special circumstances. To crown everything the Provincial Congress Conference at Barisal in March 1906 was dispersed and Surendranath Banerjee was insulted by Mr. Emerson, the Magistrate.⁹

Aurobindo was present at the break-up and toured certain parts of Bengal with Bepin Pal soon after the conference. The 'Bande Mataram' was started by Pal in August 1906 and almost immediately Aurobindo joined its editorial board at the request of Pal.¹⁰ 'Bande Mataram', 'Sandhya,' 'Navashakti' and 'Jugantar' were the fountain-head of the new spirit in Bengal and Aurobindo headed the informal common editorial board.¹¹ The National Congress at Calcutta in December 1906, being dominated by the supporters of Pal, Tilak and Aurobindo, passed the famous resolution on Swarajya, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education, partly under pressure and partly out of sympathy for Bengali feelings. However, the cracks were visible then. Dadabhai Naoroji's leadership had steered the Country through the crisis. 1907 brought waves of change. The sedition-case against Aurobindo for his writings in the 'Bande Mataram' pushed him into the limelight. Bepin Pal was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for his refusal to give evidence in the above case. The removal of Pal to jail and the death of Upadhaya Brahmabandhab while still undergoing trial left Aurobindo the undisputed master of the nationalist group in Bengal.¹²

It was as the leader of the nationalists that Aurobindo took part in the Midnapore District Conference of November 1907—a conference made memorable by the first open rupture between the moderates and the extremists. One month later he attended the Surat Congress as the nationalist chief of Bengal.

The original venue for the 1907 Congress Conference was Nagpur—a stronghold of Tilak and the nationalists. The moderates fearing domination by the extremists shifted the venue to their stronghold of Surat. The extremists wanted Lala Lajpatrai who had been recently released from jail to be elected as the President and thought his election would serve as a fitting reply to the repressive posture of the government. The moderates feared that repression might follow his election and wanted as President Dr. Rashbehari Ghose to whom the extremists were opposed.¹³ Lala's refusal to enter the contest thwarted the nationalist hope. Dr. Ghose's name was proposed and approved by the Reception Committee and was to be formally approved by the Conference as was the tradition then. Further, there was a general well-founded suspicion expressed both by the press and the extremists that the moderates did not want to stick to the Calcutta Resolutions.

Tilak held a public meeting on 23 December 1907 at Surat on the eve of the Conference.¹⁴ He urged the public to help the nationalists to pass a resolution on the subject of boycott and national education. He pointed out that twenty years of petitioning had proved fruitless. On 24 December Aurobindo presided over a closed-door meeting of the nationalists and called upon the delegates to enforce the nationalist view on the Indian National Congress and to make it a body of concentration of work instead of what it had been so far: a body of concentration of opinion.¹⁵ In this meeting Tilak stated the details. He said that the nationalists' aim was not to secede from the Congress but to make it a Nationalist Congress. He pointed out the difference between nationalists and moderates. The moderates wanted self-government on colonial lines while the nationalists wanted independence. The method of the moderates was prayer, petition and protest; the nationalist method was boycott, passive resistance and self-reliance. The whole aim, Tilak pointed out, was to force nationalist views on the Congress or at any rate to see that the Congress did not slide back from the Calcutta position. As the draft resolution was not available even a day before the conference, a very unusual thing, the suspicion grew stronger.¹⁶ On 25 December Lala Lajpat arrived at Surat. He promised to take an initiative to resolve the difference. A committee was even formed by Tilak to carry on the possible negotiation. But nothing came of this attempt. On the morning of 26 December the day of the conference, Tilak along with Aurobindo and some others met Surendranath Banarjee.¹⁷ The latter, unable to help in the matter, asked them to meet Mr. Malvi, Chairman of the Reception Committee. But Malvi declined to meet Tilak.

Without the confusion being cleared the Congress Conference commenced at 2.30 p.m. on 26 December 1907. Nevinson, a silent witness to the episode, gives the following report:

“Waving their arms, their scarves, their sticks, and umbrellas, a solid mass of delegates and spectators on the right of the chair sprang to their feet and shouted without a moment’s pause... the whole ten thousand were on their feet, shouting for order, shouting for tumult. Mr. Malvi, still half in the chair, rang his brass Benares bell and rang in vain. Surendranath sprang on the very table itself. Again and again he shouted, unheard as silence. He sat down and for a moment the storm was lulled. The voices of the leaders were audible, consulting in agitated tones. Dr. Ghose, shrill, impatient and perturbed with anger; Mr. Gokhale distressed, anxious, harassed with vain negotiation and sleepless nights. Already one caught the word ‘suspension’; ‘if they will not hear Surendranath, whom will they hear?’ said one. ‘It is an insult to Bengal,’ cried a third. Again Surendranath sprang on the table and again the assembly roared with clamour. Again the chairman rang his Benares bell and rang in vain. In an inaudible voice, like a sob, he declared the sitting suspended.”¹⁸

Hectic negotiations were tried by Mr. Chunilal of Surat and Prof. Gajjar on the night of 26 and in the morning of 27 December.

All chances of a negotiated solution being closed, Tilak informed the other group that he proposed to move an amendment. Tilak knew that many sympathised with the nationalist cause but had to be dragged from their position of inaction. He wanted to move an adjournment seeking that the matter might be referred to a negotiating committee formed by taking members from both the groups. Moderates rightly feared that such a proposal would gain immediate support. A slip requesting permission to move an adjournment in Tilak’s own handwriting was passed to Mr. Malvi while the procession was moving to the dias. The proceedings of 27 December began with a speech by Mr. Malvi. Surendranath seconded the proposal. He was heard without disturbance. Then Subarao was asked by Malvi to support the resolution. While he was doing so Tilak began to move to the platform finding his request for an adjournment motion dishonoured. Malvi declared Dr. Rashbehari Ghose elected President amid shouts of ‘No,’ ‘No.’ By this time Tilak had planted himself on the platform. Malvi and Dr. Ghose ruled out the proposed motion and ordered Tilak to return to his seat.¹⁹ The latter insisted on his right to address the conference. What followed is best described by Nevinson:

“Uproar drowned the rest. With folded arms Mr. Tilak faced the audience. On either side of him young moderates sprang to their feet, wildly gesticulating vengeance. Shaking their fists and yelling to the air, they clamoured to hurl him down the step off the platform. Behind him Dr. Ghose mounted the table, and, ringing an unheard bell, harangued the storm in shrill, agitated, unintelligible denunciations. Restraining the rage of moderates ingeminating peace, if ever man ingeminated—Mr. Gokhale, sweet-natured even in extremes, stood beside his old opponent, flinging out both arms to protect him from the threatened onset. But

Mr. Tilak asked for no protection. He stood there with folded arms, defiant, calling on violence to do its worst, calling on violence to move him, for he would move for nothing else in hell or heaven. In front, the white clad audience roared like a tumultuous sea.

“Suddenly something flew through the air—a shoe—a Mahratta shoe, reddish leather, pointed toe, sole studded with lead. It struck Surendranath Banerjee on the cheek; it cannoned off upon Sir Pherozshah Mehta. It flew, it fell, and as if at a given signal white waves of turbaned men surged up the escarpment of the platform, leaping, climbing, hissing the breath of fury, brandishing long sticks they came, striking at any head that looked to them moderate and in another moment, between brown legs standing upon the green baize table, I caught the glimpses of the Indian National Congress dissolving in chaos.”²⁰

The disturbance was only quelled by the appearance of the Police. At the request of Phirozshah Mehta, Mr. Beatty, the District Superintendent of Police, cleared the unruly crowd from the pendal.²¹

(To be concluded)

SUSMITA PRASAD PANI

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THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

The flame is within the light
The joy is within the flame
The Lord is within the joy
The light of the world is within the flame.

Within the world
The Lord gives joy to all
The Lord gives joy to those who work the land
And to those who live in towns he gives as much joy as he can.
Certainly he does to Indians in India
And to other countries too.
Italy, France, England
And to those Indians in America
And to the negroes in Africa
And to the Chinese in China
And to the Russians in Russia
And to every, every, everybody
The rich and the poor
The fat and the lean
The Lord gives.
He adores and looks from above
And to all he sends God's love

The flame is within the light
The joy is within the flame
The Lord is within the joy
The light of the world is within the flame.

ISHITA (8 years old)

ANANDA RANGA PILLAI AND HIS PRIVATE DIARY*

WHEN Ananda Ranga Pillai began writing his diary on September 6, 1736, he could have neither dreamt that his diary was destined to be read by the public and researched by historians and scholars nor known that he was enriching Tamil literature with a prose classic. A reading of the diary shows that the idea of publishing it was far from his mind, though his intention was to "preserve and perpetuate in his family a souvenir of the events of his time". Since the diary was not written for perusal by others, except perhaps the immediate members of his own family, it would have wasted its sweetness on the desert air and worms would have tried its long-preserved virginity, had not a Gallois Montbru come to its timely rescue in 1846. Father of a Mayor of Pondicherry, this Frenchman Gallois Montbru, who learnt the Tamil language and took the deepest interest in old vernacular writings, discovered the volumes along with the diarist's sword and pistol, hidden under dust and cobwebs in Ranga Pillai's house.

Gallois Montbru made a copy of the original for his own use and later translated it into French. Much later Edouarde Ariel, a minister in the French Government at Pondicherry, had a copy made and deposited the original for safe keeping in the National Library of Paris. A complete English translation was undertaken in the early 20th century under the guidance of H. Dodwell, Curator, Madras Records Office and was published in 12 volumes (1917-1928). The French Consulate in Pondicherry bore the expense of publishing the diary in the original Tamil and the work began in 1948.

As a record of matters political, historical, social and personal the diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai is an invaluable treasure. It is commonly believed that Indians have no awareness of history and there is not much of Indian historical literature. But Ranga Pillai dispels such beliefs by recording as an eye-witness the manners of the court and of society.

Ananda Rangappan was born on March 30, 1709, in Perambur, a suburb of Madras, where his affluent father carried on business as a merchant. In the boy's seventh year, his father, Thiruvengadam Pillai, migrated with his family to Pondicherry.

Thiruvengadam Pillai, whose chief intention of coming to Pondicherry was to assist his brother-in-law, Nainiya Pillai, the then Courtier or Chief Dubash, in his trade, earned the goodwill of the people and made a name as an honest man. He was honoured with the post of an assistant native agent and later Dewan to the French East India Company, an association formed by French merchants for the purpose of trading directly with India. He carried out competently whatever work was entrusted to him, and Ranga Pillai, who always accompanied his father, learnt the

* Paper read in the Seminar conducted by Tamil Aaivarangam, at the Chambre de Commerce, Pondicherry, on May 30, 1982.

nuances of the trade and became well-versed in the politics of the day.

While still in office, Thiruvengadam Pillai died in June 1726. Ranga Pillai, to keep his head above water, had to open an arecanut shop, which he did not abandon even when he was honoured with powerful posts. We are told that he used the shop as a place for meeting his friends in the evenings and gathering information.

In the same year M. Lenoir came from France and assumed office as Governor of Pondicherry. On hearing of the death of Thiruvengadam Pillai, for whom he had had high regard, Lenoir appointed Ranga Pillai native head of the French Factory at Porto Novo, where large quantities of blue cloth known as 'Company cloth' were manufactured both for the company and for private traders. As business picked up, Ranga Pillai's status in the French service rose.

But this promising young man had to wait for 12 more years to enjoy due recognition of his services when Joseph François Dupleix, Knight of the Order of St. Michael, arrived as Governor in 1742. Ranga Pillai never believed either in sycophancy or bribery. Yet he rapidly rose to power, working honestly and efficiently. Here is what he wrote about himself in his diary, dated February 26, 1747: "No one has acquired the reputation that I have; and my fame is in the mouths of ambassadors at courts, Governors of Provinces, men of rank and all people living within 300 leagues of this... They all say: 'We have never seen, or heard, a man equal to Ananda Rangappan in diplomatic skill, in keenness of intellect, or in boldness of conception; or, in fact, in any other qualification whatsoever'..."

With the death of Kanagaraya Mudaliar in 1746, the post of Chief Dubash fell vacant and Dupleix, who had full trust in Ranga Pillai's integrity and capacity, made him successor to the dead Courtier. As the most trusted of the Indian advisors, Dupleix consulted Ranga Pillai and acted upon his advice on many intricate points. The public and the officials had high respect and regard for his remarkable shrewdness and honesty in business. The French had an unshakable faith in him and they never thought twice before they accorded him the privilege of minting French coins in India. He was a prosperous merchant who owned ships that toured the seas. Money came flooding in, but he spent much of it on philanthropic causes. As a connoisseur of the arts and literature of his day, Ranga Pillai helped poets by wiping off their debts and they, in turn, sang songs in praise of their patron. Quite a number of such works exist to this day. Kasthuri Rangaiyar's 'Ananda Rangurat Sandamu', Poet Sreenivasa's 'Ananda Ranga Sambu' and Poet Thiagaraja Desigar's 'Ananda Ranga Kovai' deserve mention here.

A lover of his mother-tongue, he always signed his letters, both official and personal, and even documents, in Tamil and was proud to do so. Though well-versed in French, Portuguese, English and Persian, Ranga Pillai preferred to write his diary in Tamil.

The diarist jotted down his impressions of events in bound volumes of the size of large account notebooks. The diary was begun on September 6, 1736 and continued till September 1760. He died shortly after, on January 11, 1761. Though there

is no change of style, it is certain that the diary was not written throughout in his own hand. There is evidence of several hands with the occasional writing of Ranga Pillai himself. Perhaps overload of work, or illness because of travel, caused him to dictate to his amanuenses in the privacy of his bedroom after the chores of the day were over.

The diarist, to quote a translator, "did not record day by day the events which he considered worthy of mention. Sometimes consecutive entries are to be found; then breaks of more or less length occur; then the events of a single day appear; and then the entries are made under one date of the occurrences of several days—perhaps from notes". But the diary gives for 25 years a consecutive record of what the Chief Dubash did, of the people whom he saw and what he thought of those people. Dupleix and his wife, Chanda Saheb, Yousouf Khan, Lally, Labour Donnais and many others come to us in flesh and blood.

Here is the diarist's estimate of Dupleix's character after having observed him for four years: "His method of doing things is not known to anyone, because none else is possessed of the quick mind with which he is gifted. In patience he has no equal. He has peculiar skill in carrying out his plans and designs; in the management of affairs and in governing; in fitting his advice to times and persons; in maintaining at all times an even countenance; in closing things through proper agents; in addressing them in proper terms; and in assuming a bearing at once dignified and courteous towards all. Besides this, if his courage, character, bearing, greatness of mind and skill in the battlefield were put to the test, he could be compared only with Emperor Aurangzeb and Louis XIV and not with any other monarch."

About the Deputy Governor M. Delorme, the diarist observes, when the former left for France after his period of office was over: "Many in Pondicherry were concerned at the departure of the Deputy Governor, for he was liked by the people for his just decisions. He made no distinction between the rich and the poor, never took a bribe and treated the native on a footing of equality with the European." And about the promoted official M. Legou, the diarist writes: "The people were also grieved at the thought of having his (M. Delorme) successor M. Legou who is not famed for his uprightness and has a partiality for Europeans. They were aware of the weak administration of M. Dumas and feared that no check would be exercised over M. Legou."

Ranga Pillai's keen observation, fostered by his status in society, made his diary a source book of history. Very interested in contemporary events, he records in his diary "the valuable account of things historical, political and social appertaining to the period embracing the rise, the zenith and the decline of the French power in India". Not only great events like the negotiations ending in the purchase by the French of Karaikal, a village in Tanjore district, and the grant by the Nabob of Arcot to the French to mint their own coinage are recorded, but also the gun salutes which were fired on every possible occasion and the enormous sums of money spent on gunpowder.

The diary opens to us the vistas of bygone times. We are introduced to the customs and manners of the natives in the 18th century. When Dupleix came to Pondicherry to assume office as Governor, the natives welcomed him and the rich men and merchants gave him a lot of presents. The following few lines are what the diarist entered in his notebook on July 14, 1747: "With the presents given to Dupleix by the people, he got up and entered his coach. As he passed the gate 15 guns were fired from the walls and the soldiers formed a lane from the gate upto the grass market. First went a white banner, then men carrying tufts of peacock feathers, then horses with kettle drums and elephants with flags. Then came the troop of horse, and last of all the Mahe sepoys and horsemen. Besides these were the dancing-girls and various instruments, drums and so forth. This procession left the tent with great pomp and splendour at half-past seven. It went as far as the painters' bazaar, then turning South-West down Muttayya Pillai Street, passed the Vedapuri Iswaran Temple, skirted the South rampart and reached the East Gate. Then 21 guns were fired. At last it reached the South entrance to the Governor's House and he went in and sat down, on which there was another salute of 21 guns. In the course of the procession bundles of crackers were fired 7 or 8 times. It was a grand sight. At last all took leave of the Governor and went home."

The brutal punishments exercised on culprits are described. The culprit—be he officer or thug—was tied to a neem tree and flogged, the number of strokes depending on the nature of the crime, and salt and vinegar were daubed on the wounds before he was thrown into the godown of the Fort. Intoxicating drinks were prohibited and bootleggers were fined heavily and put behind bars for a year. And it is very interesting to read in the diary dated June 11, 1739, the following account: "Chevalier Dumas, the Governor of Pondicherry, has issued the following proclamation by beat of tom-tom: 'No person shall commit a nuisance within the limits of the town, either on the beach, or on the banks of the Upparu river running to the South of St. Paul's Church, or in the public roads. Anyone offending in this respect will be liable to a fine of six Panams ($\frac{3}{4}$ of a rupee), two of which will be paid to the person who seizes the delinquent in the act, the remaining four being credited to the funds of the court.' The foregoing rule is being reinforced. The number of citizens who have taken to heart the severity of this measure is beyond calculation". Here is one more example of how the soldiers were punished: "There was a remarkable occurrence this day (June 11, 1738). A soldier who had deserted and been captured, and who had remained in confinement for the last fifteen days, was made an example of, as a warning to others. He was removed to the South of the Fort, near the ditch and ordered to kneel. He was then blindfolded and shot through the heart by 3 soldiers who stood opposite to him with their muskets aimed at his breast."

He details the costs of commodities: Horses (highbreed)—400 pagodas (100 pagodas=320 Arcot rupees); Horses (lowbreed)—150 pagodas; 9 betel leaves for 1 kasu (now paise); 10 palams of tobacco leaves for 1 Panam and the wages paid to soldiers—Rs. 20 a month.

He describes the religious rites and festivals of Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Not only do Pongal and Sivarathri or Bhakr-id and Kandoori or Easter and Christmas find their places in the diary but also the Fire Festival (the devotees run on a pit of 20 feet in length and 10 feet in breadth, filled up with live coals without burning their feet) and the Hunting Festival (the night on which every house in the town was illuminated and which was passed in rejoicing).

He furnishes information regarding business transactions and affairs of state like "*Prince de Condé* (a ship) was laden with 800 bales of cloth and was to proceed to Mahé and receive there a consignment of pepper" and "A daily post was established between Tanjore, Pondicherry and Karaikal to facilitate communication between these places."

He narrates trivial things like the gossip of the town; for instance, the case of a French official, M. Coquet, Notary Public, who with Dutch courage entered an Indian house, made a nuisance of himself and pursued a girl who rushed out. He was severely beaten up as a result.

One can always read the diary for the sheer descriptive skill of Ranga Pillai. Look at the way he describes the havoc caused by a hurricane blast: "Pondicherry was last night (Nov. 3, 1745) visited by a hurricane, which commenced immediately after sunset. It blew the whole night. The destruction caused by it cannot, even approximately, be estimated. During the night the avenues of margosas and portias growing in the town were uprooted. Many trees were twisted out of shape. The coconut, mango, and other trees in orchards and gardens were all laid low and many persons have thereby been ruined... The houses in the three streets of the newly formed suburb were all swept away... Many persons were drowned; the cattle also perished in great numbers... During this storm crows, sparrows and other birds perished in large numbers and their remains lay floating on the water which filled the streets. The plantations in the outlying places of the town were utterly destroyed... Had the storm continued a day longer, not a single building in the town would have remained standing."

While reading the diary, we feel as if the diarist himself were speaking to us, for Ranga Pillai wrote as he spoke. There is no pundit pomposity in his writings. His charming prose style is rich, racy with the colloquial idioms of the day, and is a boon to linguistic researchers.

P. RAJA

“PRIDE GOETH BEFORE A FALL”

AN OLD STORY

RISHI Narad was a great devotee of the Lord. It was said of him that he lived, breathed and acted only for the Divine. For such a devotee tapasya—austerity—is not a necessity. But at some evil and unauspicious moment he decided to do tapasya.

He had neither wife nor children nor relatives. So he did not have to take leave of anyone to do tapasya. He at once put his thought into action. He went to the Himalaya. On the bank of the Ganga he found a fine spot for meditation and began to meditate on Adi Narayana. Narad reached the stage of Samadhi and lost all body-consciousness.

Indra, King of heaven, became suspicious of Narad’s purpose. Thought Indra, “Is he doing tapasya to gain heaven’s kingdom?” He called the God of Love, Kamadeva, in his presence and ordered him to do something to interrupt Narad’s tapasya.

Kamadeva was all agog for the interruption. So he came at once to the place where Narad was doing tapasya. He called the coil, maina, parrot, peacock, papaiya, ambassadors of spring, to his aid, he called also spring and the heavenly nymphs, fairies and apsaras. To them it seemed child’s play to tempt Narad.

Narad opened his eyes and Kamadeva shot his arrows, but not a fibre of Narad stirred. He remained immobile like Mount Meru. The apsaras’ hopes remained unfulfilled, neither their music nor their dance was of any avail. Kamadeva exhausted all his resources but to no purpose. At last he accepted defeat and departed. Thus Narad became *kānavijetā*—victor over Kama.

Even though Kamadeva had tried his level best to disturb Narad, Narad did not become angry with Kamadeva. So he also became *krodhavijetā*—victor over Anger. Thus he got two siddhis.

But in the wake of the two siddhis came vanity—the arch-enemy of the devotees—by the back door. Narad forgot that the strength to win victory over Kama and Krodha was given by the Divine. So instead of singing songs in praise of the Divine, he began to sing his own greatness. He thought: “Is there anyone either on earth or in heaven as capable as I?” Narad remembered that Bhagawan Shankara—Shiva—was *kānavijetā*. But he said to himself: “No doubt, Shankara Bhagawan is *kānavijetā* but he is not *krodhavijetā* like me.”

But what was the use of siddhis, if other persons did not know of it? So Narad was eager to tell of his siddhis. But the question arose: “Who should be the first fortunate person to hear of them?” One who has undergone the same kind of difficulties can well appreciate them. To Narad’s mind Bhagawan Shankara seemed a good target. So he went to Kailas. Bhagawan Shankara gave a seat to him and said: “You have come after many days. Where were you?” Said Narad: “Oh! I had been to the Himalaya and there I was meditating on Adi Narayana.” Bhagawan Shankar said:

“You have done well; meditation brings purity of mind and he is a great man who meditates.” Said Narad: “My will is to meditate constantly, but people come to interrupt my meditation.” Bhagawan Shankar asked: “Who came?” Narad was waiting for this; he said: “Kamadeva came with apsaras and was doing plenty of mischief, creating many obstacles.” Bhagawan Shankar asked: “What happened next?” Narad said: “What could happen? How can he injure me? I remained calm, immobile like Mount Meru, not a fibre stirred. Kamadeva retired as he had arrived, with nothing done.” Bhagawan Shankar congratulated Narad but did not like the words of self-praise that had been spoken. He said to Narad: “For your welfare I advise you not to tell this story to Adi Narayana when you go to Vaicuntha—not even if Adi Narayana asks you.”

Narad did not like this advice. He said to himself: “When did I ask Bhagawan Shankar’s advice? Why then should I listen to him? Verily he has become jealous. Up till now it was said that Bhagawan Shankar was the only one to gain victory over Kama: now that I have also got *kāma-vijaya*, he has grown envious of me and so he gives me this advice. I have won victory over Kama. It is truth, nothing but absolute truth. What harm is there in telling the truth? Will Adi Narayana suffer from ear-ache if I tell the truth?”

Now that Bhagawan Shankar had forbidden Narad to tell his story to Adi Narayana, Narad became more anxious to tell his story to him. So he at once went to Vaicuntha. Adi Narayana was pleased to see Narad and He said: “You have come after a long time, anything new?” On hearing this Narad began to sing his song with gusto and said to Adi Narayana: “I was meditating on You on the bank of the Ganga in the Himalaya, but many people came to disturb me. Indra had sent Kama with his army.” Said Adi Narayana: “What happened next?” Narad was waiting for this cue with a hungry heart. He clean forgot that “Pride goeth before a fall”. He assumed a haughty demeanour, drew himself up, his eyes became fanatically proud and he replied: “What was there to happen? They could not succeed in their purpose. They tried many blandishments to move my mind. Kama shot many arrows, still I was not moved. I was meditating on You. Others may succumb to the charms of Kama but not I. Kama had knocked at the wrong door. He forgot that he had to deal with Narad. My Lord, I will tell you this: ‘Vain was the provocation of events. Nothing within answered to the outward touch. No nerve was stirred and no reaction rose.’” When Narad finished his say, a self-satisfied smile spread over his face.

The Lord said: “Narad, what can Kama do to you? Even Your name saves one from Kama.” Narad had talked with the Lord up till now singing his own song, but now to show that he was humble he said: “Lord! it is Your Grace that works, my Lord by Your Grace I did not become even angry with Kama, though Bhagawan Shankar had become angry with him.” Under the guise of humility one uses words of sheer pride.

The Lord knew that the seed of ego had taken root in Narad’s being. He

thought of the havoc that would be wrought in Narad's life if the seed sprouted in a royal fulfilment. "Narad thinks himself superior to Shiva. Even though Shiva had asked Narad not to tell his story to me, he has told the story with gusto. My bhakta has become proud. Pride must be destroyed—uprooted—and that too immediately." So mused the Lord and took resort to His Maya. He manifested a big city on the way on which Narad was going.

The people of the city were like Kamadeva. A big tent was erected. Narad thought: "What and whose city is this?" He asked a passerby about it. The passerby replied: "This city is called Suyojan and the name of the King is Shibnidhi. He has a daughter by name Vishava-Mohini. Today is her Swayamvara—marriage-choice. Kings from all countries have come." Narad wondered. Then he went to the palace. On seeing Narad the King got up and welcomed him. The King said: "You are a saint. I consider it a good fortune that you have come. I am doubly glad because today is the Swayamvara of my daughter. Kings of all countries have arrived." So saying the King called Vishava-Mohini and asked her to do pranam to Narad. Vishava-Mohini genuflected before the saint and the King prayed to Narad to bless her. Vishava-Mohini was exquisitely bewitching as her very name indicated. She was a marvel of creation.

Narad began to look at Vishava-Mohini with unwinking eyes. From the moment he set his eyes on her, his wisdom vanished, discrimination went to the winds. He fell head over heels in love with the princess and was possessed of a burning passion to get her. He began to look at Vishava-Mohini often; her beauty proved to be a magnet to which his eyes remained glued for minutes together, and one sole thought took possession of his mind. That thought was, "How beautiful she is!" Ordinarily Narad had full control over himself, but this day he became a slave of Kama and began to look at Vishava-Mohini again and again.

Narad suddenly said to the King: "I want to see the palm of your daughter." He began to examine the palm of Vishava-Mohini. On studying it he was convinced that the person whom Vishava-Mohini might marry would be ever young, ageless and immortal. Narad thought: "This is all for the good. By marrying the princess one gets the most beautiful girl as wife, and at the same time becomes immortal. Can there be anything better? I would be most happy to get this girl."

Narad resolved to marry Vishava-Mohini. But there was a difficulty in the way. He knew that he was not very handsome and so naturally the girl would not select him. What should he do? He said to himself: "I must become the handsomest man. In this world Adi Narayana is the most handsome, therefore I must ask Him to make me just like Him. I have never asked Him for anything up till now. If I ask Him, He will give me the boon. If I become as handsome as He, it is decreed that Vishava-Mohini will select me." So Narad decided to go to Vaicuntha. But immediately another thought came: "By the time I go to Vaicuntha and return, the Swayamvara will be over, so let me remember Adi Narayana. If I remember Him sincerely, He will surely come. It is better to call Him here." Narad thought further: "If I tell the

Lord that I want to marry the princess, the Lord will advise me like this: ‘Narad, it is better that you are alone, why set your foot into this entanglement, why do you want the contract marriage? It is better that you should do bhakti.’ It would be best not to tell Him my motive. If I let Him know my motive, He will certainly say: ‘Nay.’ I will keep my motive secret. I will only tell the Lord: ‘Give me your handsomeness,’ and my purpose will be served.” Narad forgot that the Lord is omniscient. He began to remember the Lord. The Lord manifested before him. Narad saluted the Lord and said: “My Lord, I was specially remembering You today. I am very desirous of becoming as handsome as You.” The Lord said: “Narad, you are more handsome than I. How would you benefit by becoming as handsome as myself?” Narad said: “No, no, my Lord, I want to become as handsome as You on purpose. Give Your handsomeness to me.” The Lord replied: “Narad, why this kind of desire today?” Said Narad: “Lord! why do you ask this? It is not necessary. I want to be as handsome as You. For my welfare I want to become as handsome as You for some time.”

The Lord understood that Narad had become a slave to Kama and therefore begged for His handsomeness. The Lord thought: “I shall have to do something to cure him of this disease. Even if a patient asks for things which are injurious, a good physician does not give them to the patient.” The Lord resorted to a strategy and said: “I will do what is for your welfare. I will give you the beauty of Hari.” The Lord did not clarify what He meant by “Hari”. The word “Hari” has two meanings: one is “Bhagawan” and the other is “monkey”. Narad felt: “The Lord knows what is for my welfare, my benefit, and therefore He will give His handsomeness to me.” Narad went running to the place where the Swayamvara was to take place. Many kings had assembled; rishis and gods had also gathered together. Even the Lord had come disguised as a king. Vishava-Mohini came with a garland to the tent.

Now two attendants of Shiva who were in the know of the true fact said to Narad: “You are very handsome and surely the princess will choose you.” The two attendants were joking but Narad thought that as he was as handsome as the Lord, it was but natural that the princess should choose him. He began to meditate on the princess.

When the princess came before Narad she saw his face as that of a monkey. She took ill and thought: “How has a monkey come here?” And she turned away from Narad.

Narad became restless. He began to cough, hoping thereby to attract the attention of the princess, but she did not even look at him. She saw Adi Narayana in the guise of a king and put the garland round Adi Narayana’s neck.

On seeing this, Narad became very sorry and agitated. Shiva’s attendants asked him to look at his own face in a mirror. Narad rose and mirrored his face in still water.

Immediately he realised that the Lord had given him the beauty of a monkey. He became crestfallen and started to weep.

Then he took a bath and regained his original form, but became very angry.

He thought: "The Lord has played a cruel joke at my cost. He gave me the face of a monkey. When He meets me, I will make Him see what it is to make a jest at Narad's cost." Narad's eyes became red with anger, his lips began to quiver. Each and every fibre of him was saturated with anger against the Lord and he was ready to curse the Lord.

Now it happened that the Lord came from the opposite direction in a chariot. On one side of Him was Laxmi and on the other Vishava-Mohini. At this sight Narad's eyes became much redder. The Lord asked him: "Maharaj, why are you restless and depressed today? What has happened?" This proved to be the last straw, and Narad's wrath knew no bounds, it transgressed all limits and he began to vituperate the Lord thus: "You are jealous of people's prosperity. You cannot bear the good day of others. You are utterly selfish. You are sly like a fox. You are a great fraud. At the time of churning of the ocean You made Shiva drink poison and turned him into a mendicant—Vava. You gave wine to asuras and made them mad. You kept Amrita and Laxmi for Yourself. You are independent, there is no superior, so You do what You like. As yet You have met no one to break your head. You believe that there is no one who can outface You. I am going to curse You today. Today You are in my hands. I will punish You. What do You mean by giving me the form of a monkey and Yourself coming disguised as a king to take away the girl I wanted to marry? I curse You. You will be a king. You are taking away the girl that I wanted, so someone will take away Your wife. You made me weep for the girl, so You will weep for your wife. You have made me unhappy, so also You will be unhappy. Remember that You gave me the form of a monkey. You will have to seek help from monkeys."

Narad went on in this strain vituperating the Lord. At this time the Lord withdrew His Maya. The moment the veil of Maya was removed, there was neither Vishava-Mohini, nor palace, nor the king Shibnidhi, nor Suyojan city. There were only the Lord and Narad.

When the Lord withdrew His Maya, Narad became his original self again. He was convinced that he had seen the Lord's Maya. He mused: "To remove my pride—moha—the Lord did this Lila. To what extent I became a slave of Kama! To what extent my intellect became perverse! I spoke words which ought not to have been uttered. I spoke ill of the Lord. I even cursed the Lord. What have I done? I am a great sinner. I degraded myself." Narad bowed down before the Lord and said: "Punish me, show me the way to expiate my sin." The Lord said: "You disobeyed Bhagawan Shankar, so you have committed a crime against Shiva, therefore you should do Japa of His Name." Narad said: "I shall do as You say, but I want to recall the curse." The Lord said, "Your word should not prove false, I welcome the curse."

So saying the Lord disappeared and Narad began to do Japa of Shiva's Name: "*Om namaḥ Śivāya.*"

The curse was fulfilled when the Lord incarnated as Rama, whose wife Sita was taken away by Ravana.

VALLABH SHETH

EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

(43)

SOMETIME ago a calendar was distributed in our Ashram with a picture of our Mother when She was two or perhaps three years old. Did anyone see a sweeter face? It reminded me of the lines in *Savitri*:

O lasso of my rapture's widening noose,
Become my cord of universal love.
The spirit ensnared by thee force to delight
Of creation's oneness sweet and fathomless,
Compelled to embrace my myriad unities
And all my endless forms and divine souls.
O Mind, grow full of the eternal peace;
O Word, cry out the immortal litany:
Built is the golden tower, the flame-child born.

The picture reminded me also of a statue we had seen in Rome of the Child Christ. On the Capitoline Hill there is a church known as St. Maria Aracoeli. Inside there is a silver statue of the Child Christ. The most remarkable thing about the statue is that it wears all over its body priceless jewels like those we in India make our idols of our Deities wear. The statue is called "Bambino", a very musical name, and it is taken out in procession once a year to bless the citizens of Rome. The occasion is a day of great rejoicing and festivity. Bambino has unusual powers. When someone is sick and dying and the doctors have failed, Bambino is taken out and sent to the sick person and the statue is placed over his body. The people of Rome believe that Bambino has never failed. The dying man is restored. To me it seems Bambino has other powers besides this. Bambino's geese can detect the sound of the enemy's army advancing towards Rome. The story runs that several times in history Bambino's geese have in this way warned the Romans of the enemy's designs. They made a tremendous sound by their cackling. And Bambino can inspire historians. It seems that Edward Gibbon when sitting near the church of St. Maria Aracoeli first conceived the idea of writing an exhaustive history of the Roman Empire.

"Oh Rome, my country, city of my soul,"

wrote Byron and Gibbon was one with him.

*

In ancient Samarkand, Baghdad, Granada and Seville they used to have water-gardens. We read of the fabulous novelties, and contraptions, devices and even water-jokes, that were there. In modern times perhaps we would not relish the water-jokes but it seems that the ancient people enjoyed them very much. Whether Italy took the idea from the ancient people or not is not known, but water being plentiful in Italy water-gardens are there almost everywhere. Italy is the only country where we can change the lines of Coleridge "Water, water everywhere/ And not a drop to drink" into "Water, water everywhere/ And lots of it to drink." The whole peninsula is uneven and full of hills and rivers, valleys and streams. Ancient Rome brought in water by aqueducts from mountains some forty miles away. The Romans enjoyed the unique luxury of even choosing from which river they would take their drinking water, a luxury even we moderns, with all our advanced technology, cannot boast of.

Among the water-gardens in Italy the one in Villa d'Este in Tivoli is unquestionably the best. It is very near Rome and within the reach of any tourists. Built for Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, a scion of the great Estensi family of Ferrera, it was designed by Piero Ligorio although most of the ideas were his master's. To such an extravaganza of falling water, somewhere roaring, somewhere thundering, whispering, lipping, murmuring, splashing, spouting, rushing, gushing, cascading, drizzling, there is no parallel. It is a veritable fantasy. Walt Disney may have got some of his ideas from Villa d'Este, and created his picture "Fantasia". Liszt, the famous composer and pianist, once spent some time in the Villa d'Este. Night and day he heard the symphony of the water in the garden below and produced his exquisite piece, "Fountain of the Villa d'Este". In it he has reproduced all the varied sounds of water that enchanted him.

As in Rome proper, so in the suburbs and surrounding hills we come across gardens and palaces that would charm anyone who visited them. The Sabine hills around Rome are an astonishing place. Here from ancient times the people of Rome have built their summer palaces, to avoid the oppressive heat of the city when the Sirocco blew from Africa. By Tibur, the dew-fed Tibur, the breezy Tibur, the leisurely Tibur people in an aristocratic way developed the very best things of life. They say statues from these palaces had been stolen and taken to such far places as Stockholm and Leningrad and London and Paris.

The waters of Italy have from ancient times enchanted even non-Italians. Wagner, it seems, standing on a balcony overhanging a canal in Venice decided that that was the most suitable place for him to compose his "Tristan and Isolde". And the long note of the horn that one hears at the beginning of the third act of "Tristan" is an exact reproduction of a cry heard by him on the Grand Canal; two gondoliers singing Tasso's "Jerusalem". Many years before Wagner, Goethe was so charmed by the songs of the gondoliers plying their gondolas on the Venetian waters that he arranged a stage that he thought was most congenial to hearing the songs. Goethe made two gondoliers stand far apart on the brink of the water leaving their gondolas, then each sang his portion. Goethe walked to and fro not missing a single word or a single

note. And what songs they sang were from Tasso's poems or Verdi's operas.

Verdi is the most beloved of all Italy's composers. At eleven he was already composing operas. Later his music took the form of political expression, his operas were a stirring call to act. The movement known in history as the Unification of Italy had for its music Verdi's "Risorgimento". They say that in the Nineteenth Century whenever his "Risorgimento" was sung the Austrian police were put on guard. "Viva Verdi" became a password. In the bath of Caracalla the play "Aida" by Verdi was going on. Time was short, a friend of ours took us in for a little while. We were greatly impressed, for we had heard of Verdi and his work if not his music. It was evident that to enjoy Verdi one's ears must be trained.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

APPRECIATION OF THE MOTHER'S BOOKLET "IDEAL CHILD"

FROM MR. SONNY OF THAILAND

C/o C-86, Defence Colony, New Delhi-110024
9th December, 1982

To the Ashram

Dear Sirs,

I am a visitor from Thailand and I came to participate in the Asiad held recently in your most beautiful country. In the Conference Room a person distributed copies of the small but very attractive publication "The Mother—Ideal Child". I have liked the book and would like to distribute copies of the same when I go back to my country. I am grateful to the gentleman who distributed this book and should like to follow the great ideals contained in the book for raising my children and the children of my own community.

I would also take upon me the responsibility of translating this small but wonderful book in my language in my country so that it can reach the young men and women of my country.

I am writing this letter only to thank you and soon I will be leaving for my country.

With best wishes and regards.

Yours faithfully,
Mr. Sonny

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo Circle. Sri Aurobindo Society Annual. 38th Number. 1982.
Price: Rs. 15.

YOU open the Annual and the luminescence of the Mother's presence greets you. Her message of renunciation for the sake of the Lord's will and Sri Aurobindo's words to the Sadhak to inwardly renounce everything strike the keynote of their teachings. To delve into the pages of *Sri Aurobindo Circle* is to alight on pearls of Aurobindonian wisdom. There are essays and poems of Sri Aurobindo as well as other essays bearing on his philosophy in this fine collection.

The essay of Sri Aurobindo entitled 'The Supermind in Earth-Consciousness and Earth-Life' is a compilation of his two letters on the subject: through them we catch glimpses of the Supermind's nature, which according to him is holistic and founded on omniscient truth. In the other essay on the Divine Guidance of the World Movement Sri Aurobindo declares that the first step is to go beyond the surface phenomena. The Divine Will behind global conflicting forces leads to an uplifting evolution. The essay on the Inconscient and the emerging Consciousness records the sage's vision of the primordial inconscient energy as having created Matter and as being ever active. In the fragmentary translation of the Chhandogya Upanishad in a lofty style Sri Aurobindo bodies forth the praise of the Sun as the Udgitha, rising and then slaying darkness. Through the conversations with Sri Aurobindo are revealed his views on the caste system, beauty and the mental, vital and physical parts of the being.

The Mother's lucid exposé of the chaos of modern art are from her talks (1951-1955). She believes that the artists' laziness has ruined art. The art of the mid-twentieth century is ugly, horrible. Cezanne's impressionistic paintings were right in principle. They led to modern art. But contemporary art is ugly and mechanical: its source is the early type of photography. At the end of the glorious period of Manet's impressionism there was a revolt: outrageously new modes of expression were sought. The Mother feels that in spite of the stupidity, insincerity and ugliness of today's paintings, there is a new expression shaping a new beauty which seeks manifestation.

Kishor Gandhi's essay explains the Marxist interpretation of History as an introduction to Sri Aurobindo's *The Human Cycle*. It is in complete contrast to Sri Aurobindo's psychological theory of social development. The Marxist approach is based on Dialectical Materialism. Marx believes that the fulfilment of material needs is man's essential necessity; this is based on production whose relations and institutions form the economic base of society. Such modes and relations are realised in all aspects of human life, from politics to art.

From the Marxist doctrine we turn to religion and spirituality when we consider K. D. Sethna's letter that compares the Vedantic Brahman and the Buddhist Nirvana in the light of Sri Aurobindo's observations. The two aspects of the Static Self-

Being are its alignments with the waking consciousness and the 'Nirvikalpa Samadhi'. The latter is akin to the Buddhist Nirvana. The Vedantic concept of Brahman is illumined by Sri Aurobindo's vision: he regards the Non-Being state also as one of a rare indefinable consciousness. Sethna is of the opinion that the Buddhist self-oblivion and the Vedantic realisation of the Supreme Self are similar in their essence.

Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's paper on the theme of religion and peace is welcome in a world full of violence. It deals with a World Movement based on Religion towards Peace. His faith is that the mystic Agni breathing through religion is ultimately the same as the driving power of nuclear technology. His view of the 'Zero Hour' shows man perched on the brink with the abyss of annihilation yawning below and the Hill of Ascent towards the Heights looming behind: it is also Sri Aurobindo's 'Hour of God'.

Dr. Prema Nandakumar's essay deals with Sri Aurobindo's interpretations of the Upanishads—'the supreme work of the Indian mind'. They are epic hymns of self-knowledge and world-knowledge and God-knowledge. They are books of Jnana devoted to the realisation of Brahman. Sri Aurobindo also explains their poetic beauty.

A. S. Dalal's essay deals with Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga and its bearing on mental health. Sisir Kumar Ghosh's essay on the other hand leads us to the thoughts of an American professor named Richard M. Weaver. They strangely parallel Indian thought: culture is a hierarchy of knowledge and virtue. According to Weaver, modern art and life exalt the individual self at the cost of alienation from society.

Finally, a breath of freshness assails us as we read P. Raja's account of the Tamil Siddhas. These Bhaktas renounced everything, lived in mountains and forests and rebelled against conventions. They were mystics who had attained occult powers. They wrote beautiful symbolic poetry. P. Raja gives us vivid descriptions of individual Siddhas, such as Pattinathar who described a Siddha as a wanderer, an ascetic who eats anything available and is pure 'like an innocent child'.

Thus the Sri Aurobindo Circile presents rich fare for the discerning reader. Its range is from the heights of Vedantic vision to the panorama of modern life. It focuses on gems of Indian religion and philosophy.

K. M. SANTHA