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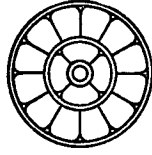
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MOTHER INDIA
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
PONDICHERRY - 605 002, INDIA
Tel: 0413 - 2233642

Email: motherindia@sriurobindoashram.org.in

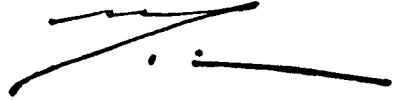


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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All correspondence to be addressed to:

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India

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No. 4

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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THE KNOT OF THE EGO

A TALK OF THE MOTHER

Sweet Mother, what does the "knot of the ego" mean?

KNOT? Oh! It is an image, you see. But it is something that clings to you and holds you as tightly as a well-made rope knot. And so it is always said that in order to progress truly the first thing to do is to cut the knot of the ego. It is very expressive and makes a good image, doesn't it?—one is tied up, one is shut up in oneself, bound as in a prison by knots which tie up all parts of the being together; it is this which produces a cohesion. But at the same time it is a limitation, a limiting. You cannot receive all the forces you would like to, because you are enclosed in this shell made of a heap of knots in the rope that's tying you.

Sweet Mother, how can we cut the knot of the ego?

How to cut it? Take a sword and strike it (*laughter*), when one becomes conscious of it. For usually one is not; we think it quite normal, what happens to us; and in fact it is very normal but we think it quite good also. So, to begin with, one must have a great clear-sightedness to become aware that one is enclosed in all these knots which hold one in bondage. And then, when one is aware that there's something altogether tightly closed in there—so tightly that one has tried in vain to move it—then one imagines his will to be a very sharp sword-blade, and with all one's force one strikes a blow on this knot (imaginary, of course, one doesn't take up a sword in fact), and this produces a result. Of course you can do this work from the psychological point of view, discovering all the elements constituting this knot, the whole set of resistances, habits, preferences, of all that hold you narrowly closed in. So when you grow aware of this, you can concentrate and call the divine Force and the Grace and strike a good blow on this formation, these things so closely held, like that, that nothing can separate them. And at that moment you must resolve that you will no longer listen to these things, that you will listen only to the divine Consciousness and will do no other work except the divine work without worrying about personal results, free from all attachment, free from all preference, free from all wish for success, power, satisfaction, vanity, all this.... All this must disappear and you must see only the divine Will incarnated in your will and making you act. Then, in this way, you are cured.

3 November 1954

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 6, Questions & Answers, 1954, pp. 390-91)

OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

SOME EXTRACTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO'S WRITINGS*

I

The Mental Being and the Reality beyond Mind

NATURE starts from Matter, develops out of it its hidden Life, releases out of involution in life all the crude material of Mind and, when she is ready, turns Mind upon itself and upon Life and Matter in a great mental effort to understand all three in their phenomena, their obvious action, their secret laws, their normal and abnormal possibilities and powers so that they may be turned to the richest account, used in the best and most harmonious way, elevated to their highest as well as extended to their widest potential aims by the action of that faculty which man alone of terrestrial creatures clearly possesses, the intelligent will....

It would seem at first sight that since man is pre-eminently the mental being, the development of the mental faculties and the richness of the mental life should be his highest aim,—his preoccupying aim, even, as soon as he has got rid of the obsession of the life and body and provided for the indispensable satisfaction of the gross needs which our physical and animal nature imposes on us. Knowledge, science, art, thought, ethics, philosophy, religion, this is man's real business, these are his true affairs....

The pursuit of the mental life for its own sake is what we ordinarily mean by culture; but the word is still a little equivocal and capable of a wider or a narrower sense according to our ideas and predilections. For our mental existence is a very complex matter and is made up of many elements.... Man's highest accomplished range is the life of the reason or ordered and harmonised intelligence with its dynamic power of intelligent will, *buddhi*, which is or should be the driver of man's chariot.

But the intelligence of man is not composed entirely and exclusively of the rational intellect and the rational will; there enters into it a deeper, more intuitive, more splendid and powerful, but much less clear, much less developed and as yet hardly at all self-possessing light and force for which we have not even a name. But, at any rate, its character is to drive at a kind of illumination,—not the dry light of the reason, nor the moist and suffused light of the heart, but a lightning and a solar splendour. It may indeed subordinate itself and merely help the reason and heart with its flashes; but there is another urge in it, a natural urge, which exceeds the reason. It tries to illuminate the intellectual being, to illuminate the ethical and aesthetic, to illuminate the emotional and active, to illuminate even the senses and the sensations. It offers in words of revelation, it unveils as if by lightning flashes, it

* The subtitles have been added

shows in a sort of mystic or psychic glamour or brings out into a settled but for mental man almost a supernatural light, a Truth greater and truer than the knowledge given by Reason and Science, a Right larger and more divine than the moralist's scheme of virtues, a Beauty more profound, universal and entrancing than the sensuous or imaginative beauty worshipped by the artist, a joy and divine sensibility which leaves the ordinary emotions poor and pallid, a Sense beyond the senses and sensations, the possibility of a diviner Life and action which man's ordinary conduct of life hides away from his impulses and from his vision. Very various, very fragmentary, often very confused and misleading are its effects upon all the lower members from the reason downward, but this in the end is what it is driving at in the midst of a hundred deformations. It is caught and killed or at least diminished and stifled in formal creeds and pious observances; it is unmercifully traded in and turned into poor and base coin by the vulgarity of conventional religions; but it is still the light of which the religious spirit and the spirituality of man is in pursuit and some pale glow of it lingers even in their worst degradations....

(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 15: 74-77)

The Religious-Spiritual Ideal: Religion and Reason

Beyond man's long intelligent effort towards a perfected culture and a rational society there opens the old religious and spiritual ideal, the hope of the kingdom of heaven within us and the city of God upon earth...

The limitations of the reason become very strikingly, very characteristically, very markedly apparent when it is confronted with that great order of psychological truths and experiences...the religious being of man and his religious life. Here is a realm at which the intellectual reason gazes with the bewildered mind of a foreigner who hears a language of which the words and the spirit are unintelligible to him and sees everywhere forms of life and principles of thought and action which are absolutely strange to his experience. He may try to learn this speech and understand this strange and alien life; but it is with pain and difficulty, and he cannot succeed unless he has, so to speak, unlearned himself and become one in spirit and nature with the natives of this celestial empire. Till then his efforts to understand and interpret them in his own language and according to his own notions end at the worst in a gross misunderstanding and deformation. The attempts of the positive critical reason to dissect the phenomena of the religious life sound to men of spiritual experience like the prattle of a child who is trying to shape into the mould of his own habitual notions the life of adults or the blunders of an ignorant mind which thinks fit to criticise patronisingly or adversely the labours of a profound thinker or a great scientist. At the best even this futile labour can extract, can account for only the externals of the things it attempts to explain; the spirit is missed, the inner matter is left out, and as a result of that capital omission even the account of the exter-

nals is left without real truth and has only an apparent correctness.

The unaided intellectual reason faced with the phenomena of the religious life is naturally apt to adopt one of two attitudes, both of them shallow in the extreme, hastily presumptuous and erroneous. Either it views the whole thing as a mass of superstition, a mystical nonsense, a farrago of ignorant barbaric survivals,—that was the extreme spirit of the rationalist now happily, though not dead, yet much weakened and almost moribund,—or it patronises religion, tries to explain its origins, to get rid of it by the process of explaining away; or it labours gently or forcefully to reject or correct its superstitions, crudities, absurdities, to purify it into an abstract nothingness or persuade it to purify itself in the light of the reasoning intelligence; or it allows it a role, leaves it perhaps for the edification of the ignorant, admits its value as a moralising influence or its utility to the State for keeping the lower classes in order, even perhaps tries to invent that strange chimera, a rational religion.

The former attitude has on its positive side played a powerful part in the history of human thought, has even been of considerable utility in its own way...to human progress and in the end even to religion; but its intolerant negations are an ignorant falsity, as the human mind has now sufficiently begun to perceive. Its mistake is like that of a foreigner who thinks everything in an alien country absurd and inferior because these things are not his own ways of acting and thinking and cannot be cut out by his own measures or suited to his own standards. So the thorough-going rationalist asks the religious spirit, if it is to stand, to satisfy the material reason and even to give physical proof of its truths, while the very essence of religion is the discovery of the immaterial Spirit and the play of a supraphysical consciousness. So too he tries to judge religion by his idea of its externalities, just as an ignorant and obstreperous foreigner might try to judge a civilisation by the dress, outward colour of life and some of the most external peculiarities in the social manners of the inhabitants. That in this he errs in company with certain of the so-called religious themselves, may be his excuse, but cannot be the justification of his ignorance. The more moderate attitude of the rational mind has also played its part in the history of human thought. Its attempts to explain religion have resulted in the compilation of an immense mass of amazingly ingenious perversions, such as the pseudo-scientific attempts to form a comparative Science of Religion. It has built up in the approved modern style immense façades of theory with stray bricks of misunderstood facts for their material....

Reason's Role, Religion's Deepest Heart and What is Usually called Religion

The deepest heart, the inmost essence of religion, apart from its outward machinery of creed, cult, ceremony and symbol, is the search for God and the finding of God. Its aspiration is to discover the Infinite, the Absolute, the One, the Divine, who is all these things and yet no abstraction but a Being. Its work is a sincere liv-

ing out of the true and intimate relations between man and God, relations of unity, relations of difference, relations of an illuminated knowledge, an ecstatic love and delight, an absolute surrender and service, a casting of every part of our existence out of its normal status into an uprush of man towards the Divine and a descent of the Divine into man. All this has nothing to do with the realm of reason or its normal activities; its aim, its sphere, its process is suprarational. The knowledge of God is not to be gained by weighing the feeble arguments of reason for or against his existence: it is to be gained only by a self-transcending and absolute consecration, aspiration and experience. Nor does that experience proceed by anything like rational scientific experiment or rational philosophic thinking. Even in those parts of religious discipline which seem most to resemble scientific experiment, the method is a verification of things which exceed the reason and its timid scope. Even in those parts of religious knowledge which seem most to resemble intellectual operations, the illuminating faculties are not imagination, logic and rational judgment, but revelations, inspirations, intuitions, intuitive discernments that leap down to us from a plane of suprarational light. The love of God is an infinite and absolute feeling which does not admit of any rational limitations and does not use a language of rational worship and adoration; the delight in God is that peace and bliss which passes all understanding. The surrender to God is the surrender of the whole being to a suprarational light, will, power and love and his service takes no account of the compromises with life which the practical reason of man uses as the best part of its method in the ordinary conduct of mundane existence. Wherever religion really finds itself, wherever it opens into its own spirit,—there is plenty of that sort of religious practice which is halting, imperfect, half-sincere, only half-sure of itself and in which reason can get in a word,—its way is absolute and its fruits are ineffable.

Reason has indeed a part to play in relation to this highest field of our religious being and experience, but that part is quite secondary and subordinate. It cannot lay down the law for the religious life, it cannot determine in its own right the system of divine knowledge; it cannot school and lesson the divine love and delight; it cannot set bounds to spiritual experience or lay its yoke upon the action of the spiritual man. Its sole legitimate sphere is to explain as best it can, in its own language and to the rational and intellectual parts of man, the truths, the experiences, the laws of our suprarational and spiritual existence. That has been the work of spiritual philosophy in the East and—much more crudely and imperfectly done—of theology in the West, a work of great importance at moments like the present when the intellect of mankind after a long wandering is again turning towards the search for the Divine...

But there is another level of the religious life in which reason might seem justified in interfering more independently and entitled to assume a superior role. For as there is the suprarational life in which religious aspiration finds entirely what it seeks, so there is also the infrarational life of the instincts, impulses, sensations, crude emotions, vital activities from which all human aspiration takes its beginning. These

too feel the touch of the religious sense in man, share its needs and experience, desire its satisfactions. Religion includes this satisfaction also in its scope, and in what is usually called religion it seems even to be the greater part, sometimes to an external view almost the whole; for the supreme purity of spiritual experience does not appear or is glimpsed only through this mixed and turbid current. Much impurity, ignorance, superstition, many doubtful elements must form as the result of this contact and union of our highest tendencies with our lower ignorant nature. Here it would seem that reason has its legitimate part; here surely it can intervene to enlighten, purify, rationalise the play of the instincts and impulses. It would seem that a religious reformation, a movement to substitute a "pure" and rational religion for one that is largely infrarational and impure, would be a distinct advance in the religious development of humanity. To a certain extent this may be, but, owing to the peculiar nature of the religious being, its entire urge towards the suprarational, not without serious qualifications, nor can the rational mind do anything here that is of a high positive value.

Religious forms and systems become effete and corrupt and have to be destroyed, or they lose much of their inner sense and become clouded in knowledge and injurious in practice, and in destroying what is effete or in negating aberrations reason has played an important part in religious history. But in its endeavour to get rid of the superstition and ignorance which have attached themselves to religious forms and symbols, intellectual reason unenlightened by spiritual knowledge tends to deny and, so far as it can, to destroy the truth and the experience which was contained in them... The life of the instincts and impulses on its religious side cannot be satisfyingly purified by reason, but rather by being sublimated, by being lifted up into the illuminations of the spirit. The natural line of religious development proceeds always by illumination; and religious reformation acts best when either it reilluminates rather than destroys old forms or, where destruction is necessary, replaces them by richer and not by poorer forms, and in any case when it purifies by suprarational illumination, not by rational enlightenment... If reason is to play any decisive part, it must be an intuitive rather than an intellectual reason, touched always by spiritual intensity and insight. For it must be remembered that the infrarational also has behind it a secret truth which does not fall within the domain of the reason and is not wholly amenable to its judgments. The heart has its knowledge, the life has its intuitive spirit within it, its intimations, divinations, outbreaks and upflamings of a Secret Energy, a divine or at least semi-divine aspiration and outreaching which the eye of intuition alone can fathom and only intuitive speech or symbol can shape or utter. To root out these things from religion or to purge religion of any elements necessary for its completeness because the forms are defective or obscure, without having the power to illuminate them from within or the patience to wait for their illumination from above or without replacing them by more luminous symbols, is not to purify but to pauperise.

But the relations of the spirit and the reason need not be, as they too often are

in our practice, hostile or without any point of contact. Religion itself need not adopt for its principle the formula "I believe because it is impossible" or Pascal's "I believe because it is absurd". What is impossible or absurd to the unaided reason, becomes real and right to the reason lifted beyond itself by the power of the spirit and irradiated by its light. For then it is dominated by the intuitive mind which is our means of passage to a yet higher principle of knowledge. The widest spirituality does not exclude or discourage any essential human activity or faculty, but works rather to lift all of them up and out of their imperfection and groping ignorance, transforms them by its touch and makes them the instruments of the light, power and joy of the divine being and the divine nature.

(SABCL, 15 pp. 116, 120-26)

(To be continued)

NOLINIDA CLARIFIES

Any statement, oral or written, made in my name is not valid or authentic unless supported by my signature.

I do not authorise anybody to speak on my behalf.

March 4, 1983



Sri Aurobindo Ashram,
Pondicherry

THE MOTHER ON SRI AUROBINDO'S VIEW OF RELIGION AND REASON

...You see, Sri Aurobindo defines religion as the seeking after the spiritual, that is, the Supermind, of what is beyond the ordinary human consciousness, and what ought to influence life from a higher realm. So, as religion seeks this it is beyond the reason, because it goes to the suprarational. And how can reason help in the realm of religion? What he means is that if one uses reason to judge the field of religion and progress in it, one is sure to make mistakes, because reason is not the master there and it is not capable of enlightening. If you want to judge any religion with your reason, you are sure to make mistakes, for it is outside and beyond the field of reason. Reason can judge things which belong to the rational domain of ordinary life. And as he says later, the true role of reason is to be like a control and an organiser of the movements of human life in the mind and the vital.

Each time, for example, that one has some kind of vital disorder, of the passions, desires, impulses and all these things, if one calls the reason and looks at these things from the point of view of reason, one can put them back into order. It is truly the role of reason to organise and regulate all the movements of the vital and the mind. For instance, you can call the reason in order to see whether two ideas can go together or whether they contradict each other, whether two theories can stand side by side in your mental construction or one demolishes the other. It belongs to the domain of reason to judge and organise all these things, and also perhaps, still more it is the work of reason to see whether the impulses are reasonable or not and will not disturb anything in the life. So, this is its full domain; that's what Sri Aurobindo says.

But in order to know the value of a religion, whether it truly has the power to put you into contact with the Divine, with the spiritual life, to lead you to it, how can the reason judge, since it is beyond its domain? It knows nothing about it. It is not its field, it understands nothing there. We must use other means. Naturally, that's how he begins, at the end he will say what means one can use; I don't know whether it is at the end of these chapters, but in any case he always gives an indication. That's what this means; he says: Don't use reason, you cannot judge with it. That's all.

25 May 1955

(The Mother's Collected Works, 7 168-9)

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of March 1983)

MYSELF: Mother dear, learning everything and living within—what a joy it brings! Even then, just for a bubbling vital pleasure, we forget it and cling to transient sentimentalities and create no end of trouble and suffering. I perceive clearly that attachment of any kind to men or things is a big hindrance to our progress.

One word more, please. Now I don't feel the intense peace that came down before. It seems rather natural; the peace has become part of the vast experience and one with my flesh and blood.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is how it should be. It should go so far indeed that you would feel this peace and vastness as your very self, the abiding stuff of your consciousness—unchangeably there. 26.9.34

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo and Mother, this is to let you know that I was not so upset this time. I made a mistake to tell X about it and I felt it at once, but when I saw that he had taken it in the right way, I was relieved. But it was giving me pain to see in myself the spirit to hide the thing from you, and not only that but to insist on another person also to do the same thing. I was not quite upset or disturbed as there was always the inner calm and quiet, I was feeling separately the struggle of this part, which was not violent in its nature but deep and calm too, and I took the watching part as my true being, the psychic, which was feeling so much pain to see the spirit to hide this thing from you and indulge in the insincerity of the mind (and vital perhaps). I had recognised both the parts and was wanting the psychic to persuade the unwillingness, and as soon as I started telling myself: 'No, this thing cannot go on. I must tell Mother'—the whole thing became absolutely motionless, calm like a sheet all spread out, but the struggle was going on only when the other part was refusing to listen to the psychic.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is very good and it shows that you have got a firm foundation in the inner being. It was of course the psychic that made the vital feel about the concealment and compelled it to assent to the working. That also is good, for if the psychic control is not yet so complete (as it must and will come) as to prevent some instinctive movements, yet it is evidently much greater than before and is increasing its influence. 14.12.34

MYSELF: Last night I felt as if a force was coming from you. This morning too, after receiving Sri Aurobindo's letter, I felt the force coming for a long time. It was clear, though the body was tired.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the Force was sent, but especially for strength and quiet

in the nerves and quiet in the mind so that there might be sleep. I shall continue till the sleep and quiet come, try to be quietly open and recover. 3.3.35

MYSELF: Mother Divine, I hear that Sri Aurobindo's eye has become red from overwork. I am very sorry that I have been writing every day for my health. Until he is a little better I won't write any more.

About my food, it is true that I don't eat much because I am afraid about my liver trouble; so I don't eat sometimes even if I feel hungry, and there is always nervousness due to fear of getting fat. Anyhow, if it is necessary I will take more food.

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't stop writing. Your letters are short and will not interfere; besides my eye is better and white, I have to be careful about it, it does not need complete rest.

To suppress hunger like that is not good, it very often creates disorder—I doubt whether fatness and thinness of a healthy kind depends on the amount of food taken—there are people who eat well and remain thin and others who take only one meal a day and remain fat. By underfeeding (taking less than the body really needs) one may get emaciated, but that is not a healthy state. The doctors say it depends mostly on the working of certain glands. Anyhow the important thing is now to get the nervous strength back.

As for the liver also, eating little does not help, very often it makes the liver sluggish so that it works less well. What is recommended for liver trouble is to avoid greasy food and much eating of sweets and that is also one way of avoiding fat. But to eat too little is not good—it may be necessary in some stomach or intestine illness, but not for the ordinary liver trouble. What about taking a walk (for exercise and fresh air) daily? 15.3.35

MYSELF: Dear Mother, last night I slept well, thanks to your grace. There was no nervous disturbance. An inner quiet and peace came and the body too felt a soothing effect.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am glad to know the disturbance was expelled last night—now the receptivity of the body consciousness has to be kept so that it may not at all return or, if it tries, may immediately be expelled. You must always try to keep the quietude, not allow depressing or disturbing thoughts or feelings to enter you or take hold of your mind or your speech—there is no true reason after one has gained the inner quietness and wideness why that should be allowed to lapse and these things enter. And if the mind keeps the quietude and receptivity to higher forces only, it can then easily pass on that quietude and receptivity to the body consciousness and even to the material cells of the body. 2.4.35

MYSELF: Mother, when you accept somebody, doesn't it mean that you have found in him even a small part that desires sincerely the Divine and that you give him a chance for it? Accepting someone permanently—does it mean anything more than that?

SRI AUROBINDO: What you say about whom we receive that if one part of them sincerely desires the Divine, we give them a chance—is quite true. If we demanded more at the beginning, exceedingly few would be able to commence the journey towards the Divine. 2.4.35

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo, kindly give me a clear and satisfying answer to this question: Can a person, who brings up another person's child as his own, love him as much as his own child? The question is Jyotirmoyee's to Nolina. Nolina says that in her experience it is possible. Dilip says it is not at all possible. Nolini says, why not? He says it is quite possible. What is your opinion? We would like to know and understand.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is certainly possible because it often happens—especially with women in whom the maternal instinct is easily aroused, but it happens to men also. Especially the very fact of bringing up a child in that intimate way has the tendency to create a feeling which may be tenderness or affection only but may be and often is even strong love. 8.4.35

MYSELF: Mother, my mind was disturbed when I heard about the incidents regarding the attitude and behaviour of M and others; they went on turning in my head. I can see clearly the matter. I have been neither hurt nor shocked by it. I could see rather calmly and straightforwardly the movement. Only the physical mind was making too much noise over the matter.

SRI AUROBINDO: That should not happen. Once a subject or thought is dealt with by the perception, you must have the power to drop it altogether out of your consciousness. 7.5.35

(To be continued)

SITTING AND EATING

WHEN we are sitting and eating like this, just eating,
Anything could happen:
The earth could fall.

But if the earth fell
The soul would remain.

And if the moon fell
Love would remain.

And if the Sun fell...
The Lord would come down.

ISHITA (8 years old)

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of March 1983)

The Mother's Message

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



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ONE day I was looking at the idols in the Mother's Stores—I was especially thrilled to behold Mahakali. While I regarded her, my mind travelled back to the year 1950 when I had gone to the temple of 'Ambaji', one aspect of the Divine Mother, near Mount Abu, with my father and my younger sister.

In the evenings the priests burnt incense, lit lamps, rang bells and sang hymns.

The atmosphere was truly heaven-haunted. I made arrangements for my father and sister to watch the ceremony, but I myself wandered around here and there. My heart was filled with a marvellous peace. The ceremony was about to begin—the priests in saffron robes held bronze stands with tiny lamps in them. The crowd was thick now and I could not make my way back to the view of the innermost part of the temple. In sheer disappointment I stood in one corner. Suddenly, I felt somebody's hand on my shoulder. I swung round with a start. It was a Sadhu in a white garb. He smiled at me, and asked me whether I wished to see Mahakali. I answered that I would love to. Then he led me to a special place, and both of us stood on a platform of cement. Now I could see everything. For the place where we stood was pretty high. The ceremony began with the sounding of many gongs. I was lost in the extraordinary atmosphere. Afterwards, the Sadhu pointed to something like an image, but actually there was no sign of it at all. The priests had decorated the 'Yantra'—a sacred piece of square gold in which a Mantra had been inscribed—they worshipped only that.

Here I may relate a legend of ancient times:

A king called Daksha Prajapati had a daughter named Dakshayani or Sati. She married Shiva (the Lord of Transformation, according to the Mother) against her father's will.

A grand ceremony of Yajna took place at the king's palace. He did not invite his daughter and her husband on the occasion, but Sati could not resist attending it in spite of her husband's warning. Unhappily, she was deeply humiliated by her father.

She felt that it was disgraceful to go back to Shiva, so she plunged into a profound meditation and by the fire of Yoga-Agni ended her life. Shiva came to know of the incident, and his fury knew no bounds. At once he went to the king's palace and carried Sati's body over his shoulder and wandered about madly in the Universe, forgetting himself, his duty and everything else. This terrible situation played havoc with the Universe. All the gods and goddesses were in distress. At last they approached Vishnu (the Protector of the World, according to the Mother) and implored him to do something in order to save the Universe. With his Sudarshanchakra, Vishnu cut the body of Sati into 108 parts which were then charged with the Divine Consciousness and scattered over various parts of India. For, India is a symbolic representation of the Universe. Now, wherever these parts fell, there temples were built in Sati's remembrance.

It is said that her heart fell in the place which is called 'Ambaji' near Mount Abu. The 'Yantra' in the temple there was considered her heart.

There is also a place called Kanakhal near Hardwara where the altar of the Yajna and the image of Sati are still kept.

The whole story is symbolic. Shiva represents the spiritual Power, and Shakti the material Nature. The number 108 is mystical and occult. There are 108 Avatars who have each his own individual power, personality and mission. In the eyes of

Hindu lore, the whole Universe is created by the permutation and combination of 108 elements. Also there are 108 beads in a rosary.

Swami Chidbhavananda, in his commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, sheds light on these 108 pieces:

“The Mystic Number Eighteen. Numbers 18, 108, 1008 and 100008 are all multiples of 9 which is a mystic number. All multiples of 9 added together ultimately become number 9. This can be verified ($16 \times 9 = 144$; $1 + 4 + 4 = 9$).

“The mystic number 9 is arrived at in this wise:

“The Universe is constituted of the three factors—time, space and causation.

“The Universe is constituted of the three Gunas (ingredients)—sattva, rajas and tamas.

“The Universe is constituted of the three functions—creation, preservation and destruction.

“Thus three times three making nine has become a mystic number. It exhausts the definition of the phenomenal Universe.

“Twice nine or eighteen makes the Mahabharata scheme complete. The eighteen portions (Parvas) in the epic define in detail the career of man on earth.

“The eighteen chapters in the Gita make yoga philosophy complete.

“The eighteen days’ warfare make the warriors’ exploits complete.

“Eighteen are the divisions of the armies of the contending parties—Pandavas and Kauravas: the one having seven divisions and the other eleven. Thus all the available human forces mobilized were eighteen in number.

“The Mahabharata is thus an exposition of the human possibilities and achievements graded into eighteen, the first multiple of nine, a mystic number. The higher multiples of it signify further ranging into divine regions.”

The following lines from the poem *Jivanmukta* by Sri Aurobindo are quite appropriate, saying as they do that the Liberated Man lives and acts

“Only to bring God’s forces to waiting Nature,
To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour
And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,
Casting down light on the inconscient darkness...”

If one goes into the domain of occult mysteries, which are difficult to put into words or semblances, one really gets completely lost.

To get back to the story. Now the Sadhu asked me to gaze straight at the ‘Yantra’. I did so. At first I could not make out anything—I was mystified. Then gradually the perfect form of Mahakali appeared before my eyes. I forgot my own existence and merged in her. I have no words to express this unique experience.

Afterwards the Sadhu led me to the innermost part of the temple and asked the priests to give me some holy water. One of them poured it into the hollow of my right hand, and I drank the water. I was extremely happy and about to take my leave, when the Sadhu said: "Wait! The Mother wants to give you a flower. Which flower do you like the most?" I answered: "Any flower will do." He still insisted on my telling him what particular flower I liked. So, with a smile, I said: "I love roses."

As a matter of fact, at that time there was nothing in his hands, but, right in front of my eyes, he suddenly closed his right hand and then opened it and gave me a pink rose full of sweet fragrance. It signified "Surrender". He asked me to eat it, and added that, if I could not do that, then I should preserve it.

I thanked him and went to an inn with my people. I never saw the Sadhu again, but the next morning before I left the place I heard from a priest that the Sadhu was a realised soul, and appeared only occasionally—especially in the evening—and he never touched women. I raised my eyebrows. I was baffled.

As regards Kali, I came across the Mother's writing in her Cent. Ed., Vol. 15, p. 18:

"Kali rarely acts in the mind. In the higher domains she is a power of love which pushes towards progress and transformation: in the vital she is a power of destruction of falsehood, hypocrisy and ill-will.

"All that is good, truthful and progressive is never destroyed by her. On the contrary, she protects and sustains it."

The rose remained quite fresh for several days in a sandalwood box, then gradually it faded. Later on I transferred it to a silver box, and I still have it with me.

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Saturday, Sunday and Monday passed by. Each day the Mother sent me a card and a bouquet of white roses. In one of the cards—that of 29th October 1956—she wrote:

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

"With all my confidence in the work she is doing so thoroughly and carefully.

"My love and blessings along with the constant Presence of the Grace are always with you."

In the evening I went to the Mother as usual in her room at the Playground. That day it was Monday—the translation lesson. I found it really boring, because of my poor French. What I enjoyed most was the warmth of the Mother's physical Presence which emanated light and filled the whole room.

The Mother sent me a lovely card the next morning, showing varieties of beautiful flowers, and these words:

“Here are nice flowers for my sweet Huta expressing all my love and affection for her.

“With my eternal blessings and the constant Presence of the Divine Grace.”

Even in a few words she had revealed the endless Love, which she alone can give.

It was the last day of the month and a card depicting pansies arrived in the morning with these luminous words:

“Bonjour to my dear little child,

To my sweet Huta.

“Here are beautiful ‘thoughts’ for you—thoughts about the Divine which bring comfort and joy. Along with them come my love and blessings and the constant Presence of the Divine Grace that never leave you.

At midday she sent me yet another card of printed roses along with some ‘prasad’, and these words:

“This morning I forgot to write to you in my letter that I shall see you tomorrow morning at 10.30 for your birthday.

“With my love and blessings.”

I had noticed that the Mother was extremely particular, scrupulous, precise and systematic even in dealing with small matters. She taught me all these things by giving her own example. She once told me:

“My mother [Mme. Mathilde Alfassa] was very strict in discipline. One evening, when my brother [Mattéo Alfassa] and I came back from an outing, we felt so tired and sleepy that we did not even bother to put our clothes in their proper places—we simply threw them here and there in a disorderly way and crept into our beds. My mother woke us up from sleep and asked us to put everything in perfect order—folding the dresses properly and then putting them in their right places.

“So you see, my child, once the habit is formed, one gets used to it. For example, suppose you have the habit to shut your door with a bang. But if you are conscious and determined and try repeatedly to close it gently, you will afterwards be accustomed to do so automatically.

“You must be very careful even with the most minor things—for instance, how to fold a handkerchief.”

Then the Mother actually showed me how to fold it. Not only this, but from time to time she made me aware of countless things both outwardly and inwardly.

She also made me conscious of the hidden truth behind the whirling of the World Force. I learnt to practise her marvellous teaching a little.

The Mother looked at me and with an amused smile said:

“My mother used to put cotton wool between the teeth of a comb and then comb my hair, so all the dirt came out collected in the cotton wool. You see, my mother was very particular.”

And she laughed softly.

I came across striking passages in the Mother's Cent. Ed., Vol. 14, p. 46, about discipline:

“To be a man, discipline is indispensable.

Without discipline one is only an animal.

One begins to be a man only when one aspires to a higher and truer life and when one accepts a discipline of transformation. For this one must start by mastering one's lower nature and its desires.”

“It can be said that all discipline whatsoever, if it is followed strictly, sincerely, deliberately, is of considerable help, for it makes the earthly life reach its goal more rapidly and prepares it to receive the new life. To discipline oneself is to hasten the arrival of this new life and the contact with the supramental reality.”

Mme. Mathilde married Monsieur Maurice Alfassa in Alexandria in 1874. She came to Paris in 1877 with her husband and her mother Mme. Mirra Ismalun.

Indeed, I have seen several photographs of the Mother's mother. She was of medium height but not fat; she was good-looking, her face round and determined, the eyes small but very keen; they could scrutinise everything minutely, yet were deeply compassionate and sympathetic. M. André, the Mother's son, informed me that his grandmother had been kind and generous. She died at the age of 88.

M. Maurice Alfassa was a very strong man who loved birds and circuses and who was a first-class mathematician as well as a linguist. He was a shareholder of the *Jardin d'acclimatation au Bois de Boulogne*. M. André wrote to me that his grandfather used to give him entry tickets, which he appreciated very much.

M. Maurice died during the early part of the First World War.

What am I to say about M. André? He was a refined person at the same time sensible, sensitive and understanding. In short he was highly cultured and a noble character. I knew him well. For, I had a direct contact with him. He passed away in Paris on 29th March 1982.

29th March 1914 had marked the first arrival of the Mother in Pondicherry.

A new month—November 1956—and a pleasant morning approached, along with the Mother's greetings on a beautiful birthday card for me showing a painted snow-white swan:

“Bonjour et Bonne Fête to my dear little child, to my sweet Huta.

“This swan, representing the purity of the soul, will bring to you the assurance of this year's decisive progress towards the realisation of your goal, the union with the Divine.

“My love, blessings and Grace are always with you.”

These lovely lines flash to my mind from the Katha Upanishad, V. 2:

“Lo, the Swan whose dwelling is in the purity: He is the Vasu in the inter-regions, the Sacrificer at the altar, the Guest in the vessel of the drinking: He is in man and in the Great Ones and His home is in the law, and His dwelling is in the firmament: He is all that is born on the mountains. He is the Truth and He is the Mighty One.”

Along with the card the Mother sent me a note saying:

“Bonne fête!

“À tout à l'heure at 10.30 this morning I shall see you to spend a few minutes in silence and concentration to start happily your new year.

“With all my love and blessings”.

Later in the morning I went to the Meditation Hall upstairs and saw the Mother. It was my second spiritual birthday in the Ashram. After we had exchanged flowers and smiles, she gave me a tiny silken white bag with a fine painting on it. She said:

“Tiens! there are two toffees in the bag. You are two years old!”

Then she went into a trance for quite some time. When she awoke, she looked at me with her shining eyes and told me gravely:

“I want peace, harmony and unity in this world—I want the Divine's Victory upon earth. I have been seeing Kali at night for the last two days and I have asked her to make the world conscious and open to the Supramental Light and transform it by this Light without violence, pain and destruction.

“Do you know, tomorrow is Kali Puja—the day of Kali?”

And she smiled tenderly. Her eyes shone with love and compassion.

On every 1st of the month, the Mother went to the “Prosperity” room; so we met again in the afternoon.

Later, that evening, she saw me once more before the class. She told me firmly and with certitude:

“The Divine shall win the Victory.”

She went into a trance for a second or two. Afterwards I showed her the silver box in which I had kept the rose given to me by the Sadhu at Ambaji’s temple, and told her how I had got it. She leaned forward and smiled brightly while touching the box, and said:

“Ah! but I know this. It is I who sent you this rose through the Sadhu at that time. Keep the box in your meditation room when your apartment is ready.”

I marvelled at her all-pervading Knowledge and Power. Then we went into the French class.

On the morning of the 2nd November she sent me a lovely card with her own photograph in which she was wearing a pretty veil, and these words followed:

— “This is the day when Mahakali manifests her love and power. Let it go to you fully with my blessings and the constant Presence of the Grace.
“À tout à l’heure.”

Later that morning the Mother went downstairs to distribute a Message. When I approached her, she looked into my eyes and gave a smile.

The Message took the form of a card with a packet of the petals of the pomegranate flower—the Divine’s Love—attached to it. And the words on the card ran:

“Thou hast come down into a struggling world
To aid a blind and suffering mortal race,
To open to Light the eyes that could not see,
To bring down bliss into the heart of grief,
To make thy life a bridge twixt earth and heaven....”

Savitri, Vol. 29, pp. 536-37

The Mother’s Cent. Ed., Vol. 7, p. 370, has this passage:

“...On Kali Puja day I *always* distribute the flowers of ‘Divine’s Love’; for Kali is the most loving of all the aspects of the Mahashakti; hers is the most active and most powerful Love. And that is why every year I distribute the petals of ‘Divine Love’ on Kali’s Day....”

That evening I went to the Mother and said to her: "Mother, you know already that I am entangled in countless lower elements. No matter how hard I try to make myself free from them, I often fall back from my endeavour. Is there any end to this? If my whole being is not totally purified, how can I ever unite with the Divine? I am so troubled by these persistent thoughts."

She heard me in silence and then glanced down at the diamond ring on the forefinger of her left hand. She turned it a little once or twice in deep contemplation. Then, raising her luminous eyes to meet mine, she said soothingly:

"Yes, I know, some beings do not want the Divine, so they always revolt against the Truth. They see the chance and open themselves to the hostile forces by small incidents and happenings. But the soul is illumined—there is light and consciousness in it and it constantly aspires for the Divine. The lower beings are full of obscurity and defects—all these rise from the subconscious and cover the true being as clouds cover the sun—but the sun is always there.

"You feel sorry and troubled because these lower elements cannot be removed or surmounted at once. But, my child, the lower nature is Universal Nature all around, and surely it takes time to be transformed. Its elements have no power or right, however, against your true being when it is completely united with the Divine."

The Mother lapsed into silence for a few moments and then said while gazing into my eyes:

"Child, your soul is ready for the higher realisation—Nirvana—and I can give it to you just now, this very instant (*she snapped her fingers*), but I do not want to do so because I really wish that your whole being should reach perfection and then attain that blissful state of the union with the Divine along with the soul. Such is your soul's aspiration also. That is why I am trying to organise your whole being."

I stared at the Mother and quietly left this matter to her. For, she knew what was best for me.

The Mother has written in her Cent. Ed., Vol. 14, p. 354:

"The centre of the human being is the psychic which is the dwelling-place of the immanent Divine. Unification means organisation and harmonisation of all the parts of the being (mental, vital and physical) around this centre, so that all the activities of the being may be the correct expression of the will of the Divine Presence."

Sri Aurobindo has stated forcefully in his Cent. Ed., Vol. 23, p. 521:

“If your soul always aspires for the transformation, then that is what you have to follow after. To seek the Divine or rather some aspect of the Divine—for one cannot entirely realise the Divine if there is no transformation—may be enough for some, but not for those whose soul’s aspiration is for the entire divine change.”

Mahumud Shabistari, c.800 A.D., has described in a touching manner the union with the Divine:

“Who is the traveller on the road to God? It is that one who is aware of his own origin. He is the traveller who passes on speedily: he has become pure from self as flame from smoke. Parted from self you can join the Beloved. In God there is no duality, in Unity there is no distinction, the Quest and the Way and the Seeker become One.”

That night I tried to absorb all that the Mother had told me about my soul’s aspiration to unite with the Divine along with the whole being.

Yes, the Mother has written clearly in her Cent. Ed., Vol. 14. p. 353:

“When one has an awakened soul, it is not easy to get rid of it; so it is better to obey its order.”

Before I went to bed I pictured her turning her diamond ring absorbedly.

I came across a writing of Sri Aurobindo in his book *The Mother*, Vol. 25, p. 86:

“The diamond is the symbol of the Mother’s light and energy—the diamond light is that of her consciousness at its most intense.”

The next morning, I received a card picturing a vase with sunflowers—together with these lines:

“Here is the consciousness turned exclusively to the Divine and caring for nothing else except the Divine’s Light and Grace which are constantly with you along with my sweetest love and my blessings that never leave you.”

The Mother’s Force and Light worked incessantly in me. I was fairly aware of their action but also of opposition from the nether forces, and so there was no sign of rest or peace.

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The Mother saw me on Sunday evening in her room at the Playground. As usual she was sitting on her low couch. I was at her feet. She held my hands in hers

for a few moments and looked into my eyes. I felt that she was pouring something of her love and Grace into me. Then slowly she let go my hand and went into a profound meditation. Her radiant presence was so soothing that I became drowsy. I put my head on the vacant space beside her on the couch. It was a most natural movement expressing the freedom of a child of hers.

The Mother was confident when she sent me a card of printed carnations with these lines the next morning:

“Bonjour to my dear little child, to my sweet Huta whom I keep always in my arms with love and affection to lift her up towards the realisation of her goal—the Divine. With my blessings and the constant Presence of the Grace.”

I knew that I could not keep a steady pace when I followed the Mother. For, there were quite a number of obstructions, which blocked my way. Very often I sat in my arm-chair at night and heaved a sigh of sorrow, and did not know where I was going—everything was hazy—nothing was realised as yet...

In the evening there was a translation class. I saw the Mother only for a few seconds. Then she and I went into the room.

The following morning I received a card showing red flowers—scarlet sage—accompanied by these words:

“Here is ‘matter consenting to be spiritualised’. Is it not good? We are going fast towards it.

“My love and blessings along with the Divine Grace never leave you even for a moment.”

It was really odd—I was not conscious of my heading fast towards anything. What I really felt was that physically I was unwell—often the nervous tension made things worse. I was frequently in bed—exhausted, weak, pale, unable to stir as if the life-breath had left my body. But, no matter what the pains and aches, I went to the Mother for our meditations.

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Many a time I saw magnificent dreams in my sleep. The Mother knew of these visions, and told me that she took my consciousness to worlds of splendour.

She sent me a card which showed a most wonderful landscape—a small pond with lotuses, surrounded by a profusion of colourful flowers, various trees and bushes, and far away there was a glimpse of a pale blue sea. The whole scenery was in perfect harmony. These words were written on the card:

“Is not this landscape something like what we see in dreams?

“I send it with all my love and blessings, along with the constant Presence of the Divine Grace.”

Sri Aurobindo has written in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 18, p. 425 about the dream-consciousness:

“If we develop our inner being, live more inwardly than most men do, then the balance is changed and a larger dream-consciousness opens before us; our dreams can take on a subliminal and no longer a subconscious character and can assume a reality and significance.

“...Our subliminal self is not, like our surface physical being, an outcome of the energy of the Inconscient; it is a meeting-place of the consciousness that emerges from below by evolution and the consciousness that has descended from above for involution. There is in it an inner mind, an inner vital being of ourselves, an inner or subtle-physical being larger than our outer being and nature....”

I was touched by the card dated 8.11.56 sent by the Mother. It indicated a yellow flower—*Helianthus*—underneath she wrote:

“Consciousness in the full supramental light.”

She continued:

“With my love and blessings along with the constant Presence of the Grace are for ever with you.”

It was fascinating how the Mother could enter into the being of each flower and give it a meaning which represents its quality and power. She gave to this particular flower—*Helianthus*—the meaning :

“Intensity of the consciousness in the full Supramental Light.
It is radiant and it radiates to illumine the world.”

The Mother has disclosed about flowers in her Cent. Ed., Vol. 6, pp. 118-19:

“There is a mental projection when you give a precise meaning to a flower. It can answer, vibrate to the contact of the projection, accept the meaning;... it is a spontaneous movement, a very special vibration. If you are in contact with it, if you feel it, you can get an impression which may be translated as a thought. That is how I give a meaning to flowers and plants. There is a kind of identification with the vibration, a perception of the quality that it represents.”

I suffered from a wisdom tooth—one more score was added to my troubles. The Mother sent me a printed card of lovely deep pink roses—*Zephyrine Drouhin*—and these lines:

“Here are some pretty roses for you.

“I am sending also a bottle of ‘Vademecum’ for gargling and hope it will help to relieve you from the pain.

“Avoid as much as possible to be restless or impatient because it is in calm and peace that the forces of the Divine Grace work at their maximum.

“My love and blessings are always with you—for ever.”

I felt much better and could concentrate on my work. In the evening the Mother asked me about my health and work. After a meditation, she looked into my eyes—I felt I was wrapped in her sweet soothing vibrations.

A card with Sri Aurobindo’s symbol came and the Mother’s words :

“Keep good courage—your progress is evident in spite of all the difficulties. Even the most acute physical pain, if it is faced calmly and quietly, diminishes and becomes bearable—even in agony, we can rely on the Divine and the Divine changes our agony into delight.

“You know now that my help is always with you, and my love and blessings are always with you and the Divine Grace never leaves you—even for a moment. Be assured of that fact. Trust fully its action and the difficulties will vanish.

“I am near you.”

When I read “I am near you”, tears were streaming down my cheeks. I wondered: if she had not been near me, what would have happened to my life?

The Mother never forgot to raise my enthusiasm for the work she had given me. She sent me many cards on the subject. And now one more card with printed flowers—phlox:

“Her is some skill in work which expresses so nicely the special capacity of your nature. I send it with all my love and my blessings with the assurance of the constant Presence of the Divine’s Grace.”

(*To be continued*)

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SRI AUROBINDO, THE COSMIC POET

(How do the Westerners who seek a higher truth and light without doing the yoga see Sri Aurobindo? This article, published in the largest French daily *Le Monde*, shows that to us clearly. It is written by one of the most widely read writers of France today: a friend of the Ashram, Christine de Rivoyre has sold hundreds of thousands of copies of her books, several of which have been adapted for the screen. She has received many literary awards and her works have been translated in most of the European languages. Mother India has serialised an English translation of a book for children, *The Lord of Horses*, which she had written in collaboration with Archaka.

The article which follows appeared on 9th December last year—a date interestingly chosen by *Le Monde* to render homage to Sri Aurobindo.)

I saw my soul a traveller through Time;
From life to life the cosmic ways it trod,
Obscure in the depths and on the heights sublime,
Evolving from the worm into the god.

“I SAW my soul”—the whole of India, I think, is in there. The Indians do indeed see their soul and, even though not always conscious, they yet strive to live for it because they are sincerely convinced of the soul’s slow and multiple journeys “from the worm into the god.” And that is why I chose to begin this article with this stanza from *The Miracle of Birth*, one of the most beautiful poems amongst the hundred and seventy-two of Sri Aurobindo, that have just been published in French thanks to his Ashram at Pondicherry.

As discreet as he is devoted—the Ashramite who has consecrated thirteen years of his life to the translation of this work will never be known except under the initial of his name : G. For him, it is the utterance of this great Indian which really counts, this great Indian whom he never met but who inspired him nevertheless, like so many others from the West, to leave all—country, family and friends—so as to live better his example and his vision.

I do not have the presumption, or the naïveté, to think that I shall introduce to the readers of *Le Monde* Sri Aurobindo. Although he left his body over thirty years back, his name still continues to radiate, more and more, in the West and particularly in France, the country in Europe where the translations of his prose-works are the most numerous and where books as difficult as *The Life Divine* appear in pocket-book edition with a first printing of twenty-five thousand copies—a colossal number for a Reflection that does not content itself with a synthesis of the thought of the East and that of the West, but innovates and opens new vistas and gives us keys to enter into the profoundest mysteries of our being and the world.

Let us know ourselves. Let us become what we are. “I” is someone else. Yes, yes, there are a few in the West who already know all this. These are phrases they

venerate, phrases that constitute the basis of their quest. But, and this is what I was just pointing out, in India these are not merely phrases but an experience, an experience that is lived—this experience which we call yoga and which for us, simplistic Westerners, indicates too often an amalgamation of ill-understood things and, as the current vogue would have it, is more physiological than psychological. “I do yoga,” the beautiful women declare at the decline of their age, or overworked businessmen who practise slow gymnastic movements more or less freakishly inspired from the Indian *āsanas*. Whereas the word yoga has another meaning—more wide and complete since it signifies “union”: union with God, or, if that word is not to be used, since it too serves as a mask for many an ambiguity, rather union with the Divine, with the Source, the supreme Origin. The Indians call it simply *tat*, That. For an Indian—Malraux speaks very well about this in his *Antimémoires*—, for Sri Aurobindo, the universe is That made manifest. There is only That which is eternal and infinite and it is with That that man must unite himself through yoga and on the basis of That he must think, will and act as well as surrender himself, consecrate himself, nay, forget himself so as to merge better in the Divine.

A thought as bold and original has, however, not spared Sri Aurobindo from facile comparisons. On the pretext that he is known in the West mostly for his ideas on the superhuman future of our species—*The Life Divine*, *The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*—, on the French side one refers immediately to Father Teilhard de Chardin (yet let us not forget that his final work, *Le Phénomène Humain*, was published only in 1955, *viz.* five years after Sri Aurobindo’s passing); while Whitehead, the English logician, is held up on the side of the Anglo-Saxons. But, however rich and sincere may have been Teilhard de Chardin’s and Whitehead’s search, it is primarily founded on an intellectual plane. Sri Aurobindo positions himself straight away on the spiritual plane to envisage the same problem and this difference of viewpoint in the observation changes the entire thrust of his exploration.

No, he who represents without doubt the greatest light that ever came to us from India, from that India which he affirmed to be “the guru of the world”, he can be compared to none. And not only his works but his life demonstrates that all comparison is futile.

Sri Aurobindo was born on August 15th 1872 at Calcutta. He was brought up in England and there did his studies with exceptional brilliance (St. Paul’s School in London, then Cambridge); he mastered English and French, was conversant not only with Italian and German but also Greek and Latin and could write in all these languages. Returning to India at the age of twenty, he became secretary to the Maharaja of Baroda and very soon entered politics, at first secretly, then in the open. An inspired revolutionary, he appeared on the political scene much before Gandhi; he wrote articles full of fire, made fervent speeches which called upon the young of India to sacrifice their lives as an offering at the altar of the Mother-goddess that is India, at that time a captive of the British. He was imprisoned for a year in the Alipore Jail in Calcutta on the charge of an assassination-attempt. And here, within four

walls, he experienced the absolute freedom of the soul, he discovered the Divine's presence in the very magistrates and jailers, in the fellow-detenus and even in the very bars of his cell.

At the end of the year he was tried and released. New articles, new speeches followed. The soul of India revealed itself to him and through him ever more resplendent. But Sri Aurobindo's situation still remained uncertain. Before the Government could rearrest him, he left Calcutta and in 1910 settled down in Pondicherry, which at that time was French territory. He decided to end his political career (later, on being asked to assume the Presidency of the Congress and govern India, he would refuse) in order to consecrate himself entirely to the yoga of transformation (to transform man into the divinity that he harbours within himself).

In 1914, a young Frenchwoman of Turco-Egyptian descent arrived in Pondicherry. She was Mirra Alfassa and she too had consecrated her life to this transformation. From their meeting—at the very moment when the War broke out—a journal was born where Sri Aurobindo started to publish his work.

Then there took place the departure and in 1920 the definitive return of Mirra Alfassa whom he called the Mother and to whom in 1926 he handed over the charge of his disciples and the organization of his Ashram. Today the Ashram is a town within a town of about two thousand disciples who live in a self-supporting organization, with an international centre of education which ranges from the kindergarten to what would be the equivalent of the Bachelor's degree and where approximately five hundred children are taught in four languages at the same time: French, English, Sanskrit and their mother-tongue (to which we must also add the fifteen hours of sports they are entitled to in a week). This is not utopia but a daily reality in a place in south India, a great visionary's dream come true.

But let us come back to the written work of Sri Aurobindo. I was saying earlier on that he is not merely a thinker of evolution, he is evidently also a yogi (*The Synthesis of Yoga, Letters on Yoga*), a political theorist (*The Ideal of Human Unity, The Human Cycle*), a Sanskrit scholar rediscovering the real significance of the ancient scriptures of India such as the Veda, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita; all these facets of Sri Aurobindo that the French readers, a few or many, are quite familiar with. They also know, thanks to *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, the being who with a smile breaks the bounds which generally limit our way of seeing. One could spend a life-time meditating on phrases such as: "The Atheist is God playing at hide and seek with Himself."

On the other hand we do not quite know the aspect of Sri Aurobindo as a dramatic author (five plays in verse); and above all—and that is an aspect even more essential of this personality—Sri Aurobindo, the cosmic poet, the mystic poet. And yet, from the time of his studies in England and right until the end of his life, he did not cease to write poetry. The bilingual publication which justifies this article, contains a lot of that admirable poetry, admirable as much for its form as for its inner meaning. The Christians, I think, will find here a few of the bases of their own faith

As for instance in this:

The Eternal is broken into fleeting lives
And Godhead pent in the mire and the stone.

or in this:

My body is God's happy living tool,
My spirit a vast sun of deathless light.

But think of the following verses:

Disbelieve in good and evil,
God with Nature reconcile.

Or these:

All who were refugeless, wretched, unloved,
The wicked and the good together moved,
Naturally to Him, the asylum sweet.

“The wicked and the good together moved”—here is something that singularly enlarges the field of blessedness. Christ rendered joyful the poor in spirit, those that were hungry and athirst for justice. In Sri Aurobindo's vision the wicked have as much a right to the abode of gentleness as the good. And in this way he refuses the idea of sin and, beyond it, that idea to which many of us cannot submit: the idea of original sin. He says that “mortality and pain/Are mere conventions of a mightier stage,” and thus comes to the succour of the humiliated and the oppressed.

Even in rags I am a god;
Fallen, I am divine;
High I triumph when down-trod,
Long I live when slain.

There is not a page of this wonderful anthology, not a line that is not a consolation to the fragile, the sorrowful and disquietened that we are. Sri Aurobindo prods us to hope and to wait for the One beyond Silence, for the One beyond Time; he gives us the certitude that we shall arrive: “I have a hundred lives before me yet/To grasp thee in, O Spirit ethereal.” And Sri Aurobindo reiterates Christ's “I shall come as a thief” in this way:

In some faint dawn
In some dim eve,
Like a gesture of Light
Like a dream of delight
Thou comst nearer and nearer to me.

What a lovely programme for the Timeless!

(Translated by Maurice from the French)

A MESSAGE FOR NAVAJATA

ON THE DAY HIS BODY WAS TAKEN TO HIS ASHRM-ROOM

Dear Bhaiji,

I had a moment of giddiness entering your Ashram-room. Your easy-chair with the immaculate cloth was there. The flowers, too, adorning as usual the photographs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Your books, your spectacles, everything was there waiting for you, still talking of you. Only you couldn't talk with me.

With my eyes brimmed with tears and my fast-beating heart suffocating me, I had to recede a few steps outside. I was isolated for a moment from all the surrounding world: my body was unprepared for the sudden encounter with your being still there but already in another dimension, and I received the shock of the extra-terrestrial voltage. The flowers, some of "Gratitude" that I knew you had liked very much, as well as those frail messengers of "Love", were drooping in my hands—their earthly substance couldn't bear the vibrations with which the place was filled.

Your physical senses were withdrawn, yet you were there; you are here with the beautiful, invisible, ethereal presence that you can now emanate around us; the best of your sweet nature was for many a balm and for many it was only weakness or perhaps at the worst acquiescence. I think that your real nature was always misunderstood: a nature that would make everybody happy: a nature that would draw people, stimulate and fascinate them like a child full of enthusiasm who ignores the reactions of men as a community, as a social group, with their small laws, their narrow codes, their so-called rights.

I know you were full of projects; you wished to realise a world of peaceful ideals, men seeking creative beauty, but you were caught in a swirl of events which escaped from your hands because they were so antithetical, so alien, to your real nature. The apparent nature was the only one we could understand. Hasn't Sri Aurobindo written that the true reality is not what men see, because they are not prepared to perceive it?

It is not a matter of hypocrisy to avoid discussing here the Auroville problem connected with your name. The problem doesn't obsess me. If you didn't solve it, I hope you were not too dejected. Is anybody capable at present of taking this dream of the Mother on so large a scale, so packed with diverse elements, towards a true solution?

Now you are free of our barbaric world of "collective alienation", where vulgarity is sovereign, where crude creatures are kings and call themselves "strong" and play the comedy of being in charge of something or other. You are now in the realm of Peace and Light, where you are not forced to say "Yes" when you would have liked to say "No". You are where the language of "No" is not required; for "No" is the first step the child learns in order to protect himself: it is the symbol of life's negativity. People of a sweet nature are ready to acquiesce in what others say, and they make mistakes.

Forgive me if I couldn't help you with the limited worldly means at my disposal. Forgive me for my "critical" nature for the sake of helping you. Forgive me my affectionate advices that may have made you thoughtful and perhaps sad. Forgive me if I couldn't understand that you were already on the Way to get rid of this world of lies and compromises. Forgive me—but my attitude has been always of a mother who would protect her child and warn him to be cautious, a mother who seeks only to clear the path of the pebbles and hidden scorpions. I have had the habit since my girlhood to pray to the Almighty to come down and help my dear ones. Now the hour of God has arrived and He came down to help you, and I must feel happy that you are at last with the Mother in the Kingdom of Truth.

I was looking at the starry sky last night and I remembered that my grandmother used to tell us, when we were children, that the stars were the souls of all the people that had passed away, and the most sparkling ones were the souls of the very good dead persons.

I love you, Bhaiji, for all the mistakes attributed to you; I love you for your innocent vulnerability, deeply concerned about the mistakes. It is our failures we call mistakes, not understanding that God has decided just the other way round.

I love you for your imperturbable gentleman-like attitude when others in the name of "sternness" were the victims of their own crude nature and fell into vulgarity.

Your generosity was known only by people who have been helped by you. Just last night I was told by Nata that at a moment when the Mother had needed money and he had spoken to you, you collected all the amount at your disposal and also some jewels of your family to give to her.

On the last day of your Pondy sojourn we spoke of the Matrikunj project and, as I produced my architect-effort, you admired and laughed at my colourful map showing how to transform the place into a real physical and spiritual home of rest to honour the name of Matrikunj. Well, you gave me an appointment for the day you would be back from Delhi. As usual you said, "You have to help me, Maria Luisa, won't you?" (Now, in what way, Bhaiji?)

I am waiting here for you; our work for the Mother must be fulfilled, a work far from so many boasting, clamorous exploits in the name of the Mother that are only the endeavours of midget thundering Jupiters of this world.

MARIA LUISA

HOW DORAISWAMI CAME TO SRI AUROBINDO

A PEEP INTO THE PAST

THE late Prabhakar Mukherjee had been a permanent resident of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, since 1937. His younger brother Mr. Mukherjee used to come to the Ashram for darshans after Prabhakar had settled there. On one of his visits, he met Doraiswami at Prabhakar's residence. Curiously he asked Doraiswami: "How and when did you come in contact with Sri Aurobindo?"

Doraiswami was a leading lawyer of Madras and later he became a notable disciple of Sri Aurobindo and a permanent Ashramite with his whole family. It was through Doraiswami that Sri Aurobindo sent his famous letter to Gandhiji at Delhi in 1942, advising him to accept the Cripps' Proposal which the then British Government had sent to India's National Congress. But Gandhiji rejected Sri Aurobindo's advice and refused Cripps' Proposal. Our country has been suffering seriously from the bitter consequence of the non-acceptance of it.

However, on that day, in answer to Mr. Mukherjee's question Doraiswami said: "In the early days I used to come to Pondicherry for some other interest. Once C.R. Das wrote to me from Calcutta to see Sri Aurobindo Ghosh at Pondicherry. I later became a member of C.R. Das's Swarajya Party. On one of my trips to Pondicherry, I managed to meet Sri Aurobindo at his residence. The Mother also at that time was living in the same house, but till then I had not heard of her. When I met Sri Aurobindo, he asked me: 'What do you want?' I answered: 'I have come to you because C.R. Das of Calcutta once wrote to me to see you.' Sri Aurobindo said: 'Oh, Chitta?' 'Yes, Sir.' 'But what is your intention?' asked Sri Aurobindo. I said: 'I want to offer you some money.' 'I need no money,' replied Sri Aurobindo. 'But it is my earnest wish, Sir,' I insisted."

After the Mother finally came in April 1920 to stay near Sri Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo's financial condition became solvent. When Nolini Sarkar came to Pondicherry from Calcutta to see Sri Aurobindo for the first time in March 1921 and then lived with him for almost five months, he saw Doraiswami coming to Sri Aurobindo every week-end with some kind of offering. Nolini Sarkar and Hrishikesh Kanjilal, one of Sri Aurobindo's disciples of the Revolutionary period, both came together to Pondy in 1921, and both of them first saw Doraiswami in Madras on their way to Pondicherry. Mr. Nambiar, an admirer of Sri Aurobindo, receiving information from Pondicherry came to the Central Station and took Nolini Sarkar and Kanjilal to his residence in Madras. In the afternoon a gentleman came to Nambiar's house "to meet them who had come from Calcutta to go to Pondicherry". He was Mr. Doraiswami. Mr. Nambiar introduced Mr. Doraiswami to Nolini and Hrishikesh. After formal chats, Hrishikesh told Doraiswami, pointing at Nolini Sarkar: "He is a singer." Nolinida then sang "Janaganamana-adhinayaka" at Doraiswami's request. Doraiswami was a lover of music. Because of Sri Aurobindo's influence his other

interest in Pondicherry faded and Sri Aurobindo shortly became of greater interest.

Once Doraiswami received a case to conduct in the Madras-court on a contract basis. If he could win the case for his client he would gain one lakh of rupees as his fee, but in the case of defeat he would get nothing.

The next time he came to Pondicherry he met Sri Aurobindo and told him about the case he had taken up, and requested Sri Aurobindo to guide him with law-points by which he could plead the case. Sri Aurobindo said: "How can I help you with law-points? I am not a lawyer." Doraiswami replied: "No, Sir, but you are an I.C.S., I pray for your guidance in this regard. I'll narrate to you briefly the case and show you the necessary papers." Sri Aurobindo was so kind to Doraiswami that he patiently heard him out and gave a look at his papers also. Then, after a little pause, he put his finger at one place and told Doraiswami: "Yes, you can plead the case on this point, and you should remain confident of victory."

Doraiswami was extremely happy to hear these words. He pleaded the case in the court on the very point Sri Aurobindo had picked out and won the case. He gained the promised one lakh of rupees.

He came to Sri Aurobindo with joy and told him: "Sir, I have won with ease the case and my fee of rupees one lakh because of your guidance and blessings. I now wish to offer you the entire sum as I deeply feel the money is yours."

Sri Aurobindo said: "But we need no money." Still, Doraiswami went on requesting him very humbly to accept the money. Then Sri Aurobindo told him: "Wait, I'll call the Mother." The Mother came and Sri Aurobindo explained to her the matter. Then she told Doraiswami: "Since you are so keen to offer money to Sri Aurobindo, give him ten thousand rupees. You need not offer the whole amount of your fee." Doraiswami then wrote a cheque for ten thousand rupees and handed it to Sri Aurobindo.

This was the first time Doraiswami had seen the Mother. As he afterwards related, he thought: "This lady is exceptional, she has no greed for money!" From that time he was gradually attracted to the Mother and later surrendered himself and his whole family as well as his monthly income at her feet. Perhaps in the beginning of the nineteen-thirties Doraiswami left his whole family under the Mother's care in the Ashram and himself lived alone in Madras to earn money for the Ashram through his law-practice. But after a few years the Mother wanted him to be near her in the Ashram. So he gave up his practice and by the end of that decade he became a permanent member of the Ashram. He sold his palatial house in Madras and offered the money to the Mother.

But before finally joining the Ashram, Doraiswami was offered the post of Advocate General. He sought Sri Aurobindo's advice in this matter. Sri Aurobindo told him not to accept Government Service.

It is astonishing how the Mother and Sri Aurobindo used to guide their sincere devotees not only in Yoga but even in their personal and private affairs. The writer

of this article has himself been fortunate enough to receive the guidance of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in several of his private and personal affairs, for which he is ever grateful at the feet of their dual divinity.

RAGHUNANDAN

OBEISANCE

At Thy feet bows my head,
Rapt is my head in communion with Thee,
Inebriate with the ecstasy of Thy love
It bows and bows again at Thy feet.

The Ganges holy, the earth and heaven vast,
The clusters of stars in adoration self-lost,
Voiceless the mind-world in meditation deep,
Self-offered my head in worship intense.

O Thou, come down on Thy own earth,
Accept my obeisance, O Thou Adorable!
Build, O Ravisher, Thy ceaseless rounds of joy,
Let Thy creative dances know no end.

Thou the beginning, Thou the end,
In each movement and the rhythm of life,
In every cell and beat of time
Bows down my head at Thy feet.

SHYAM KUMARI

INDIAN HISTORY: ITS TRUE MEANING AND ITS LIGHT ON THE FUTURE

In 1978 an Orientation Course on Indian Culture was organised by the Sri Aurobindo Society in collaboration with the Minister of Education, Department of Culture, Government of India. A series of talks was held in the Academy House, Pondicherry. Two talks were delivered by the Editor of Mother India on December 28 and 29. We are reproducing in full the text of the first talk along with its Introduction. The second talk, unlike the first one which was general, entered into anthropological and linguistic details which since then have appeared in an extended form in two books by the speaker. It will be reproduced in an abridged version next month.

Introduction, on Seeing the Audience

CONSIDERING the toughness of my theme (toughness which will get worse in the second of my two talks), I am very pleasantly surprised to see such a large number of faces. Some of the faces are actually smiling—happy like innocent lambs not knowing how soon they will be led to the slaughter-house.

History is not everybody's cup of tea. But what is needed for you is a cup of coffee to keep your minds alert. Luckily for you, I am not a professional historian: I am only an amateur. So matters may not be quite as bad as feared. I may hope to hear only the soft flute-notes of a few yawns instead of the deep organ-tones of persistent snores.

I

There are historians who believe that everything in India has come from outside India. All developments, according to them, had an origin that was non-Indian. If a certain pottery or a particular style of structure is found here, it is said to be found earlier elsewhere and has entered this country later. The very people of India, both of the north and of the south, are declared to be immigrants from abroad in several waves. Even the Harappa Culture is taken to have been a colonisation. Whatever preceded it is also regarded as a foreign entrant. There are a number of archaeological facts upon which such an outlook is sought to be based. But they are not the only ones at our disposal. And would not these facts themselves show merely that India has been willing to adopt ideas, objects and visitors from beyond its frontier and not necessarily that all we consider Indian is originally foreign? My own answer emphatically understands these facts to be showing nothing else. But I may proffer my views in this context by first attempting to give a surprise to the contrary.

Do you know that in the whole of our ancient literature—literature which we may regard as a faithful mirror of what India essentially has been—you will nowhere come across the word "Hindu" or "India" to characterise our countrymen

or our country? Neither the Rigveda nor the Upanishads nor our two great epics nor any Dharmashastras ever speak of Hindus or of India. The term "Hindu" is Old Persian for "Sindhu", the name of our biggest westernmost river, and is applied by the Achaemenian emperor Darius Hystaspes to the region through which that river flowed. "Indus", the present name of this river, is a formation from the Greek "Indos" which is what the river Sindhu was called by the historians who accompanied Alexander the Great to the Punjab in 326 B.C. And it is the ancient Persians and Greeks who extended to the whole country their word for our biggest boundary-river or for the territory about it. We have followed in their footsteps.

If we stuck to our own indigenous terminology we would designate our country Sindhia and its people Sindhus or Sindhians. Or else we would know ourselves as Sindhis and label our land as Sindh—instead of knowing only some people and a part of the pre-Partition subcontinent by these names.

We are quite happy with the foreign nomenclatures. This shows a typical turn of our mind—a readiness to accept whatever hails from any quarter of the world. And indeed many factors and forces have come into our country. We are perhaps the most invaded country in the world. Our only equal is England which was itself one of our invaders. England was invaded by the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons and Teutons, the Danes, the Normans—and in recent times it has suffered a minor and peaceful yet problem-raising penetration by the Jamaicans and our own countrymen, so that a lot of services—from bus-conducting to doctoring—are carried on by a coloured population. India has experienced in differing measures the onslaughts of the Persians, the Greeks, the Sakas, the Hunas, the Arabs, the Afghans, the Moghuls as well as the British. Although we have tried to resist the entry of all these foreigners, still once they were in we have not looked upon them as sheer intruders against whom we must shut our minds and hearts. On the contrary, we have assimilated them no less than their cultures and kept on adding new shades to our mind-pattern and our life-design and even our soul-scheme.

We are the most eager and versatile assimilators in all history. But to assimilate means to take fresh factors and forces into something that is essentially our own. It does not mean that we are composed merely of foreign elements that may have come into the land. It points to a certain fundamental spirit of ours which is so made that it can appreciate everything under the sun and convert it into an enriching value to ourselves rather than converting ourselves slavishly into anything coming our way. What goes by the foreign nomenclatures of "Hindu" and "India" is a unique genius of unity-in-diversity, a stable centre of such a kind that it can send out radii all around as far as necessary and form a circumference as wide as wanted, reaching a hundred different matters and drawing them towards us and bringing them under the light of that omniscient all-facing centre.

There we have in general the true India, the genuine Hinduism of the ages, the persistent Indian spirit that goes back thousands of years and has combined an ever-growing novelty with a profound identity. It is a commonplace of world-history

that of all the ancient peoples only two have survived on a massive scale. Egypt, Sumer, Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome have lived grandly and disappeared. Their modern counterparts can hardly be regarded as reflections of their past. China and India have alone carried a living link from their past to their present. At least up to the Communist revolution which is merely a few decades old, China stayed alive with its ancient nature essentially unimpaired. And most probably from behind the changed exterior expression the immortal China of Laotse and Confucius will re-emerge in a modern guise. As for India, we do not have to talk of any re-emergence. India has never been covered up in its essentiality. Despite all the invasions and despite every innovation in cultural mood, we confront today the very India which we meet in the remotest antiquity. Appearances, no doubt, have altered considerably, and we shall soon touch upon this topic, which is not very pleasant, but to the searching mind of the world the image of our country is still summed up in the description which every historian would apply to all our greatest yesterdays, the description "Spiritual India."

This phrase certainly does not mean that all Indians are spiritual. Alas, we know too acutely that they are not. Many can well hold their own with the worst specimens anywhere. The phrase means only that the basic motive of Indian civilisation comes from a vision of life in which the fundamental Reality is an Eternal and Infinite Divine Being who manifests Himself progressively in matter through numerous individual souls which are born again and again, mounting the scale of existence and passing through various stages. This life-vision gives each stage its legitimate importance and expands it as much as possible, yet keeps ever bright before its eyes the presence of that Eternal and Infinite Divine Being and tries to orient each stage towards an ultimate direct experience of that fundamental Reality. And, in those who at last express this Reality in one mode or another, India shows its specific Indianness. Because the pressure in India throughout history has been to produce such expressions to the maximum, there is here the largest group of God-realised figures. Indeed, India stands out to the world by virtue of that abundance. They are its chief contribution, its characteristic gift to humanity.

The recognition of true Indianness in such a gift may be illustrated by a curious episode that has come down to us from the accounts left by the Greek historians of Alexander's invasion of India, to which I have already alluded. When Alexander reached Taxila in the Punjab, he was struck most with the strange life led by a band of sadhus in a neighbouring field. They were rather ultra-modern, I should say, for they were a spiritual nudist colony. They must be considered even more than ultra-modern, since they lived day and night absolutely in the open. Alexander sent his general Oneisicratus to talk to their leader and persuade him to come and meet Alexander. The leader whom the Greek annalists call Dandamis, which is perhaps the equivalent of Dandaswami, looked Oneisicratus up and down scornfully, noting his helmet, breast-plate, sword and elaborate sandals as if meaning to say: "How can I talk to a fellow so covered up, so afraid to face the naked

truth of things?" When he consented to listen to the interpreter and learned what the message was, he flatly refused to move, declaring that he had nothing to gain from Alexander and that he was his equal in all that really mattered. Later some sadhus did visit the Macedonian foreigner. Alexander was eager to take them to his own country. He did not care for any Indian handiwork, any product of the land he had invaded, although he had received several gifts. India for him was typical in the figures of these sadhus.

I may stop the episode here with my point illustrated. But the sequel is not devoid of significance. So I shall continue. All the sadhus spurned Alexander's offer to make them his guests of honour in Macedon—all except one. He agreed to accompany him. The Greeks have reported his name as Kalanos. They write that whenever he met anyone he cried out: "Kalanos!" The word of greeting must have been "Kalyan!", a wish for good luck. But there was hardly any good luck awaiting him or Alexander. The Macedonian's luck soon started petering out. For, his army would not march up to the Ganges as he had intended. The Indian resistance had been strong enough so far and it was expected to be overwhelming further inland. Alexander began his retreat through Baluchistan, ancient Gedrosia. Before passing beyond it, Kalanos developed a severe colic. The pain went on for a couple of days and he was extremely annoyed. Up till then his body had been untroubled. Now he felt it was betraying him. He said: "Before my body forces me out of it, I will force it out of me." He told the Greeks to prepare a pyre of wood for him where he would burn himself to death. They pleaded with him not to take such a violent course. He would not change his mind. The pyre was made and a firebrand got ready. All the generals of Alexander were present. Only their master could not attend because of a sudden indisposition. He sent his sincere regrets. Kalanos said to the generals: "Tell Alexander not to worry. I shall meet him at Babylon."

The generals looked at one another in puzzlement. Babylon was certainly on their itinerary, but they could not make head or tail of Kalanos's last words. When the pyre was lit, Kalanos sat imperturbable, feeling his soul rise victoriously free from the defeated burning body. However odd his method, he proved to the gaping Greeks that to the typical Indian the soul and not the body was the true self and could show at any moment its superiority.

When Babylon was reached, Alexander's illness took a turn for the worse. He shivered all the time and ran a very high temperature. To allay it he put himself in a tank of cold water. His condition further deteriorated. Within a day he died. Then the generals understood what Kalanos had meant. The unconquerable sadhu must now have met the helpless wishful world-conqueror. The generals realised that Indian spirituality implied a power of insight and foresight beyond the human consciousness.

What they did not realise was that the Indus region overrun by Alexander had sealed his doom. For, from all the various symptoms the historians have recorded, it has been inferred that in this region Alexander had contracted malaria.

Of course, malaria is not an Indian monopoly. The very word is Italian and connotes "bad air", *mal'aria*, because in Italy this fever was formerly attributed to the unwholesome atmosphere caused by the exhalations of marshes. But in modern times it has been more rampant in India than in Europe and has been part of the considerably altered appearances I have already spoken of. When we spotlight the wonder that is Spiritual India, the altered appearances are not to be ignored. They point to a decline in both mental and physical living. There has been a certain exhaustion after a strenuous many-faceted life across millennia. Nobody can deny that in the last few centuries we have not been at our brightest—and even now we have not fully recovered. We have to face the hard truth that our material state is far from being very attractive. We invite visitors from abroad—not only because they bring foreign currency but also because we have a cosmopolitan mind and because cordiality naturally bubbles up in us. But foreign visitors are not always fortunate in their tours. If I may make a small de-tour myself, I may pin down what I mean by quoting an acquaintance of mine, a warm-hearted Indian but not quite a master of the English language which a rather shortsighted policy in the near past—another symptom of our decline—has tended to play down and neglect. My acquaintance showed me a copy of the letter he had written to a pen-friend in England. With an unconscious humour running against its own intended serious drift, it said: "Come over, dear Englishman. You will be honoured and amused by us. Seeing unexpected things here will interest, astonish and stupefy you. You will go happily crazy over our marvellous sceneries and our fascinating customs. Soon you will wish India to be your own land and ultimately you will be at home here. You will feel as if you were not only in a physical but also in a mental home. Don't hesitate to make a lengthy tour. Are we not famous throughout history for our hospitality? From the day you arrive we shall hospitalise you!"

Yes, indeed the foreigners run the risk of one infection or another because our material conditions are not exactly ideal. Although the conditions are improving year by year we have a long way to go. The same must be said about the quality of our manufactures and the tempo of our civil life. However, most of the foreigners assure me that, no matter what disadvantages they may suffer time and again in external matters, the Soul of India has gripped them. This is especially true in a place like Pondicherry where the Sri Aurobindo Ashram stands. For, whatever the outer decline of the country in certain respects, there is no failure of basic spirit.

A kind of cloud hung over this basic spirit too in the last century. The impact of a nation such as the British, extremely energetic, most efficiently practical and at the same time heir to a glorious literature, cast a spell upon us at a period when our own zest for life and adventurousness of mind were at an ebb. The spell was all the stronger because service with the foreign rulers was profitable. Millions of Indians wanted to be "Brown Englishmen". But soon a renaissance took place and has continued to go from strength to strength. Today we may assert this with confidence. A modern India, which could produce a Tagore and an Iqbal and a Bharati,

a Jagadish Chandra Bose and a C.V. Raman and a Homi Bhabha, a Tilak and a Gandhi and a Nehru, a Radhakrishnan, a Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, a Sarat Chandra Chatterji, an Allauddinkhan, a Nandalal Bose, a Jamshedji Tata—and in particular a modern India which could give birth to a Ramakrishna Paramahansa, a Swami Vivekananda, a Ramana Maharshi and, above all, a Sri Aurobindo—an India of these potentialities is still the India which once had its place in the forefront of the world in art, science, philosophy, politics and towered over all other countries with its shining procession of Rishis and Saints and Avatars who infused into every field of our national life an ever-present sense of Eternity in the passing moment, Infinity in each small nook and corner, Divinity in everything that is earthly and all-too-human.

India is a thousand different things, but it is fundamentally a spiritual entity. The quest for a Truth beyond the mind, the pursuit of a Beauty behind the heart's emotions and the thrills of the senses, the seeking for a Goodness transcending mere ethical norms and social forms—a superhuman Existence by which alone the mental-vital-physical complex that we are can perfect and fulfil itself: this is at the fount and this is amidst the process and this is in the goal of historical India. The whole meaning of Indian history lies in that superhuman Existence.

Not that India has forgotten the varicoloured surface of reality. In its greatest, most creative, most comprehensive periods as distinguished from its periods of dissatisfaction and impatience with all things temporary, it has affirmed and embraced every aspect of living. The world that we see in the early Upanishads is a world of spiritual inquirers who are also makers of kings and statesmen and artisans. The Ashrams in the age of our Epics, although situated in uncrowded spots, are no ascetic retreats: all the arts of peace and war were taught in them. And many of the sages in the past were householders. The worlds of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, where the Avatar Rama and the Avatar Krishna are central figures, are each a stage of diverse activity—high moral issues, deep cultural themes, wide political ideals, passionate romantic occupations have their play. In the Mahabharata one of our supreme scriptures is embedded, the Gita—but the Gita is not a call to shun the earth: it is promulgated in the heart of a mighty war and between two armies facing each other with drawn bows and poised javelins. A ceaseless enterprise according to everyone's true nature, leading finally to an inspired dynamism superior to all dharmas: this is the message that rings forth from the charioteer Krishna to the warrior Arjuna. The world we view in the account left by Megsathenes, the Greek ambassador sent by one of Alexander's successors to the court of the Indian king whom the Greeks called Sandrocottus (Chandragupta), is full not only of religious seeking but also of a multifarious secular constructiveness: imperial pomp, military prowess, complex political organisation, abundant commerce. Then there is the world depicted by Kalidasa, brimming with the richest vitality imaginable, hand in hand with a colourful religious pursuit.

And behind the worlds of the Upanishads and of Rama and Krishna, behind those of Sandrocottus and Kalidasa's contemporaries, we have the world of that

hoary document we know as the R̥gveda. The high-priests of the religion enshrined in it were no cave-dwellers. They stood at the head of the community and guided the diverse affairs of its kings and commoners.

Our historical consciousness is such that India is not debarred from going after anything it wants, but if it overlooks the need to press somehow through the work of its choice towards the superhuman Reality I have spoken of—to press towards it swiftly or gradually, straightforwardly or by intermediate means, openly or under some veil—if it fails to do so, then India will be frustrated, it will be only half-alive, it will never take its legitimate place in the world's future. Every country has its peculiar genius by which it specialises and excels in one direction or another, and its destiny of greatness is bound up with that genius. The whole world is aware of India's basic speciality and, as of old, the pilgrims of the Eternal, the Infinite, the Divine stream now to India as to no other land.

After this salute to spirituality in general, let me return to the topic of the universe and the multiverse constituting the mode under which the typical Indian genius functions. There is a continuing oneness and there is an equally continuing manifoldness that has made our history in the past and is making it now and will make it in the future. Influenced by modern phenomena we must not think that political unity can best arrive by our imposing some sort of over-all uniformity. India is a country that is also a continent. A hundred different cultures flourish on the surface of one underlying master-culture. It is an inner sameness that is our unity and this unity will not be contradicted by an outer variety. On the contrary, if we do not allow an outer variety as much as possible, we shall harm our typical genius, the continental nature of our country, which cries out for an organisation of ourselves in terms of what is designated as "linguistic provinces", an organisation for which the voice of Sri Aurobindo was raised at the very dawn of our Independence. Without a freely accepted diversity India's very unity would be unable to come into its own. But such diversity, I may warn, does not involve any partition of the land.

Our continuing oneness and equally continuing manifoldness is also responsible for making every invasion a chance to add a fresh facet to the diamond of our national being. It is as if those who entered India to conquer it were themselves drawn victoriously by India into its mighty depths and transfigured there into a new aspect of perennial Indianhood.

In a talk on history the first question to ask about this perennial Indianhood is: "Since when has it shown itself as a living force?" There are two answers possible at first blush. One is: "From the age of the Harappa Culture, the Indus Valley Civilisation with its twin capitals—Harappa in the Punjab and Mohenjo-daro in Sind—whose date has been changing in the opinion of historians but if we follow the most knowledgeable archaeologist at present, Dr. H. D. Sankalia, we may affirm that we are returning on the whole to the time-bracket originally proposed by Sir Mortimer Wheeler: 2500-1500 B.C." The other answer is: "In spite of certain survivals from the Harappa Culture, the main stream of Indianhood runs through the centuries

down from that primal testament of religious life, the Rigveda." Now, while a very limited discussion can be carried on about the Harappan chronology, fixing a number of shorter or longer periods such as 2300-1750, 2150-1700, 2700-1600 B.C., all within or just around Wheeler's time-bracket, a lively debate is still going on about the age of the Rigveda. R. C. Majumdar, the doyen of our historians, has made a special note of it. Wheeler and most others who have written on India's past hold the view that the Rigveda dates approximately to 1500 B.C. and marks what is popularly called the Aryan invasion of India—an invasion which in the eyes of many scholars was one of the causes for the fall and disappearance of the Harappa Culture. Against this view is pitted a small band of Indologists who put the Harappa Culture posterior in time to the Rigveda. According to them the Rigveda goes beyond 2500 B.C. and the Harappa Culture is one notable offshoot of post-Rigvedic civilisation—or rather a side-shoot since the main centre of post-Rigvedism moved further to the east of the Indus Valley.

If we are to come to grips with the essence of Indian history we have to decide between these two chronologies for the Rigveda. It is of the utmost national importance to ascertain whether the Rigveda precedes or succeeds the Indus Valley Civilisation. For, if it succeeds it, then the Rigveda involves the entry of foreigners into our country in about 1500 B.C. and in that case we have the dichotomy of Aryan and Dravidian, the division into two races originally separate and mutually antagonistic although subsequently much mixed.

This dichotomy has been a source of immense harm. Not that India lacks a feeling of unity, but it is at times a troubled feeling. Within the sense of a single many-featured nationhood, there runs a dangerous streak of separation between north and south. I shall relate a little incident, rather a funny one, to focus for you the far-from-funny situation I have in mind. From high history I'll come down to a bit of autobiography.

The time was 1947, the year of India's liberation from British rule. I had taken a train from Bombay to reach Pondicherry via Madras by August 15, which every year marks the birthday of Sri Aurobindo as well as India's Day of Independence from that year onwards—a coincidence which is full of a deep suggestion, on which I shall briefly dwell later. In that year a Marxist movement was afoot, responsible for sabotage here and there. The metre-gauge train from Madras came to a dead halt about a dozen miles from Pondicherry. The rails had been uprooted.

We stopped at an insignificant station at nearly 2 a.m. There were a few benches on one platform and none on the other. We had to get down with our luggage on the benchless platform. As I am handicapped in my legs, though at that time I was not such an antique as now and so was much more agile, my friends carried a bench across the lines. I sat on it while they went out of the station to arrange for a conveyance to take us to our destination. After a quarter hour I got up; tired of sitting in the semi-darkness, and joined my friends. Seeing they were still hassling, as the Americans would say, I returned to my bench.

What do I find there? A small plump South Indian was comfortably stretched out and seeming to be asleep. He had a pleasant face which looked to me quite friendly since it resembled that of one of my friends. Very gently I touched him. He opened his eyes and gave me a sulky stare. I said: "Will you please pull up your legs a bit and let me have a little room to sit?" He waved a hand and replied: "Go somewhere else." I pleaded again: "This bench was specially brought here for me. Kindly spare some space for me." He refused to answer. Then I said: "I shall have to sit down on your feet." He evidently could not believe I would do such an unusual thing. But I did it. Suddenly he sat up in a fury, showed me a pair of clenched fists and shouted: "You have assaulted me!" I was both surprised and amused. Keeping my cool in spite of his pugilistic gesture, I remarked: "This is the first time I have heard of assaulting anybody with one's bottom!" While this elevated observation was uttered, my friends were seen arriving from outside. On their approach my assaulted companion thought it wiser to keep quiet than to press home his charge. But before holding his tongue he turned towards me his own bottom on the bench, looked away into the dimness and muttered under his breath: "You Northerners! You have come and spoilt everything!" Obviously he felt he had voiced the ultimate condemnation with that one word "Northerners".

This was an eye-opener for me. I had known many South-Indians in Bombay and my relations with them had always been cordial. I harboured not the slightest prejudice against South India. Now I realised for the first time that a Northerner could be looked upon as an unwelcome intruder upon Southerners. The unpleasant picture is not due to a geographical or linguistic factor: it is due basically to the theory that Aryans from abroad forced themselves upon a Dravidian India—an India which originally was Dravidian in the north no less than in the south. According to this theory, the south was where the Dravidians were pushed from their legitimate place in the north: they were deprived of their right to be omnipresent in India.

At the time of my unique assault—perhaps its uniqueness entitles it to be mentioned in India's history and not merely in one Indian's autobiography—I had not thought of inquiring into the historical status of the picture which that little man conveyed to me. My schoolbooks had taught me of the Aryans entering India through the northern mountain-passes in the middle of the second millennium B.C. But when I understood the bitter feeling expressed on that wayside station I became interested enough to study the question.

What gave an added spur was my amazement on discovering that a certain section of South Indians had read even the story of Rama's march through peninsular India and of his conquest over Ravana's Ceylon a camouflaged tale of hostile colonisation!

(End of first talk)

K. D. SETHNA

CANNOT STOP...

CANNOT stop...
when—at the core of being
rings the anklet of rhyme...
If rain fails
and rivers flow not,
if stars don't twinkle
and the sun refuses to shower rays
the wonderful world sinks
into eternal darkness!

Cannot stop...
when—the ecstasy of soul
gives birth to supernal beauty...
Dies away the desire for name and fame,
false becomes the petty pride and ego.
Only the revelation remains
as the truth to aspire for and follow!

Cannot stop...
when—from behind the horizon
emerges the splendid glow of red and gold...
Night wakes up from its opaque slumber,
the trees are radiant with flowers
and the children smile...
The votaries dipped in devotion
light lamps and incenses
and meditate before the image,
their God, Guide, Lord and Lover!

Cannot stop...
when—the wine of bliss
flowing through body and nerves
comes down to earth...
Vanish all worries of life
and the mind freed from cares
bursts into music of faith!
Field and sky tinged with a mystic hue
appear to chant in praise of the unknown...

Who can know the wherefore of the adventure
of the Formless towards forms,
the art of Its self-unfolding
and the skill of Its world-play?
Mysteriously It moves on and on
without stop...

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

(A free conversion of the original Bengali into English by the author.)

WHAT IS SHE ?

HER smiling face is the crimson dawn,
Her vastness is the sky.
The moments that are rushing on
Her Presence glorify.
The silence of the night is She;
Her might revolves the world.
Her wisdom shines incessantly,
From the highest height unfurled,
Her guidance comes at every turn;
No step can go astray.
Her beacon-light will always burn
To show the truest way.
Her love enlivens every heart
That answers to Her call.
No soul remains from Her apart,
Her charm embraces all.
She looks on us—the brightest Star!
This universe is She.
All threads of life are twined with Her
Throughout eternity.

SAILEN ROY

CALL OF THE GRACE

THE Mother once gave me a very unusual flower. It was of a light brownish hue and the petals were already dry and were formed like a sherry glass. She shook the flower near my ears, and it made a noise like a rattle. I laughed, and when I asked the Mother its name, She said with a most magnetic smile, "Call of the Grace."

Sanat and I hardly ever wrote to the Mother of our difficulties and tribulations. She was always so busy and the immensity of Her work was overwhelming compared to our daily difficulties (inevitable in the path of yoga) and bawlings over them. Indeed we thought they were nothing but childish tantrums. It is below the dignity of an educated person to be always nagging and whimpering. But a few days before this incident I have stated above, I had written a letter pouring my heart out to the Mother when the goings-on were a bit more tough than usual. In answer She wrote:

Chaundona, my dear child,

Look at all these things good or bad, with quietness and detachment, indeed they have very little importance.

Sanat came to the Ashram to participate in a divine work and, quite naturally, you came with him. I consider you both as my children. So, you are here at home, and I give to nobody the right to interfere with your stay.

So, think no more of all that, and the clouds will soon disperse.

With my love and blessings

MOTHER

The Mother soothed my heart in a marvellous way by such a wonderful gift as 'Call of the Grace' and all the suggestions that lay untold behind the gift.

That night—when Sanat was busy with the radio, but the station to which he wanted to tune in was not forthcoming and a lot of pip-pip-pips and bib-bib-bibs went on—I fell to dreaming. Does the Mother's force or light or grace or whatever name one gives it go out like that of the radio signals, calling back to Her bosom great souls that are there in this world and other worlds and the universe? For how can we say that we who were in our physical bodies when the Mother was there on the earth were the only souls doing Her work or Her only intimates? Others went before us who paved the way for the great work and yet more will come in the future to carry on the work. I started seeing the vision I so often saw: the whole universe dark but a light palpitating, warm, alive rushing on in a tremendous way to God knows where, or perhaps to God. I enjoyed this vision very much. Whether it had any truth in it or whether it was all James Jeans with his "mysterious universe" acting on my brain I did not know, for as a young girl I had read a lot of modern physics.

Was there any point of time when the Mother called us—me or my family? Suddenly I sat up startled. Yes, it was when my brother died. He was just eighteen months older than I. We were both very much loved and pampered by the family.

Father, an extravert, would show it by heaping on us toys and chocolates in season and out of season. But my brother had a special position with others. People came from the Zamindari and lavished expensive gifts almost drowning him, as the future Zamindar. He died very young. When he was on his deathbed a sannyasi defying the obstructions of our stalwart Nepali darwan (doorman) came straight upstairs and stood on the threshold of the room where the boy was dying. People around were so disturbed that no one noticed him. He came near my mother who was weeping beside the bed and said, "Don't cry, ma, his was a very great soul, he had some work to do here; that done, the Great Mother is calling him back, but you will see him again." So saying he just vanished into thin air. No one saw him go away.

For several months I went on complaining, "Dada has gone out to play and he has not taken me with him." For that is what they told me. People started weeping when they heard me and I used to say to myself, "Why are they weeping? Why don't they go out and bring him back?" All this was in my father's house in Calcutta where I had seen the face of the Great Mother for the first time. In the most devastating hour of the family came the hour of God, the Mother's pips and bibs.

Father who, both in his nature and outward life, was a happy blending of all that was most aristocratic in Indian culture and the highest and best in European culture, became morose and uncommunicative. His mascot gone, he could take no joy in life. He would go out at night to pray at the great Kali temple at Kalighat. After prayer he would order the owners of the sweetmeat shops there to distribute all the eatables to the beggars. They were astounded. "Give away all the eatables to the beggars?" They had never heard of such a proposition. True, the gentleman looked rich with gold-rimmed pince-nez and gold-knobbed walking-stick, yet...? Finally when father took out his wallet and handed the cash demanded by the owners the distribution started. Father also lost all interest in his majlis that used to be held in his drawing-room every evening where at least half a dozen rajas and maharajas assembled to play bridge and chess and billiards. He decided to move to Allahabad permanently. His mother's people soothed him more than his Calcutta associates. Great-grand-father, Sir P. C. Banerji, was there no longer, but his eldest son, that is my father's eldest maternal uncle, the Honourable Mr. Justice L. M. Banerji, was there and he welcomed with open arms his favourite nephew now overwhelmed with grief over his little son.

I had not read A. E. then, otherwise I would have said to father:

Be not so desolate
Because thy dreams have flown
And the hall of the heart is empty and silent as stone.

Thy gentlest dreams, thy frailest,
Even those that were born and lost in a heart-beat
Shall meet thee there—

They are become immortal
In shining air.

They shall be with thee forever,
Thy travel done.

For the last seven years of his life he could not talk of anything but how he would go to Pondicherry and see the Mother.

If father had not migrated to Allahabad I would have been most probably married to a rich Zamindar and that would have been the end of all hope of seeing Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I would never have seen Sanat and never come to Pondicherry. If the Mother called me again and again since I was a little girl, Sanat made it possible for me to answer the call.

CHAUNDONA S. BANERJI

WHITE ROSES

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D. H. LAWRENCE

THE APOSTLE OF THE LIFE-SPIRIT

LOOKING back upon those four or five years which immediately followed on D.H. Lawrence's death, it is difficult to realise that it is now a about half a century since that "savage Messiah" passed from the contemporary scene. But now that both the wild storm of castigation and the exuberant froth of praise, which then issued from his many critics and close associates, have long since died down, we can begin to see from a respectable distance something of what Lawrence was really striving for, and his consequent failure to realise that aim.

Search for the Pure Primitive

The seventeen years from 1913 to 1930 covered practically the whole period of Lawrence's literary production, but between the publication of *The White Peacock* and his last works—*Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Man Who Died*—there emerged the modern novel in all its nakedness—that is, with all its primitiveness and crudities, that were but a full exposure of the suggestions of its earlier expression. We may well ask, however, if Lawrence was really the prophetic genius he was made out to be, or was he merely the writer of profanities breaking conventions and shocking people's sensibilities just to express what he felt to be real? Perhaps it would be safe to say that he was something of both. His genius lay in his subtle feeling into the inner life-rhythms, which are inherent in all things, animate as well as inanimate. At times he touched the true cosmic vision, but he was too responsive to the life-pull to accept the truths of those higher values which thus opened to him. It is not surprising, therefore, that the sinuous power of sex played a predominant role in his works. For by giving full rein to the primitive and instinctive elements he lost, or rather violently rejected, the balancing effect of a discriminative and intellectual stability. This made him unable and unwilling to see sex in its true perspective within the cosmic movement as a whole.

Like Blake before him, he tried to recapture something of the innocence that was man's before the "fall"—as symbolised in the Biblical story of Adam and Eve: that is, before self-consciousness had precipitated man into all the unresolved conflicts of his present condition or, as Lawrence puts it, into "the war of the self-conscious ego against the spontaneous old Adam." But it was more the full-blooded vital flow rather than the simple child-like innocence that drew Lawrence. He deliberately shocked his contemporaries by making use of what had become the discarded and obscene words of the language. And he justified his position in irrefutable terms: "All the old words," he wrote, "that belong to the body below the navel have come to be judged obscene—which is childish. The words themselves are clean, so are the things to which they apply. It is the mental association which has become

unclean—the mind drags in a filthy association, so it is our business to cleanse the mind.” In a similar way also, he justified his deliberate emphasis on sex, because he felt that “the only way to stop the terrible mental itch about sex (the disease of modern times) is to come out quite simply and naturally into the open with it.” But unfortunately he let himself be swept away by these primitive urges, so that, particularly in his last works, he yielded to “the stirring half-born impulse to smash up the vast lie of the world [on sex] and make a new world.” But, alas, his efforts to create a new world out of the rubble of these vitalistic bomb-blasts proved in the end to be utterly futile.

It was that unrestrained “daimon” in him (as Aldous Huxley called it) which tore at his vitals and prematurely consumed him, producing that insatiable restlessness which pursued him throughout his life. With an all-consuming passion he searched incessantly for the spontaneous or the “pure” mind-free primitive expression and way of life. He failed to recognise or accept the fact that all this primitiveness belonged to the past of man, and could not possibly be recovered in its old pristine form by the present-day world. It was by rejecting entirely the self-conscious level of man, which we now recognise to be but an intermediary stage, a stepping-stone in man’s development, that Lawrence has shut out all access to the higher mental reaches—the pure intuitive levels of mind. Instead of the intuitive, which he was really seeking, he merely grasped the instinctive lurking in the primitive depths of the being. He thus deliberately chose and fostered the darkness; and in this “dark womb of man’s birth and origin” he pictured the ultimate re-emergence and resurrection of man into his fullness.

Probings into Psycho-physical Secrets

The central core which formed the whole background to Lawrence’s work is perhaps most fully brought out in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (published in 1923). Although he had read various esoteric works such as books on Yoga and the writings of Plato, St. John, Herakleitos, and more recent authors like Fraser of *The Golden Bough* and Freud—he wrote always of what issued from his own inner experience. His acute analysis and probings into the inner secrets of man’s psycho-physical nature have proved, however, to be as mystifying to his contemporaries as Leonardo da Vinci’s detailed anatomical drawings appeared to the men of an earlier day. Certainly Lawrence’s analysis of man’s emotional nature (in terms of ganglia or chakras) finds no connection with the modern trend of thought. But to Lawrence it was a real experience, and one feels that in his own sphere—that of the life-impulse—he had touched on some fundamental truths which man must observe, if he means to comprehend the whole nature of his being.

Let us briefly examine his description of these psycho-physical centres, since they are fundamental for a proper understanding of Lawrence’s build-up of characters and situations depicted in his novels and short stories. Firstly, there are what he

calls the two great primal centres of the body—both below the diaphragm. These are the solar plexus in front, and behind it the lumbar ganglion. These of course are the natural centres connected with alimentation and the primal life-flow, but for Lawrence they assumed a more fundamental significance. They are the negative and positive poles—assimilative and outward feeling—of a subjective consciousness which is wholly impersonal and absorbed in itself. Of these the solar plexus (positive) is the outflowing instinctive feeling into things. The lumbar ganglion (negative) is the receptive centre which gives a sense of detachment from things other than oneself and is in fact the stiffened upright back which gives the feeling of independence and individual will-power to man. Similarly there are two great centres immediately above the diaphragm—a sympathetic centre in the breast, and a volitional centre between the shoulders. Here we recognise the heart-centre on the one hand, and the thoracic plexus on the other, controlling respectively the blood-flow and the respiration. And again these form the dual poles of positive outward feeling—seeking that which is beyond the individual self,—and a negative rejection force. The former is the symbolical sacred heart of love and compassion,—the source of light and inspiration. The latter is the powerful negative pole which, seeking to discover the knowledge and wonders of the world, transfers these wonders, as by impress, into itself. These four centres, then, form the unconscious strata of man's being. They are as yet below the mind, and are a means of direct knowing which functions quite spontaneously without the interference of mind. In them breathes the primal rhythm of life—as is typified by the steady inflow and outflow of breath from the lungs, and the rhythmic pulsating blood-beat from the heart. There are other centres (or chakras) which Lawrence touched upon, although he chiefly stressed the four large centres of the body as being the basic and primal consciousness. In adolescence, for instance, two subsidiary centres develop—one in the throat and the other in the cervical ganglia of the neck. These are respectively the centres of outward expression and of conscious activity. Youth, growing into self-aware manhood, becomes both articulate and conscious of its own bearing in the world. It is interesting to note in this connection that science has recently pointed to a centre in the back of the neck, which not only balances the skull in its upright position, but controls the whole posture and movement of the body. This centre, it has been suggested, can be utilised to attain a more conscious control over all one's physical activities.

Instinctive Levels and Mental Consciousness

It is from these primitive instinctive levels that Lawrence traces the origin and rise of the mental consciousness. But it seems to him that the latter is more of an automatic function than the primitive spontaneous rhythms which are its source. It is, therefore, against the law and nature of life to impose the mental will on the free spontaneity of the life-flow. The real function of the mental consciousness, Lawrence points out, is to provide us with the means to adjust ourselves to the

external universe, and to give us the means also for subduing that external materio-mechanical movement according to the needs of our creative life. From this, Lawrence concludes that the massive growth of mental consciousness in recent times—particularly of self-consciousness—has overbalanced the old-world rhythm, when man enjoyed the freedom of a direct expression, and of an intimate feeling into the world around him. In this top-heavy mental development Lawrence sees the whole failure of modern man to adjust himself to the world and to the cosmos. He saw, however, that it is not the mind but rather the soul in man which is the ultimate unifying factor of all these separate degrees or layers of consciousness. And it is the soul, unique for each individual, which gives man the ultimate sense of oneness. But although he realised the spiritual nature of man's inner being—or Holy Ghost, as he called it—his actual contact with and experience of it led him to identify the soul with the "quick" of life (that is, with the vital spark of man's being), losing thereby the true spiritual quality of the soul-nature.

It is unfortunate that Lawrence in thus tracing the development of man's consciousness in terms of his psycho-physical functioning, did not venture beyond the adolescent stage. In judging too hastily the present condition of man—characterised by a highly developed intellect and self-consciousness, and a corresponding loss of the subjective or sensual vision, as Lawrence termed it—he came to regard the ideative mind, and hence the brain-centre, as "the vampire of modern life, sucking up the blood and the life." Hence he says that the supreme lesson of human consciousness is to *learn how not to know*—that is, how not to interfere mentally, but live dynamically from the central source and origin of one's being. Inevitably he falls back to the primitive instinctive level of life, with its vital interchange and reactions, as being the true basis of man's dynamic fullness. We can see, therefore, how Lawrence in his later works came to abandon himself wholly to the instinctive life-spirit. Particularly in his last essays and poems, he kicked violently against man's mental probing of and interference with the realm of pure sensuality which consists primarily of instinctive and sub-conscious functions. "The business of mind," he states, "is first and foremost the pure joy of knowing and comprehending, the pure joy of consciousness. The second business is to act as medium, as interpreter, as agent between the individual and his object. The mind should not act as a director or controller of the spontaneous centres. These the soul alone must control: the soul being that forever unknowable reality which causes us to rise into being... Mind and the conservative psyche and the incalculable soul, these three are a trinity of powers in every human being. But there is something even beyond these. It is the individual in his pure singleness, in his totality of consciousness, in his oneness of being: the Holy Ghost which is with us after our Pentecost... The only way out of the vicious circle is to turn away, each one into the stillness and solitude of his own soul, and there to remain in the quiet with the Holy Ghost which is to each man his own true soul." How true! But how inadequately Lawrence himself dealt with this truth. He recognised the spirit-entity as the unifying centre of the being, but failed to perceive that

it was other than the vital centre of man. Thus his interpretation of the spiritual nature was but a shadowy affair, vague and indistinct, which could not survive the forceful reality of the life-impulse.

In one of his last works—*The Man Who Died*, a short novel which sensitively portrayed the resurrected Christ, and which balanced and offset to some extent the crudities of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*—he did endeavour to show a stage beyond mere sensuality, when man could look upon sex detachedly—that is, having transcended the sex-urge and become master of his soul. But he could not see the way by which this mastery and control could be achieved. He meant to convert profane love into sacred love, but this is impossible without the real transcendence. And it is precisely this latter from which Lawrence had fled. Having surrendered to the life-impulse, it was the living moment, the “now”, which he took to be the great underlying reality of all things. He could not, on this account, even bring himself to believe in a progressively emerging evolution, which appeared thus to be contrary to the ever-creative spontaneity of the present. And, as Aldous Huxley observed, he had no concern for eternity—the timelessness of the mystics. This, of course, is understandable when we realise that his was a particular kind of mysticism of the cosmos, with nothing of the supracosmic in it. When, therefore, he touched on some truth of the spiritual Reality, it appeared ethereal and otherworldly; he could not reconcile it with the elemental life forces to which he had wholly given himself. And so he died leaving behind him a widely varied collection of writings through which one has to step correctly in order to sift out the truth beneath his all-too free, though always stimulating, spontaneity.

NATHANIEL PEARSON

THE CASE FOR STUDYING UFOS

J. Allen Hynek, author of this article, was former chairman of the astronomy department at Northwestern University and a director of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Laboratory from 1956 to 1960 as well as consultant to Project Blue Book, the Air Force UFO study, for 17 years. He founded the Center for UFO Studies.

WHETHER a person has complete disdain for UFO phenomena or completely uncritical acceptance, or takes one of the many intermediate positions, certain incontrovertible facts stand out. UFO reports not only exist but also *persist*; they flow from many parts of the world, from disparate cultures and environments. A significant percentage of such reports come from sane and responsible people, as judged by commonly accepted standards (indeed, sometimes from well-trained technical and scientific personnel).

UFO phenomena are one thing; their interpretation is quite another. Unfortunately, in the public mind one particular interpretation has completely overshadowed and displaced the phenomena themselves: UFOs have been made synonymous with visiting extraterrestrial intelligences.

Now this is a very appealing and exciting idea, but it is this very interpretation that has been an abomination to most scientists. Familiar as they are with awesome astronomical distances, they can see no logical way in which such visitors could get here. A simple illustration serves to emphasize this: if we let the thickness of an ordinary playing card represent the distance from the earth to the moon, then it would require a 19 mile line of playing cards, back to back, to reach the star closest to our solar system. If UFOs indeed be space visitors, then they must really know something we don't!

Here is the great stumbling block; here is where the baby is cast out with the bathwater: since, according to our present scientific paradigm, it is clearly impossible for space travel to exist on such a scale, well then, UFOs must be nonsense. This is a most logical deduction on the part of the well-meaning, objective members of the scientific fraternity.

Somehow this is reminiscent of the nineteenth-century physicist who, while working with Crookes tubes (a prototypic cathode-ray tube), noted that protected photographic material became fogged when placed nearby. His far-reaching conclusion from this observation is said to have been "Do not place photographic materials near a Crookes tube," thus missing the discovery of X-rays.

Even the great can sometimes be found wearing blinders when it comes to the unexpected. In his *Book of the Damned*, Charles Fort tells the following story of Antoine Lavoisier, one of the founding fathers of modern chemistry. On September 13, 1768, "French peasants in the fields near Luce heard a violent crash like a thunderclap and saw a great stone object hurtle down from the sky. The French

Academy of Sciences asked the great chemist Lavoisier for a report on the occurrence; but Lavoisier was convinced that stones never fell out of the sky and reported that all the witnesses were mistaken or lying. It was not until the nineteenth century that the Academy accepted the reality of meteorites.”

What might *we* be bypassing by overlooking UFO phenomena? Is our only possible conclusion that we should disregard them because their implications are so bizarre and are as unfathomable as X-rays would have been to the pedestrian, objective scientific worker of the nineteenth century? Perhaps it is a mistake to characterize observations of UFO phenomena as one nineteenth-century British physicist defined effects produced by the hypnotists of his day: “One-half imposture and the rest bad observation.” Today, these same hypnotic techniques are accepted and useful in many areas, from medical therapy to legal matters. The old scientist was not alone in his dismissal of hypnotism. So serious was the attack on it by science that, when hypnotism was employed in lieu of anesthesia, the hypnotized patients undergoing surgery were branded as “hardened imposters who let their legs be cut off and large tumors cut out without showing any sign even of discomfort.” Just how deep into sand can one sink one’s head?

Now there is no doubt that many UFO reports are just as bizarre and unbelievable as the demonstrations of hypnotists or, to translate to the world of physics, as the seemingly unbelievable wave-particle duality of light. Indeed, the analogy is apt. UFO phenomena exhibit a similar duality, which, it seems, we must accept in a similar manner.

On the one hand, UFO phenomena seem to be utterly physical. Reported objects have been photographed (although it must be admitted that so far no really good close-ups have been produced), and they have appeared on radar screens. They can break tree branches and leave holes in the ground, and it is said that bullets have ricocheted off them. They have been reliably reported to stop car engines and to interfere with electrical circuits. A recent study of over 400 “car stopping” cases leaves little doubt about this physical effect.

Yet, on the other hand, UFO phenomena exhibit strangely nonphysical attributes. On occasion they appear, at least temporarily, to abrogate the inertial properties of matter: they exhibit extraordinary accelerations, hover effortlessly a few feet above the ground and can disappear before one’s very eyes. Furthermore, physical objects can be kept track of. We always know where a bus or an aircraft is; it has a continuous “world line.” But an outstanding characteristic of a UFO is its “localization in space and time.” A UFO is almost always reported in just one locality and is rarely seen sequentially in town after town, as a bus would be. And it does not remain for long in a specific locality. The distribution curve of UFO “duration times” peaks at about 10 minutes.

I have dubbed this unique property of the UFO the “Cheshire cat effect” after Alice’s cat in Wonderland, which also appeared out of nowhere, remained in one location for a short period and then vanished!

John Stuart Mill, in his *A System of Logic*, noted, “The greatest of all causes of non-observation is preconceived opinion.” To some, this ability of UFOs to appear and disappear is sufficient reason for dismissing the entire subject out of hand. But is this not more a case of refusing to look and observe because preconditioning teaches us to not want to look?

But the cat seems to be there, and from time to time it demands some attention. Maybe it’s trying to tell us something.

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HIS WIT WAS HIS GUARD

A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY

LONG ago when Pondicherry was known as Vedapuri, a wise King ruled over the territory. His enemies trembled at the mention of his very name. Not with swords or arrows, but with his sharp wit he stole a march over them. Kings of many lands sought his advice whenever they were in trouble.

Once a prosperous ruler invited him to his country. The King reached his host's palace in the disguise of a mendicant. All were surprised.

The royal host asked him if there was any reason behind his disguise other than to cause surprise.

"Well, my friend, don't you know that King Chunchinna of the neighbourhood is my enemy? I had to pass through his country. My foes are always on the look-out for me. But who will pounce on a poor mendicant?" replied the Wise King, laughing at his own dress.

"You could have travelled by sea!" suggested the host.

"Right. I will do that on my way back home!"

The King passed two days happily with his host, enjoying feasts, dances and hunting excursions.

On the morning of the third day he was requested to attend the host's court. He took his seat beside the throne.

Soon two young women, accompanied by a nurse carrying two new-born babies in her arms, appeared in the court.

"My lord," began the elder of the two women, "I am Beham and she is my sister Bibi, younger than me by two years. We were married to two merchant brothers. Our husbands are out on business.

"Day before yesterday, we gave birth to these babies you see in this nurse's arms. The two babies, one male and the other female, were born at the same hour. This foolish nurse who took the babies for a wash was unable to recollect from whose bed she had taken the male babe and from whose bed the female.

"Since I am the elder sister, I may be premitted to have the male baby."

The younger woman, who had so far kept quiet, broke her silence.

"My lord, a week before I gave birth to my child I dreamt that I was giving birth to a boy. I had that dream just before dawn. Isn't it said that all dreams dreamt a little before dawn come true? I am sure the male baby is mine."

"This is a strange case, indeed!" exclaimed the King. "The babes are born of two brothers. You two are sisters. Babies are babies—be they male or female. I wish that you two shower your love on them equally."

"Thanks, my lord, but I am sure that the male child is mine. Please allow me to take possession of it," said Bibi the younger sister.

"No! No! He is mine. I have the sole right to him," cried out Beham the elder.

The King was in a fix. He blinked and coughed and scratched his head. Soon his face brightened up. He was happy that he had the wise King of Vedapuri by his side. His beseeching look at the royal guest made the latter take up the problem.

“If your Majesty would provide me with a flawless balance and two small clay containers of equal size and weight, I should be able to solve this problem,” said the guest.

His demands were conceded. The wise King tested the balance and weighed the vessels. Satisfied, he gave the two clay containers to the two young mothers and requested them to jet milk from their breasts into them up to a certain level which was the same in both the vessels.

The mothers entered a private chamber and returned with the containers after a while. The guest-King observed them carefully and saw that the level of the content in one vessel was the same as in the other.

Beham, the elder sister, placed her container on the right-side plate of the balance and Bibi the younger on the left.

The right side of the balance slightly went down.

“The boy child belongs to Beham, the elder,” declared the wise King of Vedapuri with a victorious smile on his face.

Everyone in the court including the King and the clients clapped their hands in appreciation of the opinion.

The wise King looked at the younger mother who had lost her case. She too was jubilantly clapping her hands. The King soon understood that the scene had been enacted to test his wit. Everybody in the court knew that the male child belonged to Beham.

The host said, “You have proved your wisdom, my friend. These two young mothers are my queen’s maids. Now we’ll be extremely happy if you explain how you found out the truth.”

“That was simple,” responded the wise King of Vedapuri. “A woman’s body is soft and delicate. But look at a man’s body. It is hard, muscular, strong and rough so that he may work hard. Nature blesses the mother of the male child with slightly thicker milk. And since the right plate of the balance that held Beham’s milk went down, she was certainly the mother of the male babe.”

Hearing his explanation everyone in the court applauded again.

Five days passed after the King’s arrival at his host’s palace. Meanwhile news reached King Chinchinna, his foe, about his having passed through his land disguised as a mendicant. Chinchinna planned to kill the wise King when the latter would pass through his land on his return journey.

“I’m leaving for my country tomorrow, before sunrise, by sea,” announced the guest.

“Well then, what would you like to take with you as a souvenir?”

“Two oxen and a plough.”

“What? Such ordinary things?”

“Ordinary? Don’t we till the ground with them for a crop? And don’t we live by the crop? What better souvenir can you give me?”

“As you please, my friend. With them I give you a hundred soldiers to go as your bodyguards, and a beautiful ship.”

“My wit is my only guard,” remarked the King.

King Chinchinna’s spies learnt that the King of Vedapuri would return by sea.

King Chinchinna sent several thousand soldiers, fully armed, in fishing boats that very night. They were commanded to shoot poisonous arrows at the ship that sailed for the Vedapuri Coast.

A little before dawn the host woke up and went to see his friend off. When he reached the shore he saw the sailors waiting for the arrival of the wise King. The ship was ready to receive him.

The host went to the royal guest house. The guest was missing. He hurried to the backyard of the palace. To his surprise he found that the two oxen and a plough the guest had received as his gifts were also gone!

The host understood the situation. But he did not call his soldiers and the ship off the sea-shore immediately.

Later news reached him that the wise King of Vedapuri had reached his country safe, with the oxen and the plough, passing through Chinchinna’s land disguised as a poor farmer.

Collected and Rendered into English by P. RAJA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

My Mother by *Surendra Nath Jauhar* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch, 1982)

THE blessings of The Mother sent on several occasions to Surendranath Jauhar, found on the initial pages, shower grace and felicity on the reader also as he settles down for delectable fare.

How quaint it appears when one reads of the author's tour to South India with a 'Travel as you please' ticket costing fifteen rupees! And thus it was that the 'businessman with a flair for politics' came in 1939 to Pondicherry—'French India where there was an Ashram of an Indian Yogi.' He was intrigued by the uniqueness of the Ashram. He joined the meditation session and was rewarded by the vision of the majesty and supernatural grace of The Mother. She smiled entrancingly: Her grace and blessing enveloped all the devotees. This first glimpse of The Mother had a magnetic effect on Jauharji. It was 'The Supreme Discovery' of his life, 'the miracle of Pondicherry', where he lost his heart and 'won the soul and real life'.

After he had joined the Ashram he realised that the Divine had become his partner in business: he was robbed of all that he had 'and was given Everything'. He became a slave working for the Divine, guided by The Mother in all his actions. Once he proposed a scheme netting a profit of Rs.1000/- each month for the Ashram with greater profits later. Pat came The Mother's advice: 'You should only concentrate on your work of Sadhana and progress in that manner and never divert yourself to any other thing...' He had implicit faith in Her judgement. Thus he agreed readily when having been chosen to be the manager of the newly formed 'Honesty Society', on second thought The Mother felt that he could serve better at Delhi.

In 1951, Jauhar assisted in the establishment of the Sri Aurobindo University Centre. Unlike him The Mother felt that it would be 'the greatest seat of Knowledge upon earth'. From the 21st of February, 1940, he began going to the Ashram on this Darshan Day. Two years later, on receiving Sri Aurobindo's message (through The Mother), he started coming for every Darshan. Even when he was in jail during the 'Quit India Movement' he was surprisingly released on bail (due purely to chance and oversight) just in time to go for the Darshan and return.

It was at the request of Jauhar that a Boarding House (with his five children as the inmates) was started at Pondicherry. The Mother advised him even in personal matters, for instance that his daughter Purnima should be educated at Delhi. She foresaw her marriage and liking for foreign countries: it was with Her approval that Purnima got married to a boy doing business in Germany. Her solicitude for Jauhar's children was great. Once when he made his usual complaint about them, She retorted, "Who are you to complain about the children? They are not your children. They are my children." His child Promesse (the name given by Her) was Her favourite. Once badly hurt, the little one rushed to Her, away from

his own father. Sure enough, She showered love and solace on him while dressing his wound.

Having surrendered himself and his family to The Mother's care, he confessed that it was unnecessary to conduct his business. But She protested saying that money was one of the greatest powers on earth. She conducted his business from Pondicherry. The Mother had a knack of finding the right way for Her work. It was in this fashion that She quite casually stated that the land and building at Delhi would house the Sri Aurobindo Society, Delhi Branch, with a shrine for Sri Aurobindo's relics, when all the while he had been submitting various such plans and had also to face a host of troubles on account of the property. Gradually things shaped well and at Her suggestion a good Hostel for those proceeding to Pondicherry and back was built there, as also a School with a boarding-house. Later, the Mother appointed Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar as the Adhishthata of the Sri Aurobindo Antarashtriyā Vidyālaya at Delhi.

The Mother's interests ranged from Ashram matters to the setting of the broken bone of Jauhar's little finger. Her love for the devotees was boundless. It showed itself in many ways. Once Jauhar had gone to meet Her: everyone cautioned him against talking with Her as She had been unwell and was very weak. But to his surprise, She met him as usual with a radiant smile saying that Her rule of silence was not for him: he could say what he wanted. The delightful encounters that greet us in these pages reveal Her unique vision and powers. Once She remarked that Her blessings were rather more for those engaged in doing Her work in far-off places than for those who came to the Ashram to take blessings. In admitting Sadhaks to the Delhi Ashram The Mother would gaze sharply at those whom Jauhar brought to Her. With Her occult powers She had X-ray eyes to gauge the depths of the human soul; quite often She rejected would-be Sadhaks. Such psychic insights were combined with a rare sense of humour. Many old people free of worldly encumbrances wished to join the Ashram to serve the Divine: She would write to them that they should have applied to the Graveyard authorities.

She was in direct communication with Sri Aurobindo. Even though He was no longer there in His room for Her to seek advice, He was there within Her. To the problems of Her devotees She could thus easily get an answer. There were occasions when She would go into a trance at the call of some very distant devotee.

This lovely garland of reminiscences presents a rare multi-faceted portrait of The Mother. They also reveal the writer-devotee as a hard-working, child-like seeker of the Divine, at his best above all in that he rested in the shade of Her love and understanding. And as we come towards the end of this wonderful account of The Mother we come upon a beautiful characteristic saying of Hers. When Jauhar asked Her which was the Truth amidst the plethora of Faiths, Scriptures, Gurus and all the Isms which showed different paths of Truth, she said: "Whatever can bring Harmony is the Truth."

K. M. SHANTHA