

# MOTHER INDIA

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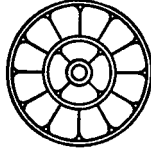
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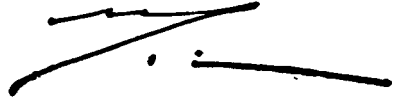


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXV

No. 6

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."*

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### An Appeal to our Well-Wishers

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We shall be grateful if this journal dedicated to the ideals of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is helped.

# OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

## EXTRACTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO'S WRITINGS

(Continued from the issue of May 1983)

### Hinduism

THE religious culture which now goes by the name of Hinduism... unlike certain other credal religions, ... knew its purpose. It gave itself no name, because it set itself no sectarian limits; it claimed no universal adhesion, asserted no sole infallible dogma, set up no single narrow path or gate of salvation; it was less a creed or cult than a continuously enlarging tradition of the Godward endeavour of the human spirit. An immense many-sided and many-staged provision for a spiritual self-building and self-finding, it had some right to speak of itself by the only name it knew, the eternal religion, *sanātana dharma*. It is only if we have a just and right appreciation of this sense and spirit of Indian religion that we can come to an understanding of the true sense and spirit of Indian culture.

The fundamental idea of all Indian religion is one common to the highest human thinking everywhere. The supreme truth of all that is is a Being or an existence beyond the mental and physical appearances we contact here. Beyond mind, life and body there is a Spirit and Self containing all that is finite and infinite, surpassing all that is relative, a supreme Absolute, originating and supporting all that is transient, a one Eternal. A one transcendent, universal, original and sempiternal Divinity or divine Essence, Consciousness, Force and Bliss is the fount and continent and inhabitant of things. Soul, nature, life are only a manifestation or partial phenomenon of this self-aware Eternity and this conscious Eternal.

Truth of being was not seized by the Indian mind only as a philosophical speculation, a theological dogma, an abstraction contemplated by the intelligence. It was not an idea to be indulged by the thinker in his study, but otherwise void of practical bearing on life. It was not a mystic sublimation which could be ignored in the dealings of man with the world and Nature. It was a living spiritual Truth, an Entity, a Power, a Presence that could be sought by all according to their degree of capacity and seized in a thousand ways through life and beyond life. This Truth was to be lived and even to be made the governing idea of thought and life and action. This recognition and pursuit of something or someone Supreme behind all forms is the one universal credo of Indian religion, and if it has taken a hundred shapes, it was precisely because it was so much alive.

The Infinite alone justifies the existence of the finite and the finite by itself has no entirely separate value or independent existence. Life, if it is not an illusion, is a divine play, a manifestation of the glory of the Infinite. Or it is a means by which the soul growing in Nature through countless forms and many lives can approach,

touch, feel and unite itself through love and knowledge and faith and adoration and a Godward will in works with this transcendent Being and this infinite Existence. This Self or this self-existent Being is the one supreme reality, and all things else are either only appearances or only true by dependence upon it. It follows that self-realisation and God-realisation are the great business of the living and thinking human being. All life and thought are in the end a means of progress towards self-realisation and God-realisation....

Indian religion never considered intellectual or theological conceptions about the supreme Truth to be the one thing of central importance. To pursue that Truth under whatever conception or whatever form, to attain to it by inner experience, to live in it in consciousness, this it held to be the sole thing needful..

One school or sect might consider the real self of man to be indivisibly one with the universal Self or the supreme Spirit. Another might regard man as one with the Divine in essence but different from him in Nature. A third might hold God, Nature and the individual soul in man to be three eternally different powers of being. But for all the truth of Self held with equal force; for even to the Indian dualist, God is the supreme self and reality in whom and by whom Nature and man live, move and have their being and, if you eliminate God from his view of things, Nature and man would lose for him all their meaning and importance. The Spirit, universal Nature (whether called Maya, Prakriti or Shakti) and the soul in living beings, Jiva, are the three truths which are universally admitted by all the many religious sects and conflicting religious philosophies of India. Universal also is the admission that the discovery of the inner spiritual self in man, the divine soul in him and some kind of living and uniting contact or absolute unity of the soul in man with God or supreme Self or eternal Brahman is the condition of spiritual perfection.

It is open to us to conceive and have experience of the Divine as an impersonal Absolute and Infinite or to approach and know and feel Him as a transcendent and universal sempiternal Person: but whatever be our way of reaching him, the one important truth of spiritual experience is that he is in the heart and centre of all existence and all existence is in him and to find him is the great self-finding.

Differences of credal belief are to the Indian mind nothing more than various ways of seeing the one Self and Godhead in all. Self-realisation is the one thing needful; to open to the inner Spirit, to live in the Infinite, to seek after and discover the Eternal, to be in union with God, that is the common idea and aim of religion, that is the sense of spiritual salvation, that is the living Truth that fulfils and releases. This dynamic following after the highest spiritual truth and the highest spiritual aim are the uniting bond of Indian religion and, behind all its thousand forms, its one common essence.

Indian culture did succeed by the strenuousness of its vision, the universality of its approach, the intensity of its seeking, in doing what has been done by no other culture. It succeeded in stamping religion with the essential ideal of a real spirituality; it brought some living reflection of the very highest spiritual truth and some breath

of its influence into every part of the religious field. Nothing can be more untrue than to pretend that the general religious mind of India has not at all grasped the higher spiritual or metaphysical truths of Indian religion. It is a sheer falsehood or a wilful misunderstanding to say that it has lived always in the externals only of rite and creed and shibboleth. On the contrary, the main metaphysical truths of Indian religious philosophy in their broad idea-aspects or in an intensely poetic and dynamic representation have been stamped on the general mind of the people. The ideas of Maya, Lila, divine Immanence are as familiar to the man in the street and the worshipper in the temple as to the philosopher in his seclusion, the monk in his monastery and the saint in his hermitage. The spiritual reality which they reflect, the profound experience to which they point has permeated the religion, the literature, the art, even the popular religious songs of a whole people...

[Spiritual experience] has needed a constant stream of saints and religious thinkers and the teaching of illuminated Sannyasins to keep the reality vivid and resist the deadening weight of form and ceremony and ritual. But the fact remains that these messengers of the spirit have never been wanting. And the still more significant fact remains that there has never been wanting either a happy readiness in the common mind to listen to the message....

... the people of India, even the ignorant masses have this distinction that they are by centuries of training nearer to the inner realities, are divided from them by a less thick veil of the universal ignorance and are more easily led back to a vital glimpse of God and Spirit, self and eternity than the mass of men or even the cultured elite anywhere else. Where else could the lofty, austere and difficult teaching of a Buddha have seized so rapidly on the popular mind? Where else could the songs of a Tukaram, a Ramprasad, a Kabir, the Sikh Gurus and the chants of the Tamil saints with their fervid devotion but also their profound spiritual thinking have found so speedy an echo and formed a popular religious literature? This strong permeation or close nearness of the spiritual turn, this readiness of the mind of a whole nation to turn to the highest realities is the sign and fruit of an agelong, a real and a still living and supremely spiritual culture....

There has played ever in India the saving perception of a higher and purer spiritual intelligence, which has had its effect on the mass mentality. Indian religion has always felt that since the minds, the temperaments, the intellectual affinities of men are unlimited in their variety, a perfect liberty of thought and of worship must be allowed to the individual in his approach to the Infinite....

India recognised the authority of spiritual experience and knowledge, but she recognised still more the need of variety of spiritual experience and knowledge. Even in the days of decline when the claim of authority became in too many directions rigorous and excessive, she still kept the saving perception that there could not be one but must be many authorities. An alert readiness to acknowledge new light capable of enlarging the old tradition has always been characteristic of the religious mind in India. Indian civilisation did not develop to a last logical conclusion its earlier poli-

tical and social liberties,—that greatness of freedom or boldness of experiment belongs to the West; but liberty of religious practice and a complete freedom of thought in religion as in every other matter have always counted among its constant traditions....

The atheist and the agnostic were free from persecution in India. Buddhism and Jainism might be disparaged as unorthodox religions, but they were allowed to live freely side by side with the orthodox creeds and philosophies; in her eager thirst for truth she gave them their full chance, tested all their values, and as much of their truth as was assimilable was taken into the stock of the common and always enlarging continuity of her spiritual experience. That ageless continuity was carefully conserved, but it admitted light from all quarters. In later times the saints who reached some fusion of the Hindu and the Islamic teaching were freely and immediately recognised as leaders of Hindu religion,—even, in some cases, when they started with a Mussulman birth and from the Mussulman standpoint. The Yogin who developed a new path of Yoga, the religious teacher who founded a new order, the thinker who built up a novel statement of the many-sided truth of spiritual existence, found no serious obstacle to their practice or their propaganda. At most they had to meet the opposition of the priest and Pundit instinctively adverse to any change; but this had only to be lived down for the new element to be received into the free and pliant body of the national religion and its ever plastic order....

The necessity of a firm spiritual order as well as an untrammelled spiritual freedom was always perceived, but it was provided for in various ways and not in any one formal, external or artificial manner. It was founded in the first place on the recognition of an ever-enlarging number of authorised scriptures. Of these scriptures some like the Gita possessed a common and widespread authority, others were peculiar to sects or schools: some like the Vedas were supposed to have an absolute, others a relative binding force. But the very largest freedom of interpretation was allowed, and this prevented any of these authoritative books from being turned into an instrument of ecclesiastical tyranny or a denial of freedom to the human mind and spirit....

Finally, and most characteristically, most powerfully, order was secured by the succession of Gurus or spiritual teachers, *paramparā*, who preserved the continuity of each spiritual system and handed it down from generation to generation but were empowered also, unlike the priest and the Pundit, to enrich freely its significance and develop its practice. A living and moving, not a rigid continuity, was the characteristic turn of the inner religious mind of India. The evolution of the Vaishnava religion from very early times, its succession of saints and teachers, the striking developments given to it successively by Ramanuja, Madhwa, Chaitanya, Vallabhacharya and its recent stirrings of survival after a period of languor and of some fossilisation form one notable example of this firm combination of age-long continuity and fixed tradition with latitude of powerful and vivid change. A more striking instance was the founding of the Sikh religion, its long line of Gurus and the novel direction and form given to it by Guru Govind Singh in the democratic institution of



the Khalsa. The Buddhist Sangha and its councils, the creation of a sort of divided pontifical authority by Shankaracharya, an authority transmitted from generation to generation for more than a thousand years and even now not altogether effete, the Sikh Khalsa, the adoption of the congregational form called Samaj by the modern reforming sects indicate an attempt towards a compact and stringent order. But it is noteworthy that even in these attempts the freedom and plasticity and living sincerity of the religious mind of India always prevented it from initiating anything like the overblown ecclesiastical orders and despotic hierarchies which in the West have striven to impose the tyranny of their obscurantist yoke on the spiritual liberty of the human race.

*(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 14, pp. 122-32)*

*(To be continued)*

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## **THE MOTHER ON SPIRITUAL INDIA**

FROM the spiritual point of view, India is the foremost country in the world. Her mission is to set the example of spirituality. Sri Aurobindo came on earth to teach this to the world. This fact is so obvious that a simple and ignorant peasant here is, in his heart, closer to the Divine than the intellectuals of Europe.

*(The Mother's Collected Works, Vol. 13, pp. 251)*

## ON THE WAY TO THE SUPERMIND

FROM A TALK OF THE MOTHER ON JUNE 6, 1956

*To reach the Supermind, Sri Aurobindo says there are stages: first, the mind, then the purified mind, the illumined mind and all that.... Is it necessary for everyone to go through all these stages?*

(After a silence) It is likely that a sequence of this kind always occurs. But the duration of the stages and their importance vary considerably according to individuals.... For some the passage may be rapid enough to be hardly perceptible, while for others it may take a very long time; and according to the nature of the resistance in each one, the stress on one or another of these stages varies enormously.

For some, it may be so rapid that it seems almost instantaneous, as though it didn't exist. For others it may take years.

There is one phenomenon which obviously seems indispensable if one wants the realisation to become stable.... Experiences come, touch the consciousness, sometimes bring great illuminations, then get blurred, retreat into the background and, outwardly, in your ordinary consciousness, you don't feel that there is a great change, a great difference. And this phenomenon may occur very often, may repeat itself for many years. Suddenly you get a sort of revelation, like an illumination, you are in the true consciousness and have the feeling of having got hold of the real thing. And then, slowly or suddenly, it seems to recede behind you, and you seek but do not find that there is any great change in you.... These things seem to come as heralds or as promises: "See, it will happen", or to tell you, "Well, have faith, it will be like that."

And this may recur very often. There is progress, obviously, but it is very slow and hardly apparent

But then, suddenly—perhaps because one is sufficiently prepared, perhaps simply because the time has come, and it has been so decreed—suddenly, when such an experience occurs, its result in the part of the being where it takes place is a complete reversal of consciousness. It is a very clear, very concrete phenomenon. The best way of describing it is this: a complete reversal. And then the relation of the consciousness with the other parts of the being and with the outer world is as if completely changed. Absolutely like an overturning. And that reversal no longer comes back to the same old place, the consciousness no longer returns to its former position—Sri Aurobindo would say "status". Once this has happened in any part of the being, this part of the being is stabilised.

And until that happens, it comes and goes, comes and goes, one advances and then has the impression of marking time, and one advances again and then marks time again, and sometimes one feels as though one were going backwards, and it is interminable—and indeed it is interminable. It may last for years and years and

years. But when this reversal of consciousness takes place, whether in the mind or a part of the mind, whether in the vital or a part of the vital, or even in the physical consciousness itself and in the body-consciousness, once this is established, it is over; you no longer go back, you do not ever return to what you were before. And this is the true indication that you have taken a step forward definitely. And before this, there are only preparations.

Those who have experienced this reversal know what I am speaking about; but if one hasn't, one can't understand. One may have a kind of idea by analogy, people who have tried to describe yoga compare it with the reversal of a prism: when you put it at a certain angle, the light is white; when you turn it over, it is broken up. Well, this is exactly what happens, that is to say, you restore the white. In the ordinary consciousness there is decomposition and you restore the white. However, this is only an image. It is not really that, this is an analogy. But the phenomenon is extremely concrete. It is almost as though you were to put what is inside out, and what is outside in. And it isn't that either! But if you could turn a ball inside-out, or a balloon—you can't, can you?—if you could put the inside out and the outside in, it would be something like what I mean.

And one can't say that one "experiences" this reversal—there is no "feeling", it is almost a mechanical fact—it is extraordinarily mechanical. (*Mother takes an object from the table beside her and turns it upside down....*) There would be some very interesting things to say about the difference between the moment of realisation, of siddhi—like this reversal of consciousness for example—and all the work of development, the tapasya; to say how it comes about... For the sadhana, tapasya is one thing and the siddhi another, quite a different thing. You may do tapasya for centuries, and you will always go as at a tangent—closer and closer to the realisation, nearer and nearer, but it is only when the siddhi is given to you... then, everything is changed, everything is reversed. And this is inexpressible, for as soon as it is put in words it escapes. But there is a difference—a real difference, essential, total—between aspiration, the mental tension, even the tension of the highest, most luminous mind and realisation: something which has been decided above from all time, and is absolutely independent of all personal effort, of all gradation. Don't you see, it is not bit by bit that one reaches it, it is not by a small, constant, regular effort, it is not that: it is something that comes suddenly; it is established without one's knowing how or why, but all is changed.

And it will be like that for everybody, for the whole universe: it goes on and on, it moves forward very slowly, and then one moment, all of a sudden, it will be done, finished—not finished: it's the beginning!

(*Silence*)

It is usually the first contact with the psychic being which brings this experience, but it is only partial, only that part of the consciousness—or of the activity in

any part of the being—that part of the consciousness which is united with the psychic has the experience. And so, at the moment of that experience, the position of that part of the consciousness, in relation to the other parts and to the world, is completely reversed, it is different. And that is never undone. And if you have the will or take care or are able to put into contact with this part all the problems of your life and all the activities of your being, all the elements of your consciousness, then they begin to be organised in such a way that your being becomes one unity—a single multiplicity, a multiple unity—complex, but organised and centralised around a fixed point, so well that the central will or central consciousness or central truth has the power to govern all the parts, for they are all in order, organised around this central Presence.

It seems to me impossible to escape from this necessity if one wants to be and is to be a conscious instrument of the divine Force. You may be moved, pushed into action and used as unconscious instruments by the divine Force, if you have a minimum of goodwill and sincerity. But to become a conscious instrument, capable of identification and conscious willed movements, you must have this inner organisation; otherwise you will always be running into a chaos somewhere, a confusion somewhere or an obscurity, an unconsciousness somewhere. And naturally your action, even though guided exclusively by the Divine, will not have the perfection of expression it has when one has acquired a conscious organisation around this divine Centre.

It is an assiduous task, which may be done at any time and under any circumstances, for you carry within yourself all the elements of the problem. You don't need anything from outside, no outer aid to do this work. But it requires great perseverance, a sort of tenacity, for very often it happens that there are bad "creases" in the being, habits—which come from all sorts of causes, which may come from the environment you have lived in or from many other causes. And these bad creases you try to smooth out, but they wrinkle up again. And then you must begin the work over again, often, many, many, many a time, without getting discouraged, before the final result is obtained. But nothing and nobody can prevent you from doing it, nor any circumstance. For you carry within yourself the problem and the solution.

*(Silence)*

And to tell the truth, the most common malady humanity suffers from is boredom. Most of the stupidities men commit come from an attempt to escape boredom. Well, I say for certain that no outer means are any good, and that boredom pursues you and will pursue you no matter what you try to escape from it; but that this way, that is, beginning this work of organising your being and all its movements and all its elements around the central Consciousness and Presence, this is the surest and most complete cure, and the most comforting, for all possible boredom.

It gives life a tremendous interest. And an extraordinary diversity. You no longer have the time to get bored.

Only, one must persevere.

And what adds to the interest of the thing is that this kind of work, this harmonisation and organisation of the being around the divine Centre can only be done in a physical body and on earth. That is truly the essential and original reason for physical life. For, as soon as you are no longer in a physical body, you can no longer do it at all.

And what is still more remarkable is that only human beings can do it, for only human beings have at their centre the divine Presence in the psychic being. For example, this work of self-development and organisation and becoming aware of all the elements is not within the reach of the beings who are usually called "gods"; and when they want to do it, when they really want to organise themselves and become completely conscious, they have to take a body.

And yet human beings come into a physical body without knowing why, most of them go through life without knowing why, they leave their body without knowing why, and they have to begin the same thing all over again, indefinitely, until one day, someone comes along and tells them, "Be careful! you know, there is a purpose to this. You are here for this work, don't miss your opportunity!"

And how many years are wasted.

(*Questions and Answers*, 1956, pp. 171-6)

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### Correction

In the *Mother India* of April 24, on p. 250, line 8, please read "Ashram" in place of "Society".

## AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of May 1983)

Now I shall present 6 consecutive letters but I have to say something by way of introduction. In January 1937 my condition began to deteriorate so much so that I decided to leave this place. It started with my *abhiman* towards the Mother, my ego's resentment, the reason being that she didn't appear to love me. Along with it, many difficulties regarding the sadhana began to accumulate, leading to the conclusion that sadhana was impossible, I couldn't do it. Besides, if the Mother didn't love me, when she had despaired of me, what was the use of my staying here?

The situation rose to a climax and I took the decision to leave. Friends tried to dissuade me in various ways, but I gave no ear to their pleadings. Only one refrain I repeated, "If anyone can prevent me, it is the Mother." A terrible obstinacy gripped me. All my luggage was packed, except the bedding. The preparation was complete. Still, strange to say, I felt that I couldn't go; all this was just a drama, but outwardly I was determined. As I was ready and waiting, the mind enveloped in darkness, Nolini came quietly and said, "What? Are you going?" "Yes, Nolinida, I am going," I replied with tearful eyes. The atmosphere of the house was tense, sombre. He kept quiet for a while and sat on my cot. Then in a deep slow voice he continued, "Mother asked, 'Is Sahana going tomorrow?' " Then he stopped. Again, he repeated, "Mother said, 'Is Sahana going tomorrow?' " He repeated it just in the way the Mother had said it. She seemed to have spoken three times slowly, halting at each time. My being was then filled with silent sobs and I burst out as soon as he had finished. Utterly broken I cried, "Nolinida, please tell Mother I won't go." It was as if I was just waiting for this touch of the Mother. The cloud dispersed at once. What a relief! Nolinida said before departing, "Give me whatever money you have with you." I understood his fear. After this event, there was no repetition of this thought of going away. Now the six letters from Sri Aurobindo bearing on this episode

(1a) All these suggestions that came to you were of course part of the attack on the physical consciousness,—the attack on the body is used to raise these ideas and the ideas are used to make it more difficult for the body to recover. At a certain stage attacks fall heavily on the body because the opposing forces find it more difficult than before to upset the mind and vital directly so they fall on the physical in the hope that that will do the trick, the physical being more vulnerable. But the sensibility of the body to attacks is no proof of incapacity just as a finer sensibility of the mind or vital to attacks was no proof—it can in due time be overcome. As for the

feelings about the Mother and that her love is only given for a return in work to those who can do sadhana well, that is the usual senseless idea of the vital-physical mind and has no value.... I hope you will be all right soon. If the body does not right itself, you must keep me informed from time to time

17.1.37

(1b) Try to keep yourself open to our Force in the body, that is the main thing. If the nerves (physical) are quieted, the illness itself will be less intense in its symptoms and can be more easily got over.

17.1.37

(2) It would not be at all right to yield to these suggestions which are obviously there of a force that wants to make use of unease and disappointment of the vital in order to drive you to break your sadhana. These are the usual suggestions that come to all under the stress of the vital condition, "I am not fit for this sadhana. I must go, I cannot stay here—the Mother does not love me. I have given up everything and got nothing. The struggle makes me too miserable, let me go." As a matter of fact there is no real foundation for these suggestions. Because an acute struggle has come, it would be absurd to conclude that you are unfit for the sadhana and to give up after going so far. It is because you have asked the physical vital to give up certain of its cherished attachments and habits that it is in this condition. Unable to resist altogether, miserable at being deprived, it accepts these suggestions as an excuse for escape from the pressure you have put upon it. The acuteness of the struggle is due to the vehemence of the attack, but still more to this vital or a part of it responding to the suggestions; otherwise a less disturbing even if a slower movement would be quite possible. The Mother has in no way changed towards you nor is she disappointed with you — that is the suggestion drawn from your own state of mind and putting its wrong sense of disappointment and unfitness on the Mother. She has no reason to change or be disappointed, as she has always been aware of the vital obstacles in you and still expected and expects you to overcome them. The call to change certain things that seem to be in the grain of character is proving difficult even for the best sadhaka, but the difficulty is no proof of incompetence. It is precisely the impulse to go that you must refuse to admit—for so long as these forces think they can bring it about, they will press as much as they can on this point. You must also open yourself more to the Mother's Force in that part and for that it is necessary to get rid of this suggestion about the Mother's disappointment or lack of love, for it is this which creates the reaction at the time of Pranam. Our help, support, love are there always as before—keep yourself open to them and with their aid drive out these suggestions.

26.1.37

(3) As you say that you are determined to go, I can only answer by reaffirming our disapproval of the step you propose to take and the rejection—from a blind vital feeling—of the true path and the spiritual life. It is not true that you could not appreciate our help and solicitude or that you were unable to follow the sadhana, you are

only shutting the door of your mind and vital to the help and laying stress on a temporary block which would have disappeared if you had dissociated yourself from it. I can only express the hope that the true being in you will awake in time and draw you back from this course, restoring the inner contact with us and the unity with the higher self a glimpse of which had come to you for a moment. 31.1.37

(4) From your last letter it is clear that it is not your own will that pushes you to go but something that has taken hold of your mind, a clutch of some Force which is using old movements of the outward mind and vital to drive the action. All the more reason to reject this action as contrary to the soul's and heart's true feeling. The pride that says, "I am one of those who can break but will not bend" is a poor thing and conceals the fact that one is bending before forces and impulses that are ignorant and obscure. Its result is as you yourself have seen at the end of your letter that one bends to the lower forces of nature but refuses to bend to the Divine.

If sadhana as a struggle between the higher will and the old forces of nature brings suffering and inner torment, we do not want you to do that kind of sadhana. That is not the spirit of our Yoga. What we want you to do is to recover your quietude and go on in that. To have the basis of quietude and allow the Divine Force to work in you firmly and quietly is always the best method—it is not necessary to proceed through a big personal effort, disturbance and struggle. Come back to this—open yourself once more, as you did before,—then you could get back sleep or health in a day or two and were growing inwardly without excessive trouble—and let the Mother's Power and Grace lead you.

I shall do all to help you and pull you out, but that which has closed itself in you must open for the help to work quietly as it did before. Otherwise too it can pull you out, but if there is this strong obstruction that has to be undone, time is needed. A central change of attitude in your mind would, I believe, make all the difference—it has done before. 1.2.37

(5) I have not the slightest doubt that you can do the sadhana if you cleave to it—not certainly in your own unaided strength, for nobody can do that, but by the will of the psychic being in you aided by the Divine Grace. There is a part in the physical and vital consciousness of every human being that has not the will for it, does not feel the capacity for it, distrusts any hope or promise of a spiritual future and is inert and indifferent to any such thing. At one period in the course of the sadhana this rises up and one feels identified with it. That has happened to you now but along with an attack of ill-health and nervous indisposition which has turned this passage through the obscure physical into a dark and intense trouble. With enough sleep and quieting of the nerves and return of physical energy that ought to disappear and it would be possible to bring the Light and Consciousness down into this obscure part. An intense concentration bringing struggle is not what is needed but a very quiet attitude of self-opening. Not any effort of sadhana just now, but the recovery of



tranquillity and ease is what is wanted at present to restore the opening of the nature.

2.2.37

(6) I am very glad to hear that the incubus of this depression and dark condition has been lifted. I think now that the first thing is indeed to restore your nervous and physical strength by sleep and food—it was largely through the depressed body consciousness and nerves that the bad condition was able to hold and to prevent the return of mental clarity and the psychic to give its balance. For the sadhana simply keep the consciousness open to us and let things go on quietly until you are naturally and without struggle or too much effort able to do more. Also do not hesitate to write whenever it is necessary.

3.2.37

*(To be continued)*

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## A PRAYER

WITHIN my heart a flame ignite,  
That shall forever burn  
And never let me turn  
Away from Thee.

Fill my whole being with its light,  
That every trace of darkness may  
Vanish, and nothing in me stray  
Away from Thee.

Let all in me be one pure blaze  
Of aspiration's flickerless fire,  
So nought may lead with blind desire  
Away from Thee.

Lord of Compassion and of Grace,  
For a single strength alone I've sought —  
To slay each whim which drives my thought  
Away from Thee.

LALITAMAL

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

*(continued from the issue of May 1983)*

## The Mother's Message

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



ON 30th November a card came from the Mother unfolding an enchanting view of snow, lake, trees and mountains which gave the effect of tranquillity. There were also these lines:

“Today I am going to the Sports Ground for the last rehearsal—I shall be back in the Playground at 5.45 or 6 o’clock and I shall see you then to have our daily concentration.

“My love and blessings along with the Divine Grace are always with you without fail.”

Every year on 2nd December there was a demonstration of Athletics. So the Mother went to the rehearsal as she was extremely particular about perfection.

I finished my duty at the Exhibition Hall and was just in time to see the Mother at the Playground as previously arranged.

She smiled graciously and gave me a variety of flowers. After our brief concentration I said to her: “Mother, I have indeed enjoyed my work of the ‘Temple’ at the Exhibition Hall. I am grateful to you for everything.”

Then after a pause I looked at her smilingly and continued: “Mother, you know, I was admiring the Japanese exhibition which is opposite the ‘Temple’ at the far end of the room. There were a few men who were present. One of them remarked pointing out to me one of the Japanese dolls: ‘Ah! Huta, you have a pretty face with large eyes and look like this doll!’ I said nothing and went away from the place. Ma, aren’t these remarks awful? Am I pretty really?”

Her laugh rang out like a silver bell shedding music in her room. She patted my cheeks and said sweetly:

“That you are, but never mind: you see, men have this habit to tell such things to girls—do not pay any attention.”

Once again she laughed, leaving me in total perplexity. My memory travelled back to a morning some time earlier. I was with the Mother to show her a fine fabric, which I had bought to make her a stole. She led me to the Meditation Hall which was full of sunlight to have a better view of the cloth. But, to my utter surprise, she looked at me with wide-open eyes and told me:

“Oh! what big eyes you have!”

I blushed. This was the first time she had seen me without my glasses, in full light.

Much later she asked me to put aside the glasses for good. She inquired whether I could see and read from near. I said: “Yes, I am short-sighted.” She glanced down into my eyes and said:

“Child, so long as you can see from near, there is no need to see far.”

November gave way to December. On the 1st of the month, the Mother wrote on a card which showed a vase with a bunch of irises:

“Here is the ‘aristocracy of beauty’. Is it not fine? This is the first of a series of flower pictures which I shall send you one by one.

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

“I am enclosing your handkerchief which I found near my seat in the playground after you had left. Love.”

I realised my folly—I had been forgetful. But, I thought, why on earth did she take so much trouble to carry it to her apartment in the Ashram and then remember to send it to me? Her nobility and aristocracy appeared even in the smallest things.

I went to the Exhibition Hall. For, on that day I had to wind up everything. The photographers moved from one room to another in order to take the last snaps of the dolls and idols. Pranab—one of the attendants of the Mother—took several photographs of the idols. Some of the photographs have appeared in the *Bulletin*, February 1957. He also took separate photographs of Radha and Krishna. Now he wanted to capture another pose of them, quite different from what he had obtained so far. He asked me whether I could bring a step lower the stand on which stood Radha and Krishna, so that he might take a picture from another angle. It was 9.30 when I was bringing down the stand, my hands were steady and firmly gripping it. Within a split second, to my horror, Radha flung herself over to Krishna and landed in the far corner—broken. Krishna stood there alone on the stand which was immobile. I questioned myself: “If the stand was immobile, how did it happen that the marble image of Radha alone fell down and broke?”

All the colour had gone out of my face; my head drooped forlornly; I stared at the image, now broken which I had loved dearly. A heavy sob broke from my heart; then slowly I took the head of the idol in my hand and ran a finger tenderly over its face. I closed my eyes in sheer agony and tears trickled down my cheeks. My whole being quivered with fear lest the Mother should scold me because of my carelessness. Hurriedly, I wiped my tears and looked at Pranab and asked him what he would say to the Mother when he went to her at midday. I also added that it was really no fault of mine. He told me with a faint smile, while shrugging his shoulders, that he would tell her exactly what he had seen. I did not question any further because the people present started gathering and I could not stand there any more. I ran wildly, blindly to the Mother. I was quite aware that it was one of her busiest days, and wondered whether she would see me. Then within a few seconds I stood before her, trembling and perspiring; she said with a smile:

“Alors, mon petit! what is the matter?”

I apologised and told her everything in detail. Suddenly she became serious and asked me:

“What time was it when this happened? How many people were around you?”

I answered: “Mother, it was 9.30 when the incident took place and Pranab alone was with me.” She watched me intently and then drew me very close to her and said:

“That is it! Now I visualise everything very vividly. I know the exact reason.”

I was baffled and raised my eyebrows. She continued:

“Yes, it was precisely at 9.30 when I was in my bathroom that I saw in a vision the dark clouds of evil forces who were coming in torrents to throw the Divine’s Love out from this world, but the spirit of Radha, who is Perfect Love for the Divine, took that horrible attack on herself and the nasty forces subsided without fulfilling their mission. Otherwise, they would have wiped out the Divine’s Love from this earth. Well, you know what would have been the consequences if they had done so. The whole episode of the image of Radha is symbolic and answers to a truth. You need not be sad about the matter, on the contrary it is *very good* that you became an instrument.

“Ah! and you said that Pranab alone was with you! Well, this corresponds to something in the incident. I will explain it to you later on—now you may not understand....”

Her talk overwhelmed me. Suddenly she took me into her arms and kissed my forehead. Then her hand moved to pat my cheeks and she said with a smile:

“My child, you can take that injured look off your face. Everything is all right.”

Apropos of the Mother’s mention of the Divine’s Love I may refer to:

#### THE MOTHER’S EXPERIENCE ON THE NIGHT OF APRIL 12, 1962

“...Suddenly in the night I woke with the full awareness of what we could call the Yoga of the World. The Supreme Love was manifesting through big pulsations, and each pulsation was bringing the world further in its manifestation. It was the formidable pulsations of the eternal stupendous Love, only Love: each pulsation of the Love was carrying the universe further in its manifestation....”

*Mother India*, February 21, 1974, p. 108.

The Mother says in the book *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part Nine, p. 43:

“...That brings us to the symbol of Krishna and Radha. Krishna is he of whom Sri Aurobindo speaks as the divine Flute-player, that is to say, the immanent and the universal Divine who is the supreme power of attraction. Radha is the name given to the soul, the psychic personality—responding to the call of the Flute-player.

“Radha consciousness is essentially the way in which the individual answers to the divine call. Sri Aurobindo describes it as the capacity to find Ananda in all things through total self-giving to this Presence. That has the proper power of changing everything into perpetual ecstasy....”

These delightful verses from *Savitri*, Bk. 7, p. 525 are perfectly apt:

“The Master and the Mother of all lives  
Watching the worlds their twin regard had made,  
And Krishna and Radha for ever entwined in bliss,  
The Adorer and Adored self-lost and one.”

I returned to the Exhibition Hall wearing an ambiguous smile on my face, which betrayed the shock within me. Some people clustered around and asked me what had happened and where I had gone. I returned no answer and started winding up everything.

Meanwhile the broken image was mended by Lakshmi, a friend of mine who was in charge of the dolls.

My heart was twisted painfully, yet my pride would not allow me to reveal my hurt to anybody who was there. A sudden glimmer in my eyes, I blinked hard and desperately for fear that the weak tears might overflow for everyone to see.

I finished winding up things and thought that ultimately I had failed to execute my work without a hitch. I could not forget the unpleasant incident, in spite of the Mother's solace.

There was the programme of 1st December in the Sri Aurobindo International University Theatre. It is in a large area purchased by the Ashram. The gallery and floor are big enough to hold more than 1000 people. Also, there are the stage and the projection room as well as the Mother's resting-room which she used during the intervals.

We saw the function with the Mother in the evening. It was directed by her. First, a dance drama of the Upanishads, then in English a rendering of selections from Sri Aurobindo's *Conversations of the Dead*. At the end there was a drama in French, “The Ascent to the Truth”, written by the Mother.

I could not follow it word for word, but I could get the gist of it from the sets and the acting.

Much later I read the drama in English. I should like to quote the Epilogue:

*The Realisation*

*And land of fairy Light*

First Aspirant:

“Here we are, borne upon invisible wings, by miraculous Power!”

Second Aspirant (looking all around):

“What marvellous splendour! Now we have only to learn to live the new life.”

The following morning I received from the Mother a card depicting a vase with exotic flowers arranged elaborately. It brought to me along with them her words:

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

“Here is the second of the series I wrote about yesterday.

“This evening I expect to be in the Playground at 6.30. I shall see you for a moment.

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

The Programme of 2nd December was in the Sports Ground.

First we marched past. The Mother took the salute standing on a high platform. Near it the flags of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother fluttered. The band was superb. We marched on. Then there were the performances of parallel bars, the balancing beam and the trampoline. Some exercises had been taught by the Soviet Gymnasts who had visited the Ashram in April 1956.

There were also tableaux and drills. I took part in only one of the drills. It was a mass drill. Everybody was doing it with a perfect rhythm in tune with the right music.

In the evening I saw the Mother. After giving me flowers, she enfolded me comfortingly. We parted with a smile.

The next morning a card came from the Mother saying:

“Here is a third picture of nice flowers.

“My love and blessings and the Presence of the Divine Grace are constantly with you, never leaving you even for an instant.”

Still I could not obliterate from my mind the episode which had taken place on the 1st. I felt that if all my re-born hopes were to be killed like this, then I too might just as well be dead. The painful thoughts perpetually thronged my brain, pro-

ducing a state of confusion. In that frame of mind, I wrote a letter to the Mother, saying that I did not deserve all that she gave me, and that, furthermore, I wished to withdraw from this precarious life. She replied:

“I have told you to come every evening to the Playground and *I mean it*.

“There is no question of *deserving* and *not deserving* because the Divine grace is *Grace* and does not depend on merit.

“When the Divine tells you that you will reach your goal, it does not in the least depend on what you think or feel about it. The Divine Knowledge cannot depend on your ignorance.

“At each moment the Divine does what is the best for you, because His purpose is to save you and liberate you from all trouble.

“Finally, He cannot allow you to put an end to your life in an arbitrary way because death thus obtained means entering into a hell of endless suffering compared to which the suffocating feeling you are expressing now could be called bliss.

“Consider *these answers as final*. So, henceforth you need not put the same questions again and again, because I will not answer any more to them.”

For the life of me, I was unable to answer the Mother. I was held in the grip of some nerve-racking emotions.

In the evening there was a French lesson, but I did not attend it. After receiving from the Mother some flowers and a kiss on my forehead, I made for Golconde.

I presume that there are quite a number of people who think the Mother should pour her Grace more and more on them, so that they may get everlasting peace and happiness. This is indeed a feeling and an indication of selfishness. I could not escape from the whirl of Universal Nature! The Mother wrote:

“I have read your letter and answered to it. But I shall not send this answer—and if necessary, I shall read to you this evening at the Playground what I have written.

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

That evening she showed me what she had written. Here it is:

#### Sri Aurobindo's answer

“Some people are truly greedy—they are never satisfied; the more you give them, the more they ask—and they would find it quite natural if the Divine were exclusively busy with them and nothing else.”



“My child,  
 “Do not be greedy—be satisfied with what is given to you and grateful also for what is given, without grumbling because you are not given still more.”

The Mother looked at me with a searching smile. I said that she was absolutely right, and that it was she who would change the consciousness of human beings. Then she nodded.

The next morning she sent me a card, saying:

“I am sending you Sri Aurobindo’s answers. Come to the meditation a little before 10 and sit in the hall in front of the ‘darshan seat.’

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

SRI Aurobindo’s “answer” must have been given directly by SRI Aurobindo himself. The Mother, who was in general touch with him at all times, had kept certain hours for special communication with him—early in the morning and late in the evening. The answer must have come during these talks. Their Consciousnesses are never apart. That is why Sri Aurobindo has written:

“The Mother and I are one and equal.”

And the Mother has stated:

“Without him I exist not; without me he is unmanifest.”

There was a general meditation in the Meditation Hall upstairs on that day—5th December. For, it was the 6th anniversary of Sri Aurobindo’s passing away.

I entered the Meditation Hall and sat on the threshold of the Darshan Room, opposite the Mother’s chair at the other end, as she had directed me in her letter.

The Hall was full of people whose faces varied in expression. Some had closed their eyes. Some were anxiously waiting for the Mother—they glanced now and again at the door from which the Mother would come.

I liked the place where I sat by myself. I was calm and at ease. Meanwhile an American fellow—a sadhak—threaded his way in feverish haste and slumped down beside me. As there was not enough room for two, I felt exceedingly uncomfortable and thought: “Here goes my peace and comfort!” I could not possibly tolerate his restless, impatient vibrations which made me sick. He was indeed an unpredictable person whom in spite of all his rash and odd behaviour the Mother loved and was always giving a flower—*Poinciana Pulcherrima*—meaning “Fire”.

The Mother came in a white gown, completely indrawn, with a serene face. But my meditation was ruined.

In the evening the Mother saw me in her room at the Playground and asked me whether my meditation in the morning had been good.

I replied: "Good? No, Mother, it was horribly disturbed."

She raised her eyebrows. I told her what had happened. Amusement gleamed in her eyes. Then she held my hand and said:

"Does not matter. Now let us have a quiet meditation here."

I had a peaceful meditation with her—a blissful recompense for the previous one!

That night I sent a letter to the Mother expressing my soul's aspiration. The morning after, I got a card displaying deep pink roses:

"I have received your very nice letter, and in answer I am sending this 'loving surrender' which is already realised in your heart.

"The glorious Grace along with my love and blessings surround you always with their protection and help."

That evening we gave flowers to each other and after a tender embrace we went to the French class.

The next morning I received a card from the Mother:

"Here is one more of the flower series that I am sending you with all my love, my blessings and the constant Presence of the Divine Grace to lead you to your Supreme goal."

\*

A cool spell of weather now spread a little.

In my solitary and melancholy mood, many a time I leaned over the lily pond in Golconde to dip my hand in the water where fishes came rushing, twirling about my fingers. When there was a moonlit night, I watched hours on end for the water-lilies to open. And how gradually and gracefully they opened themselves! I found more relief, more joy in Nature than in human company.

I felt strongly within my true being about human relationships, love and passion, that they are all so wrong, so terribly wrong—these desires, these yearnings that know no peace or rest, these selfishnesses, clashes, misunderstandings and separations, these agonies, these attachments which human beings call "love"...

The Mother wrote correctly in the book *White Roses*:

"Human beings love some and not others, love sometimes and sometimes not.

"The Lord's love is constant, equal, universal, unchanging—permanent."

Human love is shallow. A man and a woman find real love once in a life-time if they are fortunate; for the majority it is only a dream eternally out of reach.

But even in its finest form it is only a stage in the heart's evolution as these verses from *Savitri*, Bk. 10, C. 3. Cent. Ed., Vol. 29, p. 632, reveal to us in a brief survey of earth's longings:

“All our earth starts from mud and ends in sky  
And Love that was once an animal desire,  
Then a sweet madness in the rapturous heart,  
An ardent Comradeship in the happy mind,  
Becomes a wide spiritual yearning's space.”

Love has been beautifully described in the book *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Love*, pp. 13, 14:

“Love is one of the greatest universal forces; it exists by itself and its movement is free and independent of the objects in which and through which it manifests.... Men think that they have suddenly fallen in love; they see their love come and grow and then it fades—or, it may be, endures a little longer in some who are more specially fitted for its more lasting movement.... Love does not manifest in human beings alone; it is everywhere. Its movement is there in plants, perhaps in the very stones; in the animals it is easy to detect its presence. ... Love divine gives itself and asks for nothing. What human beings have made of it, we do not need to say; they have turned it into an ugly and repulsive thing. And yet in human beings the first contact of love does bring down something of its purer substance; they become capable for a moment of forgetting themselves, for a moment its divine touch awakens and magnifies all that is fine and beautiful. But afterwards there comes to the surface the human nature, full of its impure demands, asking for something in exchange, bartering what it gives, clamouring for its own inferior satisfactions, distorting and soiling what was divine.”

*Conversations with the Mother, IX*

I cannot resist quoting these verses from *Savitri*, Bk. 2, C. 5, p. 159:

“A fragile human love that could not last,  
Ego's moth-wings to lift the seraph soul  
Appeared, a surface glamour of brief date  
Extinguished by a scanty breath of Time...  
Hopes that soon fade to drab realities  
And passions that crumble to ashes while they blaze  
Kindled the common earth with their brief flame.”

With all my heart and soul I sought the Divine as my sole companion, and wanted to love Him alone, wanted to consecrate my whole life more and more to the Divine, because I knew too well inwardly that the Love of the Supreme would never fail me. This is the Truth, and to love and be loved eternally was all I aspired for. Once more a cry of my soul reached the Mother, and she answered on a card depicting deep-red roses:

“I have read your lovely letter and my answer is, ‘let all your prayers be granted.’

“Here is the picture of the human desires and passions turned into love for the Divine and for that also I say, ‘Let it be.’

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

The Mother has said in the book, *Education*, pp. 107-108:

“... one who has known Divine Love, finds all other love obscure, mixed with smallness and egoism and darkness. It looks like a bargain or a struggle for superiority and authority: and even in the best of men, it is full of misunderstanding and sensitiveness, frictions and misgivings....”

*(To be continued)*

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# FIRST STEPS

## A RESPONSE TO AN INQUIRING FRIEND

Dear Friend,

YOU have asked me several times about the 'method' of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, and I feel as if I have answered each time only very incompletely and on the spur of the moment. This morning during my meditation on *The Synthesis of Yoga* the outline of a completer response came to me, which I would like to offer to you in case it can help you.

The method of the Integral Yoga which Sri Aurobindo has indicated to us is determined by the *aim* of his yoga. He tells us that the evolutionary process is evidently not complete—we human beings are very obviously transitional beings between what has already been manifested in Nature and what is yet to be achieved; and that future achievement he characterises as a fuller realisation of possibilities that are already within us, have always been within us since the very beginning, whose push towards realisation has shaped the past evolution of the Earth, and which we perhaps experience within ourselves as a longing for perfection, immortality, or union with God. And, he says, this future perfection we long for will not only be inner, a union of *consciousness* with the Divine, but also outer: the whole earth-life will be transformed into a perfect manifestation of Divine powers and harmonies... something more totally perfect than we can possibly conceive of now with our presently limited faculties.

All this could be achieved through aeons of unconscious effort, as the past earth-evolution has been; but in human beings the faculties of consciousness and will have been sufficiently developed to permit us to make a conscious effort in the evolutionary direction, and thus not only perhaps speed up the process, but also experience the joy of conscious participation... no longer just to wander blindly, impelled hither and thither by the obstacles and lures that Nature lays in our way, but to journey to a goal we have some concept of, along a path that has to some extent been mapped out for us.

I think all this is quite clear and familiar to you.

So, how, precisely, are we to proceed on this journey? In the passage we read today in the *Synthesis*, Sri Aurobindo explained that the aim of this yoga would be achieved by each of us as individuals placing at the disposal of the Divine a perfected individual instrument—all the capacities of our individual being purified and perfected to their utmost, so that they could be used for a perfect play of Divine manifestation in the world. He says that each of the many parts of our complex being has to be first purified and then perfected... and he explains that by purity he does not mean any blank ascetic whiteness, from which all possibility of wrong action, (and therefore of any action at all) has been eliminated, but one which offers

no obstacle or blockage to the full play of the Divine energy and delight. How is this to be achieved?

He says that there are two radical, fundamental sources of all the impurities in all the planes of our being: first, that because we have evolved as individuals out of the inconscient, an untrue attitude has stamped itself on all our instruments: a sense of separateness, incompleteness; and secondly, that because life has evolved out of matter and mind out of living matter, and spirit and soul appear as the manifestation of mental being in living matter, there is on every plane an immixture of the lower in the higher, and a subordination of the higher to the lower which sullies and limits its true expression. All this has to be reversed.

A seemingly impossible task, you will say. And from the standpoint of our present consciousness it *is* impossible.

The wonderful thing is that these future achievements are aspects of our own true Self, which are not only waiting for us in the future, but leaning over us now to help us and draw us up into themselves; we can experience them as the Presence and Power of the Guru, whose touch can bring us into states of consciousness quite other than our ordinary evolved mentality, or help us to make unimaginable progress as if by magic—or as the shaping influence of some innermost Being within ourselves which moulds the circumstances of our lives and our reactions to them in the most favourable possible ways, inconceivable and often incomprehensible to our minds.

Our part of the work is to surrender, progressively, more and more of our lives to this touch and this influence. And this is a real work... if we just lie passive to all the touches and impulses of our nature and universal Nature, the Guru's Grace and the Psychic Influence will necessarily be restricted in their effect, because we allow the free play of all kinds of other much less helpful influences and touches. So a very active work on our part of discrimination and persevering rejection of all the impulses that come from other sources, and a constant choice of the true help is essential if we want to move forward to our goal as quickly as possible. But here you will understand that it is not possible to give any outer rule: "Do this, don't do that", since each of us is at a different point of the path, has different needs and qualities and problems. That is why Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have no simple formula or prescription or mantra or puja which they can offer to everyone and say, "Follow this, it will lead you to your goal." Much more, they try to bring us into contact with the source of inner light within us, the true discrimination, the Guide and Guru seated within the heart of all beings, and to tell us, "Follow Him and He will lead you to your goal."

So: active discriminating surrender,  
persevering will . . .

a great *sincerity* is also demanded, a clear-eyed and ever-increasing honesty about oneself,

and a great *faith*—which is really the expression in our present consciousness of our innermost soul's foreknowledge of the goal and the way; and if we do not have these great qualities in our outer nature to begin with, they are nevertheless native to our soul, and can be brought forward, developed and made effective in our lives through *aspiration*—which when it springs spontaneously from within is simply the sign of the Divine touch and the soul's will to follow it, but which can be *cultivated* too, by whatever is most illumined in our outer being—perhaps the mind that has received some touch of light and does not want to let it go, or the heart that has felt some closeness of the Divine and tries to compel all the rest of our nature to follow after that.

And if we have once felt these things strongly active in our lives we can be sure that it is a promise... that we have reached a point on our long wanderings when we could become aware, even if only for a moment, of the guiding hands of the Mother who is leaning over us and drawing us to Herself; and that if only we will follow Her guidance, it will become ever clearer to us, until at last we reach our goal.

This is why it is so helpful to us to immerse ourselves in the atmosphere, the consciousness of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo—by daily concentrated reading of their books, by being in the Ashram and opening ourselves to their vibrations there, by having their pictures around us (for each photograph carries a charge of the physical presence and can create a wonderful atmosphere in a room if it is respected and cherished), by prayer and meditation concentrated on them; these outer aids, if consciously and sincerely used, can help us to become more and more receptive to the Presence and the Help, and can evoke the needed qualities and faculties within us.

But in any case these outer helps can assist us only insofar as we are at the same time doing our part ... sincerely trying to follow the light every day a little more perfectly. And for detailed advice about that (apart from the general indications I have mentioned, which Sri Aurobindo states much more perfectly in the first chapters of *The Mother*, there are the Mother's *Entretiens*,<sup>1</sup> which you could read in French, and Sri Aurobindo's *Letters on Yoga*, and the Mother's letters and messages.... I often find that if I have a particular question or problem in mind, I will just happen upon some words of theirs which give a sudden illumination. The Mother has even said that one can consult a book such as her *Prières et Méditations*, or *Savitri*, or the *Synthesis*, or *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, as a kind of oracle; she says that the words of these books are intensely charged with the consciousness that can help us, and that if we come to them with sincere seeking and sufficient receptivity, that consciousness will respond to our need and give us the precise help we require. I am sure you have experienced this yourself.

I have written enough; I hope it may be of some use to you. With love,

SHRADDHAVAN

<sup>1</sup> "Questions and Answers" in English

# EASTERN MYSTICISM AND MODERN PHYSICS

## I

FRITJOF Capra, once a practising physicist, wrote in 1975 the book entitled *The Tao of Physics*, with the subheading: "An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism." The book has become a best-seller by its lucid exposition of both relativity theory and quantum theory in their various aspects as well as by its vivid attempt to survey the highest mystical insights common to Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism and to establish, for the complexities and paradoxes the author discerns in modern physics, a suitable framework in what he understands to be the meeting-ground of Hindu, Buddhist and Taoist seers. However, there are two crucial questions. First, has Capra understood Eastern mysticism properly? Second, does he provide the right philosophical interpretation of modern physics?

His general statement on the several schools of Eastern mysticism is:

"The highest aim of their followers...is to become aware of the unity and mutual interrelation of all things, to transcend the notion of an isolated individual self and to identify themselves with the ultimate reality... In the Eastern view, then, the division of nature into separate objects is not fundamental and any such objects have a fluid and ever-changing character. The Eastern world view is therefore intrinsically dynamic and contains time and change as essential features. The cosmos is seen as one inseparable reality—for ever in motion, alive, organic; spiritual and material at the same time...<sup>1</sup>

"In Eastern mysticism, this universal interwovenness always includes the human observer and his or her consciousness...<sup>2</sup> the final apprehension of the unity of all things...is reached...in a state of consciousness where one's individuality dissolves into an undifferentiated oneness, where the world of the senses is transcended and the notion of 'things' is left behind."<sup>3</sup>

Capra's general summary of ultimate scientific thought runs:

"The further we penetrate into the submicroscopic world, the more we shall realize how the modern physicist, like the Eastern mystic, has come to see the world as a system of inseparable interacting and ever-moving components with man being an integral part of this system...<sup>4</sup>

"At the atomic level, 'objects' can only be understood in terms of the interaction between the processes of preparation and measurement. The end of the chain of processes lies always in the consciousness of the human observer... The crucial feature of atomic physics is that the human observer is not only necessary to observe

<sup>1</sup> *The Tao of Physics* (Shambhala, Berkeley, 1975), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25



the properties of an object, but is necessary even to define these properties. In atomic physics, we cannot talk about the properties of an object as such. They are only meaningful in the context of the object's interaction with the observer...<sup>1</sup>

"The mystics are not satisfied with a situation analogous to atomic physics, where the observer and the observed cannot be separated, but can still be distinguished. They go much further, and in deep meditation they arrive at a point where the distinction between observer and observed breaks down completely...<sup>2</sup>

"Modern physics, of course, works in a very different framework and cannot go that far in the experience of the unity of all things. But it has made a great step towards the world view of the Eastern mystics in atomic theory... It has come to see the universe as an interconnected web of physical and mental relations whose parts are only defined through their connections to the whole."<sup>3</sup>

Quite a number of important issues have been brought forward by Capra. We shall confront the one about "observer and observed" in atomic physics later. We shall begin with that of Eastern mysticism.

In some places Capra quotes Sri Aurobindo as a spokesman for the Eastern mystics. Hence we may legitimately ask whether Sri Aurobindo supports Capra's general presentation of the latter. No doubt, Sri Aurobindo accepts for Indian spirituality the terms which Capra<sup>4</sup> sets up : "the unity and interrelation of all phenomena and the intrinsically dynamic nature of the universe." But he does not stop there—or, rather, he does not begin there. "The fundamental idea of all Indian religion," says Sri Aurobindo,<sup>5</sup> "is one common to the highest thinking everywhere. The supreme truth of all that is is a Being or an existence beyond the mental and physical appearance we contact here. Beyond mind, life and the body there is a Spirit and Self [Brahman-Atman] containing all that is finite and infinite, surpassing all that is relative, a supreme Absolute, originating and supporting all that is transient, a one Eternal. A one transcendent, universal, original and sempiternal Divinity or divine Essence, Consciousness, Force and Bliss is the fount and continent and inhabitant of things. Soul, nature, life are only a manifestation or partial phenomenon of this self-aware Eternity and this conscious Eternal..." What lies at the base of Hinduism Sri Aurobindo<sup>6</sup> puts thus: "First comes the idea of the One Existence of the Veda to whom sages give different names, the One without a second of the Upanishads who is all that is, and beyond all that is, the Permanent [*dhruvam*] of the Buddhists, the Absolute of the Illusionists, the supreme God or Purusha of the Theists who holds in his power the soul and Nature,—in a word, the Eternal, the Infinite..." Once again Sri Aurobindo<sup>7</sup> tells us : "Indian culture recognises the spirit as the truth of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 141-2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (The Sri Aurobindo Library, Inc., New York, 1953), p. 142.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176

our being and our life as a growth and evolution of the spirit. It sees the Eternal, the Infinite, the Supreme, the All; it sees this as the secret highest Self of all, this is what it calls God, the Permanent, the Real and it sees man as a soul and power of this being or God in Nature..."

What are the outstanding terms in Sri Aurobindo's account of the primaries of Indian mysticism? Not only unity, infinity and universality, but also a Being that is transcendent of all cosmic phenomenon, an Eternity beyond all that is, an Absolute and a Permanent amidst and within as well as behind all that is relative, transient, changing. Here is an everlasting immutable Stability self-existent and logically prior to any "system of inseparable interacting and ever-moving components". This system emerges or emanates from what is implicit in that Being or rather manifests as a result of that Being's power or Shakti, its force of illimitable and multifarious Becoming. Capra's "Eastern Mysticism" takes no cognizance of such a Being that is free from "time and change" : it is confined to the pattern of such a Being's Becoming. Only to this pattern the ultimate vision of modern physics is sought to be compared. So that vision misses wholly the fundamental experience, the basic reality, compassed by Hinduism, Buddhism and "the highest thinking everywhere", which means also by Taoism.

It is surprising that Capra ties the Tao down to the level of Becoming. He<sup>1</sup> writes with a quotation from the great ancient Taoist Chuang Tzu to support him:

"The Chinese, like the Indians, believed that there is an ultimate reality which underlies and unifies the multiple things and events we observe:

There are the three terms—'complete', 'all-embracing', 'the whole'. These names are different, but the reality sought in them is the same: referring to the One thing.

"They called this reality the *Tao*, which originally meant 'the Way'. It is the way, or process, of the universe, the order of nature. In later times, the Confucianists gave it a different interpretation. They talked about the *Tao* of man, or the *Tao* of human society, and understood it as the right way of life in a moral sense.

"In its original cosmic sense, the *Tao* is the ultimate, undefinable reality and as such it is the equivalent of the Hinduist *Brahman* and the Buddhist *Dharmakaya*. It differs from these Indian concepts, however, by its intrinsically dynamic quality which, in the Chinese view, is the essence of the universe. The *Tao* is the cosmic process in which all things are involved; the world is seen as a continuous flow and change."

Surely, Chuang Tzu's "complete, all-embracing, the whole, the One thing" has no indication of exclusively a process of universal flux and mutation. Where is any explicit suggestion of dynamism? A perfection, a uniqueness, which is the ground of all and beyond which nothing can go is the immediate and central sense. The

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

image of “the Way” must imply not only a movement through time and space but also an eternal and infinite immobility, a stable basis for world-activity to proceed upon. No doubt, the full mystic does not confine himself to the experience of a static transcendence, but such an experience must be foundational to him. Capra<sup>1</sup> himself tells us : “Fully realized human beings, in the words of Chuang Tzu, ‘by their stillness become sages, by their movement kings’.” The stillness marks in them the presence of the supreme immobility and it is out of it that the movement flows most naturally, most truly. That is why, as Capra<sup>2</sup> notes, “spontaneity is the *Tao*’s principle of action.”, and “such a way of acting is called *wu-wei* in Taoist philosophy; a term which means literally ‘non-action’.” The power of the *Tao* stems from the supremacy of the transcendent peace of the Eternal and is therefore the greatest power, justifying Lao Tzu’s famous puzzling phrase which Capra<sup>3</sup> cites without plumbing its profundity: “By non-action everything can be done.”

The nature of the *Tao* at its deepest emerges unmistakably in some sentences of Chuang Tzu in the sixth chapter of his book *Tao Te Chung*. He says of *Tao*: “It is self-rooted, and it existed before the heavens and the earth... It produced the heavens, it produced the earth. To the *Tao* the zenith is not high, nor the nadir low; no point in time is long ago, nor by the lapse of years has it grown old.” Having “existed before the heavens and the earth” and having “produced” them, the *Tao* has to be more than “the cosmic process”. Rightly does Sidney Spencer,<sup>4</sup> making use of the sentences, comment on the term *Tao*: “For Taoists the word sometimes means... the law operative in the universe, the way in which things work; but most distinctively it stands for the ultimate Reality which underlies the universe and finds expression in its working. The *Tao* is the Source of all things; it is self-existent; it transcends time and space.”

Capra makes much of the Chinese recognition of flow and change in Nature, the recurring constant patterns, the interplay of two polar opposites yin and yang, the masculine and feminine forces, the need of their harmony. He<sup>5</sup> draws upon the “Book of Changes”, the popular *I Ching*, to tell us: “That which lets now the dark, now the light appear is *Tao*.” Nothing wrong in itself here, but the incessant dynamism, the cyclic patterns and the polar workings and balancings which serve as guides to the art of sagacious living are all subsidiary to the realization of the *Tao* as sheer Being, the infinite Peace and Oneness whence derive all Power, all multiple manifestation. The essential *Tao* goes clean out of Capra’s ken.

A second difference between the Eastern schools of spiritual insight and the world-vision today’s physicists offer is that the former give us the mystical experience not of “the submicroscopic world” with which those physicists are concerned but

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 116, 117

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> *Mysticism in World Religions* (A Pelican Original, Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> *Op cit.*, p. 106

of the universe as presented to the senses—the universe as we know it from day to day. It is the cosmos of physical objects that is faced and felt anew. This is clear from a passage Capra<sup>1</sup> cites from Sri Aurobindo:<sup>2</sup> “The material object becomes... something different from what we now see, not a separate object on the background or in the environment of the rest of nature but an indivisible part and even in a subtle way an expression of the unity of all that we see.” Capra is aware of Sri Aurobindo’s implication and that is why, after quoting a similar-looking pronouncement by the Buddhist Nagarajuna, he<sup>3</sup> comments: “If these statements could be taken as an account of how nature appears in atomic physics, the following two statements from atomic physicists could...be read as a description of the mystical experience of nature.” The first of his examples, more pertinent to Sri Aurobindo’s words, tells us: “An elementary particle is not an independently existing unanalysable entity. It is, in essence, a set of relationships that reach outward to other things.” Actually, the statements are not comparable. How can we put the world of common sight, sound, smell, taste and touch side by side with the realm of electrons, protons, neutrons, mesons and all the other particles down to the extra-enigmatic hypothesized “quarks”? Even the atom spoken of in Eastern mysticism is generally the old classical “building block” serving to constitute the elements: earth, water, air, fire. The picture of the man-sized world in modern physics cannot equate to Sri Aurobindo’s experience quoted by Capra<sup>4</sup> of objects and activities on that scale: “Nothing to the supramental sense is really finite; it is founded on a feeling of all in each and each in all.” If Capra wishes to find analogues he must resort strictly to relativity theory and leave quantum theory severely alone; for the former takes the macrocosmic world for its field. But relativity theory, though astonishing enough, can hardly reflect the Aurobindonian formula.

Even quantum theory is rather far from it. Referring to the most advanced models of the nuclear strong-interacting particles labelled as “hadrons”, Capra<sup>5</sup> remarks: “The picture...is often summed up in the provocative phrase, ‘every particle consists of all other particles’. It must not be imagined, however, that each hadron contains all the others in a classical static sense. Rather than ‘containing’ one another, hadrons ‘involve’ one another in the dynamic and probabilistic sense.” Involvement signifies inevitable interrelation. Sri Aurobindo’s words, while not excluding inevitable interrelation, go beyond it to something like containment in the classical static sense. A cosmos of definite-looking independent-seeming objects is what undergoes transfiguration in the perceptual activity of the Supermind.

Capra is not quite oblivious of the difference between the field of Eastern mysticism and that of quantum physics. He<sup>6</sup> informs us: “Eastern mystics, in their

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1957), p. 993.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 138-39.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

non-ordinary states of consciousness, seem to be aware of the interpenetration of space and time at a macroscopic level, and thus they see the macroscopic objects in a way which is very similar to the physicists' conception of sub-atomic particles. This is particularly striking in Buddhism." Again, after speaking of Eastern mysticism's world-view of "a fundamental underlying entity" as "the only reality", he<sup>1</sup> tells us: "This reality of the Eastern mystic cannot be identified with the quantum field of the physicist because it is seen as the essence of *all* phenomena in this world and, consequently, is beyond all concepts and ideas. The quantum field, on the other hand, is a well-defined concept which only accounts for some of the physical phenomena..."

Material objects on the man-sized scale as the background to the Eastern mystic's transfiguring experience bring us very relevantly to a third point. Eastern mysticism never reduces the play of Shakti, the universal Energy, to a mere interconnected unity in which the ultimate facts are the relations and in which the relata vanish. We may recall Capra's quotation describing "an elementary particle" as, "in essence, a set of relationships". Capra<sup>2</sup> also writes of "patterns of probabilities" which "do not represent probabilities of things, but rather probabilities of interconnections". Relations without relata are foreign to Eastern mysticism. The relations are always between objects, constantly changing though the objects may be. Without relata no relations: this is the dictum of both Eastern mysticism and common-sense logic. An interrelated ensemble without any parts separately definable in however vague and fluctuant a sense, is a h-o-l-e instead of a whole: nothing would exist to be connected together. The entities connected may be mysterious, to which the old definitions may not apply, but surely there is something which behaves mysteriously, now like a particle, now like a wave, eluding precise description but still not ceasing to be an entity and becoming a mere bundle of interrelations. Eastern mysticism knows of no such fantasy. The individuality of things is as much admitted by Eastern mysticism *à la* Sri Aurobindo as the generality of things and the essentiality of things. When Sri Aurobindo speaks of each in all and all in each (plus all in all), he does not dissolve the individual object. He declares it to be much more than it seems, much more than a limited thing in a certain location at a certain time. It partakes of infinity and eternity and is a projection of them but it is still real as a projection and has its own existence. Since Eastern mysticism is concerned with the day-to-day world of macroscopic experience, what Sri Aurobindo says is characteristic of everything that Eastern mystics even outside the Vedanta say. The entire experience and vision are far removed from the picture Capra very frequently though not invariably conjures up

(*To be continued*)

K. D. SETHNA

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

## APROPOS OF "NTR'S SCHOOL OF POLITICIANS"

### A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF *MOTHER INDIA*

I SHOULD like to draw your attention to an article in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, March 13, under the caption, "NTR's School of Politicians", because it bears some affinity to an article written long ago by Sri Aurobindo in the *Bande Mataram*. The present article written by one G.S. Reddy, says that "if it works, NTR's latest scheme for training 'politicians' in the art of politics could very well be a precedent that the rest of the country would do well to follow".

I shall first give a synopsis of this article and then quote Sri Aurobindo's article so that you may judge for yourself how far goes the resemblance between them. Reddy writes:

"The College will train graduates in various disciplines like Telugu culture, history, world-affairs and parliamentary practices....

"Since 400 students will be admitted every year, the Telugu Desam's college will eventually turn out hundreds of trained party workers within a decade.... A special feature of this training programme will be the inclusion of yoga—the physical fitness exercises... Besides the class room training the students will have to acquaint themselves with the problems of the selected constituency. After gaining an insight into these through field study, the students will submit a report."

It is the bare essentials that I have quoted from the article. I hope the readers will get a fair idea of the scheme.

Sri Aurobindo's approach is different in the sense that his vision is directly spiritual and therefore the basis would be spiritual, but it has a purpose similar in view to NTR's. He says:

"What is needed now is a band of spiritual workers whose *tapasyā* will be devoted to the liberation of India for the service of humanity. The few associations already started have taken another turn and devoted themselves to special and fragmentary work. We need an institution in which, under the guidance of highly spiritual men, workers will be trained for every field, workers for self-defence, workers for arbitration, for sanitation, for famine relief, for every species of work which is needed to bring about the necessary conditions for the organisation of Swaraj. If the country is to be free, it must first organise itself so as to be able to maintain its freedom. The winning of freedom is an easy task, the keeping of it is less easy. The first needs only one tremendous effort in which all the energies of the country must be concentrated; the second requires an united, organised and settled strength. If these two conditions are satisfied, nothing more is needed, for all else is detail and will inevitably follow. For the first condition the requisite is a mighty selfless faith and aspiration filling the hearts of men as in the day of Mazzini. For the second, India, which has no Piedmont to work out her salvation, requires to organise her scattered strengths into a single and irresistible whole.

"For both these ends an institution of the kind we have named is essential. The force of a great stream of aspiration must be poured over the country, which will sweep away as in a flood the hesitations, the selfishness, the fears, the self-distrust, the want of fervour and the want of faith which stand in the way of the spread of the great national awakening of 1905. A mightier fountain of the spirit must be prepared from which this stream of aspiration can be poured to fertilise the heart of the nation. When this is done, the aspiration towards liberty will become universal and India be ready for the great effort.

"The organisation of Swaraj can only be effected by a host of selfless workers who will make it their sole life-work. It cannot be done by men whose best energies and time are given up to the work of earning their daily bread and only the feeble remnant to their country. The work is enormous, the time is short, but the workers are few. One institution is required which will train and support men to help those who are now labouring under great disadvantages to organise education, to build up the life of the villages, to spread the habit of arbitration, to help the people in time of famine and sickness, to preach Swadeshi. These workers must be selfless, free from the desire to lead or shine, devoted to the work for the country's sake, absolutely obedient yet full of energy. They must breathe the strength of the spirit, of selfless faith and aspiration derived from the spiritual guides of the institution. The material is ready and even plentiful, but the factory which will make use of the materials has yet to be set on foot. When the man comes, who is commissioned by God to do it, we must be ready to recognise him "

Politics as it is practised today has a very bleak future. Unless a band of selfless workers are trained to serve the Motherland it will remain an open field for exploiters in the name of service of the country. From that point of view, NTR's scheme augurs very well as a starting-point. Later on it has to take a farther step and orient itself towards Sri Aurobindo's vision in order to make it entirely selfless and efficient.

NIRODBARAN

## THE VOICE OF MUSTAFA

ELIJAH looked at him and said:

“Master, today, in my early meditations, I sought answers to many questions, and my words faltered though my spirit took wings. I have sought you out. The sun sleeps warm on this stretch of land and the hour is tranquil. Draw your wisdom to your lips. Speak, master, and let me carry your words to the four corners where my feet lead me.”

Mustafa threw the cowl back and looked deep into Elijah’s eyes, and in that look were sympathy and understanding.

“What do you want of me, Elijah?”

“Speak to me of Grief, master.”

“Any man would choose Grief as the last of his riddles. Elijah, I marvel at you, for you have chosen to learn of that great fountain of true knowledge.

“Grief seeks you that you may be turned into a child of the Most High. Your reading of scriptures opens your understanding while your spirit still sleeps like the bud; Grief touches the softness and the bud opens to kiss the four winds of the Earth, it opens to taste of sunshine and the tremor of butterfly wings.

“Grief is the true awakener.

“Sink, Elijah, sink deep, struggle for the fresh air, pine for the flowers and the laughter of children.

“Grief cuts your foolish bonds to the things of this passing parade.

“You touch these glittering phantoms and cry to make them your own. How can they be? They don’t come from you. Your Destiny is different from what you ordinarily perceive; it is like a million suns in brightness and grandeur. To know it, Grief has to invite you first into its chambers of dark moving clouds, hungry wolves, vast arid wildernesses, foul vapours prowling in dark lanes of memory.

“When she departs, you see a new dawn, a new life which requires of you a new naming.

“Elijah, have you lost someone you loved? Has someone who slept by the warmth of your hearth walked away from your life? Have you seen the dark angel of Death pointing his finger at someone to whom your eyes ever clung?

“Grief visits you in disguises so that she may help you fulfil your destiny.

“There is a wrenching, there is an emptying till you understand, till you see for yourself that you are clinging to bits of straw.

“Grief nourishes the wings and tinges the feathers with the red glow of the many sunsets you have known.”

Now Mustafa stooped and picked up a handful of dry leaves and let them fall through his fingers. They fluttered awhile and were carried in the direction of the wind.

Elijah looked at the feet of Mustafa and pondered for long, searching for the moments when Grief touched his heart and he sighed:



“Master, I’m much beholden to you. Tell me something of Prayer. I have prayed and prayed, but my feet have never left the dust and my eyes have been always clouded. What is Prayer?”

Mustafa placed his hands on his knees and his eyes took on a far-away look.

“What is Prayer? You beg to forget yourself. You don’t ask for things of this world in true prayer. The Wise One knows and He is often amused when we pray for that which may prove our undoing.

“Pray that you may forget yourself.

“Pray that you may be lifted from this turning wheel, or try to get to its centre.

“Prayer is also a way of listening.

“Do you hear anything from afar?”

“Have you, Elijah, stopped by telegraph poles and listened to voices hurtling to far-off places?”

“Prayer is listening, the little voice takes long to be heard.

“Train yourself to catch that voice that seems to come from afar.

“Once you hear it, you will know it. Once you know it you can awaken it at any time, and other voices will not matter.

“Will not the bride strain her ears to catch the voice of the bridegroom, the voice that mixes with the voices of wedding guests? Love helps her catch that single voice.

“Prayer can move mountains, said the Christ. I tell you, when you pray in earnest, you will not ask for mountains to move, you will ask for wings, you will ask for a quiet nest in the green leaves, you will ask for the eyes that can gaze beyond the brink, and once you have seen, what more would you seek in Prayer?”

“Prayer is the moment of intermission when you take Him aside and tell Him about yourself and ask Him about Himself.

“It is a meeting with the right person.

“It is a doing of the right thing.

“It is a saying of the right word.

“It is a thinking of the right thought.

“Prayer balances the many parts jingling and jarring within. Prayer trains them into a harmony, and this harmony invites the All-pervading harmony to make itself heard in a blend of angel voices and instruments.

“Prayer is the soul’s telling the universe that the Two are in reality One.”

Now Mustafa fell into a deep silence, closed his eyes and mumbled something. Then Elijah looked at him and said:

“Master, since you have spoken about Prayer, shouldn’t you also say something about God?”

Mustafa lifted the lids of his eyes slowly as if awakening from slumber, and looked at the trees beyond and to the clouds billowing over the tops of the trees.

“Elijah, how often I have heard that word! Is the word the same as the experience? Is the experience the thing that we are trying to apprehend?”

“What can I tell you about Him, about It, about All?”

"Many say He is here, I have seen, It's like this, It's like that.

"We want to see the All with our senses which are limited in their perceptions of the world around us.

"Yet, yet, Elijah, something in you, something in me, answers to the intrusions of this All-Force in Time.

"The All-Force makes its signals through what strikes me from the higher peaks of perception.

"These higher peaks of perception do not reckon with what we do to fill the coffers in our homes nestling in the valleys.

"I have sat in temples, in churches, and watched the idols, and read the scriptures on their walls and in their books.

"We grow from the Little-ordinary into the All-awe-inspiring.

"And knowing the All-Force we bow with humility, for, that virtue alone acknowledges the presence of the All-Force.

"We cry to it, trying to get to that which was separated from us in Time. It descends to meet us through its prophets, its saints, giving us signs of its concern for us.

"Descending into history it has left its searing touch on the pages of the holy books. Read them, Elijah, and seek opportunities to test them, to make them the charts of your spirit.

"Hold a prism against the light of the All-Force and it breaks up into rainbow humanity.

"Is it the goal?

"Is it the end-point of Time?

"It is more the way than the end.

"What we don't know about it, lends meaning to why we are here.

"All that we know, all that we will know, will not measure up to all that we don't know which is the real meaning of the All-Force.

"The All-Force is 'It' and 'Him', the power in all, the love in all, holding the cycles of life in its all-embracing invisible hands of blue fire."

Mustafa stopped here and looked up at the stars that were coming out one by one, and the tops of the trees were touched by golden fingers of sunlight.

Elijah lifted his head. The winds were gentle and he wished to know much more. Hence he asked:

"What about Love and Lust, Master? People speak so often about Love, but I don't know when they mean Love and when Lust. Can the two be the same?"

"Ask, Elijah, ask your questions. As the stars come out in the infinite sky, so also my thoughts wish to shine in the infinitude of my spirit. The evening cajoles me with its soft whisperings.

"Love and Lust are burning energies shaping the world. They create, they destroy. As long as you relate this burning to what you can touch, you can never know what is Love and what is Lust.

"Love is a long process of transformations through partnership and sharing,

without which we will be drifting islands engulfed in dark clouds.

“Give yourself in Love, Elijah, and you will see how tall you grow. You will shoulder the skies and stretch your hands out for the stars.

“Lust burns well too; but it leaves you small, it leaves you on all fours sneaking your way through the labyrinth glades of this world, for Lust is self-centred and empty and what can it share with the other?

“Let yourself be carried by Lust, the Great Tide of Deception, and you will find yourself ashore on an island waiting for yet another big wave. In Lust you go from loneliness to loneliness. You can beget, but your lust will build walls around you.

“Learn to love, and you will learn to surrender your talkative self; you will beget and share more in Love. Wildernesses will be filled with sun-kissed orchards and the song of birds will gladden your mornings. You will take the road of your pilgrimage and Love will keep you company with songs. You don’t carry a bag to fill when you go with Love.

“Lust is like a big painted balloon, hourly swelling with its foul vapours. There is a time for its doom. There is a time for its reluctant helpless return to the dust.

“Lust can build memories, but these memories flatter the little self. Love builds memories and as you rock on your chair and go back on Love, you will see the flowers that have sprung in your footprints.

“Lust has no variety and can sing only of the little self a boastful song. It clings to the straws of the world and awaits yet another moment to suck at the dugs that can yield only blood

“A mother can love her child.

“A brother can love his brother.

“A child can love its mother, its father.

“Will a man love a friend?

“Is it easy to love a friend, the way you love a mother, father, child, brother, sister, wife, husband?

“The Love of a friend is the broadest and deepest of all. Towards this love we must strive.

“Leave Lust for the dogs in the streets. Leave Lust for those who shuffle about in their shells.

“Love is our concern. Stretch your hand to the lost child in the dingy lane. Stretch your hand to the old abandoned man watching the storm clouds, shivering in the lashing rain.

“Stretch your hand to this Love, and the universe shall follow you like your shadow.

“Lust is the common heritage of all things that move.

“Love requires your efforts to reach the true Other. You have to blow the spark into the flaming radiance. You may cough, you may swear, you may cry, you may choke; but blow, blow, and watch the flame crackling over the Ego, watch the flame ascend with open arms.”

Mustafa's eyes closed and he brought his hands together in prayer. Elijah watched the quiet stooping figure, and prayed with him that the wisdom of Mustafa may help him unseal more worlds of wonder.

"Master, you have spoken about Love and Lust and begetting. Tell me about the children who play in the streets."

"Elijah, you can hear their screams of joy in this evening air. They make you feel that you were made for joy and laughter and games and quiet untroubled sleep.

"Children tell you of the world that you might have lost through plunder and cunning.

"They are the sunshine of this world.

"Elijah, the poet in you who writes verses on the running waters of Time, is the child in you. Don't strangle him into perpetual sleep. Sometimes, this child will point to a star on the horizon; go in that direction and you will see the gods playing with images, giving them different shapes and different meanings.

"Children are the world's version of Heaven's angels.

"They are the props of our age, the fires of our hearths.

"How dull our lives would be, if we were to listen to the endless bargains and quarrels of the elders. The elders are always busy adding ornaments to their homes, doing deeds that bring reward.

"Children give themselves up to play, to laughter, and wait for no reward but the smiles of their playmates.

"If you wish to see your god, look at the child, learn to be like the child, don't lose the gift of play, don't stay back to collect your dues.

"I'm happy, Elijah, as long as I hear their screams, and I give thanks for the day that has been full of children's voices."

Elijah looked in the direction of the tiled houses, at the open spaces where the children played. Then he sought for an answer to something that provoked him when he looked at the pink-tinted clouds, and he said:

"Master, I sit at your feet to learn, to know; tell me more of those things that people call the Beautiful. What is Beauty?"

Mustafa looked at Elijah, and Elijah did not know whether he was stern or smiling; Mustafa's face was a deep grey in the dusk, but his eyes were luminous.

"You ask me of Beauty? Am I an artist? Am I a poet? Am I a sculptor or a dancer or a musician? Yet, Elijah, in each one of us there is the silent poet-artist-musician, and this Silent One emerges when something appears that bears the name and shape of the Beautiful.

"So many different objects, different moods, different faces, we call the Beautiful. The same impulse awakens to these differences.

"A mother bends in grief over her lost child and there is this sadness that touches some depth in you and awakens Beauty.

"Hands clasped in prayer touch that same depth in you.

"Lovers in the ecstasy of a kiss touch that same depth in you.

“Children holding their arms out to welcome the bright things of day touch that same depth of Beauty in you.

“This depth is the true mark of your humanity and your godliness. In it is reconciled two worlds: the Passing and the Forever.

“This world is full of reflecting mirrors and when you behold in the world something of you that is more than you, you have known Beauty.

“Give the artist his brush, the poet his pen and the musician his lute, and you will see the depth taking shape; and yet this is a poor picture of the great fleeting vision, a poor poem of the great fleeting voice, a poor composition of the great fleeting symphony.

“The stable in you answers to the Permanent in all creation in a moment of Beauty.

“Open the third eye to the land of wonders. Let that great vision be ever present in your third eye so that grace may descend in you and fill your days with the peace and love of knowing what He is like, what She is like, and in Beauty, in Being and Power, He and She are truly One.”

*(To be continued)*

EUGENE D'VAZ

## THE MUSIC MASTERS

THE great composers had no conception of neurobiology or codes in the nervous system, but some of them were certain that their works embodied far more than melody and meter. They were aware of an underlying 'pulse' in their compositions.

Bach saw his music as a synthesis of social and celestial harmonies. Beethoven claimed Deity itself as the source of his inspiration.

"In the architecture of my music I want to demonstrate to the world the architecture of a new and beautiful social commonwealth. The secret of my harmony? I alone know it: each instrument in counterpoint, and as many contrapuntal parts as there are instruments.

"It is the enlightened self-discipline of the various parts, each voluntarily imposing on itself the limits of its individual freedom for the well-being of the community. That is my message. Not the autocracy of a single stubborn melody on the one hand nor the anarchy of unchecked noise on the other.

"No, a delicate balance between the two; an enlightened freedom. The science of my art. The art of my science. The harmony of the stars in the heavens, the yearning for brotherhood in the heart of man. That is the secret of my music."

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

"When I open my eyes I must sigh, for what I see is contrary to my religion, and I must despise the world that does not know that music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy, the wine that inspires one to new generative processes, and I am the Bacchus who presses out this glorious wine for mankind and makes people spiritually drunken. When men are again become sober, they have drawn from the sea all that they brought with them, all that they can bring with them to dry land.

"I have not a single friend; I must live alone. But well I know that God is nearer to me than to other artists; I associate with Him without fear; I have always recognized and understood Him and have no fear for my music—it can meet no evil fate.

"Speak to Goethe about me. Tell him to hear my symphonies and he will say that I am right in saying that music is the one incorporeal entrance into the higher world."

LUDWIG VON BEETHOVEN

*Brain/Mind Bulletin*, December 13, 1982—3

## HER NAME

I SEE and hear but fail to register  
In the crowded mind's counter  
Her ever-green presence—in and behind  
That twinge of sorrow, that tear in the eye,  
That swirl of tail at some sudden joy,

That rustle of leaves that echo Her voice,  
And that sight of hovering bees  
On honey that flows through flowery seives,  
And in a hundred things of virtue or vice.

Then I utter Her Name, loud and clear,  
And repeat it again and again and yet again,  
Seeking to see and trying to hear  
In every beat and breath its sweet refrain.

Slowly I succeed and softly at first  
Hear as if through blocked ears  
And see Her face though veiled in mist  
That slowly clears  
By the light and power the Name evokes.

And then the tinkle of Her laughter,  
As She plays and sings and paints and creates  
New cells and salt and waves of fresh thought,  
Sends vibrations of Love and Light  
Through my new being that is being made  
Around Her name.

DINKAR PALANDE

## BEYOND THE SPHINX

ON Life's criss-cross meandering roads,  
Across chasms and gorges of ignorance and sleep  
We meet sometimes a Sphinx-Entity  
Whose gaze, prying deep into us,  
Often kills and possesses,  
Obtaining ego-answers to questions unasked.  
It hooks and impales our rising prayer  
In silent mockery and distorted joy.  
The soul's knowledge and an inner strength  
Born of conscious effort and communion,  
And sweetness lovely and compassionate  
That joins us in oneness with our World-Mother's heart,  
Can alone confront this formidable Power.  
Meet it then with brow still uncrowned  
And seek in its eyes its very own Self,  
Its Sphinx-archetype, with equal unshrouded regard.  
Perhaps a far deeper nodus you will perceive:  
A mounting Holocaust of the Spirit's leap  
Into a fathomless abyss of dumb unyearning  
And dark perpetual Sleep.  
In your physical frame chance upon boundless discovery.  
A cry awakening other cries rises in awe,  
Depths open where thought does not dwell,  
Nor passion nor pain nor will nor hope,  
Only a vast wave of the unbounded Infinite  
Rolls forever unsounding towards its never-ending Shore.

In your own self alight upon your boundless Base,  
And feel upon your face haloed Mystery's light.  
Await the Knowledge that speaks not,  
In Stillness' inexhaustible profound.  
It glides, music-winged, and strays into your air,  
Into your sleep awakes, white star-drops of unawakened bliss.  
A beauteous Grace and Grandeur steal upon you  
And with golden soft-footed steps of wonder and delight  
Enter invisibly into your utmost unknown  
Past the great doors where even Silence never dares,  
Effacing darkness and its formless dream,  
And set aglow your soul-mansion's translucent walls  
With a Presence sacredly near, from your eyes looking out



Upon a world of unexpected divinity.  
 The whispered Name that revealed itself to you  
 Like an inward echo, now brightly rings,  
 Touching upon things holy with Becoming.  
 Moved by a wide-visioned Power, you no more are,  
 But an incarnate Sight in a miraculous dance.

ARVIND HABBU

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### O HEARKEN NOT ...

O HEARKEN not to mere words of mine,  
 Hearken to the prayer hidden in them;  
 The child has little knowledge of the words.

O hearken not to my prayer,  
 Hearken to the aspiration innate in it;  
 The devotee knows no asking for a boon.

O hearken not to my weak aspiration,  
 Hearken to my mind's resolution;  
 The pilgrim sees not his destination.

O hearken not to my mind's resolution,  
 Hearken to the call of my soul;  
 Mind and life perceive not the goal.

Hearken only to my inmost soul,  
 Hearken to its ceaseless pure call;  
 The soul alone possesses knowledge divine.

SHYAM KUMARI

*(Translated by Parichand from the Hindi)*

# EUROPE 1974

## A TRAVELOGUE

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"THIS is the Rubicon," said a soft voice and we looked down to see a small stream that seemed to have nothing important to say. Yet we were thrilled for a few seconds, for we were on a scene that had witnessed one of the most momentous and dramatic incidents in European history.

Rome was already a great power and was about to become master of three continents. The Republic got its greatest impetus when Julius Caesar, in January 10, 48 B.C., standing on the verge of this small river that meandered down to the Adriatic Sea, a place between Rimini and Ravenna, decided to cross it and march south-west. "The die is cast," he is reported to have said. For the river Rubicon was the boundary between Rome and Cisalpine Gaul which is the Lombardy-Tuscany valley today. No general was to cross it without the specific permission of the Senate in Rome. It was the greatest gamble of Caesar's life, nay, the greatest gamble in European history. Hundreds of tourists and other people cross it now every day without remembering what had happened here so many years ago. Perhaps there would have been no Roman Empire without this memorable crossing. The waters of the Rubicon flowed on unhurrying without a dash or even any special character. Yet it had that day swallowed up a whole herd of beautiful horses voluntarily offered by Caesar to the river god. Later, so the story runs, a whole herd of horses in the stable in Rome were found standing still with their heads down when came the fateful Ides of March. Ravenna saw the birth of an Empire, one might say, and it is Ravenna that saw its death. For it was here that the last Roman Emperor came as a fugitive to escape the barbarians and he finally abdicated.

Even more interesting is the story of Dante. He spent the last three years of his life in Ravenna. He died of marsh fever. The Florentines exiled him from his birth-place in 1302 because of his political views. Naturally the most precious possession in the minds of the people of Ravenna was the tomb of Dante Alighieri in their midst. Now that he was dead the Florentines woke up to the fact that they had sinned by banishing from Florence (Firenze) a very great man and a glory to their town and that perhaps posterity would howl at them. A terrific battle was waged for three centuries between Florence and Ravenna for the bones of Dante. This battle was of course not fought with an army and swords but with hot-worded letters and angry emissaries. Luck was with Ravenna and it always won. Finally in 1519 a Medici Pope issued an injunction authorising Florence to demand the mortal remains of Dante. Someone warned the people of Ravenna. They removed his bones and found for them a new resting-place with the greatest secrecy. The result was that soon the people forgot where they had laid him anew. For 350 years no one knew where Dante's tomb

was. In 1865 a digger using his spade on the debris of a broken-down chapel discovered some bones which after a medical post-mortem were declared to be those of Dante. For three days the people of Ravenna arranged for the bones to lie in state. Today in the Franciscan church of St. Croce in the Piazza di Santa Croce in Florence the tourists are shown rows of wall-tombs belonging to Michelangelo, Machiavelli, Galileo and many other famous Florentines. Dante's tomb too is there but is empty, while two marble figures, one symbolising poetry and the other personifying Florence, point at the empty tomb and are seen weeping. Arno flowed down gently, there was none of the "scornful shout" that Dante had described.

Driving due north in a leisurely fashion we arrived at the Lombardy-Tuscany valley with its life-line the river Po. It is a beautiful place. Poplar and cypress, acacia and mulberry (that fed the silk-worms) softly swayed in the most amorous breeze. In the meadows were fields of rice, maize, wheat and barley. Rice, they say, was introduced into Italy by the Arabs. Every now and then a hillock arrived topped by a church or monastery or castle. There was a time when the Po and its tributaries were linked together by a network with innumerable artificial canals and water-ways. From Venice arrived cargo boats laden with the merchandise of the East. Inland towns became ports and the greatest of them was Milan. Men could travel without fear of pirates or bandits. The Dukes and their friends and even their household staff travelled in picturesque gilded barges called the Bucentaurs, all decorated with flowers and brocade cloth and silken tassels. Spices and horses, embroidered silk and woollen fabric came from Venice right up to Milan for Italy and other European countries, those that had contact with the great bankers and traders of Italy. Through these channels came also the Greek Manuscripts.

If one can, one should pay a flying visit to Lake Maggiore where the sky lends its azure to the smiling waters and its peace to the mountains. From Stresa one can see floating in mid-lake the island of Isola-Bella, the wonder garden created by St. Charles Borromeo (Prince). It is a fantastic Baroque-style garden with a palace in the middle with baroque décor. The island was once completely rocky and every inch of the soil had to be brought from the mainland in boats. At Baveno they will show you trees planted by Queen Victoria who, it seems, had once spent a month's holiday there. At Monza another very interesting thing is on display: the Iron Crown of Lombardy. It was presented by Gregory the Great to Theodolinda, Queen of the Lombards. The crown contains a nail from the cross of Jesus Christ brought from Jerusalem by Queen Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine the Great. The crown was used at the coronations of Charlemagne, Barbarossa and forty-four other Emperors including Charles V and Napoleon.

Mantua is made famous by Shakespeare who mentioned it 25 times. Its marchioness during the Renaissance, Isabella d'Este, brought undiminished lustre to the place. She was a remarkable woman, charming, gifted, accomplished, who patronised art and learning. In fact she represented all that was the very best in the Renaissance period in Italy. Books came to her in huge caskets from Venice bound in vellum and

other precious material of those days. She had asked Leonardo da Vinci to paint her private rooms and her study. But da Vinci was not painting any more at that time. So she commissioned Perugino to do the work. When finished she called her rooms Paradiso. When Leonardo started painting again, he painted for her "Christ among the Doctors". The picture was lost for several centuries. One day Europe was shocked to find it in American hands. If Leonardo da Vinci was the greatest representative personality of the period known in European history as the Renaissance, it seems to me Isabella d'Este was his counterpart.

*(To be continued)*

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

# MOODEVI IS NOBLER THAN SEEDEVI

## A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY

THE sun had set. The entire village was getting shrouded in darkness. The women-folk cooking food had lighted the clay oil lamps.

The flavour of fried fish that emanated from a hut, brought a hungry bitch to its entrance. She peeped at the cooking dame, wagged her tail and finally barked as if to say, "Some food, please. I'm hungry."

The woman hurled a few abusive words at the bitch and drove her away.

The bitch made a wry face. "Moodevi is certainly nobler than Seedeви." She barked out thus and ran away.

The woman was unable to understand what the bitch meant. She racked her brain, but to no use. Later she asked her husband; but he was no wiser. Both of them consulted the other villagers. All of them pondered over the bitch's statement, but nobody could explain it.

"How can Moodevi be nobler than Seedeви? It makes no sense! But to find out the truth of the matter, let us ask the bitch herself," suggested an old man.

The villagers agreed and started their search for the bitch. They found her lying curled up near a rubbish heap.

To their request the bitch replied in a bossy tone: "No. Never. I'll never explain my words to folks like you. If the king asks me, I'll answer him".

This was rather unexpected. The villagers discussed the situation among themselves.

"Well then, let us go to the king and you explain your words to His Majesty," proposed a man.

The bitch became very angry at his words. She loudly barked: "What do you take me for? First inform the king and if he desires to meet me, let him send a palanquin with escorts".

The villagers stood speechless. They were unable to guess what was in her mind. But curiosity drove them to the king's court.

The king patiently heard them. He too was eager to meet the bitch that demanded respect even from the king.

The royal escorts went with a palanquin to fetch the bitch.

The bitch arrived at the palace gates jubilantly seated in the palanquin. But she refused to get down. The escorts demanded an explanation. The bitch replied:

"Let a screen be put in the hall between me and the king, so as to enable me not to see the king's face."

The escorts ran to the king and informed him of the bitch's demand.

The king was astonished, but he agreed. A big silken screen was hung between the bitch's seat and the king's.

"I have never heard of another bitch like you. I am happy to meet you in my

court. I will be pleased if you explain why you said: 'Moodevi is nobler than Seedeви' which is contrary to our belief," requested the king.

"Your majesty," began the bitch, "it is a popular belief that Seedeवि, the goddess of wealth, rules the land when the lamps are lighted and Moodeवि, the goddess of disaster, when the lights are extinguished. When Seedeवि rules, poor creatures like me can't get into any hut to steal food. And if at all we dare, we have to do it at our own risk. But it is quite different when Moodeवि rules the land. When everyone is snoring who is there to find us out when we steal and eat to our stomach's fill. And so in my opinion, Moodeवि is nobler than Seedeवि, for we creatures are all happy when the former rules."

The king smiled and appreciated the bitch for her clever explanation. "Now tell me why you insisted on this screen to be put between me and you".

"Is it not our custom that the mother-in-law should remain indoors when the son-in-law is present?... Then how can you expect your mother-in-law to speak face to face with you?" replied the bitch.

The king was taken aback. "What nonsense! What nonsense do you speak? You are a bitch and you claim to be my mother-in-law!" he bawled. Red with anger he pulled the string that pushed the screen aside.

He saw the bitch sitting on her hind legs. When she saw the angry king she rose to her feet and in a trembling voice said, "Your Majesty! Be kind to me and listen to my words. A few days ago, when you were cross with your wife, do you remember the words you hurled at her?... Didn't you shout at her by calling her 'daughter of a bitch'? If your wife is my daughter, then am I not your mother-in-law?"

The king broke into a guffaw. The villagers and the courtiers followed suit. Sympathising with the bitch the king built a kennel for her in his royal orchard and ordered his gardeners to look after her and feed her. And this the king did as a reward for her sagacity

Collected & rendered into English by P. RAJA