

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JULY 1983

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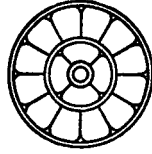
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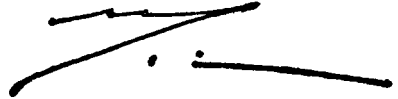


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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All correspondence to be addressed to:

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

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Editor: K. D. SETHNA

The Late Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR

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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXV

No. 7

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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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The good number of our advertisements must not be taken as a sign of marked gain. We pay a large commission on several of them, and after the deduction of press-charges our profit is small on the whole and cannot counteract the general loss.

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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—3

### EXTRACTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO'S WRITINGS

*(Continued from the issue of June 1983)*

#### **Indian Civilisation**

[INDIAN civilisation's] firm structure capable of supporting without peril a large tolerance and assimilative spirit, its vivacity, intensity, profundity, and multitudinousness of experience, its freedom from the unnatural European divorce between mundane knowledge and science on the one side and religion on the other, its reconciliation of the claims of the intellect with the claims of the spirit, its long endurance and infinite capacity of revival make it stand out today as the most remarkable, rich and living of all religious systems. The nineteenth century has thrown on it its tremendous shock of negation and scepticism but has not been able to destroy its assured roots of spiritual knowledge. A little disturbed for a brief moment, surprised and temporarily shaken by this attack in a period of greatest depression of the nation's vital force, India revived almost at once and responded by a fresh outburst of spiritual activity, seeking, assimilation, formative effort. A great new life is visibly preparing in her, a mighty transformation and farther dynamic evolution and potent march forward into the inexhaustible infinities of spiritual experience....

The many-sided plasticity of Indian cult and spiritual experience is the native sign of its truth, its living reality, the unfettered sincerity of its search and finding....

The Indian mind ... is averse to intolerant mental exclusions; for a great force of intuition and inner experience had given it from the beginning that towards which the mind of the West is only now reaching with much fumbling and difficulty,—the cosmic consciousness, the cosmic vision. Even when it sees the One without a second, it still admits his duality of Spirit and Nature; it leaves room for his many trinities and million aspects. Even when it concentrates on a single limiting aspect of the Divinity and seems to see nothing but that, it still keeps instinctively at the back of its consciousness the sense of the All and the idea of the One. Even when it distributes its worship among many objects, it looks at the same time through the objects of its worship and sees beyond the multitude of godheads the unity of the Supreme. This synthetic turn is not peculiar to the mystics or to a small literate class or to philosophic thinkers nourished on the high sublimities of the Veda and Vedanta. It permeates the popular mind nourished on the thoughts, images, traditions, and cultural symbols of the Purana and Tantra; for these things are only concrete representations or living figures of the synthetic monism, the many-sided unitarianism, the large cosmic universalism of the Vedic scriptures....

In its totality [Indian religion] has been a free and tolerant synthesis of all spiritual worship and experience. Observing the one Truth from all its many sides, it shut out none. It gave itself no specific name and bound itself by no limiting distinction. Allowing separative designations for its constituting cults and divisions, it remained itself nameless, formless, universal, infinite, like the Brahman of its agelong seeking. Although strikingly distinguished from other creeds by its traditional scriptures, cults and symbols, it is not in its essential character a credal religion at all but a vast and many-sided, an always unifying and always progressive and self-enlarging system of spiritual cultures. (The only religion that India has apparently rejected in the end is Buddhism: but in fact this appearance is a historical error. Buddhism lost its separative force, because its spiritual substance, as opposed to its credal parts, was absorbed by the religious mind of Hindu India. Even so, it survived in the North and was exterminated not by Shankaracharya or another, but by the invading force of Islam.)...

It is necessary to emphasise this synthetic character and embracing unity of the Indian religious mind, because otherwise we miss the whole meaning of Indian life and the whole sense of Indian culture. It is only by recognising this broad and plastic character that we can understand its total effect on the life of the community and the life of the individual. And if we are asked, "But after all what is Hinduism, what does it teach, what does it practise, what are its common factors?", we can answer that Indian religion is founded upon three basic ideas or rather three fundamentals of a highest and widest spiritual experience. 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 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. This is the first common foundation; but it can be and is expressed in an endless variety of formulas by the human intelligence. To discover and closely approach and enter into whatever kind or degree of unity with this Permanent, this Infinite, this Eternal, is the highest height and last effort of its spiritual experience. That is the first universal credo of the religious mind of India....

Admit in whatever formula this foundation, follow this great spiritual aim by one of the thousand paths recognised in India or even any new path which branches off from them and you are at the core of the religion. For its second basic idea is the manifold way of man's approach to the Eternal and Infinite. The Infinite is full of many infinities and each of these infinities is itself the very Eternal. And here in the limitations of the cosmos God manifests himself and fulfils himself in the world in many ways, but each is the way of the Eternal. For in each finite we can discover and through all things as his forms and symbols we can approach the Infinite; all cosmic powers are manifestations, all forces are forces of the One. The gods behind the

workings of Nature are to be seen and adored as powers, names and personalities of the one Godhead. An infinite Conscious-Force, executive Energy, Will or Law, Maya, Prakriti, Shakti or Karma, is behind all happenings, whether to us they seem good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, fortunate or adverse....

The Infinite creates and is Brahma; it preserves and is Vishnu; it destroys or takes to itself and is Rudra or Shiva. The supreme Energy beneficent in upholding and protection is or else formulates itself as the Mother of the worlds, Luxmi or Durga. Or beneficent even in the mask of destruction it is Chandi or it is Kali, the dark Mother. The One Godhead manifests himself in the form of his qualities in various names and godheads. The God of divine love of the Vaishnava, the God of divine power of the Shakta appear as two different godheads; but in truth they are the one infinite Deity in different figures. One may approach the Supreme through any of these names and forms, with knowledge or in ignorance; for through them and beyond them we can proceed at last to the supreme experience....

One thing however has to be noted that while many modernised Indian religionists tend, by way of an intellectual compromise with modern materialistic rationalism to explain away these things as symbols, the ancient Indian religious mentality saw them not only as symbols but as world-realities,—even if to the Illusionist realities only of the world of Maya. For between the highest unimaginable Existence and our material way of being the spiritual and psychic knowledge of India did not fix a gulf as between two unrelated opposites. It was aware of other psychological planes of consciousness and experience and the truths of these supraphysical planes were no less real to it than the outward truths of the material universe....

The idea of strongest consequence at the base of Indian religion is the most dynamic for the inner spiritual life. It is that while the Supreme or the Divine can be approached through a universal consciousness and by piercing through all inner and outer Nature, That or He can be met by each individual soul in itself, in its own spiritual part, because there is something in it that is intimately one or at least intimately related with the one divine Existence. The essence of Indian religion is to aim at so growing and so living that we can grow out of the Ignorance which veils this self-knowledge from our mind and life and become aware of the Divinity within us. These three things put together are the whole of Hindu religion, its essential sense and, if any credo is needed, its credo....

*(To be continued)*

# THE SYMBOL OF KRISHNA AND RADHA

FROM A TALK OF THE MOTHER ON JULY 18, 1956

I HAVE received two questions. One is about a passage from *The Synthesis of Yoga* where it is said:

*“For there is concealed behind individual love, obscured by its ignorant human figure, a mystery which the mind cannot seize, the mystery of the body of the Divine, the secret of a mystic form of the Infinite which we can approach only through the ecstasy of the heart and the passion of the pure and sublimated sense, and its attraction which is the call of the divine Flute-player, the mastering compulsion of the All-Beautiful, can only be seized and seize us through an occult love and yearning which in the end makes one the Form and the Formless, and identifies Spirit and Matter. It is that which the spirit in Love is seeking here in the darkness of the Ignorance and it is that which it finds when individual human love is changed into the love of the Immanent Divine incarnate in the material universe.”*

*The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 150*

This brings us back to the symbol of Krishna and Radha.

Krishna is the One of whom Sri Aurobindo speaks here, the divine Flute-player, that is to say, the immanent and universal Divine who is the supreme power of attraction; and the soul, the psychic personality, called here Radha, who responds to the call of the Flute-player. So I have been asked to say something this evening on the Radha-consciousness, that is, in fact, on the way in which the individual soul answers the call of the Divine.

It so happens that this is exactly what Sri Aurobindo has described in the chapter we have just read: it is that capacity of finding Ananda in all things through identification with the one divine Presence and a complete self-giving to that Presence. So I don't think I have much to add; what I could say would be a limitation or a diminution of the totality of this experience.

*(After a silence)* This consciousness has the capacity of changing everything into a perpetual ecstasy, for instead of seeing things in their discordant appearance, one now sees only the divine Presence, the divine Will and the Grace everywhere; and every event, every element, every circumstance, every form changes into a way, a detail through which one can draw more intimately and profoundly closer to the Divine. Discordances disappear, ugliness vanishes; there is now only the splendour of the divine Presence in a Love shining in all things.

It is obvious that from a practical point of view one must be able to remain at a constant and unshakable height in order to be in that state without exposing oneself to fairly troublesome consequences. That is probably why those who wished



to love in this state used to withdraw from the world and find the universal contact through Nature.... I must say, without meaning to be unpleasant to men, that it is infinitely easier to realise this state of consciousness when one is surrounded by trees, flowers, plants and even animals than by human beings. It is easier but not indispensable. And if one wants the state to be truly integral, one must be able to keep it at every moment, in the presence of anyone and anything.

There are countless legends or stories of this kind, like that of Prahlad,<sup>1</sup> for instance, which we saw recently in a film, stories which illustrate that state of consciousness. And I am not only convinced, but I myself have the quite tangible experience that if in the presence of some danger or an enemy or some ill-will, you are able to remain in this condition and see the Divine in all things, well, the danger will have no effect, the ill-will can do nothing to you, and the enemy will either be transformed or run away.

But I must add a word which is quite important. You must not seek this state of consciousness with any motive or seek it because it is a protection or a help. You must have it sincerely, spontaneously, constantly; it must be a normal, natural, effortless way of being. Then it is effective. But if you try in the least to imitate the movement with the idea of obtaining a particular result, it won't succeed. The result is not obtained at all. And then in your ignorance you will perhaps say, "Oh! but they told me that, but it is not true!" That is because there was some insincerity somewhere.

Otherwise, if you are really sincere, that is, if it is an integral and spontaneous experience, it is all-powerful. If, looking into somebody's eyes, you can spontaneously see the divine Presence there, the worst movements vanish, the worst obstacles disappear; and the flame of an infinite joy awakes, sometimes in the other person as well as in oneself. If in the other person there is the least possibility or just a tiny rift in his ill-will, the flame shines forth.

*Sweet Mother, about Radha, in all the Vaishnavite stories and in the accounts of many mystics, there are always tears and anguish: "She wept and the Divine did not come... The Divine tormented her..." What does this mean? She was integral purity, then why...*

That is just on the way! That happens when one is still on the way, when one has

<sup>1</sup> In Indian mythology Prahlad is the son of King Hiranyakashipu, an ardent enemy of the god Vishnu. The king had banned the worship of Vishnu in his kingdom, and when he learnt that his son Prahlad was worshipping this god in his own palace, he delivered him to serpents, but they did not bite him, then he had him thrown down from the top of a hill into the sea, but the child was miraculously carried by the waters. When the enraged King asked his son, "Who has saved you?", the child replied, "Vishnu is everywhere, in the serpents and in the sea." It is interesting to note that the King himself had been a soul temporarily driven out from the heaven of Vishnu due to the curse of some rishis who had given him the choice between three lives on earth as the enemy of Vishnu and ten lives on earth as the worshipper of Vishnu—the King had chosen the shorter way back.

not reached the goal. They have that, they insist a lot on this, for... for they like to prolong the human road, simply because they enjoy this human road and because, as I told you, if you want to remain in life, in contact with life, a certain relativity necessarily remains in the experience. They like it that way—they like to quarrel with the Divine, they like the feeling of separation, these things give them pleasure! For they remain in the human consciousness and want to remain there. The moment there is perfect identification, all this disappears. So, it is as though one were depriving oneself of the pleasure of a drama! There is something that has gone out of life, that is, its illusion. They still need a reasonable amount of illusion; they can't enter directly into the Truth.

In fact, for the feeling of separation to disappear, you must have realised within yourself a perfect identity; and once this perfect identity is realised, well, the story comes to an end, there is nothing more to tell.

That is why it is said that if the world, if creation realised its perfect identity with the Divine, there would no longer be any creation. If you realise this perfect identity in which there is no longer any possibility of distinction and if the entire universe realised this perfect identity in which there is no longer any possibility of distinction, well, there would no longer be any universe. It would be a return to Pralaya.

So the solution is to find Ananda, even in the play, in this exchange in which one both gives and receives, in which one seems to be two; and that is why they keep the duality.

Otherwise, in identity, nothing remains but the identity. If the identity is complete and perfect, there is no more objectivisation.

But I said this somewhere when speaking about the story of love. I think nobody—oh! I don't know—probably very few people noticed the distinction. I said that it begins with the Ananda of identity, and that after the full circuit of the creation, it ends in the Ananda of union.<sup>1</sup> Well, if there had been no circuit, there would never be the Ananda of union, there would only be the Ananda of identity. Were there no circuit, there would be no union.

This is perhaps a little subtle, but it is a fact: and perhaps it is just in order

<sup>1</sup> Later, someone asked Mother: "What is this 'it' ? the universe?" To which Mother replied, "I said 'it' deliberately, so as not to make it precise. I don't like the word 'creation'; it immediately gives the impression of a special creation as though it were made out of nothing—but it is He Himself. And it is not the universe 'which begins': the universe 'is begun'. How to put it? It is not the universe which takes the initiative of the movement. And if one says that the Lord began the universe, it becomes false. All these are such fixed ideas. If I say: 'The Lord began the universe,' one sees at once a personal God deciding to begin the universe—it is not that.

"I have said that about Love, the manifestation of Love which is the supreme Ananda. Sri Aurobindo also said it: beyond Being and Non-being there is something which is, which manifests as supreme Love, and which is at once Being and Non-being. And the first manifestation of That is the Ananda of identity—essentially it is the identity becoming aware of itself in Ananda, and then, it makes the full circuit through the whole manifestation and all the forms taken by Love, and returns to the Oneness through union. And this adds to that Ananda, the Ananda of union, which would never have existed if the circuit had not been made."

that the Ananda of identity may find what I might call its consummation and crowning in the Ananda of union, that the whole circuit was made.

But if there is perfect identity, there can be no union, the feeling of union does not exist, for it necessarily implies something other than perfect identity. There can be perfect union but there is no perfect identity.

Don't try to understand with words and with your head, for these two words express altogether different experiences. And yet the result is the same, but one is rich with all that was not in the other, the richness of the whole experience—the whole universal experience.

*If union is experienced consciously, why do some mystics continue to have all kinds of emotions like ordinary people, and weep and lament ?*

This is perhaps because the union is not constant.

*But Radha is sincere in her aspiration.*

If you ask me, I believe this is just literature, my children! Anyway, it is certainly in order to give you an artistic picture of human life as it is!

---

## MARVEL

I DO not know where the marvel lies—  
 In outward things or in my eyes.  
 I do not know—and yet I know  
 Nothing's the same as a week ago.

In still earth and in heaving sea,  
 In the wind-washed, sun-dyed rolling sky,  
 In the wide dry plain with its lonely tree,  
 Dawn of the bird-song, dusk of the cricket's sigh,  
 In white clouds' unfurled crests  
 The nameless opal marvel rests;

And in the starlit vast expanse of night  
 I see the stains of a self-same still-blue light

# AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

*(Continued from the issue of June 1983)*

MYSELF: Mother, this time I was able to keep my consciousness right even under multiple attacks.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a great thing that you have been able to keep your consciousness right under these attacks. 17.3.37

MYSELF: Through various ups and downs, troubles and trials, I acquired experiences and perceptions beyond belief. Still, the inherent difficulties of our nature, their hold over us and their power of creating hurdles on our way (for example, attachments, desires, tendencies of the lower nature, etc. whose roots are very deep indeed) remain, but to make myself free from such obstacles, to conquer, eradicate them is the urge and aspiration I am feeling now. Should I devote myself to achieving it? Shall I succeed? What is the way? Please let me know.

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly, all the help possible will be given. As for the method, there are always the two ways possible—one, to overcome the difficulty in its own field, the other to develop the inner realisation until it grows so strong that the roots you speak of have no longer any soil to hold by and come out easily by a spontaneous change. 19.3.37

MYSELF: Yes, I have understood that the dumb has no enemy, so I shall henceforth keep dumb. But shall I for ever remain a disturbing element?

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly in these things "Silence" is the best motto.

13.6.37

MYSELF: I feared that I have lost my voice for good. Very often I had the impulse to give up singing, but I realised at once that I was not singing for my sake but for the Divine to whom I should offer whatever I have. I find after three months that good results have started to follow.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is so with all things in the path of sadhana, one must persist however long it takes, so only one can achieve. 13.6.37

MYSELF: I feel often that weeping is a thing which opens the door to weakness, allows opportunities to those powers to enter which take away our mental will.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is quite correct that weeping brings in the forces that should be kept outside for the weeping is a giving way of the inner control and an expression of vital reaction and ego. It is only the psychic weeping that does not

open the door to these forces—but that is without affliction, tears of bhakti, spiritual emotion or Ananda.

Your experience was a very beautiful one—the inner being realised by it that which must be established in the waking state as the true foundation of the spiritual consciousness and spiritual life. 3-7-37

MYSELF: Mother dear, I used to have such experiences at one time; I could then separate my inner being, but not in the way Sri Aurobindo has indicated. I remember that the suffering of the body used to appear as something quite different, I could see that it was the outer being that suffered, the inner being was not involved, there was a division into two parts in the being.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is that separation of the inner from the outer which has to come back and be fixed—until outer and inner can become one free consciousness. Probably when you had it your attention was more on the change of mind and vital and you were observing those. 26-7-37

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo, am I then going on a wrong track? You wrote nothing, so I am uneasy. Please let me know where I stand.

SRI AUROBINDO: Silence does not mean disapproval. Your letter informed me of your present state in regard to your inner feeling in relation with others which is evidently very good. You have only to go forward and see that it is confirmed and perfected beyond all possibility of interruption, disturbance or mixture. 23.9.38.

MYSELF: It seems there is a control over speech; still, how difficult for me! What we call a slip of the tongue seems also to be less now. I wonder at the amount of tangles in which our nature is caught. To change them will be a Herculean job. One gets lost even to think of it.

SRI AUROBINDO: The habits of the physical or the vital physical nature are always the most difficult to change, because their action is automatic and not governed by the mental will to control or transform them. You have to persevere and form the habit of control. If you can succeed in controlling the speech often,—it needs a constant vigilance,—you will finally find that the control stands by itself and can in the long run always intervene. This must be done so long as that movement is not fully opened to the Mother's force, for if that happens the thing can be done more quickly and sometimes with a great rapidity. There is also the intervention of the psychic, if the psychic is sufficiently awake and active to intervene each time you are going to speak at random and say "no", then the change becomes more easy. 11.10.38

SAHANA'S NOTE: The period of correspondence with questions and answers comes to an end. I shall now begin furnishing Sri Aurobindo's letters without questions—not all, but quite a number of them.

*(To be continued)*

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(continued from the issue of June 1983)

## The Mother's Message

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

24

ON the morning of 9th December 1956 a card displaying yellow-gold roses came from the Mother and these words:

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

This evening I shall arrive at the Playground at 6 o'clock or so—I shall

see you at that time.

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

That morning there was a meditation near the Samadhi. For, on this day in 1950 the casket bearing Sri Aurobindo's body had been laid in the Samadhi-vault.

The Mother in her white attire came slightly before 10 a.m. and took her seat on a chair which was placed near the threshold of the staircase opposite the Samadhi.

The Mother asked me to sit near her chair. She looked intently at the Samadhi and meditated with her eyes open. Over and over again I opened my eyes to look at her and the Samadhi. Everything was remarkably peaceful and luminous.

Some people were sitting around the Samadhi, some in the courtyard, some against the big trunk of the Service Tree. This tree completed 50 years in 1980. Usually a Service Tree never lasts so long. The meaning the Mother has given to its flower is:

“To be at the Divine's service is the surest means of attaining realisation.”

In the evening the Mother met me at 6.15 p.m. or so. Once again we had a nice meditation.

The Mother has written about the Lord in her Cent. Ed., Vol. 15, p. 5:

“Do not forget even for a moment that all this has been created by Him out of Himself. Not only is He present in everything, but also He is everything. The differences are only in expression and manifestation.

If you forget this you lose everything.”

The Mother has explained about Sri Aurobindo as an emanation of the Supreme Lord in *White Roses*, Old Ed., pp. 104-5:

“Sri Aurobindo is the Lord—He is part of the Lord. But He is not the whole of the Lord, though his Consciousness is one with the Lord's Consciousness. He is leading us to the Lord.

“There is nothing that is not the Lord. The Lord is all that is manifested and also all that is not manifested.

“But very few are those who are conscious of the Lord, and it is this unconsciousness that constitutes the falsehood of the world.”

\*

The following morning a card from the Mother, showing the flowers Blue Bells, came along with this chime of words:

“Here are charming bells ringing the joy of Krishna.

“Let them be with you—along with my love and blessings and the Presence of the Divine Grace that never leave you.”

I remembered these lines from the Mahabharata, which Sri Aurobindo has translated:

“To Krishna’s mind all things are penetrable,  
His genius knows not the impossible.”

That very day, 10th December, I received from England the painting materials. I sent them to the Mother. In the evening when I saw her, she told me aughingly:

“Eh! now we shall soon start painting and play with colours as children do!”

Once more a sweet laugh rang out. I was very much pleased at that time to hear all that she said, but later on I found that this special kind of painting was not at all child’s play!

To paint was all right with me, but I did really want to live the Divine Life. I wondered how to make my whole being come round to join the ardent aspiration of my soul to lead the Divine Life in completeness. Once again I implored the Mother to accomplish my longing, because now my patience was wearing thin. She replied in a pretty card:

“I have read your nice letter. Yes, my dear child, I will explain to you all that is needed to live the Divine Life, the true life, and I will show you the way step by step.

“My love and blessings and the Divine Grace are always present with you, night and day and for ever.”

As usual we had a quiet meditation. It was the Mother who meditated profoundly—I knew nothing except that I felt a constant warmth in my heart. Then for a moment she looked down into my eyes and I felt she was looking down into my very soul. Her eyes were shimmering in her lovely face.

She gave me white roses along with other flowers in her graceful way. I took them with gratitude. Suddenly a flower fell from my hands on her feet. I was about to retrieve it when she said with a sweet smile:

“No, my child, don’t take the flower. It is a good sign that it fell...”

This reminds me of a moving piece from *Shreemad Bhagavat*:

“On hearing the news of Krishna’s birth the various parts of the bodies of the Gopies spoke up.



Ears: 'Today with these ears we have heard of Krishna's birth.'

Eyes: 'Today with these eyes we shall behold the beautiful face of Krishna.'

Head: 'Now this head will bow down at the feet of the Lord.'

Hands: 'With these hands we shall touch Krishna.'

Feet: 'Ah! but we shall take all of you Krishnaward.'

Heart: 'With the news of Krishna's birth I am all melted.'

Then the chaplets of flowers, which the Gopies had worn in their hair, thought: 'Deep is the devotion of the Gopies and ardent is their love. Our place is not on their heads but surely at their sacred feet.'

Then at once each flower in the chaplets strewed itself at the feet of the Gopies."

The next morning the Mother sent me a fine card and these lines:

"It is on Friday morning at 10.30 that you will come to open together [with me] the box of painting materials—and I shall show you how to use these things.

"My love and blessings along with the Presence of the Divine Grace never leave you and will never leave you."

Yet one more day to go for the real trial! I was scared stiff. Although she had previously given me in a nutshell an idea about painting, and I had registered everything in my mind, I still wondered how to face the situation when I would be actually put before it.

On the morning of the 13th a card came from the Mother—underneath she had written: "Morning" and these words followed:

"This is the reproduction of a picture by Turner.

Is it not like a pretty dreamland?

"All my love and blessings along with the Presence of the Divine Grace never leave you even for a moment."

The Mother met me before the French lesson. She looked deeply into my eyes for a few moments, then pressed my hands forcefully and, giving me a delightful smile, reminded me to be present the next morning in the Meditation Hall upstairs. I gave her a faint smile, while nodding my head, and took her hand into mine and laid my cheek on it. For, I knew now I could not escape.

In the class I slid into dreams of my future career, wondering if painting was to be my vocation in the time to come.

The next morning she sent me a picture-card by Turner—*The Fighting Téméraire towed to her last berth*. She had inscribed:

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

Here is another picture of Turner.

“À tout à l’heure at 10.30. I shall come to the hall.

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

The Mother liked the simplicity and ideality in the works of William Turner, who was never content with Nature as he found her; he was an impressionist. Direct observation was only the starting-point of his brilliant imaginative visions; and these take us to some unknown worlds of beauty and splendour.

Sri Aurobindo has written in the booklet, *Art: Revelation of Beauty*. p. 4:

“To find the highest beauty is to find God; to reveal, to embody, to create as we say, highest beauty is to bring out of our souls the living image and power of God.”

It was a fine cool morning on the 14th December. I entered the Meditation Hall upstairs where I surveyed the whole set-up at a single glance. There were: a small easel, a stool, the painting materials, a low table with a vase holding three flowers of *Hibiscus mutabilis* (Grace) against a background formed by a cloth hung over the back of a chair. Indeed, it was the Divine’s Grace which showed itself. Jayantilal and Champaklal were present. We waited for the Mother. The minutes ticked by and I became impatient and nervous—I was shaken considerably by this trial, which had not been of my seeking.

The Mother came smiling—but, as she had a cold, she sneezed once or twice. She gave a fleeting smile to us and then sat on the small stool before the easel, and instructed Jayantilal to squeeze certain colours out from the tubes onto the palette. This done, in one hand she held the palette, with brushes of various sizes laid across her fingers. She picked up one brush with the other hand and started painting. Her hand moved artistically over the board. She was silent but time and again a smile touched her lips; it proved that she really enjoyed doing the painting in spite of her heavy cold. She made me sit on her left so that I might see every move of hers, the composition of flowers, the arrangement of light and shadow.

The Mother was so absorbed in this work that time flew more quickly than we had anticipated. She sat for more than two hours, yet, unhappily, the painting remained unfinished, but it was unusually beautiful. In fact, she only wanted me to learn how she had used different colours and strokes. Afterwards she asked Jayantilal to clean the palette. Turning to me, she said:

“Now you must watch how the palette is cleaned. These remaining colours can be used on a canvas to make an interesting background for a new painting.”

I receded further and further into the mists of fear and confusion. Meanwhile,

a smile rippled across her lovely mouth, when she gave me three flowers of Spanish Jasmine (Psychological Perfection)—to paint, and asked me to show her the painting that same evening. I felt as if a bolt had fallen from above. Oh God! How was I expected to do the painting at such short notice? I took the flowers from her with trembling hands. Amusement showed in her blue-grey eyes.

Several years later—in 1967 after I had finished illustrating the whole of *Savitri*, and after the exhibition of the illustrations—she gave me the painting which she had done in front of me as a token of her appreciation.

I took all the materials and went to Golconde. Jayantilal helped me to carry things. On the way I asked him whether he could give me some ideas regarding the painting I had to do. For, I felt terribly diffident. He just smiled and told me that everything would be all right. I could not understand what to make of it—all that I knew was that I had to cope with the matter myself. Naturally nobody wished to interfere in the Mother's work.

I did not feel like taking my lunch but ate just a mouthful and off I went to my room. I set up everything and started the work in the very spirit the Mother had done—I did not have a cold, though, but a little headache! After a great struggle I could paint only one flower on a tiny board—hardly 5" × 7½"! I avoided looking at the picture because it was an utter mess.

The Mother has said in the book, *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part Eight, p. 63:

"There is a flower to which we have given this name. It is the familiar *champa*. The flower has five petals. Each petal represents a quality or movement of consciousness, the five qualities or movements making up the psychological perfection. In the beginning I named them (1) Surrender, (2) Sincerity, (3) Faith, (4) Devotion and (5) Aspiration. Of course the meaning can be changed."

The Mother has revealed the meaning of the flower *Plumeria*—Psychological Perfection—in the book *Flowers and their Messages*, p. 155:

"There is not one psychological perfection but five, like the five petals of this flower. We have said they are: sincerity, faith, devotion, aspiration and surrender. But as a matter of fact every time I give this flower it is not always the same psychological perfection. It is something very fluid, depending on the circumstances and the need of people."

She has also stated in *Questions and Answers 1956*, p. 38:

"...So here's my proposal: we put surrender first, at the head, that is, we accept what Sri Aurobindo has said: that to do the integral yoga one must first resolve to surrender entirely to the Divine, there is no other way, this is *the way*. But after that one must have the five psychological virtues, the five psy-

chological perfections, and we say that these perfections are:

- Sincerity or Transparency
- Faith or Trust (Trust in the Divine, naturally)
- Devotion or Gratitude
- Courage or Aspiration
- Endurance or Perseverance.

One form of endurance is *faithfulness*. Loyalty to one's resolution, being faithful. One has taken a resolution, one is faithful to one's resolution. This is endurance...."

In the evening she saw my painting for a few moments and said tenderly:

"Child, it is your first attempt and it is quite good. You should only express the proper effect by showing the depth of the flower, so that it stands out and looks real. Use a little grey with white to give that impression. You see, there is always a play of light and shadow, and you should bring out the reality of the flowers by giving precise strokes with the exact colours required for the objects or flowers."

There and then thoughts started flashing into my brain. I questioned myself: "What kind of oil painting is this? What are these depths and strokes she is talking about?"

I went home in that touchy mood. I was restless, impatient, disturbed, disappointed, upset and what not. I wanted to give up painting altogether. The trouble with me was: I wanted to paint masterpieces in a day!

I had noticed that whenever I took up new work, the adverse forces readily had a few cards of their own to play—ones I was not aware of. Then suddenly another ridiculous thought entered my head: I felt that the Mother had not enough time and she could not teach me everything in detail. For, I felt that until and unless I learnt drawing and perspective and knew how to use colours accurately, I could not possibly go any further in the work. Once again I had succumbed to those dark forces. I wrote a letter to the Mother that very night, and she answered the next morning:

"Indeed, it is very good that Jayanti will help you and I am sure you will progress very quick and do very nice things.

"My love and blessings and the Presence of the Divine Grace are and will always be with you."

I thought I was certainly not such a blockhead as not to sense a touch of sarcasm in the letter. I really felt ashamed, and gave up the idea of learning from anybody.

I went to the Mother in the evening and told her that I would learn painting only from her, from whatever she taught me. She smiled and looked into my eyes, and then, leaning back on her couch and folding her arms across her bosom, said:

“Splendid! You see, nobody here in the Ashram has seriously and strictly taken up oil painting in a systematic and professional way. You are the first to do so. In the Ashram school the children paint only with water colours and they are all amateurs. Our grown-up artists also use water colours and pastel colours. So there you are.

“Oil painting is an art in which you can give only an impression. All the beauty and charm depend on how you develop your consciousness. With the growth of consciousness, hands and eyes become sharp and skilful, they recognise exactly what can be done in oil painting. Automatically and spontaneously the thing takes shape and becomes vivid and full of radiant vibrations.

“If the hands are fully trained and they become full of consciousness, then everything becomes easier. For example, there are a certain number of sweets in a box. Now, you wish to pick out only five sweets from it. If your hands are full of consciousness and skill, surely the precise number of sweets will be in your hand. In painting, too, you will gradually develop a similar capacity.

“You will learn painting according to my will and vision.”

I placed my chin between my hands and listened to her with wide-open eyes. I could not really fathom the mystery of oil painting. Meanwhile she leaned forward, took my hands into hers and said:

“Now let us meditate quietly.”

What else could I do except that? The next morning she wrote on a lovely card:

“This is again a painting from Turner showing the interior of a room. It is again a good example of how things must be simplified in a picture. I am sending you back also your book for you to write down all that I told you yesterday on painting and I shall see it when it is written. Jayanti has taken all the small boards that were ready and he will give them to you this morning. Finally I am sending you along with this letter a branch of ‘Grace’ in a pretty green vase. You must try to do that. Prepare your composition on a board and paint as much as you can today. You can keep the vase and copy it tomorrow. And this evening at 5.30 at the playground bring what you will have done today and I shall show you or rather explain to you how to continue.

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

The Mother saw the half-finished painting of the green vase and the flowers of 'Grace', and said:

"You must concentrate properly on the object till the full idea of forms comes into your vision and consciousness. Then draw an outline with pencil in the correct position, and remember to keep the proper composition of the object.

"Now you must find out where the darkest shadow and the brightest light are on the subject you want to paint; and at once you should give on the board a stroke where there is the brightest light and another on the darkest shadow.

"Here is an example of how a picture can be composed. Suppose you take the flowers of 'Grace' as you have taken here, you can paint them by giving proper touches of suitable colours as in the flowers and paint around them a striking background, so that they may stand out. The top of the background must be a little paler. You can use cold colours—like green, blue-green, green-blue, cobalt blue, violet and crimson. By mixing blue and crimson, you get a slightly purple colour, but it is very difficult to get the accurate effect of that colour; I myself tried so many times when I was doing painting in Paris.

"The background must be painted a little darker at the bottom with warm colours—like cadmium yellow, orange, scarlet, Indian red, burnt sienna, raw umber, and so on.

"Now another example. The vase I sent you is pale green and beautiful in colour. You should observe it keenly and find out where the shadow and light are, and according to that you should paint and give the exact shape of the vase. Otherwise it will look flat. Let us see how to make the round shape of the vase. First of all, mark the play of light and shadow on it. If you see a dark shadow on it, paint dark-green with shades of certain colours like mauve or maroon to give an accurate shape to the vase. On the other side, if you see the light, mix green with yellow or mix blue with yellow to show it paler in colour. On the same side, if you see a little shadow, put certain shades of darker (warm) colours, so that the vase can take the perfect shape and harmonise with the flowers and the background as well.

"Here you must never forget that where there is full light on the vase, you must give a sharp stroke of whitish blue to give a shine to the vase as well as the effect of a final touch."

My head started whirling round and round with her explanation—it was too much for me to grasp this technique. A sickening chill spread all over me. I became angry with myself and thought that I had certainly made a grave mistake in accepting this type of work, which was beyond my capacity.

Sri Aurobindo has written about the technique in the booklet, *Art: Revelation of Beauty* p. 24:

“The technique is only a means of expression; one does not write merely to use beautiful words or paint for the sole sake of line and colour; there is something that one is trying through these means to express or to discover. What is that something? The first answer would be—it is the creation, it is the discovery of Beauty. Art is for that alone and can be judged only by its revelation or discovery of Beauty.”

On the morning that followed a fine card came accompanied by a bouquet of white roses and conveying the Mother's words:

“Here is another picture—a Music Party—from Turner giving a good example of simplification. I am not sending you a flower to paint today because you said you wanted to take rest. You can write down what I have told you about painting.

“As for giving you time to hear what you want to tell me I am not forgetting and shall do it one of these days as soon as it will be possible.

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

*(To be continued)*

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## EASTERN MYSTICISM AND MODERN PHYSICS

(Continued from the issue of June 1983)

2

THE sole meeting-ground of modern physics and Eastern Mysticism is that the old machine-modelled materialistic non-paradoxical non-mysterious world-view is gone and we are in the midst of the unpicturable though not beyond the range of mathematical expression. The interpretation of this expression is a puzzle to be solved and perhaps it is insoluble in detail. But if the self-satisfied outlook of the nineteenth century has disappeared, what do we have in its place? As we saw, nothing basically like Eastern mysticism's experience. The only outcome can be couched summarily in such quotations as Capra<sup>1</sup> makes from Heisenberg: "Natural science does not simply describe and explain nature; it is part of the interplay between nature and ourselves"—"What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning." In extended and explicit form the outcome may be phrased by drawing upon Capra<sup>2</sup> himself:

"A careful analysis of the process of observation in atomic physics has shown that the subatomic particles have no meaning as isolated entities, but can only be understood as interconnections between the preparation of an experiment and the subsequent measurement. Quantum theory thus reveals a basic oneness of the universe. It shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated 'basic building blocks', but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole. These relations always include the observer in an essential way. The human observer constitutes the final link in the chain of observational processes, and the properties of any atomic object can only be understood in terms of the object's interaction with the observer. This means that the classical ideal of an objective description of nature is no longer valid. The Cartesian partition between the I and the world, between the observer and the observed, cannot be made when dealing with atomic matter. In atomic physics, we can never speak about nature without at the same time speaking about ourselves....

"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. Measurements are interactions which create 'sensations' in our consciousness—for example, the visual sensation of a flash of light, or of a dark spot on a photographic plate—and the laws of atomic physics tell us with what probability an atomic object will

<sup>1</sup> *The Tao of Physics* (Shambhala, Berkeley, 1975), p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 68-9, 140-41.



give rise to a certain sensation if we let it interact with us....

“The crucial feature of atomic physics is that the human observer is not only necessary to observe 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... The observer decides how he is going to set up the measurement and this arrangement will determine, to some extent, the properties of the observed object. If the experimental arrangement is modified, the properties of the observed object will change in turn.

“This can be illustrated with the simple case of a subatomic particle. When observing such a particle one may choose to measure—among other quantities—the particle’s position and its momentum (a quantity defined as the particle’s mass times its velocity)... Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle... says that these two quantities can never be measured simultaneously with precision. We can either obtain a precise knowledge about the particle’s position and remain completely ignorant about its momentum (and thus about its velocity) or vice versa; or we can have a rough and imprecise knowledge about both quantities. The important point now is that the limitation has nothing to do with the imperfection of our measuring techniques. It is a principle limitation which is inherent in the atomic reality. If we decide to measure the particle’s position precisely, the particle simply *does not have* a well-defined momentum, and if we decide to measure the momentum, it does not have a well-defined position.

“In atomic physics, then, the scientist cannot play the role of a detached objective observer, but becomes involved in the world he observes to the extent that he influences the properties of the observed objects. John Wheeler sees this involvement of the observer as the most important feature of quantum theory and he has therefore suggested replacing the word ‘observer’ by the word ‘participator’. In Wheeler’s own words,

Nothing is more important about the quantum principle than this, that it destroys the concept of the world as ‘sitting out there’, with the observer safely separated from it by a 20 centimeter slab of plate glass. Even to observe so miniscule an object as an electron, he must shatter the glass. He must reach in. He must install his chosen measuring equipment, it is up to him to decide whether he shall measure position or momentum. To install the equipment to measure the one prevents and excludes his installing the equipment to measure the other. Moreover, the measurement changes the state of the electron. The universe will never afterwards be the same. To describe what has happened, one has to cross out that old word ‘observer’ and put in its place the new word ‘participator’. In some strange sense the universe is a participatory universe.”

We may mark that Capra no less than Wheeler is careful to make certain small reservations by phrases like “to some extent”, “to the extent that”, “in some strange

sense". As will appear later, there are even clear cautionary warnings, but the student of mysticism is at times so eager to cash in on scientific concessions that he slips into a sweeping spiritualistic interpretation. Thus that fine expositor of both Indian and Christian philosophies as well as an earnest practitioner of the *via mystica*, Bede Griffiths, records his impression of Capra's book:<sup>1</sup>

"The basic idea of *The Tao of Physics* as I understand it is that the division between matter and mind, between existence and consciousness, which has prevailed from the time of Descartes and Newton has now been overcome. The universe, as he says, is now conceived as a 'web of relations between various parts in a unified whole' of which the human mind is an essential part. We live in what has been called a 'participatory universe'. Nature is not an 'extended substance' outside the human mind, but an integrated whole of which the human mind is an essential part... In other words, the object of all scientific knowledge is not nature itself, or the 'thing as such' as Kant called it, but nature mirrored in the human mind and the human senses with the instruments which we use to extend the range of the senses. We can therefore no longer maintain a separation between mind and matter. Just as we ourselves are a psychosomatic unity, so the universe as a whole, as far as we can know it, is a psycho-somatic unity."

Capra is more careful in his general outlook, more restricted in his conclusions. Apropos of Wheeler he<sup>2</sup> writes:

"The idea of participation instead of observation has been formulated in modern physics only recently, but it is an idea which is well known to any student of mysticism. Mystical knowledge can never be obtained just by observation, but only by full participation with one's whole being. The notion of the participator is thus crucial to the Eastern world view and the Eastern mystics have pushed this notion to the extreme, to a point where observer and observed, subject and object, are not only inseparable but also become indistinguishable. 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, where subject and object fuse into a unified undifferentiated whole....

"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. Quantum theory has abolished the notion of fundamentally separated objects, has introduced the concept of the participator to replace that of the observer, and may even find it necessary

<sup>1</sup> "Science Today and the New Creation", *The Examiner*, February 27, 1982, p. 137, cols. i-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 141-42.

to include the human consciousness in its description of the world.”

The last phrase should put us on guard against Capra's previously using—without preparing the reader—such sentences as: “The end of processes lies always in the consciousness of the human observer. Measurements are interactions which create ‘sensations’ in our consciousness.” The phrase used now should certainly give pause to interpreters like Griffiths. Capra unmistakably implies that “the concept of the participator” falls short of making “the human consciousness” a direct element of participation. Until this role is worked out in a convincing fashion, is it not too big a jump to generalize that “we can no longer maintain a separation between mind and matter” and that, tracing in the phenomena of quantum physics a mental character, we can posit for the universe a psycho-somatic unity like the psycho-somatic unity that the participator is? Just because, unlike as in classical physics, now the observer is said to have an influence on the physical object observed, has the old separation between mind and matter essentially ceased to exist? Let us look at the issue closely.

### 3

In classical physics a particle under observation was taken as an isolated entity with fixed properties and the apparatus was devised accordingly. Now the particle is no more than “an interconnection between the processes of preparation and measurement. The properties of the particle cannot be defined independently of these processes. If the preparation or the measurement is modified, the properties of the particle will change too”.<sup>1</sup> But does the sheer act of observation by the mind or consciousness of the physicist have a different aspect? The question has a radical importance if we are to assess correctly such statements of Capra's as: “The human observer constitutes the final link in the chain of observational processes, and the properties of any atomic object can only be understood in terms of the object's interaction with the observer.”<sup>2</sup>

Is not the interaction of the object merely with the measuring apparatus? The observer as such—the conscious human being—reads off what the apparatus records on its dial. He does not directly interact with the object. His role is exactly the same as that of the classical physicist. If the atomic object undergoes any change by the bare fact of observation, the apparatus employed affects the object and works the change. In classical physics the apparatus did not affect the object: in quantum physics it brings about what Wheeler calls “interference” with the extremely minute object observed. The mind of the physicist, whether classical or modern, marks the readings provided by the apparatus: neither the old non-interference nor the new interference is due immediately to the reading mind.

Of course, the apparatus is merely an extension of the eyes and ears and hands

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135-36.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

of the physicist himself. It is just a highly refined and developed representative of them. But to say this does not help the argument. We still have an apparatus, the body: the body is a physical instrument whose recordings are read by the physicist's mind. It is not itself the mind. The mind's activity is the same as in the old physics, for there also the apparatus was an extension of the physicist's organs and limbs. Even if we opt to declare that the mind is not an entity different from the body with its nervous system and brain, we yet stay where we were. The non-distinction would hold just as much for the classical physicist. The mind does not newly fuse with the body now. In both cases its status is identical.

However, the set-up of the apparatus, in whichever sense we may take the latter, depends on the mind or consciousness and the answer which the object gives to the apparatus depends on the set-up. So at one remove the observer's mind determines what properties are revealed of the object. But the kind of apparatus employed in classical physics was devised too, as all apparatus has to be, and depended on the observer's inventive consciousness so that what the apparatus revealed was finally dependent on mind. Can a radical difference be urged on the ground that the observation of modern physics offers a larger choice among possibilities of experimental arrangement? Can the increased complexity of the procedure followed by modern physics be construed to make the object observed more "subjective", more mind-involving, consciousness-determined, observer-created than in classical physics? Undoubtedly, the larger choice in arranging experiments throws the devising activity of the human observer into more prominence, showing the activity of his mind or consciousness at one remove in a clearer light. But the larger choice does not prove his mind or consciousness to be basically functioning in another way.

We would prove it to function so if we could make the submicroscopic world whatever our devices would like it to be: that is, if there were no pre-existent nature of reality. Capra here and there seems to suggest such a formative power for quantum physicists. But actually the power consists in no more than choosing what *known* aspect they will measure of that world: *e.g.*, an entity either as a particle confined to a very small volume or as a wave spread out over a large region of space. But, just as in classical physics, here also it is sudden surprising discoveries that lead to new concepts, discoveries having nothing to do with the physicists' expectations. What was the origin of "the *koan*-like paradoxes which finally led to the formulation of quantum theory"?<sup>1</sup> Capra<sup>2</sup> recounts: "The whole development started when Max Planck discovered that the energy of heat radiation is not emitted continuously, but appears in the form of 'energy packets'. Einstein called these energy packets 'quanta' and recognized them as a fundamental aspect of nature." We must understand that we are dealing with a reality outside our observation, however impossible it may be for us to formulate it separately from our instruments and from our reading of them. Although in quantum physics we can never describe it as if

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

it were independent of our instrumental readings, we cannot shape it as we want, chop it to our requirements. The atomic reality imposes conditions and boundaries upon us, and these are undeniable the moment we insist, as Capra<sup>1</sup> does more than once in connection with Heisenberg's uncertainty relation, that some strange characteristics of phenomena are not at all due to the imperfection of our instruments. We have already quoted his statement that a particle can have either a well-defined position or a well-defined momentum but never both simultaneously. Capra ended by saying: "It is a principle limitation which is inherent in the atomic reality." The admission explains Capra's use of expressions like "to some extent" and "to the extent that". The observer decides what properties he will measure of the atomic reality: he does not decide for the atomic reality these properties: they are a portion of the mystery we encounter in this domain. If a particle is so odd that it cannot be said to have an exact momentum when we have ascertained an exact position for it, we have to accept the extreme oddity of nature and stand bewildered by it, hoping at least to manage it mathematically. Once our instruments find a particle with one property or another, the particle's existence is automatically established, no matter how alien it may be to our habitual expectations of something we can label as a particle. Observation of whatever kind by our measuring apparatus argues the fact of the "given", the "pre-existent", even if we are not sure whether in some states the "given" can be said to be actual or merely potential. Nature has been found such and such, a paradoxical web of interconnections.

The situation so far is precisely the same at bottom as in classical physics. Merely the results laid bare by the mind or consciousness working in co-operation with measuring equipment are exceedingly at variance with the phenomena formerly known or hypothesized. The novel phenomena shadow forth a universe which, as Capra<sup>2</sup> remarks, "our classical notions...are not fully adequate to describe" and it recalls some deliverances of Eastern mysticism about the dynamics of the cosmos. Neither can we now cut apart nature from our instrumental readings: we cannot tell what it is like when our instruments do not interact with it. But we grant the reality—the "given-ness", the "pre-existence"—of the atomic domain, and its properties are not devised by our mind or consciousness. As long as that is so, the observer as participator has in the last analysis the same status as the mere observer in classical physics.

In that case we can focus on the true philosophical problem by setting aside as irrelevant to it the entire perplexing content of modern physics and concentrating on the procedure in which the modern physicist stands on a par with the classical. Some words of Capra's<sup>3</sup> present him in the very light we need:

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 140-41, 158.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

“The delicate and complicated instruments of modern experimental physics penetrate deep into the submicroscopic world, into realms of nature far removed from our macroscopic environment, and make this world accessible to our senses. However, they can do so only through a chain of processes ending, for example, in the audible click of a Geiger counter, or in a dark spot on a photographic plate. What we see, or hear, are never the investigated phenomena themselves but always their consequences. The atomic and subatomic world lies beyond our sensory perception.

“It is, then, with the help of our modern instrumentation that we are able to ‘observe’ the properties of atoms and their constituents in an indirect way....”

Now, with the modern physicist-observer, like the classical, dealing with the measuring instruments through which he extends his senses to catch in sensory perception signs from the object chosen to be observed, we have simply to ask in the mind-matter controversy: “These instruments of his and their reports, both of them part of the same macroscopic world as he himself—are they, in any immediate connotation, mental rather than material realities?” There is a philosophical theory—Berkeleyan idealism—which holds all so-called matter to be existing purely as a state of perception, as nothing save mental experience. No material entity stimulating the mind, drawing response from the consciousness, is admitted in this theory. It has some affinity with Eastern mysticism which takes the infinite and eternal Spirit to be the ultimate reality of so-called matter but this mysticism does not reduce the world grasped by the human senses to a sheer construct of the human mind or consciousness: only a divine universal consciousness is held by Eastern mystics to experience the universe of matter as its own construct. Nor does any scientist, whatever his final philosophy, approach his instruments and the observational readings he gets by them as if they were mental constructs, individual or collective, without any existence of their own.

Going through Capra with close attention is enough to help us discern the scientist’s inevitable Realism instead of Idealism in his immediate context. Take the passage:<sup>1</sup> “In the twentieth century...physicists were able to tackle the question about the ultimate nature of matter experimentally. With the help of the most sophisticated technology they were able to probe deeper and deeper into nature, uncovering one layer after the other in search for its ultimate ‘building blocks’. Thus the existence of atoms was verified, then their constituents were discovered—the nucleus and electrons—and finally the components of the nucleus—the protons and neutrons—and many other subatomic particles.” “Matter” is accepted as existing in its own right to be tackled “experimentally”. The atoms are accepted as “verified” existences and no difficulty is felt in calling them a layer of matter and considering them an interim kind of “building blocks”: that is, “constituents” of the objects of our common experience, like the very apparatus used by the modern physicist. Thereby they are adjudged equally real as what they build, though with seven-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

ral properties different from those of common objects. A step further brings us to the atom's constituents and next we reach the components of the latter. If matter is "real" and non-Berkeleyan, not only are the atoms of it "real" essentially but also essentially "real" are the entities that constitute them and even the entities that compose any of the constituents of the atoms. In short, once the matter of classical physics is granted reality, neither atoms nor electrons-protons-neutrons and, by the same token, none of the other subatomic particles can be deemed mere mental constructs.

Quite appropriate here to mention is an aspect of quantum physics which stands foursquare in the way of trying to divide the quantum-physics observer from the classical-physics one. We can spotlight this aspect from Capra<sup>1</sup> himself:

"The mathematical framework of quantum theory has passed countless successful tests and is now universally accepted as a consistent and accurate description of all atomic phenomena. The verbal interpretation on the other hand—*i.e.* the metaphysics of quantum theory—is on a far less solid ground. In fact, in more than forty years physicists have not been able to provide a clear metaphysical model....

"The starting point of the Copenhagen interpretation [which was developed by Bohr and Heisenberg in the late 1920s and is still the most widely accepted model] is the division of the physical world into an observed system ('object') and an observing system. The observed system can be an atom, a subatomic particle, an atomic process, etc. The observing system consists of the experimental apparatus and will include one or several human observers. A serious difficulty now arises from the fact that the two systems are treated in different ways. The observing system is described in the terms of classical physics, but these terms cannot be used consistently for the description of the observed 'object'. We know that classical concepts are inadequate at the atomic level, yet we have to use them to describe our experiments and to state the results. There is no way we can escape this paradox. The technical language of classical physics is just a refinement of our everyday language and it is the only language we have to communicate our experimental results."

Here we get not only a general admission of the proper boundaries of the situation in quantum physics. We have also the particular admission that the observing system—the experimental apparatus with one or several human observers reading off its notations—figures exactly as in classical physics. Hence what this system does must be evaluated according to the terms of classical physics. There, as Capra<sup>2</sup> informs us, "it was believed that the world could be described objectively, *i.e.* without ever mentioning the human observer." For, it is not he but the experimental apparatus that receives and records the touch of the phenomenon meant to be observed. The receiver-*cum*-recorder is taken as being "out there" and so too what is received and recorded on it. In scientific philosophy no subjectivism can be

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 132-33.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

brought upon the scene in regard to the observing instrument's relationship with the human observer in spite of all the failure of classical concepts to cope wholly with the behaviour of the atom, the subatomic particle or the atomic process observed.

Exactly as in classical physics, the modern physicist has to be a Realist instead of an Idealist in his immediate context. Sheer mental constructs are ruled out at the very root of his observing activity. And no wonder, since, as we have previously caught Capra noting, the human consciousness as such, the very ground for any possibility of subjectivism, has not yet entered the descriptions of physics, and no other factor—not even the participator-concept—brings in this factor which is crucial to our inquiry.

Towards the end of his book Capra<sup>1</sup> reverts to the topic. He admits that so far “the pragmatic formulation of quantum theory used by scientists in their work does not refer to their consciousness explicitly” although “Wigner and other physicists have argued that the explicit inclusion of consciousness may be an essential aspect of future theories of matter” and although Geoffrey Chew<sup>2</sup> regards the existence of consciousness as logically necessary “for the self-consistency of the whole” towards which modern physics tends. But Capra<sup>3</sup> quotes Chew as also saying that confronting “the elusive concept of observation and, possibly, even that of consciousness” may issue in “a completely new form of human intellectual endeavour, one that will not only lie outside of physics but will not even be describable as ‘scientific’”. In any case, the patent absence of the consciousness-concept is clinched when Capra<sup>4</sup> suggests: “If physicists really want to include the nature of human consciousness in their realm of research a study of Eastern mysticism may well provide them with stimulating new viewpoints.”

Obviously, not only is consciousness excluded as much by modern as by classical physics but also physics, whether classical or modern, cannot remain physics if it is included and, since the deepening, widening, heightening of consciousness which is the very heart of Eastern mysticism, is what is needed to make good the lack of that inclusion, the decisive rapport with Eastern mysticism has not yet been reached by physicists in spite of their science's achieving general analogies with the thought-bewildering and language-straining insights of this mysticism into the basic behaviour of the cosmic energies.

Face to face with these three facts we should take with great caution some of the sweeping pronouncements in Capra's book. Thus referring to the framework which is called “S-matrix theory” and seems most suitable for the description of the centrally important particles, the stronger interacting ones, the hadrons, he<sup>5</sup> declares: “Such a theory of subatomic particles reflects the impossibility of separating

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 301.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 276-77.



the scientific observer from the observed phenomena...in its most extreme form. It implies, ultimately that the structures and phenomena we observe in nature are nothing but creations of our measuring and categorizing minds." Again, we hear from Capra<sup>1</sup> about the modern physicist: "Penetrating into ever deeper realms of matter, he has become aware of the essential unity of all things and events. More than that, he has also learnt that he himself and his consciousness are an integral part of this unity. Thus the mystic and the physicist arrive at the same conclusion; one starting from the inner realm, the other from the outer world. The harmony between their views confirms the ancient Indian wisdom that *Brahman*, the ultimate reality without, is identical to *Atman*, the reality within."

Surely, the three facts we have elicited from Capra's own words should prevent us from taking such pronouncements literally and should convince us that we cannot affirm in a radical sense "the Tao of Physics".

*(To be continued)*

K. D. SETHNA

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305.

## TO A YOUNG ARTIST

Dear S,

I WAS extremely interested to read your letter in which you outlined the three themes of your planned thesis—calligraphy, geometry and tree-forms; it set me thinking... what is the link that connects these expressive forms so that we can compare one with another? What does each express? My thoughts ran somewhat as follows:

Calligraphy, so far as I know, as practised in Japan and China and perhaps even more so in the Islamic cultures, was never meant to be an expression of the individuality of the artist in the way that we somehow expect of artists today; it was practised much more as a kind of 'dynamic meditation' in the course of which the artist would try to contact and give expression to, *through* his individual nature, some truer, more universal underlying consciousness or at least some harmonising principle of Nature; and the greatness of the calligrapher was assessed by the extent to which he could make himself a pure channel for that underlying principle of Harmony or Beauty or Divinity. His 'spontaneity' was not an indulgence in or exaggeration of his own personality, but rather an abnegation of it in order to make his individual consciousness and skill available for the expression of something else, something diviner breathing through him.

Geometry is another kind of attempt to come into contact with the principle of order underlying all the appearances of the universe which is the origin of Beauty. The other day our learned friend M. told us that the Greek word for the universe 'kosmos' originally meant 'beauty' and that this meaning survives in our word 'cosmetic'; in dictionaries the meaning of 'kosmos' is usually given as 'order'. I think that for the Greeks these two concepts were one: what is orderly, in its place, harmonious is Beauty; and order, psychological and physical, is the basis of beauty in our world and in our lives, a manifestation of the Harmony that holds the universe together. In this sense 'Beauty is Truth, and Truth Beauty...' For the thinkers who perceived things in this way geometry, which perhaps seems to us a dry and two-dimensional art, was a thrilling exploration of the laws and structures of both inner and outer worlds, a revelation of the thought-processes of the Creator, a key to the consciousness of God. I am sure this must have been true for other peoples also... for the Chinese, who always tried in their buildings and politics and social life to remain in harmony with the underlying forces of Nature; for the Indians who developed not only the *mantra*, but also the *yantra* and *mandala*—sacred diagrams which not merely represented but could *embody* and radiate the living power of the reality they describe. Surely also for Islamic artists?

Calligraphy and geometry are manifestations of human expressiveness: geometry working mainly through the analytical, inductive mind, calligraphy more through its aesthetic, emotional powers; but what they *express* is, ideally, a principle of consciousness which is not specifically individual nor even human, but something per-

vading the universe as a whole. And it is this same creative consciousness that speaks to us very directly through the forms of Nature—so it is not surprising if the lines drawn by the meditating calligrapher to express the name of God, or by the concentrating geometer tracing the structure of the universe, should recall or seem to be reflected in the expressive lines of trees and landscapes around us. The source is in fact the same, and the skill of the artist or mathematician may truly be measured by the extent to which he has come in contact and succeeded in expressing in his own particular way the source, the fount of order, harmony, beauty, truth.

I think I spoke to you once about a series of drawing exercises a fine teacher showed me once. The object of them was to show us how to make that contact and to set aside some of the limitations of our conventional way of seeing and representing objects in order to allow a flow of creative consciousness to manifest something beautiful through us. Concentrated accuracy of observation was very important, and steadiness of hand we found to depend very closely on steadiness of mind. We were not encouraged to seek 'realism' for its own sake—if the drawing became a recognisable reflection of a particular object it was because there was a correspondence of consciousness, an inner connection between it and the drawing of it, not just a superficial rendering of appearances... the appearances were useful simply as a key to the inner order that had externalised them. I was very happy to find in a Munich art-gallery last summer two drawings done by very different artists, but both within the last five years, which were very fine examples of this approach. Life-giving energy pulsed quietly out of each of them, as it does from the pattern of stars in the sky at night, or from a harmonious landscape, from a tree we see outlined against the sky, or from a lovely flower.

If we could only rediscover this life-giving power of harmonious line and proportion in our daily environments—our homes and public buildings, our furniture and tools and cars, our clothes and our 'works of art'—I am quite sure that all of us would be both physically and psychologically stronger and healthier. Until this century fine works of art could be enjoyed only by a few privileged people—unless they stood in public places of worship where the masses went for spiritual renewal. But with today's visual media and the wider distribution of wealth and leisure, almost everyone could live in a daily bath of beauty. Wouldn't that be worth working for? Then the artist would have rediscovered his true role in the world...to catch hold of yet-unmanifested harmonies and beauties and truths and, by giving them visible expression, to make them real and seizable and meaningful to his fellow-men.

I hope that you, who have this capacity and aspiration, may be able to take some steps in this direction, for the benefit of us all!

With love,

SHRADDHAVAN

## ADVENTURES WITH THE MOTHER

ON the 10th June we came to live at Nanteuil House. Since then adventures and surprises met us every day, every hour of the day. A few days earlier the Mother said to us, "After Tennis I will show you the place." We were happily surprised, for the Mother was always so busy and we did not expect such attention. Round about five Her Humber arrived and stopped at the playground gate. Exactly opposite to it is the gate of Nanteuil House. The Mother had bought this house some years before for Margaret Wilson, daughter of the American President Woodrow Wilson who, as most people will recall, was the founder of the League of Nations. When she died, the place lay vacant for several years except for a few months, when it was occupied by Ali Hyderi, son of Sir Akbar Hyderi, one-time Dewan of Hyderabad. Ali and his family came as visitors and once they left they never returned.

The Mother took us upstairs at once, and inspected all the rooms and the terrace and the veranda, in fact every nook and corner. Thanks to the department under Rishabhchand the place looked fresh and clean. Later Rishabhchand told us, "The thought came back to me again and again that Mother will want the flat soon, some people are coming and I must keep the place ready." As long as he was working in the Department he was always extremely nice to us. In one of the bedrooms there was a bed with a woven cane-mat instead of a mattress. The Mother pointed out to me a big hole and said, "Look what they have done to my furniture." The hole had obviously been made by the butt of a cigarette. At once I thought, "Thank God Sanat does not smoke." The Mother, Pavitra, Sanat and I stood on the terrace and went on chatting when the Mother, suddenly pointing to the second floor terrace, said, "From there you can get a first-class view of Pondicherry." There was a certain encouragement in the statement, almost an invitation to me to make good use of the terrace. When leaving she said, "If you want any alteration or addition to the flat just contact Rishabhchand."

Our furniture started coming in and I visited the place every morning to put things in their places. One morning I noticed a big basket full of brand-new cooking utensils. On enquiring, I learnt that Dyumanji had sent them for me. I was surprised and happy. I knew no cooking then. We were starting a new house, a new life, a new life-style, more truly a new birth. It was befitting that our intakes should be cooked in new vessels. I told my servants to throw away the old ones and use the ones sent by Dyumanji. The mornings so far started with "Tea ready, Mem-sahib", while I lay sipping tea and rubbing my limbs against the silken sheets. But it was Sanat now who woke me up. "Get up, Chaundona, we will be late for the Balcony Darshan," he would say with a certain urgency in his voice. We dressed quickly and started for the Ashram. We stood under a tree that had small flowers with a lovely fragrance. The Mother appeared and we drank from Her heavenly cup. The most remarkable thing about the Balcony Darshan was that the Mother did not survey the whole scene just cursorily but met each and every pair of eyes and gave nec-

tar to the person's psychic being and help to the outer being for the day's work, even messages. I had in this way several times received messages instructing me to do certain things.

When we were comfortably settled down, the Mother came again to see us. She saw to every detail and finally commented, "It is all very beautiful. You have changed the place." Perhaps She started remembering how bare and empty it had looked when some six months back She used to come to the flat for the rehearsal of Her drama *Elle* which was staged on the 1st December 1949. That evening the Mother, sitting in our drawing room, gave Sanat a full discourse on how to read Sri Aurobindo. She told him to take up teaching work and to translate Her *Belles Histoires* into English. He did so very soon and called the book *Tales of all Times*. Sitting near the Mother I saw that evening a transformation going on in front of my eyes. A certain *hauteur* and stand-offishness was inevitable in a high official like Sanat, more so if he happened to be a brilliant scholar. The Mother one day described it as modesty. It was not modesty in the vulgar meaning we generally attach to the word, but knowing what one is and not more nor less. It was dignity born of one's learning one's position and awareness of the god within. Happy as a child with his first toy Sanat sat there gazing at the Mother and drinking up each and every word She spoke. He visibly melted into Her hands. While the Mother talked and smiled, Her eyes looked at him intensely, remoulding him to a pattern of Her own.

Sanat may have harboured for a long time the desire to join Sri Aurobindo in his great work. But I cannot vouch that I had registered any such wish in my most outward mind. Yet when we actually arrived I did not feel like a fish out of water. Rather, when in the company of the Mother or reading Her or Sri Aurobindo's books I felt very much inside the water. I feel like saying in imitation of Dag Hammarskjöld, one-time Secretary General of the U.N.O.—

"I don't know who or what put the question, I don't know when it was put, I don't even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer Yes to someone or something and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that therefore my life, in self-surrender, had a goal. God does not die on the day when we cease to believe in a personal deity, but we die on the day when our lives cease to be illumined by the steady radiance, renewed daily, of a wonder the source of which is beyond all reason."

The Mother had once actually said, "Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is an adventure and if you want to live with me you must think in terms of eternity."

## AN EXTRAORDINARY DREAM-EXPERIENCE

ON the night of the 13th April, I went to bed early (as I am forced to do these days, owing to the pain in my knees).

As usual I concentrated on the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and longed to go to them in the subtle-physical. But I could not do it. When I was fast asleep, I had an extraordinary dream-experience. I found myself in the front line of a large army which was facing another army.

I was clad in a steel armour, a steel helmet, and was holding a sword or a spear in my right hand. I was on horseback and prepared to charge as soon as we received the order from our general to do so.

Strange to say, a fine handsome man, who was the leader of the opposing army, stepped forward and had a long talk with our leaders. He was said to be not only a great general but also a very experienced and clever diplomat. And thanks to his intervention the impending battle was stopped, and the army ordered to disperse. From the talk which I overheard I knew that I was in France and that the time was that of the great Joan of Arc.

So strange and vivid was this experience that even after waking up it took me several hours to start my normal work in the house. I asked myself again and again how a weak and cowardly person like me could have been a warrior in the far past. But there was no mistaking the experience, which had come so spontaneously. And if I had not read in Sri Aurobindo's letters how a soul which has chosen one sex for its general evolution can sometimes change to the other in order to undergo certain experiences for its development, I would never have believed this dream experience to be true.

In my life I have known many a member of the male sex (like my late husband Mehelli) who was much more of a woman than a man. And it was the opposite case with my mother-in-law. She had great strength, courage, and a capacity for endurance, so I told myself not to feel weak and discouraged because of these physical disorders, but to go on with the Divine's work in whatever way I could.

In the last few years I had found myself in many other places in my dreams. Sometimes it was in Egypt or in Italy or else other places, but no experience was so strong as the one I had on this night which has left me amazed.

I may add that when I woke up I felt centred deeply in the heart-region. From this I infer that it was the psychic being, the inmost soul, that had brought the memory of a past life. Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have told us that it is the psychic being that carries memories of the past-life occasions when it has suddenly emerged and joined with the outer self.

LALITA

# STUDENTS' SELF-OBSERVATIONS

## HOW THEY FELT AND REACTED TO NEW IMPACTS DURING VACATION

EXPLORATION and Discovery are delightful pursuits and innate interests of the human mind. They widen our knowledge more and more as we pursue them.

Ordinarily we look outwards and are delighted to make ever new discoveries in our knowledge of the external world. The child is always making new acquaintances with things and persons and acquiring new aptitudes. That is how the personality of the child grows up and in course of time becomes competent and confident to play a definite role in life.

But is it enough to know external things only in order to act competently in life and achieve an increasing satisfaction as a human being? No, one must know oneself too, one's reactions to things, one's thoughts, one's feelings, one's attitudes and the varied impulses to actions. Not only know them, but organise them into a proper form, under a worthy idea or ideal or around one's spiritual reality, the psychic being. Then a personality does really come into being. We must know and understand the world we live in, but also know and understand ourselves who have to live in this world and achieve a fulfilment and a perfection that human life is inherently capable of. External observation, therefore, needs to be completed by an internal observation for the exploration of the internal world. And the internal world is, in fact, more varied, richer and a great deal more interesting. Man is said to be a miniature universe.

Our 'Centre of Education', as usual, reopened after the annual vacation on 16th December, 1982. We happened to be struck by the problem of our students going home and spending a month or so there in the ordinary atmosphere of life, and we thought of an exercise in introspection for whoever was game for it, in the form of the following questions:

"1. How did I feel during my stay outside? How do I feel about the stay now on return? What have I gained, what lost?

\*

"2. Did I have the Pondicherry contact, the Ashram feeling, the thought of the Mother when I was away? How do I feel them now? Any difference?

\*

"3. Do I feel inwardly quite bright and joyous or rather clouded? Can I go about my studies and sports with my normal zest?

\*

“4. Did I miss my friends of the Ashram when away or do I miss home when here?”

\*

A few students, boys and girls, of the age group 15 years felt the thrill of the questions, observed their own thoughts and feelings and wrote out answers. Here are those answers:

#### STUDENT ONE

##### A Girl

Well, for the first day it was all right but as soon as the second day dawned I found the life too busy and the atmosphere untruthful, dishonest, dirty. I didn't enjoy myself much.

\*

It's a great relief with my usual routine and this calm and peaceful atmosphere.

\*

I haven't gained anything except the knowledge that if one wants anything one has to be cunning, dishonest and all that is bad. Well, I can't really make out what I have lost because my stay was only for 2 days.

\*

No, I had no contact except by letters, no Ashram feeling means to say that silence and all, but the Mother's thought was always there.

\*

Now the feeling of the Ashram is always there and the thought of the Mother is there too. The feeling of the Ashram is now uppermost.

\*

Well, a hell of a lot of difference between here and the outside life.

\*

In the beginning for a few hours I was clouded but as soon as I went to the



Ashram and sat there for half an hour I felt much better and also was back to normal life.

\*

Studies are fine but if I had not gone, sports could have started much better.

## STUDENT TWO

### A Boy

Of the four times that I have been out for the vacation only once have I spent the period in Bombay, but that was because my grandfather was ill. Otherwise I have been visiting hill stations with my parents and visiting these places was quite fun. I felt quite happy in seeing new places, but nothing struck me.

Back here I feel I have been wasting much of my time out there and even at the places I visited. I always repent because before going I plan out what I shall be doing there but on reaching there I can't adjust and do things I had not thought of.

\*

What I gained are the lovely scenes of nature which stay in my mind like photos and later help me in imagination. Apart from this I have gained practically nothing.

Losing what one knows is easy and that unconsciously. I have lost quite a few things, which I often take time to get back.

\*

The Pondicherry contact and the Ashram feeling are out of the question, for the atmosphere outside is totally different. But the thought of the Mother was always there. I was always confident of her protection. Now I feel everything more vividly and easily. A difference it surely does make.

\*

I have not yet felt bright but am still joyous. I am not feeling clouded.

\*

Within the 1st week I was all right, but now—I don't know why—I am inwardly very sorry that I can't go about my work with my normal zest. Yet I am improving. I do not think that my stay outside has affected me for I came out of that atmosphere long back; only, now something in me, the devil in me, is dominating me. But soon

I will overthrow him and regain my domination 'sur lui'.

\*

I do miss friends here, especially my classmates, for some small incident comes to my mind and I remember how we had enjoyed it and then I laugh to myself.

Home, I do not miss when I am once here, for this is the abode of God, or rather heaven.

#### STUDENT THREE

##### A Boy

During my stay in Bombay I was not so happy but when I went away to Kāshmir where I was away from the relatives and films I was happy.

I have gained nothing and lost nothing.

I had the thought of the Mother. My father loves the Ashram. We often went to an Ashram-branch in Bombay. The contact with the Mother here is stronger.

I feel very bright and joyous on return. I am very glad to join the sports and all ready for the new academic year.

No, I never missed my friends when I was there and never miss my parents when here.

#### STUDENT FOUR

##### A Girl

I felt happy staying with my parents after one year. I feel still happy about the stay now on return. Meeting my friends and getting back to group and school is a great joy.

I have gained the realisation of being so lucky to be here in the Ashram. I've lost nothing.

\*

Yes, I did have the Pondicherry contact through some of my friends. That Ashram feeling, that quietness, was not there but the thought of the Mother was always there.

\*

Surely, I feel very happy and joyous. The first few days, it was a little difficult to adjust myself to my studies and sports with the normal zest, but in a few days I felt very normal.

\*

Yes, during the first few days I did miss them a lot, but afterwards not so much. For one or two days after my return I did miss home a little, but afterwards I was much too busy with my studies and group activities.

It's really very nice to be back here, in quietude and far from the world of business.

#### STUDENT FIVE

##### A Boy

I feel happy, there are lightnings of joy inside me.

\*

I have gained nothing and lost everything.

\*

Yes, I had all of them but not as powerful, as strong, as when present in Pondicherry.

\*

Now I feel as if I am under Mother's protection.

\*

Yes, a heaven-and-hell difference.

\*

I felt rather clouded there because I was not physically in contact with the Ashram atmosphere.

\*

No, I cannot, it is very difficult.

\*

I missed my friends of the Ashram when there.

It is evident the answers are original, frank and honest. The students possess a self-awareness, which is remarkable. A self-confidence too, which is striking. Surely this bit of introspection on their life at the Ashram and that outside helped them to recover the tone and the temper of their life back here more quickly and

more fully. Apart from that it must have given them a most valuable discrimination between the two qualities, the quality of life here and that outside, which should slowly build up a true relationship between the two.

In assessing education, we generally go by the material learned and the skill acquired and do not take note of the attitudes and inner feelings developed towards oneself, towards others, towards existence as a whole, an aim of life, a guidance for life, an atmosphere, the quality of peace, quietude, joyfulness, the will to grow and to learn and the like. Actually it is these that constitute the core of personality, the material learned and skills acquired are only peripheral assets of personality. But it is necessary to have a due appraisal of the two parts and not ignore or underestimate the essential.

In this connection, one would easily recall a word of Sri Aurobindo. He says, "The children should be helped to grow up into straightforward, frank, upright and honourable human beings ready to develop into divine nature." This higher spiritual nature is the destiny of man, his fulfilment, the one solution of all the varied problems of the lower egoistic nature. And it is prepared by the growth of the inner qualities of frankness, straightforwardness, honesty and others.

A student may surely go out during the vacation if he is keen about it, but he needs to be confident of himself and should be able to meet new impacts consciously and with discrimination. In any case he has to recover the true inner feeling as soon as possible after every interruption of it.

INDRA SEN

## THE VOICE OF MUSTAFA

*(Continued from the issue of June 1983)*

THE stars were bright trembling points and the moon climbed golden beyond the dark line of trees. The winds were gentle and growing chill. Mustafa picked up the pebbles close to his feet and looked at them and mused over their true nature.

Elijah looked at him and said: "The evening is fair, and a sense of peace clothes all. What is Peace? Has it something to do with material prosperity? Or do we find it more in our communings with Nature?"

"Elijah, what is Peace but the virtue to be unmoved by anything around you? Then can you be called indifferent? No, Elijah. Have compassion, as the Buddha has said, have great compassion for all living things, but don't think of your gain in the venture. The moment you pick up some small thing and say: 'This I shall keep for myself', you will be giving away a fraction of your peace.

"Have you seen a water wheel, Elijah? As the cups fill with water, the weight turns the wheel; the faster and heavier the filling, the faster will the wheel turn.

"We are forever filling the pouches of our water wheels with gold, brick, mortar, instruments for our luxury, and the wheel turns, turns and turns. It looks as if we love to have the wheel turn, we are afraid to stop it, we are afraid to die to the Finite.

"Some fear to stop it because the silence will call from them other great realities.

"Call nothing your own. Empty your pockets. Look at the 'now', the 'here' and see what you are and not what you have.

"To call yourself blessed because you have earthly possessions, is a delusion of the mind and heart. Your faith has to soar from emptiness into the white radiance of wisdom and peace.

"So many talk of peace. So many godmen offer the promise of Peace. But no one ever thinks of stopping this water-wheel of the mind."

Elijah was pleased with the image.

"Master, let us stroll down this road; I am yet to learn many things from you."

"Yes, Elijah, as you say, let us stroll down and ponder over this puzzling pilgrimage caught in the hands of Time and Illusion and fanned by perfumed winds blowing from different directions."

They walked side by side, clad in their homespun robes and they looked like the shades of Dante and Virgil traversing the three worlds. The stars were twinkling, and the moon grew into a pearly disc of radiance. Cool shadows shifted on the ground as the leaves danced in the trees.

"Master, I have heard of Right and Wrong. Some may deem something right which others think wrong. So talk to me about Right and Wrong so that my judgments may be more sound, filled with your wisdom."

And Mustafa spoke:

“The tribes of old hunted for meat and ate their fill. The meek and helpless were left out, hungry. Then compassion crept into the heart of one of these beast-men and he cut a chunk of meat and gave it to his meek and helpless brother, saying: ‘Take and eat your fill and do for others what I have done for you.’ And the young one grew strong and hunted not for himself alone but also for his weak brother. This was the beginning of Right.

“The tribes selected their kings. The kings looked at the sun, moon, fire, winds, and water and prayed for wisdom and wrote down laws.

“Laws were made to give a fair deal to all men, but, Elijah, remember, laws come from man and they are mixed with the weaknesses of man.

“Man uses cunning to twist the law to gather for himself what may rightly belong to his brother.

“The Right gives every man the chance to grow to the full stature of his personality.

“The Wrong maims the spirit and the face itself begins to wear a mean, dark, furtive look. In the Wrong, Grace is traded for the stones and metals of this world.

“None must be forced to do the Right.

“It is Right to share your excess with your brother, but Wrong to force him to share his excess with you.

“History is nothing but the story of the slow purification of man moving towards the All-Good through the changing structures of Right and Wrong.

“Right and Wrong are concepts to help man understand how much of him is dedicated to the purpose of the All-Force.”

The leaves of the trees were glistening in the moonlight, and a lonely beggar tapped on the road with his stick. He cast sidelong glances, perhaps searching for a place of rest.

“A few more questions, Master, and then we can retire for the night. I see so much of people around me, my brothers, in rags, living in hovels, living on measly morsels, but their faith in the Supreme, in the All-Force is remarkably inviolate. Speak to me of their poverty and their faith. Shouldn’t they feel bitterness for their God who ignores their sad plight?”

“Yes Elijah, so much of poverty around you; yet a divine wisdom informs all. How nice to think of home as the place of the simple hearth, where wheat is ground on the turning stone and rice boiled in a little black pot and the smoke lazily leaves the chimney!

“This is a simplicity full of a hidden richness. Elijah, think of the day when machines will be used for the work and pleasure of man. Think of the day when work takes little time and pleasure all our time.

“We have a very foolish picture of riches and progress. We make machines for every little work; most absurdly, Elijah, we are desperately trying to succeed in eliminating ourselves.

“Struggle preserves our natural selves and we stay human.

“The poor we see around us are the test of our faith in the Supreme. How much are you willing to share with your neighbour as a measure of your love?”

“People shout from their housetops about the Kingdom of God, but in their homes they crave for comfort, for more and yet more of worldly things. Yea, Elijah, their arks will never brave the storms, because they carry too much dead weight.

“Look at the poor. Listen to their words. The smallness of wants is their true protection, and in their words the wisdom of the spirit uncoils forth in a surprising melody.

“Strive not to perpetuate poverty, but its wide-spreadness today is all the greater a test on the conscience of those whom blind Fortune has favoured. Fortune is fair of countenance, but for a heart she has a weather-vane.

“When we give and share, we learn to be god-men.

“Don’t give in bitterness, let your giving be marked with joy.

“Give the sunshine to others and take the darkness for yourself, and believe me, Elijah, this darkness is the true shaping force of wisdom.

“Receive the nail in your hands, receive the spear-thrust in your heart, receive the hemlock for your drink, and let the sunshine burst out, golden, warm and loving from you so that the will of the All-Force may realize itself in human history.”

Mustafa’s face was radiant in the moonlight and his robe looked as though it were spun out of threads of pearl. Everything was so silent around. The children had long retired to their homes. The road was like a long ribbon of luminous grey.

“Master, here is my last question. We shall take the road to your village while you speak to me. Speak to me of Happiness, Master.”

“Elijah, we have completed the circle. It is but right that we should conclude with Happiness. We started with Grief and then passed on to other riddles. What can I say of Happiness? When I spoke to you of Beauty, of God, of Prayer, of Peace, and of Right, I was speaking in images that were all related. All life is one. We are trained to see differences and similarities, but all life is one.

“Life is a rich murmuring flow with a rhythm; we pick up points of meaning. These points fall within the circle of our life and we seek to understand.

“Your happiness may be a thing of today, a moment’s sunlight burning warm on a patch of grass, and you outlive it and tell yourself: ‘At that time I was happy.’

“Ask the man going to the market and he would say happiness means good vegetables for a small price.

“Ask the scholar going to the university and he would say happiness means holding the scroll that measures the success of his learning.

“Ask the lover going to his tryst and he would say happiness means the soft kiss on the lips of his beloved.

“Ask the beggar looking into nowhere and he would say happiness means the cheerful tinkling of coins in his bowl and the smell of food.

“Ask the child returning from school and it would say happiness means lying close to the beat of its mother’s heart.

“We are in search of a happiness that will stay with us.

“In this world, circumscribed by our limiting natures, happiness is a grand state that passes over like the breath of the wind carrying the perfume of fresh-blown flowers.

“It blows over, dissipates, and mingles with the unseen.

“Yet, Elijah, we are all after it, prodding the four corners of the world, flying on the four winds, shaking every sleeping form of nature and asking it to answer this perplexing riddle.

“We step into its footprints and feel its vibrations, but what is Happiness? Who is she? Who is he? What is it? We know only its footprints and follow them to the foot of the rainbow.

“We gather the flowers that grow in its footprints and the flowers fade.

“We move along opening doors to get at an answer, to hear the voice of the Unknown. Every door opens and the scent picks up stronger.

“The final door will open and the voice of the Crystal Omniscience will be heard and then we shall know that all this we go through now was just a carnival, a pilgrimage, a game of hide-and-seek. The Crystal Omniscience will invite us to step onto the Bridge of Transformations and beyond that, I believe, my brother Elijah, beyond that, is the complete answer to all your questions; why! by then you would have forgotten the little riddles of this world.”

“I’m beholden to you, Master. Tonight, my dark chamber will be lit by many lamps. I shall cherish this wisdom that flowed from your lips. May the All-Force, the Crystal Omniscience, grant you the golden moment when you will take the whole of humanity to Its radiant feet.”

They parted company. Elijah watched the hooded form of Mustafa dwindle down the long road. Above, in the vast firmament, the stars kindled their trembling white fires.

End

11th November, 1982

EUGENE D’VAZ



## S.O.S OF AYURVEDA

THE word Therapy is said to have its origin in "thera" meaning the Buddhist sadhu who was the carrier of religion and medicine from India to the middle-east and Greece. The principle of three humours of Greek and Unani medicine has its root in Ayurveda because Greek and Arab cultures are more recent, compared to Indian culture: they learnt their medical science from India. One can prove it by comparing the oldest books of each.

Ayurveda is not only Medicine, it is Botany, Pharmacology, Physiology, Hygiene, Exercise, Recreation, Dietetics, Philosophy, Sociology, Sexology, Moral Science, Psychology and many more things together.

From the beginning of human history, Ayurveda had been getting stronger day by day. If there was a decline, some renovator always came forward. The Mohammedan rule neglected Ayurveda for six centuries, so the progress halted, still the science survived. Even up to the first quarter of this century it was the main therapy of India. A sick landlord or a big businessman dare not resume his original diet or duties until a Vaidya—a Hakim—a Kaviraj sanctioned them. But though the flag of Ayurveda is still flying high, the ship of Ayurveda is sinking day by day. There are hundreds of Indian physicians who have the Ayurvedic Licence, yet have no drug prepared in the Ayurvedic Pharmacy even while some rare person, who may have an Allopathic Licence, still prescribes only Ayurvedic drugs. What is the cause of the sad plight of Ayurveda during the last six decades?

All Government bodies—village panchayats, Municipal bodies, State Governments and the Central Government—all are behaving as if Allopathy were 99% perfect and whatever little was missing could be added by incorporating a few very important Ayurvedic products, developing them by modern research, the remaining huge body of Ayurveda set aside as quite rotten, ready to be thrown into the ditch of the obsolete.

Allopathic drugs can reach, at the most, 30% of the population of India. Ayurveda is covering more than 60%. Still in the medicine-budget, it is given a meagre share of 1 to 3 percent. Who will bell the cat?

Egypt, Mexico, Brazil, Peru had ancient medicine-therapies a thousand years ago. By the attacks of political, commercial and religious interests those therapies are completely destroyed without leaving the name of a single medicine-book. It is high time for the Indian nation to give serious thought to the development and even the existence of Ayurveda. Year by year, Ayurveda is being pushed to the brink of the abyss.

The death-blow came to fading Ayurveda in the fourth decade of this century while laws were being made for registration and licencing Ayurvedic physicians. The right of an Ayurvedic physician to educate a disciple at home was taken away cunningly. Now we are reaping the fruits of that poison-tree, that cunning law.

The scientist, the man of intellect, has not done much for the development of

Ayurveda. The Yogimuni, the man of inspiration, has built the simple but gigantic structure of it. Let us see Sri Aurobindo's opinion of Ayurveda. As a great Yogi Sri Aurobindo is honoured all over the world.

A few inmates of Sri Aurobindo Ashram had the chance to discuss various topics of human life with the Master. Let us go through a few paragraphs of *Evening Talks* noted by A. B. Purani. Here is a transcript of pp. 236-39 and p. 251 of the First Series.

### Talk of 21. 10. 1938

Disciple: There was a time when barbers occupied a respectable place in medicine.

Sri Aurobindo: Why, during the middle ages, it seems, most of the surgeons were barbers. (*After a pause*) I understand there are Kavirajas—physicians—who can, by examining the pulse, state the physical condition and the disease of the patient. Is that true?

Disciple: No one has seen these claims demonstrated. I have heard of some remarkable Nadi-pulse-specialists who can even say what the patient had eaten a few days earlier. (*Laughter*) Can we accept these claims?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? How do you know they are not correct? Many sciences are built up by experience and intuition. They are handed down by tradition: for example, the Chinese method of treatment by finding and pricking the nerve-centres.

Disciple: It is said of Dhanavantari, the father of Ayurveda, that he came to know the medicinal properties of plants by intuition. He would, it seems, stand before a plant and question the plant and it would reveal its properties to him.

Sri Aurobindo (*smiling*): He was the physician of the Gods and so nothing was unnatural for him. (*Laughter*) (*After a pause*) Ayurveda is the first system of medicine; it originated in India. Medicine, mathematical notation and astrology all went from India to Arabia, and from there they travelled to Greece. The Three Humours of which Hippocrates and Galen speak are an Indian idea.

Disciple: At Calcutta and other places they are trying to start Ayurvedic schools. I think it is good. It will be a combination of Eastern and Western methods, especially of Western Anatomy and Surgery.

Sri Aurobindo: Why? Anatomy and Surgery were known to Indians. There were many surgical instruments in India. For an ancient system like Ayurveda I doubt if the modern method of teaching would do. Modern methods make the whole subject too mental, too intellectual, while the ancient systems were more intuitional. These subjects used to be handed down from Guru to disciple. The same is true about yoga. One can't think of schools and colleges and studies for yoga. That would be an American idea. The centre of yoga teaching in America has been holding classes and giving lectures and courses.

Disciple: Perhaps Hatha-Yoga can be taught that way.

Sri Aurobindo: Even that would be only the external part.

Disciple: I think that the medical profession should be under State-control.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't believe in that. I like State-control less than a Medical Council's control.

### Talk of 10.1.1939

Sri Aurobindo: Many diseases which require an operation for their cure in Allopathy are cured by Unani and Ayurvedic medicines without an operation.

There were many specific cures known in India but I am afraid they are getting lost. I remember the case of Jyotindra Nath Bannerji who had a remedy for sterility from a sannyasi, and he used it with success. Many cases of barrenness of ten or fifteen years were cured within a short time. The directions for taking the medicine were very scrupulously to be observed. He knew also a remedy for hydrocele.

Disciple: I do not think that any system of medicine can succeed in curing all diseases. I believe that only yogic power can cure all diseases.

Disciple: Even that is not unconditional: otherwise, it might be very nice. There are conditions to be fulfilled for the yogic power to succeed.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you expect that the yogic power, or consciousness, will simply say, "Let there be no disease", and there will be no disease?

Disciple: Not that way. But cases of miraculous cures are known, that is, cures effected without any conditions.

Sri Aurobindo: That is another matter. Otherwise, the Yogi has to get up every morning and say, "Let everybody in the world be all right", and there would be no disease in the world! (*Laughter*).

\*

From Sri Aurobindo's opinion of Ayurveda one can conclude that—

1. Ayurveda is a very important therapy and India should be proud of it. It is the duty of every Indian to uphold Ayurveda.

2. An Ayurvedic doctor should give more importance to inspiration than to intellect while treating a patient.

3. Compared to intellect and information, inspiration is much more important for Ayurveda. So, for transmission of Ayurvedic knowledge, a Guru-Kula-Guru is much superior to a professor of an Ayurvedic college. To revive the guru method in Ayurveda much sacrifice is needed, because the highest political and business interests will not easily allow it. At any cost, to keep real Ayurveda alive, all Ayurvedic physicians should be given the right to prepare at least one disciple in a decade. For this all Ayurveda-lovers will have to fight tooth and nail.

4. To guide and control Ayurvedic education, research and production, non-Governmental and semi-Governmental bodies will be more useful than Governmental ones.

## SEVEN STEPS

1

O MOTHER, let me be the wheel of Thy chariot....  
Breaking the dumb inertia, infuse in me  
the spirit of Thy progress.

2

O Mother, let me be Thy anklet and kiss Thy feet....  
Inspire me to tinkle with the mood  
and rhythm of Thy footsteps.

3

O Mother, let me be the flame of Thy lamp....  
Make me emit a life-giving glow  
into the dark cavern of inconstancy.

4

O Mother, let me bloom as a flower  
in the garden of Thy creation....  
Make me open my petal-eyes and look at Thy face.

5

O Mother, let me wake up with the magic of Thy dream....  
Make fruitful the hope of heaven  
hidden in matter.

6

O Mother, let me be the clarioning conch at Thy lips....  
Blow forth within me the breath  
of Thy new-birth mystery.

7

O Mother, let me be a docile child in Thy courtyard....  
Cleansing me of clay and caprice,  
lift me up on Thy glorious lap.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

## A FLAME

I WAS going through the wood. It was dark and deep. There was no sign of light all around. Yet I was moving towards a light. The light was neither dim nor bright; in a sense inexpressible. I was going. My steps were neither hasty nor slothful. Forward and forward my body was moving. Nowhere but towards that light through the wood which was lovely, dark and deep. It was all a sensation of the surroundings, a vague but deep feeling perhaps, for my sight was neither on this nor on that, I was not looking at anything but moving only towards that light. The mind tried to form some images, it tried to brood over memories and stories but no definite formation was possible. It was figures of the bygone days, some forgotten faces that passed quickly as on a cinema screen, quick remembrance of a pining for what was not to be. A sweet but painful thing that makes the blood flow quickly. Some distant associations came together to form stories but again scattered for nothing could stand on that screen and the mind was again seen silent, at repose. I was moving through the wood alone, all alone. No human face could stand, no sorrow, no happiness for long. There was neither time, nor relations but only a connection, an interminable attachment to that vague light towards which I was moving forward and forward.

After all human faces vanished there appeared animals. Tiger, Elephant, Bear and beasts even worse. There were some roars, some attempts to jump and soar; some efforts to scratch and bite but all their might were futile though full of evil. They moved and jumped all around me as if shadows. None could touch or scratch. I was fearless, alone.

I was moving neither quickly nor slowly but steadily. Gradually the steps were faltering. I was walking and yet not walking. I was being lost, merged deeper and deeper into... After a while I saw myself before the bars of an open window. I was trying to enter into the room in the middle of which that vague light was now burning. The room was tiny, quite sufficient to hold the light which was a whitish flame burning with a steady head, unflickering. No more vagueness. I saw myself as if in a mirror, trying to enter into the room like a caterpillar that pushes its head against a closed window-glass uselessly. I was observing myself. This went on for sometime. And then suddenly that happened like a sudden transformation without a definite knowledge as to exactly when and how it happened. Yet it happened. The vague distant light was no more. It was a light at the centre of a small room within me burning and then that happened. This I was no more. It was all flame, only flame burning with its head up and steady, unflickering. No air anywhere. I was witnessing my own dissolution into the fire. All was fire. A flame burning steadily with its head up unflickering and sharp.

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

# THE DEADLY SECRET

## A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY

FOR many years together the Creator did not bother about the world he had created. One day he chanced to look at it. With a great shock he found that the world was heavily crowded with human beings and only very little space was left on land.

He thought for a while and then plunged into action. He sent his messenger to fetch Kaalan. No one knew who this fellow was. But when he came the Creator said: "I appoint you as the Lord of Death and you will have a separate world of your own beneath the earth. Your duty is to kill whomsoever you find suitable, regardless of their age. I expect you to be very regular in your duty. See to it that there is always enough space left on earth for people to move about...."

"I am honoured, my Lord," said Kaalan, thereafter known as the Lord of Death. "But tell me on what grounds should I kill people? And how should I do it?"

The Creator smiled and said, "Listen! I am the Creator of life. You will be the destroyer. We need not assign any reason for our action. Don't ask me how to perform your duty. Have your own way of doing it."

Kaalan thanked the Creator and left for his abode. On his way he seriously thought about the art of performing his duty.

When he reached home, he recounted to his mother the words of the Creator.

He thought that his mother would jump in joy. But to his great disappointment she said, "What a wretched job the Creator has assigned to you, my son! What do you think the public opinion will be when you kill people? Certainly they will speak ill of you and curse you. Above all, no one knows what sort of abusive language they would use against me for having given birth to a merciless butcher. Remember, the curse of the good-hearted people is always very effective."

The Lord of Death was taken aback. But his newly given power saved him from losing his balance. "Mother," he responded, "every job has its own merits and demerits. One should not worry over what people say. One should do his duty. That is the best way to serve the Divine."

His mother stood listening. And the Lord of Death could see hot tears trickling out of her eyes.

"I understand your plight, mother dear," he continued. "But I'm sorry, I cannot do anything about it. I can't afford to disobey the orders of the Creator."

His mother wiped the rolling tears on her cheeks with the hem of her sari and said: "Do not disobey Him, but if you can do your duty without getting your name involved in it, I'll be happy. See that no one finds fault with you and your work."

"Mother! My duty is to kill people. How can I do it without getting myself involved in it?"

"Aren't you yet aware of your powers, my son? Come nearer," so saying his

mother imparted a secret into his ears.

The Lord of Death prostrated himself before her and kissed her feet as a token of gratitude for her advice. Then he took leave of her and flew to the earth. On reaching there, his eyes fell on a crowd gathered near a temple, celebrating some religious festival.

The temple elephant admirably decorated with costly jewels stood at the entrance of the temple. The Lord of Death disembodied himself. Taking the form of a wasp he entered into the ear of the elephant. Once inside he started stinging its brain.

The elephant out of intolerable pain trumpeted loudly and ran amuck. People ran helter-skelter and, by the time the crowd melted, a few hundred people had died in the stampede.

The Lord of Death came out, resumed his invisible shape and went to another place. There he saw a bullock-cart making its way on a rugged mountain path. A family of men, women and children were travelling in it.

He flew to the cart and removed the linch-pin. Soon the moving wheel freed itself from the cart and rolled away. The cart with a violent jolt rolled down the slope of the mountain and not one survived to tell others of the mishap.

The Lord of Death moved to another place where he saw a couple sitting under a bushy tree. He took the shape of a serpent, bit the man and made his wife a widow.

He then walked into a nearby house, took the shape of a scorpion, crawled into the cradle and stung the sleeping baby.

When he came out he saw two brothers quarrelling. The Lord of Death entered into the body of one of them and fought with the other and killed him.

When death occurs, don't people ask the question, "How did he die?" And what is the answer given?

"...died in the stampede."

"...died in an accident."

"...died of snake-bite."

"...died of scorpion-sting."

"...died in a fight."

and so on and so forth. And who on earth ever finds fault with Kaalan, the invisible butcher responsible for killing people?

*Collected and rendered into English by P. RAJA*

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Agnimantramala** (Part - 1) by *Jagannath Sharma* (Vedālamkāra), published by Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry-605002. Price Rs. 30/-.

“I SEEK not science, not religion, not theosophy, but Veda—the truth about Brahman, not only about His essentiality, but about His manifestation, not a lamp on the way to the forest, but a light and a guide to joy and action in the world, the truth which is beyond opinion, the knowledge which all thought strives after. .... I believe that Veda to be the foundation of the Sanatana Dharma; I believe it to be the concealed divinity within Hinduism,—but a veil has to be drawn aside, a curtain has to be lifted. ... I believe the future of India and the world to depend on its discovery and on its application, not to the renunciation of life, but to life in the world among men.”

The importance of Veda in the life and philosophy of Sri Aurobindo is evident from the above quotation on the jacket of the book under review. Sri Aurobindo named his commentary on the Isha Upanishad—“The Life Divine”, and later wrote another series under the same name. So, according to Vedic terminology, it is a Brāhmaṇa, *i.e.* a revealed and revelatory commentary on Veda, and hence itself Veda. ‘Mantrabrāhmaṇayor Veda-nāmadheyam’, as the formula goes, Veda is the name given both to mantra and Brāhmaṇa. Sri Aurobindo speaks of mantra in *Savitri* and Brāhmaṇa in *The Life Divine*, *The Secret of the Veda*, etc.

Swami Pratyagātmananda Saraswati’s *Japa-Sutram* (*The Path to Sound*) and Srimat Anirvan’s *Veda-mimāṃsā* (*Vedic Interpretation*) are two other books containing revealed knowledge, and can be categorised as Brāhmaṇas, modern Brāhmaṇas written in the twentieth century. Veda or Supreme Knowledge being Sanatana, it is not time-place-bound or person-bound. It can appear, if it chooses, to any person at any place, at any time. For example, Tagore’s poetry, especially his songs, breathe Veda, and the poetry of many English mystic poets too. So it is not surprising that Veda has revealed itself to modern seers, as it did to the ancient ones. But what is surprising is that the academic world takes little note of the fact. The three above-mentioned books seem to have made no impact at all even on Indian scholars who are still groping with Western methods and ideas to reach the Effulgence that is Veda. The long-due radical change in attitude and approach is still lacking, and the gap between Veda and scholastic Vedic interpretation still remains, with a few exceptions here and there.

Shri Jagannath Sharma, a member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and an erudite Sanskrit scholar, has come forward to fill in this gap. He has taken upon himself the task of introducing Sri Aurobindo’s Vedic interpretation to the Sanskrit Academic world. His medium of communication is lucid Sanskrit—a bit too modern—which he handles with considerable ease and deftness.

After an introduction dealing with the plan of the book and the nature of the Vedic god Agni, the book begins with Sanskrit translations (with the original prin-



ted on the left side) of Sri Aurobindo's 1) Foreword to *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* and 2) 'Doctrine of the Mystics'. Then follows the author's real contribution to Vedic exegesis. He translates into Sanskrit the English translation by Sri Aurobindo of fifteen Agni-hymns, gives a Sanskrit commentary and adds copious grammatical notes explaining the formation of the original Vedic words. These fifteen hymns form the nucleus of his work, followed by a much larger appendix, containing 1) Sanskrit translations of two chapters from *The Secret of the Veda* and four essays of Sri Aurobindo on Veda in Bengali, 2) translation and explanation of the mantras quoted or referred to by Sri Aurobindo in his Foreword—a valuable feature of the book—and 3) explanation of hymns and mantras of the author's own selection.

Considering that Shri Sharma has dealt with only 15 out of 174 Agni-hymns translated by Sri Aurobindo, and the rest of the mantras are addressed mostly to deities other than Agni, *viz.* Mitra, Varuṇa, Uṣas, Indra, Prajāpati, etc. the name Agni-mantra-mālā is a bit misleading. A name like Veda-mantra-mālā or Sri Aurobindo-Veda-Vyākhyā-Pravesa would have been more suitable for the material presented.

The translator's task is hard indeed. He has both to re-present the original exactly, and to make it intelligible and easily digestible to the reader. And the task is doubly hard, when one has to handle a difficult subject like the present one. Granting all this, one wishes the translations of the essays to have sounded more Vedic.

Vedic terminology is unintelligible to the modern reader, but once it is made intelligible, it will have a mantric effect on the reader, having the precision of technical scientific terms and a direct living link with tradition. It would have entailed greater labour for the translator, but to greater benefit of the serious reader, if 1) the exact Vedic equivalents had been given within brackets beside the more obliging Sanskrit counterparts, and 2) familiar Vedic words had been used instead of classical ones, wherever possible.

For example, 1) 'ocean of light and infinity' has been translated as आनन्त्यस्य प्रकाशस्य च समुद्रः (p. 61). The Vedic phrase महो अर्णः could be bracketed. The caption of the essay 'Doctrine of the Mystics' has been translated as रहस्यविदां सिद्धान्तः. The Vedic equivalent निष्ठा वचंसि could have been supplied in brackets. In fact, the translator has missed an opportunity to correlate the English phrases coined by Sri Aurobindo to their Vedic originals as Srimat Anirvan has done in his Bengali translation of *The Life Divine*. He does occasionally use a Vedic phrase like सानोः सानुर् आरोढव्यः (p.61), but one wishes these were more numerous and formed the very warp and weft of the translation. 2) In the same para, the word पोत meaning ship is used. It is familiar, but not Vedic. The word नौ which is both familiar and Vedic has a better claim here. Similarly, between ऋजू and सरल (meaning straight) the former is preferable.

Another dilemma for the translator is whether to make it literal or literary. Sri Aurobindo prefers 'literary translation, preserving a fidelity to the meaning, the sense of the words and the structure of the thought' (p.56). He also points out that

‘The turn of phrases and syntax of English and Vedic Sanskrit are poles asunder; to achieve some sense of style and natural writing one has constantly to turn the concentrated speech of the Veda into a looser, more diluted English form’ (*ibid*). This is a pointer to one who intends to translate his Vedic English into simple and idiomatic Sanskrit. So whether passages like ‘In the brief limits of this foreword these slight indications must suffice; they are meant only to give the reader an initial insight into the esoteric method of the interpretation of the Veda’ (p.48) should be translated, as Shri Sharma has done, as अस्याः प्रस्तावनायाः लघुसीमानु इमे संक्षिप्तनिर्देशा एव पर्याप्ताः । वेदस्य गुह्यार्थपद्धतौ प्रवेशार्थं पाठकाय प्रारम्भिकान्तर्दृष्टिप्रदानमेवैषां प्रयोजनम्, or as ह्रस्वेयं प्रस्तावना दिङ् मात्रमेव निर्देशितुमलं नाधिकं, स च निर्देशो वेदस्य अध्यात्मव्याख्यायां वाचकस्य धीप्रचोदनपरा is for the reader to judge.

With his sound knowledge of Pānini, Sharmaji has handled the grammatical part of his work very ably, though there is still room for suggestions. E.g. परिष्टि (p. 135, RV 1.65.2), if derived from स्ति (to go stealthily), instead of इष् (to go) can explain the short ‘i’, and suit the Vedic context better. Instead of merely ‘encompassing’, it would then mean ‘silently encompassing’. ‘Agni the Vast Silence encircling the earth as Sky’ is a deeper Vedic imagery, having a parallel in the Baul song—

बलो बलो नीरव गुरु सांइ,  
कोन् साधने बाहिर होले ब्रह्मकमरल पाइ—  
चले चन्द्रवारा नित्यधारा राष्ट्र कोथाओ नाई ॥

Tell me, O Lord, O silent Guru,  
How to reach the myriad-petalled Cosmos—  
The eternal stream flowing moons and stars  
Noiseless, soundless, silent.

We earnestly hope, Shri Sharma will carry on with his commendable work on the revival of the Veda.

GAURI DHARMAPAL