

# MOTHER INDIA

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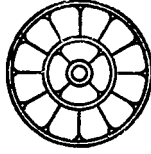
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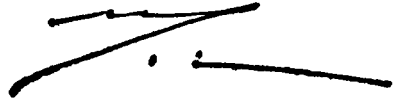


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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

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# **SRI AUROBINDO'S SADHANA, AND THE SADHAKS OF HIS ASHRAM**

## **A MANIFESTO BY THE MOTHER**

*November 24 each year marks not only the anniversary of what is known in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram as the Day of Siddhi or Victory but also the very establishment of the Ashram. For, on this occasion in 1926 Sri Aurobindo put the Mother in the forefront to take charge of the sadhaks and to organise the common spiritual life and work around the two Gurus. The following statement of the Mother can serve very well as a sharp summary view of the goal set up by Sri Aurobindo and of the institution of Integral Yoga she was asked to develop.*

THE usual sadhanas have for aim the union with the Supreme Consciousness (Sat-chit-ananda). And those who reach there are satisfied with their own liberation and leave the world to its unhappy plight. On the contrary, Sri Aurobindo's sadhana starts where the others end. Once the union with the Supreme is realised one must bring down that realisation to the exterior world and change the conditions of life upon the earth until a total transformation is accomplished.

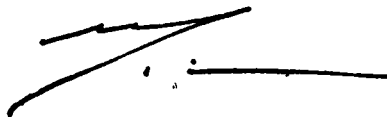
In accordance with this aim, the sadhaks of the integral yoga do not retire from the world to lead a life of contemplation and meditation. Each one must devote at least one third of his time to a useful work. All activities are represented in the Ashram and each one chooses the work most congenial to his nature, but must do it in a spirit of service and unselfishness, keeping always in view the aim of integral transformation.

To make this purpose possible, the Ashram is organised so that all its inmates find their reasonable needs satisfied and have not to worry about their subsistence.

The rules are very few so that each one can enjoy the freedom needed for his development, but a few things are strictly forbidden: they are (1) politics, (2) smoking, (3) alcoholic drink and (4) sex enjoyment.

Great care is taken for the maintenance of good health and the welfare and normal growth of the body of all, small and big, young and old.

24 September 1953



## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NOVEMBER 24, 1926 AND SRI KRISHNA AS AVATAR

FROM NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

August 29, 1935

*Today I shall request you to "stand and deliver" on a different subject. What is exactly the significance of the 24th of November? Different people have different ideas about it. Some say that the Avatar of the Supermind descended in you.*

RUBBISH! Whose imagination was that?

*Others say that you were through and through overmentalised.*

Well, it is not quite the truth, but nearer to the mark.

*I myself understood that on that day you achieved the Supermind.*

There was never any mention of that from our side.

*If you did not achieve the Supermind at that time, how was it possible for you to talk about it or know anything about it?*

Well, I am hanged. You can't know anything about a thing before you have "achieved" it?

Because I have seen it and am in contact with it, O logical baby that you are! But achieving it is another business.

*Didn't you say that some things were getting supramentalised in parts?*

Getting supramentalised is one thing and the achieved supramental is another.

*You have unnerved many people by the statement that you haven't achieved the Supermind.*

Good Lord! And what do these people think I meant when I was saying persistently that I was trying to get the supermind down into the material? If I had achieved it on Nov. 24, 1926, it would have been there already for the last nine years, isn't it so?

*Datta seems to have declared on that day that you had conquered sleep, food, disease and death. On what authority did she proclaim it then?*

I am not aware of this gorgeous proclamation. What was said was that the Divine (Krishna or the Divine Presence or whatever you like) had come down into the material. It was also proclaimed that I was retiring—obviously to work things out. If all that was achieved on the 24th November 1926, what on earth remained to work out, and if the Supramental was there, for what blazing purpose did I need to retire? Besides are these things achieved in a single day? If Datta said anything like that she must have been in a prophetic mood and seen the future in the present.

I have stood, but I have not delivered. I had time for standing a moment, but none for a delivery—however pregnant my mind or my overmind may be. But really what a logic! One must become thoroughly supramental first (achieve supermind) and then only one can begin to know something about supermind? Well! However if I have time one day, I will deliver—for evidently with such ideas about, an *éclaircissement* is highly advisable.

### September 15, 1935

*I seize the golden opportunity to ask you to deliver about the Supermind as you had promised. I hope you remember it; if not, the question was: What is exactly the significance of 24th November? Overmental, supramental realisation or what? You say that it was something like the descent of Krishna in the material. Some say that the descent took place in you. But you are not matter, are you? Not very clear.*

Why not? Why can't I be matter? or represent it at least? At least you will admit that I have got some matter in me and you will hardly deny that the matter in me is connected or even continuous (in spite of the quantum theory) with matter in general? Well, if Krishna or the Overmind or something equivalent descended into my matter with an inevitable extension into connected general Matter, what is the lack of clarity in the statement of a descent into the material? What does logic say?

*By your "trying to get the supermind down into the material", we understand that the ascent is done and now descent has to be made. Something like one going up to you at Darshan and getting all the bliss, joy, etc. and trying to bring it down and not lose it as soon as one steps out. And what is this again? You say you are in contact with it and then again that you are very near the tail of it! Sounds funny! Contact and no contact?*

But supposing I reached supermind in that way, then under such conditions would it be probable that I should come down again at the risk of losing it? Do you realise that I went upstairs and have not come down again? So it was better to be in contact with it until I had made the path clear between S and M. As for the tail,

can't you approach the tail of an animal without achieving the animal? I am in the physical, in matter—there is no doubt of it. If I threw a rope up from Matter, noose or lasso the Supermind and pull it down, the first part of Mr. S that will come near me is his tail dangling down as he descends, and that I can seize first and pull down the rest of him by tail-twists. As for being in contact with it, well I can be in contact with you by correspondence without actually touching you or taking hold even of your tail, can't I? So there is nothing funny about it—perfectly rational, coherent and clear.

*Another point: Have you written anywhere what would be the nature of the physical transformation?*

I have not, I carefully avoided that ticklish subject.

*What would it be like? Change of pigment? Mongolian features into Aryo-Greco? Bald head into luxuriant growth? Old men into gods of eternal youth?*

Why not seven tails with an eighth on the head—everybody different colours, blue, magenta, indigo, green, scarlet, etc.; hair luxuriant but vermilion and flying erect skywards; other details to match? Amen.

Now you can't say surely that all your points have not been cleared?

**February 10, 1935**

*...it is hoped that the sadhaks will be supramentalised. Since it is a state surpassing the Overmind, am I to deduce that the sadhaks would be greater than Krishna, who was the Avatar of the Overmind level? Logically it follows, but looking at others and at myself, I wonder if such a theory will be practically realised. Past history does not seem to prove it. In Krishna's time, no disciple of his was a greater spiritual figure than the preceding Avatar Rama, even though Krishna was an Avatar of a higher plane.*

What is all this obsession of greater or less? In our Yoga we do not strive after greatness. It is not a question of Sri Krishna's disciples, but of the earth-consciousness—Rama was a mental man, there is no touch of the overmind consciousness (direct) in anything he said or did, but what he did was done with the greatness of the Avatar. But there have since been men who did live in touch with the planes above mind—higher mind, illumined mind, Intuition. There is no question of asking whether they were "greater" than Rama: they might have been less "great", but they were able to live from a new plane of consciousness. And Krishna's opening the overmind certainly made it possible for the attempt at bringing Supermind to the earth to be made.



February 3, 1936

*...Krishna says that whoever takes the name of the Divine, or offers a flower, etc., comes to his feet. Then why is it said...that he is an overmind "God" ? Doesn't it mean that there is a greater godhead than Krishna?*

What was said was that Krishna as a manifestation on earth opened the possibility of the Overmind consciousness here to men and stood for that, as Rama was the incarnation in mental Man. If Krishna was *an* overmind "God", that means he was not an Incarnation, not the Divine, but somebody else who claimed to be the Divine—i.e. he was a god who somehow thought he was God.

## SANKARACHARYA ON THE GLORY OF SIVA

### A NOTE TO THE EDITOR

IN No. 32 of his famous *Sivamahimnastotra* Sankara has written lines which have a close affinity with the couplet quoted by you from Kabir. They run:

*Asitagirisamaṁ syāt kajjalam sindhupātre  
Surataruvaraśākhā lekhanī patramuroṣi,  
Likhati yadi gṛhītvā śāradaṁ sarvakālam  
Tadapi tava guṇānāmīṣa pāram na yāti.*

In my rough translation:

"If the blue mountain serves as the ink-material, the sea as the ink-pot, the best branch of the Parijata tree as the pen, the earth as the sheet of paper, and if Saraswati, with the help of all these, goes on writing eternally, your good qualities, O Lord, will ever remain immeasurable."

ROBI DAS

## RIGHT AND LEFT SIDES

*Q: Is there any significance in the Mother's standing on the right side and your standing on the left side in my experiences?*

### Sri Aurobindo's Answer

✓ YES, she is the executive power and must have the right arm free for action. The symbolism which puts her on the left side belongs to the ignorance. In the ignorance she is on the left side, not free in her action—all is a wrong action or half result....

20. 2. 1932

### Editor's Note

On Darshan days the Mother was always seated to the right of Sri Aurobindo. But in old Indian iconography the Goddess is always to the left of the God. Even in the famous Ardhanarishwara, the half-male half-female deity, it is the left side of the sculpture that is female. In the ordinary Indian life, too, the wife is said by all authorities to be invariably to the left of the husband—except at marriage when she is to his right. It is difficult to tell what idea lay at the back of this exception.

What we may conjecture in the case of Indian iconography is that the left-side position may have come about because the executive or manifesting power of the Supreme in world-action was not found in past spiritual experience to be fully effective, as if the Divine did not stress the possibility of a plenary fulfilment in the cosmic manifestation and made the drive of spirituality go mainly towards world-transcendence.

Could there be here a reflection of the fact that, as Sri Aurobindo has said, the highest Divine Dynamism which he has termed Supermind and described as holding the secret of an integral transformation of earth-life was never directly brought into play?

## THE LAW OF SACRIFICE IN PHILOSOPHIES AND RELIGIONS

*This piece was found among the papers of the Mother. Most of the introduction and part of the last section were published in Les Dieux, a book by Paul Richard in which the Mother may have collaborated. The annotated compilation which makes up the bulk of the piece has never before been published. Presumably the Mother contributed significantly to its research and writing.*

IN every order and in every state of the universal reality, it is the great regulating principles, the great organising forces and the descending scale of the great individualisations of the cosmic intelligence that embody and represent this Unthinkable Divinity; it is the innumerable hierarchies of beings, from the greatest to the smallest, that manifest it.

The ancient Chaldean tradition which has its equivalent in the initiatory philosophies of all peoples and whose distorted teaching may still be recognised in the religious popularisations of the West, assigned to each substantial septenary the original cosmic cause of the next septenary, and to each state of this septenary the formative power of the following state.

Thus, in the transcendent depths of the Etherisms, the dwelling-place of the Adonai,<sup>1</sup> the representative of the Causeless in the material worlds, came to be symbolically located. And the Adonai in turn was represented at the seven periods of formation by its seven essential activities, each one being the DBR,<sup>2</sup> the Greek Logos, the Word acting through the great formative powers and their hierarchies of free intelligences.

The last great formative power of the material universe was known as Abba, the father; these hierarchies of Intelligences were named the Elohim.

And of the Word itself it was said that after having presided over the work of formation, it had annulled itself in a supreme sacrifice in order to diffuse all its energies into the very substance of this universe destined to become progressively by its growing perfection the last unstained and seamless raiment of the Unthinkable which it must finally manifest.

Such is the origin of all the glosses relating to the sacrifice of the Great Holocaust, the immolated Logos, the universal Christ whom all the Christs of humanity, anointed for the work of sacrifice among their brothers, will represent until the end of time.

<sup>1</sup> Literally "My Lord". Name substituted by the Hebrews for YHWH (Yahweh or Jehovah), the name of God too sacred to be pronounced.

<sup>2</sup> Dabar or Dawar. The Hebrew Word.

## THE LAW OF SACRIFICE IN RELIGIONS

*One central idea:* The forces of the Logos diffused in matter to give it life, light and love, to liberate it from death—the principle of equilibrium at the core of all things.

*The realised symbol:* The terrestrial being who is most perfectly in relation with these divine forces, who most fully manifests them, subsequently becomes the living symbol of the Great Primordial Sacrifice.

From age to age one man re-enacts this sacrifice and diffuses his forces to hasten the balancing of man, the terrestrial harmonisation.

Of this divine man, legend has nearly always made a God.

*Crude interpretations of the symbol:* All the deformations arising from the ignorance and savagery of the masses, but from which the central idea and its human symbol can be recovered.

\*

Finally we shall conclude with the affirmation, contained in all philosophical and religious teachings, of this Knowledge of the inner divine Presence and the ethical consequences they have drawn from it.

\*

### 1. *The forces of the Logos diffused in matter*

*Philosophical teachings:*

*In China*

They existed in Tibet, India, Egypt, ancient Chaldea.

The Tao-Te-Ching of Lao Tze. The teachings of Confucius.

*Symbolic narratives:*

*India*

*Brahmanism. Rig-Veda:* "The gods (in order to create the world) sacrifice Purusha, the origin of man, contemporary with the Creator."

*Tandya Brahmana (Veda):* "The Lord of creatures (Prajapati) offers himself in sacrifice for the gods."

And from this universal sacrifice all creatures are formed:

"The Brahmins came forth from his mouth, the Rajanya from his arms, etc... the moon issued forth from his soul (Manas), the sun from his eye, from his head the sky, from his feet the earth, and in this way the world was formed."

*Vedantism:* The idea is expressed in the Bhagavad-gita: "Know, son of Pritha, that I am the inexhaustible seed of all living beings."

Also in the vision of Arjuna.

*Egypt*

Osiris is cut into pieces and scattered by his enemy Typhon, the serpent of evil, symbolising the division of matter; but he in turn is destroyed by Horus, the reincarnation of Osiris (the material universe in which Osiris is manifested).

We shall speak of Horus at greater length with regard to—

2. *Legends concerning the terrestrial representative of the holocaustal forces*, which nearly always refer to men who carried out this work of diffusion of forces in a very concrete way.

But it is not the true story of these men which is told. The main facts are basically identical in each case and are always the symbolic expression of initiatory knowledge which is always the same in all ages and among all peoples. Thus the legend of the individual becomes the perfect symbol of the universal reality.

*Birth* at the winter solstice, a date which corresponds to our 25th December—the sun being considered as the best symbol of the life-giving Word.

*The virgin mother*, symbol of the fertile substance receiving the forces of the formative Logos and giving birth to the only son: the manifested universe.

*Death* — which for the individual who really existed was rarely, if ever, a brutal physical death, but rather a dying to himself, a total giving of his forces to all—death in springtime, for it is the death that precedes the new life, the true life. The legend nearly always tells of the death as a crucifixion, for all over the earth and from all time, the cross has been the symbol of equilibrium and has often been known as “the tree of life”, the balanced order, the harmonic of the true life for the advent of which the holocaustal being sacrifices himself.

*Resurrection* is the symbol of the new birth, the birth into eternal life for the individual; for the whole it is the assurance of the victory that will be won, of the harmonious and synthetic unity that will be established among all the dispersed elements of the great divine body—the manifested universe. Often symbolised by limbs that are cut off and joined again.

\*

*China*: We read in the I Ching: “Ch’ien (the Holy Man, the Anointed) will combine within himself all the virtues of heaven and earth. By his justice the world will be re-established in the ways of rectitude. He will work and suffer much. He must cross the great torrent whose waves will enter into his soul, but he alone is capable of offering to the Lord a sacrifice worthy of him.”

\*

*Egypt:* We have seen that Horus, son of Osiris and Isis, is the conqueror of the serpent Typhon who had scattered the limbs of Osiris.

The Egyptian symbol is particularly complete, for the story of Horus is identical to that of Osiris; and as Horus is considered to be the reincarnation of Osiris, we see that Osiris symbolises the Word dispersed in matter, and Horus the true human individual, the incarnation of the divine Word, the terrestrial representative of the Great Universal Sacrifice.

Horus was called the Saviour. The anniversary of his birth was celebrated at the winter solstice. He was born of a virgin (Isis) who was known as the Messiah of Heaven, the Mother of God, the Immaculate Virgin (the same names as those given to the Virgin Mary).

Horus is represented standing with his arms outstretched, forming a cross against the sky, or else holding a square cross in his hand.

\*

*India:* "Krishna (according to the Vishnu Purana) is the Supreme Brahman himself, though it is a mystery that the Supreme can assume the form of man."

There are striking analogies between the legend of Krishna and that of Christ. The virginity of his mother Devaki, the signs announcing his birth, the flight to escape from the cruelty of his uncle Kansa (the Hindu Herod), the miracles he performs, etc.... As an exception to the general rule (the historic) Krishna was really killed by a huntsman's arrow while absorbed in meditation in the heart of the jungle.

Krishna was considered to be an incarnation of Vishnu.

The sacred Hindu Scriptures speak of another incarnation of Vishnu called Vithoba or Balaji.

He is always represented in the position of a crucified man, although he is not nailed to a cross, and he is known as "the man crucified in space".

\*

*Babylon:* Tammuz (later Adonis) was called the "Saviour". The name Adonis comes from the Phoenician Adon (Lord). He is described as "the only son" of the god Ea and the virgin Ishtar or Mylitta. His death and resurrection were celebrated in springtime.

\*

*Persia:* Mithra was born at the winter solstice. His death and resurrection were celebrated in springtime and announced with this sentence: "Take heart, sacred order of initiates, your god has awoken from death. His sorrows and sufferings will be your salvation."

Zoroaster was also considered as the Saviour of mankind. In the legend he is

the son of the sun or of a ray of Divine Reason, and of a virgin.

Under the name of Zeradusht, he was known to the Celts of Ireland and venerated among the Druids.

\*

*Phrygia* (Asia Minor): The god Atys was worshipped under the name of "only son" and "Saviour". He was represented bound to a tree with a lamb at his feet.

\*

*Mexico*: Their saviour Quetzalcoatl was known as having had a miraculous birth. The Lord of Existence appears to the virgin Chimalma and breathes upon her and by this breath she gives birth to Quetzalcoatl. He is crucified by those he came to save. In an old manuscript which tells his story, one can find great resemblances to the story of Christ.

\*

*Yucatan*: The Saviour Bacab was born of a virgin named Chiribirias.

\*

Prometheus, Bacchus, Dionysus (Zagreus). (Similar legends)

\*

3. *Crude legends* expressing the idea of the universal formation by the divine sacrifice.

*Chaldean legend*: "The god Bel-Marduk cut Amorca (the woman) in two and out of Amorca, Bel made the world and the things it contains.... Then Bel cut off his own head and out of its blood made man."

The whole legend expresses very crudely the idea that man, the animals and all living creatures are formed from the blood of the god. (Blood is taken as the symbol of that which gives life.)

\*

4. *Religious rites*, completely distorted, attempting to re-enact materially the divine sacrifice.

*Primitive or degenerate races*: barbarous ceremonies that consist in slaying the totem god, protector of the tribe.

\*

Dionysian festivals with their bloody sacrifices.

\*

All animal and human sacrifices.

\*

Philo of Byblos says in his work on the Jews: "According to an ancient custom, in crises of great danger, the governor of the city or the nation would give his beloved son to be killed for the sake of the whole people, as a ransom offered to the demons. And the children thus offered were slain with sacred rites."

### THE INNER DIVINE PRESENCE

The theologians of the past, better psychologists than our own, did not fail to teach that it is within oneself, in the inner temple of one's inmost life, that each one must seek his God.

For the unthinkable which we call God, since it lies at the inner as well as at the outer limit of both the infinitely small and the infinitely great, dwells not only outside us in the unknown depths, but also within us, in the depths of our inner universe. He is, beyond all that we know of ourselves, the unknown self, the true self, the self which each one must manifest.

It is in this sense that we should understand the ancient utterance: "Your God is; I am (for that is the name of the true self) and you shall recognise none other than he."

\*\*

"Not I," says St. Paul, "but Christ liveth in me."

\*

"The kingdom of God lies within you."

(Luke: chap. XVII, verse 21)

\*

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

(St. Paul: I Corinthians, chap. III, verse 16)

### MORAL CONSEQUENCES

Each one, in order to become conscious of his inner divinity, should live, at least inwardly, the life of the Christs. This life can be lived whatever the outer circumstances may be. He must die to himself to be born into the new life.

The sacrifice of personality, of egoism, of the artificial and impermanent outer self, to attain the true, permanent, inner self, to realise the true terrestrial and uni-



versal human solidarity, to re-create the harmonious synthesis, unity.

\*

“The Self is your God.” Did not all the guides of humanity teach That? But why should I cite Krishna, the Buddha, Lao Tze, Confucius, Zoroaster, Moses, Pythagoras, all those revered by men? How could the majesty of their names add to the authority of that word? By that they became great. That made them what they were. Without that they would not have been. But that was before they were.

That is eternally, because that is in accordance with the essence of the eternal Being.

---

## MOTHER !

### Jewel-Soul

MOTHER! In your golden casket  
Safely reposes my jewel-soul—  
A profound of Peace;  
An overflowing Light;  
An emanation of All-Love;  
An adventure of Bliss.

Now after ages I have come of age,  
Open your golden casket  
With the key of your Grace.  
Enrich me with the pearl of my Soul.  
Crown me with this gift from Your wealth.

### Flag of Victory

Mother! Unfurl your flag of victory,  
And open wide your kingdom doors.  
So that through their revealing Light  
Countless liberated souls may pass.  
Their splendid silent march  
Will overcome the agelong gloom,  
And on the breast of our fair mother earth  
Matchless godheads will bloom.

## A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON NOVEMBER 11, 1953

Mother is about to begin reading the first pages of *Quelques paroles, quelques prières*.

THE first texts were written in 1912. Many of you were not yet born. It was a small group of about twelve people who met once a week. A subject was given; an answer was to be prepared for the following week. Each one brought along his little work. Generally, I too used to prepare a short paper and, at the end, I read it out. That is what is given here—not all, only these two. These two first ones. Later, it was something else. The others appeared in *Words of Long Ago*.

There were four meetings. The subject for the first meeting was: What is the aim to be achieved, the work to be done, the means of achievement? And here is my answer:

*Mother reads the text of 7 May 1912: "The general aim to be achieved is the advent of a progressive universal harmony."*

This is the Supermind.

I did not know Sri Aurobindo at that time and he had not written anything yet.

*"...To become the perfect representatives on earth of the first manifestation of the Unthinkable in his three modes, his seven attributes and twelve qualities..."*

*What do you call the "three modes, seven attributes and twelve qualities"?*

I no longer remember. The three formed modes—love, light and life—which correspond to Sachchidananda. The seven attributes... I have a list somewhere. There is an old tradition which says that the world was created seven times, that is, the first six times it returned into the Creator. This is the idea of pralaya.<sup>1</sup> It is said that this happened six times and that we are now the seventh creation, and that is the last one. It is the one which will persist, and it is the "creation of Equilibrium." All these creations I have also noted down somewhere, it is written down. I no longer know their order. There are six creations, one after another, created in accordance with this special mode, found imperfect and withdrawn into the Origin, recreated and withdrawn into the Origin—six times thus. And it is a progressive order. When one knows that order, one understands the principle of each creation. Well, this tradition said that the principle of our latest creation, at present, is the principle of Equilibrium, and that this is the last. That means the world will not

<sup>1</sup> The end of a world preceding a new creation.

go back again into *pralaya*, and there will be a perpetual progress. And this is the creation of Equilibrium.

Consequently, now, there is no longer anything good or bad: there is what is in equilibrium and what is not in equilibrium. There is imbalance and balance. That's all. And what I have said there was based upon that.

The twelve qualities—that is something else still. That too is noted somewhere. In order that the world may continue, it must realise a perfect equilibrium of all its elements by means of these twelve qualities, all present there. And then it will be a world which, whilst progressing indefinitely, will constantly be in harmony and hence will not be open to destruction.

*“...To give to the world once again, under a new form adapted to the present state of its mentality, the eternal word. This will be the synthesis of all human knowledge....”*

*You speak here of “the eternal word”?*

I am using “word” in the sense of truth. There is an eternal truth, which is eternally true, but which finds expression in definite forms, and these definite forms are changing, fluctuating; they may become distorted; and to have the truth one must always go back to the source, which is... it may be called the eternal word, that is, the creative Word. It is a truth which is eternal, which manifests itself through all possible words and ideas. I use “word” in a literary sense—it is what is called elsewhere the creative Word. It is the origin of all speech and all thought.

*I did not understand “the aim to be achieved”.*

The aim to be achieved? What have I said? It is the harmonisation of the earth, I think, isn't it?

*“In regard to the earth, the means of achieving this aim is the realisation of human unity by the awakening in all and the manifestation by all of the inner Divinity who is one.*

*In other words: to create unity by establishing the kingdom of God which is in all.*

*Hence, the most useful work to be done is:*

*1) For everyone individually the becoming aware in oneself of the divine Presence and one's indentification with it.”*

Yes, you do not understand? I have said it fifty thousand times already, haven't I? ...Ah, you understand now? (*laughter*)

*"2) The individualisation of states of being which have so far never been conscious in man and, consequently, the putting the earth into touch with one or several sources of universal force which are yet sealed to it."*

"The individualisation of states of being which have so far never been conscious in man", that is to say, there are superposed states of consciousness, and there are new regions which have never yet been manifested on earth, and which Sri Aurobindo called supramental. It is that, this was the same idea. That is, one must go into the depths or the heights of creation which have never been manifested upon earth, and become conscious of that, and manifest it on earth. Sri Aurobindo called it the Supermind, I simply say these are states of being which were never yet conscious in man (that is, that man has so far never been aware of them). One must get identified with them, then bring them into the outer consciousness, and manifest them in action. And then, I add, (exactly what I foresaw—I did not know that Sri Aurobindo would do it, but still I foresaw that this had to be done):

*"3) To speak to the world, under a new form adapted to the present state of its mentality, the eternal word."*

That is, the supreme Truth, Harmony. It was the whole programme of what Sri Aurobindo has done, and the method of doing the work on earth, and I had foreseen this in 1912. I met Sri Aurobindo for the first time in 1914, that is, two years later, and I had already made the whole programme.

*"4) Collectively, to found the ideal society in a place suited to the flowering of the new race, that of 'the Sons of God.'"*

*Where did you decide to found the Ashram?*

Where did I decide to do it?... I never decided anything at all! I had simply said that it had to be done. I did not have the least idea, except that I had a great desire to come to India. But still, I did not even know if it corresponded to something. I had decided nothing at all. Simply, I had seen that state, what had to be done.

Then the children come back to the conversation of 4 August 1929:

*"The ordinary social notions distinguish between two classes of men,—the generous, the avaricious. The avaricious man is despised and blamed, while the generous man is considered unselfish and useful to society and praised for his virtue. But to the spiritual vision, they both stand on the same level; the generosity of the one, the avarice*

*of the other are deformations of a higher truth, a greater divine power. There is a power, a divine movement that spreads, diffuses, throws out freely forces and things and whatever else it possesses on all the levels of nature from the most material to the most spiritual plane. Behind the generous man and his generosity is a soul-type that expresses this movement; he is a power for diffusion, for wide distribution. There is another power, another divine movement that collects and amasses; it gathers and accumulates forces and things and all possible possessions, whether of the lower or of the higher planes. The man you tax with avarice was meant to be an instrument of this movement. Both are important, both needed in the entire plan; the movement that stores up and concentrates is no less needed than the movement that spreads and diffuses..."*

*Questions and Answers 1929 (4 August)*

*What do you mean by "soul-type"?*

What is the sentence?... (*Mother looks at the text*) Ah! it is the spirit of the type; just as we said that behind each animal type there was a spirit of the type. This is what I call soul-type. It is a soul-type which may be progressive, but which is indestructible.

The soul-type corresponds, individually or in groups, to the *dharma* of things. Sometimes it is also called the truth of things, of each thing.

*Is generosity a deformation of the truth?*

Yes, all human qualities are deformations of a truth which is behind them. All that you call either qualities or defects are always a deformation of something which is behind, and which is neither this nor that but something else. But I say, moreover, what truth is found behind generosity: it is the movement of the spreading forces. But in order that these forces may spread, they must first become concentrated. So there is a sort of movement of pulsation: the forces are concentrated, then they spread, and then they are again concentrated and again spread....But if you always want to spread out without ever concentrating, after a certain time you have nothing left to spread. For the forces—all forces—it is the same thing. I have written, besides, (or rather I shall write some time) that money is a force, it is nothing but that. And that is why nobody has the right to own it personally, for it is only a force, just like all other forces of Nature and the universe. If you take light as a force, it would never occur to anyone to say: "I possess the light", and to want to shut it up in his room and not give it to others! Well, with money people are so stupefied as to imagine that it is something they can possess and keep, as though it belonged to them, and make something personal of it. It is exactly the same thing. I am not speaking of money as paper naturally, because that would be just like the light you put in a lamp, you may own the lamp, and so you say: "It is my light." Money, your notes,

your pieces of silver, that is *your* money. But that is not money. This is a force which is behind all that, the power of exchange which is money. That does not belong to anybody. It belongs to everyone. It is something which is alive only if it circulates. If you want to heap it up, it decays. It is as though you wanted to enclose water in a vase and keep it always; after some time your water would be absolutely putrefied. With money it is the same thing. And people have not yet understood that. Later on I shall write about it.

That won't last always.

*When there is avarice for material things...*

Avarice for *all* things—there is an avarice for spiritual things also. There are misers who want to keep all the forces for themselves and never give them. But I have just told you the truth about it: one must have the power to accumulate in order to have the power of spreading. If you have only one of the two, that causes an imbalance. And it is then that it becomes avarice or wastage. One must have both in a balanced, rhythmic movement—the equilibrium we just spoke about. For it would be quite easy to prove that in fact at present equilibrium is the true thing: one must be neither here nor there, that is what Buddha called “the middle path”. The middle path is the path of equilibrium. And so one must know how to manage as when rope-walking with a stick to keep one's balance.

But the most generous man in the world could give nothing if he had nothing to begin with. Hence, if it is not he who has accumulated, it is someone else who has accumulated for him. But if he has nothing in his pocket, he cannot distribute anything! That is evident. And the power of accumulation is as important as the power of distribution. It is only when these two things become egoistic that they are deformed, altogether deformed, and lose all their value.

*Voilà*, my children.

*(Questions and Answers 1953, pp. 346-358)*

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

*(Continued from the issue of October 1984)*

*(These talks are from the notebooks of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others, after the accident to his right leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were: Dr. Manilal, Dr. Becharlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshankar. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.)*

September 7, 1940

*(I do not remember how the talk started on Buddhism.)*

SRI AUROBINDO: Radhakrishnan finds contradictory statements in Buddhism about the Self. In one place, he says, it doesn't recognise the Self and in another it says the Self is the Lord of nature.

P: Yes, that is a famous quotation. But so long we thought that Buddhism doesn't recognise the Self.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, perhaps it means the phenomenal Self.

S: Krishna Prem gives a different interpretation to Buddhism. He says Nirvana is only a half-way house.

SRI AUROBINDO: That agrees with me.

S: In one of his letters I saw that he didn't agree with you about some idea of Buddhism. I don't remember exactly what.

SRI AUROBINDO: What I might have said or now say about Buddhism is according to the current idea about Buddhism. Krishna Prem puts his own interpretation.

N: He follows the Mahayana School.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mahayana is nearer to the Advaita School.

S: Even Mahayana teachings may be a modern interpretation. Nobody knows what Buddha said.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. My impression was that even Mahayana had no clear idea about the ultimate concepts.

September 8, 1940

N: Charu Dutt is impressed by one fact that here are no demigods, while in Shantiniketan you find at every corner such demigods popping up their heads. Anilbaran, Nolini, etc. are inclined to keep themselves more behind and aloof than in front.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see. Anilbaran, Nolini are not likely to interfere with any-

body. Suren and Ramachandra may.

C: Here the condition or atmosphere is quite different. There is no scope for anybody's domination, even if they wanted it. Isn't that correct?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the desire to dominate is in everybody; but there is no field here because of the Mother.

C: Yes, that is what I meant.

*(Anilbaran couldn't understand one quotation made from the Rig Veda in The Life Divine.<sup>1</sup>)*

SRI AUROBINDO: What is the difficulty? It is very simple.

P: He is asking because he will have to explain it to his class. He wants to know what is meant by "Names" there and how can "might after might" be worn as a robe. *(Loud laughter)*

SRI AUROBINDO: What has become of his head? It is a metaphor and why can't it be used as a metaphor? He can tell his students that these are mystic expressions and they will have to be mystics to understand them.

P: Then he will have an easy escape.

SRI AUROBINDO *(taking up the passage)*: "Names" means ideas, significances; and as for "might after might", the Divine Force is of various kinds, each of which one takes up just as wearing a robe; all very simple. Ask him to use his mystic mind instead of the professorial one.

### *Evening*

P: It seems Bonvain is going to declare for De Gaulle.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. The British government has put pressure on him. He must either declare for him or the British government will take possession of Pondicherry.

*(P then reported that there had been a meeting of the Council in which David and others had spoken about it: some, especially Baron and the Bank manager, favouring the idea, some opposing it.)*

SRI AUROBINDO: Baron's voice seemed to have been drowned in a murmur of disapproval.

S: But why should there be any difficulty? The Governor has been advised by Pétain: "Marchez avec les voisins."

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but this is not "avec" but "vers les voisins"; in excess of

<sup>1</sup> "By the Names of the Lord and hers they shaped and measured the force of the Mother of Light; wearing might after might of that Force as a robe the lords of Maya shaped out Form in this Being.

The Masters of Maya shaped all by His Maya; the Fathers who have divine vision set Him within as a child that is to be born."



what was asked. But this is the first time the British government has given such an ultimatum. They are feeling strong perhaps after their alliance with America in the matter of a Naval Base.

September 9, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO (*to P*): Any more news about French India joining De Gaulle.

P: It seems the Governor has sent the resolution to the Viceroy.

SRI AUROBINDO: I understand they have made one condition with the India government that if war breaks out in Indo-China, they may be allowed to send troops there, and the India government has consented.

P: But how is it possible? Indo-China is under the Pétain government.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. So they may get shot by them. And it will be bad for us....

P: The scientists say that the light of a star passing close to the sun is deflected towards the sun. But the light curves in this way because of the curvature of space.

SRI AUROBINDO: How does space get a curvature and manage to do all these pranks?

P: Mathematically a curved space has been demonstrated.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mathematics is like reason. As by reason you can logicise anything, so by mathematics you can prove anything.

P: But one has no means to verify them. And the difficulty is that if anybody questions, they at once reply you must know mathematics. All these people get some idea first and try to fit the idea into their work.

SRI AUROBINDO: What Arjava said seems to be true, that according to the way you approach Nature, Nature will answer you.

P: And they say that mathematics is most impersonal.

SRI AUROBINDO: Nonsense! So they used to say about Science. Algebra and geometry are like designs. They offer no theory on the conception of the world, but only a structure.

September 10, 1940

(*Yesterday again there was a rumour that the Governor was not going to declare for De Gaulle.*)

P: It has come in *The Hindu* like that "The Governor announces". So there can't be any truth in that rumour.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is true he has declared for De Gaulle, and also that there won't be any mobilisation for Indo-China if a fight breaks out there. The two things we wanted have happened: first that he should reject the Pétain government and this Indo-China affair. But why are these people including Dr. André in favour of sending troops to Indo-China?

N: Perhaps because Dr. André has his brother there.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh, his brother is there?

P: Yes, and many other relatives. Many people here have their relations there.

SRI AUROBINDO: But instead of sending troops, André should bring his relatives back. (*Laughter*)

N: M. N. Roy has been expelled from the Congress.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. I don't understand the reason.

N: Because he makes freedom dependent on British support.

SRI AUROBINDO: But he is talking of world freedom and it is quite true that unless Nazism is destroyed, there won't be any freedom anywhere.

P: And if Hitler wins, India's freedom has no chance.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not in a century.

N: Roy has also said that we must give unconditional support to gain the sympathy of the British public.

SRI AUROBINDO: He is right. What sympathy the British have at present will cool down if India persists in this attitude. They will say, "We have promised them Dominion Status after the war, what more do they want?" They can't understand fine distinctions.

September 11, 1940

P: Udar has got an unexpurgated edition of *Mein Kampf*. If you want to see—

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't want to waste my time on it.

P: Charu Dutt says that the modern poets are trying to follow Pope and Dryden in their play with words, their metrical devices, etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: How? Pope and Dryden are very clear in what they say, while you can't make out anything of the modernists. As regards metre, Pope and Dryden are formalists and limited. One may say they don't play with words. The modernists are unintelligible and their irregularities are eccentric. The only similarity they have is in their intellectuality and the ingenuity of their mind.

*(Sahana wrote an aphorism where darkness means unwillingness to receive the Light. Dilip didn't agree.)*

SRI AUROBINDO: It is partly true. In one state it may be true, but in the state of inconscience, there is a temporary obstruction which produces an incapacity to receive even if one has the will. You can say it is also an unwillingness, but of nature, not a personal unwillingness. In other cases, the mind may be unwilling or the mind willing, the vital may not agree. In these cases you can say that one is unwilling.

*(Then there was a talk about Kalidasa's Raghuvamsha and Kumarasambhava. It seems X has found Raghuvamsha full of problems, questions of morality and immorality.)*

SRI AUROBINDO (to P): Have you been struck by a great number of problems

in *Raghuvamsha*? Kalidasa being concerned with morality and immorality?

P (*laughing*): I thought Kalidasa was the last person to be concerned with that. He was more concerned with beauty, *i.e.* the aesthetic aspect. No ethical question troubled him.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. If it was feeling, he was concerned with the beauty of the feeling; if idea, with the beauty of the idea.

P: Some people—Bankim was one I think,— are also trying to make out that *Kumarasambhava* is earlier than *Raghuvamsha*.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't think so. *Raghuvamsha* is brilliant while *Kumara-sambhava* is more mature, has more power and energy.

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

*(Continued from the issue of October 1984)*

## The Mother's Message

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



(40)

It was 1st September 1957. A card bearing a photograph of the idols of Radha and Krishna arrived from the Mother. The snap had been taken by Pranab on the 1st December 1956 at the exhibition of "The Dolls and Idols".

The Mother had written on the card:

“To my dear little child Huta  
With my sweetest love.”

She also sent me another beautiful card showing an embroidered bird perched on a branch. She wished me:

“To my dear little child  
Bonne fête!”

The Mother received me in the Meditation Hall upstairs. She greeted me with a broad smile and gave me a big bouquet of various flowers full of fragrance and an envelope. She asked me to open it. I found in it the picture of a very charming peacock. Her words were:

“To my dear little child Huta for her physical birthday.  
With all my love, strength and sweet compassion.”

She had started giving me a special card on my physical birthday. Now I had two birthdays, one spiritual on 1st November and the other physical.

The meaning of the peacock has been given by Sri Aurobindo:

“Bird of Victory.”

The Mother also presented to me a lovely box of six bottles of famous perfumes from La Galion Paris. I like perfumes as did the Mother.

After a short meditation she kissed my forehead and bade me “Au revoir.”

As always she sent me Prasad. But that day it was special—sweetmeats and other extra delicacies.

I did not take my nap, but painted the bouquet she had given me in the morning.

I saw the Mother in the Prosperity Room in the afternoon. She gave flowers and blessings to all.

I wore one of the perfumes when I went to her in the evening. She viewed my painting and exclaimed:

“I like it. I am very happy indeed.”

The importance of birthdays is clearly stated by Sri Aurobindo in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 25, p. 282:

“It is not a question of a physical birthday or of the body—it is taken as an occasion for opening a new year of life with a growing new birth within. That is

the meaning in which the Mother takes the birthday.”

Once again in the same volume he has said:

“About the birthdays. There is a rhythm (one among many) in the play of the world-forces which is connected with the sun and planets. That makes the birthday a day of possible renewal when the being is likely to be more plastic. It is for this reason the Mother sees people on their birthdays.”

\*

Days passed.

On the morning of the 5th I met the Mother in her apartment without an appointment and told her that I had felt like seeing her and so I had come. She smiled cheerfully and said:

“Oh, you have come to see me.”

Then she handed two flowers—Hibiscuses, signifying “Grace”—and remarked:

“Tiens, mon petit, whether you paint these flowers or not, I am giving them to you. Keep always the Divine Grace in your heart”.

With affection she wrapped me in her warm embrace.

I painted the flowers. She admired the picture. The feeling of her room at the Playground gave me security and solace which I needed unceasingly. When she gave me the flower—*Ravenia Spectabili*—meaning “Happy Heart”, my innermost heart received its essence. Unhappily, outwardly I still had to face and feel despair and despondency.

\*

During that period Laljibhai was here for a short time. Now he took all his meals at “Huta House”. I missed him in Golconde, where I was still residing.

I had been painting various objects sent by the Mother. This constant practice gave me confidence to use colours freely and boldly. But I could never dare to claim myself to be an efficient artist.

Life seemed stereotyped. Nothing new had been established in my consciousness. A peculiar kind of fear and restlessness haunted me terribly. The rebellious and unfavourable elements opened the gate to adverse forces. I was attacked by them once more.

The night of 8th September, when I awoke from an uneasy sleep, it was some seconds before memory returned, bringing with it all the horror of sickness, qualm

and anxiety, and a feeling of scare and suspense in the pit of my stomach.

The next day I returned to the Mother the card she had sent me; the subtle suggestion had come to my mind that merely written things would not help me get out of the commotion and the conflict.

“And what was the use of going to the Mother?” I thought.

The morning that followed she sent me a card along with a note:

“This card has been returned to me by the devil yesterday—but today I am sending it back to your *soul*.”

With these luminous words she dispersed the dark clouds of unconsciousness. I met her in the evening. We meditated in utter silence.

I went to Golconde. Exhaustion flooded over me and I felt ridiculously close to tears as I looked around my room, which seemed like a cell.

On the 11th I received from the Mother a card illustrating *Gladiolus* in various colours. On top of the card she had written: “Receptivity.” She had also added on the same card:

“To my dear little child Huta,  
With all my love, strength and sweet compassion.”

I had lost all courage to go any further in this life. I knew nothing except how to draw and paint a few things that too were not up to the standard. However, just to pass the time I drew a white rose on a tinted paper. After seeing the picture, the Mother sketched, near the rose which I had done, a beautiful angel holding the rose tenderly. She had revealed with a few strokes a living divinity.

She and I had a long meditation. It was Sunday.

The succeeding morning a Chinese lid which was ancient and precious came from the Mother. Before painting it I scrutinised it with keen eyes and then completed the work. She was very pleased when she saw it and remarked:

“Oh! it is excellent!”

\*

Gradually my health started failing. I was weary in both mind and body. I wanted to go to Africa with Laljibhai. I expressed my wish to the Mother. She replied:

“You wrote that you want to go to Africa with Laljibhai and you add: ‘kindly allow me to go to Africa with Laljibhai.’ So I answer: ‘I allow you to go.’

With my love and blessings.”

My consciousness became numb. I could not think rightly. I was confused. The Mother saw me in her room at the Playground. I could not explain anything. I was in sheer turmoil. My devotion and love for her were receding rapidly.

When I reached my room I flung myself down on my bed and allowed the tears that had threatened all day to overwhelm me.

I said nothing to Laljibhai. For I could not possibly make him understand my inner and outer state. I restrained myself from confiding in him lest he should misconstrue me.

\*

A few days elapsed. I continued the study of drawing on tinted papers. I sketched waterlilies. The Mother saw them and said:

“It is a vital inspiration.”

Indeed, the Mother could feel instantly the source of inspiration when looking at pictures.

On the 19th I received from her a card depicting the flowers *Sansevieria*. Underneath she had inscribed:

“The joy of spiritual purity.”

She had also continued on the same card:

“With all my love, strength and sweet compassion *always*.

“Keep faith and confidence—all will be all right.”

Well, that was all to the good. I had to try and try endlessly to trust her fully.

\*

One day Laljibhai sent me some fruits. I was inspired to paint them. As I had been working in the Mother's Stores, I took from there a painted jug. I went to the Mother's apartment in the morning, carrying all the objects. She arranged their composition.

She was glad to see the painting when I took it to her in the evening. Then suddenly I had a throbbing sensation in my head. While holding it I complained to her of a headache. She leaned forward from her couch, put her hands on my head, and said with concern:

“Child, you must know how to observe your thoughts—how to prevent wrong thoughts and master your mind. Afterwards, if you want to bring silence into



your mind, you can do so; finally you will be on the heights.”

The more I attempted to follow her advice the more I got entangled in the network of rigid and obstinate elements which prevented me from entering into the new consciousness. It was very difficult to apprehend the mischievous and malicious forces which upset my whole being. The whole function was loathsome and trying.

I wrote to the Mother about my weariness and uneasiness.

She sent me a card displaying a branch of yellow flowers and an attractive butterfly fluttering towards the flowers. The words on the card were:

“The fatigue comes from the resistance and the worry, do not worry, let yourself go, and the fatigue will go also.

With my love, strength and sweetest compassion always.”

Days dragged on. I went on brooding over my small self and its conveniences and inconveniences. My ego never budged from its reign. I was awfully involved in my own interests. I left aside my soul’s aspiration and fought against my true being, shutting myself to the Mother’s Force and Grace. It was extremely hard to get out of self-centredness.

On 29th September the Mother saw me in the evening. I sat on the carpet near her feet. For a moment or two I closed my eyes from tiredness, and against the sense of problems and conflicts all around me. When I opened my eyes, she gazed straight down into them to review the state of my mind. Then she went into a trance for a few seconds. After that she spoke:

“In Buddhism there is one thing much stressed, that people should never waste their time on their own interests. They should always think of their progress and realisation.

“If people think constantly about their small selves throughout their lives, their next birth will be more difficult and painful for getting out of their ego and their defects.

“In their present life itself they must try to transform themselves and develop their consciousness to reach the Supreme Goal.”

Her words rang true to my innermost heart. But I was frightened, I was weak and lacked confidence to go to the other side of the Truth, leaving my ancient self behind.

In connection with the Mother’s reference to Buddhism I like immensely these passages from the book *Reincarnation: The Phoenix Fire Mystery* compiled and edited by Joseph Head & S. L. Cranston, pp. 174-75:

“Buddha once handled the problem of procrastination in a rather startling

fashion. It is told that upon meeting King Pasenadi of Kosali, the Buddha asked him this seemingly casual question: 'What have you been doing recently?' The King replied: 'Lord, I am afraid I have been very busy lately. My days have been filled with all kinds of things—none of them very serious or actually important, but I have been busy.' The Buddha, however, seeing that 'busyness' tends to serve as an excuse for inaction in important matters, told King Pasenadi the story of the moving mountain.

'Supposing,' said the Buddha, 'that an overwhelming catastrophe were to strike the country, perhaps a violent break-up of the earth's crust, causing mighty earthquakes and shifting the dominant mountain range slowly yet inevitably down to the sea, covering the plains and bringing death and destruction to all in its path. Faced with this total, terrible and inescapable disaster, what would you do?'

The King's reply was that he would accept the inevitable, have faith, make amends where he could for his past misdeeds and embrace death with a good heart while living righteously in the time he had left.

'And yet,' said the Buddha, 'surely all reliable messages carry the news that such a mountain is rolling remorselessly towards us for is not old-age and death approaching, and are not all barriers ineffective?'

Wide-awake now, to the reality of life and death, King Pasenadi realised fully the fleeting nature of his existence and saw just how important it was that time should not be wasted in trivial pursuits.... Posed with such a stark dilemma and seeing no possibility of escape, King Pasenadi dedicated himself once more to the wholehearted practice of Dharma, certain that joy and peace could be obtained only by the development of wisdom and compassion.

*The Middle Way* (London), August 1974, p. 53. Adapted from *The Book of Kindred Sayings* (Samyutta-Nikaya), translator, Mrs. Rhys Davis. London: Pali Text Society, 1971, Part I, pp. 125-26.

"Thus, against the background of numerous incarnations, Buddha viewed each life as a precious opportunity, one that could never be duplicated, and depending upon how it is lived, shifted the future up or down, for good or ill. The proverb 'opportunity knocks but once' could apply here. It never knocks again exactly the same way; in the same psychological setting; in the same combination of circumstances and people."

\*

Now the Puja days started. Then came the last day of September. The Mother, dressed in a lovely sari, sat majestically in her high-backed chair in the Meditation Hall downstairs and distributed a Message written by her:

“To express our gratitude to Sri Aurobindo we can do nothing better than to be a living demonstration of his teaching.”

*(To be continued)*

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## KINDLE THE FIRE, O LORD

O LORD, the summit and source of all,  
 In the world of creative sacrifice  
 I am the base, the earthly altar.  
 Resolve in me the mystery of new creation!

I carry within crude elements for perfection—  
 Bring down the purified butter,  
 Sprinkle it upon them  
 And kindle the eternal Fire!

Offer there heavenly incense  
 And make me incense-smelling for all time.  
 Let me not compromise  
 With the evil and the undivine.

Convert my desires into aspiring flames,  
 Keep at bay the ever-attacking darkness,  
 Hurl the superconscient sword  
 To cut asunder the obscure knots of the body...

Let light flow through the blood-vessels  
 Chanting always the original word OM!  
 A blue-gold hue will quiver amid tissues and cells!  
 Free will be the fettered life and the flesh illumined.

O Lord of Sacrifice,  
 Let me befriend the Mystic Fire for good,  
 And in my sanctified Self  
 Sow the seeds of new creation,  
 Make humanity achieve its longed-for goal!

CHUNILAL CHAUDHURY

# THE INSPIRATION OF *PARADISE LOST*

(Continued from the issue of October 1983)

5

## The Preparation for *Paradise Lost*

WHEN apropos of Milton we speak of the lyric inspiration and of spontaneity, we must remember that he is spontaneous in a particular way that lyric poets are not. And here I mean more than the epic character of his lyricism. I mean what I have called the power behind in addition to the power beyond the poem, what he himself did to make his total effortlessness possible. I may now specifically term it his sedulous cultivation of the inner mood—a deliberate travail seldom undergone by the lyric poets. And in the lines I have cited about harmonious numbers and the nightingale's nocturnal note we have the indication that Milton used to practise getting into the right mood for the voluntary movement of his poetry. He would feed on such thoughts as would naturally bring forth poetic utterance. I suppose thoughts like these differ with poets: what would touch Milton to music might not touch his contemporary and friend, Andrew Marvell. Marvell spoke of:

Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade.

A steeping of the mind in Nature's greenery would be the mood in which Marvell could be marvellous as a poet. But, though Milton also mentions "shadiest covert", his is no "green shade": dense foliage at night-time, woods of profound gloom that are the nightingale's environment, are oftenest the physical counterparts of the mental *milieu* of Milton's song, an inner world of mysterious contemplation, in which the musical thoughts are no green ones but what the greatest line he ever wrote tells us:

Those thoughts that wander through Eternity...<sup>1</sup>

Milton made it a practice to plunge his mind in the contemplation of lofty themes that his soul found most congenial and out of this contemplation sprang voluntarily his great verse. He did not labour over his verse, planning out its details beforehand, but he did labour over his frame of mind. And not only immediately before the composition of his epic did he habituate himself to live on certain elevations of the intellect which might touch most naturally the heavenly founts of Song. Long before the first words of *Paradise Lost* broke their controlled thunder upon the world, he had started climbing towards these elevations. Thus the third paradox about Milton is his lifelong toil over the inner mood which during five years sparked off his unpremeditated speech under the spell of Urania.

<sup>1</sup> Bk. II, 148.

The reason why he toiled so much is that in very early life the intuition had formed of a great poem within him, waiting to be delivered in due season. He was barely thirty when he told his friends that he would write such a poem and a little later he even made bold to inform the public that the poem he sought to write would be one that the world would not willingly let die. But he felt unprepared to venture his wings at once, nor had the right subject dawned on him. Through the years that led up to his old age he cast about for a suitable theme and was not sure whether he would produce an epic or a tragic drama. In the meantime he set himself to the task of building his own intellect and character. For, he had the conviction that the man who would write a great poem must make his life a great poem first: his very substance should be mighty and majestic and his whole mind moulded to epic proportions. The inner mood over which he laboured was to rise out of this achievement and be the pregnant concentration of its slow-wrought greatness.

Broadly speaking, this achievement would involve three activities. We may indicate them in his own words. First, "devout prayer to that eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim, with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases". Secondly, the poet's not "presuming to sing the praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that which is praiseworthy". Thirdly, "industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs". In other words, (1) development of the religious sense, (2) nurture of the ethical conscience and the civic responsibility, (3) growth of the intellectual faculty and the artistic-literary instinct.

The religious sense was awake in Milton from the very beginning. Repeatedly in his early poems we come across an aspiration to be God's instrument. Most characteristic of himself are lines like:

Towards which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven,<sup>1</sup>

or

As ever in my great Task-master's eye.<sup>2</sup>

We hear also of his habit in later life to have the Hebrew Bible read out in the early morning and to sit in contemplation afterwards. The ethical conscience too was strong throughout. During his Italian tour he refrained from the slightest moral deviation even "in all those places in which vice meets with so little discouragement, and is practised with so little shame". Personal courage was another virtue of his. When he was told that in Rome there was a plot against him because he had spoken too freely on religion, he went to that city, moved about in as exposed a manner as possible and openly defended Protestantism for two months. What cut short his continental tour was the news of civil commotions in England. He thought it base to amuse himself abroad when his "fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home".

<sup>1</sup> Sonnet: "How soon hath time .", 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

In England he started writing a series of pamphlets on various public themes. Some of them made him unpopular, but he held on to his course. With the end of the Civil War he was appointed Latin Secretary to Cromwell. Time and again he defended the policy of the Commonwealth. The most famous occasion was when an attack on it was launched by the greatest scholar in Europe, Salmasius, for the favour of whose presence half a dozen Courts competed. The Council of State in England called on Milton to reply. The work demanded incessant application. He had already lost the sight of one eye and that of the other was getting weaker. His doctors warned him that if he took up the job of answering Salmasius he would go completely blind. Milton ignored the warning and strained himself to the utmost for a year. Salmasius was crushed by the *Defensio Populi Anglicani* (*Defence of the English People*), lost his high position at the Swedish Court and died soon after. But Milton was henceforth dependent totally on other men's eyes. Did his blindness daunt him? He continued with his pamphleteering. And a little before the restoration of the Stuart Monarchy he published his treatise, *The Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings Out of the Church*, and, almost when Charles II came over, he brought out the anti-monarchical tract, *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*. Had not Marvell and some other friends intervened, he would have been sent to the gallows out of hand and we should have had just a little of *Paradise Lost* and nothing of *Paradise Regained* or *Samson Agonistes*. All in all, his public life took up nearly twenty years involving him in endless controversies and keeping him away from his long-dreamt-of plan of composing an English epic. He put aside his personal ambitions and lent himself to his country amidst the dust and heat of the political arena.

But those twenty years were not really lost. Although many of his prose works are unreadable now because of their outmoded subjects and their violent and even virulent tone which was in accord with the habit of the times, they brought out the strength of his mind and widened the range of his interests. Even apart from the challenge of the immediate occasions to his inquiring spirit, he did not neglect to enlarge the general horizons of his knowledge. He continued the work begun in retirement at Horton to gather up into his mind all that had been written by way of history or geography, science or philosophy or poetry. His reading was always enormous. He was like an encyclopaedia by the time he found leisure for *Paradise Lost*. We see this from the far-stretching references in his epic, the manner in which he made his poem cover not only the Fall of the Angels and of Man but whatever happened afterwards in all parts of the world. Thus when he writes of Satan's shield he brings in his own contemporary, the scientist Galileo, and his explorations of space through the telescope: it is one of the most celebrated of Milton's similes. Satan

his ponderous shield,  
Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,  
Behind him cast. The broad circumference  
Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb

Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views  
 At evening from the top of Fesolè,  
 Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,  
 Rivers or mountains in her spotty globe.<sup>1</sup>

Equally celebrated is the description of Satan's throne in Hell:

High on a throne of royal state, which far  
 Outshone the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind,  
 Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand  
 Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,  
 Satan exalted sat...<sup>2</sup>

Or read the passage from the account of Satan's flying voyage from Hell to Earth:

As when far off at sea a fleet descried  
 Hangs in the clouds, by equinoctial winds  
 Close sailing from Bengala, or the isles  
 Of Ternate and Tidore, whence merchants bring  
 Their spicy drugs: they on the trading flood,  
 Through the wide Ethiopæan to the Cape,  
 Ply stemming nightly toward the pole: so seemed  
 Far off the flying Fiend.<sup>3</sup>

Lastly, glance at the simile for the Causeway built by Sin and Death between Hell and Earth:

So, if great things to small may be compared,  
 Xerxes the liberty of Greece to yoke  
 From Susa, his Memnonian palace high,  
 Came to the sea, and, over Hellespont  
 Bridging his way, Europe with Asia joined,  
 And scourged with many a stroke the indignant waves.<sup>4</sup>

These are but a few samples of Milton's eye traversing the pageant of all history and geography and world-work. Scholars have found his reading to include not only standard philosophy and accepted religion: they have found it to include also heretical speculations, even a book like Bodin's *Heptaplomeres* whose very presence in a man's library risked the reader's head. Milton seems to have packed into his own

<sup>1</sup> Bk. I, 284-91.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. II, 1-5.

<sup>3</sup> Bk. II, 636-43.

<sup>4</sup> Bk. X, 306-11.

head whatever there was to know, so that his great poem, whenever it did get composed, would not merely set out to justify the ways of God to man but also survey mankind as with God's omniscient eye!

In regard to purely literary preparation, Milton, before bringing forth his own epic, assimilated the epics of Europe's past into his own vitality. Not only have we oblique references to them in *Paradise Lost*: we have also the sense of their very presence in the temper and texture of the poem. It is as if the oceanic sweep of Homer pulsed through Milton's arteries, the broad even river-flow of Virgil ran in his veins, the concentrated titanism of Aeschylus made his bone and marrow, the grandiose passion of Lucretius tensed his tissues, the sweetly intense severity of Dante thrilled and toned his nerves—and, in addition to these formative forces, there were the diverse poetic qualities brought by Tasso and Ariosto and Camoës and all other continental writers who had essayed the epic strain in one manner or another, in long stretches or short. The Hebrew Prophets and the Christian Apostles were profoundly absorbed too—Genesis, the Book of Job, David's Psalms, Isaiah, the Gospels, the Apocalypse poured their splendour and terror into his spirit. From England itself, he was deeply influenced by Spenser's melodious subtlety, Marlowe's colourful violence, the multitudinous leaping lights and shadows that are Shakespeare's. He surcharged himself with past poetry to such an extent that he won access to some single supernal spring in the inner being from which all European verse had gushed through the ages in various directions. All those directions fused in Milton and were changed into his distinct individuality when the hour struck for him to roll out his own epic accents.

The original yet composite style of *Paradise Lost* started its development from very early in Milton's life, for even in his youth he had taken something of the past masters into himself. Already in his nineteenth year we find him seeking to use his "Native Language" for some grave subject

Such where the deep transported mind may soar  
Above the wheeling poles, and at Heaven's door  
Look in, and see each blissful deity  
How he before the thunderous throne doth lie,  
Listening to what unshorn Apollo sings  
To the touch of golden wires...<sup>1</sup>

Here, except for the rhymes, we might be in the midst of one of the several exordiums in *Paradise Lost*. And a little further in the same youthful exercise we have another touch of the later manner and mood:

Then sing of secret things that came to pass  
When beldam Nature in her cradle was...<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *At a Vacation Exercise*, 33-8.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-6.



This looks forward to

Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme<sup>1</sup>

as well as to

that I may see and tell  
Of things invisible to mortal sight.<sup>2</sup>

In his twenty-first year we catch a high bold note like

The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep,<sup>3</sup>

or the one about "the Old Dragon underground" who, at the Judgment Day,

wroth to see his kingdom fail,  
Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.<sup>4</sup>

We think at once of Satan who in Hell,

Prone on the flood, extended long and large,  
Lay floating many a rood,<sup>5</sup>

and of Satan who, alarmed,

Collecting all his might, dilated stood,  
Like Teneriffe or Atlas, unremoved:  
His stature reached the sky, and on his crest  
Sat Horror plumed...<sup>6</sup>

When the poet was twenty-two we get an anticipation not only of the music (though rhymed) but also of the theme of *Paradise Lost*: the lines uttering the prayer that we may answer on Earth Heaven's "divine sounds"—

As once we did, till disproportioned Sin  
Jarred against Nature's chime and with harsh din  
Broke the fair music that all creatures made  
To their great Lord, whose love all motion swayed  
In perfect diapason whilst they stood  
In first obedience and their state of good.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bk. I, 16.      <sup>2</sup> Bk. III, 54-5.

<sup>3</sup> *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, 156.      <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 171-2.

<sup>5</sup> Bk. I, 195-6.      <sup>6</sup> Bk. IV, 986-7.      <sup>7</sup> *At a Solemn Music*, 19-24.

In *Comus*, four years later, the Miltonic soul that we soar with so often in the epic is fitly sounded:

In regions mild of calm and serene air,  
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot  
Which men call Earth, and, with low-thoughted care,  
Confined and pestered in this pifold here,  
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being...<sup>1</sup>

In the lines in the same poem—

But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts  
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;  
Himself is his own dungeon<sup>2</sup>—

we hear afar the Satanic outburst:

Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;  
And, in the lowest deep, a lower deep  
Still threatening to devour me opens wide,  
To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heaven.<sup>3</sup>

Apropos of *Comus* we may remark that in this “Masque”, more than ever before, Milton shows himself the master of rhythm no less than word. The instinct of the inevitable sound reinforcing the precise verbal suggestion cannot be better illustrated than by his conversion of the clear adequacy of his first draft—

And airy tongues that lure night-wanderers—

to the haunting atmospheric subtlety:

And airy tongues that syllable men's names.<sup>4</sup>

Or listen to the massive ominous effect:

The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with plumes.<sup>5</sup>

*Lycidas*, which comes three years after *Comus*, carries the master-rhythmist in even greater abundance and some of its passages have the authentic roll of *Paradise Lost*. They are too well known to be quoted. But we may touch on Milton's work during the twenty years of service to his country. He wrote only a few sonnets,

<sup>1</sup> 4-9.

<sup>2</sup> 383-5.

<sup>3</sup> Bk. IV, 75-8.

<sup>4</sup> 208.

<sup>5</sup> 730.

yet the grip on the medium is steady and we can feel even here the poet preparing for his epic. In the midst of the Civil War, when on November 12, 1642, London was on the verge of being stormed by the King's armies who would have made short work of Milton, the poet coolly wrote a sonnet to be nailed up outside his door, advising the officer of the sacking-party to remember that if he spared the resident within he had the chance of being immortalised in verse. The sestet runs:

Lift not thy spear against the Muse's bower:  
 The great Emathian conqueror bid spare  
 The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower  
 Went to the ground; and the repeated air  
 Of sad Electra's poet had the power  
 To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.

Apart from the fine-pitched Classical allusions—the mention of the poets Pindar and Euripides—we have in the last line, which looks simple enough, so exquisite a combination of vowels and consonants that a critic like Grierson considers it the most musical in all English poetry. At least we may deem it as beautiful as any waft on the ear in *Paradise Lost*. An effect comparable to any there in rhythmic strength is also in a Sonnet of 1652:

And rumours loud that daunt remotest kings.<sup>1</sup>

About the sonnet of white rage, *On the Late Massacre in Piedmont* (1655), three years before the commencement of *Paradise Lost*, Douglas Bush<sup>2</sup> well observes that in spite of its especially arresting rhymes it is a structure of run-on lines and medial pauses that approaches the wheeling paragraphs of the epic. The remaining sonnets too seem to press each in its own way towards that style of packed controlled gravity as much as of incandescent *élan*, a style that can touch everything with both force and dignity. The very last which Milton wrote—on his dead wife—is not only a product of the same year as saw *Paradise Lost* invoke the "Heavenly Muse": it is also a poem speaking of a vivid dream that the blind Milton had, a sleep-experience richer than anything held by the day which was one long darkness to him. It is as if Milton's nights were getting animated with "forms more real than living man". And even his wife is a figure of mystery as she breaks upon his "fancy": one might say she was but a little more intimate version of his Urania who visited his slumbers, for the form of his wife

Came vested all in white, pure as her mind.  
 Her face was veiled; yet to my fancied sight

<sup>1</sup> *On the Lord General Fairfax, at the Siege of Colchester*, 4.

<sup>2</sup> *English Poetry* (1952), p. 73.

Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined  
 So clear as in no face with more delight.  
 But, oh! as to embrace me she inclined,  
 I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night.<sup>1</sup>

Yes, Milton was poetically ready in every manner before he undertook his life's crowning work. But what those twenty years of social and political pamphleteering which meant postponement of it added to his expressive genius was an intense intellectual fervour and a constant penchant for the Latin mode of language-construction. For, the pamphlets are often infused with argumentative eloquence and many of them are written in resonant Latin in order to reach all Europe's ears. In fact, Milton, when he came to *Paradise Lost*, was in two minds about the tongue in which to compose it: should it be in Latin or in English? In his youth he had been proficient in Latin verse. He had actually performed the feat of writing in Latin an elegy on the death of his friend Charles Diodati which nearly equals in poetic excellence the elegy over his friend Edward King's death, the marvellous *Lycidas*. So if in his steel-tempered old age he were to write *Paradise Lost* in Latin he was certain to produce a work which might stand on a level with Virgil's *Aeneid* and Lucretius's *De Natura Rerum*. Besides, the whole of Europe would be his audience. Luckily for modern times which has, like the already modern Shakespeare, "small Latin and less Greek", he chose English and consented to limit his appeal. But, while choosing English, he made the language so Latinised that much of the poem could be followed by any Continental scholar of his day who had a smattering of English. This Latinisation was not deliberate: it came automatically of the varied practice his youthful proficiency in that language had received in those twenty years during which even his English prose is full of Latinisation. The ordinary reader is sometimes hampered by the recurring Latin constructions in *Paradise Lost*. For instance, how would he make sense of the first line in the apostrophe to "holy Light"—

Or hear'st thou rather pure Ethereal Stream,  
 Whose fountain who shall tell?<sup>2</sup>

It is not that the holy Light is hearing some "pure Ethereal Stream" just as Wordsworth's Lucy is pictured among rivulets:

...and she shall lean her ear  
 In many a secret place  
 Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
 And beauty born of murmuring sound  
 Shall pass into her face.

<sup>1</sup> 9-14.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. II, 7-8.

Milton's holy Light is itself "pure Ethereal Stream": the word "hear" is employed with the Latin suggestion of being called, so that the line means: "Or art thou more properly called pure Ethereal Stream?" We have to think of "pure Ethereal Stream" as a name called out to the Light and the Light as hearing and approving of it. The word "name" itself in *Paradise Lost* carries often a Latin connotation. Thus the phrase 'the Angelic Name' in a line<sup>1</sup> in Book IX stands for "the Angelic race or nation": the Latin "nomen" has frequently this significance. Or take from the same Book the words "obnoxious first or last/To basest things."<sup>2</sup> "Obnoxious" is used here in the Latin sense of "submissive, obedient, subject." I believe the absurd-sounding lines—

Adam, the goodliest man of men since born,  
His sons; the fairest of her daughters, Eve<sup>3</sup>—

which involve the representation of Adam as one of his own sons and Eve as one of her own daughters, owes also to Latin as well as Greek. Grammarians call it "the inclusive superlative". Thucydides in his *Peloponnesian War*<sup>4</sup> calls that contest "the most worthy of mention among all those which had preceded it", as if it were itself one of those preceding contests. A Latin poet speaks of Diana as "comitum pulcherrima", "the fairest of her own attendant girls". But we must not think of Milton as the sole perpetuator of this classic form. Shakespeare had already written in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*:<sup>5</sup> "the greatest error of all the rest." Likewise most of Milton's Latinisms have precedents elsewhere. Our lines illustrate also the Latin phrase-arrangement known as the Chiasmus — the reversing of the order of words previously followed: thus the first phrase ends with the sons of Adam while the second begins with the daughters of Eve instead of ending with them. The Chiasmus is widely employed in English. Milton differs in his Latinisms from other writers mostly in using them on a very large scale. But even this does not render, as some critics claim, his language utterly unEnglish. A Latin turn is part of the multiple modulation to which English lends itself. Thus the turn about Hell which Milton puts in Moloch's mouth—

this dark opprobrious den of shame,  
The prison of his tyranny who reigns  
By our delay<sup>6</sup>—

employs the relative "who" with an antecedent in the possessive case: "his." The normal English expression would be: "the prison of the tyranny of Him who reigns by our delay." But the irregularity dared by Milton is justified not only by its adroit brevity: it is justified by the inherent Latin proclivity of English itself. It occurs

<sup>1</sup> 142<sup>2</sup> 170-1.<sup>3</sup> Bk. IV, 323-4<sup>4</sup> I 1<sup>5</sup> V, 1, 252.<sup>6</sup> Bk. II, 58-60.

several times in Sri Aurobindo—even in his prose. Milton's critics have exaggerated his Latinity. They have also forgotten that he has no marked Latinity in thousands of lines. And even when he has a lot of it his disparagers forget that real Latinity would make for a flexibleness in the disposition of words, which no English writer can risk. Latin, unlike English, is an inflected language: its word-endings denote gender, number, tense, case, so that, without being misunderstood, a writer can shuffle the order of the words in the interests of emphasis and rhythm. Without the freedom thus indulged in, there can be no genuine Latinisation of English. If Milton were truly Latinised, the opening lines of his poem—

Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the World, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing, Heavenly Muse—

could with impunity be written:

Of that forbidden Muse whose heavenly seat  
Brought Man's first blissful taste, with greater fruit  
Of disobedience, till the loss and woe  
Of the one mortal Man and all our death  
Regain us and restore into the World,  
Sing, Eden tree...

This order of words would not display much more license than "the extraordinary involution and confusion" of verbal arrangement which Patrick Maxwell has noted as leading yet to no obfuscation of sense in Horace's Odes, Book V, the first fifteen lines.

To cut a long story short: Milton on the eve of *Paradise Lost* was quite ripe for the learnedly loaded, artistically complex and finished, Latinly cast poetry of *Paradise Lost*. Such poetry, rising to a grand manner reflective of the dynamic and dedicated structure which the poet had made of his own mind and life through sustained self-culture and crowded public experience, would be natural to him. It would be natural whether composed with difficulty or with ease. It would be natural even if he were the sheer medium of a power beyond himself. We should not at all be surprised at the absolute effortlessness which he claims for a highly literary and scholarly style like his. The character of the style makes no odds to its being wholly inspired. The inspiration works through the established mould of the man's being. If the mould established were like Milton's, the inspiration could bring about the result that *Paradise Lost* should be thoroughly Miltonic without being written in the least by

Milton. What Milton made himself by lifelong effort fitted him not only to reach the inner breaking-point of intensity at which a power beyond him could enter and take charge of his work: it fitted him also to receive this power in a shape most personal to him and seeming the exact opposite of our conception about the style of effortlessly composed poetry.

*(To be continued)*

K. D. SETHNA

# CELTIC

## 1: By Shadowy Waters

A PALE face gazes through the water—  
The lake-king's daughter  
Yearns for sunshine and for flowers.  
Her long hair tangles in the rushes,  
Her sad voice murmurs in the sedge....

If I reach my hand into the cold, cold water  
Will she rise to me? Or draw me down  
To drown in the deep pools of her eyes?

## 2: Silent Music

Rhythmic spirit, who are you—  
Moving beneath old trees,  
Greeting birds, weaving flowers,  
Swaying and turning,  
Embodied breeze...?

Green and grey velvet,  
Lace-mist and gossamer,  
Deep forest embraces your dancing;  
Soft wings and bright blossoms move with you,  
Moss welcomes your pale feet.  
In your moonsilver garment  
Like water you flow  
To and fro.

My heart dances with you,  
In deep shades of silence  
Silently turning.  
The unheard rhythm of your steps  
Brings healing to its wounded wholeness.

SHRADDHAVAN



## PURITY

THE moon shone from a measureless sky,  
Stars stood apart like sentinels,  
The ocean's foaming rapid waves  
Crashing rose from deafening swells.

The calm austerity of the Night  
Outspread through all the rippleless vast  
In rings around my starlit soul,  
Monarch of future, present and past.

Numberless lives have hurried by,  
A million spells have woven their charm;  
Unmoved its gaze on viewless fronts  
In stillness secure from bodiless harm.

Its eyes are now recast in Light.  
They seize a Beauty from the deep,  
In vacancy guess a sun-born Shape  
Blossom within earth's voiceless sleep.

A murmured alchemic wonderment,  
A breath of lyric tenderness  
Steals with a close flower-fragrant air  
Softly into the inmost recess.

Where the soul stood on a mystiered point,  
Sparkle white streams of petalled bliss,  
A hundred lotuses heaven-blown,  
The ever-bright Immortal's kiss.

The I, that held together all,  
Passes dissolved in muted trance:  
A diminishing atomic memory  
Within God's vast remembrance.

## MESSAGES FROM THE MYSTERIUM TREMENDUM

### ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT DEVAN NAIR AT THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES CONVENTION AT ST. ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL, SINGAPORE, ON SATURDAY, 28 JULY 1984, AT 4.30 P.M.

I PREFACE my address by stating the obvious. First, Singapore is a secular state and our constitution guarantees freedom of belief and worship. And it is official policy to preach and practise mutual tolerance and respect between adherents of all religions. To do otherwise would be to embark on that march of folly undertaken by some other multi-religious societies, in both East and West, with disastrous consequences for themselves.

Second, I cannot address you as a Christian speaking to fellow Christians. However, one does not need to be formally a Christian in order to accept Christ. I do, and I know of several non-Christians who also do. The late Mahatma Gandhi was an illustrious example. He made no secret of the fact that he was deeply influenced by the teachings of Jesus, although he remained Hindu.

You may be assured that I, albeit non-Christian, do not address you as an atheist. I accept Deity, for entirely personal and private reasons.

After that necessary preamble, may I begin by disqualifying myself from talking about the role of the National Council of Churches? I leave this subject to the experts. I have no inclination for theology or for metaphysical speculation. I may be mistaken, but the little metaphysics that I have read leaves me with the impression of (in Sri Aurobindo's words) "a futile combat in the clouds and always inconclusive". Indeed, far abler men than I, both Christian and non-Christian, have declared that it is pointless to attempt to define divinity in mental terms. The results seem plain enough: different intellectual formulations of eternity and infinity, each looking suspiciously on the others, if not casting aspersions on them.

I therefore prefer poetry to theology. In other words, I prefer the delight of watching a sunrise or sunset to reading a ponderous essay on the theory of colours. It is the same with my response to religion.

One cannot help but esteem and admire the founders, prophets, saints and sages of all the great religions. Christ, the prophet Muhammad, Buddha, Lao Tze, Confucius, and the Hindu seers have exercised, and continue to exercise, a far greater influence on human thought and conduct than all the power-brokers of mankind combined—whether imperial, secular, political, military or mercantile.

I revere the figure of Christ, and the authentic accents of divinity clearly evident in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in his sayings.

My reverence for Christ came about inadvertently, and not because of any religious inclination. In 1939, when I was in Standard 8 in Victoria School, I developed a profound distaste for Latin declensions. One morning I decided, quite wrong-

headedly of course, that smoking an illicit cigarette up a cherry tree by the school field, was preferable to the Latin class.

The retribution was prompt, and turned out to be providential. A commanding voice from below summoned me down from up the cherry tree. It was the principal of the school, an Englishman by the name of Mr. Cobb. He pulled me by both ears, walked me to the Scriptures class, and handed me over to the teacher with the words: "This boy is quite unfit for Latin. He could do with a bit of morality. Let him study the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles." I thus gained entry into an incredible world, not so much of morality, but of an immense beauty, grandeur and mystery. My reactions to the discovery of Christ were perhaps somewhat similar to those of many other non-Christians.

The late H. G. Wells was anything but religious. Yet, in his *Outline of History*, which I read thirty-eight years ago, there is a vivid description of his reactions to Christ, which made an indelible impression on me. For he captured in honest and memorable words my own reactions. I looked up Wells again, and quote his exact words:

"He was too great for his disciples. And in view of what he plainly said, is it any wonder that all who were rich and prosperous felt a horror of strange things, a swimming of their world at his teachings? Perhaps the priests and the rulers and the rich men understood him better than his followers. He was dragging out all the little private reservations they had made from social service into the light of a universally religious life. He was like some terrible moral huntsman digging men and women out of the snug burrows in which they had lived hitherto. In the white blaze of this kingdom of his there was to be no priority, no privilege, no pride and precedence; no motive indeed and no reward but love. Is it any wonder that men were dazzled and blinded and cried out against him? Even his disciples cried out that he would not spare them the light. Is it any wonder that the priests realised that between this man and themselves there was no choice but that he or priestcraft should perish? Is it any wonder that the Roman soldiers, confronted and amazed by something soaring over their comprehension and threatening all their disciplines, should take refuge in wild laughter, and crown him with thorns and robe him in purple and make a mock Caesar of him? For to take him seriously was to enter upon a strange and alarming life, to abandon habits, to control instincts and impulses, to essay an incredible happiness.... Is it any wonder that to this day this Galilean is too much for our small hearts?"

I have often wondered why there were so many kinds of Christians, although Christ himself was one and unique. Just as the Buddha himself was one and unique, and yet there are different sects of Buddhism. The Hindus too, though acknowledging God as one, call him by different names. But I have no penchant for delving into

these intricacies, which I personally regard as irrelevant. I would prefer a direct glimpse of Deity, if that is at all possible, without having to go through any intermediary. But it is important to enter a caveat here. This is an entirely personal position, and I respect the right of every person to his own window on Deity. I may add that I also respect sincere and honest atheists and agnostics. Several of them have made significant contributions to human progress and well-being.

I welcome gatherings like the National Council of Churches. Any getting together of men and women of goodwill, even though they subscribe to different denominations, is a sign of civilised maturity and wisdom. For the same reason I welcome the existence of the Singapore Inter-religious Council.

I received a rewarding insight into the ecumenical spirit in Christianity when I read some months ago a book about the friendship and affection which bound a group of Christian writers, whose literary fantasies still fire the imagination of those who seek a truth beyond apparent reality.

They were a group who lived, worked and taught in Oxford, in that strange waiting time between two world wars. They were known as "The Inklings". The group included, among others, J. R. R. Tolkien, Professor of Anglo-Saxon and a devout Roman Catholic, C. S. Lewis, Professor of English Literature, who began as an atheist and ended up as an Anglican, and Charles Williams, a lecturer in English Literature, who was an Anglican. They were prolific writers and lecturers. Tolkien is world-famous today for books like *The Hobbit*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *Silmarillion*. Lewis also wrote several fantasies and works on criticism which are today regarded as classics. He is also well known for some brilliant tracts on Christian apologetics. Charles Williams wrote a series of novels, works on Christian theology and the like.

The point I would like to make here is the friendship and affection that existed and grew between these remarkable men, even though they belonged to different Christian denominations.

"I had been brought up to distrust philologists and papists," C. S. Lewis wrote. "My friend Tolkien is both."

It is also curious that it was a conversation between the Catholic Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, which marked the latter's turn from atheism to Christianity as embraced by the Church of England.

It is best to let Humphrey Carpenter, the author of *The Inklings*, tell the story in his own words. They cannot be improved upon:

On this Saturday night in 1931, after they had dined, Lewis took his guests on a walk through the Magdalen grounds. They strolled along Addison's Walk, and here they began to discuss metaphor and myth.

Lewis had never underestimated the power of myth. Far from it, for one of his earliest loves had been the Norse myth of the dying god Balder. But he still did not believe in the myths that delighted him. Beautiful and moving though such stories might be, they were (he said) ultimately untrue. As he

expressed it to Tolkien, myths are “lies and therefore worthless, even though breathed through silver”.

“No,” said Tolkien. “They are not lies.”

Just then (Lewis afterwards recalled) there was “a rush of wind which came so suddenly on the still, warm evening and sent so many leaves pattering down that we thought it was raining. We held our breath.”

When Tolkien resumed, he took his argument from the very thing that they were watching.

“You look at trees,” he said, “and call them ‘trees’, and probably you do not think twice about the word. You call a star a ‘star’, and think nothing more of it. But you must remember that these words ‘tree’, ‘star’ were (in their original forms) names given to these objects by people with very different views from yours. To you, a tree is simply a vegetable organism, and a star simply a ball of inanimate matter moving along a mathematical course. But the first men to talk of ‘trees’ and ‘stars’ saw things very differently. To them, the world was alive with mythological beings. They saw the stars as living silver, bursting into flame in answer to the eternal music. They saw the sky as a jewelled tent, and the earth as the womb whence all living things have come. To them the whole of creation was ‘myth-woven and elf-patterned’.”

But, said Lewis, this did not effectively answer his point that myths are lies.

But, replied Tolkien, man is not ultimately a liar. He may pervert his thoughts into lies, but he comes from God, and it is from God that he draws his ultimate ideals. Lewis agreed. He had, indeed, accepted something like this notion for many years. Therefore, Tolkien continued, not merely the abstract thoughts of man but also his imaginative inventions must originate with God, and must in consequence reflect something of eternal truth. In making a myth, in practising ‘mythopoeia’ and peopling the world with elves and dragons and goblins, a story teller, or ‘sub-creator’ as Tolkien liked to call such a person, is actually fulfilling God’s purpose, and reflecting a splintered fragment of the true light. Pagan myths are therefore never just ‘lies’: there is always something of the truth in them.

They talked on, until Lewis was convinced by the force of Tolkien’s argument.

Lewis had a particular reason for holding back from Christianity. He did not think it was necessarily untrue: indeed he had examined the historicity of the Gospels and had come to the conclusion that he was ‘nearly certain that it really happened’. What was still preventing him from becoming a Christian was the fact that he found it irrelevant.

As he himself put it, he could not see ‘how the life and death of Someone Else (whoever he was) two thousand years ago could help us here and now—except in so far as his example could help us’. And he knew that Christs example as a man and a teacher was not the centre of the Christian story. ‘Right

in the centre', he said, 'in the Gospels and in St. Paul, you keep on getting something quite different and very mysterious, expressed in those phrases I have so often ridiculed—"propitiation"—"sacrifice"—"the blood of the Lamb".' He had ridiculed them because they seemed not only silly and shocking but meaningless. What was the point of it all? How could the death and resurrection of Christ have 'saved the world'?

Tolkien answered him immediately. Indeed, he said, the solution was actually a development of what he had been saying earlier. Had he not shown how pagan myths were, in fact, God expressing himself through the minds of poets, and using the images of their 'mythopoeia' to express fragments of his eternal truth? Well then, Christianity (he said) is exactly the same thing—with the enormous difference that the poet who invented it was God Himself, and the images He used were real men and actual history.

Do you mean, asked Lewis, that the death and resurrection of Christ is the old 'dying god' story all over again?

Yes, Tolkien answered, except that here is a *real* Dying God, with a precise location in history and definite historical consequences. The old myth has become a fact. But it still retains the character of a myth. So that in asking what it 'meant', Lewis was really being rather absurd. Did he ask what the story of Balder or Adonis or any of the other dying gods in pagan myth 'meant'? No, of course not. He enjoyed these stories, 'tasted' them, and got something from them that he could not get from abstract argument. Could he not transfer that attitude, that appreciation of story, to the life and death of Christ? Could he not treat it *as* a story, be fully aware that he could draw nourishment from it which he could never find in a list of abstract truths? Could he not realise that it *is* a myth, and make himself receptive to it? For, Tolkien said, if God is mythopoeic, man must become mythopathic.

Twelve days later Lewis wrote to a friend: "I have just passed on from believing in God to definitely believing in Christ—in Christianity. I will try to explain this another time. My long night talk with Tolkien had a good deal to do with it."

You may be interested to know that a non-Christian source had a similar perception. I refer to the great Indian seer-poet, Sri Aurobindo. He was not a Christian. But his words are worth repeating to a Christian audience. I quote:

"Strange! The Germans have disproved the existence of Christ. Yet his crucifixion remains still a greater historic fact than the death of Caesar."

"Sometimes one is led to think that only those things really matter which have never happened; for beside them most historical achievements seem almost pale and ineffective."

“They say that the Gospels are forgeries and Krishna a creation of the poets. Thank God then for the forgeries and bow down before the inventors.”

I might round off this address with the following remarks. I welcome the ecumenical movement in Christianity. It strikes me as a return to Christ from creeds. But I personally subscribe to an ecumenical movement with a far wider and ampler international sweep. I belong among those who consider this an evolutionary imperative. For it is a movement which includes all seekers of truth, whatever their separate fields of enquiry may be. It includes sincere seekers and men of God of all religions, cultures, climes and times. It also includes the men of science who serve at the frontiers of exploration in modern physics and biology. Science too is a portion of the total reality.

All the disciplines of the spirit, and of science, art and literature, knock whether implicitly or explicitly at the gates of what the Christian mystics called “The Mysterium Tremendum”. This is what an ancient Indian scripture referred to as “The One before whom words recoil”. This also recalls the words of a great Christian mystic. “Why dost thou prate of God?” asked Meister Eckhart. “Whatever thou sayest of Him is untrue.”

I accept Christ as an extraordinary delegate of “The Mysterium Tremendum”. Personally, I am unable to settle for a lesser Christ.

You will have your own separate approaches to Deity. For, as I said, we all have our own separate windows on Deity. I respect your windows. I am confident that you will at least tolerate, if not respect, mine.

May I wish you all the best in your deliberations?

## ALLELUIA

I STOPPED as abruptly as I had started to send trays to the Mother. I remembered Her stricture: "Are you emptying your house?" I looked around. There were still a sufficient number of fine things to make the rooms look beautiful and rich. I had some very beautiful Japanese plates for my show-case. But I gathered that the Mother had similar ones, so they would have been only duplicates. Conclusion: they could stay with me. I had sent Her a pair of mother-of-pearl bracelets with miniature Persian paintings, which had been brought to me from Teheran. I was sure the Mother did not have anything like that and later She confirmed my view. So I put a painting in a frame. I had yet another rare object, a tiny volume of Shakespeare's poems, a gift from Amal Kiran. I figured the Mother had small books, for the Europeans are very fond of collecting small books. Lila's little dictionary and presents too I kept with me, thinking the Mother must have all such.

Still, as in all human activities there was a cause for regret. I had some exquisitely beautiful silver boxes with gold inside, belonging to my father and grandfather. How I had overlooked them I do not know, but I felt like weeping when I learnt that the Mother loved Japanese Dragon motives. One little box had Japanese Dragons in relief on its side and cover. However, I have found a reliable friend. When I am too old and dying I will pack all that is still left with me and give the suitcase to him. He will see to it that my things reach the Mother's collection. When the children grew up, they had brought me presents on two consecutive birthdays. These too will reach the Mother's collection.

Heart-warming as my activities had been, when they stopped a new line opened up almost equally interesting. From the time we had joined the Ashram, Pavitra (P. B. St. Hilaire, Director, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education) suggested to me to start teaching. "In this work Sanat would be able to help you and he knows all the Mother's views and mine. Elsewhere you will be all on your own and that is not a very congenial circumstance to be in." When father died, my mother came to live with us and I was relieved of the routine household chores. I started teaching. "When you have gathered sufficient experience I will give you Sri Aurobindo's *Ideal of Human Unity* to teach," put in Pavitra, an added bait. The text-books I found very uninteresting, so I started writing histories and typed them out and distributed them to my students. Sanat brought pictures from Madras and I embellished the sheets with new pictures on relevant subjects. The children were delighted. Sometime later Har Krishan made cyclostyle copies of the histories and I took one morning a nice set inside a file to the Mother. I explained what they were and left them with Her. Four or five days later, another incident happened when paradise had a tryst with me. Said the Mother one morning, "I do not have time these days to read written matter sent to me. But I have read all your stories; these are excellent papers. I will give the file to Pavitra." At that time Pavitra was starting his *new system*. He gave me the school-level history section to look after and Sanat offered to take the



higher classes. As once promised, a few years later Pavitra gave me the work of teaching *The Ideal of Human Unity*. By then my history-knowledge had become considerable.

Before opening the Higher Course the Mother called a *Convention*. Many notable people in the Educational line were invited. We had hoped the Mother would preside and thereby give us more of Her ideas and Sri Aurobindo's views on education. But no, instead my cousin (from my mother's side) Shyamaprasad Mookerji (son of Sri Ashutosh Mookerji) was allowed to preside. A huge shamiana was constructed and the gathering was impressive. The Mother came in the nick of time and from then onwards captured our attention and held it to the last. The fact was that many of us—at least I can speak for myself—saw nothing, heard nothing but only stared at the Mother, she looked so majestic and sublime.

Teaching and preparing stories for the children became an engrossing occupation. I was always busy. Sanat helped, Pavitra gave suggestions and even came to my classes sometimes. How happy we used to be then! He used to survey the pictures I had gathered for a more realistic view of the incidents of history for the children. His encouragement was really heartening. I reaped immense help from Amal's literary genius and eminence, his prodigious knowledge of the language. In spite of all I would occasionally bring to the Mother's notice that I was now teaching by asking questions. I give here some of her responses.

"Choose a line and follow it but as soon as you find that it is too difficult for the children or that they are not responding somehow or other, change your method. In this way you will find that all of you are progressing beautifully."

"Forget that you are the teacher and they are your students, treat them as your little friends. In this way you establish a happy relationship that will benefit all."

"If you want your children to progress, do a lot of homework, read a lot even if you think you know the subject well. Knowledge gets rusted very soon. But if you do some homework, not only the facts but the appropriate words will flow easily. That will give you confidence and the children interest in what you are saying."

One day I asked the Mother, "Goaded by other people the children sometimes ask irrelevant questions outside the subject taught. What to do then? I do not know all the answers." The Mother said,

"One must be able to show courage in the face of heavy odds. Never lose your temper. You can tell them the fact that it was beside the point or, if you know the answer, you can give it to them. Or you can plainly say that you do not know but if they wished you could look it up and tell it to them later."

"Keep up enthusiasm in spite of failures. For I will be there. You must have confidence in my help. Ask for help and keep quiet."

"What you do is not important, the important thing is the way of doing it and the consciousness."

One day I took special care to choose a flower for the Mother. It was a sweet-smelling violet flower called *Silence* by Her. I offered it and said nothing but watched

her reaction. She surveyed it for some seconds, then said in a soft voice, "It is the inner silence I mean." From that moment onwards I might be shouting at the top of my voice but my inner being remained placid as a lake on a windless day. Her powers were immense, I realised.

Another day Sanat and I went to the Mother together and Sanat started discussing history. After a while the Mother said, "Sri Aurobindo knew a lot of history," and, instead of looking at Sanat, looked at me. Sanat was very well versed in history: the one who needed encouragement was I. This time it was I who smiled my sweetest and said in my heart, "Merci Mère."

CHAUNDONA S. BANERJI

# INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY INHERENT IN INTEGRAL YOGA

## IN THE WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

*(Continued from the issue of October 1984)*

### **Memory, Judgment and Imagination**

MEMORY is the indispensable aid of the mind to preserve its past observations, the memory of the individual but also of the race, whether in the artificial form of accumulated records of the general race memory preserving its gains with a sort of constant repetition and renewal and, an element not sufficiently appreciated, a latent memory that can under the pressure of various kinds of stimulation repeat under new conditions past movements of knowledge for judgment by the increased information and intelligence. The developed logical mind puts into order the action and resources of the human memory and trains it to make the utmost use of its materials. The human judgment naturally works on these materials in two ways, by a more or less rapid and summary combination of observation, inference, creative or critical conclusion, insight, immediate idea—this is largely an attempt of the mind to work in a spontaneous manner with the directness that can only be securely achieved by the higher faculty of the intuition, for in the mind it produces much false confidence and unreliable certitude,—and a slower but in the end intellectually surer seeking, considering and testing judgment that develops into the careful logical action.

The memory and judgment are both aided by the imagination which, as a function of knowledge, suggests possibilities not actually presented or justified by the other powers and opens the doors to fresh vistas. The developed logical intelligence uses the imagination for suggesting new discovery and hypothesis, but is careful to test its suggestions fully by observation and a sceptical or scrupulous judgment. It insists too on testing, as far as may be, all the action of the judgment itself, rejects hasty inference in favour of an ordered system of deduction and induction and makes sure of all its steps and of the justice, continuity, compatibility, cohesion of its conclusions. A too formalised logical mind discourages, but a free use of the whole action of the logical intelligence may rather heighten a certain action of immediate insight, the mind's nearest approach to the higher intuition, but it does not place on it an unqualified reliance. The endeavour of the logical reason is always by a detached, disinterested and carefully founded method to get rid of error, of prejudgment, of the mind's false confidence and arrive at reliable certitudes.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> SABCL Vol. 21, pp. 822-23.

### Desire as the Will Clutching at Results

The root of desire is the vital craving to seize upon that which we feel we have not, it is the limited life's instinct for possession and satisfaction. It creates the sense of want,—first the simpler vital craving of hunger, thirst, lust, then these psychical hungers, thirsts, lusts of the mind which are a much greater and more instant and pervading affliction of our being, the hunger which is infinite because it is the hunger of an infinite being, the thirst which is only temporarily lulled by satisfaction, but is in its nature insatiable. The psychic prana invades the sensational mind and brings into it the unquiet thirst of sensations, invades the dynamic mind with the lust of control, having, domination, success, fulfilment of every impulse, fills the emotional mind with the desire for the satisfaction of liking and disliking, for the wreaking of love and hate, brings the shrinkings and panics of fear and the strainings and disappointments of hope, imposes the tortures of grief and the brief fevers and excitements of joy, makes the intelligence and intelligent will the accomplices of all these things and turns them in their own kind into deformed and lame instruments, the will into a will of craving and the intelligence into a partial, a stumbling and an eager pursuer of limited, impatient, militant prejudgment and opinion. Desire is the root of all sorrow, disappointment, affliction, for though it has a feverish joy of pursuit and satisfaction, yet because it is always a straining of the being, it carries into its pursuit and its getting a labour, hunger, struggle, a rapid subjection to fatigue, and a sense of limitation, dissatisfaction and early disappointment with all its gains, a ceaseless morbid stimulation, trouble, disquiet, *asāmi*.<sup>1</sup>

#### 2

The essential turn of the soul to possession and enjoyment of world consists in a will to delight, and the enjoyment of the satisfaction of craving is only a vital and physical degradation of the will to delight. It is essential that we should distinguish between pure will and desire, between the inner will to delight and the outer lust and craving of the mind and body....

To tread down altogether the prana, the vital being, is to kill the force of life by which the large action of the embodied soul in the human being must be supported; to indulge the gross will to live is to remain satisfied with imperfection: to compromise between them is to stop half way and possess neither earth nor heaven. But if we can get at the pure will undeformed by desire,—which we shall find to be a much more free, tranquil, steady and effective force than the leaping smoke-stifled, soon fatigued and baffled flame of desire,—and at the calm inner will of delight not afflicted or limited by any trouble of craving, we can then transform the prana from a tyrant, enemy, assailant of the mind into an obedient instrument.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 629-30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 631, 632.

### The Ego or the Separative 'I-ness'

This ego or "I" is not a lasting truth, much less our essential part; it is only a formation of Nature, a mental form of thought-centralisation in the perceiving and discriminating mind, a vital form of the centralisation of feeling and sensation in our parts of life, a form of physical conscious reception centralising substance and function of substance in our bodies. All that we internally are is not ego, but consciousness, soul or spirit. All that we externally and superficially are and do is not ego but Nature. An executive cosmic force shapes us and dictates through our temperament and environment and mentality so shaped, through our individualised formulation of the cosmic energies, our actions and their results. Truly, we do not think, will or act but thought occurs in us, will occurs in us, impulse and act occur in us; our ego-sense gathers around itself, refers to itself all this flow of natural activities. It is cosmic Force, it is Nature that forms the thought, imposes the will, imparts the impulse. Our body, mind and ego are a wave of that sea of force in action and do not govern it, but by it are governed and directed...<sup>1</sup>

If this is the truth of works, the first thing the sadhaka has to do is to recoil from the egoistic forms of activity and get rid of the sense of an "I" that acts. He has to see and feel that everything happens in him by the plastic conscious or subconscious or sometimes superconscious automatism of his mental and bodily instruments moved by the forces of spiritual, mental, vital and physical Nature. There is a personality on his surface that chooses and wills, submits and struggles, tries to make good in Nature or prevail over Nature, but this personality is itself a construction of Nature and so dominated, driven, determined by her that it cannot be free...<sup>2</sup>

Thus calm, detached, a student of himself and a witness of his nature, he realises that he is the individual soul who observes the works of Nature, accepts tranquilly her results and sanctions or withholds his sanction from the impulse to her acts...<sup>3</sup>

Thus he learns in place of mental control or egoistic will an inner spiritual control which makes him master of the Nature-forces that work in him and not their unconscious instrument or mechanic slave...<sup>4</sup>

A vast universality of soul, an intense unity with all, is the base and fixed condition of the supramental consciousness and spiritual life. In that universality and unity alone can we find the supreme law of the divine manifestation in the life of the embodied spirit; in that alone can we discover the supreme motion and right play of our individual nature. In that alone can all these lower discords resolve themselves into a victorious harmony of the true relations between manifested beings who are portions of the one Godhead and children of one universal Mother...<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 20, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

### **Our Mind and its Control of the Physical Life**

Our mind instead of being a thing powerful in its own strength, a clear instrument of conscious spirit, free and able to control, use and perfect the life and body, appears in the result a mixed construction; it is a predominantly physical mentality limited by its physical organs and subject to the demands and to the obstructions of the life in the body. This can only be got rid of by a sort of practical, inward psychological operation of analysis by which we become aware of the mentality as a separate power, isolate it for a free working, distinguish too the psychical and the physical prana and make them no longer a link for dependence, but a transmitting channel for the Idea and Will in the buddhi, obedient to its suggestions and commands; the prana then becomes a passive means of effectuation for the mind's direct control of the physical life. This control, however abnormal to our habitual poise of action, is not only possible,—it appears to some extent in the phenomena of hypnosis, though these are unhealthily abnormal, because there it is a foreign will which suggests and commands,—but must become the normal action when the higher Self within takes up the direct command of the whole being....<sup>1</sup>

### **Towards an Ideal Soul and Mind**

The impressions of the sense-mind are used by a thought which exceeds them and which arrives at truths they do not give, ideative truths of thought, truths of philosophy and science; a thinking, discovering, philosophic mind overcomes, rectifies and dominates the first mind of sense impressions. The impulsive reactive sensational mentality, the life-cravings and the mind of emotional desire are taken up by the intelligent will and are overcome, are rectified and dominated by a greater ethical mind which discovers and sets over them a law of right impulse, right desire, right emotion and right action. The receptive, crudely enjoying sensational mentality, the emotional mind and life mind are taken up by the intelligence and are overcome, rectified and dominated by a deeper, happier aesthetic mind which discovers and sets above them a law of true delight and beauty. All these new formations are used by a general Power of the intellectual, thinking and willing man in a soul of governing intellect, imagination, judgment, memory, volition, discerning reason and ideal feeling which uses them for knowledge, self-development, experience, discovery, creation, effectuation, aspires, strives, inwardly attains, endeavours to make a higher thing of the life of the soul in Nature. The primitive desire-soul no longer governs the being. It is still a desire soul, but it is repressed and governed by a higher power, something which has manifested in itself the godheads of Truth, Will, Good, Beauty and tries to subject life to them. The crude desire-soul and mind is trying to convert itself into an ideal soul and mind, and the proportion in which some effect and harmony of this greater conscious being has been found and enthroned, is the measure of our

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 21, pp. 630-31.

increasing humanity.... But this is still a very incomplete movement....<sup>1</sup>

The ethical mind becomes perfect in proportion as it detaches itself from desire, sense suggestion, impulse, customary dictated action and discovers a self of Right, Love, Strength, and Purity in which it can live accomplished and make it the foundation of all its actions. The aesthetic mind is perfected in proportion as it detaches itself from all its cruder pleasures and from outward conventional canons of the aesthetic reason and discovers a self-existent self and spirit of pure and infinite Beauty and Delight which gives its own light and joy to the material of the aesthesis. The mind of knowledge is perfected when it gets away from impression and dogma and opinion and discovers a light of self-knowledge and intuition which illumines all the workings of the sense and reason, all self-experience and world-experience.<sup>2</sup>

### The Spiritual Energy or Yoga-Force

In the world so far as man is concerned we are aware only of mind-energy, life-energy, energy in Matter; but it is supposed that there is a spiritual energy or force also behind them from which they originate....<sup>3</sup>

If there is no such thing as spiritual consciousness, there can be no reality of Yoga, and if there is no Yoga-force, spiritual force, Yoga Shakti, then also there can be no effectivity in Yoga. A Yoga-consciousness or spiritual consciousness which has no power or force in it, may not be dead or unreal, but it is evidently something inert and without effect or consequence. Equally, a man who sets out to be a Yogi or Guru and has no spiritual consciousness or no power in his spiritual consciousness—a Yoga-force or spiritual force—is making a false claim and is either a charlatan or a self-deluded imbecile; still more is he so if having no spiritual force he claims to have made a path others can follow. If Yoga is a reality, if spirituality is anything better than a delusion, there must be such a thing as Yoga-force or spiritual force.

It is evident that if spiritual force exists, it must be able to produce spiritual results—therefore there is no irrationality in the claim of those sadhakas who say that they feel the force of the Guru or the force of the Divine working in them leading towards spiritual fulfilment and experience. Whether it is so or not in a particular case is a personal question, but the statement cannot be denounced as *per se* incredible and manifestly false, because such things cannot be. Further, if it be true that spiritual force is the original one and the others are derivative from it, then there is no irrationality in supposing that spiritual force can produce mental results, vital results, physical results....<sup>4</sup>

The conditions and limits under which Yoga or sadhana has to be worked out are not arbitrary or capricious; they arise from the nature of things. These including the will, réceptivity, assent, self-opening and surrender of the sadhaka have to be respected by the Yoga-force....

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 640-1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 641-2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 22, 216.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

Still the Yoga-force is always tangible and concrete in the way I have described and has tangible results. But it is invisible—not like a blow given or the rush of a motor car knocking somebody down which the physical senses can at once perceive. How is the mere physical mind to know that it is there and working? By its results? But how can it know that the results were that of the Yogic force and not of something else? One of two things it must be. Either it must allow the consciousness to go inside, to become aware of inner things, to believe in the experience of the invisible and the supraphysical, and then by experience, by the opening of new capacities, it becomes conscious of these forces and can see, follow and use their workings, just as the Scientist uses the unseen forces of Nature. Or one must have faith to see how things happen, it will notice that when the Force was called in, there began after a time to be a result, then repetitions, more repetitions, more clear and tangible results, increasing frequency, increasing consistency of results, a feeling and awareness of the Force at work—until the experience becomes daily, regular, normal, complete. These are the two main methods, one internal, working from in outward, the other external, working from outside and calling the inner force out till it penetrates and is visible in the exterior consciousness. But neither can be done if one insists always on the extrovert attitude, the external concrete only and refuses to join to it the internal concrete—or if the physical mind at every step raises a dance of doubts which refuses to allow the nascent experience to develop. Even the Scientist carrying on a new experiment would never succeed if he allowed his mind to behave in that way.<sup>1</sup>

### **Spiritual Experience**

...The decisive experiences cannot be brought, the permanence of a new state of consciousness in which they will be normal cannot be secured if the mind is always interposing its own reservations, prejudgments, ignorant formulas or if it insists on arriving at the divine certitude as it would at the quite relative truth of a mental conclusion, by reasoning, doubt, enquiry and all the other paraphernalia of Ignorance feeling and fumbling around after Knowledge; these greater things can only be brought by the progressive opening of a consciousness quieted and turned steadily towards spiritual experience...<sup>2</sup>

Mind by itself is incapable of ultimate certitude; whatever it believes, it can doubt; whatever it can affirm, it can deny; whatever it gets hold of, it can and does let go. That, if you like, is its freedom, noble right, privilege; it may be all you can say in its praise, but by these methods of mind you cannot hope (outside the reach of physical phenomena and hardly even there) to arrive at anything you can call an ultimate certitude.<sup>3</sup>

*(To be continued)*

*Compiled by* **INDRA SEN**

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 169-70.



## LORD KRISHNA AND THE NEW ARISHTA MOUNTAIN

“... everywhere Thou raisest up matter...”

(In the Sundara Kanda of the Valmiki *Ramayana*, there is a description of a mighty mountain landed on and demolished by Hanuman before he takes his grandiose leap from Lanka back to the mainland where Rama's army awaits his news of Sita. The descriptions of its beauties are lavish: it is lined with Padma, Sal, Palm, Asvakarna, and tall Devadaru trees. Its flowing waterfalls sound like Vedic chants and its streamlets like the flow of soft music. Clouds wrap its peaks like an upper cloth and its enormous caves filled with dew give it “the appearance of one absorbed in meditation with senses controlled”. Spreading creepers bedeck it with flowers and the flow of minerals from its mines decorate it. It was inhabited by various species of animals such as lions and tigers, as well as being the home of Munis, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras and Nagas. Various kinds of edibles, roots and fruit-bearing trees grew on it to nourish its population and its innumerable foothills “gave it the appearance of a fierce going-forward to attack in all directions.”

The word “arishtam” had come to mean “bad luck, evil, misfortune, an unlucky omen”, so in this episode it is clear that Hanuman was subduing all evil portents under his feet, as it were, before launching himself on the next important phase of his mission. A similar connotation can be seen in the Krishna legend where the Lord subdues and kills a bull-demon of the same name. The bull perhaps symbolises vital strength that is being misused, which was of course the case with Ravana and the Rakshasas of Lanka in the *Ramayana*. The original and primary meaning of “arishta”, however, is “unhurt, perfect, imperishable, safe” and so we will use it in this story where the Arishta Mountain gets resurrected in a transformed state as a symbol of the New Creation on earth, in which Lord Krishna is now taking part as the still-veiled, yet potent mystery of the Supramental Ananda.)

Lord Krishna, in His tour of Sri Lanka, stopped at a particular expanse of flat land and said, “This is where the splendid and enigmatic Arishta mountain once stood, that held so many secrets of Mother Nature in terms of balance of ecology, the harmony amongst diverse forms of animal and plant life, and the manifest play of consciousness among sages and celestial beings of the vital and other worlds. Its teeming life had to be entirely pushed down into the nether worlds (the subconscious) by Hanuman in his intensity of Bhakti so he could get his impetus to fly to Rama, but now it must be released from its subterranean abode and its treasures mastered and reordered and divinised, for it is like the golden shekels that lie on the bottom of the Eternal's sea. The things must be brought up gradually and under careful supervision. That is why I have come here myself to undertake the ‘excavation’. It is a great adventure and I will fashion something truly beautiful from this ancient store.”

Krishna took three paces across the open land and then slowly raised His hands from earth to heaven, saying,

“It has to be constructed of a new material; that is the main thing. The new Matter must be pliable and ready for any utility. I see a substance that looks like fine sand in its dry, unaltered state but which will firmly hold to any mould if moistened and set consciously. It then becomes like a thick cream which can be handled easily and dries hard. It will not enter this immobile fixity by mere rain falling on it. It has to be set by a human or superhuman consciousness-force to which it will readily respond. Whatever formations are made from this substance will then be like aspirations of Matter itself, its own rising up towards the heights. Dwellings can then truly be living extensions of protective Mother Earth Herself in a natural state.”

Extending His arms straight before Him, Krishna declared, “The first things I invoke then are the foothills of the new Arishta Mountain.” Pools of water were seen to appear which were soon absorbed into the ground and then increasing up-risings of earth appeared in ever-enlarging mounds. They grew into low hills forming a broad circle as far as the eyes could see.

“Next, low growing plants, especially ‘Humility,’” Krishna announced, and soon these tiny, delicate-as-lace shoots appeared, as well as ground ivy (“Lasting Attachment”—“Modest, without glamour, but persistent”), Lobelia (“Remembrance of Sri Aurobindo”), pale blue and white Clitoria (“Krishna’s Light in the Senses” and “Purified Senses”) growing as a ground creeper, *Evolvulus* (tiny sky-blue saucer-shaped flowers carpeting the ground (“First Sign of Krishna’s Light in Matter”), *Eranthemum* (“Krishna’s Light in the Subconscient”) and lavender-blue *Torenia* (Krishna’s Play in Matter”). “Let all these prepare the basis for the New Manifestation. Let them be the protective envelope around what will be built up here, for truly what is being done is a work of Consciousness, not just what ordinary scientists would think of as gross life and matter. Each thing must be built up by stages having all the necessary prerequisites in the stage below it. The new Arishta Mountain is a sadhana in Matter. I am simply here to hasten what would, in the ordinary course of Nature, take thousands if not millions of years. This is a symbolic creation to lay the groundwork for an entirely New Earth. The program is vast and wonderful; the way totally unknown until it progressively manifests. I will be the Guide and Chief Manifestor at every stage.”

Krishna continued, “Let there now be trees, three varieties of Coral Trees, some with orange-red to dark red flowers (‘Beginning of Realisation in Matter’); secondly, bright orange (‘Matter prepares Itself to Receive the Supramental’); and thirdly, white veined with pink (‘The Psychic Governing Matter’). These bring in a more complex working in the plant life and will act as protectors and benefactors of the lower growing plants. The Clitoria creeper and the Ivy can also climb up these trees and interact more intimately with them. With each added element the overall ecological and spiritual Harmony is preserved and enhanced. Such is the Divine’s way of landscaping.”

Thus Krishna exclaimed, laughing, and threw up His hands like a temperamental artist who had just finished a painting with which he was extremely pleased.

“Now fruit trees are required to prepare for the advent of the animal life. Every delicious and edible kind of fruit we must have, for variety is the spice of life. Let’s have apples, pears, peaches, pomegranates, plums, oranges and grapefruit, mangoes, jackfruit, bananas and all other types of exotic and wonderful things,” Krishna said, like a mischievous boy, “but it must be a tidy orchard, and the fruits more beautiful and more luscious than anywhere on earth so that all the creatures on this mountain and hereabouts will be nourished by the Divine’s richest bounty. Earth products today have become meagre and small compared to what they could be in the Divine’s imagination, or else they have been oversized by the use of chemical and artificial methods. Here size will not be the major thing, but quality, purity and rich wholesomeness bringing a divine blessing to all the cells of the body when one partakes of them.” As Krishna spoke the trees slowly appeared here and there and fruits began to develop on them immediately after the leaves, glistening with morning dew. It was like watching a slow-motion film of the whole development process being hastened. A deep silence pervaded this marvellous scene.

Krishna then stepped up to an apricot, a peach and a cherry tree in turn and, plucking one fruit from each, sat down beneath a spreading almond tree to rest. “It has taken a great deal of energy to do all this work,” He said smiling. “Now I will revitalise My body with just a few of these miraculous products.” So saying He ate first the cherry, then the peach and apricot and a handful of almonds and smiled to Himself in full contentment. “If I were not the Creator of all this manifest universe I might be tempted to rest here and do no more,” He thought, “but then all life would cease from My non-participation; so for the good of the world, I must now bring some animals into being.”

“I will that there be a new population of animals on this earth,” Krishna declared. “They must be strong, beautiful, harmonious with all other creatures above and below their level, and a blessing to the soil and air. The birds must be magnificent of plumage and sweet or powerful in song; the four-footed animals healthy and well-built, always acting in accord with their dharma; and the ducks and swans more graceful and inspiringly colourful than any the earth has known. There will be no need for crawling creatures such as lizards and snakes, for there will be no rodents or harmful insects which will have to be kept in check. Every living thing will be contented and will not suffer the agonies of much of animal life on the earth today. All will be naturally domesticated and yet retain their full freedom of movement in a balanced environment. Their joy of life will enhance that of the plant life and their mutual sharing of this locality will be a definite help to the well-being of Nature all over the globe. So let it be.” And so these creatures appeared, and lakes, streams and ponds along with them (which Krishna forgot to mention in His discourse, but must have had in the back of His Mind!), so they could have water to drink as well as fruits and plants to eat.

Krishna felt delighted with the way things were turning out (naturally, as He had full mastery over the situation!) and He walked for a long time through the now ample but not overcrowded foothills that He had fashioned with so much divine ease. "The summits will be more difficult," He thought, "for to do that I must ascend Myself into the higher ranges of Consciousness and work to create beings who can more consciously reflect something of the Higher Law. The more complex a creature, the more difficult it is to create and the more 'dangerous', for they tend to want to become independent of Me and go their own way. I must see to it that this time they remain linked to My Consciousness in some way, within and without. I will have to find the Key and use it." And so He wandered, lost in Thought, contemplating on His own creation. "Ever higher' is the watchword," He half-mumbled to Himself, and at that He saw a stirring in the centre of the circular area. "That is it," Krishna said, "the power of the Word in man, articulating his aspiration—that is what can uplift and transform Matter itself. It is that principle I must now invoke as the next higher step in this evolutionary unfolding. I will bring forth men with the divine flame still burning within them, men who can think and see divinely—god-men, sages, rishis. They can then collaborate with Me in forming other beings of the inner worlds and make a true cosmos of the celestial hierarchy. I so will it now—let them be self-born, the prototypes of the supermen."

With this fiat, beautiful, mature, divinely human forms appeared out of the ethers, just as Swayambhuva Manu had done when the semblance of Man was first dreamed by the Creator. They stood on earth as Masters of themselves and all they surveyed. They bore the Eternal in their gaze and ranked as the progenitors of a whole new race to come. They were to be the forbears of the Infinite in human form, those who would evolve a higher and higher type of human being until it approached the supramental being that would ultimately manifest from Above. All this Krishna saw in a flash as soon as they appeared. The women among them were also seers and yoginis, one-pointed in their devotion to their Lord.

"Now I have made something truly marvellous," Krishna said to Himself, "beings who can be My true companions on earth, at last." "Come to Me," He said aloud, "gather here on the banks of this swan-filled lake and let Me look at you. Let us begin without delay to fill the inner worlds by our divine imaginations and ensure that this time the cosmic beings of the hierarchy will all be close collaborators in the Divine Plan and will aid us in bringing the Divine Beauty and Love and Ananda down on earth."

They all gathered near Him, inwardly athrill with His Bliss, and sat in meditation dreaming of Gandharvas, Kinnaras, Apsaras, and even Yakshas and Nagas who were all of a divinised character in their own type. Gods and Goddesses from all the planes of being too appeared in their eternal typical forms and offered their obeisance and collaboration. The celestial worlds were now a scale of symphonic harmonies from top to bottom. "We have done our work well," Krishna said after some silence. "All can be realised now; it is only a matter of time." He looked on all with a satisfied

smile and rose to walk slowly around the lake, the group following Him in a serried line of matched pairs. The circumambulation in a clockwise direction was symbolic of the working of Krishna's Sudarshan Chakra, His Force in action, beginning to revolve now with the Lake of Eternal Bliss as its center and focal point. This single action released a tremendous creative power in the universe, so much so that now in the distance, above the foothills, new soil could be seen arising in ever-increasing mounds. "The summits are beginning to take shape," Krishna declared. "We are entering the final phase of our work on Arishta Mountain."

During the whole day and into the night as the group communed by the lake, the slopes could be seen rising in wondrous shapes, being at once covered with greenery and climbing flowers. Rivulets began to run from out of the rocks, spacious caves formed for the shelter of animals and for ideal meditation retreats for the yogis, trees spread their gracious branches in all the right places for the ease of travellers mounting the route, and fragrances haunted the air, as if coming from the mountain itself. All was an enchantment and a breath of heavenly ease.

The next morning at dawn, Krishna announced to the group that He would go up the mountain alone, first, to survey the work that had been done. "I am the Transcendent and I will now mount My throne," He quipped, walking off briskly, His flute in hand. Everyone watched Him walk as if with gigantic strides across the plain and disappear into a grove of Kadamba trees at the base of the ascending path. Soon they heard His lyric call seeming to come from all directions at once and their souls soared to meet Him in their inner hearts, though none could see His form. "We are Thine," some cried; others swooned in ecstasy, still others stared as if they knew not who they were or where. All were transfixed in some ethereal plane of transcendent Bliss, filled with the Enchanter's Wine. "Oh, come back to us! Leave us not here below only to commune with Thee within! Show us thy single form," they cried. "Make the individual Divine manifest again before our eyes. O Divine Purushottama, leave us not destitute of Thy ineffable smile! Return to us and stay awhile.

Krishna heard their call and, soon finishing His inspection of the heights, re-emerged from where they had last seen Him pace. They rushed to Him with tears of Gratitude and as one body prostrated themselves at His Feet. "Now we are fulfilled," they breathed at last. "Don't ever again leave us; let that way of separation be past. We want to be One with Thee and yet see Thy Form, O Glory of Glories, so wondrously warm!" Krishna responded, "I grant your plea. I will never leave again. You have bound Me with Love; I will remain among men. Fear nothing, for now I am your trusted All-Guide; all sorrow is ended; I will stay by your side."

A hymn then arose from even the atoms of Earth, for a new era had started; the Divine Soul had taken birth. All realms from the lowest to the highest beyond men resounded with the music, celestially kin. Life knew no limit; matter was no bar; and always Sri Krishna's Laughter was heard from afar.

## CONSCIOUSNESS IN PHYSICAL THINGS

GENERALLY we believe, behave and act as if physical things have no consciousness. This is our ignorance.

Not only do physical things have consciousness, but they respond to care and are averse to rough handling.

Sri Aurobindo has said:

“It is very true that physical things have a consciousness within them which feels and responds to care and is sensitive to careless touch and rough handling. To know or feel that and learn to be careful of them is a great progress of consciousness.”

And when Sri Aurobindo has said so, who are we to refute it? But to some of us—sceptics—this would seem to be an exaggeration. Granted that physical things have consciousness, it is not believable that they respond to care and are averse to rough handling. How are we to know that the thing has responded or is offended? The last lines in the statement have answered this point. It requires a greater consciousness on our part to know whether the thing has responded or is offended.

The truth of Sri Aurobindo’s statement is amply illustrated to the letter in the following incident that happened in the life of Lin Chi.

Lin Chi was a Zen Master. Someone came to see him. The man who came was angry. He may have been fighting with his wife, his sons, his parents, his friends, but he was angry. He pushed open the door in anger, threw off his shoes in anger and then came very respectfully and bowed down to Lin Chi. Lin Chi said, “First go and ask forgiveness from the door and from the shoes.” The man must have looked at Lin Chi very strangely. There were other people also sitting there, and they started laughing, Lin Chi said, “Stop” and then addressed the man, “If you don’t do it, just leave. I will have nothing to do with you.” The man said, “It will look crazy to ask forgiveness from the shoes and the door.” Lin Chi said, “It was not crazy when you expressed your anger. Will it now be crazy? Everything has a consciousness. So go. Unless the door and shoes forgive you, I am not going to allow you in.”

The man felt too awkward to go. Later he became a monk himself and grew enlightened. After he had gained enlightenment he related the whole incident and said, “When I stood before the door, asking forgiveness, I felt awkward, foolish. But then I thought: ‘If Lin Chi says so, there must be something in it.’ I trusted Lin Chi. So I thought that even if it was foolish, I must do it. In the beginning whatsoever I was saying was just superficial, artificial; but by and by I started to get warmer. And Lin Chi was waiting and he said that he would watch. If the door and the shoes forgave me, only then could I come in, otherwise I had to stay out until I had persuaded the door and the shoes to forgive me. I forgot that many people were looking, I forgot about Lin Chi and then the concern became sincere and real. I started to feel that the door and the shoes were changing their mood. And the moment I realised that they had done so and that they were feeling happy, Lin Chi immediately said that I could come, I had been forgiven.”

VALLABH SHETH

## SRI AUROBINDO ON INDIAN CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY

A SERIES of articles by Sri Aurobindo under the titles "The Foundations of Indian Culture" and "The Renaissance in India" appeared in the *Arya*. The *Arya* enjoyed an uninterrupted, span (1914-21). The series "The Foundations of Indian Culture" includes articles entitled "Is India Civilised?", "A Rationalistic Critic on Indian Culture", "A Defence of Indian Culture" and "External Influence," while the series "The Renaissance in India" runs to four articles.

In these articles, Sri Aurobindo, besides attempting an exposition of the essentials of Indian culture, dispels certain misconceptions about the Indian attitude to life which not only certain prejudiced Westerners, but also many educated Indians who have come under their impact, suffer from. "Spirituality is the master-key of the Indian mind," says Sri Aurobindo. The Westerners and their cultural counterparts, the cultural exiles on the Indian soil, equate Indian spirituality with unpractical other-worldliness. The Indians are dismissed as a nation of dreamers given to metaphysical speculation and divorced from life's hard realities.

It is high time spirituality grew the dominant, governing impulse of the Indian mind. Spirituality implies an awareness of a transcendental order of reality beyond and behind external phenomena. The Indian mind recognises and emphasises the operation of spiritual supramental forces. Man is not just a bundle of flesh and bones. "A spark disturbs our clod," says Robert Browning. Man holds within himself the element of divinity. With introspection and diving within, he can conquer "ranges of mind beyond our present mind, become a god, become one with God, become the ineffable *Brahman*."

Though spirituality is the main strand in the Indian mental fabric, India is not a land of lotus-eaters. Spirituality does not mean escape from or ascetic negation of life. It does not flourish in a vacuum. "It does not grow on an impoverished soil," declares Sri Aurobindo. Spiritual discipline calls for a healthy mind and body. Swami Vivekananda says that we cannot preach the Gita to a hungry man and that one who plays football understands the Gita better. The leaves and buds of a tree are exposed to the light of the sun. So is the mountain-top. But the tree and the mountain are fast rooted to the soil. So is human life when the light of spirituality flows into it, enriching it in the midst of life's preoccupations. There is no antithesis between life spiritual and life material, between life contemplative and life active. Life is a synthesis of these two complementary elements.

That spirituality was not the sole preoccupation of the Indian mind in the past is borne out by the fact that it was engaged in different areas of creative activity—art, architecture, trade, politics, science, etc. Such many-sided, vital, intellectual and aesthetic pursuits would not have been possible if the Indian mind was unilateral, moving only in the direction of spirituality. Indian culture has laid stress on the

balanced development of all the faculties of man—physical, mental, moral and spiritual. In the past one hundred years and more India has been exposed to Western ideas on democracy, progress and scientific and technological development. Sri Aurobindo stresses the need for India to adopt and assimilate modern ideas without sacrificing her inherent spirituality. No nation today can remain in isolation and India, says Sri Aurobindo, should keep the windows of her mind and soul open to receive from different quarters healthy influences which promote human development.

It is a mistake to identify spirituality with any particular religious system or denomination in India. It might form part of a particular religious tradition, but it goes beyond religion in the formal, restricted sense of the term. Religion, overlaid with dogma, superstition and ritual, tends to degenerate into religiosity, whereas true religion is a quest for the divine in man. Spirituality provides a scale of enduring values to measure and regulate practical and material life. It is a dynamic force capable of transforming life on earth into life divine. Spiritual pursuit and pragmatic activity are not mutually exclusive, nor do they run counter to each other. On the contrary, they fulfil each other.

S. JAGADISAN



# MAIN TRENDS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY TO-DAY

(Continued from the issue of October 1984)

THE emergence of the Analytical School of philosophy in the West has revolutionised the very conception of philosophy. Admittedly, linguistic analysis has a methodological importance, but it is always a means, never an end. The clarifactory function involved in the process of linguistic analysis can no doubt save us from "the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (Wittgenstein), but language-analysis can at best serve as the preparatory ground of the activity called philosophising. Language-analysis is a clarifactory and not a creative function, while philosophical activity is undoubtedly a creative one. Incidentally, ancient Indian thinkers were not totally unaware of the importance of language-analysis. Some centuries ago, Indian Philosophy developed its branch of linguistic analysis, such as Vakya-Sastra of the Mimamsa and Sabdha-Kanda of Nyaya. Existentialism and Phenomenology are the most powerful current philosophic movements of the West. Existentialism has a humanistic orientation and an inward-looking tendency. Man's inner subjectivity, Existentialism suggests, is the only subject-matter of philosophic enquiry. Nevertheless it is a sort of ego-centric philosophy vitiated by anti-scientific dogmatism. Existentialism and Phenomenology have some superficial affinity with the general philosophic outlook of India, but the differences are even more glaring and deep-rooted. A full-length exposition of the fundamentals of modern Western thought along with their implications do not fall within the scope of our present discourse. All that we wish to suggest is that these significant philosophical doctrines have exerted some sort of magical charm and captivated the imagination of some of the Indian scholars and academic philosophers so much so that they servilely accept these schools of modern Western Philosophy and cast a sneering look at their own philosophic tradition. Interestingly enough, the Marxist Philosophy has not been able to exert any perceptible influence on the academic philosophers of India. Is it on account of its materialistic and deterministic character?

Admittedly, knowledge knows no geographical boundary, it is the proud possession of all mankind. But philosophical questions, statements and facts are of such nature that absolute certainty or finality is never to be met with in this sphere. Evidently creative thinking can never be advanced by borrowing or echoing tendencies from the West. We would do well to remember that man can be free and more genuinely creative through being released from the boredom of repetition. "Our seers," observes Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "desired not to copy but to create. They were ever anxious to win fresh fields for truth and answer the riddles of experience which is ever changing and therefore new. The richness of inheritance never served to enslave their minds."<sup>1</sup> However, we do not seek to suggest that original

<sup>1</sup> Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II. London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1955: P. 776.

thinking is altogether absent in India in the present century. We have outstanding original thinkers like Prof. K. C. Bhattacharya, and Gopinath Kaviraj, but the structural organisation of a system can only be met with in the metaphysical doctrine (Integral Advaita) of Sri Aurobindo.

Academicism has become one of the striking features of Indian Philosophy to-day. Academicism might have a charm especially for a certain type of mind which finds pleasure in logical quibblings or in meticulous expositions of subtleties. But if this is carried too far, the entire dissertation abounds with abstract, lifeless ideas and categories. A good number of modern academicians doing philosophy indulge in the game of analysis to the point of making endless hair-splitting distinctions ultimately leading to triviality and indifference to the basic problems affecting man's existence. The vital importance of expository analysis as an instrument of philosophic enquiry cannot be disputed, but it is dangerous to quibble over non-essentials when the time for utilizing our intellect for some creative activity arises. It is worthwhile to remember that life is not logic-chopping or verbalism. Every intellectual discipline should have some social significance, either direct or indirect, and philosophy does not enjoy immunity from this need. So, while attempting to present a coherent intellectual picture of our experience in broad outlines, it should not encourage alienation from the practical problems of life. A purposeful quest into the crucial problems arising out of man's existential situations as well as his dreams and desires, beliefs and aspirations should find place in any meaningful philosophical investigation.

In the present century, the scientific, industrial and technological revolution has radicalized man's outlook and behavioural patterns, but this has its concomitant failures and disadvantages. The advancement of Science and technology has resulted in a serious erosion of the values cherished by the majority of mankind. Despite endless accumulation of wealth and all-round material prosperity, man in this age feels inwardly impoverished and his life is full of tension and sorrow, doubt and uncertainty. In such a situation philosophy in addition to the formulation of a theoretical generalisation of man's experience in its entirety should formulate 'new patterns of thought and conduct and inspire new endeavours', so that a rational ordering of the society might be possible. But unfortunately contemporary Indian philosophers have not shown adequate interest in the examination of social phenomena. Social Philosophy has not made significant strides as it should have done. Hence it has been alleged, though not quite unreasonably, that "Contemporary India is without a Praxiology based upon Philosophy."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Praxiology" means "a general theory of efficient action." Such a theory was conceived and christened by Kotarbinski. Henryk Skolimowski in his *Polish Analytical Philosophy* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967) also used this expression. In his own words: "Until the twentieth century there was no general theory of efficient action which would embrace all human activities regardless of the kind of activity ... It is rather peculiar that no department of learning was reserved for the theoretical reflection upon practical activities from the point of view of their efficiency or efficacy.... The science of efficient action, whatever the field of activity, physical or mental,

Eminent academic and professional philosophers are classed along with others in the group of the intellectuals and they owe, unlike the commoners, a special social responsibility on account of their possession of a superior intellectual capacity characterised by hindsight, insight, farsight and creative freedom. An intellectual, who might not necessarily be a social reformer or a professional politician, might enrich by his profound reflections the cultural foundation of the society to which he belongs. In India, most of our modern intellectuals have not shown much awareness of the significant role which they might play at the crucial juncture of history. Sometimes their reflections lack relevance to situational contexts. Certain failings are common to them, they suffer from indecision when vital issues are involved; they maintain, at least so far as their articulated expression goes, a stoic indifference to all cruelty and injustice, distortion and decadence. Most of them are preoccupied with trifles and insignificants. Hence they fail to provide the real intellectual leadership expected of them. This apart, when an intellectual becomes a promotionist, careerist, propagandist or a mouthpiece of the establishment, he loses all credibility. As a matter of fact, it is doubtful whether a person who does not respond to the basic human problems of contemporary India could be called an intellectual at all. In the post-Independence days, Indian philosophers have not shown much interest in the deliberations of the issues having contemporary social significance; as a result Social Philosophy has not flourished here to the extent desirable. If this tendency is not reversed and modern Indian Philosophy continues to maintain its indifference to human history, a day is not far off when Indian academic philosophy will fail to evoke any respect and credibility from the thinkers and scholars of other disciplines and people will not turn to philosophy for inspiration and guidance.

Indian Philosophy, in order to retain its time-old distinctive spirit and acquire a new identity, should endeavour to carve out an independent Indian way of thinking, keeping in mind the contemporary historical situation. A proper appraisal and sympathetic understanding of the recent trends of Western Philosophy with its central focus on man and his problems is essential for the intellectual equipment of an individual thinker engaged in serious philosophical activity. But a mere imitative continuation of what is being thought elsewhere will not help modern Indian philosophers in achieving creative freedom. Original and independent thinking only can help Indian Philosophy to-day to attain new identity and purposiveness but this cannot be generated merely through money or by providing facilities of a varied nature. For the healthy growth of original philosophic thinking, we need a community of philosophers devoted to the pursuit of knowledge and truth, who in turn create an appropriate cultural environment essential for the flowering of independent

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and whatever the scale of activity, a one-minute performance or a gigantic undertaking, has received the name 'Praxiology' " (p. 116). Our contention repeats that of Dr. K. Satchidananda as articulated in his brilliant paper "Philosophy, Development and National Crisis" which he read as the Presidential Address in the 54th Session of the Indian Philosophical Congress, Madras, 1979 and later included in the *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. VII (1978-80).

thinking. But in recent years something queer has happened in our intellectual life and the scholars and professional philosophers of India have developed a mentality which is unwilling to welcome anything great and extraordinary; we are not eager to hear a great voice which would command respect. We are happy with the average and the mediocre. It is to be wished that this tendency is reversed.

The vitality and dynamism of Western Philosophy has in recent years enabled it to enrich considerably certain branches of knowledge, such as Philosophy of Science, Mathematical Logic, Political Philosophy, by initiating new thoughts and ideas and it would be mere wishful thinking that Indian philosophers will in the near future be able to contribute substantially towards the enrichment of these branches of knowledge by expounding new thoughts and ideas. Modern Indian philosophers can, however, truthfully explore certain areas, such as: Philosophical Anthropology, Epistemology, Ethical Studies, Philosophy of Religion, Theory of Culture, Social Philosophy where new thoughts and ideas could be explored in conformity with our sense of values *vis-à-vis* the scientific technological value-system of the West. Also, modern Indian philosophers cannot afford to alienate themselves from the study of human society. The social life of modern India is afflicted with certain grave socio-political problems, some of which have resulted from the acceptance of the principles of socio-political organisation of the West. They need reevaluation in the light of a new theoretical framework, a new paradigm comprising new questionings, new modes of approach to these problems.

Man's outer life is the mirror of his inner life. And if the problems of our inner life are properly attended to, much of the disorder of our public life can be done away with. Indian Philosophy today should focus its attention on this side of man's life. India has learnt the value of growing through absorption and assimilation rather than through confrontation and conflict. Indian Philosophy to-day might attain a new identity, a new personality by an original and creative synthesis of the traditional and modern values. Modern Indian Philosophy can only be revitalised if it maintains its commitment to the spirit or soul of India and give that commitment new form and new vitality.

(Concluded)

RANJIT KUMAR ACHARJEE

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual—1984**, published by Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir, 15, Bankim Chatterji St. Calcutta-700 073, pages: 116+108. Price: Rs. 15/-

OPEN this annual and a feast awaits you. Seventeen photographs of the Mother and six photographs of Sri Aurobindo taken at different times adorn the first fifteen pages. Printed in pleasant colours they are certainly a treat for your eyes. This album forms the first part of the annual.

The second part carries a selection from the writings of Sri Aurobindo, The Mother and Nolini Kanta Gupta.

The 'Sri Aurobindo' section begins with a message delivered by him to a young man who met him on his birthday August 15, 1909. Here is an excerpt from that inspiring piece: "You will have to sacrifice yourself at the feet of your mother. You should, therefore, devote yourself with firm faith and whole heart to her service. Service of our motherland is our highest duty at this moment. This must be our duty in this iron age. It is now the time for us to conserve our energy. Do not be impatient, do not despair. Do not lose faith." His speech at the 'Hoogly Conference' (September 1909) and his letter to the editor of *The Hindu* that announces his bidding goodbye to politics to pursue his yogic sadhana completes the 'Historical Section'. They are useful documents to his biographers. What follows is the 'Vedic and Vedantic Section'. His translations of selected Hymns of Vasishtha Maitravaruni; some chapters for a work on the Isha Upanishad that discuss in detail the Hindu explanation of the world, the interpretation of Vedanta, the instruments and field of Vedanta and finally a chapter for a work on Vedanta which tells us the means of Realisation—these are all grouped under this section.

In the second section of the second part we read the writings of the Mother. 'Helping Humanity' discusses the thoughts of the Buddha and Saint Vincent de Paul who stood at the two poles of human consciousness, yet both believed in salvation through the spirit, through the absolute, unknowable to thought, which one called Nirvana and the other God. Her 'Four Talks on Education' are answers given to questions. These answers not only clarify the doubts of the teachers but also instruct them how to be perfect in their profession: "Never make a mistake. Never lose your temper. Always understand." She gives us clues to awaken in the children the interest and the desire to learn. Such instructions need to be followed in all Educational Institutions to bring in harmony between the teacher and the taught. Finally in 'The Problem of Woman' she discusses how woman is enslaved to man and why no law can liberate women unless they liberate themselves psychologically. This section is of great interest to laymen too.

Then we come to the final section of the second part. There are three essays by Nolini Kanta Gupta. In the first one after defining the ideal of Sri Aurobindo: "It is to divinise the human, immortalise the mortal, spiritualise the material," he

poses two questions: "Is the ideal possible? Is the ideal practicable?" His answers follow. First of all he shows that it is possible, next that it is probable and finally that it is inevitable. 'The Mother and the Nature of Work' tells us something about a bit of her life and a bit of her activities. In the last one, he speaks of the system of creation in which two lines of growth or development or expression can be seen. That is a double ladder one mounting from below and the other coming down from above.

Nothing need be said of the closing part that is the advertisement section except that it occupies half of the annual. As usual this engaging annual with a different tone of voice for each is worth its price.

P. RAJA