

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE

21 FEBRUARY 1984 : THE ANNIVERSARY OF
THE MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

Price: Rs. 3.00

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

INLAND

Annual: Rs. 30.00

Life Membership: Rs. 420.00

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Annual: \$11.00 or £5.50

Life Membership: \$154.00 or £77.00

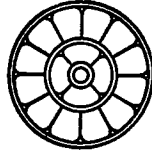
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Life Membership: \$448.00 for American & Pacific countries

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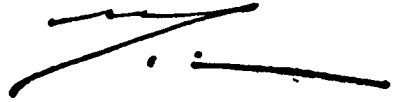


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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

Editor's Phone: 4782

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Published by: P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY - 605 002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry - 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No. R. N. 8667/63

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Vol. XXXVI

No. 2

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A PRAYER OF THE MOTHER

FEBRUARY 1, 1914

↓

I TURN towards Thee who art everywhere and within all and outside all, intimate essence of all and remote from all, centre of condensation for all energies, creator of conscious individualities: I turn towards Thee and salute Thee, O liberator of the worlds, and, identified with Thy divine love, I contemplate the earth and its creatures, this mass of substance put into forms perpetually destroyed and renewed, this swarming mass of aggregates which are dissolved as soon as constituted, of beings who imagine that they are conscient and permanent individualities and who are as ephemeral as a breath, always alike or almost the same, in their diversity, repeating indefinitely the same desires, the same tendencies, the same appetites, the same ignorant errors.

But from time to time Thy sublime light shines in a being and radiates through him over the world, and then a little wisdom, a little knowledge, a little disinterested faith, heroism and compassion penetrates men's hearts, transforms their minds and sets free a few elements from that sorrowful and implacable wheel of existence to which their blind ignorance subjects them.

But how much greater a splendour than all that have gone before, how marvellous a glory and light would be needed to draw these beings out of the horrible aberration in which they are plunged by the life of cities and so-called civilisations! What a formidable and, at the same time, divinely sweet puissance would be needed to turn aside all these wills from the bitter struggle for their selfish, mean and foolish satisfactions, to snatch them from this vortex which hides death behind its treacherous glitter, and turn them towards Thy conquering harmony!

O Lord, eternal Master, enlighten us, guide our steps, show us the way towards the realisation of Thy law, towards the accomplishment of Thy work.

I adore Thee in silence and listen to Thee in a religious concentration.

Prayers and Meditations (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1979).

THE MOTHER

A TALK BY M. P. PANDIT ON FEBRUARY 20, 1983

Om Anandamayi Chaitanyamayi Satyamayi Parame!

MEETING as we are on the eve of the Mother's Birthday tomorrow, it is natural that we should be full of thoughts and feelings about her who has given meaning to our lives, and direction to the world.

I remember it was exactly ten years ago—1973—that on the early morning of the 21st when my sister woke up, she was hearing a crescendo of Bonne Fête! Bonne Fête! Bonne Fête! from all sides. When I reported this to the Mother the same morning, she had such a sweet smile, affirmative, that it is still fresh in my mind. It feels as if it happened only yesterday. With Mother the years do not count. I would like to take this occasion to draw your attention to a few special features of her life.

She once observed that it took the Supreme Creatrix, the Adi-Shakti, nearly a thousand years to gather material to form her body. The material was taken from all over the universe and organised. It took that long. I remembered this remark of hers much later in her life when she was once discussing the possibility of "this time" or "some other time" for transformation. Drawing attention to the state of her body, she said it was immaterial to her whether she was to live or go. But she needed to know sufficiently in advance, in order to put back into the sources the various elements that had been assembled in her. She meant not only the physical body, but the various other bodies also. Her body, the form we call the Mother, was not made in the usual manner. There was a great past behind it, not a past of evolution, not a past of karma, but a past of higher preparation.

Further, she was disarmingly frank in saying that she chose her parents because she wanted a firm materialistic foundation on which to work out the divine transformation. Thus it was that her parents were those who never believed in religion, in God. You know her father was a banker who didn't care a dime for higher values. Her mother prided herself on being a positivist who would always think that anybody reporting a dream or an experience of a different type was a fit case for the psychiatrist. Those were the surroundings of her birth and early growth.

You may note that in the case of Sri Aurobindo also, he himself draws attention to the fact that his family was not a very religious one. There was no spiritual backdrop for him in his family. He confirms that he was an agnostic, though not an atheist, when he was in England. But the Mother says she was an atheist, she was a rebel against God, the God familiarised by the religions with which she was familiar,—the Christian, the Jewish, the Muslim, the God that they may have visualised and established in the human mind, the God who inflicts punishment. She rebelled against such a Being who, after creating this unequal universe, visited punishment

on people who are not responsible for this mess. She grew up without belief in God.

But she says it was when she met Théon, her occult teacher, about 1904, that he pointed out to her that God is *within*. You know this is a totally foreign conception for the Christian or the Jewish or the Islamic mind. For them God is there above, but when Théon said God is within (pointing to the heart), it carried conviction to her and then everything changed. All changed to such an extent that, as she has observed, even before she met Sri Aurobindo, three-fourths of the work had been done. Of course, though she did not believe in God as such, she was aware of a Consciousness and she has noted that by the age of 20 she had established a constant communion with the Consciousness within. Still she felt there was a lot more to be done. A little later, Swami Vivekananda's lectures on Rajayoga (a French translation) came to her hands. And she was amazed to find that there could be somebody who could give such detailed directions and she achieved within a few months what would normally have taken a few years. Very soon, when she was 21, she happened to meet Prof. Jnan Chakravarty (of Lucknow University), husband of Yashoda-ma, the Vaishnav Guru of Sri Krishna Prem. He was passing through Paris. He gave the Mother a copy of the Gita and told her: Regard Lord Krishna as the immanent Divine and surrender to him. And she says that all the work was done within a month.

These are certain landmarks in her development. It was a little later that she came into contact with the Théons and organised the occult knowledge that she already had. It is not that she learnt the A.B.C. of occultism from Théon, she had it on her own. She used to have out-of-body experiences, telekinesis, etc. But to learn it as a systematic science, she chose to go to Tlemcén in Algeria where she stayed with Théon and his gifted wife Alma. She learnt from Madame Théon the technique of denuding oneself of sheath after sheath, the physical body, the subtle-physical body, the vital body and so on, as many as twelve times, at the end of which one is on the border of form and formlessness. And it is there on the border of formlessness, she records, that she saw an outline which resembled the human form; it gave her the perception that this form with whatever modification is a protoform, it is going to stay. This form is going to stay in its broad framework. She was told by Théon—and it was later confirmed by Sri Aurobindo—that each cycle of creation has a beginning and an end. There have been so far six such cycles which have come and gone. But the present one which is the seventh has no end, it will be an endless progression, because of the intended transformation by the Supramental Consciousness and Power, which is an integral part of the programme for this cycle. It may not be achieved today, but certainly it will be done one day. Her coming here and meeting Sri Aurobindo and all that followed afterwards are facts of common knowledge.

Sometime later in her life, she exploded some myths that had grown up regarding her. One of them was that when Paul Richard met Sri Aurobindo in 1910 he was supposed to have asked Sri Aurobindo the meaning of a lotus which his wife used to see in her visions. It was reported that Sri Aurobindo explained that the lotus is a blossoming of consciousness at the touch of the Divine Ray and so on. But when

the Mother saw this report about Richard she said, "No, I never sent any question to be asked, perhaps he himself may have asked."¹

As you know, the Mother was very frank, almost brutally frank when she chose to be so, on purpose, otherwise she would not say anything, there would be only an enigmatic smile. Now, on February 29, 1956, we all know that there was a Manifestation. We also know that the Mother was disappointed that nobody here knew of the great Event as it took place. It was the Manifestation of the Supramental for which the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had worked. And there was a tendency everywhere to look for the results. The Mother frankly tells us that what came was not the supramental consciousness, supramental truth, but its aspect of power, she repeated on another occasion that what had come was the supramental light, force and power, but what then came was simply swallowed up by fumes after fumes, dark fumes, rising from the earth. So even what came has had to slowly organise itself and work to prepare the ground for further manifestations. That is why even after 20/25 years we may not see spectacular results in the world. But those of us who are observant, those who are earnest in their sadhana, can see a loosening of knots, a crumbling of obstinate difficulties, an effortless aspiration and a conviction, a certainty that the divine power is here, the Divine is at work.

Nobody needs to argue and convince us, because she *is* present. A few years back our centres started asking for relics of the Mother. It was difficult to refuse, because it was argued, "Sri Aurobindo's relics are with us, now we want the Mother's." At that time Nolini-da wrote a brief statement which appealed to me very much, and indeed to all of us. He said: "Relics are of those who have gone. But for us Mother is here; how can you talk of her relics?" The inevitable question arises: what about Sri Aurobindo? It was pointed out that it was the Mother who decided to give his relics and we cannot explain why. That set all demands at rest and nobody now talks of the Mother's relics. She is **HERE**. It is an experience of every single person staying and visiting the Ashram that her presence is as concrete as when she was in her physical body—perhaps even closer. I have experienced it here and also 10,000 miles from here. People who have never been here have experienced it. And when she said that the whole world was her Ashram she meant it. The Mother is present in such a concrete way that she does not need to speak through artificial modes, through mediums. She can talk direct—not in words, words are suspect,—but through psychic feeling. Her direction is unmistakable. She always functions through our psychic or through the silent and pure mind. The Mother has indeed no successor in the manner of the *sampradaya* or religious lineages. She is **PRESENT** in an unmistakable way. She is our Teacher and Mother. We know her more as our Mother than as our Teacher. And no one can be so foolish as to arrogate to himself the position of the Mother. That would be sacrilege.

Once when somebody from Bombay wrote of a communication received from

¹ Another myth exploded is that she had asked Richard to consult Sri Aurobindo on the interpretation of the symbol known as the Seal of Solomon, also called the Star of David.—Editor

Sri Aurobindo through a medium, she said: "Sri Aurobindo is far beyond the plane that can be contacted by mediums and such." The same applies to the Mother.

She warned before she left: There will be many attempts to imitate me, to imitate my voice, beware. Her intimation is through the psychic. And she said: then there would be a great danger of an attempt being made to pervert Sri Aurobindo's teaching into a religion which would be narrow and cruel. That danger is very much there as the Asura wants to pervert the Truth. We have been fortunate that wherever such attempts are made, she sees to it that they are checkmated. We don't need to make any special effort for that if only we are sincere to her. And that was what she wanted. Provided one is sincere, she forgives everything. Whatever the foolishness, the obstinacy, she overlooks it provided there is this sincerity.

Another characteristic of the Mother is freedom. Sri Aurobindo speaks in the first chapter of *The Life Divine* how, of the three or four divine verities that have made a perennial appeal to mankind, freedom is one. And the Mother cherished freedom. She insisted on giving freedom to everyone. She explains how even in cases of difficulty she would intervene without interfering. Mark her words. When you are in difficulties you pray for help and the Guru cuts across your karma, and does something which actually is an interference in your growth. Her way was to intervene without interfering. There were a hundred such observations of hers, each of which could form a theme for a book, a philosophy. Every word of hers was a scripture. She did not write, she did not discuss philosophies, but every word that she said was the seed of a philosophy, much more than that. It is Truth put in such terms that even a child can understand.

If anyone can be said to have taken the Divine to the common man, it is she; when Sri Aurobindo said, All life is Yoga, it was she who demonstrated that all life can indeed become Yoga, if one has a will for it.

These are some thoughts about the Mother that should help us to keep a proper perspective in our faithful adherence to the Truth for which she stood and worked and for which she is working still, though from behind the veil. The veil is transparent, very thin and almost not there. Not all people write books of their experiences, not all people communicate; their experiences are too intimate. But every day somewhere or other, there are miracles, miracles of guidance, miracles of salvation, miracles of light getting into the dark horizons. We can make this our theme and with devotion and the purest love that we can summon in our humble adoration, let us meditate on her in preparation for the great day tomorrow.

(From "Service Letter" of 1 4. 1983)

THE MOTHER ON SRI AUROBINDO AND THE RELIGIO-SPIRITUAL PAST

FROM A LETTER ON 31.3.1967 BY PAVITRA (PHILIPPE BARBIER ST. HILAIRE) TO THE REGISTRAR OF THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

I HAVE read to the Mother the proposals that were discussed and adopted by the teachers about the introduction of the "Project Method" in the afternoon's supervised study classes in the Library. The Mother approved fully the principles of this new venture.

But when she heard the synopsis of the first Project "On the Spiritual History of India", she said:

"No! It won't do. It is not to be done that way. You should begin with a big 'BANG'!

"You were trying to show the continuity of History, with Sri Aurobindo as the outcome, the culmination.... It is false, entirely ...

"Sri Aurobindo does not belong to History; he is outside and beyond History."

Then she went on explaining:


"Till the birth of Sri Aurobindo, religions and spiritualities were always centred on past figures, and they were showing as 'the goal' the negation of life upon earth....

"Sri Aurobindo has told us that this was a fundamental mistake which accounts for the weakness and degradation of India....

"True, India is the only place in the world which is still aware that something else than matter exists. The other countries have quite forgotten it: Europe, America and elsewhere.... That is why she still has a message to preserve and deliver to the world. But at present she is splashing and floundering in the muddle.

"Sri Aurobindo has shown that the truth does not lie in running away from earthly life but in remaining *in it*, to *transform it*, *divinize it*, so that the Divine can manifest **HERE**, in this **PHYSICAL WORLD**.

"You should tell all this at the first sitting. You should be square and frank... like that!"

She makes with her hands a big  on the table.

"Then, when this is told, strongly, squarely, and there is no doubt about it—and then only—you can go on and amuse them with the history of religions and religious or spiritual leaders.

"Then—and then only—you will be able to discern, from time to time, from place to place, an 'intuition' that something else is possible; in the Vedas, for instance (the injunction to descend deep into the cave of the Panis); in the Tantras also... a little light burning...."

I may add that you could adopt as *motto* for your first Project this quotation of Sri Aurobindo:

“We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future.”

(*Essays on the Gita*)

La Mère a ajouté le Message suivant:

“Sri Aurobindo n’appartient pas au passé et à l’histoire.

“Sri Aurobindo est l’avenir en marche vers la réalisation.

“Il nous faut donc nous revêtir d’une jeunesse éternelle pour pouvoir avancer avec la rapidité voulue et ne pas être des retardataires sur le chemin.¹

bénédictions.”

LA MÈRE

¹ Editor’s Note: This message could be translated—

“Sri Aurobindo does not belong to the past nor to history.

“Sri Aurobindo is the Future advancing towards its realisation.

“We must clothe ourselves in an eternal youthfulness in order to advance with the speed required and not be laggards on the way.”

A statement akin to this as well as to the more detailed declaration in Pavitra’s letter is the earlier one of 1961:

“The essential mistake was to have considered Sri Aurobindo’s teaching as one among the spiritual teachings—and the work done here now as one among the many aspects of the Divine works.

“This has falsified your basic position and has been the cause of all the difficulties and confusions.

“If this mistake is corrected in your mind and in your attitude all other difficulties will disappear easily.

“You must understand that what Sri Aurobindo represents in the world’s history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a *decisive action* direct from the Supreme.

“And I am just trying to fulfil that action.”

TWO TALKS BY THE MOTHER

THE DIVINE AND HIS CREATION

TRULY speaking, to be practical, the problem could be expressed like this. If the Divine had not conceived His creation as progressive, there could have been from the beginning a beatific, immobile and unchangeable condition. But the minute... How shall I explain it, I don't know. Just because the universe had to be progressive, perfect identity, the bliss of this identity, the full consciousness of this identity had necessarily to be veiled, otherwise nothing would have ever stirred.

A static universe may be conceived. One could conceive of something which is "all at one and the same time": that there is no time, only a kind of objectivisation—but not an unfolding in which things manifest progressively one after another, according to a special rhythm; that they are all manifested at the same time, all at once. Then all would be in a blissful state and there would be no universe as we see it, the element of unfolding would be missing, which constitutes... well, what we live in at present.

But once we admit this principle that the universe is progressive, the unfolding progressive, that instead of seeing everything together and all at once, our perception is progressive, then everything takes its right place within it. And inevitably the future perfection must be felt as something higher than what was there before. The realisation towards which we are moving must necessarily seem superior to the one which was accomplished before.

And this opens the door to everything—to all possibilities.

Sri Aurobindo often said this: what appeared beautiful, good, even perfect, and marvellous and divine at a given moment in the universe, can no longer appear so now. And what now seems to us beautiful, marvellous, divine and perfect, will be an obscurity after some time. And in the same way, the gods who were all-powerful at a certain period belong to a lower reality than the gods who will manifest tomorrow.

And that is a sign that the universe is progressive.

This has been said, this has been repeated, but people don't understand, you know, when it concerns all those great ages, that they are like a reduction of the universal progress to the human measure.

That is why if one enters the state in which everything, as it is, appears perfectly divine, one necessarily goes out of the universal movement at the same time. This is what people like Buddha or Shankara had understood. They expressed in their own way that if you could realise the state in which everything appears to you perfectly divine or perfectly perfect, you necessarily go out of the universal movement and enter the Unmanifest.

This is correct. It is like that.

They were sufficiently dissatisfied with life as it was and had very little hope that

it could become better; so for them this was the ideal solution. I call it escaping, but still... It is not so easy! But for them it was the ideal solution—up to a certain point, for... there is perhaps one more step to take.

But it is a fact. If one wants to remain in the universe, one must admit the principle of progress, for this is a progressive universe. If you want to realise a static perfection, well, you will inevitably be thrown out of the universe, for you will no longer belong to its principle.

It is a choice.

Only, Sri Aurobindo often used to say: people who choose the exit forget that at the same time they will lose the consciousness with which they could congratulate themselves on their choice! They forget that.

18.7.1956

(Questions and Answers, 1956, pp. 232-34)

PREFERENCES AND DIFFERENCES

Here is a question I have been asked—it seems many people are asking themselves the same thing! I am going to read to you what is written, then I shall speak to you afterwards. It looks so convincing, this question:

“How should we understand ‘not to have preferences’? Shouldn’t we prefer order to disorder, cleanliness to dirt, etc? Not to have preferences—does it mean treating everybody in the same way?”

Now, here is my answer: this is playing on words! What you call preference, I call choice. You must be in a perpetual state of choice; at every minute of your life you must make a choice between what drags you down and what draws you up, between what makes you progress and what makes you go backwards; but I do not call this having preferences, I call this making a choice—making a choice, choosing. At every minute one has to choose, this is indispensable, and infinitely more so than choosing once for all between cleanliness and dirt, whether moral or physical. The choice: at every second the choice is before you, and you may take a step downward or a step upward, take a step backward or a step forward; and this state of choice must be constant, perpetual; you must never fall asleep. But this is not what I call having preferences. Preferences—this means precisely not choosing. There is something for which you feel sympathy or antipathy, repulsion or attraction, and blindly, without any reason, you become attached to this thing; or else, when you have a problem to solve, you prefer the solution of this problem or this difficulty to be of one particular kind or another. But that is not at all choosing—don’t you see, what the truest thing is doesn’t come into question, it is a matter of having a preference. For me the meaning of the word is very clear: a preference is something blind,

an impulse, an attachment, an unconscious movement which is usually terribly obstinate.

You are placed in certain circumstances; one thing or another may happen, and you yourself have an aspiration, you ask to be guided, but within you there is something which prefers the answer to be of a certain kind, the indication to be a particular one, or the event to come about in one way rather than another; but all this is not a question of choice, it is a preference. And when the answer to your aspiration or prayer is not in accord with your desire, this preference makes you feel unhappy, you find it difficult to accept the answer, you must fight to accept it; whereas if you had no preferences, whatever the answer to your aspiration, when it comes, you cling to it joyfully, spontaneously with a sincere *élan*. Otherwise you are compelled to make an effort to accept what comes, the decision which comes in answer to your aspiration; you wish, desire, prefer things to be like this and not like that. But that, indeed, is not a choice. The choice is there at every minute; every minute you are faced with a choice: the choice to climb up or go down, the choice to progress or go backwards. But this choice does not imply that you prefer things to be like this or like that; it is a fact of every moment, an *attitude* you take.

Choice means a decision and an action. Preference is a desire. A choice is made and *ought* to be made, and if it is truly a choice, it is made without care for the consequences, without expecting any result. You choose; you choose according to your inner truth, your highest consciousness; whatever happens does not touch you, you have made your choice, the true choice, and what comes about is not your concern. While, on the contrary, if you have preferences, you will choose through preference in one way or another, your preference will distort your choice: it will be calculation, bargaining, you will act with the idea that a particular thing must happen because this is what you prefer and not because that is the truth, the right thing to do. Preference is attached to the result, acts with a view to the result, wishes things to be in a particular way and acts to bring about its wish; and so this opens the door to all kinds of things. Choice is independent of the result. And certainly, at every minute you can choose, you are faced with the necessity of choosing at every second. And you do not choose really well, in all sincerity, unless it is the truth of the choice which interests you, and not the result of your choice. If you choose with the result in view, that falsifies your choice.

So I say it is playing on words, it is mixing up two different things; and so you ask questions which seem insoluble, for it is a mixture. There is a confusion in the question.

As for treating everybody in the same way, it is a worse confusion still! It is the kind of confusion one makes when one says that the Divine must treat everybody in the same way. So it would not be worth the trouble to have diversity in the world, not worth the trouble of not having two identical individuals; for this contradicts the very principle of diversity.

You may—or you ought to if you can't—aspire to have the same deep atti-

tude of understanding, unity, love, perfect compassion for all that is in the universe; but this very attitude will be applied to each case in a different way, according to the truth of that case and its necessity. What could be called the motive or rather the origin of the action is the same, but the action may even be totally and diametrically opposite in accordance with the case and the deeper truth of each case. But for that, precisely, one must have the highest attitude, the most profound, the most essentially true, that which is free from all outer contingencies. Then one can see at every minute not only the essential truth but also the truth of the action; and in each case it is different. And yet, what we may call "feeling"—though this is an inadequate word—or the state of consciousness in which one acts, is essentially the same.

But this cannot be understood unless one enters the essential depth of things and sees them from the highest summits. And then it is like a centre of light and consciousness high enough or deep enough to be able to see all things at the same time, not only in their essence but in their manifestation; and although the centre of consciousness is one, the action will be as diverse as the manifestation is diverse: it is the realisation of the divine Truth in its manifestation. Otherwise it would be doing away with all the diversity of the world and bringing it back to the essential unmanifest Oneness, for it is only in the non-manifestation that the One is manifested as the One. But as soon as one enters the manifestation, the One manifests as the multiplicity, and multiplicity implies a multitude of actions and ways.

So, to sum up: the choice must be made without care for the consequences, and the action must be performed in accordance with the truth of the multiplicity in the manifestation.

There we are.

(Questions and Answers, 1956, pp. 405-8)

THY WONDER

ON the margin of a lonely shore
 I saw Thy Light as never before.
 Stone-still I stood and gazed
 At Thy wonder golden-blazed.
 Dawn woke rose-glories everywhere—
 My heart was a rapture I could hardly bear—
 Close to Thee felt each single beat.
 Suddenly I saw Thy sacred feet!
 I knelt and then looked up at Thee
 And found the Truth that was this me!

LALITAMAL

THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

A SUMMING-UP BY SRI AUROBINDO

A VEIL behind the heart, a lid over the mind divide us from the Divine. Love and devotion rend the veil, in the quietude of the mind the lid thins and vanishes

September 9, 1936

(“On Himself”, *Centenary Vol. XXVI*, p. 215)

AN INSIGHT ON METRE AND RHYTHM

TWO LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO TO AMAL

YOU ask why “What sanctities has thy ear dreaming known? [in *Far Flute*] is not metre. Well, because *thy* is too weak here to bear even a suggested accent and the distribution of stress becomes “What ^{sanctities} has thy eár ^{dreaming} kn^{own}?”, which makes no imaginable metre. If the last syllable of “sanctities” were strong or if “ear” were replaced by a sound on which “thy” could lean for strength, there would be a metre of a kind but still no rhythm—unless there is a very successful transition to the long sound at the end.

Quantity is not an acknowledged element of English prosody, but it is a virtual and important though a free and unfixed element. “-tities has thy” are all short sounds, four of them together. One of them must be made longer and stronger. “Thy” before the vowel of “ear” remains desperately short and weak, put “trance” or “dream” and by the aid of the double consonant it becomes longer and stronger. With “trance-vigil” [instead of “ear dreaming”] there is metre, but a poor rhythm; with “dream-vigil” you have both metre and rhythm. (7.4.1931)

“What sanctities has thy trance-vigil known” is not so good as what you first wrote. The word “trance” overburdens the line with clattering “t”s and, besides, it repeats awkwardly the “a” of *sanct* and “has” and comes in with a clipped abruptness after an inordinate number of short and weak syllables,—the whole making a harsh and inconclusive effect. The line gives the impression of a slithering glide with two jumps at the end. Why not keep your original idea of dream—“What sanctities has thy dream-vigil known”? That does not alter the fundamental sense, and at the same time the long sound of “dream” saves the whole line, harmonises with a purposefully sliding flow and almost suggests the sound of the flute.

O MOTHER DIVINE

CRYSTAL clear skies are
a reflexion of Thy eyes,
Deep dark blue waters
are their merry laughter.
Oh! high mountains are
Thy arms raised upwards
like aspirations opening
their flower hearts heavenwards.
This dense dark life is
like a grey shell,
In whose heart
the secret soul prays.

Thou art consciousness
That, in matter unawares,
the descent of the golden
long-awaited dawn prepares.
O Goddess of Suns,
O Mother Divine,
With Thy light
let our earth shine.

SHYAM KUMARI

THE LYRE BIRD

AWAKENED from a trance of crystal wind
Where memories move along ancient shores
Gliding swiftly past the lanes of Light
The lyre bird flies through a naked Night.

Parting the ways of the tried and known
Over the shadowed visages of a past reborn,
Sailing the seas of a time-lost Sun
It heralds the cadences of a New World won.

T. L. B.

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of January 1984)

Sri Aurobindo's Letters

WHAT you have written about your condition seems to be correct as a whole. There is certainly a greater calm within and a freedom of the inner being which was not there once. It is this which gives you the equality you feel there and the capacity to escape from more serious disturbances. When one has this basis of inner calm, the difficulties and imperfections of the surface can be dealt with without upset, depressions, etc. The power to go among others without any invasion is also due to the same cause.

As for the second question there is no general rule, but your attitude is the right one for you—for you have not the need of any particular development of capacity, having behind a sincere attitude of a more general and penetrating and pervasive character. Others who feel the need of a particular development actually ask for it and get it. 9.6.1936

Fundamentally, it is the same question as the control of speech,—not to allow the mind or the vital to act or speak or make formations without an inner criticism and control. Once that habit of psychic control and the eye of the psychic perception kept on these things is established, there will be no difficulty. 21.6.1936

There is no reason for despondency; when one has progressed as far as you did, that is so far as to feel and maintain the calm and have so much of the psychic discrimination and the psychic feeling, one has no right to despair of one's spiritual future. You could not yet carry out the discrimination into an entire psychic change, because a large part of the outer physical consciousness still took some pleasure in old movements and therefore these roots remained alive in the subconscious. When you were off your guard the whole thing rose up and there was a temporary and violent lapse. But this does not mean that the nature is not changeable. Only the calm inner conscious poise, the psychic discrimination and above all a will to change stronger and steadier than before must be so established that no uprising or invasion will be able to cloud even partly the discrimination or suspend the will. You saw the truth but this part of the old nature which rose up did not want to acknowledge—it wanted its play and imposed that on you. This time you must insist on a complete truthfulness in the whole being which will refuse to accept any denial of what the psychic discrimination sees or any affirmation or any consent anywhere to what it disapproves,

spiritual humility and the removal of self-righteousness, self-justification and the wish to impose yourself, the tendency to judge others etc. All these defects you know are in you; to cast that out may take time, but if the will to be true to the inner self in all ways is strong and persistent and vigilant and always calls in the Mother's force, it can be done sooner than now seems possible. 21.8.1936

¹ You did quite right to go to V—it was the thing to do as soon as the vital was clear. You also saw accurately about the obstacle as being the first to go, that it was a pride that had not to be entertained. The ordinary and the spiritual view of these things must necessarily be different, and from the spiritual viewpoint not to give a foothold to the ego was the important thing. Also the resolution not to preoccupy oneself with the faults and offences of others—whether committed against oneself or other people—is just the right resolution. There was no mistake nor any vital concealed in your movement. 3.9.1936

It is of course the resistance of the old vital in the past that is being redeemed which creates this irritation and these imaginations about the Mother's displeasure. For as a matter of fact there was no dissatisfaction against you in the Mother's mind and this idea is usually a suggestion to the sadhak's mind from the Force that wants to create the wish to go or any other kind of discontent or depression. It is a curious form of delusion that has taken root, as it were, in the Ashram atmosphere and is cherished not so much by the individual vital as by the forces that work upon it to break, if possible, the sadhana. You must not allow any harbourage to that or else it will create any amount of trouble. The absence of proper sleep naturally brings a state of fatigue in the nerves which helps these things to come—for it is through the physical consciousness that they attack and if it can make that consciousness tamasic in any way their entry is more easy. 15.9.1936

Your attitude towards the change needed and new life is the right one. A quiet vigilant but undistressed persistence is the best way to get it done.

For the intimacy within to be reestablished the quietude must deepen so that the psychic may come out in the physical as it has done in the higher parts. 28.9.1936

It is the beginning of a very decisive experience and realisation—first, the Ascent above the mind (head) into the spiritual plane. It is here that one realises and is released into the vastness, stillness, silence, freedom, peace and joy of the Infinite and becomes aware of the Universal Self and the Divine. This realisation is the foundation (when it is fixed and one lives constantly above the body in the wideness of the infinite Being) of the spiritual state and the beginning of the spiritual transformation of the nature. What you have been having up to now is the psychic change; when the psychic and spiritual join together, then the transformation can be complete.

¹ Text not certain everywhere.

For this Descent is necessary and that is the second thing you are feeling,—the Descent of the higher, spiritual, or divine consciousness and energy into the whole system down to the bottom of the spine where is the Muladhara or centre of the Physical Consciousness. The Energy descends through all the levels and centres, mind centre, vital centre, physical centre and fills the whole body with the higher experience and consciousness. The Ascent is the liberation (Mukti), and when one thus ascends, one is liberated from the body consciousness, one no longer feels the body as a form, no longer feels contained in the body, but widens out into the formless Vastness of the Divine. Or sometimes the body is felt as something very small in this Vastness. In the Descent the body is felt but not as a confining form so much as an instrument and receptacle for this larger consciousness. Your description of the experience is unmistakable. All the elements are there. What has to happen is to get fixed in the wideness, freedom, stillness, peace of the consciousness above and for the Descent to continue till it has fixed the higher power of being everywhere below—in the body and in the subconscious below it and also all round the body so that one lives enveloped in this new consciousness and being.

13.11.1936

It is indeed good that the psychic intervened and prevented the mind taking the wrong direction. It is not possible that there should not be occasional stumbles, failures etc. in the work of self-purification and change, but to feel upset or remorseful over them is harmful rather than helpful; it easily brings depression and depression brings clouding of the mind and weakness. To observe calmly the wrong movement and its nature (here it was the tongue that was at fault and the tongue is always an easily erring member) and to set it right inwardly is always the best way. Calm, especially when the true spiritual calm of the Self is there, is the thing that must always be preserved; for then everything else can be done in time and with the least trouble

27.11.1936

The difficulty you experience exists because speech is a formation which in the past has worked much more as an expression of the vital in man than of the mental will. Speech breaks out as the expression of the vital and its habits without caring to wait for the control of the mind; the tongue has been spoken of as the unruly member. In your case the difficulty has been increased by the habit of talk about others—gossip, to which your vital was very partial, so much that it cannot even yet give up the pleasure in it. It is therefore this tendency that must cease in the vital itself, not to be under the control of the impulse to speech, to be able to do without it as a necessity and to speak only when one sees that it is right to do so and only what one sees to be right to say, is a very necessary part of yogic self-control.

It is only by perseverance and vigilance and a strong resolution that this can be done, but if the resolution is there, it can be done in a short time by the aid of the Force behind.

6.12.1936

There seem to be two elements in the physical difficulty that is weighing on you. The

first is the liver trouble which weakens and must weaken still more if it leads you to diminish your food below what the body needs for maintaining sufficient strength to react—also probably the nervous tendency to insomnia with its consequences. The second is an inertia of the lower vital and physical consciousness which prevents it from throwing off lassitude, from reacting against the attacks and from opening steadily to the Force which would remove these things. All that is due to the breakdown of the poise that you had for so long, the vital trouble that caused it and the reaction of the lower vital to the insistence on throwing out the causes of the trouble. This reaction seems to have been a restlessness at losing the things to which it was still holding—such a reaction always brings the inertia of the physical consciousness while the right reaction in the lower vital to the victory is a sense of peace, release, quietude which definitely opens the lowest physical parts to the higher consciousness and force. If you can get over this and get back the old poise, then all these things can be made to disappear. But it is always the right inner poise, quietude and outward faith, the opening of the body consciousness to the Mother and her force that are the true means of recovery—other things can only be minor aids and devices. 7.3.1937

It is the right resolution and all our help will be with you to carry it out and bring it to fruition. The mechanical activity of the vital mind of which you speak ought not to be too difficult to dispel—we shall send you force for that and for recovering the sleep. I am glad to hear that the energy is coming back—with the restoration of the upward connection between the physical and the Above it was bound to do so.

13.3.1937

I suppose the proposal came as a touch to see how far the old things could revive and how far the new psychic life within would cancel this vibration. That often happens when there is a forward drive from within. We shall certainly aid you towards their removal. For the ego, however insistent it may be, one has only to keep one's eye on it and say no to all its suggestions so that each position it takes up proves to be a fruitless move. Treated in that way it becomes ready for the moment when the psychic has only to give a slight push for it to fall away in each field of its activity from its loosened roots. Persevere steadily in the present movement and it cannot fail to be effective. 21.3.1937

The difficulty is probably somewhere in the external physical vital or else comes up by habit from the subconscious. But if the vital itself supports the new movement, these obstacles are bound to disappear. One has to persevere quietly and steadily with as much vigilance as possible. I hope the headache etc. will soon disappear. For all that you have written about we will try to give you the necessary support of our force always. 28.3.1937

It is quite natural that there should be much mixture in the attitude till all is clear—

the ordinary nature clings to the action and the transformation in its completeness cannot be sudden. What is necessary is that the basic consciousness should become firmly established in the Divine, then the mixture and the rest can be seen and steadily weeded out. To have this outwardly as well as inwardly is a great progress.

24.4.1937

(To be continued)

NEW DAY

DEW drops on lid-leaf
Say open-sesame

To sun hidden in a chest of petals
And locks open that autumn had closed,
Rose-soft doors spring separate and start
Revealing burnt-gold curtains about to part.

Lips quiver and a smile peeps
Through a chink, shy, uncertain,
The air stirs, expectant, as dawn sweeps
All blacks away, each ray of rising sun

A tube of colour, shiny and light,
The mind paints with inner sight
A heart-scape on the canvas of life,
A portrait of today's Divine.

DINKAR PALANDE

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of January 1984)

The Mother's Message

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



(31)

It was Friday, 1st March 1957. A card showing pears and flowers came to me from the Mother together with these lines:

“Bonjour to my dear little child, to my sweet Huta,
From your note I can see that you wish to come one morning to tell me what

you have to say. Yes, my child, I shall call you as soon as it is possible.

“Meanwhile, my love and blessings and the Presence of the Divine Grace are constantly with you to help and protect you.”

In the afternoon the Mother went to the Prosperity room to distribute, as she did on every first of the month, the month’s requirements of the Sadhaks and Sadhikas. She also gave flowers. Then she went to play tennis.

As usual in her room at the Playground, the Mother and I meditated.

The next morning I began painting the Chinese carved stone which she had sent me on 28th February. I half finished the painting and went to the Mother in her Ashram apartment to show her my work. Her gladness glimmered in her eyes. She said:

“Ah! this is neither old classical painting nor modern and abstract painting but something new and stylish!

“You see, I always wanted you to do something exceptional.

“The old classical paintings of the past are quite all right and very interesting historically. Abstract and modern paintings seem to me ugly. I do not want you to do either.”

The previous night I had seen a vision of white light with a pretty fringe touched with a red tint. The white light was falling from above on the flowers—Pomegranate—“The Divine’s Love.”

I related the vision to the Mother in the evening when we met again. She said with a smile:

“It is very interesting. You must try to paint it. I shall send the flowers of the Divine Love.”

The next morning she sent me a bunch of the flowers. I painted the vision. Meanwhile I also finished the painting of the Chinese carved stone and sent it to the Mother that very day. She wrote on a fine card:

“My dear little child,

I am sending you back your picture.

It is very good. You have improved quite a lot in the technique, it has become much more bold and free. It is a great progress.

lovingly.”

In the evening the Mother saw the painting of my vision. After a moment or two of silence, she said:

“You can paint your visions. But you must train your eyes to see each and every thing properly in the vision—how they look, what their forms and colours are, the feeling they convey—all in detail. Also you must remember exactly what you have seen.

“Once your eyes are used to observing all in perfect arrangement, then there is no need to see things over and over again in order to remember.

“You must practise to develop the memory of your eyes and reproduce accurate observations in painting.

“Yes, indeed, everything takes time and needs lots of effort, patience and practice.”

Then she entered into a profound meditation. From time to time she half opened her eyes and a sweet smile touched her lips. Her smile was one of great warmth and charm. Finally she awoke and said:

“Just now I saw in a vision a huge fiery flame which was soaring up towards inaccessible unknown heights. Then the flame changed its colour—it became pale gold and finally turned into the flower (Hibiscus) of the Supramental Consciousness—“Gloriously awake and powerful, it is luminous, sure of itself, infallible in its movement”, and the white Divine Light was falling on the flower. The flame was between us. My child, it was the flame of *your aspiration!*

“Paint the vision I have seen. I shall send you Hibiscus flowers.”

I was dumbfounded.

The Mother explained to me in detail all about the colour and form of the flame. She did two sketches of her vision.

Much later in 1974, her sketch of the flame appeared on the cover of the booklet. *Matrimandir—the Mother’s Truth and Love.*

The morning that followed, the Mother sent me the flowers—Hibiscus.

I painted the vision twice and she altered it because this type of painting was alien and difficult for me—especially as it was her vision that was concerned.

Finally I painted the way the Mother wanted me to paint. She admired the result and said:

“You see, the flame of aspiration is rising up and finally it merges into the Supramental Consciousness.”

“Marvellous!” I said to myself. As a matter of fact, I really understood nothing. The words “Supramental Consciousness” were gigantic and beyond my capacity to grasp.

The Mother must have read my thoughts. She said smilingly:

“It certainly takes time to establish the higher Consciousness. Everything must be done by the higher Consciousness. But, of course, this cannot be achieved in a minute, it takes years and years.

“If you try on your own to attain the Supreme Truth, then it is impossible for you to realise the Divine. It will take eternal time. Nevertheless, here there isn’t anything impossible, because the Divine Grace is present. The Grace helps wonderfully. It does not bargain.

“You cannot do anything alone. You must put yourself into the hands of the Divine Grace. When you feel lonely, miserable and upset, at once you should call the Divine Grace and pray sincerely to the Grace to help and to do everything for you, because it is the Divine Grace which can do everything.

“If you put everything into the hands of the Divine Grace, and worry less, you will be all right much quicker.”

I like this quotation from the Mother, which has appeared in the book *Flowers and their Messages*, p. 138:

“In aspiration there is what I might call an unselfish flame; aspiration is something that gives itself not necessarily in the form of thought, but in the movement, in vibration, in the vital urge... even when it is formulated by a thought, it leaps forth like a flame from the heart.”

Sri Aurobindo has written beautifully in Cent. Ed., Vol. 10, pp. 60-1 about the Supramental Consciousness:

“This psychological conception is that of a truth which is truth of divine essence, not truth of mortal sensation and appearance. It is *satyam*, truth of being; it is in its action *ṛtam*, right, truth of divine being regulating right activity both of mind and body; it is *bṛhat*, the universal truth proceeding direct and undeformed out of the Infinite. The consciousness that corresponds to it is also infinite, *bṛhat*, large as opposed to the consciousness of the sense-mind which is founded upon limitation. The one is described as *bhūmā*, the large, the other as *alpa*, the little. Another name for this supramental or Truth-Consciousness is Mahas which also means the great, the vast. And as for the facts of sensation and appearance which are full of falsehood (*anṛtam*, not-truth or wrong application of the *satyam* in mental and bodily activity), we have for instruments the senses, the sense-mind (*manas*) and the intellect working upon their evidence, so for the Truth-Consciousness there are corresponding faculties,—*dṛṣṭi*, *śruti*, *viveka*, the direct vision of the truth, the direct hearing of its word, the direct discrimination of the right. Whoever is in possession of this Truth-Consciousness or open to the action of these faculties, is the Rishi or Kavi, sage or seer....”

I quote Sri Aurobindo again from Cent. Ed., Vol. 24, p. 1181:

“That the constant fire of aspiration has to be lit is true; but this fire is the psychic fire and it is lit or burns up and increases as the psychic grows within and for the psychic to grow quietude is needful. That is why we have been working for the psychic to grow in you and for the quietude also to grow and that is why we want you to wait on the Mother’s working in full patience and confidence. To be always remembering the Mother and always with the equal unwavering fire within means itself a considerable progress in sadhana and it must be prepared by various means such as the experiences you have been having. Keep steadfast in confidence therefore and all that has to be done will be done.”

“The central fire is in the psychic being, but it can be lit in all the parts of the being.”

*

The next day the Mother sent me a tray along with a tea-pot, cups, saucers and a vase of bamboo with fern leaves which had come from the Black Forest (Germany). I had been to this Forest in 1952. I remember the place very vividly.

The Mother wrote.

“To be painted *with the tray* just as it is, on a pale green background.”

Really I had never found anything so difficult to draw as this elegant set. It was simply impossible for me to draw the objects as they were. Still, I tried and, to my discomfiture, found that it looked as if the whole tray were falling upon me! I felt uneasy. For, I had to show the drawing to the Mother that very evening. On top of everything, I could not help listening to what some people were saying about my drawings and paintings. It was silly of me to depend on their judgment. I was extremely disappointed and wished to give up painting altogether.

In the evening I went to the Mother and told her: “Mother, it is not possible for me to do painting, because I am absolutely poor at drawing. If I cannot draw accurately, how can I paint? Have a look at my drawing of the tray. Besides, I cannot tolerate people’s remarks. I get into the habit of listening to them. What can I do?”

She heard me quietly and then gave me a good scolding:

“Why do you listen to people? Everyone has his or her own ideas and different points of view and opinions. No one can see the real thing by a true and total sight. The Divine alone can see, know and do everything. Child, better rely on the Divine alone, who is the best Judge and knows better than people do!

“Didn’t I tell you before that I want you to paint according to my ideas and will?”

“My girl, you are lucky that you are doing nice paintings. You are a gifted person. The capacity for art is in your blood and it must come out. Why do you want to lose what has been given to you by the Divine?”

“Here you must remember that the growth of consciousness is indispensable for your painting, because what you learn from books or from professors is of no use until you get into the higher true artistic consciousness.

“Also, once the hands become full of consciousness, light and skill, then surely you will draw and paint accurately. Have faith and patience, everything will come in time.”

Then she tilted my chin gently and looked deeply into my eyes. After giving me various flowers and a kiss on my forehead she bade me adieu.

The succeeding morning I completed the painting of the tray with a great effort. It was the toughest thing I had ever attempted so far in painting.

When I showed the result to the Mother in the evening, she said:

“I like the painting very much. Do you know, last night I tried to persuade you during your sleep to continue painting?”

No wonder she changed my mind and adjusted my consciousness time and again when I was in a muddle. Indeed, it is beyond our comprehension to perceive the mystery of the Supreme.

It was a fact that the Mother did persuade me, because many a time at night I thought of doing the painting quite differently or I thought of giving up for good. But in the morning everything seemed to be changed and I would do something quite contrary to my stupid ideas, and was once again on the right track.

*

The next morning the Mother sent a Chinese vase with some attractive peacock feathers.

As usual I did the drawing without putting on any paint, I painted only one feather on a very small board in order to show it to the Mother for her approval.

She looked at my work and said.

“The feathers may be made a little longer than the vase. Otherwise everything is all right. Your painting of a feather is good. You see, the great artists used to paint bits here and there on a small board and finally they painted big pictures.

“Leonardo da Vinci and Michael Angelo made small sketches, like one leg, one eye or hand and so on and finally they put all the fragments into order

and organised them in their huge paintings. This is how big paintings can be done.

“Child, now let us see how to do a big painting.

“First of all draw a sketch of any object. It must be well composed, on a board. Then start painting according to your inspiration. Of course, you must show in the sketch the full idea of what you really wish to express in painting. Naturally, it does not take much time to do the painting on a small board. And when you do the big painting, the small board can serve you as a model. It is true that while painting on a small board you cannot possibly show all the details. Nonetheless, you must try to do various experiments in painting on small boards which will always be there to show the thing when you do a big picture.

“But you must remember that without having an accurate vision of what you wish to do, you cannot paint on a small board which can serve to indicate the exact scale of composition, the proper colours, values, lights and shadows and strokes.

“So you must express precise ideas and true inspiration on a small board on a small scale and then start painting a picture on a big scale.”

Michael Angelo Buonarroti, 1475-1564, was an Italian artist, sculptor, painter, architect and poet, born near Florence. He was one of the greatest geniuses of the Italian Renaissance and, like Leonardo da Vinci, an outstanding example of the versatility of the artists of his time.

When I went to Europe in 1952, I saw his marvellous frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. At that time I had no notion about painting, but something in me felt enchanted by these masterpieces.

Sri Aurobindo has written about art in Cent. Ed., Vol. 14, p. 247:

“A critic of high repute speaking of the Indian influence in a famous Japanese painting fixed on the grand strongly outlined figures and the feeling for life and character recalling the Ajanta Frescoes as the signs of its Indian character: but we have to mark carefully the nature of this feeling for life and the origin and intention of this strong outlining of the figures. The feeling for life and character here is a very different thing from the splendid and abundant vitality and the power and force of character which we find in Italian painting, a fresco from Michael Angelo’s hand or a portrait by Titian or Tintoretto. The first primitive object of the art of painting is to illustrate life and Nature and at the lowest this becomes a more or less vigorous and original or conventionally faithful reproduction, but it rises in great hands to a revelation of the glory and beauty of the sensuous appeal of life or of the dramatic power and moving interest of character and emotion and action....”

I came across an enchanting verse by Michael Angelo:

“With chiselled touch
 The stone unhewn and cold
 Becomes a living mould—
 The more the marble wastes
 The more the statue grows.”

I finished the painting of the vase and feathers. When the Mother saw it, she said:

“The feathers are exceptionally good and living.”

*

Through the long week, each day stretching longer than I could endure, I found myself lost in long spaces of time where there seemed no hope of realising the Divine.

I had observed that I had been saved from one phase only to walk into another trap, each trap was more perilous than the previous one. Now the jealousy in me flared up by leaps and bounds.

I was depressed and dejected when I saw the Mother giving ample time to other people. I grew very envious. I believed that these people must have reached their goal by perfecting themselves, otherwise the Mother would not pay so much attention to them and care for them. The Mother appeared to give me false promises to liberate me. All the while like a throbbing undercurrent of disaster at the back of my mind were such thoughts as, “Suppose I cannot reach my goal, suppose I fail in every way, suppose I am no longer wanted and loved by the Mother.”

A bitter jealousy twisted through my heart and made me sick. I flung myself downwards on my bed and wept as though my heart would break. I wanted to run away from the Ashram. My emotions had reached their climax.

I wanted to forget the hurt of my heart and took a book at random but after I had turned over several pages I noted that my brain had not taken in a single word of the sentences which my eyes had followed.

The time passed by, the night crept on—the hands of the clock moved slowly onward. I could not sleep—I was restless.

In the morning I went to the Mother and told her my plight. She looked at me intently and led me to her other room where there was a table, and wrote down on a piece of paper:

“Jealousy is a deadly poison that is fatal to the soul.”

Then she gave it to me. Once again she looked at me with all her compassion and love which I failed to recognise at the time.

In the evening when I went to the Mother, I prayed to her to explain to me all about spirituality and how to get rid of falsehood.

She smiled and went into a trance for a few moments. When she came out of it, she said:

“The wrong movements of the lower mind and the lower vital make the body tired and sick. So many troubles and sufferings are created by the lower vital and the lower mind. Otherwise, the body is truly obedient.

“The whole being must be governed by the soul—there must be only one ruler, who must be a wise ruler. There is absolutely no need of three rulers like soul, mind and vital.

“Child, can you stop the earth from turning round the sun? So should you bother and worry about what is going on in the universe?

“There are billions of people who have no idea about the higher life, because their souls are not awakened; so they go on enjoying their ordinary life. Naturally they have many difficulties and miseries also. But when the soul awakes, everything comes between and contradicts and revolts against the soul. Those who are enjoying themselves do not know how to get out of falsehood, while here, in the Ashram, people are lucky that they can get constant and direct help from the Divine. Sooner or later they will come out of their difficulties and miseries, because the Divine always hears the sincere call and helps them. I am sure they have many experiences of the Divine’s response.

“My child, you have to aspire from within. You must not put yourself in difficulties because of dissatisfaction and small matters. Mostly wrong suggestions come from outside, but you must never listen to them.

“Whether to meditate or not, whether to attend the classes or not, whether to study or not—it does not make any difference in this Yoga. What you really should do is only to go within yourself and aspire sincerely to want the Divine and love the Divine only; that is all.

“Also you must laugh away all difficulties.”

The Mother asked me to do the most difficult thing: “...laugh away all difficulties.”

No matter how hard I tried to escape this life, my soul would not let me do so, because what the Mother has written goes to the heart of the matter:

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

Sri Aurobindo has stated in Cent. Ed., Vol. 24, p. 1615:

“All who enter the spiritual path have to face the difficulties and ordeals of the path, those which rise from their own nature and those which come in from outside. The difficulties in the nature always rise again and again till you overcome them; they must be faced with both strength and patience. But the vital part

is prone to depression when ordeals and difficulties rise. This is not peculiar to you, but comes to all sadhaks—it does not imply an unfitness for the sadhana or justify a sense of helplessness. But you must train yourself to overcome this reaction of depression, calling in the Mother's Force to aid you.

“All who cleave to the path steadfastly can be sure of their spiritual destiny. If anyone fails to reach it, it can only be for one of two reasons, either because they leave the path or because for some lure of ambition, vanity, desire, etc. they go astray from the sincere dependence on the Divine.”

There are countless defects in a human being. I found jealousy suffocating, strangling, full of poisonous horrors, killing.

Shakespeare has said correctly:

“O! beware, my lord, of jealousy;
It is the green-eyed monster that doth mock
The meat it feeds on.”

From my experience, now I may say that once one is out of it, one feels exceedingly relieved and totally free from some of the worst adverse vibrations of the Universal Nature. Then one can surely raise one's head fearlessly with a clear conscience and move towards the Truth.

Nevertheless, it was not very easy for me to surmount this defect. It took me years. If the Mother had not been there to help me and make me conquer it, I do not know what would have happened to my life.

(To be continued)

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REMEMBERING THE MOTHER

I

LES BONBONS

THERE was no defence against the Mother if She chose to see our souls, feel our hearts or read our minds. She even knew what we had been doing during the day and the topic of our conversations. This was an experience that most people who came to live in the Ashram had. But few realised that She could even see through the thick Burma-teak panels of a wardrobe. She once gave me an unforgettable surprise, the thought of which even now after so many years makes me laugh.

As I entered Her sitting-room in the Playground one evening, I found Her standing, instead of sitting on Her divan as She usually did. But before I could say anything or offer my flowers She cupped one of Her palms and thrust the fingers of the other hand into it and said, "Have you got a god like this?" Her utterance was absolutely incomprehensible to me. My eyes must have told Her so. For She again repeated Her sentence, "Have you got a god like this?" Suddenly I remembered that I had in my almirah a traditional Shiva. The stand was of a metal that gave out a fine lustre when nicely polished. The stone was black with a white ring within it that looked like Shiva's snake. It was a gift of Sanat's mother to me when I was very young. The Doon Valley is full of mountain streams, and lovely stones of all shapes and sizes are found there, trimmed and polished and sold in the Dehra Doon market. The next evening I took my Shiva to the Mother. She surveyed it with visible pleasure and said, "This is very good, this is just the thing I wanted." Then She took possession of it and tucked it away in an almirah.

Surprised and happy as I was with the whole episode I had completely forgotten about it when one day we heard that there was a dolls' exhibition at the Exhibition Hall. We went to see it and found it very small compared to other such exhibitions we had seen elsewhere, yet it was well arranged and interesting. At the far end of the second hall was a rack that displayed Indian gods and goddesses. And lo, there in the very middle of the second stage sat my Shiva almost stealing the whole show. I screwed my eyes to make sure it was my Shiva when Sanat said with a laugh, "Of course it is your Shiva." It was adventure *par excellence* and happiness unalloyed. Coming back we noticed a Japanese section. Sanat remarked, "The Mother must have made a pretty picture in Japanese society, with Her European features, and dignified bearing. Those slanting eyes and pouting mouths around are rather unpleasant."

*

The Mother came to see us on my birthday which fell just three months after we had joined the Ashram. I played my guitar for Her. When I had finished, She

praised me in superlative terms and used the word “*Exquisite*”. “You will play for my 1st December show,” She said. Next day She told me that Anu was to dance and I was to play. She came in the afternoon again, wrote a piece for us, chose my pieces and gave us many advices and suggestions. We practised daily and the Mother would drop in sometimes to see how we had progressed. On the final day I think Anu and I both did very well. As I came down from the stage the first person to meet me was Madame Gaebelé. “Madame le consule, c’est magnifique,” she said holding my hands. People actually came out of the audience and congratulated me. For the next few days people met me on the road and said complimentary words. Gauri (Bhattacharya) used the word “*Apurba*” which again means “*magnifique*”. Later she became a very sweet friend of mine.

I played for the 1st December show for three consecutive years. The last time at the Mother’s wish Anusuya Doraiswamy joined Anu and me with her violin. We made a good trio. But soon my enthusiasm started waning. So much so that when Sunil met with an accident and could not compose his music or conduct his orchestra the Mother asked me to do something to fill the gap. I flatly refused. Sensing my enthusiasm waning the Mother asked Pavitra to order fresh music from Paris. But to no avail. The Mother like a true mother understood my feelings and after a while did not press. My mind was now completely occupied with physical culture, encouraged no doubt by a comment of the Mother, “You are looking prettier now that you have slimmed down a little.” In my teens I had been a bit of a ballet dancer. I had performed several times on stage for amateur variety shows. I had for my teachers talented persons like Bryl More and Hilda Holga. But as society’s demands grew I had to give up my favourite preoccupation, and at once started to gain weight. I was also a proficient ball-room dancer but that role too I had to give up eventually.

Though the Mother did yield to my wishes, for a long time I felt a little uneasiness in Her presence. She must have sensed this. For one evening after I had offered my flowers and pranams She suddenly produced an exquisitely beautiful sequin handbag brimful with Bonbons and said, “*Voilà, mon enfant.*”

That night as I opened my *Prières et Méditations* with an ivory page mark as the Mother herself had taught us to do, I opened on these lines: (p. 337)

Quels mots diront jamais la splendeur de Ta Loi et la magnificence de Ta Gloire! Quels mots exprimeront la perfection de Ta Conscience et la félicité infinie de Ton Amour!

Quels mots chanteront Ta Paix ineffable et célébreront la majesté de Ton Silence et la grandeur de Ta toute-puissante Vérité!¹

¹ What words will ever tell the splendour of Thy Law and the magnificence of Thy Glory? What words will express the perfection of Thy Consciousness and the infinite bliss of Thy Love?

What words will sing Thy ineffable Peace and celebrate the majesty of Thy Silence and the grandeur of Thy all-powerful Truth? (p. 303)

HER CLOTHES

A volume could be written on the clothes our Mother wore. And of course the best person to write about them was Vasudha. In fact it was she who first started sewing the Mother's clothes. The Mother's photos taken in Paris show Her wearing chic Parisian gowns. But as soon as She settled down in India She started wearing the Sari, the Indian woman's favourite wear. This, I suppose, was on ceremonial occasions; in the mornings she wore Her long delightful robe with a light knee-length cloak over it. The robe trailed behind her as did a great Victorian lady's. The Mother was in fact a great Victorian. A history written by one who knew nothing of Her Spiritual personality would class Her as one of the Great Victorians. A light veil covered Her shapely head but the corners showed locks of Her golden hair. I think She looked heavenly in this dress. The Sari made Her look older, although a silken embroidered crown that She wound round Her head on these occasions made Her look more regal. As soon as She started playing tennis She was a modern girl with salwar and kamis but no dopatta, and a kitty-cap to match. Sometimes the whole ensemble was of one colour, sometimes colour-contrasts or colour-schemes were produced by different cloths for the different parts of Her dress. Whatever She wore She looked different from the previous day. She walked briskly for Her seventy-five years. Her face was always bright no matter how tired She was and Her eyes sparkled, sometimes blue sometimes grey-green. She was a delightful person to meet. People were given permission to bring their problems at any time of the day and She then and there eased their discomfiture. There is a phrase in English usage, "Oh he can think on his legs!" Seeing the Mother one can understand the full impact of the phrase.

There was a time when we rarely saw the Mother with a bared head. Later most of the time when She was in Her room we could see Her head, Her hair neatly brushed back and tied up in a tiny bun. On such occasions She looked timeless and at these times you could establish any relation with Her you liked: Mother, Guru, Friend, Advisor, Playmate and Guide. She was no longer just the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram but the Infinity of Savitri who spoke with an organ voice:

"Choose, spirit, thy supreme choice not given again;
 For now from my highest being looks at thee
 The nameless formless peace where all things rest.
 In a happy vast sublime cessation know,—
 An immense extinction in eternity,
 A point that disappears in the infinite,—?
 Felicity of the extinguished flame,
 Last sinking of a wave in a boundless sea,

End of the trouble of thy wandering thoughts,
 Close of the journeying of thy pilgrim soul.
 Accept, O music, weariness of thy notes,
 O stream, wide breaking of thy channel banks.

The Mother was very fastidious about the clothes She wore, She would not accept any machining on Her dresses. Every inch had to be hand-stitched. And She never wore clothes She had once worn, they had to be washed and pressed again before She would touch them. Vasudha must have had difficult hours trying to wash materials that defy washing. We have heard of spiritual beings whose mouth dripped honey and their bodies smelt like flowers. It was all a story before we met the Mother. Before that we thought it was spiritual humbugging. One day I said to Vasudha, "The Mother must have embraced you just now." "No," she said, "I was ironing Her clothes."

I knew no sewing or stitching or embroidery before I came to the Ashram. In the old days a tailor sat at the end of our veranda to do all the work, and my mother did all the delicate embroidery which I thought was a woman's work and I was a bit of a tomboy. In the Ashram, seeing the Mother wearing such beautiful dresses day after day I felt like doing some sewing for Her. For now it was not Vasudha only but a whole department which had grown under her, sewing the Mother's dresses and I must add that when we came the embroidery in the department under Vasudha's supervision had reached a very high degree of proficiency in delicacy and fineness. Vasudha herself was directly trained by the Mother. Therefore her taste was immaculate and she was still the very best. When she had been a young girl she had once embroidered some roses for the Mother. And the Mother had commented, "They look like real roses. Most roses embroidered look like paper-work." After this certificate perhaps all her life Vasudha needed no other compliment or praise.

I decided to start sewing for the Mother. One night I met Vasudha in the Meditation Hall and timidly approached her. "Vasudha, can I join your department and do some sewing for the Mother?" She gave me an encouraging smile. "Why not? Of course." So far so good but I simultaneously wondered what she would say when I told her I knew no sewing. I blurted out the fact. Her reponse was heart-warming, "That is nothing, I will myself teach you." So a new life started. To encourage me Vasudha praised my first work profusely. Then there was Anusuya and Amma (Meenakshi, Mrs. Doraiswamy) who had always a sweet something to say whenever we met. "How is the Consul?" she would invariably say, and when I heard it for the first time I answered, "I don't know. I have not seen him for months." "I mean Sanat," she said; "for to us he will always be the Consul." Life became very pleasant. My first embroidery was a blue cloak for the Mother. Vasudha showed the cloth to the Mother for approval. The Mother commented, "Who is going to work on this material? I see some one *très gentille*." As the drawing lines were still showing on the cloak I washed it myself at home and to my horror the material shrank

considerably and the whole thing was in a mess. Afraid of a rebuke I said nothing to Vasudha, just put the box on the table and said, "Will it be ready next week? I have an interview with the Mother." When I went to fetch the box before the interview I found a beautiful robe all beautifully pressed and with exquisitely beautiful buttons fixed on it where the Mother would need them. My gratitude knew no bounds. It was just like Amal's literary work, editing other people's writings selflessly.

Once I bought a golden velvet for a kamiz for the Mother. I took the piece to Her to be approved. "There will be cloth for the salwar too," I said. "No," said the Mother. "It will look nice," I said, but still the Mother would not give in. "You mean it is too thick?" I asked at last. "No, it is sticky." Then it occurred to me that the Mother would play tennis in these clothes and we all know that velvet surfaces tend to stick when rubbed against each other. I bought some other cloth for Her salwar. It was the rainy season, so I took the work home with Vasudha's permission. It all went well till I reached the neck-line. I cut the cloth but it would not fit. I opened out the whole length and did the thing all over again, still it would not fit. It stuck out like a collar where the Mother's neck-line sat flat on Her chest. In utter desperation and crestfallen I took the dress to Vasudha. She said it had come all wrong because I had not cut the cloth properly: it must be opened out and done again. I was about to snatch a pair of scissors when she said, "Don't be in a hurry, I shall have to show it to the Mother." "Oh no," I cried out in real agony. "Oh yes," she mimicked me, smilingly. What happened behind the scene I do not know. But one afternoon the Mother appeared at the Tennis-ground wearing my golden kamiz, the neck-line all sticking out. My feeling, one can imagine, was mixed. On one side I was ashamed that I had done it all wrong, yet my eyes filled with tears that the Mother was wearing it in spite of my mistake. I felt like falling at Her feet then and there.

I was my parent's only child. The result was that I received from them a lot more gifts than I would have done if I had had brothers and sisters. Among them were several boxes of beautiful and expensive saris, all of real gold and silver and pure silk, not plastic thread and polyester. When I joined the Ashram, naturally I stopped wearing them. But whenever I opened my wardrobe I always sighed, "What a pity no one will see these or use these lovely saris!" There may have been some new ones, but most I had worn, so the idea of offering them to the Mother was abhorrent. One day I became somewhat stubborn and said to myself, "Appropriate or not, I am going to offer these lovely stuffs to the Mother, if She likes She can at least make cushion-covers." So with the help of Sanat night after night, when the roads were empty, I carried my saris to the Mother. At first She said nothing and only asked what they were. She only showed a little surprise that Sanat should be there holding another box. One morning paradise fell on my head like an avalanche. "What lovely things you have sent me," said the Mother. My bags and capes and robes were also there with the saris. There is no word in the English vocabulary to express what I felt that morning when the Mother uttered these words. Yet more

happiness awaited me. On the dashera day (Vijaya Dashami, i.e., the fourth day of the Durga Puja) I saw the Mother sitting on Her throne in the Meditation Hall wearing one of my red and gold saris.

In Pondicherry we never have a real winter. What come in the months of November and December are wet rainy days with a damp and most unpleasant strong wind. Ours is a winter-rain area. In this unpleasant weather the Mother used to sit out in the Playground watching the captains do their figures under the direction of Pranab. The area used to be almost empty except for a few of us who wanted to stay as long as the Mother was there. The Mother used to have around Her shoulders a flimsy silk-scarf. Looking at Her I thought again and again: "Does She not feel uncomfortable?" Perhaps coming from Europe where it is less sunny She does not mind." Later I found that She did mind. Among my saris there was a robe I had specially ordered for myself in Nepal. It was a chocolate-coloured silk on which was worked a design of real gold thread. Next winter I found the Mother wearing robes exactly like mine in white silk and with embroidery on them, perhaps done by Vasudha herself. And when there was an exhibition at the Hall by the sea, my chocolate coloured-robe from Nepal hung in an almirah just under the bright light. Such was the Mother's grace and Her wearing the robe was reserved exclusively for me.

CHAUNDONA BANERJI

THE THING I SEEK

THE Thing I ever seek, is neither this nor that, which was seen
As through a blue gemmed veil in a beautiful distant dream;
Half forgotten, though I feel the fragrance yet can never explain
And say "This is here, This is it" and then give a name.

Oh vain is the high intellect's astounding acrobatic feat—
In an arboreal wilderness, counting the dead leaves day in, day out.
What I mean is the meaninglessness of all common meanings—
The deluded self's blind vital cravings and mental leanings.

Let me but stop here beside the stream in the woodland deep
And drink the air, breathe the sun, penetrate the one root
And watch the serene sap light the sacred lamps, then upward leap—
A marvel of the secret being's trance-lit purple fruit.

A. VENKATARANGA

FALLING AND RISING

A LETTER OF 1978

PART of my delay in answering your letter came from a sudden change in my way of living. On 10 February I had the worst fall in my fall-crowded career. Even now after more than four weeks I am not up to the mark at all, but I think the critical turn upward has been taken. The horribly horizontal is growing hopefully vertical. May I entertain you with a sketch of my tragi-comedy?

In India, as you must know, the porch or the pavement in front of a house is deluged with water every morning. I suppose it is a relic from the days of Mohenjodaro and Harappa, famous for their obsession with the hygienic as well as ritual use of water. But this relic is always a sort of death-trap for none-too-steady legs. At about 10 a.m. of the day I have mentioned I went to my friend Dr. Sircar's house to get help for a lady who was down with 'flu. Crossing the porch to it I overlooked a patch of ground that had not dried yet. My stick slipped on it and my feet followed suit. I went bang on my two knees and then both my legs spread out at right angles to my trunk and violently executed one of the most difficult ballet-poses of the Great Pavlova.

I managed to get up and move slowly up a few stairs and pass into my friend's sitting-room. Once I sat down I felt I would not be able to stand up again. I told my story and was at once given an aspirin. My head was swimming a little but I regained control over myself and stood up with the intention of walking back to my rickshaw. I had to take help from two other visitors. But even so I suddenly heard and felt a cracking within my right hip and it was impossible to take any weight on either leg. Somehow I got myself pushed into the rickshaw. I went to my house and from the road called to my wife Sehra to come out. She could not understand why I adopted this rather high-handed procedure. When she came, I explained in brief my predicament and informed her that I was on my way to the Ashram's X-ray clinic. She jumped in with me.

The X-ray found that—thanks to a stroke of Divine Grace in the midst of a very ungracefully achieved physical feat—I had escaped cracking my knee-caps, fracturing the necks of my femurs or dislocating my hip-joints. Short of these misfortunes I could not have been in more of a shambles. The ligaments of the right hip seemed torn to bits and all the bones of both the legs were a many-moded acuity of unending ache. The knees were special sufferers. The left one received an extra decoration: a huge balloon of sinovial fluid.

What happened could be symbolised not so much by the Fall of Adam, of which the low results are said to be shared by his whole progeny, as by the unique degrading which Shakespeare's Cardinal Wolsey pictures in the phrase at the close of his celebrated speech on Ambition:

And when we fall we fall like Lucifer,
Never to rise again....

At least my wife feared I might be bedridden for life. But on one of the following days when my plight looked most hopeless a sudden action by the Mother took place, de-Lucifering my future. I felt a tremendous life-force rush into my right leg, starting with the hip and reaching down to the knee. And the source of the power was felt to be in the heart-centre, so that what rushed forth was at the same time a light-force and a life-force. The sensation I had in my upper body was as if I were a giant with my back a vast block of granite. At that moment it was as though I could leap from my bed and walk about.

This experience was comparable to what had occurred on the seventh evening of the nasty fever and intestinal malaise I had brought home from the KEM Hospital in Bombay after the cataract-operation on my right eye on 18 August 1973. A subtle sight in me became aware of a strong clenched fist behind my right shoulder. A muscular arm brought it down decisively to break the opposition within my body to the Mother's curative force. My fever vanished immediately and my abdomen felt that the ogre who appeared to be lodged firmly there was hurled out. One second earlier I had lain helplessly and hopelessly ill, with no antibiotic able to rid me of the strange ailment. The next second I was perfectly well. I spent a peaceful night and had a vivid dream in which I had darshan of the Mother. She was walking on her terrace. I was in the street. When she saw me she joined her palms together in a namaskar. I responded in the same manner, but my whole body was a-quiver with an extreme emotion of love ceaselessly flowing towards her, and my lips were murmuring, "Mother, Mother, Mother..." The dream brought home the sense that the force that had instantaneously cured me was from the Mother.

In the illness six years ago no direct bodily injuries had been involved. In my present case they were. So the translation of the cure into the gross-physical from the subtle-physical domain was bound to take longer. But the inner certainty of the cure was the same. And from that point onward I have kept progressing and the Mother's presence has been more and more a process of palpable healing. I may add that the energy which rushed through my leg was like a brilliant diamond light cutting irresistibly through all deformities.

There were some other experiences, too—certain spiritual realisations. The most memorable was during the first night after the accident, when the pain in both the legs was extreme. In trying to detach myself from it, my consciousness went withdrawing deeper and farther every moment until I seemed to be poised at an immense distance from the body—apart and free from it in a large independent existence. The body was a tiny object far away. I remembered some lines from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*:

In the enormous spaces of the self
The body now seemed only a wandering shell....

The sole difference was that my body was a shell lying immobile instead of "wandering". I had the feeling that I could throw it away any time and that it was something of no importance. I had always wondered how Sri Aurobindo and the Mother could have the heart to give up their bodies which had undergone so much of spiritual transformation. Now I knew that even such bodies must be to their mighty inner beings no more than bagatelles, puny nothings which they could any minute cast off if the Supreme Command came to give up the physical work on it they had undertaken.

Yes, my fall led to many marvellous discoveries. I always look for the golden core of God's gift hidden in the depth of every disaster. When the full enormity of my fall came home to me, I surrendered it to the Mother and prayed that I might receive whatever divine message could reach me across it. There has been an answer to my prayer and I have known and learnt many things that have enriched my life and spurred me to rise higher.

AMAL KIRAN

In view of the importance of February 29 no less than February 21 of this year—February 29 which is the 7th anniversary of the Supramental Manifestation upon Earth—the prices of the following publications of Huta have been reduced.

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A LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM R. R. DIWAKAR

Sri Arvind Krupa, 233, Sadashiv Nagar, Bangalore - 560 080
12th December, 1983

Dear Sir,

KINDLY refer to page 728 of the 1983 December Issue of *Mother India* and the controversy re: Sri Aurobindo and Sister Nivedita.

There is often a tendency to give undue importance to what 'Westerners' say about Indian Culture and Indian personalities. Instead of recognising and properly assessing personalities of the stature of Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi as the unique representatives of India's deathless spiritual culture, even well-meaning Indian writers give exaggerated importance to Western influences in their lives.

This writing of Sankari Prasad Basu, which is ably refuted by Nirodbaran, belongs to that unfortunate category.

I do not mean that some 'Westerners' had no part to play in the lives of our great personalities. But that crucial and critical decisions were taken by the latter on account of non-Indian influences is a statement too gross and crude to swallow.

In fact, the very artificial compartmentalisation of human activities into spiritual and temporal and then looking at the lives of persons like Sri Aurobindo, Paramahansa Ramakrishna and Gandhi is repugnant to the integral view of human activities.

As early as the 14th Century the religious Pontiff of Vijayanagar of Karnataka played an active part in establishing an empire which stood as a barrier against aggressive Islam in the South for more than two centuries. We find him declaring, *Jñānīnā caritum sākyam samyak rājyādi laukikam*.¹ His *Panchadashi* in *Tripti-deepa* declares his spiritual attainment in terms of the highest spiritual ecstasy. Further, his *Jeevan-mukti-Viveka* extols 'Liberation while alive' as the highest attainment of a human being.

Sri Aurobindo declared that his Yoga is *for life* and not away from it! He was for 'divinising life' here on earth and not seeking the Kingdom of Heaven on doomsday. Sri Aurobindo is 'integral' not merely in 'Yoga' but in everything, since what exists is a projection of the 'Poorna', the Perfect, and the projection too is 'Poorna'. What is awaited is the realisation and that Sri Aurobindo declares is possible by Integral Yoga.

The perceptions of Sri Aurobindo re: 'integrity' of everything is being endorsed now even by modern physics. Please refer to *The Tao of Physics* by Fritjoff Capra. The universe is not merely a mechanical combination, but an organic existence.

Will you kindly publish the few lines which I have penned after reading the December issue?

Yours sincerely,
R. R. DIWAKAR

P.S. I am still dreaming of going to Pondy and spending some time with all of you!
R. R. D.

¹ "It is eminently possible to participate in political activities such as establishing kingdoms."

WHO IS A TRUSTEE FOR THE MOTHER'S WORK? AND WHAT IS THE MOTHER'S WORK?

WHO is a trustee for the Mother's work? Is every sincere disciple of the Mother not a trustee for what She stood for, what She taught and what She worked for? Will he not rejoice if Her mission thrives and prospers, in the world? And will he not feel unhappy if he sees the soaring and aspiring movement of Her work getting slack and slow? Will he not aspire and strive that the touch of the Gracious Mother may ever abide with us and that the work ever remain in the ascendant?

But what is the Mother's work? Her own words are clear and strong. In the year 1972, shortly before She left Her body, She called a few young people and spoke to them with very deep feeling indeed, She said:

"I don't simply tell you we are here upon earth to rest and enjoy ourselves, now is not the time for that. We are here...to prepare the way for the new creation.

"The body has some difficulty, so I can't be active, alas. It is not because I am old, I am not old. I am not old. I am younger than most of you. If I am here inactive, it is because the body has given itself definitely to prepare the transformation. But the consciousness is clear and we are here to work—rest and enjoyment will come afterwards. Let us do our work here.

"So I have called you to tell you that. Take what you can, do what you can, my help will be with you. All sincere effort will be helped to the maximum.

"You are here at this moment, that is to say, upon earth because you chose it at one time—you do not remember it any more but I know it—that is why you are here. Well, you must rise to the height of the task, you must strive, you must conquer all weaknesses and limitations: above all you must tell your ego: your hour is gone. We want a race that has no ego, that has in the place of the ego the Divine Consciousness."

Evidently to strive for the transcendence of the ego and the realisation of the Divine Consciousness is the work to be done. The Divine Consciousness is the one thing Sri Aurobindo and the Mother inculcated in us, fed into us through their teaching, through their example, through the atmosphere of the Ashram, through the food we eat here, in fact through every impact of life we get here. The realisation of it, the embodiment of it, the manifestation of it, is all the work entrusted to us and for that each disciple is evidently a trustee.

The Ashram has, of course, a physical base, which is the field for this realisation. This physical field needs management and it has to be looked after by a few persons in the service of and in full cognisance of the aim of Divine Realisation. These few are trustees for the work entrusted to them. But the truth remains that spiritually every sincere and devoted disciple is a trustee and as he cannot forget the Mother's love for him so too he cannot forget what She has wanted of him.

The management of the physical base of life or of the field of our spiritual reali-

sation is by itself a difficult matter—the number of persons is so large and is so varied, the freedom permitted and desired is so great and life as a whole is so widespread and complex. It was managed by the Divine Consciousness of the Mother. A human consciousness will be inadequate to the task. Evidently problems will arise ever and again and dissatisfactions will be felt. But we cannot take them seriously or get involved in them as they cannot much affect the spiritual aim and progress. It is extremely interesting that the spiritual pursuit is essentially so little dependent on the physical conditions. It can thrive and flourish under all circumstances. It depends really on its own inherent power.

The spiritual trust of a sincere Sadhak is thus a matter of his own consciousness and he can gloriously work out his trust if he wills to do so. The Mother's help is all assured to him for this pursuit and, as to its reward, here is a word of Sri Aurobindo:

“The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.”

It can be said that it is difficult to give up the ego and to realise the Divine. Yes, it must be so. We find it hard to contemplate it even.

But does that not show our deep commitment to the ego? In fact, when some detachment comes, we begin to find that to give up the ego means giving up smallness, narrowness, superficiality, selfishness. And we also find that to be the psychic being is joy itself, it is depth, it is peace, it is spontaneous truth-feeling.

And to ascend to the Divine Consciousness is to rise high above all conflicts and confusions, to be large and wide, intense and luminous, and to command all existence.

Into the bargain, we thus please the Mother the most. Is it right then to say that it is difficult to give up the ego and to realise the Divine?

The Mother too has said, “...the Divine is not something remote or inaccessible. The Divine is within you...”

Thus our trust is not an impossibility. It needs a sincere will and, all the help being there, we can be sure of success.

INDRA SEN

INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY INHERENT IN INTEGRAL YOGA

IN THE WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of January 1984)

Integration and Harmonisation of Personality

IN some human beings it is the physical Purusha, the being of body, who dominates the mind, will and action; there is then created the physical man mainly occupied with his corporeal life and habitual needs, impulses, life-habits, mind-habits, body-habits, looking very little or not at all beyond that, subordinating and restricting all his other tendencies and possibilities to that narrow formation. But even in the physical man there are other elements and he cannot live altogether as the human animal concerned with birth and death and procreation and the satisfaction of common impulses and desires and the maintenance of the life and the body: this is his normal type of personality, but it is crossed, however feebly, with influences by which he can proceed, if they are developed, to a higher human evolution. If the inner subtle-physical Purusha insists, he can arrive at the idea of a finer, more beautiful and perfect physical life and hope or attempt to realise it in his own or in the collective or group existence. In others it is the vital self, the being of life, who dominates and rules the mind, the will, the action; then is created the vital man, concerned with self-affirmation, self-aggrandisement, life-enlargement, satisfaction of ambition and passion and impulse and desire, the claims of his ego, domination, power, excitement, battle and struggle, inner and outer adventure: all else is incidental or subordinated to this movement and building and expression of the vital ego. But still in the vital man too there are or can be other elements of a growing mental or spiritual character, even if these happen to be less developed than his life-personality and life-power. The nature of the vital man is more active, stronger and more mobile, more turbulent and chaotic, often to the point of being quite unregulated, than that of the physical man who holds on to the soil and has a certain material poise and balance, but it is more kinetic and creative: for the element of the vital being is not earth but air; it has more movement, less status. A vigorous vital mind and will can grasp and govern the kinetic vital energies, but it is more by a forceful compulsion and constraint than by a harmonisation of the being. If, however, a strong vital personality, mind and will can get the reasoning intelligence to give it a firm support and be its minister, then a certain kind of forceful formation can be made, more or less balanced but always powerful, successful and effective, which can impose itself on the nature and environment and arrive at a strong self-affirmation in life and action. This is the second step of harmonised formulation possible in the ascent of the nature.

At a higher stage of the evolution of personality the being of mind may rule;

there is then created the mental man who lives predominantly in the mind as the others live in the vital or the physical nature. The mental man tends to subordinate to his mental self-expression, mental aims, mental interests or to a mental idea or ideal the rest of his being: because of the difficulty of this subordination and its potent effect when achieved, it is at once more difficult for him and easier to arrive at a harmony of his nature. It is easier because the mental will once in control can convince by the power of the reasoning intelligence and at the same time dominate, compress or suppress the life and the body and their demands, arrange and harmonise them, force them to be its instruments, even reduce them to a minimum so that they shall not disturb the mental life or pull it down from its ideative or idealising movement. It is more difficult because life and body are the first powers and, if they are in the least strong, can impose themselves with an almost irresistible insistence on the mental ruler. Man is a mental being and the mind is the leader of his life and body; but this is a leader who is much led by his followers and has sometimes no other will than what they impose on him. Mind in spite of its power is often impotent before the inconscient and subconscious which obscure its clarity and carry it away on the tide of instinct or impulse; in spite of its clarity it is fooled by vital and emotional suggestions into giving sanction to ignorance and error, to wrong thought and to wrong action, or it is obliged to look on while the nature follows what it knows to be wrong, dangerous or evil. Even when it is strong and clear and dominant, Mind, though it imposes a certain, a considerable mentalised harmony, cannot integrate the whole being and nature. These harmonisations by an inferior control are, besides, inconclusive, because it is one part of the nature which dominates and fulfils itself while the others are coerced and denied their fullness. They can be steps on the way, but not final; therefore in most men there is no such sole dominance and effected partial harmony, but only a predominance and for the rest an unstable equilibrium of a personality half formed, half in formation, sometimes a disequilibrium or unbalance due to the lack of a central government or the disturbance of a formerly achieved partial poise. All must be transitional until a first, though not final, true harmonisation is achieved by finding our real centre. For the true central being is the soul, but this being stands back and in most human natures is only the secret witness or, one might say, a constitutional ruler who allows his ministers to rule for him, delegates to them his empire, silently assents to their decisions and only now and then puts in a word which they can at any moment override and act otherwise. But this is so long as the soul personality put forward by the psychic entity is not yet sufficiently developed; when this is strong enough for the inner entity to impose itself through it, then the soul can come forward and control the nature. It is by the coming forward of this true monarch and his taking up of the reins of government that there can take place a real harmonisation of our being and our life.¹

¹ *The Life Divine* (American Ed.), pp. 799-800

The Transformation of Nature

... When these different parts are all under the control of the Psychic and turned by it towards the reception of the higher consciousness, then there begins the harmonisation of all the parts and their progressive recasting into moulds of the higher consciousness growing in peace, light, force, love, knowledge, Ananda which is what we call the transformation.¹

*

The soul, the psychic entity, then manifests itself as the central being which upholds mind and life and body and supports all the other powers and functions of the Spirit; it takes up its greater function as the guide and ruler of the nature. A guidance, a governance begins from within which exposes every movement to the light of Truth, repels what is false, obscure, opposed to the divine realisation: every region of the being, every nook and corner of it, every movement, formation, direction, inclination of thought, will, emotion, sensation, action, reaction, motive, disposition, propensity, desire, habit of the conscious or subconscious physical, even the most concealed, camouflaged, mute, recondite, is lighted up with the unerring psychic light, their confusions dissipated, their tangles disentangled, their obscurities, deceptions, self-deceptions precisely indicated and removed; all is purified, set right, the whole nature harmonised, modulated in the psychic key, put in spiritual order. This process may be rapid or tardy according to the amount of obscurity and resistance still left in the nature, but it goes on unflinching so long as it is not complete. As a final result the whole conscious being is made perfectly apt for spiritual truth of thought, feeling, sense, action, tuned to the right response, delivered from the darkness and stubbornness of the tamasic inertia, the turbidities and turbulences and impurities of the rajasic passion and restless unharmonised kinesis, the enlightened rigidities and sattwic limitations or poised balancements of constructed equilibrium which are the character of the Ignorance.²

*

A psychic or, more widely speaking, a psycho-spiritual transformation of this kind would be already a vast change of our mental human nature.³

*

Purification of the nature by the "influence" of the Spirit is not what I mean by transformation; purification is only part of a psychic change or a psycho-spiritual

¹ *On Yoga—Tome Two* (1958), p. 218.

² "The Life Divine", Vol. II (1940) pp. 936-37.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 930.

change—the word besides has many senses and is very often given a moral or ethical meaning which is foreign to my purpose. What I mean by the spiritual transformation is something dynamic. It is a putting on of the spiritual consciousness, dynamic as well as static, in every part of the being down to the subconscious. That cannot be done by the influence of the Self leaving the consciousness fundamentally as it is with only purification, enlightenment of the mind and heart and quiescence of the vital. It means a bringing down of the divine Consciousness static and dynamic into all these parts and the entire replacement of the present consciousness by that.¹

(To be continued)

Compiled by INDRA SEN

¹ *Letters*, series II. (1949), pp. 43-44.

THE WEIRD WORLD OF WORDS

ONE completely fascinating thing about words is the magic that is inherent in many of them. We are, however, apt to become so used to these mainsprings of our language that we often tend to take them for granted, forgetting that many a word in the English language is filled with a mystery that transcends straight thinking. Emerson hit the nail on the head when he said, "Each word was at first a stroke of genius." For, if we only tried to develop the perception of looking at the words we encounter with fresh eyes, we would find that quite a number of them are exciting little things fairly wriggling with life.

My passion for research in the realm of words had its genesis at school when someone asked what was the longest word in English. There were varying answers to the question, but what is pertinent is that I was not among the contributors to the list. It was only many years later I discovered that *Chamber's Dictionary* actually lists a 29-letter word, *floccinaucinihilipilification*, whose meaning is put down as "setting little or no value". This marathon discovery stands unchallenged as the longest word in the language.

The mystery surrounding words is by no means confined to their length. These little black and white hieroglyphs represent much more, as any reader who takes an interest in the solving of "cryptic" crosswords will testify. Let us start with what is known as the "palindrome", which means "a word that reads alike backwards and forwards". Now, just study the clue: "The language is the same, whichever way you look at it!" The answer to this is MALAYALAM, which reads the same backwards and forwards. Another such word is REVIVER, for which you can frame the clue: "A stimulant in more ways than one!" ROTATOR and DEIFIED are two more examples of the palindrome.

Then there are words which, when split up, can be quite diverting in their import. To make the implication of the clues cited here quite clear to the reader, we shall italicise the meanings of the words under consideration. Now, for the word MENDICANT, there can be the clue: "*Beggar* confessing inability to change his ways." Here, *beggar* represents the meaning of *mendicant*; and how does he confess inability to change his ways? By saying: "MEND/I/CAN'T."

"Word within Word"

By the same token, the clue for INITIATE would be: "*Begin* describing what I did at the café". The meaning of "initiate" is covered by *begin* and the answer to "what I did at the café" is: "IN/IT/I/ATE". Yet another intriguing specimen is the word INTEMPERATE, for which the clue may be: "What the gluttonous hot-head did?" The answer, of course, is: IN/TEMPER/ATE.

There is, however, no variety of clue more titillating than what is styled "word within word". Try deciphering the following poser for PANORAMA: "*Complete*

view of daughter sandwiched by daddy and mummy!" The meaning of "panorama" is, of course, "complete view", and you see the girl sandwiched by father and mother when the word is split as: PA(NORA)MA.

Do you know what SARABANDS are? They are "slow Spanish dances", and quite a clever clue for the word would be: "*Dances* portraying Arab in his natural surroundings". Note the "word within word": S(ARAB)ANDS—"Arab" is seen inside "sands", which are his "natural surroundings". Even more tantalising is this clue for MASONRY: "*Stonework* showing Mary expecting a happy event." Observe how Mary is seen expecting a visit from the stork: MA(SON)RY.

We now come to what is known as the "anagram", meaning "a word formed by the letters of another in different order". Some impressive samples of the anagram are: STAGNATION and ANTAGONIST; PLATITUDES and STIPULATED; HARMONICAS and MARASCHINO; CONSIDERATE and DESECRATION. There is, doubtless, a mechanical element about this form of clue, as even the plodder can ultimately arrive at the correct answer. But, properly juxtaposed, even anagrams can be skilfully concealed; for instance, this clue for GLIBNESS: "Blessing in disguise". Here, *blessing* is a "disguise" of *glibness*, since it is an anagram of the latter word. Similarly, for DOMESTICATE: "*Tame* comediettas?" "Tame", of course, supplies the meaning of "domesticate", and "comediettas" the anagram. Of the English bowler TYSON, you can say: "He's so fast he's stony-broke!" To elucidate, "stony" is a broken form (i.e. an anagram) of "Tyson", and "fast" in the context means "speedy", and not "dissipated". Certain words form several anagrams: ENLIST, for instance, gives LISTEN, TINSEL, SILENT and INLETS.

Mental Acrobatics

Words are primarily pegs to hang ideas on. Small wonder, therefore, that a compiler's subtleties of imagination are best in evidence in problems based on the play of words. Prominent personalities often lend themselves admirably to the clothing of ideas. For example, with the *key* word not italicised, could you get the hang of this clue for MIDAS: "His tragedy was *touching*"? Nine out ten readers would here interpret "touching" to mean "moving"; but actually the use of the word is purely *literal* for it will be recalled that King Midas's tragedy was indeed *touching*, inasmuch as all that he touched, even his dear daughter, turned into gold, making him most unhappy. Similarly, for ROBINSON CRUSOE, you may say: "He could get his work done by Friday", remembering full well that Crusoe's assistant was a hefty chap who answered to the name of Friday! DICK WHITTINGTON can yield the clue: "It paid him to let the cat out of the bag", since it was by fetching his cat, which was hidden in a bag on the ship, that Whittington came to acquire his fabulous fortune.

Next, can you think of "A name known for centuries to the whole world"? No need at all to stretch your memory very far back, for the answer is BRADMAN—

a name known to one and all for the centuries or hundreds he compiled in cricket.

Animals, too, can afford a fruitful diversion. A baffling clue for ELEPHANT would be: "Large maker of trunk-calls." An elephant is, of course, large and, since it calls out with its trunk, isn't it a maker of trunk-calls? Reasoning along the same lines, for TORTOISE, you can say: "Fabulous exponent of the go slow policy"—the reference obviously being to the hare-and-tortoise fable.

Words are the dress of thoughts and, when imaginatively garbed, come alive and dance before our mind's eye. Study this poser for HEADACHE: "The *highest* form of suffering anyone could undergo!" And for TOOTHACHE: "It makes both dentist and patient look *down in the mouth!*" The patient *figuratively* looks "down in the mouth", being in low spirits because of the pain accompanying the toothache, while the dentist literally looks "down in the mouth", to see where the root of the trouble lies!

Often, the shorter a clue, the more intriguing it is. Thus, for CALENDARS: "Their days are numbered"; for TRUANT: "Absent-minded pupil"; and for ORATOR: "A figure of speech." Exploring further, the following clue for ANATOMY is designed to put the solver completely off the track: "The framework of our constitution?"

OSTLER is defined as "one who attends to horses". So you can say of him: "He should know how to *back* horses". The "ostler" here doesn't back horses by *betting* on them, but by literally causing them to *move backwards!* CAPSIZE, which means "upset" and splits into CAP/SIZE, can have the clue: "*Upset* depending on the jockey's head?" For PROMPT, a subtle teaser is: "What teacher likes pupils to *be* but not *do!*" Similarly, for TYPIST: "Hands over the keys when he's working"; and for STENOGRAPHERS: "They work for dictators."

How captivating this kind of mental gymnastics can be is illustrated by the unique clue for NOTABLE: "Night-club manager won't like to say he's *this* to accommodate a *this* person even when he has *this!*". You are here required *suitably* to substitute NOTABLE wherever the word "this" occurs in the clue. Carrying out the substitution, you get the revealing statement: "Night-club manager won't like to say he's NOT/ABLE to accommodate a NOTABLE person even when he has NO/TABLE!"

The above example represents the quintessence of compiling. But clues much simpler sometimes have the solver groping in the dark. A vivid word-image comes to mind when we fathom this clue for INFANTS: "They are *born suckers!*"; and for THIRST: "It's enough to drive anybody to drink!"

Instruments of Thought

The amazing flexibility of the English language is not restricted to words alone. Idiomatic phrases, ingeniously employed, can go a long way towards demonstrating the fact that words are the instruments that make thought possible. Take the usage HANG BY A THREAD, for which we can say: "*Perilous* way the Lilliputian

murderer was sentenced to die?" The meaning of "hang by a thread" is here indicated by the opening word *perilous*, and, reading the clue, you form the picture of the puny Lilliputian needing only a thread for hanging! Likewise, for the phrase HOPE AGAINST HOPE: "*Overoptimistic* comedian who's his own enemy?" The meaning of the phrase is signified by the word *overoptimistic* and, visualising the idea, you automatically think of Bob Hope, the comedian, as being his own enemy.

Lastly, did you know that an INDIAN GIFT is "something for which a return gift is expected"? So, a fairly humorous clue for this term would be: "The conventional one's an elephant—but Nehru never wants the present back!"

These are but a few striking examples picked at random to initiate you into a pastime that can be all-engrossing and truly enlightening. Once we make a habit of dissecting the words we read, we will be astounded at their potency. And while deriving all this enjoyment, there is also the satisfaction of knowing that we are well on the road to becoming millionaires in the field of words.

RAJU BHARATAN

(With acknowledgments to *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, August 4, 1957, p. 66.)

KRISHNA'S JEWELS

AN OLD TALE RETOLD

KALA the robber crept stealthily from room to room of the rich man's house. It had not been difficult to enter unnoticed, for everyone who lived in the village had come that evening to listen to the Pandit. They were all sitting around him now in the central hall, listening with rapt attention as he chanted a few verses from the precious palm-leaf book before him on the dais, and then explained and elaborated on them so that everyone could understand. The owner of the house, his family and their servants were as absorbed as the rest, joyful devotion shining on their faces as all everyday cares and quarrels were forgotten in the delight of hearing the sweet and enchanting stories of the Lord.

It was a wonderful opportunity for Kala to see what he could lay his hands on. His mind was occupied with his search, he was not paying any attention to the story that was fascinating the villagers. He was a thief and a vagrant, who had no home or family or friends. He had just a dim remembrance of the man who had taught him the only trade he knew. Had old Babu been related to him in any way? Kala only knew that he had been kind to him and taught him how to be quick and clever at filching the small objects that could be exchanged for money at certain places they knew of. Whatever he had not learned from Old Babu he had picked up for himself since his protector had disappeared—whether to Lord Yama's kingdom itself, or to its earthly equivalent the gaol, Kala did not know; he knew simply that now he was alone and had to fend for himself in the only way he had ever learned. He was often lonely as he went from village to village, from town to town, and he dreamed of having a place where he belonged, instead of always being an outsider, on the edge of things, looking into a world where there was no room for him. He imagined himself finding something really valuable—a rich man's purse, a diamond, a queen's bracelet ... something that might bring him enough to buy a little house in the town and keep him so that he need never steal again, never be afraid again. Then he would have neighbours, friends.... He knew it was only a dream, but the thought of his treasure warmed his heart and filled his mind as he moved from room to room. The Pandit's words, which held the villagers enthralled meant, nothing to Kala. They belonged to a world he had no share in. But suddenly a phrase rivetted his attention, and pausing in his watchful prowl he listened to the tale in growing wonder, drawn without noticing it into the spell-bound circle around the dais.

The Pandit was reading and chanting from the *Bhagavat Purana*, which tells the wonderful stories of Lord Krishna's life. He was spending only a few days in this village, for it was his life to travel from place to place telling all who would listen of the Beloved Lord. The previous night he had told his eager listeners of Krishna's birth, of the cruelty of Kamsa and of how miraculously Krishna had been brought to the house of Nanda the Cowherd where he was to grow up as Mother Yashodha's

son. Tonight his tale was of Krishna's boyhood in the forest of Brindavan.

The verses told how, with the first streaks of dawn-light in the sky the cow-herd boys were shouting outside Krishna's house:

"Krishna! Balaram! Aren't you awake yet? Come along, sleepy-heads! It's time to take the cows to pasture."

Then the book spoke of how Mother Yashodha would lay food before the boys and then array them in the finery they always wore. The Pandit described in loving detail how she dressed them in fine dhotis—Krishna's saffron one glowing against his dark skin, Balarama's deep-blue one like the distant sea. Then she would put on their ornaments: jewelled bangles, necklaces, girdles and head-dresses, and last of all their musical anklets of gold. These were the words that had caught Kala's attention, and his wonder grew as the Pandit went on to describe all the glowing splendour of Krishna's ornaments:

"Bangles of gold inlaid with pearls and rubies on his upper arms; a girdle of gold and pearls around his waist; a diadem of gold upon his head, in which he always wears a peacock-feather; around his ankles bells of gold that make music so enchanting that it would steal your soul away; and around his lovely neck a necklet of many jewels set in gold, hanging down onto his chest where a single diamond shines bright enough to make the very sun seem dark."

The Pandit went on to speak of Krishna's mischievous eyes, the enchanting loveliness of his face which glows with such love and beauty that one could gaze on it forever in untiring delight; of his dark skin and curling hair, his dainty hands and feet, the charm of every line of his body—and lastly of the irresistible music of his flute whose loveliness no words can capture ... but Kala was not listening. Nor had he gone back to his business. He stood in a daze, stunned at the prospect he saw opening up before him... why should he bother about picking up a trinket here, a few coins or a cloth there? Why continue this hand-to-mouth existence, moving from place to place and getting what he could lay hands on? If he could only find these two children, it would be easy to get their ornaments from them—and then he would have nothing to worry about for the rest of his life. He need never go hungry again, never again be afraid of getting caught and beaten. He could buy a little house and settle down and live like other people. His mind ran on, going over and over the description he had heard of those wonderful jewels, until he could almost see in his mind's eye the dark child sparkling in all his finery. He could think of nothing else. And so he stood as if in a trance, unhearing, until the Pandit had finished his story.

Then the Pandit invited all his listeners to take *prasad*. As they made their offerings, he gave to each a handful of sweet-scented flowers, and then the people, blessed and purified, turned towards their homes. Kala left the house with the rest, but he waited behind a tree outside until at last the Pandit was escorted to the door, with many respectful farewells from the host and his family. Our thief had decided to speak to the Pandit and find out more about those two marvellous children and their jewels.

So as the Pandit went on his way to the house that had been provided for his stay, Kala followed him; and when they came to a quiet stretch of road he called out, "Hey, Panditji! Wait for me, I want to talk to you!" At the sound of that rough voice, the Pandit thought immediately of robbery. In his belt he was carrying all the money that the villagers had offered him as *dakshina* and he was afraid. Fastening his cloth more tightly around him, he quickened his steps. But again Kala cried out, "Wait for me, Panditji! What are you afraid of? I want to ask you something." There was nothing for it; the Pandit stood and waited, saying a prayer in his heart.

"I want to know more about those boys—those boys you were telling the people about.... What are their names? Where do they live? Who is their father? How can I find them?"

The Pandit was astonished at such a barrage of questions from this dark rough-looking man, but the fellow seemed to mean him no harm, so he replied, "Didn't you hear what I was telling the people? Krishna and his brother Balarama live in the house of Nanda, the chief of the cowherds, near Brindavan; and every day at dawn they go out with the cows into the fields and forests along the banks of the river Yamuna."

"Which way is Brindavan from here? It isn't very far is, it? Do those children really go out into the fields every day, dressed like you said in all those wonderful jewels?"

The Pandit began to get a glimmer of understanding. He felt perhaps he could guess what had sparked the interest of this uncouth fellow—and he only wanted to get home with his money and his skin intact; but still he asked.

"Why are you asking me all these questions? Weren't you listening to what I said? What makes you so interested?"

Kala looked at the Pandit and said frankly,

"Look at me! You know what I am, don't you? And why would a robber like me be interested in those children? Is it true they have all those jewels... or were you just making it all up?" he demanded suddenly, advancing on the Pandit with raised fist and threatening glare.

"No, no, I didn't make it up. It is most certainly all true," said the Pandit hastily.

"And if they wear all those jewels when they go out into the fields every day, they must have plenty more at home for special occasions, isn't it so, Panditji? How much do you think they are worth altogether?"

"The riches of Krishna are a priceless treasure, beyond anything we can imagine," replied the Pandit with a smile.

"Well, just one of those ornaments would set me up for the rest of my life. And I mean to go and get something from him," said the thief. "So you'd better tell me, truthfully, how to get there. And don't try to play any tricks on me—if I don't find them, I shall surely come back and pay you out. But if I *do* get some good loot,

then you'll get your share for helping me, you'll see."

So the poor Pandit, wanting only to get home in safety, pointed to the North and said, "Brindavan lies that way."

"And how shall I know it when I get there? What is it like, this place Brindavan?" demanded Kala.

"There is a wide river there, with lovely green meadows and groves of flowering trees along its banks. Especially there are beautiful *kadamba* trees—you know the *kadamba* tree, with its big leaves and huge balls of flowers? There the cowherds come in the early morning, and there under a *kadamba* tree Krishna stands and plays his enchanting flute; surely you will recognise him if you see him."

The simple thief was quite satisfied with what the Pandit told him from his memory of the sacred verses, and resolved to set out immediately and take no rest until he reached the river and found the marvellous children and took from them some of their priceless treasure.

II

It was dusk on the third day when Kala reached the river. He had hardly slept and hardly eaten on the way, and throughout the long journey only one image had filled his mind: the beautiful dark curly-haired child in the yellow dhoti and shining jewels with the peacock-feather in his diadem. The picture had spurred him over the weary miles so that he was scarcely aware of his hunger and thirst and fatigue and the pain in his legs and feet. And here at last was the river, looking so cool and soothing, gleaming pale in the twilight, flowing swift and deep between its green banks, edged here and there with little sandy beaches. Surely this must be the place!

"But the boys will not come until morning," thought Kala, and wondered which way their village lay; but he could see no houses nearby, and the cool river and green grass looked so inviting that he decided to stay where he was and wait for the dawn-light.

He cooled his aching feet in the river, and the water felt so fine that he plunged right in. Then he threw his weary body down on the soft cool grass. But although he was so tired, the image of that wonderful child still seemed to hover before his closed eyes....

It may have been only an hour or two later that he awoke with bright moonlight on his face, his body tingling with excitement...

"They will come at first light," he thought; "I should find a good place to hide and look out for them; I *must not* miss my chance." And he set off along the river bank, looking for the *kadamba* trees that the Pandit had told him about. There were many fine tall trees around, and as he followed the river he soon came to a lovely grove of large-leaved trees with fragrant blossoms like powder-puffs, filling the air with their scent. As he passed under the huge trees Kala had a strange sensation, something he had never felt in his life before, something magical and sweet, a breath of enchanting promise.

"This must be the place," he thought. "Here are the trees, and how rich the grass and undergrowth are here—surely they will come here with their cows in the morning; this *must* be the place." And he thrilled with excitement again as he looked around for a hiding-place.

He chose a bush near the river, pushed in under its twigs and sat down to wait for morning. But there were stinging ants there, and not even the picture in his mind could make him quite oblivious to those troublesome creatures. "Besides," he thought, "what if Krishna follows another path? Even if he were only a little bit further from the river I might miss him and here there don't seem to be any cow-tracks on the beach.... I had better climb up one of those trees, and then I will be able to see him even at a distance."

So he crawled out, brushing ants and twigs off his arms and out of his hair, and looked around for a good tree to climb. He chose one on the edge of the grove and with some difficulty hoisted himself up among the leafy branches. But the leaves were so thick that he couldn't see much after all, and he felt very uncomfortable perching on a branch like a bird—he was afraid that if he fell asleep, he might just fall off like an overripe fruit—so finally he clambered down again to look for a better place. At last he simply leant his back against one of the broad smooth silver trunks, in a little niche where he was sheltered from sight by some thorn bushes, and despite all the tension of his anticipation, his weariness got the better of him, his eyes closed and his head slipped sideways.

In the very first morning twilight he awoke with a start.... What had awakened him from his dreams of Krishna? There it was again, too sweet to be a bird's song, although the birds were waking and singing all around as the magic dawn-light intensified all the marvellous tints and shades of the forest. This time it rang out quite clear on the first stirring breeze: the notes of a flute! Kala's heart almost stopped with excitement and delight—they were really coming, the Pandit had not deceived him, he had not made a mistake, this was the right river, the right forest, and they were coming this way, towards this very grove! He could hear the boyish voices now, and the tinkling of cow-bells.... But they were passing somewhere off to his left, out of sight in the forest, he was going to miss them!

Kala was already on his feet to follow the voices, when a movement on the far edge of the glade caught his eye. There under the furthest tree stood a tiny figure, his saffron-coloured dhoti with red and gold border gleaming incredibly bright in that dawn-twilight against the dark skin and the forest greens and greys. A boy was standing there and playing his flute, as we have seen him many times pictured, one foot crossed over the other, a peacock-feather in his hair, jewels gleaming around his neck, his arms, his ankles and his brow, a sweet smile on his face and his eyes sparkling with mischief. But what Kala saw was lovelier than any picture one has ever seen, lovelier even than the picture he had carried in his mind all those days and nights on his journey, something absolutely breath-taking and enrapturing in its beauty, for it was Lord Krishna himself.

Kala, totally unaware of himself, left his hiding-place and drew nearer and nearer to the marvellous boy, irresistibly attracted by the beauty he saw and heard. And when he had come quite close, Krishna took the flute from his lips and smiled directly at the poor robber, so sweetly that Kala's whole body tingled and shuddered with delight. Krishna looked at him awhile and then spoke in a voice that was as lovely as all the rest of him.

"Dear Kala, didn't you want something from me?"

Kala wasn't even astonished that the lovely boy should know his name—he hardly even noticed it, for a flood of shame swept hot and painful over him as he suddenly remembered the intention that had brought him here. But in the next moment he realised that Krishna knew perfectly well why he had come, and that he was not angry, but only laughing at him. And Kala too, looking into those eyes, could see the joke.

"Dear, dear child, it is true I came to rob you of your jewels; but that was before I knew you. I thought I wanted to be rich, but really I only wanted to have a friend... now I have seen you, why would I need money? You *are* my friend, aren't you?" he asked.

"Of course I am your friend—and so I can give you a gift too.... only tell me, what would you like to have?"

"Only tell me I can come here and meet you whenever I want, look at you and sometimes hear you make your lovely music—that's all I want," said Kala, little tears standing in his eyes.

"But my jewels—you came all this way to get my jewels.... don't you want anything now?" said Krishna, looking serious, but with a mischievous sparkle in his eye.

"You keep your jewels—they look so fine on you; how could I take any of them? Only..." Kala paused as he thought of something—"I did promise the Pandit who told me about you, that if I found you I would give him something. If it hadn't been for him I would never have seen you—could you perhaps give me something for him?" asked Kala shyly.

Krishna laughed aloud and took off one of his armlets, a lovely silver one set with fine emeralds. "Here, take this for the Pandit," he said "and of course you can come here and see me whenever you like. Come to this grove any morning, stand under this tree and call me; I promise I will come."

"Dear child, dear child," said Kala, shaking his head. "But are you sure it is all right, your mother won't scold you? The Pandit will be so happy, it is a fine thing..."

"Perhaps my mother will scold me, but I'll soon make her laugh again," said Krishna with another of his adorable twinkles. "But come, let's go find the others—they've gone to bathe the cows!"

III

Kala's feet seemed to have wings upon them as he sped back to the village where he had left the Pandit. The thought of his marvellous new friend and his new-found happiness left no room for weariness or hunger, and as he passed, oblivious, through villages along the way, folk marvelled at his shining face and the light that seemed to go with him. Still, it was a three-day's journey before he reached the village, and the Pandit had finished his series of discourses and was preparing to leave the next day on the next stage of his tour. Late in the night he heard a loud knocking at his door, and when, frightened, he didn't immediately open, there came a call:

"Panditji, Panditji, are you sleeping? Open up quick, I've brought something for you."

Though he recognised the voice of the robber whom he had hoped never to see again, there was something reassuring in its tones... the man didn't sound as if he had come in anger to beat him up; more in curiosity than anything, the Pandit opened his door.

Kala came rushing in like a whirlwind, his eyes shining, and immediately knelt and touched the Pandit's feet.

"Thanks to you, I found him, Panditji! I am so grateful; without you I would never have known! He is *so* kind, and lovely and wonderful, you can't believe—such a beautiful child you never saw in your life! And I told him about you, Panditji, and he sent you this" and Kala drew the precious armlet out of the waist of his ragged lungi.

The Pandit had to sit down suddenly, spluttering, "What... who... where did you get it? What happened?"

And Kala, laughing delightedly at the old man's consternation, had to tell him the whole story.

You can imagine that the poor Pandit had difficulty in believing his ears. He knew very well that the real Krishna had lived thousands and thousands of years ago, far away in the north—so what on earth was this poor ragged fellow babbling about...? And yet, there was the armlet, and there was Kala with his transfigured face and voice.... The Pandit questioned him over and over. "Where did you see him? What did he look like? What did he say then? And what did you do next?" and so on. After many, many such questions, and Kala's simple and matter-of-fact answers, the old man said at last, "And did he really promise you that you could meet him whenever you liked? Then take me with you, dear fellow... let us leave at once; all my life I have wanted to see him, but I never thought that I really would" and he would have set off immediately without more ado. But poor Kala was worn out after all his travelling, and hadn't eaten at all on the way back, and he begged for a bite to eat and a night's rest before setting off again.

Nevertheless dawn saw them both on the road—a strange couple: the Pandit in his white robes, and rough-looking Kala in his dingy rags, carrying the precious bundle that contained the Pandit's books, a few belongings and now too the Lord's

armlet. As they went, Kala questioned the old man about Krishna, and marvelled at all the tales he knew about that wonderful boy. And in return the Pandit questioned Kala over and over again about his experience in the forest and marvelled at the simple, convincing and yet incredible things he told about the wonderful boy he had met there. So the miles passed easily, until at last they came at evening to the river-bank and the edge of the forest, refreshed themselves and lay down to sleep.

Before dawn Kala woke the old man. "Now he will come... let's go to the *kadamba* grove, you can wait near the thorn-bushes, and I'll call him."

And indeed, when Kala called they heard the sweet notes of a flute approaching through the misty morning air, and before long Kala could see his friend standing beneath the tree and playing and twinkling his eyes at him.

"Dear child," he said, "I hope you don't mind—I have brought Panditji... he was so thrilled to have your gift and wanted to thank you himself; he has never met you, but he knows all sorts of stories about you. Did you really do all those things? Never mind, you tell me about it another time—look, he is waiting over there; shall I call him?"

"I can see him," replied Krishna smiling, "but I don't think that even if you call him he will be able to see me just yet. He does not have your pure heart and innocent sight. But you can tell him I am waiting for him, I have not forgotten him, surely he will see me one day," and Krishna looked very tenderly towards the old man still standing by the thorn-bushes, gazing in bewilderment at Kala, who seemed to him to be talking into thin air.

But he had heard the flute, and later he said to Kala, as they sat together in the simple hut they built beside the river and shared for several years until the old man died,

"I understand it very well... I was lettered enough to read the stories of the Lord; and sometimes they woke a longing in my heart to see and know him, but I had many other longings and thoughts in me too. But you, on the contrary, from the moment you heard about him, had no other thought in your mind, no other longing in your heart but him. That was his Grace to you—but I hear his flute in the forest every morning; do keep telling me how he looks and what he says and does with you. Hasn't he promised that I too shall see him with my own eyes one day? I am content."

SHRADDHAVAN

THE POWERFUL DEITY

A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY

LONG long ago when Europeans ruled Pondicherry, there lived an atheist who was a bosom friend of the governor of the state. No one knows for certain whether the governor and his friend were Dutch, or Portuguese or English or French, for these were the four who were said to have ruled this historically renowned place at different times.

To come to the story, the atheist behaved like a despot and quite often ill-treated the natives. The governor neither questioned his attitude nor lent his ear to the natives' grievances. Since none dared to question him, the atheist poked his nose into the worship of Hindu idols.

He had often seen the natives go to a temple, very near to the shore. He had nurtured a strong desire to throw the idol into the sea and demolish the temple.

One day he went with his followers to see what the natives did in the temple. He was taken by surprise when he saw some people prostrating themselves before the image. Some lit pieces of camphor and dashed coconuts against the stone slabs; some closed their eyes and recited mantras while some stood silently praying to the Lord. What was more surprising to the atheist was the curiously shaped image which the natives called God

The image had a big and oval face with a long trunk for a nose. It had a pot-like belly and its colour was pitch black.

"What the hell do they call this half elephant and half glutton?" the atheist enquired of his men.

"They call it Pillaiyar," replied one in his gang.

The atheist laughed and his laughter arrested all action in the temple and silence ruled the place. Everyone shivered.

"Go and lift that stone which they call God and throw it into the sea," he commanded his gangmen.

The unruly gang immediately plunged into action. Helpless, the natives stood watching the evil work of the thugs. With great difficulty they lifted the image and carried it to the seashore. They boarded a catamaran with the image, while the atheist stood on the shore watching the movements with pleasure.

Soon his men returned to tell him that the stone image had been thrown into the deep sea.

Happy at heart, the atheist with his followers marched towards the temple to bully and insult the natives.

But he was taken aback to see the image of Pillaiyar seated at the very same place in the temple. He saw the natives praying in silence.

He knew well that the natives could not have brought in another image in such a short while. But at the same time he wondered at the sudden reappearance of the image.

“How did that stone come back?” he shouted at the natives in the temple.

“We do not know. When you left this temple we prayed with our eyes closed. And when we opened them we saw Him seated in the vacant place,” said a native.

“Is that so? Does that stone presume to set its wits against me?” the atheist roared. He then commanded his men: “Carry the statue away. Tie it to a bigger stone. Go a long distance into the sea and roll the stones together into the deep sea.”

His order was obeyed. But when they came back to the temple they were shocked to see the Pillaiyar again.

Suspecting some foul play, the atheist stared at the smiling faces of the natives. One mustered courage and said: “This Pillaiyar is a very powerful deity. No force on earth can destroy Him.”

The atheist wanted to make a final attempt. He told his men to lift the image and take it to the seashore. When it was done he asked all the natives who had gathered in the temple to quit the place. He then closed the doors of the temple and locked it. Carrying the key with him, he went to the seashore, boarded a boat with his companions and the image.

Under his supervision, the image was thrown into the deep sea. With great satisfaction they returned to the temple.

When the atheist unlocked the doors of the temple, he was horrified to note the reappearance of the Pillaiyar.

A large crowd had already gathered there. Many laughed at the foolish action of the atheist.

Sneering at the crowd the atheist ordered his gangsters to fetch crowbars. When the weapons reached the place, he gave an order that grieved the natives very much: “Use these crowbars on their Pillaiyar and break the stone into pieces. Let the powerful deity save himself.”

The gangmen began to dash the sharp edges of their crowbars against the image. But they could not make even a dent on it. They repeated their actions but to their great disappointment the crowbars broke into pieces and fell to the ground.

A splinter from a broken crowbar flew whizzing towards the atheist and hit his right knee-cap. Crying in pain he fell down before the image.

Later it was reported to the governor that the atheist went to the temple every morning and evening without fail to worship Pillaiyar, the powerful deity.

P. RAJA

THE DARSHAN

A NOVELLA

The Story so far

Narasinhbabu related to the strangers how one of his forefathers used to have the vision of Lord Vishnu and how His magnificent golden Image originated and the temple got built at the hill-top. He also stated that the temple in the town had been recently built by his grandfather and the Image brought down from the hill-top and installed here.

The strangers revealed that they had not come for the usual Darshan as devotees but to investigate whether there was any illegal treasure concealed in the Idol or somewhere else inside the temple. They produced a government warrant. Sinhababu, poised and peaceful as ever, asked his grandson Dev to show them the temple and the Image. Accordingly Dev took them to the temple and unlocked the door. But to their utmost surprise they found no Idol on the altar or anywhere else in the temple.

The ruffians who had kidnapped Kunjanath had carried him into a secret cave of the hill and left him there with tied-up hands and feet and gagged mouth. After passing a horrible sleepless night Kunjanath recalled towards the morning the events of his early life. He always had a difference of opinion with his father, Shivanath, a great Sanskrit scholar. This grew more acute in respect of his future higher studies. At one time it reached such a state that he had to leave his hearth and home to continue his studies in the medical line. In due course he became the assistant of the famous pathologist of the time, Dr. Mondal.

One night while he was travelling by the Bombay mail, an accident took place and he came across a baby girl of ten months flung out of the train. He picked her up. As she lay in his arms, he felt a sudden psychological upheaval within him. The course of his life changed, he went to his father with the baby and on account of her the father and the son reconciled all their differences.

III

“HULLO, Kunjanath, what have you decided?” The trio appeared at the entrance of the cave. Kunjanath got startled, his day-dreaming stopped. One of the three hurried to remove his mouth-band. The chief asked “Now tell us your decision.”

“Nothing to tell.”

“You mean you won’t give us the keys!”

“No, never. So long as I live I won’t allow you to burn and beat the glorious Image, the replica of a sublime vision, into a shapeless slab of gold. Don’t you dare forget that the Image is the object of worship and adoration to thousands from all walks of life.”

“Ho.. ho.. ho.., how strange! From where have you got this idea, Kunjanath,

eh? Listen, the Image will not get even a scratch. It will remain just the same as it is now. Simply it will fly abroad across the sky and be seated in a huge and decorated building. The visitors will come there also but not to worship with incense and flowers as they do here. There must be some difference between a temple and a museum: isn't that so? What do you think? Of course, you will get your dakshina, your remuneration, as a priest, in full, at a time, in a bunch. Well, now tell us how much do you want approximately?"

"Shut up, scoundrel, you dare allure me with money?" The outcry made the three tremble in alarm. But the chief steadied himself shortly and said, "It's quite clear now that smooth dealing won't do with him. Let's start changing the anatomy of his face."

"Very well, you may try," Kunjanath said, absolutely fearless.

"We shall not stop by disfiguring your face only "

"What else? You can kill me if you so want."

"Kill you! Oh no, no, we are not that foolish."

Kunjanath cast questioning eyes at the man. The man smiled cunningly and said, "Why, your daughter is there, we shall disfigure her face also, make her blind and break her nose and teeth. ."

Kunjanath groaned in inner agony, his body shook and tears appeared at the corners of his eyes. The men looked at each other, winked suggestively and then one of them rushed to bind his mouth again and the others checked the knots on his hands and feet. While departing the chief addressed him, "Kunjanath, think calmly once more whether you will give us the keys or not. We shall come again."

*

Three schoolboys, Rup, Ratan, and Ashish were practising long-distance running in Palasgarh, a vast field surrounded by Palas trees at the outskirts of the town. Rup, the best of the runners, stopped all on a sudden and sat down pressing his chest with both the hands. The other two followed and hurried to ask him, "What's the matter, what has happened to you, Rup?"

"Nothing, simply a little pain... but please carry on. I won't run any more. Let me go home," he brooded over this unusual indisposition. Rup stood up and moved towards home slowly with his dog Hunter behind him. The rays of the sun were scorching, the mild and soothing breeze of the morning had turned quite hot by then. Somewhat tired and sick, Rup walked on thoughtfully with lowered head and in a subdued mood. He had forgotten to sing, whistle or recite poems as on other days. Hunter also was without excitement. He seemed to sense his master's state.

At the crossing of the temple-road Rup was shocked to see his elder brother in front followed by three strangers. He looked terribly distressed and haggard which reminded Rup of his own sudden illness. He sensed something sad and mysterious, particularly the presence of the unknown men definitely indicated something wrong

somewhere. He signed Hunter to keep quiet and followed them stealthily. Hunter understood everything, only it did not know how to speak. But that did not make any difference to Rup, he could guess all that Hunter wanted to say.

Entering 'Sinha Mansion', Dev with the men headed towards his dadu's drawing room while Rup chaining Hunter at his usual place followed his brother from a safe distance. Dadu was sitting with closed eyes with didi and Sidhu by his side, waiting for him to open his eyes. The moment Dev entered Deepa exclaimed, "What's it, dada, what has happened to you?"

"The Image is missing, It could not be found anywhere in the temple. Now Kunjanathkaka is the only hope," muttered Dev meekly.

"But Kunjar ath has also vanished from his house and there is no trace even of Banchhita," observed Sidhu excitedly.

"What are you saying?" Dev yelled and dropped to the floor like a wounded animal.

"You mean the priest has vanished, don't you? It's natural on his part and the purpose is also clear. If the man who has the keys with him doesn't..."

"Enough of it, not a word more," dadu's commanding voice stopped the talkative visitor. Then he consoled Dev mildly, "Dev, it's not the time to be nervous and witless. Presence of mind and patience are the qualities most needed at the moment. We must find Kunjanath somehow. It is his habit to slip away occasionally from home. But I think this time he has not gone of his own accord. He has been kidnapped. I simply don't understand why that little girl also has been... No, no, Dev, to be depressed will not help us in any way. I entrust you with the job of finding them. Rise to the occasion and follow any course you think best."

The talkative visitor observed dadu keenly and thought, "If not Kunjanath, this old man is perhaps involved in the matter, he also has the keys..."

Rup from his hiding place listened to everything and assumed that these strangers must have been some officials in disguise and were concerned with the disappearance of the Idol. Thinking thus, he silently stole into his room and locked the door from inside.

Rup was not only a first-grade athlete and sportsman but a would-be detective too. The study of detective stories was his hobby and that not simply for entertainment but to gain technical knowledge for the practice of detective work. He had finished reading a lot of books about the science and art of the subject but had had no chance to do field-work yet.

Now this mysterious event at his own house excited Rup's interest a hundred-fold. It was a God-sent golden opportunity for him to become a detective practically. He should try to solve the mystery in his own way. But dadu had assigned the task to dada who was a student of History and a poet, a man of airy imagination. At best he would, perhaps, take help of the police. In that case everything would go to the dogs. No, there was not a moment to waste, he must take up the work before dada and his police could poke their noses into the matter.

Rup got ready in no time, packed his kit-bag with the requisite things and stepped downstairs quietly. He unchained Hunter and whispered into its ears, "Hunter, we must find Kunjanathkaka at any cost, he has been kidnapped. Do you understand?" Hunter wagged his tail, looked at Rup with intent burning eyes and assented, "Baw-baw" ("Surely, surely").

Rup went first to Kunjanath's house with Hunter. Reaching there Hunter got very excited, sniffed everything and moved about everywhere. Rup was quiet, observant and attentive. He searched the room thoroughly but did not find anything other than signs and marks of a tussle on the floor, and the walls as well as in the doorway. No, he didn't get even a broken match-box nor a burnt cigarette. He was not equipped with the means to take an impression of foot-prints or finger-marks. So he thought it wise to conduct a physical search. He went out with Hunter to the nearby jungle and moved about to catch any significant indication. After a while he came across an *adivasi* boy, a goat-herd.

"Have you seen an outsider this side?" Rup asked the boy. The boy said something in his own tongue which meant, "No, today I have not seen anybody, but two or three days back I remember to have seen a few men with peculiar dress and black goggles on..." Hardly could the boy finish, when Hunter rushed abruptly towards the deeper part of the wood. Rup tried to follow but missed the trail. Hunter was too fast for him.

Only when Hunter started barking furiously from a distance did Rup move ahead following the sound. Getting to the spot he saw that the dog was almost mad with rage while circling round a big cluster of a bush.

"Hunter, what's it? Stop, tell me what's the matter!" At the master's presence the dog stopped barking but didn't fail to keep watch over the bush from all sides.

"Who is there?" shouted Rup more than once. A half-naked man crept out of the bush with a sharp short sword in hand, ready to charge at any moment. Rup got startled, Hunter hesitated to jump upon the man on account of the latter's attacking gesture. Just then Rup discovered that the young man was well known to him. Often he came to town to sell milk, eggs, vegetables, etc.

"Ringtu, it's you! What brings you here with such a dangerous weapon in hand?"

"I am in search of my missing goat. They say it has been taken away by someone of the cinema party which had camped in the jungle. I have been searching all morning but have not found either any camp or any cinema-person or my goat."

"I see..." Rup saw a ray of hope; "well, Ringtu, have you searched the other side of the hill? No... then let's go and see that side also."

"Chhotebabu, the jungle is quite dense and difficult that side, why will you take the trouble for my goat? Moreover, I don't understand what leads you here at this odd hour."

"Come along, let's go. I shall tell you everything on the way."

Upon waking up in the morning the so-called old lady heard a feeble sound, not of *sehnai*, of course, but of a continuous sob. From early morning Banchhita had been in a fit of nonstop crying. The lady tried various means to appease her but failed.

Outside the closed door of the dilapidated building a fierce-looking man waited and was at the end of his patience since no one opened the door. At long last the door showed a crack and out came the lady. The man straightened up and stretched out his hand, saying, "My money, please!"

"Your money? Oh yes, I shall surely pay you." Then the lady spoke to herself, "It's going to be noon but no news yet..." She then addressed the man, "I am just going to the tent for a while; on coming back I shall pay you off fully, please don't worry. In the meantime take care of the girl, try to console her and stop her crying."

"O.K. But you have to pay me extra fees for this."

"Yes, of course, don't you worry about the money." The old lady, *alias* the short man, disappeared into the jungle.

The fierce-looking man stepped in shouting in a hoarse voice, "Hai, nasty girl, stop, stop crying I say..." Perhaps he didn't know other means of appeasing.

"I must go to my dad, please take me to him," Banchhita's sweet and musical appeal made the man's heart leap up in joy. The magic entreaty pierced him through and through. Joy in him gave place to a deep pity for the poor girl and then a struggle started in him between two propensities—one, love, affection and pity for the girl and the other greed and hankering after money. He asked as tenderly as he could, "Listen, my dear little child, will you be able to go to your father if I leave you at the foot of the iron bridge where I picked you up yesterday."

Banchhita nodded her head in assent. But then suddenly the fear of the police cropped up in the man, a third propensity which had been dormant so long. He shrunk at the prospect of going out in broad daylight with the girl. But he had already given his word dictated by his compassion for her, and had aroused hope in her longing heart. What to do now?

*

Alone in the cave, Kunjanath groaned in agony, "O ho, ho,... if they beat Banchhita, break her nose... O, ho, ho..." A helpless suffering had assailed him, he didn't know what to do. He recalled his father and prayed to him, "Father, wherever you might be, please protect your beloved Banchhita..."

A dog's bark alerted him and he was all attention. But the sound did not recur, instead he heard the tramping of approaching footsteps. "Are they coming again?" he reflected. "But now they are coming without any talk whatsoever." His face brightened. "Then are these my rescuers, moving about in search of me?" He wanted to scream out to announce his presence but could not, his mouth was tightly bound. So he groaned as loudly as he could and looked intently at the entrance of the cave. But he could see only the shadow of a dog which vanished at once.

Immediately after, someone rushed in and stooping over him untied the band across his mouth and cut with a knife the cords tying his hands and feet. Kunjanath sprung to his feet and embraced his rescuer with deep affection and gratitude. Then he whispered to him, "May God bless you, Rup..." He could not add anything more, his voice choked with emotion. A deep silence ensued.

Rup broke the silence, "Kunjanathkaka, Banchhita is not at home, do you know where she is?"

"Rup, I don't know anything about her, except that she is in the custody of those who brought me over here. But, Rup, it's not safe to stay here any more. They are expected to come here at any moment now."

"Is it so? Will they come here? Bah, very good. Our men also will come shortly to entertain them."

"Your men! Well, Rup, how could you get the sense that I was here?"

"Why, by seeing the broken branches, crushed grasses and dishevelled creepers. Of course, it is a fact that but for Hunter perhaps it would not have been possible for us to find you, at least not so soon. It is the dog which led Ringtu over here." They came out of the cave and kept waiting in a hiding place under a big bushy tree.

"Who is this Ringtu?" asked Kunjanath.

"He is an *adivasi* young man whom I came across in the jungle itself, but he has been well known to me for long. I have sent him to bring some more men with weapons for safety and self-defence."

*

The short man's mouth watered as he neared the tent and got the delicious smell of meat-curry. Getting inside he found that the trio were busy gulping greedily. "Bah, bah, well done," he said, "but I wonder how you could forget me altogether. I kept on waiting there for your direction and you rogues are loading your bellies here. The obstinate girl is crying like a bagpipe from early morning and that bastard of a man is about to suck my blood for money. Don't you see the risk? Suppose the man calls someone to arbitrate over the payment of his money, eh?"

"Nonsense, stop it. He will call others to arbitrate, as if he did not have to save his own skin. Don't you bother yourself with trifles. Everything will be sorted out in time. Now remove the cover of that pot and help yourself to the contents. Hope you won't call me a bad cook. Have your fill, change your clothes and accompany us if you so wish. Some fun is awaiting us there with Kunjanath. Ha, ha, ha, you know, the medicine has started working, ha, ha,..." The chief of the gang went on laughing, a bit excessively due to the effect of wine.

*

The fierce-looking so-called sinister man was on his way with Banchhita across the jungle towards the main road. The more he advanced the more afraid he

became of the police. Still he proceeded as his conscience was pricked with the sense of the wrong he had done to the girl the day before. He must make good his wrongdoing somehow. But then he was assailed by a negative thought, "What will I do if the police catch me?"

He shrunk and asked hesitatingly, "Well, my little one, will it do if I leave you just on the main road instead of going up to the foot of the iron bridge?"

"Yes, of course, uncle," her voice was free, fresh and sweet like a ringing rivulet. The man halted abruptly, he was suspicious. Shortly they heard the sound of gradually approaching footsteps, "There, the police are coming," murmured the man and vanished immediately into the jungle.

The sound of footsteps neared to a certain extent and then receded. Puzzled, Banchhita stood still and waited for the man to come back. Time rolled on but the man didn't return even after a long interval. Banchhita was left all alone in the heart of the wood. Would she be able to trace her way out of this enigmatic place?

*

"Well, Kunjanath, what have you decided?" The four ruffians entered the cave and asked at a time. Their words were half-articulated and their feet shaking because of intoxication.

"Bow-bow," a bark from behind even before they were aware of the absence of Kunjanath in the cave. They turned round and saw that the entrance of the cave was blocked by a number of militant figures. There was no way of escape without a fight. A fight started and lasted only for a short while. It didn't take long for Rup, Kunjanath, Ringtu and his party to overcome all the four and make them prisoners. Kunjanath snatched the mask off the short man, struck hard at his jaw, shouting, "Tarafdar, take this as interest; capital you will get afterwards. Now tell me, where is my daughter?"

"She is in the dilapidated building opposite the eastern hill-side," he made a protective gesture, apprehending another blow from Kunjanath.

"What! you have left her alone in that haunted house? Heartless brute, don't you have a child of your own? Ringtu, come along with me. Rup, you proceed towards the town with them. We shall catch up with you soon after rescuing Banchhita."

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Dev sat sunk in thought in his own room holding his head with both hands. Deepa entered, no change in Dev, he was unaware of her presence. Deepa waited a while and then addressed him, "Dada, what's the good of thinking, do something. Everything will be quite clear as and when Kunjanathkaka is found."

"Yes, you are right; I think so myself. I have already informed the police, the visitors have gone there to chalk out a plan. I shall also join them if necessary. I

am just waiting for their word.”

Deepa remained silent. She thought, “Perhaps Rup would have been the right person to tackle the matter. Probably he would not have gone to the police at the outset. But he is still too young. Moreover, I haven’t seen him since morning. Where has he gone?” She asked Dev, “Dada, do you know where Rup is?”

“Rup, oh no, where has he gone?” he asked the same question and jerked up on his feet and looked around in search of Rup, as it were.

Rup with the prisoners, guarded by Ringtu’s men, headed towards home. Getting onto the main road he removed the masks of the other three but could not recognise any of them. However, they walked silently on up to the iron bridge when Kunjanath called from behind, “Rup, Rup, wait a little, we are just coming.”

He and Ringtu hurried to meet them panting, “Rup, we didn’t find Banchhita in that haunted house nor anywhere nearabout.” Kunjanath was restless and very depressed. Sorrow, suffering, hunger and anxiety had made him look pale and haggard beyond recognition. He added, “Rup, tell me, what shall I do?”

But before Rup could say anything Kunjanath rushed abruptly to the short man and catching him tightly by the collar shouted, “Rascal, tell me where you have kept Banchhita, otherwise I shall strangle you to death.”

“Oh, oh, oh, release your grip, Kunjanath, I am getting choked. Oh, oh, if she is not there, I don’t know where she may be... Oh ho, ho, really, please, believe me, Oh ho, ho...”

Kunjanath left him and punched him right in his face and then turning to Rup screamed, “I am out of my wits, Rup, tell me what I should do. How shall I find her?”

“Don’t you worry, Kunjanathkaka, we shall surely find her somehow or other. Please have patience.” Rup consoled him, caressing his back.

Meanwhile Mr. Mitra, the O. C. of the local Police Station, appeared along with the three visitors and a few constables. But none spoke. They just looked silently at one another. Mr. Mitra looked at Kunjanath with surprise and suspicion, whereas Rup looked askance at Mr. Mitra. Kunjanath scrutinised the three strangers. The strangers’ eyes were riveted on Ringtu and his men. Ringtu and his men flashed fire with their eyes at the prisoners as though to burn them to ashes. But the prisoners didn’t know where to look. Their eyes moved about aimlessly, once over the clear sky and then on the green trees of the far forest.

Suddenly Ringtu approached one of the prisoners and catching him by the neck asked, “Scoundrel, where is my goat?” The man became puzzled and simply pointed to his stomach, saying, “We have eaten it up.” Instantly Ringtu threatened to cut open his belly with his sword. The man yelled out of fear while two constables intervened and set them apart.

Rup laughed heartily but then became serious the next moment. He said, “Mr. Mitra, we have found Kunjanathkaka, but don’t know the whereabouts of Banchhita yet. So we are going in search of her again. Meanwhile here are the culprits, take them into custody and explain the whole situation to dadu and dada as they must

be very anxious. Kunjanathkaka, Ringtu, let's go; come along, Hunter." They turned round and proceeded towards the jungle.

A beautiful valley-like place at a certain height of the hill with scattered trees, bushes, flowers and fountains. Here the scorching rays of the sun had magically turned very soothing and their brightness had changed to a tender greenish hue. A breeze, laden with unknown fragrance, blew from all sides. It was as if an air-conditioned drawing-room had been built by nature herself for her own pleasure.

Kunjanath, Rup and his party wandered here by chance. They had searched thoroughly every nook and corner of the wooded foot of the hill but could not find any trace of Banchhita. Then coming upon a gateway they entered and climbed to a certain height and reached this splendid spot. They rested, relaxed and stretched their tired limbs at the ideal place and discussed the future course of their action.

"By the way, Rup," Kunjanath asked on a sudden, "do you know who those three strangers with the O. C. Mr. Mitra are?"

"No, not exactly, Kunjanathkaka, I have kept from you a certain fact: the Idol of Vishnu has been stolen from the temple. I think those men are concerned with the Idol, maybe they are from the C.B.I."

"What! what do you say? It's impossible, Rup. How can It be stolen without the keys, unless, of course, they break open the doors, which seems to be quite improbable? Apprehending an attack on me I kept the keys with your dadu yesterday." Then he brooded on, "Has Sinhababu himself done something with the Image for safety's sake...? In that case..."

Rup interrupted, "No, the doors are not broken, they are intact and nicely locked. Still the Image has vanished and that is most unusual and mysterious, Kunjanathkaka."

"You know, Rup, it is just for the keys that I have been kidnapped and harassed so much. I have even been threatened that if I didn't give the keys they would mutilate the face and figure of Banchhita, break her nose and spoil her eyes..." He bursted into a fit of loud sobbing.

"Papa, papa, why do you weep? See what an Idol I have got!" A musical voice came floating from a balcony-like ridge at the hill-wall behind. All eyes turned in that direction to find Banchhita standing there. And what a Banchhita! as if the beauties of heaven and earth were mingled in her parted smiling lips, pearl-like teeth and round and shapely shoulders and arms. And, wonder of wonders, those graceful arms carried the lustrous Image of Sri Vishnu Himself in His exquisite pose with conch, disc, club and lotus in four hands.

"Papa, please don't weep." She leaned down to console her father. Within seconds Kunjanath jumped to his feet and cautioned her, "Banchhita, get back, don't stoop, you will fall down. Just get back and wait, we are coming."

Kunjanath and others groped hither and thither for a way to ascend but didn't find any suitable one. Meanwhile Banchhita herself came down following some almost worn-out and hidden steps under long-rooted trees and bushes. It was indeed

a splendid sight to see her stepping downwards rhythmically, intoxicated with heavenly wine, as it were.

Just as she reached below, Kunjanath, who could not do without either Banchhita or Vishnu, lifted both of them together in his strong arms and chanted the famous hymn of the Gita, Chapter II, Sloka 40, with deep devotion and delight:

“नमः पुरस्तादथ पृष्ठतस्ते
नमोऽस्तु ते सर्वत एव सर्व ।
अनन्तवीर्यामितविक्रमस्त्वं
सर्वं समान्वीषि ततोऽसि सर्वः ॥

“Salutation to Thee in front and behind and from every side, for Thou art each and all that is. Infinite in might and immeasurable in strength of action Thou pervadest all and everyone.”

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This is how Banchhita narrated her adventure, “Left alone in the pathless wood. I stand dumbfounded for a while. Then led by a strange inspiration I move along heedless of height, slope, right or left. After a long while I find myself standing opposite the closed door of an old temple at the hill-top. I push the door which gives way instantly, showing an interior flooded with golden light. Startled, I think, ‘This must be due to the slanting sun-rays coming inside through the doorway! But then I see that bathed in that light stands the golden figure of Vishnu Himself in His glorious pose. Nay, It appears to call me by the gestures of His eyes and hands. I step in with outstretched hands to catch It. And lo, the miracle of miracles: the Gold-God is within my clasp—as if It were a little boy waiting so long to climb into my arms. I turn round, come out of the temple with the Idol in my hands and descend, the same inspiration directs my footsteps all the time. I meet my father....”

How the Image went into the old temple nobody cared to bother about. The sight of Banchhita with the Idol in her hands brought about an alchemic change in the three investigating officers. They simply prostrated themselves in awe and wonder and prayed for the Grace of the Supreme Deity. The question of punishing the kid-nappers also got lost amidst the tumultuous ovation from the thousands of awaiting devotees.

Among the whole lot it was only Mr. Mitra, the O. C., who rushed to Sinhababu for further investigation but was obstructed at the doorway by Deepa, “No, you cannot disturb dadu now, he is in deep meditation.”

Mr. Mitra did not care, he forced his way into dadu’s drawing-room and asked excitedly, “Sinhababu, do you know how the Image went to the old temple?”

No reply. His meditation did not break.

Mr. Mitra called aloud again. Sinhababu half-opened his dreamy eyes and

murmured, "Oh, what a resplendent beauty, victory to the Lord."

"Do you know how the Image went to the old temple?"

"No, I know nothing, I simply meditated on Him. He assured me that He existed and was safe."

"That's O.K. But how did it go to the old temple?"

"Old temple! O Lord, who can know about your leela!"

Just then Rup entered with Banchhita, Dev and Deepa, "Mr. Mitra, we are all tired, please don't bother dadu any more now," observed Rup. "Besides, everything has been settled, what's the good of knowing now how the Idol got to the old temple?"

"Why don't you take it to be a miracle?" suggested Dev.

"Ho, ho, ho... miracle! I don't believe in miracles. At least I shouldn't do that as a Police officer."

"But it is actually a miracle," intervened Deepa, "I overheard Kunjanathkaka when he handed over the temple-keys to dadu. I got terribly perturbed and went on thinking constantly about the safety of the Image I could not sleep. But in half sleep and half wakefulness I saw a vision and heard a voice, 'Remove me to the old temple, Sidhu knows.' Sidhukaka did it with the help of the gate-watchman who knew the step-way to the old temple. As I have heard and known, Mr. Mitra, everything about the Image has been miraculous from the beginning."

(Concluded)

CHUNILAL CHAUDHURY