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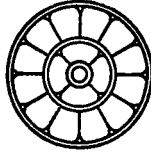
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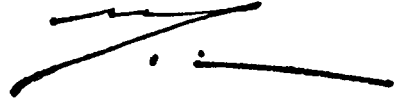


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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All correspondence to be addressed to:

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

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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DIFFERENCES, INFLUENCES, FORMATIONS

FROM A TALK OF THE MOTHER

“Why are some people intelligent and others not? Why can some people do certain things while others can’t?”

It is as though you asked why everybody was not the same! Then it would mean that there would only be one single thing, one single thing indefinitely repeated which would constitute the whole universe.... I don’t know, but it seems to me that it wouldn’t be worth the trouble having a universe for that, it would be enough to have just one thing.

But the moment one admits the principle of multiplicity and that no two things are alike in the universe, how can you ask why they are not the same! It is just because they are not, because no two things are alike.

Behind that there is something else which one is not conscious of, but which is very simple and very childish. It is this: “Since there is an infinite diversity, since some people are of one kind and others of a lesser kind, well”—here of course one doesn’t say this to oneself but it is there, hidden in the depths of the being, in the depths of the ego—“why am I not of the best kind?” There we are. In fact it amounts to complaining that perhaps one is not of the best kind! If you look attentively at questions like these: “Why do some have much and others little? Why are some wise and not others? Why are some intelligent and not others?” etc., behind that there is “Why don’t I have all that can be had and why am I not all that one can be?...” Naturally, one doesn’t say this to oneself, because one would feel ridiculous, but it is there.

*

I have another question about what I told you the other day, when we discussed the distinction between will and “willings”. I told you that “willings”—what Sri Aurobindo calls “willings”—are movements arising not from a higher consciousness coming down into the being and expressing itself in action, but from impulses or influences from outside. We reserved the word “will” to express what in the individual consciousness is the expression of an order or impulse coming from the truth of the being, from the truth of the individual—his true being, his true self, you understand. That we call “will”. And all the impulses, actions, movements arising in the being which are not that, we said were “willings”. And I told you in fact that without knowing it or at times even knowing it, you are moved by influences coming from outside which enter in without your even being aware of them and arouse in you what you call the “will” that a certain thing may happen or another may not, etc.

So I am asked:

“What is the nature of these influences from outside? Could you give us an explanation of their working?”

Naturally these influences are of very diverse kinds. They may be studied from a psychological point of view or from an almost mechanical standpoint, the one usually translating the other, that is, the mechanical phenomenon occurs as a sort of result of the psychological one.

In very few people, and even in the very best at very rare moments in life, does the will of the being express that deep inner, higher truth.

(After a silence Mother continues:) The individual consciousness extends far beyond the body; we have seen that even the subtle physical which is yet material compared with the vital being and in certain conditions almost visible, extends at times considerably beyond the visible limits of the physical body. This subtle physical is constituted of active vibrations which enter into contact or mingle with the vibrations of the subtle physical of others, and this reciprocal contact gives rise to influences—naturally the most powerful vibrations get the better of the others. For example, as I have already told you several times, if you have a thought, this thought clothes itself in subtle vibrations and becomes an entity which travels and moves about in the earth-atmosphere in order to realise itself as best it can, and because it is one among millions, naturally there is a multiple and involved interaction as a result of which things don't take place in such a simple and schematic fashion.

What you call yourself, the individual being enclosed within the limits of your present consciousness, is constantly penetrated by vibrations of this kind, coming from outside and very often presenting themselves in the form of suggestions, in the sense that, apart from a few exceptions, the action takes place first in the mental field, then becomes vital, then physical. I want to make it clear that it is not a question of the pure mind here, but of the physical mind; for in the physical consciousness itself there is a mental activity, a vital activity and a purely material activity, and all that takes place in your physical consciousness, in your body consciousness and bodily activity, penetrates first in the form of vibrations of a mental nature, and so in the form of suggestions. Most of the time these suggestions enter you without your being in the least conscious of them; they go in, awaken some sort of response in you, then spring up in your consciousness as though they were your own thought, your own will, your own impulse; but it is only because you are unconscious of the process of their penetration.

These suggestions are very numerous, manifold, varied, with natures which are very, very different from each other, but they may be classified into three principal orders. First—and they are hardly perceptible to the ordinary consciousness; they become perceptible only to those who have already reflected much, observed much, deeply studied their own being—they are what could be called collective suggestions.

When a being is born upon earth, he is inevitably born in a certain country and a certain environment. Due to his physical parents he is born in a set of social, cul-

tural, national, sometimes religious circumstances, a set of habits of thinking, of understanding, of feeling, conceiving, all sorts of constructions which are at first mental, then become vital habits and finally material modes of being. To put things more clearly, you are born in a certain society or religion, in a particular country, and this society has a collective conception of its own and this nation has a collective conception of its own, this religion has a collective "construction" of its own which is usually very fixed. You are born into it. Naturally, when you are very young, you are altogether unaware of it, but it acts on your formation—that formation, that slow formation through hours and hours, through days and days, experiences added to experiences, which gradually builds up a consciousness. You are underneath it as beneath a bell-glass. It is a kind of construction which covers and in a way protects you, but in other ways limits you considerably. All this you absorb without even being aware of it and this forms the subconscious basis of your own construction. This subconscious basis will act on you throughout your life, if you do not take care to free yourself from it. And to free yourself from it, you must first of all become aware of it; and the first step is the most difficult, for this formation was so subtle, it was made when you were not yet a conscious being, when you had just fallen altogether dazed from another world into this one (*laughing*) and it all happened without your participating in the least in it. Therefore, it does not even occur to you that there could be something to know there, and still less something you must get rid of. And it is quite remarkable that when for some reason or other you do become aware of the hold of this collective suggestion, you realise at the same time that a very assiduous and prolonged labour is necessary in order to get rid of it. But the problem does not end there.

You live surrounded by people. These people themselves have desires, stray wishes, impulses which are expressed through them and have all kinds of causes, but take in their consciousness an individual form. For example, to put it in very practical terms: you have a father, a mother, brothers, sisters, friends, comrades; each one has his own way of feeling, willing, and all those with whom you are in relation expect something from you, even as you expect something from them. That something they do not always express to you, but it is more or less conscious in their being, and it makes formations. These formations, according to each one's capacity of thought and the strength of his vitality, are more or less powerful, but they have their own little strength which is usually much the same as yours; and so what those around you want, desire, hope or expect from you enters in this way in the form of suggestions very rarely expressed, but which you absorb without resistance and which suddenly awaken within you a similar desire, a similar will, a similar impulse.... This happens from morning to night, and again from night to morning, for these things don't stop while you are sleeping, but on the contrary are very often intensified because your consciousness is no longer awake, watching and protecting you to some extent.

And this is quite common, so common that it is quite natural and so natural that you need special circumstances and most unusual occasions to become aware

of it. Naturally, it goes without saying that your own responses, your own impulses, your own wishes have a similar influence on others, and that all this becomes a marvellous mixture in which might is always right!

If that were the end of the problem, one could yet come out of the mess; but there is a complication. This terrestrial world, this human world is constantly invaded by the forces of the neighbouring world, that is, of the vital world, the subtle region beyond the fourfold earth-atmosphere;¹ and this vital world which is not under the influence of the psychic forces or the psychic consciousness is essentially a world of ill-will, or disorder, disequilibrium, indeed of all the most anti-divine things one could imagine. This vital world is constantly penetrating the physical world, and being much more subtle than the physical, it is very often quite imperceptible except to a few rare individuals. There are entities, beings, wills, various kinds of individualities in that world, who have all kinds of intentions and make use of every opportunity either to amuse themselves if they are small beings or to do harm and create disorder if they are beings with a greater capacity. And the latter have a very considerable power of penetration and suggestion, and wherever there is the least opening, the least affinity, they rush in, for it is a game which delights them.

Besides, they are very thirsty or hungry for certain human vital vibrations which for them are a rare dish they love to feed upon; and so their game lies in exciting pernicious movements in man so that man may emanate these forces and they be able to feed on them just as they please. All movements of anger, violence, passion, desire, all these things which make you abruptly throw off certain energies from yourself, project them from yourself, are exactly what these entities of the vital world like best, for, as I said, they enjoy them like a sumptuous dish. Now, their tactics are simple: they send you a little suggestion, a little impulse, a small vibration which enters deep into you and through contagion or sympathy awakens in you the vibration necessary to make you throw off the force they want to absorb.

There it is a little easier to recognise the influence, for, if you are the least bit attentive, you become aware of something that has suddenly awakened within you. For example, those who are in the habit of losing their temper, if they have attempted ever so little to control their anger, they will find something coming from outside or rising from below which actually takes hold of their consciousness and arouses anger in them. I don't mean that everybody is capable of this discernment; I am speaking of those who have tried to understand their being and control it. These adverse suggestions are easier to distinguish than, for instance, your response to the will or desire of a being who is of the same nature as yourself, another human being, who consequently acts on you without this giving you a clear impression of something coming from outside: the vibrations are too alike, too similar in their nature, and you have to be much more attentive and have a much sharper discernment to realise that these movements which seem to come out from you are not really yours but come from outside. But with the adverse forces, if you are in the least sincere and observe yourself

¹ Consisting of the four principles: physical, vital, mental and psychic.

attentively, you become aware that it is something in the being which is responding to an influence, an impulse, a suggestion, even something at times very concrete, which enters and produces similar vibrations in the being.

There, now. That is the problem.

The remedy?... It is always the same: goodwill, sincerity, insight, patience—oh! an untiring patience and a perseverance which assures you that what you have not succeeded in doing today, you will succeed in doing another time, and makes you go on trying until you do succeed.

And this brings us back to Sri Aurobindo's sentence:¹ if this control seems to you quite impossible today, well, that means that not only will it be possible, but that it will be realised later.

December 12, 1956

(*Questions and Answers, 1956, pp. 387-94*)

¹ *Thoughts and Glances, Centenary Vol. 16, p. 378.*

AWARDED Ph.D. ON SRI AUROBINDO'S AESTHETICS

PROFESSOR H. R. Justa of the Himachal Pradesh Education Service has been awarded the Ph.D. degree on his thesis "Sri Aurobindo's Aesthetic Vision" by the Himachal Pradesh University, Simla. His thesis has been hailed as an important landmark in the context of Indian Aesthetics. Sri Aurobindo emerges as a great formulator of the Art and Science of Aesthetics, who brought to bear on the subject the intensity of his experience as a creative writer, the knowledge gained through his mastery of Yoga, the vast learning of his literary scholarship and the visionary sweep and depth of his philosophy. Dr. Justa has suggested that the Universities should introduce at the Postgraduate level an "Aurobindonian School of Aesthetics and Criticism" to supplement the other approaches to English Literary Criticism because Sri Aurobindo's Aesthetics yields a complete approach, self-contained, self-subsistent; it has a range and a scope which go beyond the other schools and is holistic.

The U.G.C. sanctioned a grant of Rs. 8,000 for undertaking this research and a visit to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of March 1984)

Sri Aurobindo's Letters

By will I meant this that there is something in the body that accepts the illness and has certain reactions that make this acceptance effective—so there must always be a contrary will in the conscious parts of the being to get rid of this most physical acceptance. (No date)

You say after several years you have not changed your nature. I only wish the external nature were so easy to transform that it could be done in a few years. You forget also that the real problem—to get rid of the pervading ego in this nature is a task you have seriously tackled only a short time ago. And it is not in a few months that that can be done. Even the best sadhaks find after many experiences and large changes on the higher plane that much remains to be done. How do you expect to get rid of it at once unlike everybody else? A Yoga like this needs patience, because it means a change both of the radical motives and of each part and detail of the nature. It will not do to say “Yesterday I determined this time to give myself entirely to the Mother and look it is not done, on the contrary all the old opposite things turn up once more; so there is nothing to do but to proclaim myself unfit and give up the Yoga”. Of course when you come to the point, make a resolution of that kind, immediately all that stands in the way does rise up—it invariably happens. The thing to be done is to stand back, observe and reject, not to allow these things to get hold of you, to keep your central will separate from them and call on the Mother's Force to meet them. If one does get involved as often happens then to get disinvolved as soon as possible and go forward again. That is what everybody, every yogin does—to be depressed because one cannot do everything in a rush is quite contrary to the truth of the matter. A stumble does not mean that one is unfit, nor does prolonged difficulty mean that for oneself the thing is impossible.

The fact that you have to give up your ordinary work when you get depressed does not mean that you have not gained a steadiness—it only means that the steadiness you have gained is not a personal virtue but depends on your keeping the contact with the Mother—for it is her force that is behind it and behind all progress you can make. Learn to rely on that Force more, to open to it more completely and to seek spiritual progress even not for your own sake but for the sake of the Divine—then you will go on more smoothly. Get the full psychic opening in

the most external physical consciousness. That and not despondency is the lesson you ought to draw from your present adverse experience. (No date)

Your nature like that of almost everybody has been largely ego-centric and the first stages of the sadhana are with almost everybody ego-centric. The main idea in it is always one's own sadhana, one's own endeavour, one's own development, perfection, siddhi. It is inevitable for most, for without that personal endeavour there would not be sufficient will or push to bring about the first necessary changes. But none of these things can really come—development, perfection or siddhi—in any degree of completeness or unmixed finality until this ego-centric attitude changes into the God-centric—until it becomes the development, perfection, siddhi of the Divine Consciousness, its will and its instrument in this body—and that can only be when these things become secondary and bhakti for the Divine, love for the Divine, oneness with the Divine in consciousness, will, heart and body becomes the sole aim—the rest becomes merely the fulfilment of the Divine's Will by the Divine Power. This attitude is never difficult for the psychic, it is its natural position and feeling, and whenever your psychic was in front you had it in your central consciousness. But there was the outer mind, vital and physical that brought in their mixture of desire and ego and there could be no effective liberation in life and action till these were liberated. The thinking mind and higher vital can accept without too much difficulty, but the difficulty is with the lower vital and physical and especially with the most external parts of them, for these are entirely creatures of habit, recurring movement, an obstinate repetition of the same movement always. This habit is so blind and obstinate and persistent as to seem almost invincible, especially when it is used at a juncture like this by the Forces of Ignorance as their last refuge or point of attack. But the apparent invincibility is not true. The most ego-centric can change and do change by the psychic principle becoming established in the external nature. That it can be done only by the Divine Grace and Power is true (that is true of all spiritual changes)—but with the full consent of the being. As it was done in the inner being, so it can be done in the outer; give the adhesion of your full will and faith and, whatever the difficulty, it will be done. (No date)

That is good progress. As for the resisting part, there is for a long time a resistance from some layer of the physical—one layer opens, another beneath remains obscure. But if the pressure from above is continuous, the resistance gets exhausted at last.

The stillness of which you speak in the meditation is a very good sign. It comes usually in that pervading way when there has been sufficient purification to make it possible. On the other side, it is itself the beginning of the laying of the foundations of the higher spiritual consciousness.

I think you are right about the change coming in many. Still chequered by remnants and returns of the old nature, it is proceeding. (No date)

All that you write in your letter is perfectly sound and true. The very object of Yoga is a change of consciousness—it is by getting a new consciousness or by unveiling the hidden consciousness of the true being within and progressively manifesting and perfecting it that one gets first the contact and then the union with the Divine. Ananda and bhakti are part of that deeper consciousness, and it is only when one lives in it and grows in it that ananda and bhakti can be permanent. Till then, one can only get experiences of ananda and bhakti, but not the constant and permanent state. But the state of bhakti and constantly growing surrender does not come to all at an early stage of the sadhana; many, most indeed, have a long journey of purification and tapasya to go through before it opens, and experiences of this kind, at first rare and interspaced, afterwards frequent, are the landmarks of their progress. It depends on certain conditions, which have nothing to do with superior or inferior Yoga capacity, but rather with a predisposition in the heart to open, as you say, to the Sun of the divine Influence. (No date)

The experience you have is the experience of the true self. Untouched by grief and joy, desire, anxiety or trouble, vast and calm and full of peace, it observes the agitations of the outer being as one might the play of children. It is indeed the divine element in you. The more you can live in that, the firmer will be the foundation of the sadhana. In this self will come all the higher experiences, oneness with the Divine, light, knowledge, strength, Ananda, the play of the Mother's higher forces. It does not always become stable from the first, though for some it does; but the experience comes more and more frequently and lasts more till it is no longer covered by the ordinary nature. (No date)

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(We are resuming this series which came to a stop some time ago)

August 5, 1940

P: I was reading Okakura's book on Japan. He says even the Japanese have to be Westernised to protect their independence, they will go to that length.

SRI AUROBINDO: Being Westernised won't serve. As you say, Western nations lost their independence.

Evening

C and P standing at either extremity were making some gestures at each other, C burst suddenly into laughter and P joined in. Sri Aurobindo looked at them. They continued to laugh.

SRI AUROBINDO: Unspoken jokes seem to be more successful.

P: Champaklal was showing different poses of standing.... The British have started arresting the Japanese.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): Yes and they say it is not retaliation. Extraordinary coincidences, I suppose.

P: Yes, many such coincidences are possible in this world.

S: This is better than wordy warfare....

P: The Bengal government is taking many communal measures. The Hindus should organise.

N: They held a protest day on the 4th.

SRI AUROBINDO: Merely protest won't do anything.

N: Shyama Prasad is the only solitary figure now who says other measures have to be taken.

August 6, 1940

P: The Viceroy has issued an ordinance banning all volunteer organisations—political or communal. Only for social service an organisation can be retained, sanctioned by the Provincial government.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see. That would give an occasion for starting Civil Disobedience.

P: Yes. One thing good is that the Khaksars will go—all the other organisation too, Hindu Sabha, Mahavir Dal, etc.

N: Gandhi will issue another threatening statement. But the government may be taking advance measures to stop any Civil Disobedience Movement.

S: That won't prevent Gandhi. If he issues a call, people will join.

SRI AUROBINDO: How can that be possible without organisation?

S: During the Dandee march it happened automatically.

SRI AUROBINDO: But he admitted there were many mistakes. Of course he says he will start the Civil Disobedience in his own way. Nobody knows what that way is.

P: The Viceroy says that in any such private organisation one man gets more power than he is legally entitled to, which is not desirable. The government has enough capacity to deal with any trouble.

SRI AUROBINDO: Has it? The government hasn't shown it recently.

P: People can join the Civil Guard, the Viceroy says...

S: Setalvad has declared for expansion of the Council and trying for independence after the War.

SRI AUROBINDO: Trying for what?

P: Further extension. (*laughter*)

S: For independence.

SRI AUROBINDO: Independence? He can try for 20,000 years, he won't get it. He has been already trying by giving speeches, writing, etc....

P: Have you read an article in the *Sunday Hindu* about the collapse of France? It says that Reynaud's speech helped to break the morale of the army.

SRI AUROBINDO: How? Churchill also said that if England fell, they would go to the Empire and fight from there. That didn't break the morale.

S: And his appeal to America was to avert the armistice move in the cabinet.

P: He says that it is a mystery that when the whole nation was against, a small number of people could make them accept the armistice.

SRI AUROBINDO: When a small number of persons is determined to do a thing, they can do it. It has been done any number of times in history. There is no mystery there. Here especially when there was no chance of communication with the people or the Parliament, it was quite easy. He assumes that constitutional opposition would have been possible. But how when there was no senate? At Bordeaux there were only 50 or 60 members and they were all Laval's men. Lebrun played into the hands of these people.

P: Mandel is said to be the natural son of Clemenceau. It may be true as is evidenced by his energy and vigour.

SRI AUROBINDO: And Weygand is said to be the illegal son of Leopold II, one of the most notorious kings in history. Weygand is also very rich, holds many shares of the Suez Canal. A lieutenant here, who used to attend the French cabinet meetings as a Police officer, said that Mandel was the only clean and honest man. In Reynaud there was something excited and unsteady, but he is very intelligent. Outwardly his decisions were all right but one could see that inwardly he was liable to make many mistakes.

S: It is lucky that England has got a leader now. Nobody knows what the old government would have done by now. The back numbers of the *New Statesman and Nation* make a very interesting study. They are still discussing the defection of Belgium. One doesn't know what they will do when they hear of Paris' fall and the Vichy

government. When one reads these numbers one feels like a minor god who knows the after-events and is ahead of them while they are still at the old events (this is because we are getting the old numbers).

SRI AUROBINDO: They show how people commit mistakes in their judgment and calculation like what we are doing ourselves at the present time. (*laughter*)

S: People chafe at these past mistakes. If they knew of their past lives life would become a burden.

SRI AUROBINDO: And yet they want to know their past.

Evening

(*The radio news: The Germans are concentrating for attack on the Channel ports and embarking, disembarking in the Baltic.*)

P: So it is true that the Germans are preparing.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Perhaps they will attack from Holland and Belgium. The Baltic will be too far. If it is a quick stroke and cleverly done, then it is possible and it depends on where they land. The British navy can't protect the whole coastline.

P: But if after landing they can be checked successfully once, then it will break their morale. Hitherto they have thought themselves invincible.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not one check, but many checks.

P: At any rate England knows all about their plan and preparation.

August 7, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO: Hitler's invasion can't come off on the 10th.

P: He has still 3 days' time. Otherwise it will break his sequence. He is preparing.

SRI AUROBINDO: I wish it had been fixed to come after the 15th; I don't want the Darshan to be disturbed....

N: Hiren Dutt finds *The Life Divine* obscure and loose.

SRI AUROBINDO: Obscure to himself?

P: I haven't much regard for his opinion and learning. I met him at Bombay.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has an ordinary mind and it runs in the traditional groove. When the *Arya* was being published, I think he said that he couldn't understand it.

N: Yet he has made a name as a scholar.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not a very big name!

N: Prashanta Mahalanvis seems to have said that *The Life Divine* is গাঁজা।¹

SRI AUROBINDO: He is a Brahmo, isn't he?

N: Yes.

P: He means he found it as intoxicating as গাঁজা ?

N: Oh no, Brahmos don't touch গাঁজা .

¹ ganja: hemp.

P: It was the same man who came with Tagore here and was not allowed to accompany Tagore in his interview with you. He was very angry. I remember the story of a Brahmo. He was asked by somebody where some particular theatre was; he said he didn't know. He realised that he had told a lie and then called the man back and said, "I know, but I won't tell you." (*laughter*)

N: That is Heramba Maitra. ⁷

S: I like this comment about গাঁজা . He means we were smoking গাঁজা in solitude here.

N: Oh, they think much worse than that.

P: Some of these people are strictly ethical and moral.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the Pharisee's "I am not a sinner" type.... Hiren Dutt was a clever solicitor. He was the solicitor in my case; in all my cases, I think, and he was one of the few who remained faithful after the collapse of our movement. When the meeting was getting smaller and smaller, he was the one who was always present. Ramananda was another.

N: Ramananda has now joined the Hindu Movement.

Evening

S: China is also threatening Indochina!

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, if in case they allow Japan any port.

P: It seems Italy has launched an attack against British Somaliland and Egypt.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but not against Egypt. It is evident that the British have a very insufficient force there. I don't understand why Australian soldiers are being sent to England. They ought to have been out there.

(Then Purani brought in the talk about Nandalal Bose's coming here and said that it must be due to consideration for Tagore that he has suspended his coming to this Darshan.)

SRI AUROBINDO: Artists can't keep their resolutions!

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of March 1984)

The Mother's Message

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



(33)

THE Mother asked me to do the drawing of a chair. I did so. When she saw it in her room at the Playground, her blue-grey eyes lit up with laughter. She commented:

“Ah! in your sketch the chair looks as if it is going to fall at any moment. Child, the drawing is not correct. The chair must be stationary. Let me show you how to draw a chair from different angles.”

She drew it with ease. I admired her skill.

I felt so ashamed—disappointed—and called myself a duffer not even to be able to draw a simple chair. I had still to learn much about perspective.

All the events in my life were moving so fast that it was very difficult to make my faltering steps cope with the Mother's rapid strides.

When I reached my room in Golconde, I dissolved into tears.

The next morning the Mother sent me a card along with a bunch of white roses. She also sent a fully bloomed rose to draw.

In the evening I showed my sketch to her. She said, while pointing at a rose in a vase:

“Look at this—I will draw it.”

She did it just to show me how the petals of the rose could be separated by showing light and shadow in the correct places so that the rose looked real.

After that we meditated together. During that time, my mind wandered in a thousand directions. Then with a leaden heart and an aching head I came back home.

*

On 8th April in the morning I received from the Mother her exquisite white Egyptian satin sandals to paint. Their straps were like the wings of a swan—their front had tiny heads of swans. She also sent a bottle-green velvet cloth for the background and a green velvet cushion to place her sandals on.

Champaklal who brought these things told me how the Mother wanted their composition.

I placed the velvet cushion on a low stool and, behind it, turned a chair so that its back faced me. Then I arranged the bottle-green velvet cloth on its back. Lastly I put the sandals on the cushion and did only the drawing on the canvas board. The Mother saw it in the evening. She took the measurement of the sandals and checked it on my board with a ruler to examine their correct position and proportion. She was satisfied with the sketch.

The next day I did half the painting. The Mother liked it and said:

“Next I shall send my Egyptian crown for painting.”

On 10th April I completed the painting of the sandals.

When the Mother saw it, I marked the glimmer of a smile enter her eyes. She said:

“Oh! they are beautiful!”

My fatigue disappeared after I meditated with her.

The following morning, as always, a card came bearing her perpetual love and sweetness—white roses accompanied it.

The Mother sent an ancient bronze statue which was a combination of Buddha and Shiva. I found it exceedingly mysterious.

She asked me to do a sketch of it. I did the drawing. But the Mother found it inaccurate. So she said:

“Bring the statue tomorrow evening. I will sketch it in front of you to make you understand how it can be done correctly.”

Then with a smile she added:

“You see, the statue has come from Tibet.”

Here I may state that in 1979 from the Mother’s sketch a bronze image was made by a sculptor. It was placed in the lovely garden of our *Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*. I was happy and satisfied to see this concrete representation installed in the right place.

*

The Mother sent me an Egyptian crown to paint—the one she had mentioned earlier. First I did the drawing of it. After seeing it and liking it the Mother asked:

“Why don’t you try to do your own portrait? You see, great artists always did their own portraits. Do your portrait and you will learn the technique.”

I smiled and answered: “Mother, you asked me before to do my portrait. But I am afraid it won’t come out nicely. Moreover, I am not a great artist.”

A flash of amusement crossed her face when she said:

“Child, now look, to whatever I say you must say yes. If I ask you to be happy, you must be happy; when I ask you to paint, do so.”

I replied: “Yes, Mother, everything except my own portrait!”

Then she put out a hand and gently touched my cheek.

I finished the painting of the crown. The Mother encouraged me incessantly by appreciating my work.

In answer to a letter of mine she wrote:

My dear little child,

I was so terribly busy yesterday that I could not even open your letter and in the evening I was sorry not to have been able to give you the flower before

the lesson. I kept it with me and wanted to give it to you when I came back home—very late but you were not there. Very willingly I will listen to what you have to say; not today because it is a lesson day, but tomorrow in the evening at the Playground.

Meanwhile, my loving blessings are with you.

The next day was Sunday. I forgot all about what I had to say to her. She and I had a long meditation. Whiffs of the delicate perfume she wore delighted me. The warmth of her Presence enveloped my true being. The feeling took me to another sphere.

The Mother opened her eyes and said tenderly:

“The soul is the temple of the Divine. The soul is a steady pure flame of aspiration. It cannot impose itself on those parts of the being which révolt against the true being.

“Nevertheless, all these parts must submit to the soul; then alone it can rule over them.

“The Divine is self-illuminated, sweet, compassionate and full of love.

“The world must submit to the Divine.

“Those who take refuge in the Divine, the Divine Himself leads in His own way. And even for those who do not surrender to Him and revolt, the Divine Grace, Love and Light are there around them and on them.”

After a pause she added:

“The Divine Grace does not bargain.”

I contemplated on all that she had said to me. I could not find any clue to my soul which was the key to everything. Finally I fell asleep praying that when I awoke in the morning things would be different. My prayers were not answered.

The Mother sent me the Chinese dish as previously arranged.

It took two days to finish the painting because of intricate designs on the dish. She was happy with the work and said:

“This morning I went into the Darshan Room to look at your paintings which are hung there. They are nice.”

She gave me a most charming smile.

I was pleased that my paintings were in the room where Sri Aurobindo and the Mother used to give Darshan to people four times a year: on 21st February, the Mother’s birthday—24th April, the Mother’s final arrival day—15th August, Sri Aurobindo’s birthday—and 24th November, the Victory Day.

Now it was 24th April 1957. Everyone was busy with one thing or another on Darshan day. I got up very early, bathed and dressed in shorts and shirt. I joined my group. We gave our salute to the Mother at the Balcony in full group-formation. Then the march past at Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi. We paid our homage to him. The Mother watched us from the window upstairs which is just opposite the Samadhi. After a brief concentration, all the groups in grades went to the Meditation Hall upstairs to receive the message from the Mother along with her special blessings.

Concentration around the Samadhi reminds me of these lines from *Savitri*:

“A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.”

The message of the day ran:

“In the eternity of becoming each Avatar is only the announcer, the fore-runner of a more perfect realisation.”

This message has been completed with the following passages which have appeared in the *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 22:

“And yet men have always the tendency to deify the Avatar of the past in opposition to the Avatar of the future.

“Now again Sri Aurobindo has come announcing to the world the realisation of tomorrow; and again his message meets with the same opposition as of all those who preceded him.

“But tomorrow will prove the truth of what he revealed and his work will be done.”

In the evening there was a short programme of dancing, singing and recitation at the Playground. Afterwards the Mother distributed the *Bulletin* as she had been doing on every Darshan day.

The attractive floral decoration on the floor of the Mother's room charmed everyone. This decoration is called “Alpana”. I had never seen in my life such skilful perfection.

It had been an exhausting day. I felt very sleepy, but as a rule I read a passage or two from *Prayers and Meditations* before I retired.

I opened the book and found enlightening lines which really bore upon the group-formation at the balcony road that morning:

“Like a Sun Thy Splendour descends upon the earth and Thy rays will illumine the world. All those elements which are pure enough, plastic enough, sufficiently receptive to manifest the very Splendour of the central fire-nucleus are grouping themselves together.”

As regards Avatarhood, Sri Aurobindo was an Avatar.
An aspirant asked the Mother:

Will the Avatar need to take birth on earth once the supramental consciousness is firmly established?

Her answer which has been published in the *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 255 sums up everything about Sri Aurobindo:

“This question will be easier to answer when the supermind is manifested in living beings on earth.

“I had always heard that Sri Aurobindo was the last Avatar in the human body—afterwards, we do not know....”

The Mother has commented on the first Avatar in *About Savitri*, Part I, p. 14:

“Sri Aurobindo says:

The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
From the reclining body of a god.

A god had come down upon earth to wake it up to the inner Consciousness. We could say that this was the first Avatar.

“It is the coming down of the first Avatar to wake up the earth to Consciousness—that is, to bring an intensity of Consciousness and Realisation into this inconscient world.

“This is obviously the description of the appearance of the first Avatar. It starts from that—because He puts:

Then through the pallid rift that seemed at first
Hardly enough for a trickle from the suns
Outpoured the revelation and the flame.

The revelation and the flame

And...

The brief perpetual sign recurred above.
That is the sign of the Avatar coming down upon earth.”

“I don’t know about Avatars. Practically what I know is that I had not all the powers necessary when I started, I had to develop them by Yoga, at least many of them which were not in existence in me when I began, and those which were I had to train to a higher degree. My own idea of the matter is that the Avatar’s life and actions are not miracles. If they were, his existence would be perfectly useless, a mere superfluous freak of Nature. He accepts the terrestrial conditions, he uses means, he shows the way to humanity as well as helps it. Otherwise what is the use of him and why is he here?”

“I was not always in the Overmind, if you please. I had to climb there from the mental and vital level.”

*

On the 26th, Friday morning, I went to the Meditation Hall upstairs to meet the Mother. She greeted me affectionately. Then she pointed to a box in the shape of a fat hen made of *papier maché* and laughed heartily, with a great sense of enjoyment in her laughter. She said:

“Child, paint this hen. But first show me the drawing of it in the evening.”

It was done. She approved of the sketch. Then suddenly she lifted the upper body of the hen, which formed the lid of the box, and looked into the box’s lower part and said:

“Has she laid any eggs?”

I replied: “Not yet.”

We both burst out laughing.

The ensuing evening the Mother viewed the finished painting of the hen, which amused her a great deal. A spark of humour appeared in her eyes when she asked me:

“Oh, but has she laid any eggs?”

I answered: “Mother, I don’t think so.” Her laughter tinkled merrily. I relished her lively and delightful sense of humour.

Sri Aurobindo has written in Cent. Ed., Vol. 22, p. 501:

“I am not aware that highly evolved personalities have no sense of humour or how the person can be said to be integrated when this sense is lacking. ‘Looseness’ applies only to a frivolous levity without any substance behind it. There is no law that wisdom should be something rigidly solemn and without a smile.”

*

Sense of humour? It is the salt of existence. Without it the world would have got utterly out of balance—it is unbalanced enough already—and rushed to blazes long ago.”

*

The days were growing longer and warmer as spring passed into summer.

The Mother sent me a wooden book-stand to paint, along with Sri Aurobindo's book *The Mother* open on it.

In the composition, I had to show incense sticks burning near the book-stand.

In the evening I took all the things together with my sketch of them to the Mother. She also drew these objects. It was a joy to see how absorbedly and gladly she did the work which she loved.

The following day I completed the painting. She was happy with it.

One more day and that would be the end of the month April.

At night I relaxed in my armchair before I went to sleep. I floated on a gentle tide of memory of the enchanted experiences which I had enjoyed occasionally. They mingled so pleasurably with the delicate fragrance of the rose-incense sticks I had lighted in my room. This scented atmosphere and the quietude of night brought a remembrance of the Mother, and made me feel drowsy.

(To be continued)

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NOLINI-DA

EXPANDED VERSION OF A TALK GIVEN AT THE ASHRAM PLAYGROUND ON 24th FEBRUARY 1984

It was about ten years ago that we assembled in this historic playground of hallowed memories on the occasion of the Mother's passing and it was Pranab who addressed you at that time. Most unexpectedly it is on the occasion of another departure that we have assembled again tonight. It is the passing of Nolini-da who was, to borrow a happy phrase, one of the first and foremost disciples of the Mother, her collaborator and our eldest brother. The sanctity, solemnity and beauty of this occasion my poor words cannot express though my mind can envisage it without fathoming it. His "unhorizoned" consciousness is too wide for human measurement and it never ceased to climb towards the heights even when he fell ill. At that time I was once called at night. He said, "You see, I went out of my body and when I came back, the body received a jerk. Hence this minor disturbance. You will understand. I don't need any medicine." The tone reminded me somewhat of Sri Aurobindo. I had come to know that often Nolini-da used to go out of his body and had to keep his hold on somebody's hand in order to keep contact with the earth. I had read also the Mother saying that he could easily go out of his body to the Sachchidananda state. Well, these superconscious things are beyond me; I know a bit of the sub-conscious ones. Nevertheless I feel it my humble duty to present a few glimpses of his vast-visions life to you so that you may have a rough idea of a person who rarely spoke of himself and to whom you may offer your gratitude and love for having quietly done so much for us. I must confess that most of what I shall say is based on my observation, reflection and conviction.

I had a moment's sight of him when I met the Mother for the first time. She came to see me accompanied by Nolini-da, Amrita-da and Dilip-da. It was Dilip-da who had arranged the interview. Later, when I came to settle in the Ashram for good, I used to hear that Nolini-da was an enigma; he was a man of few words. People would not dare to assail his sanctum except on strict business. He was the secretary of the Ashram, but they all respected his aloofness. Often he used to be brusque with them and there were quite a number of anecdotes current in the Ashram about his abruptness. He had acquired the knack of upsetting people without himself getting upset. I shall quote two such stories. Once a sadhak complained to the Mother for what he considered Nolini-da's rude behaviour to him. Sri Aurobindo wrote to Nolini-da about it. As a result he called the sadhak and apologised to him. On another occasion the hair-cutting saloon was to be opened. Nolini-da was approached; he flatly refused. The person wrote to the Mother and proposed another name instead. When, next day, Nolini-da went to see the Mother, she asked him why he had refused. On coming down, he hastened to the saloon and opened it.

Therefore, I used to avoid him. There you can see two traits in his nature, the outer somewhat jerky and the inner obedient to the Mother. Amrita who was his close associate used to say that Nolini-da was like *yaṣṭi madhu*. You have to chew it before you taste its sweetness. What a conversion took place in the later phase of his life! I marvelled at it. But let me not anticipate.

Though I kept myself at a distance, his learning and writings had a great attraction for me. I admired and respected him for them as well as for his personality. His passion for knowledge, which made buying books his one hobby, could be summarised by a verse from *Savitri*: “He sought for knowledge like a questing hound.” If the small can be compared with the great, I had also such a passion, but a minor one and I tried to satisfy it at Sri Aurobindo’s expense. You know the way I provoked, pestered, even bothered him with a host of questions. While I did this, Nolini-da gathered him in the vast cathedral of his mind and seated him on its high altar as the supreme deity. You know how Sri Aurobindo initiated him in the esoteric lores of the Vedas and Upanishads as well as in the secular knowledge of various literatures and languages. Sri Aurobindo’s heart must have been gladdened to find such a worthy young mind. Thus his approach to Sri Aurobindo was through the mind. I need not dwell at length upon this aspect, since his erudition is quite well known. Perhaps I can summarise it by quoting another expression from our Shastra. Both *parā vidyā* and *aparā vidyā* were at his command and they have all gone into 10 volumes of Bengali and 8 volumes of English works. They can make a side-stream running along with Sri Aurobindo’s vast Brahmaputra-like productions, fed and nourished by them and flowing into oneness with them. Sri Aurobindo has said that Nolini-da had a remarkable mind. But some people have found its works an echo, a shadow of Sri Aurobindo. Even if they were a shadow, they were a luminous shadow.

I have often wondered how he could contain such “infinite riches in a little room”. For except his broad and high forehead, the other parts of his body were frail. His forehead often made me think of Shakespeare and Einstein. In fact, often during our medical visits in the morning when he had just come down from the inner empyrean as if with the gold dust of trance-land still on his body, a few locks of hair disarrayed, eyes dreamy, he looked very much like a mystical Einstein. But after he had had his wash, combed his hair and brushed his pet moustache, he was the elegant incarnation of Virgil.

Still, he was by no means a book-worm, a recluse. He had his hands full. He had to manage the bulk of the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s correspondence, distribute their letters to sadhaks and carry on other work. His domestic chores he did himself: washing his own clothes, making his bed, bringing his kuja-water, preparing his own tea, polishing his shoes, etc. He had a weakness for shoes. When Sri Aurobindo wanted to get rid of a pair of Vidyasagari shoes, having no further need for them, he said they could be given to Nolini since he was fond of shoes. He was a bit of a dandy. He was doing regular athletic exercises and taking part in

competitions. Mass drill was his favourite item and he participated in it till his late seventies.

Every fraction of his life was disciplined and methodised. That is the external reason of his keeping fit and being capable of a huge output in a single life. I wonder if there is any world-figure today with so many facets combined and harmonised to such a degree of perfection.

But where is the key to be found for such various accomplishments? It was certainly his inner development that was the secret of his outflowering. He practised yoga with one-pointed concentration and took up his literary and other activities as a part of it. As in Sri Aurobindo's own case so in Nolini-da's and in other cases of outer flowering in art, literature, etc. in the Ashram, yoga and the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's force were mainly responsible for success. It seems that during the most brilliant period of the Ashram in 1927, when the Mother was bringing down the gods into the sadhaks, there came down into Nolini-da's *ādhāra* the consciousness of *Varuṇa*, the Vedic god of Vastness. Hence the vastness in his writings. One could never achieve such an amplitude and integrality by mere mental labour. The work of the mere mind would be lop-sided. Nolini-da's later productions, like those of his Master, must have been written from a silent mind. I would say transcribed rather than written. I would have doubted such a process, had not Sri Aurobindo convinced me by his thundering words and logical arguments during our correspondence.

Now I enter a *terra incognita*. To talk of the inner developments of a Yogi is like a layman perorating on the theory of relativity. Fortunately I can draw upon some casual hints given by the Master and the Mother. Once when someone complained that Nolini-da was not doing Sri Aurobindo's yoga since he kept aloof, was unsociable, etc., Sri Aurobindo replied, "If Nolini is not doing my yoga, who is doing it? Is sociableness a part of yoga?" Secondly, it was alleged that the sadhaks here would count for nothing in the world outside. Hearing which, Sri Aurobindo remarked, "The quality of sadhaks is so low?... There are at least half a dozen people here who live in the Brahmic consciousness..." This statement excited my curiosity and I surmised that Nolini-da must be one of these. I began to study his outer life. I could not get any clue. He was a closed shell, would not expose his pearls to an outsider. Besides, I was just a novice and had not the ghost of an idea of what the Brahmic consciousness was. Apropos of my query I received another sweetly castigating letter from the Master.

None the wiser, I went on merrily without caring about Brahman, for Sri Aurobindo was my Brahman till he passed away. And then the Mother filled his place. In the 'sixties came a startling disclosure from the Mother. She wrote on Nolini-da's birthday card—"Nolini en route towards the superman." The years that followed brought a succession of revelations: "Nolini, with love and affection for a life of collaboration"... "For the prolonged continuation of this happy collaboration"... and lastly, in 1973, "With my love and blessings...for the transformation. Let us

march ahead towards the Realisation." These are very big words indeed. I don't know if any other person received such encomiums.⁷ I could now understand to some extent what these expressions meant and I was struck speechless. But Nolini-da swallowed all calmly and with ease. The coming superman did not undermine the natural man. I could not glean his ample inner field. Perhaps he was marching ahead with the Mother and when there was "one more step to take and all would be sky and God," the greatest calamity befell the earth. The Mother passed away. There was an overclouding gloom, dejection, consternation.

It was then that Nolini-da came forward and took the lead as it were. When the Mother's body was brought down and laid in the Meditation Hall, the Trustees came and Nolini-da was called from his room. He was requested to say a few words. Keeping quiet for a moment, he stood up straight like a column of light and said some words whose purport is: "Let us stand together and go forward in harmony and collaboration. The Mother has said she will be with us in our consciousness." He felt perhaps that a vacuum had been made and he must do his part.

From that time a new life began for Nolini-da and a new phase for us. He had to come out of his shell. All eyes were turned to him for guidance, for help spiritual and mundane. He was invited to witness many functions; his approval was sought in many activities. In other words, he was called to shoulder a big part of the Mother's spiritual work. A plethora of visitors asked for his touch. His writings were continuing in the same way and he used to read some of them in the School, in the Playground and in the Meditation Hall in front of his room. The idea, I believe, was to hold the Ashramites together and bathe them in the spiritual Presence. The Mother had assigned to him a French class for the elders and he continued it. In this manner, he was coming out more and more and his presence and nearness were available. It will not be an exaggeration to claim that he held the divisive tendencies together and saved us from falling apart. His hold particularly on the youth was of very good augury. When he had to undergo an operation for a cataract, the young boys kept vigil over him for about three months. Strange enough to observe that people operated upon along with him or afterwards got cured in two or three weeks while he took three months or so owing to a number of complications. He remarked jocularly that because he was given so much attention Nature took revenge.

In 1977, he had an apocalyptic vision of the Mother. He writes: "The Mother says, 'Just see. Look at me. I am here come back in my new body—divine, transformed and glorious. And I am the same Mother, still human. Do not worry. Do not be concerned about your own self, your progress and realisation nor about others. I am here, look at me, gaze into me, enter into me wholly, merge into my being, lose yourself into my love, with your love; you will see all problems solved, everything done. Forget everything, forget the world. Remember me alone, be one with me, with my love.'"

It was after this vision probably that he began to talk more and more about the Mother. To the departing students of the Higher Course he used to repeat that the

Mother would be with them wherever they went. They were bound to her by a golden chain.

In 1978 either due to overstrain or some other reason he fell ill. Dr. Bose, Dr. Datta and myself formed a trio. I was the zero of the three, for my presence was more of a personal nature than a professional one. Now we enter the last phase of Nolini-da's long career. It is a sweet song telling of sad things. His heart had gone wrong; to use Sri Aurobindo's words, it was misbehaving. The blood pressure was high. The doctors succeeded in stabilising them. Satisfied with the progress Dr. Bose went to his home-town for about a month. After he had returned, there was a recrudescence of the symptoms and the condition took a serious turn. Consultation with an outside physician was thought of but Nolini-da had confidence in his doctors and vetoed the idea. However, things were becoming critical. Nolini-da himself said that he was passing away. The Calcutta people were informed. Somehow the faith and energetic intervention of the doctors, particularly of Datta, called down the Mother's Grace and Nolini-da was sent back from the threshold. A slow recovery followed and along with it he took up gradually his previous work, but naturally modified according to his measure. His movements were now confined to the Ashram precincts. Apart from the recording of *Savitri*, translating it into Bengali, seeing visitors and various other minor activities, most of the time he used to keep to his bed. We were visiting him as usual. At this time or even before, I do not remember, my stock shot up with him, though I was only a pulse-taking doctor. He used to call me by name, "Nirod", which had an Aurobindonian ring, and, stretching his hand, ask me to feel his pulse. Often he used to do that and ask: "All right?" When all of us had examined him, his query was again: "All right?" "Yes, all right, Nolini-da," we would answer and depart.

No superfluous talk. Sometimes he would simply give a steady look and then utter, "Bonne nuit." From Datta he would inquire about his patients or he would himself speak of some patients who had approached him. Monique, the French Ballet teacher, had a very bad fracture and had to be sent to France. Nolini-da used to inquire about her almost three times a day.

After that massive attack he never enjoyed sound health and was kept on drugs which he used to swallow without any murmur. Anima would exclaim that she had not seen any other person taking 4 or 5 bitter drugs a day as if it was a habit. When the symptoms increased, I being near at hand was called at night and, if necessary, the others were informed. At times all the three medicos were present. In addition to his own troubles, occasionally Nolini-da used to groan in sleep as if in pain over the ailments of his friends. Once he cried out repeatedly a person's name. That person appeared to have been in a very critical condition that night and Nolini-da's body received the vibration. There are numerous instances to show that he was sensitive to other peoples' inner and outer condition and perhaps sent help to them in the yogic way. I know how in one case he cured an "incurable" malady or at least arrested it completely. He had given peace and taken away deep sorrow from people.

A woman had come from London and wanted to have Nolini-da's darshan. She was asked to take my permission. I saw her coming back from the darshan with tears streaming from her eyes. I wanted to know the reason. She said that when she had got up after pranam, she was flooded with light coming down upon her. She was permitted to do pranam to him every day from a distance. This was the first concrete proof I had of his spiritual communicative power and my solar plexus was knocked out.

A few months before his passing, Dr. Bose suddenly passed away. Nolini-da was deeply moved. With tears in his eyes and a choked voice, he murmured: "What a fine soul! what a fine soul! He should not have gone before me." Such human expression of feeling from him was something new to us. I believe that the loss made a dent in his heart. Once Bose had seen in a dream Nolini-da's upper body full of golden light: the lower part had been absent. Nolini-da commented that it was an overmind vision. A few days later, as he was lying in his bed, I asked him through Anima where his consciousness could be. He answered: "Why, with the Mother!" I wanted more precision. Then he answered: "In the Overmind." I was simply swept off my feet. Though the Mother had indicated it, the information coming from Nolini-da himself had a tremendous effect upon me—I don't know how people in general would understand the significance of that large utterance. Quietly I went away and tried to absorb the impact, for I knew by that time what it meant and at once in a flash many of his actions or decisions which had puzzled us were revealed in a new light. He was suspected to have some weakness for his family. He replied: "Great souls are beyond such ties." For the first time in our knowledge he had made a personal reference. We were also baffled by his attitude towards those who were known to do harm to the Ashram. Then, when I saw him distributing his own photos to selected people, I was piqued. Now all these bizarre-looking movements troubled me no more and every question was set at rest. The mystery and mystique of all his actions became clear to me. Later I learned from Anima that Nolini-da had confided in her that he was mostly in the Overmind but at times a little beyond it.

To resume, yet cut our story short: Bose had gone from the doctor-group, two were now in harness, Datta's being the main labour—I was an adjunct. Nolini-da was comparatively well and we expected that he would score his century. Anima and Matri Prasad, his two closest attendants, were regaling him with many stories and he too was indulgent to them. They were very free with him and would cut jokes again and again. I myself used to feel embarrassed at times; for this image of Nolini-da was a new development and I kept always my old attitude of respect towards him. In this period, which was a little before Bose's departure, his most memorable action was to go and see Vasudha on her last birthday. We were somewhat alarmed. She had been bed-ridden. Nolini-da would often inquire about her and Datta kept him informed. I think Nolini-da had realised that Vasudha's days were numbered. So he took this opportunity, though he could hardly walk even a few steps. We had great difficulty in putting him in a car and getting him just across the road. He sat

before Vasudha with his chest heaving from exhaustion, took her hands into his own, blessed her and then came back.

His Bengali translation of *Savitri* had been completed and was expected to come out before his next birthday. Since the last months of 1983 things had begun to take a bad turn. His old pain in the heart re-appeared, stringent measures had to be taken regarding seeing visitors and other activities. His birthday on January 13 which had been expected to be a day of jubilation passed quietly, but he did not fail to meet the out-going students and give his blessings. Pain and distress were now on the increase. All modern measures were adopted, but only with momentary relief. Again the question of consulting a known heart-specialist was thought of, but met with disapproval. Distress and agony pervaded the general picture. We were at constant call and the attendants were ever vigilant, particularly at night. Less than a week before the last act, Nolini-da said to Anima that he would like to distribute his *Savitri*-translation to all the attendants. Books were a bit late in coming. He ordered: "Get the books quickly and call the people." This was the last gesture. As *Savitri* was Sri Aurobindo's last composition, its translation was Nolini-da's last composition. And I can affirm that the masterly translation has added a large dimension to the Bengali language. When more than once doubts were raised about the exactness of some words, Nolini-da said with force: "One has to read the Vedas, Upanishads, Mahabharata, Sanskrit literature before questioning their use." He surprised me by this unusual self-estimation.

On the 7th February the closing scene was enacted. We had examined him in the morning. The condition, though bad, was not critical. At noon, I heard that he had taken his usual meal and relieved himself. Datta was by his side. I was suddenly called at 4 p.m. and informed that after the motion Nolini-da had collapsed. When I came down, Datta said with a gloomy air that there was a sudden fall of blood pressure. Nolini-da had gone within; his eyes were shut; the pulse was thready and he was sweating profusely. The end was near. I sat by his side and called "Nolini-da!" He opened his eyes, gave a look of recognition as if from the Beyond and closed his eyes. Slowly, quietly, the breathing stopped at 4.42 p.m.—the *grand finale* of the long epic story.

Once I had collapsed due to a sudden fall of blood-pressure. Nolini-da was informed that I was passing away. He came to see me and found that I had revived. He seems to have remarked later that I couldn't go away, I had still a lot of work to do. I suppose, one of the assignments was to help in his departure.

The day after the event, his body was laid out in the Meditation Hall. Hundreds saw his chiselled face embalmed in a Nirvanic peace.

The rest of the story is well-known. One thing to be observed is that his body was taken to the Casanove garden in royal splendour. The procession of cars was something new in the history of Pondicherry. And almost the entire Ashram and group of visitors made their pilgrimage to the burial place as a token of their love and respect. That too was something unprecedented in our experience. A man

who had lived a quiet, unassuming life had earned the veneration of thousands. The body was laid to rest by the side of his old friends and colleagues Amrita-da and Pavitra-da, fulfilling his last wish.

Now when I ruminate over what I was given to observe of the last phase of Nolini-da's life, a few rare qualities remain impressed upon my memory and reveal to me his true soul. First, his freedom from the taint of personality: ego was dead. He had love for all and sundry. Enemy he had none, not even those who were considered to be doing harm to the Ashram. He accepted them all as the Mother's children and left it to her to judge them. In consequence he gained universal respect and confidence. The government also had trust in him and the Prime Minister stated that he radiated peace.

Secondly, he always preserved a strong strain of impersonality even with those people who were close to him. That was his natural genius. This was a typically Aurobindonian stamp. The other Aurobindonian stamps were: he would not push himself to the front and never interfered with what people did, even when they happened to be his near ones, unless approached for advice. He never criticised anyone and did not approve of anyone making criticisms and using strong language. A large liberality, sweetness and compassion crowned all his actions and movements. Even children used to love him. If he did not approve of anyone's actions, he did not confuse the man with his actions. He could invite the man to sit by his side.

These were the later manifestations of his hidden nature. Once somebody complained to him about life and its difficulties. He answered: "Why am I here?" Then the person who had complained said: "You are needed for the Ashram. Therefore the Mother has kept you here." In a grave tone Nolini-da declared: "I am here for a particular development. So far in my evolution there was the sattwic consciousness: the element of knowledge. Now a new element has been added: love, ananda. For that new growth I am here. But no use saying all this. People won't understand and they will distort it."

Some of his last utterances are worth recording. I was once called at night and found him sitting on the edge of his bed. He said: "You see, this body is of the earth earthy and will mix with the earth. But the realisation will remain." Then in the last days he used to be in-drawn. We thought he was sleeping. When he came out of his absorption he had the appearance of an ever-joyous child and he also spoke and behaved like one. I said: "Perhaps you are in the Sachchidananda state"—to which he replied with a smile: "It is in an Anandamaya region." On another occasion he was heard to mumble in an absorbed way: "Sat-yogi, Sat-yogi." Asked whether he was by any chance referring to himself, he softly whispered: "Yes." After that he withdrew almost wholly into himself and, when he spoke, it was to tell many that he would be leaving his body. On his 95th birthday he remarked: "This new year will be very critical for me." When he was once asked where he would be after he had left his body he stated very clearly: "A little beyond the Overmind." During those days he had also visions of the three goddesses Chamunda, Kali and Gauri.

About Chamunda, he said that she was trying to do mischief with his heart and he had detected it. Kali was all dark: everywhere there was darkness. In another vision he saw that she had gone away to a solitary place, all alone: there was no sign of life anywhere around. Then he saw Matri, following him.

When I try to assess his contribution to the sum-total of the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's work, I feel that short of the Supermind he realised in himself a true synthesis of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and proved that this many-sided, complex, comprehensive Yoga is not an insane chimera. Further, he has made the path easier and smoother for posterity, as he has himself said that his realisation will remain. He serves as a bridge, an intermediary between us and the Mother. I can illustrate this point by citing the experience of a young sadhika the very night Nolini-da passed away. She went home with a heavy heart after seeing Nolini-da. She read a few pages from *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo* before going to sleep. She dreamt that Nolini-da's body had been shifted beside the Mother's room on the second floor. People were going to see him in batches. When she arrived, she saw Nolini-da standing at the door radiant, youthful and full of zest. He called her in and cried loudly: "Come, come, today is my Bonne Fête." Then he made her sit down and talked a lot on the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Simultaneously she saw his dead body lying beside the wall, as it had been in his room. She was very much astonished. Then she read a chit from Counouma, asking her to go to Cazanove, since she was one of the attendants, and a vehicle had been arranged for the purpose.

Let us try, therefore, to be Nolini-like, to quote K. D. Sethna, if the Mother and the Master seem far beyond our reach.

Finally, my story will be incomplete if I fail to recognise the inestimable service rendered by our young people to whom we cannot be too grateful for what they have done night after night, specially Anima and Matri. Anima's devotion and self-abnegation will be a matter of history. For years she looked after Nolini-da—his secretary, nurse, mother, sister all in one. As soon as he called "Anima", she was there. She gave him all the royal comfort and ease he deserved. She may have her faults—who is free?—but, without her, Nolini-da would have left us long ago and in a very lamentable condition. Our admiration for her knew no bounds. She kept her eyes upon the comfort of the attendants as well. She was full of life and cheer and had a fund of tales, anecdotes, reminiscences by which she tried to enliven Nolini-da's mood and mitigate his physical distress though she herself had high blood-pressure and was subject to headaches, pains and other ailments.

In conclusion let us hear a part of the recorded voice of Nolini-da where we get a clue to his true being (*svarūpa*):

"The story is after all the story of our adventure upon earth, a common adventure through centuries—not only through centuries but perhaps from the very creation of the earth. It is the story of the adventure of a group of souls, souls who were destined, who were created for the advent of a new creation. I will speak of only just a few bits and some important episodes of this adventure in which I participated,

because you wanted to hear my life.

“We came, all of you, all of us who are here, most of them, in different epochs at the crucial stages of our evolution. In different periods, whenever there was a necessity of an upliftment or an enlightenment, we all came together, each in his own way. So one or two episodes like that I can tell. For example, in Europe a crucial turning-point of its history was the Renaissance, the new light. At the time of the Renaissance we all know that the creator of the Renaissance was Sri Aurobindo—Leonardo—and the whole Renaissance was in his consciousness and all those who flocked around him, each one did his own work. You know that Amrita was intimately connected with that work—he was Michael Angelo. And Moni was also there—Suresh Chakravarty. He was one of the chief artists. I have forgotten his name...

“But all... the work they actually did, you know, the important thing, the consciousness they brought—expressed some sad event, some not so, but living, concretising the consciousness.... My contribution in that age of Renaissance was in France. The Mother always said: ‘Your French incarnation was very prominent, even today it is very prominent.’ That little bit of evolution is still living. The consciousness at that time in France—that was also the beginning of the Renaissance and... the new creation, new poetry—I was a poet of that time and introduced the new poetry in France. At that time the king of France was François I^{er}. He was in the political—also in the general life of the people he introduced this new light, new manner of consciousness. So I was with him. And who was François Première you know—Duraismamy!

“The consciousness of the reality of that country was so strong that when I started reading or writing French—I wrote French—then sometimes I noted down some lines... later I found that I had noted down exactly some verses of this poet of France, Ronsard...”

I may add an incident of recollection by Nolini-da of a past life. One day when he went to inspect our School garden, he was very much interested in observing the plan of the garden, the trees, the lotus pond and he remarked: “I was the gardener of Louis XIV, Le Nôtre.”

NIRODBARAN

THE FRIENDS OF PAUL—LUKE AND MARK

DID THEY AUTHOR ANY BOOKS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

POPULAR Christian belief, especially Roman Catholic, and even a fair part of Biblical scholarship take the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles as the double work of the Luke who figures three times in the Epistles of Paul (Colossians 4:14, Philemon 24, 2 Timothy 4:11). Similarly they accept, as the author of the Gospel that passes under the name of Mark, another friend of Paul's named Mark whom he mentions in his Epistle to the Colossians (4: 10) as the cousin of Barnabas and who features in Acts (13:4-13) as the assistant of Barnabas and Paul in the mission to Cyprus.

On rare occasions a voice is raised from the Roman Catholic fold against the first ascription. Thus, apropos of the attempt by an over-orthodox expositor to contradict the impression we get from Paul (Galatians 4: 5) that unlike Luke he attributed a normal and not a virgin birth to Jesus, the notably fair-minded scholar Father Raymond Brown¹ speaks of "the unverifiable assumption that Luke, Paul's companion, was the evangelist, an assumption that vitiates much of R. J. C. Cooke's *Did Paul know of the Virgin Birth? ...*" But even Brown does not go further than suspending judgment on the question of Luke. And several of his notes to the Infancy Narratives in the New Testament seem to suggest Acts to be the composition of whoever is responsible for the Lucan Gospel. About the alleged connection of the Evangelist Mark with his namesake in the Epistles of Paul and in Acts, Brown has expressed no opinion. Here silence appears to be consent and, along with his general attitude to Luke/Acts, it places Brown in a large company of exegetes Protestant no less than Catholic.

The thesis in the present essay is threefold: (1) Paul's Luke was not the Evangelist; (2) he did not write the Acts of the Apostles either; (3) the Mark who gives his name to a Gospel could not be Paul's companion. The problem whether the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were penned by the same person is not discussed. It is left for another essay: the current belief in the same person does not affect our first and second conclusions, while it is irrelevant to the third.

I

To soften up the common assurance about Luke's Gospel we may begin by glancing at some critical remarks in a recent edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.² We find Krister Stendahl pronouncing: "the author has been identified with Luke, 'the beloved physician,' Paul's companion on his journeys, presumably a Gentile... There is no Papias fragment concerning Luke [as about Mark in c.130 A. D.], and

¹ *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1973), p. 57, fn. 91.

² *Macropaedia* (1977), Vol. 2, p. 954, col. 2.

only late-2nd-century traditions claim (somewhat ambiguously) that Paul was the guarantor of Luke's Gospel. The Muratorian Canon refers to Luke, the physician, Paul's companion; Irenaeus depicts Luke as a follower of Paul's Gospel. Eusebius [early 4th century] has Luke as an Antiochene physician who was with Paul in order to give the Gospel apostolic authority. References are often made to Luke's medical language, but there is no evidence of such language beyond that to which any educated Greek might have been exposed. Of more import is the fact that in the writings of Luke specifically Pauline ideas are significantly missing; while Paul speaks of the death of Christ, Luke speaks rather of the suffering, and there are other differing and discrepant ideas on Law and eschatology. In short, the author of the Gospel remains unknown."

In regard to the claim for Luke the Evangelist as a medical man we may support Stendahl's criticism by quoting, from *The Scientific American*, November 1979, p. 39, part of a review of *Literary Detection* by A. Q. Morton: "Once it was held that the Gospel of Luke was written by a physician, since medical terms were frequent in it. The context of the words, however, was nonmedical, and their use was shared by the historian Josephus (1st century A.D. like Luke), never a physician. In the Book of Acts the same compiler, judging by his vocabulary, has become an old salt displaying much knowledge of shipwreck. Nouns notably mark the topics and not the author."

At one place in his commentary on Luke's infancy narrative, Raymond Brown affords us an example of how facilely some scholars read the doctor in Luke. The passage concerned is Luke 1: 41: "the baby jumped in her womb." Brown¹ writes: "Grotius and others have raised the possibility that [the original Greek word] *skirtan* might have been a technical term for movement within the womb and thus confirm the theory that Luke the physician (Colossians 4: 14) was the author of the Gospel. But it is a general verb for skipping or leaping as of sheep in a field, and is applied to a baby already in Genesis 25: 22."

The language employed by Luke may not be incompatible with the old tradition of the author having been a doctor, but if we do not already assume his medical profession on the basis of Paul's Luke, as the reports of the late 2nd century and of periods still later almost certainly did, nothing can set him apart from the other Evangelists as a follower of it. Perhaps C. B. Caird,² who is not averse to that tradition, assesses best the general situation neutralising the brief for doctorship. Referring to the medical terms said at one time to be especially present in the writings ascribed to Luke, he states: "It has since been shown that the same argument would make doctors of almost all the writers of antiquity, and that the whole thesis is in any case ill-founded, since Galen himself claimed not to use a medical jargon

¹ *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke* (New York: Image Books, Garden City, 1979), p. 332.

² *The Gospel of Luke* (The Penguin New Testament Commentaries, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 17.

but to write in the common parlance of ordinary men.”¹ With the mention of Galen we have the testimony of the greatest medical authority in ancient times proving the alleged medical terms to be no specialist distinguishing lingo at all.

To return to Stendahl. His comment² on Acts goes: “In the latter part... are several sections known as the ‘we-passages’ (e.g., 16: 10, 20: 5, 21: 1, 8, 27: 1, 28: 16) that appear to be extracts from a travel diary, or narrative. These do not, however, necessarily point to Luke as a companion of Paul—as has been commonly assumed—but are rather a stylistic device, such as that noted particularly in itinerary accounts in other ancient historical works (e.g., Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*). Though the pronoun changes from ‘they’ to ‘we’, the style, subject matter, and theology do not differ. That an actual companion of Paul writing about his mission journeys could be in so much disagreement with Paul (whose theology is evidenced in his letters) about fundamental issues such as the Law, his apostleship, and his relationship to the Jerusalem church is hardly conceivable... Acts presents a picture of Paul that differs from his own description of himself in many of his letters, both factually and theologically... The account of Paul’s relation to Judaism in Acts also differs from that in his letters... In Acts Paul is not called an Apostle except in passing, and the impression is given, contrary to Paul’s letters, that he is subordinate to and dependent upon the twelve Apostles.”

Even an advocate of the orthodox Luke-Paul companionship cannot but feel rather pulled up at least at one very important juncture. J. B. Phillips³ ruminates: “Perhaps we are not supposed to speculate, but one cannot help wondering why there is no mention of the incident which Paul recorded in Galatians 2:11 and ff., and where it fits into this story. It was indeed a crucial moment for the Church. Peter, it will be recalled, unhappily exhibiting that same fear of other people’s opinion which led him to deny his Master, was refusing to eat his meals with the Gentile Christians. Paul immediately saw what was at stake and publicly condemned Peter’s action. Since Luke was such a close associate of Paul’s it is a remarkable thing that no mention is made of this momentous reprimand.”

Perhaps the most dramatic instance of the inconsistency of Acts with Paul’s own Epistles is in the famous “conversion” of Paul from persecutor to preacher of Christianity. The Roman Catholic Jerusalem Bible⁴ annotating Acts 9: 3-9 says: “Crucial event in the Church’s history. Luke gives three accounts whose discrepancies of detail are explained by their differing literary forms: the second and third accounts are found in Paul’s discourses. See also Ga 1:12-17.” Even about the first account and its sequel (9:1-30) we are informed that “Paul himself could have

¹ H. J. Cadbury, *Harvard Theological Studies* VI, “The Style and Literary Method of Luke”; cf. *The Beginnings of Christianity*, ed. Foakes Jackson and Lake, II, pp. 349-55.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 957, cols: 1 & 2.

³ *The Young Church in Action: The Acts of the Apostles in Modern English* (Collins, Fontana Books, London, 1966), p. 19.

⁴ The Jerusalem Bible (Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1966), The New Testament, p. 215, col. 1, note a.

told Luke" of his "conversion".¹ How then is it that both here (9:15) and in the second account (22:14) Paul's mission to work among the Gentiles is revealed to him by a man named Ananias of Damascus and is made explicit, according to the second account (22: 21) in the Temple, whereas Paul's own direct assertion (Galatians 1:11-21) is that for his mission he was not responsible to anyone except Jesus and needed neither telling nor confirming of it by human beings? The Jerusalem Bible² translates Paul: "The fact is, brothers, and I want you to realise this, the Good News I preached is not a human message that I was given by men, it is something I learnt only through a revelation of Jesus Christ...God...called me through his grace and chose to reveal his Son in me, so that I might preach the Good News about him to the pagans. I did not stop to discuss this with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were already apostles before me, but I went off to Arabia at once and later went straight back from there to Damascus. Even when after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas [Peter] and stayed with him for fifteen days, I did not see any of the other apostles; I only saw James, the brother of the Lord, and I swear before God that what I have just written is the literal truth." It is clear that Paul could not have given the author of Acts either the first or the second account, although the latter is made out as if Paul himself were relating his experience to the Jews of Jerusalem.³

The third account is again put into Paul's own mouth, now as told to King Agrippa in Caesarea. Here Jesus, not Ananias, sends Paul to the Pagans to open their eyes (26:17-18).⁴ So a contradiction is introduced in Acts itself between two accounts which are both ascribed to Paul. And even the third is not wholly "found in Paul's discourses". In the discourses we find nothing to correspond to the story of Jesus appearing to Paul on the road to Damascus nor anything answering to the statement: "After that, King Agrippa, I could not disobey the heavenly vision. On the contrary I started preaching first to the people of Damascus, then to those of Jerusalem and all the countryside of Judaea..." (Acts 26: 19-20).⁵ In Galatians we are expressly informed that Paul did not "go up to Jerusalem" but "went off to Arabia at once". The mention of going "straight back from there to Damascus" does imply that Damascus figures in the "crucial event": still, it is as if it took place in this city itself where he was staying before going off to Arabia and not on the road to Damascus.

The road, however, is not quite ruled out. The third account in Acts, which seems the least out of accord with Paul's Galatians-statement, depicts the antecedents of the experience thus: "...I once thought it was my duty to use every means to oppose the name of Jesus the Nazarene. This I did in Jerusalem; I myself

¹ P. 196 (Introduction to the Acts of the Apostles).

² Pp. 322-23.

³ Pp. 238-39.

⁴ P. 244.

⁵ *Ibid.*

threw many of the saints into prison, acting on authority from the chief priests, and when they were sentenced to death I cast my vote against them. I often went round the synagogues inflicting penalties, trying in this way to force them to renounce their faith. My fury against them was so extreme that I even pursued them into foreign cities. On one such expedition I was going to Damascus, armed with full powers and a commission from the chief priests, and at midday as I was on my way, your Majesty, I saw a light brighter than the sun come down from heaven ..." (26: 9-13).¹ On turning to the autobiography in Galatians we find the same antecedents to the "revelation" connected with Damascus: "You must have heard of my career as a practising Jew, how merciless I was in persecuting the Church of God, and how enthusiastic I was for the traditions of my ancestors" (1: 13-14).²

In passing, we may contradict the excuse offered for "the discrepancies of detail" in the three accounts as being due to "their differing literary forms". In the first account, after "the light from heaven" had shone around Paul, the men travelling with him "heard the voice" addressing him but "could see no one" (Acts 9: 7).³ The second account makes Paul say about Jesus: "The people with me saw the light but did not hear his voice as he spoke to me" (22: 9).⁴ What has literary form to do with hearing the voice in one account and not hearing it in another? Again, in the former where no one is seen in the midst of the light it is natural that Paul was temporarily blinded by the light and his fellow-travellers "had to lead him into Damascus by the hand" (9:8).⁵ But in the latter account they saw the light and yet Paul is reported as saying: "The light had been so dazzling that I was blind and my companions had to take me by the hand; and so I came to Damascus" (22: 11).⁶ Why were they not equally dazzled into blindness? The third account records Paul's words: "I saw a light brighter than the sun come down. It shone brilliantly round me and my fellow travellers. We all fell to the ground" (27: 13-14).⁷ Now all should have been blinded, yet there is no reference to any effect on anyone's eyes, including Paul's. Why should consideration of literary form demand such an unlikely lack of result? The simple fact is internal haphazardness no less than dissonance with Paul's *ipsissima verba* in the Epistles.

We may close with the remark that all the accounts in Acts show the "crucial event" to be partly shared by Paul's road-companions. Galatians discloses his experience to be strictly individual and solitary—a unique one for a specific purpose. The only other reference to it —1 Corinthians 15:8—comes at the tail-end of a tally of Christ's appearances after death to many of his followers: "...and last of all he appeared to me too; it was as though I was born when no one expected it."⁸ Here the declaration falls into one of the two categories Paul makes, though not systematically. He mentions (15:5-7) the appearance "to the Twelve", "to more than five hundred of the brothers" and "to all the apostles" and by contrast we

¹ P. 214.² P. 244.³ P. 322.⁴ P. 239.⁵ P. 215.⁶ P. 239.⁷ P. 244.⁸ P. 307.

have it "first to Cephas", "then...to James"¹ and finally to himself. There is a collective appearance and there is an individual one to a person all alone. Obviously, Paul's Damascus-vision occurred when no one was about. The list does not include anybody accompanying him.

A still more subtle aspect may be noted. The broad impression we have so far considered is of a vision that had objective reality in the sense of having been a spiritual being's physical-looking "appearance" in front of the beholder as if outside him. But the very passage in Paul (Galatians 1:11-21), which speaks of Christ giving him directly his mission to the Gentiles and which we have balanced against the vision in Acts on the Damascus-road, has the sentence: "God...called me through his grace and chose to reveal his Son in me ..." The last two words—"in me" (*én émoi* in the original Greek)—suggest an inward revelation, as though Christ's "appearance" was witnessed in a trance or in some sort of communion with an indwelling divine being.

In the Epistles the "appearance" is not said to be the occasion for the mandate to preach to the non-Jews. Here, contrary to what Acts conveys, the two events seem likely to be distinct from each other. Doubtless, the "appearance"-event, like that of the mandate, is linked with an allusion (1 Corinthians 15:9) to Paul's past persecution of "the church of God", and it brings in the idea of a strange birth—"as though I was born when no one expected it"—just as the mandate-event is preceded by a phrase (Galatians 1:15) about God specially choosing Paul while he was still in his mother's womb;² but there is not a word in the appearance-event about Paul's being spiritually allotted the wider task outside Jewry. Indeed the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,³ remembering Galatians' turn of speech (1:15) about God calling Paul through his grace, indicates the mandate in a way which tends to bring home a probable distinction between the two events: "Paul viewed himself as chosen to be an instrument to take the message of God and Christ to the Gentiles, a call rather than a 'conversion-experience.' Hand-picked as God's servant (slave), he received a revelation—not from men but by secret knowledge from God—that the Gentiles will come to the Christian faith without the Law, the Torah of the Jews."

In every significant point, whether clear-cut or presumably valid, the author of Acts emerges as somebody who had no acquaintance with Paul.

2

As a parting word on the subject we may point out how incongruous it would be to associate the author of the Gospel according to Luke with Paul in view of the situation the latter's Colossians displays to us. This Epistle, like all the

¹ *Ibid.*

² p. 322

³ P. 962, col. 2 and p. 963, col. 1.

others except the one to Philemon, was dictated by Paul and only at the end he said: "Here is a greeting in my own handwriting." Before putting pen to the document he has communicated, among messages from those around him, one as follows: "Greetings from my dear friend Luke, the doctor..." (4:14).¹ Evidently, Paul's Luke, along with some others whose greeting too the Apostle conveyed, was on the spot to hear the latter make the dictation, starting in his own name and Timothy's and concluding with good wishes from everybody present. If such is the position, the contents of the Epistle acquires a special bearing on our subject. Broadly, we may take Paul's Luke, as well as all his other companions, to have been under the influence of the great preacher's personality and of his religious outlook. But there is Paulinism in general and there is Paulinism in particular. In the second category would fall certain central doctrines. Colossians in its opening part contains a poem which is one of the centre-pieces of the Pauline *weltanschauung* and which prompts the Jerusalem Bible to say that this late Letter retains Paul's "basic ideas".² In that case, Luke's direct association with it as hearer and greetings-sender must allow us to consider him imbued not only with Paulinism in a general sense but also with Paul's most characteristic Christology as it declares itself in the grand poem here on Christ:

He is the image of the unseen God
and the first-born of all creation,
for in him were created
all things in heaven and on earth:
everything visible and everything invisible,
Thrones, Dominations, Sovereignities, Powers—
all things were created through him and for him.
Before anything was created, he existed,
and he holds all things in unity.
Now the Church is his body,
He its head.

As he is the Beginning,
he was first to be born from the dead,
so that he should be the first in every way;
because God wanted all perfection
to be found in him
and all things to be reconciled through him and for him,
everything in heaven and everything on earth,
when he made peace
by his death on the cross.³

¹ The Jerusalem Bible, p. 349.

² P. 261 (Introduction to the Letters of Saint Paul).

³ Pp. 344-45.

As the Jerusalem Bible notes, "The subject of the poem is the pre-existent Christ," though "considered only in so far as he was manifest in the unique historic person that is the son of God made man..."¹ We are referred to the note at Philippians 2:5+, where we read about the poem in verses 6-11: "...Each stanza deals with one stage of the mystery of Christ': divine pre-existence, *kenosis* [self-emptying] in the Incarnation, his further *kenosis* in death, his glorification, adoration by the cosmos, new title of Lord. This hymn is concerned solely with the historical Christ in whose personality godhead and manhood are not divided..."² Elsewhere we are informed of Philippians 2:6-11: "...this poem is our chief proof that the early Church believed in the divine pre-existence of Jesus."³ This "pre-existence" is something typical of Paul and the Evangelist John and the writer of one other portion of the New Testament which will shortly get mentioned. The mode in which it becomes a problem, in relation both to the Evangelist Luke and to whoever is the author of Acts may be focused with the help of a few words from Brown.⁴

We may leave aside the steps by which the highest "christological emphasis" moved from "the return of Jesus at the end of time" to the exalted status "already at the resurrection" in contrast with "a ministry of service and lowliness" and then to "the public ministry" itself. What concerns us is the picture as between Luke and Paul. Brown writes: "In Matthew and Luke we have the christology moved back to Jesus' infancy in Mary's womb, for an angel proclaims that from the moment of his conception he was already the Messiah and the Son of God. On the other hand, in hymns quoted in the Pauline epistles (Philip 2:6-7; Col 1:15-17), in Hebrews (1:2), "and in John (1:1; 17:5) the christology is moved toward pre-existence." Next Brown remarks: "The NT authors did not have the difficult task of reconciling these two 'pre-ministry' christologies, one centred on conception, the other on pre-existence; for we have no evidence that the proponents of one were aware of the other." What Brown tells us is that Matthew and Luke are not only devoid of the vision of Jesus' divine pre-existence but also unaware of such a vision occurring in the Epistles of Paul, in Hebrews and in John's Gospel. He is absolutely right. Luke's Gospel no less than Matthew's contains no trace of the Pauline Christology just as Paul's Letters contain no sign of the Virgin Birth. But how is ignorance possible to the Evangelist Luke as well as to the Luke of Acts if he was present when Paul dictated to Timothy the poem of pre-existence meant for the people of Colossae? The conclusion stares us in the face that this Luke and Paul could never have been together.⁵

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

¹ P. 345, col. 1, note e.

² P. 339, col. 1, note d.

³ P. 260 (Introduction to the Letters of Saint Paul).

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁵ In fairness it must be stated that a few Protestant exegetes regard Colossians, along with Ephesians, as a post-Pauline composition by a Paulinist, dating to the end of the 1st century or the beginning of the 2nd. But the majority are of the opposite opinion. All Catholic commentators, while recognising some problems, uphold the Apostle's authorship.

THE HUMAN HEART

It is said that the human heart is full of desires, good, bad, indifferent and there is no end to them. The moment one desire is fulfilled another arises and then another and still another: the story goes on *ad infinitum*. Desire is ever green. The point is well illustrated by the following tale.

The audience was full. The king and all the grades of his people were present. They were on the point of beginning the work. At that time a sannyasi appeared at the gate with a small begging bowl in his hand. On seeing the sannyasin, the king asked, "What's your business? What brings you here?" The sannyasin replied, "Only this" and, so saying, he pointed to the begging bowl and said, "Fill up this bowl." The king asked, "With what?" The sannyasin said, "With whatever you please." The king remained silent for a while and mused, "He has come to me, a king, so he must have come with high hopes. I must give such a thing that he may not have to go begging elsewhere. I will give him gold asarafies." The king asked his treasurer to fill up the bowl with gold asarafies.

The bowl was very small, so the treasurer put 100 asarafies in the bowl. And lo! The asarafies disappeared and the bowl remained empty. The treasurer put another 100 asarafies in the bowl. They also disappeared. This process went on and on and the asarafies kept disappearing. A time came when all the asarafies in the treasury were exhausted.

All present wondered at the phenomenon. Why were the asarafies disappearing? The prime minister exclaimed, "There is some witchery. There is some Satan's trick." The king looked at the sannyasin with questioning eyes. The sannyasin said, "There is neither witchery nor Satan's trick, the simple fact is that this small begging bowl is made from a human heart." So saying, the sannyasin departed, leaving the audience agape.

VALLABH SHETH

POEMS BEFORE AND AFTER 1973

OFFERING XVI: *I Have Lost Innocence*—February 1967

I HAVE lost innocence.
I can no longer see
The first violets simply
As simple things that speak
To me of spring.

I see the bee's
Avidity for honey rip
The tender throat and savage
Winds strip stalk.

Once all was under the warm
Protection of the Sun, but now
A ball of incandescent gas
Indifferently shines on bee
And bud and flower.

The bud is crushed to find
The universe; torn petals
Are woven into poems, and twisted
Stalk informs philosophies.

But reconstructed violets
Of the mind and the immense
And cold vacuity of space cannot
Replace lost faith or recompense
The loss of innocence.

(Analogue to *Let Me Go* Offering XVII November 24, 1983)

OFFERING XVII: *Let Me Go*—November 24, 1983

Let me go... let me go where man has not defiled
His Eden; the lush meadows and the golden glades of God
Untouched by slithering evil and raw hate;
Where all is innocent or innocently wild,
And foot has not indifferently trod
On little lives and violent blood no blade

Of grass has stained nor arrogant heel has crushed beneath... a flower.

Light and silence invading all illumine the dark hour.

Let me be... *let all man* be illumined by knowing
 And the mantras that are written in the cells,
 The potent powers in consequence commanding
 Gentle and meditative ways until immaculate, outflowing
 Epiphany changes all deaths erupting from the wells
 Of ignorance into unchanging consciousness of life, expanding
 Each minute into Eternity... *then shall this compel*
 All life to break forever out of the seed, the shell.

And everywhere will be the rich splendour, the vernal magnificence of
 joyous song,

Paeon after paeon, hosannas in celebration
 Of the Grandeur, the Greatness, the Simplicity, the strong
 Pure Being, the last and loving Creation.

ELIZABETH STILLER

(Analogue of *I Have Lost Innocence* Offering XVI, February 1967)

THE BEST SHORT STORY OF THE MOTHER

Conte Saphire was originally written in French in October 1906 and published for the first time with an English rendering as "A Sapphire Tale" in *Mother India* in February 1957.

The Mother originally wrote four short stories. Her other stories were adaptations. This is the most outstanding of her stories, a fine romantic creation. It does not concern a particular period or country. And it starts quite traditionally:

"Once upon a time, far away in the East, there was a small country that lived in order and harmony, where each one in his own place played the part for which he was made, for the greatest good of all.

"Each one tried to contribute his best for the common good of all. There were Workmen, Artists, Scientists, Philosophers, guiding the state and the king. The king was king because he was the most intelligent and he alone was capable of fulfilling the needs of all."

Now this is like an ideal kingdom. The ideals involved can be found pronounced later by the Mother in her Charter for Auroville excepting for the king, a personage of a bygone age. However, the king here was more than two hundred years old and, though otherwise fit, he wanted to retire. So he called his son Meotha. Meotha too is another exemplary personality who grew up with all fine qualities and was loved universally in the kingdom. So there would not be any dispute about his inheriting the throne.

"But as you know," the king continues, "according to the age-old custom, no one may ascend the throne, who is not biune, that is unless he is united by the bonds of integral affinity with the one who can bring him the peace of equilibrium by a perfect match of tastes and abilities." The prince admitted that he had not so far been able to find such a match in the kingdom. He suggested that the king permit him to go out for a year to foreign countries in order to get himself acquainted with the laws and customs of those countries and also to find his match, if possible. The king blessed his son and permitted his venture.

The second part of the story is enacted on an island, again unnamed—"Amid the Western Ocean lies a little island valued for its valuable forests." There, under the trees, in the woods, walks slowly on a radiant summer's day a young girl named Liane. Her body is graceful, lips carmine, hair so golden that it shines and her eyes are like two deep doors opening on a limitless blue, and light up her features with their intellectual radiance. In a dream she has seen a man who seems from his dress to come from a distant land and to whom the girl has given herself totally. For him she waits. To her the forests and birds and the whole atmosphere are quite friendly and sympathetic. She is an orphan. We remember Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, a unique creation, who has some resemblance to Liane.

Liane was walking in complete silence under the thick foliage of the wood which could not be pierced even by the dazzling sunlight. She was walking in a half dream, expectant.

“Suddenly a bird’s song rings out clear and joyful; all uneasiness vanishes.... She is seized by an emotion of great sweetness, all appears beautiful and good to her, and tears come to her eyes... It seems to her that the trees quivering in the breeze, the moss rustling beneath her feet, the bird renewing its melody—all speak to her of the one whom she awaits.”

She trembles with emotion in expectation of meeting the beloved, presses her hands against her beating heart and now the sensation grows intenser. Liane opens her eyes sure of a presence. “Oh, wonder of wonders! He is there, he, he in truth as she has seen him in her dreams... more handsome than men usually are—it was Meotha.”

They look at each other in a supreme joy of rediscovery. They recognise that they have known each other in the distant past. Liane calmly comes and places her hand in the hand he offers her and they wend their way through the forest—“Silent in a silence filled with thoughts exchanged.” A great ship comes near the shore and a boat comes to take them to the ship. Liane trustingly, meekly follows Meotha. Then as the ship glides and the little island disappears below the horizon the girl speaks:

“I was waiting for you, and now that you have come, I have followed you without question. We are made for each other. I feel it. I know it. But I would like to know to what shore you are taking me.”

As he reciprocates the feelings of Liane and tells her where he is taking her to be his queen, we may imagine Meotha soliloquising:

“With life for ever old, yet new,
 Changed not in kind but in degree,
 The instant made eternity
 And heaven just prove that I and she
 Ride, ride together, for ever ride.”¹

The situation created in the story may be said to be Lovers’ Paradise. Meotha and Liane, it appears, know each other from births immemorial. They wait on earth for the opportune moment only. It may look as if the story floated on the light wings of imagination and the lovers met very easily without the usual pang of separation that may lead to real happiness in union. But is it not that their having lived apart is a deep enough sorrow to find a proper bliss of union when they meet? In fact their joy of surrender and acceptance, the rapture of union is something beyond the grasp of ordinary human ideas. The story is created on an occult level and here the lovers’ lives are like open pages. When they meet silently and glide together, even before they speak, it seems many untold stories are told. And we have to relish the story in the

deep silence of our heart. For we realise its meaning better through the heart than through a critical intelligence.

The Mother is always for this ideal love where lovers meet in a deeper urge than mere likes and dislikes and often love before they see each other physically as the Poet and the Clairvoyant in the Mother's drama *Towards the Future*.

The story embodies, as the Mother said to the Editor of *Mother India*, "The ideal of an Overmind Creation."

To understand this better we may quote a few passages from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. While answering some questions the Mother said:

"Sri Aurobindo has called the Supermind the world of the Truth. But in between is what he has distinguished as the Overmind, the world of the Cosmic Gods. Now it is this Overmind that has up to the present governed our world: it is the highest that man has been able to attain in illumined consciousness."²

And Sri Aurobindo, while discussing the Overmind creation in literature, remarked:

"You must remember that the Overmind is a Superhuman Consciousness and to be able to write always or purely from an Overmind inspiration would mean the elevation of at least a part of the nature beyond the human level.

"But how do you expect a Supramental inspiration to come down here when the Overmind itself is so rarely within human reach?"³

The Mother continues in the same discourse as already cited:

"No doubt the Supermind has also acted in the history of the world but always through the Overmind. It is the direct descent of the Supramental Consciousness and Power that alone can utterly recreate life in terms of the Spirit. For in the Overmind there is always the play of possibilities which makes the beginning of this lower triple world of mind, life and Matter in which we have our existence. And whenever there is this play and not the spontaneous and infallible working of the innate truth of the Spirit, there is the seed of distortion and ignorance. Not that the Overmind is a field of ignorance, but it is the border-line between the Higher and the Lower, for the play of possibilities, of separate even if not yet divided choices, is likely to lead to deviation from the truth of things."⁴

And Sri Aurobindo in *The Life Divine*:

"Purusha and Prakriti, conscious soul and executive force of nature, are in the Supramental harmony a two-aspected single truth, being and dynamis of the Reality; there can be no disequilibrium or predominance of one over the other. In overmind we have the origin of the cleavage."⁵

Having understood that the Supramental Consciousness is the Truth-Consciousness and the Overmental creation a derivation from the Supramental and that the cleavage commences from it, we shall present the Mother's views about the two which are relevant for our present purpose.

On the 10th July 1957, the Mother related a very interesting story of her life. In 1926 after Sri Aurobindo had retired for his Sadhana for the Supramental Mani-

festation, the Mother assumed charge of the Ashram and thereafter—

“Things took a certain shape: a very brilliant creation was worked out in extraordinary detail, with marvellous experiences, contacts with divine beings and all kinds of manifestations which are considered miraculous.”

One day the Mother went as usual to relate to Sri Aurobindo what had been happening. Then Sri Aurobindo said to her:

“Yes, this is an Overmind creation. It is very interesting, very well done. You will perform miracles which will make you famous throughout the world...”

“It will be a great success. But it is an Overmind creation. And it is not the success that we want; we want to establish the Supermind on earth. One must know how to renounce immediate success in order to create the new world, the Supramental World in its integrality.”

The Mother realised the matter and a few hours later the creation was gone.

On the same date the Mother related another of her experiences. She was witnessing a Bengali film ‘Rani Rashmoni’ where Sri Ramakrishna, the temple of Dakshineswar, the statue of Kali were all being shown. While seeing the cinema the Mother suddenly realised that though the relations with God, the ideals of oneness of all religions, etc. in it were the purest and the highest spiritual effort of man, here was a world that had ceased to be real. It was transcended and surpassed by something which had taken birth now and was only beginning to express itself—“But whose life was so intense, so true, so sublime, that all these become false, unreal, worthless.”

Obviously, the Mother was referring to the descent of the light of the Supramental Consciousness on the 29th of February 1956 on earth. She was extremely emphatic about the ultimate victory of the Supermind as visioned by Sri Aurobindo.

“The old world, the creation of what Sri Aurobindo calls the overmind, was an age of the Gods and consequently the age of religions....

“In the Supramental creation there will no longer be any religions. The whole life will be the expression, the flowering into forms of the divine unity manifesting in the world. And there will no longer be what men now call God.”

On the 15th of May 1957 someone had asked—“Since the beginning of creation why is there this difference between male and female?”

The Mother forcibly denied the truth of the statement. She said it was so only in the material world, that too not wholly. Neither in the vital nor in the mental world is this distinction a ‘must’.

“Now, there are many people who are very keen on this distinction—they may keep it if they like—but it is not at all something final or eternal... or perfect in itself. It was perhaps an ideal of overmind creation, that is possible.... and yet even then not totally, only partially. But still those who are so fond of this differentiation—they may keep it if they like! If it gives them pleasure.... It has its advantages and disadvantages, many disadvantages.”

The Supramental Manifestation was perhaps a dream in 1906 when the present

story was written. In the meantime what had been promised was fulfilled, and with the Supramental light manifesting in whatever small way or limited sphere, the Mother visualised, at least symbolically, that the age of the old world was gone and that the Supramental had taken the field. Still, as she and Sri Aurobindo said, it is not expected that all will be supramentalised in no time. Aeons may pass till such a divine plan is actualised, depending on many things. Both the old world and the new creation will continue. Still, the Mother was not for the old world, the world of separative religions, the world of male and female. So she said in 1957 that the story was "The ideal of an Overmind creation."

Though the author presented us with a unique story in 1956, it may have been to our Mother a Divine Dissatisfaction in 1957.

During the later years of her ministry on earth, even the cells of her body were undergoing changes under the Supramental influences. She visualised a Supramental being to be unlike a man or woman as they are at present. Such a being will not have several organs common now: they will be completely unnecessary, including the organs differentiating male and female. Understandably, such a world would be completely different from our own. And the story of such beings is altogether unheard-of so far; it is yet to take its birth, perhaps awaiting in the womb of eternity. As Sri Aurobindo has said, even Overmind is attainable by a superhuman consciousness and indeed literary creations under its influence have been very rare. Short of the Supramental, it is the purest and noblest ideal that man has so far created and with the present mental, vital and physical stature of mankind the Overmental creation is the highest conceivable. The story of love between Liane and Meotha is thus the most ideal that we can cherish in our heart and the lovers are most adorable to us, their relationship being beyond the reach of humanity in general. We are happy with the story and feel that humanity in its progress towards divinity will benefit from the light it holds aloft.

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

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- ² *The Mother*, Collected Works, Vol. 3, p. 173.
- ³ *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo, SABCL, Vol. 8, p. 370.
- ⁴ *Op. cit*, pp. 173-174.
- ⁵ *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo, SABCL, Vol. 18, p. 299.

INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY INHERENT IN INTEGRAL YOGA

IN THE WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1984)

So Far Thus

*A review of the last five excerpts on Personality and Transformation published
in the issues of December 1983, January and February 1984*

IN the two opening instalments of our excerpts (December 1983 and January 1984) we have really mapped out human personality elaborately enough. We have given a picture of our fuller personality and then a large account of our Integral Personality under "Principal Domains of Consciousness". The concept of Integral Personality is a most valuable contribution from India which opens up new fields of investigation for the science of psychology. The entire tradition of Yoga bears testimony to the various fields of experience of Integral Personality and contemporary Yogic experience confirms it. The factual reality of these fields cannot be doubted, but they need to be explored and substantiated in terms of scientific psychology. This is, in fact, the exclusive or at least the primary responsibility and privilege of the Indian Psychologist.

Let us briefly restate what Integral Personality is.

Our ordinary personality is an organisation of interactions with the environment. It is a surface formation dealing with the surface or the phenomena of nature. It is intensely self-centred or marked off from the not-self of the rest of nature. It is also deeply a part of the same nature. This is the domain of consciousness or personality which we ordinarily take as the whole personality or the primary subject matter of the science of psychology.

But by a persistent practice of yogic introspection, if we withdraw from it, dissociate ourselves from it, we land in a field of wider mind, life and body, a universality of them. In relation to this our ordinary personality becomes clearly a separated particularity of personality. This experience is really wonderful. There universal forces of nature become a direct perception, they do not remain inferences as ordinarily they are. Telepathy then becomes an exercisable function. A yet further inward withdrawal lands us in a luminous and blissful core-consciousness, which renders our wider personality (called by Sri Aurobindo the subliminal) an external fact. This is felt as self-existent and independent of circumstances. The discovery of this domain of consciousness holds the key to many problems of scientific psychology. There, we feel, sex is not final to life, reaction to environment is not essen-

tial and normality is not merely social conformity. This is very illuminating to a student of human personality.

Introspection is a profound discipline for yoga. The foregoing discoveries it makes by following an in-look in its action of observation. Our ordinary posture of consciousness is one of out-look. But it also pursues an up-look in its investigation and then it discovers a large field of consciousness of increasing luminosity and universality. It seems to command all existence. It is also unitary in nature. This Sri Aurobindo calls Superconsciousness or the Superconscient. And then there is a reverse movement of down-look, which lands us in the subconscious and the unconscious or the Inconscient. This is a field of obscurity and lack of organisation and order.

Such then is the wide field of Integral Personality and all directly observable by a due cultivation of introspection.

Is this prospect not a thing of great challenge? Our excerpts need to be read over and again in order to be duly appreciated. In the excerpts in the issue of February '84 there has come up the subject of integration of all the foregoing diverse fields of personality. This integration involves transformation. Both integration and transformation are capital issues of life, education and psychology.

Education and culture bring about modifications in the natural endowment of man. These modifications are the essence of civilization and of progress in the quality of human living. Now, the question is: Is a real and effective change in the quality of life possible? Freud's answer is that it is not possible. What is possible is a recanalisation of the original energy along new lines, into new fields of life and experience. Sex-energy remains sex-energy but it might take on art or religion as its expression. At the root and in essential character it will remain a sex-craving. A sublimation is all that is possible, but no transformation. Man is born with instincts and he lives by instincts, whatever their external expression may be. Even spiritual experiences of utter selflessness are, to Freud, sublimations or veiled expressions of the self-seeking sex-instinct.

'The integration of personality'; which is the high aim of education to-day, can at best be, according to him, an economic balance among the three factors of personality, the Ego, the Id and the Superego. Such economic balance is really an adjustment, a working arrangement, not a transcendence of the conflict inherent in the make-up of the personality, the Ego, the Id and the Superego. An Integration or Harmonisation is, therefore, not possible.

Even General Psychology—apart from Freud's Psycho-analysis—which accepts integration of personality as a possibility aims at a summation of the varied functions. But Integration really implies an integrating principle. In the West, it was C. G. Jung alone who felt the need of 'a centre' in personality behind the dualities or polarities of the ego. This 'centre' he endowed with an integrative function. But he did not investigate how to activate the centre and achieve integration of personality.

The position of Indian Psychology on this entire subject is very different. Man

has an animal inheritance and as such he is much divided and suffers from much inner conflict, but he has also a soul, which is all-conscious, blissful and unitary. Man can, through yogic discipline, dissociate himself from the divided animal nature and identify himself with the holistic divine principle in him, his soul, and live a life of spontaneous joy, unitary will and clarity of perception. Thus integrated living is a complete possibility. And this has been demonstrated again and again in the lives of saints and yogis in varying forms and degrees.

However, Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga and Integral Psychology affirm that apart from the achievement of the spontaneous life of the soul, it is possible to attempt and achieve, under the influence and action of the soul or, as called by him, the Psychic Being, a real change in our ordinary nature, from its animal quality to the divine quality, from a divided to a holistic state, from a state of partial consciousness to that of integral consciousness. This means change to a spiritual quality, for the Spirit is qualitatively different from the Mind. Mind is environment-dependent; Spirit is self-existent. Mind is largely, in Freud's words "nine-tenths", unconscious, Spirit is entirely conscious. The change contemplated in the nature of man is really a spiritualisation of human nature. This, Sri Aurobindo calls Transformation. This is for human nature and progress *the issue*. And this was essentially *the issue* of Sri Aurobindo's quest in life.

Sri Aurobindo worked out in detail the processes of integration and harmonisation and transformation. He also demonstrated them through the practice of his Integral Yoga.

The excerpts given in the February issue give a broad idea of the subject. The topics coming in the next issue are: The Chakras or the subtle centres of consciousness affirmed by yoga and the various branches of psychology handled by Sri Aurobindo. Still later will come Psycho-analysis and other subjects.

INDRA SEN

SO TO SPEAK...

SELECTIONS FROM A WORK-IN-PROGRESS

LORD, when I was born they could not decide whether to sew me up in a sack and leave me in the forest, place me on a high tower for the birds, or anoint and burn me.

But instead I was gathered up and comforted, and inexplicable things were murmured in my ear.... And so the difficulties began.

*

Later, Lord, when I was thrown to the serpents and they did not bite me, dropped hand and foot into the ocean and the waters bore me up, I began to see, Lord, in the serpents and the wild water, that you must have something very special prepared for me.

*

The trouble is, Lord, that I have spent twenty years now standing on my head, and I fear that all my sense has floated to my feet.

How can a man, Lord, be ready for anything when his feet are not in touch with the earth.

*

Twenty years, Lord, knowing nothing! Sometimes I feel like a shepherd with a flock of black sheep on a moonless night... and what I thought was my dog Rover has just started to howl and display his teeth.

*

Lord, I am tempted to go and leave my black sheep and seek Thee on the holy mountain and at the meeting place of the sacred rivers. Nothing is holding me here. I can go any time.... Some would call that freedom. But is it freedom, Lord? Or is it flight?

*

So I stay, Lord. Every morning I fight the light; every evening I fight the dark. I don't know why I just don't go along with the turning of the world. Except that someone's got to be different.

*

Yet, Lord, it seems to me that this that I see before me is the beginning of some path

that you might want me to follow. If it is your wish, Lord, I am ready, I think, after all these years, to set out.

*

But wait, Lord! Where is my mad friend? The one I loved all these years, the one who all these years I could count upon always to love me. Lord, I've lost my mad friend! I'm not going anywhere without my mad friend. For who can I laugh at, blame? Who, Lord? Who? What is man without his mad friend? Free? O Lord, not that. Give me my mad friend.

*

O but we are all mad, Lord. Mad going, mad staying; mad speaking, mad silent. O mad, mad, most of all mad here now face to the earth before Thee.

*

And, being mad, the question comes to me, Lord, am I so, this minute, or am I not? Is there, right now, someone here behind the apparent vacantness, or is there not?

I play with stones, Lord, throwing them up, trying to catch them on the back of my hand. Missing, missing, all the time.

For always, Lord, I am... and am not.

*

Lord, I am like a fisherman who studies the shape of the river and the patterns on the water before he makes his move. And all the time the fish are studying him.

*

But you can't blame me, Lord, can you, if I watch you every moment. Otherwise you would cover me up completely with your love.

And then there would be nothing left of you except your smile. And nothing left of me except my joy.

*

O Lord, Lord! Here it is the end of Springtime and I have merely gone through with all the paraphernalia of pretended change.... I fear to throw anything away and I fear to start something new. All I do is change about like an old dog in the summer dust.

*

This is the silent month, filled with silent cries from silent mouths. But the silence,

Lord, is the silence only of my desire, passionate and deep, endless... and empty.

*

The sun is high, Lord, in the sky, the wind somewhere beyond the dry hills. I water the flowers... which die. The wildflower weeds grow wantonly.

By now, Lord, you would think I would know what I should water and what I should leave alone... and what will bloom no matter what I do.

*

O Lord, midsummer with its sighs and murmurs and its dry winds laden with chaff. I lay my burden down, Lord, lay my burden down, down in the dust.

*

Lord, my heart is a desert seed, dried like the sand it is buried in.

Rain, O Lord. Send rain.

*

Lord, I watch as the sun goes down: all the grasses wave, this way, that, whichever way the wind blows. This way, my brothers, that, whichever way the wind bloweth, we listenth.

*

Lord, the sky is white and endless, unblemished. I say your name, Lord, and inhabit eternity. Then I refrain from saying it, and I live for ever in the moment.

*

Lord, dragon-flies appear, and swifts, Lord, as nimble as goldfish after sprinkled crumbs. And clouds gather in the sky. Clouds, clouds, at last, O Lord, clouds.... And me and Thee here in the darkening chamber of the world.

*

Lord, all things are stirring while all things remain at rest.

*

Lord, I awake at night, expectant, and mistake the sound in the trees for rain. But it is not rain. Lord, is it your intention to let me wither on the vine?

*

Where did this silence come from, Lord? This silence that is hiding all the noise.

Am I going crazy, Lord, in this muffled din?

Ssh, Lord, ssh.

Softly, softly, Lord;
softly into my ear.

*

The moon is racing through the night, and my spirit rises. Lord! We are all here together, none knowing how many or where one starts or one ends: clouds, moon, night sky, You, me, all, all.

*

Lord, what use is the weather-cock if it points one way and the rainclouds come from another? Lord, I've got a weather-cock for a mind.

*

Lord, I bend against the wind, then pause.... Where is it that I want to go that is so difficult to reach? I turn about, then hurry away with the wind blowing at my back.

Lord, that laughter, like the wind—I don't know if it is for me or against me.

*

Your dark wings obscure the sun; blown leaves race me home. I close the shutters against your laughter, and against your rain.

Lord, you are too much for me.

*

It's come, Lord. The rain has come. And already I shiver in it and ask for warmth. Yesterday I sweltered in the sun and asked for wind; the day before I fingered the dry earth and worried for my crops.

Always, Lord, always, I want something other than what I am given.

*

The monsoon waters swirl across the fields. Everywhere is the dance of smoking flowers.... And then, Lord, the rain eases, revealing again the bare red earth, but leaving me still with flowers.

*

Lord, what is that about still waters? I forget. I forget.

It does not matter. For it is the waters rushing on to the sea that matter to me. Right, Lord? Right?

*

Lord, the rain continues to fall. The frogs move out of the house; the ants move in. Always something, Lord.

*

In singing, Lord, there is always the frog school competing with the lark school.

Listen to me, Lord, as I sing. What a froggy lark I am, absolutely nowhere in both schools.

But unable to stop singing.

*

O Lord, what a sun-round day it is. And what a moon-round night. Why are there no square things in your world, Lord? No straight lines?

Bend me a little bit, Lord. Ah! More, Lord. More.

*

Lord, these small blue flowers in the grass.... And these violet flowers that have sprung up overnight. Are they your work?

O well done, Lord. Well done.

*

Lord, I burn this button of camphor in my new house; the door is open, Lord, and each day I shall burn a button.

Come, Lord, enter.

*

O Lord, this empty room: how filled it is. I open the doors and the windows and more and more emptiness pours in until one would think there would be no more room for it all. But there is. Always.

*

Lord, at night the moths tap at the screen to come in; at sun-up others tap on the screen to go out. The same screen, Lord, the light sometimes on this side, sometimes on that.

*

Lord, I sniff around the house and smell sandal but there is no sandalwood anywhere near. Now it is something else I smell: amber, mattipal. It is you, Lord, I smell, filling my so unfragrant body.

*

Excuse me, Lord, but for all your experiments the gecko is just about perfect... except for one thing. Do you suppose you could change him a bit so that he would not bite off his younger brother's tail and go about with it sticking out of the side of his mouth like a young man with his first cigar? Apart from that, Lord, he is just about the most perfect of creatures.

*

Lord, sometimes I think my wonder is merely literary: the enchantment of empty rooms, of solitary chairs awaiting coats of paint on the yellow grass of summer, of open doors on moonlight nights, of candlesticks before a mirror.... You see what I mean, Lord?

O empeople this world with angels, with demons, with whatever you wish. But let it be unliterary, Lord, real, commonplace, miraculous, un-if necessary-poetic.

*

Lord, are you tired of my incantations? I know you have no need for my figures of speech, my elaborate postures.... But I keep hoping that you will be able to hear something worthwhile in the infrequent moments when I pause for breath.

*

Lord, all the time, everywhere, countless miracles being performed. Countless, Lord, countless. More than I can imagine. More even, Lord, than *You* can imagine.

*

O Lord, all is erased, by worm if not by wind. Isn't that so? I am more than glad. I exult. I glory in it. All, all is erased. Fresh is the world, new-made, untouched, clean, all new, new.

*

Ho-ho, Lord! The hidden banners flutter in the air! Ho-ho, my tiny trumpet sounds! Listen, world, to the emissary of the Lord, signalling his own ho-ho insignificances.

*

Lord, I have just discovered that I have finally learnt enough to be called an idiot. When, Lord, did I cease being a fool? How soon before I am merely ignorant.

*

Lord, I want to be everywhere, everywhere, all at the same time: help me to become many.

And after becoming many, Lord, help me to become one.

*

Lord, today everyone loved me, agreed with everything I said. O forgive me, Lord, this transgression.

*

Lord, how may I achieve nothingness when a part of me is so satisfied with somethingness?

*

Lord, I see now that there is no mystery behind this mystery. It is transparent. It is merely something deep, inexplicable, known only through identity.

*

Yet, Lord, sometimes I am mysterious even unto myself.

*

O Lord, so many things.... Simple things. Yet I understand nothing. Is this also, Lord, a way of understanding?

*

Lord! Today... where is everybody? Where is everything? The world is absolutely filled with laughter and there is no one here but me to hear it.

No one but me... and Thee.

*

Lord, this woman spoke thus to me: Where is the frontier to the Lord's Kingdom? That is what she said. To me, Lord. Of course, she was old and her eyes filled over, but I had to laugh.... And then so did she.

Were you testing me again, Lord?

*

Lord, I place my brow against the trunk of this old tree. Lord, Lord, it is difficult to speak.

I feel the sap rise from the very roots.

Lord, I feel it.

*

And I walk upon the beach, Lord, amid the incense of seaside fires. The dark beyond is boundless, impenetrable, filled, Lord, with invisible light.

*

And when I stand by the river, Lord, it ceases to flow. I see the light on it, I see the light travelling from the sun, but the water on which it rests... it does not move. It is at the source, Lord, and at the sea, and before me now, all of it within my grasp.

*

Lord, I enter Your Kingdom. I know it, Lord: I smell the difference in the air, see the difference in the light. But how, Lord, did I miss the gate? And the watchman? And the man who points the way?

Lord, I have not moved.

*

Lord!

O Lord, Lord, Lord!
Lord, Lord!

Lord! Lord! Lord! O Lord, Lord,
Lord, Lord, Lord!

O Thou!

NAVODITTE

THE LAST WISH

A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY

LONG long ago a washerman's widow lived in a village. After her husband's death she had taken up his job of washing clothes. Her twenty-year-old son was of immense assistance to her. They took the dirty clothes to the river, washed them clean, dried them on the lawns, folded them and delivered them to the customers. Their customers included not only many of the villagers but also the king.

It was the widow's duty to go to the palace early in the morning, collect the clothes from the queen's maid and return them washed and dried before dusk.

The queen was very pleased with the washerwoman since she did her job perfectly well and returned the clothes on time. Having developed a soft corner for her, the queen treated the washerwoman as one of her maids. By the grace of her majesty, the washerwoman and her son had enough to eat, good clothes to wear and more than sufficient coins to spend. The washerwoman proved very loyal to the queen and did her job with the utmost care.

One day as she was spreading the washed royal garbs on the lawn, she stumbled over a stone that lay hidden under the bushy grasses and fell.

Her son who was washing clothes in the river heard her yell and rushed to her. He understood that her pain was due to a sprained ankle.

"Mother! Take rest. I'll do the work for you," he said and helped her sit comfortably under the shade of a tree.

The clothes were all dried and neatly folded. It was time for them to carry the bundled clothes and deliver them to the respective customers.

"My son, I'll not be able to walk to the palace. My sprained ankle gives me intolerable pain. Will you please carry the royal clothes to the palace and deliver them to the queen's maid?"

"Yes, mother, I'll do it. But will the palace guards permit me to enter the queen's chamber?"

"Certainly, if you tell them who you are."

The washerwoman's son carried the bundle of royal robes on his head. When he reached the palace, the guards at the entrance stopped him.

"I'm the washerwoman's son. She is suffering from a sprained ankle. Hence I have come to deliver the clothes to the queen."

The guards sent word through an attendant to inform the queen about the arrival of the washerwoman's son and to seek her advice regarding his admittance.

Permission was granted.

The washerwoman's son reached the queen's chamber. He saw the beautiful young queen seated on a swing. The chambermaids sat at her majesty's feet.

Amazed at the sight of the queen he stood spellbound. For him it was love at first sight.

He came back to his senses when the queen enquired about his mother. He felt extremely elated and grabbed the chance of talking with her majesty.

For the next few days he went in the mornings to collect the clothes, and in the evenings to deliver them washed and dried.

His mind dwelt constantly on the queen. He started nurturing a flaming passion towards her. Life without her seemed one big vacuum.

The washerwoman was completely cured of her sprain within three days. When she resumed going to the palace, her son was denied admittance by the guards. He longed to see the queen but none of his attempts bore fruit. He was heart-broken.

As days passed he became lean and haggard. On seeing the pathetic condition of her son, the washerwoman probed into the matter. She was shocked to hear from her son that he was passionately in love with the queen.

She advised him not to dream of the impossible. But advice is of no avail with one who is blindly in love. No herb in the world could cure his 'disease'.

The washerwoman pitied her son and mustered courage to speak with the queen.

The queen heard the washerwoman out in sympathy, heaved a sigh and then fell into silence...She finally said: "In the name of the Almighty, and with the noble purpose of saving a dying man, tonight I'll come to your house... Let it be known to none... Remember, I am condescending to your request, only at the peril of my life..."

Disguised, the queen under cover of darkness, reached the washerwoman's house and after an hour left for the palace unnoticed.

But it seemed that the queen's stay with the sick man had fulfilled a last wish. He died a few hours later.

The corpse was taken to the cremation ground. Firewood, cowdung cakes and hay were heaped on the corpse. All that had to be done was to set the funeral pile on fire. It must be done by the one who was very much loved by the dead man. Only then could the corpse be burnt to ashes.

The washerwoman ignited the funeral pile. But it didn't catch fire. In vain she tried again and again.

The dead man's friends and relatives tried. The funeral pile resisted fire.

Many villagers tried. But it was of no use at all.

The matter was reported to the king. He sent all his courtiers, soldiers and ministers one after another to try. The funeral pile was adamant.

The king thought that one of the queen's maids might be in love with the dead man. So he sent them all to the cremation ground. They too tried but the pile didn't catch fire.

In the whole realm only two were yet to try. One was the king and the other was his queen.

Finally the king tried. To his great disappointment he failed. He looked at his queen and said: "Try your luck. This is the last chance for the dead man. If

the pile fails to catch fire let the corpse be thrown into the sea and left to the mercy of the sea-animals..."

A cold shiver ran through the queen's spine. With trembling hand she took the firebrand and ignited the pile.

To everyone's surprise, the pyre was ablaze. They looked askance at the queen. She bent her head in shame.

The king's face was full of anger. He was thinking of what he should do to the queen when he heard her majesty sing:

“Never did I share his food,
Nor did he buy me a garb.
Yet to ease him at death
I quenched his gaze.
O, Good women all!
Be you faithful unto death
To your Lord who gives you mirth.”

When she finished her song she jumped upon the funeral pyre and the flames consumed her.

Collected & retold by P. RAJA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

We have pleasure in reproducing with acknowledgment to SPAN, August 1983, the following review-article by M. C. Joshi, Director of Antiquities, Archaeological Survey of India, under the title "Landmark in Harappan Studies".

Harappan Civilization: A Contemporary Perspective. Edited by *G. L. Possehl*. Oxford and IBH, 1982.

EVER since the discovery of the Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa sites in the 1920s, a varied mass of writing has appeared on the subject, some of it scientific, some speculative, some emotional. The discovery pushed back the beginnings of civilization in India by more than a millennium, and appealed to the patriotic pride of a still subjugated nation. And since certain historical theories had been firmly entrenched over the years—the coming of the Aryans from somewhere outside through Iran to India and their conquest of a pre-Aryan, perhaps Dravidian civilization—the new discovery had to be fitted into the known scheme of things, at least partly through speculation. Besides, linguistics and archaeological finds were virtually the only instruments available to the writers of the time for their interpretative studies.

Although the early archaeologists—Marshall, Mackay, Vats, Mazumdar—were objective enough in their assessments, today's researchers have an array of scientific means at their disposal which gives them an advantage over the earlier crop of scholars. The carbon 14 method, for example, fixes the time of an archaeological stratum and its finds almost beyond all speculation. Besides, a multidisciplinary approach brings to bear a wealth of scientific techniques on a subject that was earlier the preserve of professional archaeologists. Thus in the present volume the section headings alone indicate the range of specialized lines of study; the nature of Harappan urbanization; ecology, technology and trade; biological anthropology. An essay by John R. Lukacs deals with "Dental Disease, Dietary Patterns and Subsistence at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro"; and an entire section is devoted to the nature of Harappan researches so far—itself a new and very valuable exercise.

It was in the 1950s that archaeology took this turn toward an interdisciplinary search for the total pattern that can be 'unearthed' from excavations and their finds. In 1962 the Archaeological Survey of India, celebrating its centenary, held an international seminar, followed by another conference organized by the Deccan College, Pune. These heralded a great theoretical change in the assessment of the Harappan civilization. Thereafter, the pre-Harappan culture of Kalibangan (Rajasthan) was located and identified, and its continuity in some form with the mature Harappan culture was established. With another conference in 1972, there was further advance: concepts of ecology, geography and trade came into fuller play in the interpretation of the civilization. Still later, other methods were introduced to enhance the scientific assessment of a site. For instance, Walter A. Fairservis, as his paper in the

present volume tells us, used quantitative methods in examining a small site called Allahdino; he even counted the number of pottery shards unearthed, and was able to draw significant conclusions from that. Jean-François Jarrige went to the extent of examining entire heaps of garbage and made brilliant inferences about the life and habits of the people at the neolithic site of Mehrgarh (Baluchistan). These new methods firmed up many ideas that would have remained speculative.

Following the earlier investigations of A. Ghosh in the Rajasthan desert, Rafique Moghul not only discovered over 400 sites belonging to pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan cultures, but traced archaeologically the story of the lost river Saraswati, so famous in the Rigveda. Indeed it appears that the decline of the mature Harappan civilization was mainly due to the drying up of the Saraswati. Chitwale's paper in Posschl's volume shows that so long as the Rann of Kutch was full of water the centres of Harappan culture in that area were in a flourishing state. As the water dried up, so did the civilization. Interesting questions are raised by this: since the Saraswati was already drying up in the third millennium B.C., those hymns of the Rigveda that refer to the river Saraswati must have been composed before 1500 B.C., the period normally assigned to the Rigveda. Thus, a host of conventional theories have to be re-examined.

Greg Posschl's volume is a landmark in the history of Harappan studies. His earlier collection, *The Ancient Cities of the Indus*, consolidated the most significant writings, old and new, on the subject; the present volume is remarkable in that practically every article in it advances our knowledge and understanding of the Harappan civilization in some way or other. For instance, George F. Dales' paper reassesses some unpublished and forgotten features of the city of Mohenjo-Daro, resurrected from archaeological records and supplemented by his own investigations. The nature of the riverine base of the growth, decline and fall of the civilization has been illuminated by the contributions of B. K. Thapar, Marcia Fentress and Shirin Ratnagar. Fentress has tried to reconstruct the environment logically, interlinking it with the centers of Harappan culture; Ratnagar has discussed the location of Harappa in relation to the factors responsible for its growth. "With primate cities functioning as 'gateways'," Ratnagar points out, "the networks connecting the settlement points are like elongated fans radiating from the primate city.... The primate city is located at a point where it can control the movement of goods; at a break-of-bulk point, at an important river crossing, or at the junction of several natural routes. It forms the major link between the core territory and the peripheral region or the external world."

Posschl's own introductory essay, one of the most important and brilliant pieces in the collection, establishes the six major 'domains' of Harappan civilization, concretizing our understanding of its territorial spread and getting away from the vague uniformity of the previous 'empire' approach. The work of earlier scholars and theoreticians has been absorbed in many ways into the new orientation which would not have been possible, in fact, without these pioneering contributions. A. Ghosh's analysis of the "Deurbanization of the Harappan Civilisation" is based in Gordon

Childe's 10 abstract criteria of preindustrial urbanization, laid down in 1950. G. C. Lemberg Karlovsky enlarges on the external dimensions of the civilization by projecting important structural similarities in urban processes characterizing Sumer, Elam (West Asia), Turan (Central Asia) and Indus cultures. S. P. Gupta, seeing it from another angle, speaks of the process of ruralization of an urban culture in the context of late Harappan communities.

The general picture emerging from this superbly produced collection of scholarly articles shows the strong zonal bias of the Indus Valley civilization with a localized politico-economic and social complex, possibly interlinked through trade and exchange. Perhaps the whole complex originated in a cultural synthesis of diverse local and foreign elements, prospered with growing external trade and communication, finally declining with the loss of urbanism caused by changes in river courses and other natural factors—certainly not due to external invasion, as many earlier scholars believed.