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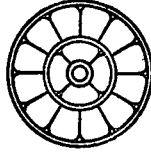
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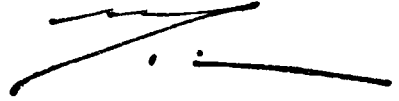


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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MONEY: ITS BASIC NATURE, RIGHT USE, CONQUEST AND TRANSFORMATION

A TALK OF THE MOTHER ON MAY 3, 1951

Money is the visible sign of a universal force, and this force in its manifestation on earth works on the vital and physical planes and is indispensable to the fullness of the outer life. In its origin and its true action it belongs to the Divine. But like other powers of the Divine it is delegated here and in the ignorance of the lower Nature can be usurped for the uses of the ego or held by Asuric influences and perverted to their purpose. This is indeed one of the three forces—power, wealth, sex—that have the strongest attraction for the human ego and the Asura and are most generally misheld and misused by those who retain them... for this reason most spiritual disciplines... proclaim poverty and bareness of life as the only spiritual condition. But this is an error; it leaves the power in the hands of the hostile forces. To reconquer it for the Divine to whom it belongs and use it divinely for the divine life is the supramental way for the sadhaka.”

Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, pp. 11-12

How can one know if one's way of using money is in accordance with the divine Will?

ONE must first know what the divine Will is. But there is a surer way—to surrender money for the divine work if one is not sure oneself. “Divinely” means at the service of the Divine—it means not to use money for one's own satisfaction but to place it at the Divine's service.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of “a weak bondage to the habits that the possession of riches creates”.

Ibid., p. 14

When you are rich and have a lot of money to spend, generally you spend it on things you find pleasant, and you become habituated to these things, attached to these things, and if one day the money is gone you miss it, you are unhappy, you are miserable and feel all lost because you no longer have what you were in the habit of having. It is a bondage, a weak attachment. He who is quite detached, when he lives in the midst of these things, it is well with him; when these things are gone, it is well also; he is totally indifferent to both. That is the right attitude: when it is there he uses it, when it is not he does without it. And for his inner consciousness this makes no difference. That surprises you, but it is like that.

If one has the power to acquire a lot of money, does this mean that one has a certain control over terrestrial forces?

This depends upon how one acquires it. If you get it by foul ways, that does not mean that you have a control. But if someone, scrupulously doing his duty, sees that money comes to him, it is evidently because he exercises a control over these forces. There are people who have the power of attracting money and they haven't the least need to practise dishonesty to get it. Others, even to get a few pennies, must make all sorts of contrivances, more or less clean. So one cannot say.... We see a rich man and think he must be exercising a control over the forces of money—no, not necessarily. But if a man remains perfectly honest and does what he thinks is his duty without caring to acquire money, and yet money comes to him, evidently he has a certain affinity with those forces.

It is said, "One cannot make a heap without making a hole", one cannot enrich oneself without impoverishing someone else. Is this true?

This is not quite correct. If one produces something, instead of an impoverishment it is an enrichment; simply one puts into circulation in the world something else having a value equivalent to that of money. But to say that one cannot make a heap without making a hole is all right for those who speculate, who do business on the Stock Exchange or in finance—there it is true. It is impossible to have a financial success in affairs of pure speculation without its being detrimental to another. But it is limited to this. Otherwise a producer does not make a hole if he heaps up money in exchange for what he produces. Surely there is the question of the value of production, but if the production is truly an acquisition for the general human wealth, it does not make a hole, it increases this wealth. And in another way, not only in the material field, the same thing holds for art, for literature or science, for any production at all.

When I was doing business (Export-Import), I always had the feeling of robbing my neighbour.

This is living at the expense of others, because one multiplies the middlemen. Naturally, it is perhaps convenient, practical, but from the general point of view, and above all in the way it is practised, it is living at the expense of the producer and the consumers. One becomes an agent, not at all with the idea of rendering service (because there is not one in a million who has this idea), but because it is an easy way of earning money without making any effort. But of course, among the ways of making money without any effort, there are others much worse than that! they are countless.

Friends from outside have often asked me this question: "When one is compelled to earn his living, should one just conform to the common code of honesty or should one be still more strict?"

This depends upon the attitude your friend has taken in life. If he wants to be a sadhak, it is indispensable that rules of ordinary morality do not have any value for him. Now, if he is an ordinary man living the ordinary life, it is a purely practical question, isn't it? He must conform to the laws of the country in which he lives to avoid all trouble! But all these things which in ordinary life have a very relative value and can be looked upon with a certain indulgence, change totally the minute one decides to do yoga and enter the divine life. Then, all values change completely; what is honest in ordinary life, is no longer at all honest for you. Besides, there is such a reversal of values that one can no longer use the same ordinary language. If one wants to consecrate oneself to the divine life, one must do it truly, that is, give oneself entirely, no longer do anything for one's own interest, depend exclusively upon the divine Power to which one abandons oneself. Everything changes completely, doesn't it?—everything, everything, it is a reversal. What I have just read from this book applies solely to those who want to do yoga; for others it has no meaning, it is a language which makes no sense, but for those who want to do yoga it is imperative. It is always the same thing in all that we have recently read: one must be careful not to have one foot on one side and the other foot on the other, not to bstride two different boats each following its own course. This is what Sri Aurobindo said: one must not lead a "double life". One must give up one thing or the other—one can't follow both.

This does not mean, however, that one is obliged to get out of the conditions of one's life: it is the inner attitude which must be totally changed. One may do what one is in the habit of doing, but do it with quite a different attitude. I don't say it is necessary to give up everything in life and go away into solitude, to an ashram necessarily, to do yoga. Now, it is true that if one does yoga in the world and in worldly circumstances, it is more difficult, but it is also more complete. Because every minute one must face problems which do not present themselves to someone who has left everything and gone into solitude; for such a one these problems are reduced to a minimum—while in life one meets all sorts of difficulties, beginning with the incomprehension of those around you with whom you have to deal; one must be ready for that, be armed with patience, and a great indifference. But in yoga one should no longer care for what people think or say; it is an absolutely indispensable starting-point. You must be absolutely immune to what the world may say or think of you and to the way it treats you. People's understanding must be something quite immaterial to you and should not even slightly touch you. That is why it is generally much more difficult to remain in one's usual surrounding and do yoga than to leave everything and go into solitude; it is much more difficult, but we are not here to do easy things—easy things we leave to those who do not think of transformation.

If someone has acquired a lot of money by dishonest means, could some of it be asked for the Divine?

Sri Aurobindo has answered this question. He says that money in itself is an impersonal force: the way in which you acquire money concerns you alone personally. It may do you great harm, it may harm others also, but it does not in any way change the nature of the money which is an altogether impersonal force: money has no colour, no taste, no psychological consciousness. It is a force. It is like saying that the air breathed out by a scoundrel is more tainted than that breathed out by an honest man—I don't think so. I think the result is the same. One may for reasons of a practical nature refuse money which has been stolen, but that is for altogether practical reasons, it is not because of divine reasons. This is a purely human idea. One may from a practical point of view say, "Ah! no, the way in which you have acquired this money is disgusting and so I don't want to offer it to the Divine", because one has a human consciousness. But if you take someone (let us suppose the worst) who has killed and acquired money by the murder; if all of a sudden he is seized by terrible scruples and remorse and tells himself, "I have only one thing to do with this money, give it where it can be utilised for the best, in the most impersonal way", it seems to me that this movement is preferable to utilising it for one's own satisfaction. I said that the reasons which could prevent one from receiving ill-gotten money may be reasons of a purely practical kind, but there may also be more profound reasons, of a (I do not want to say moral but) spiritual nature, from the point of view of tapasya; one may tell somebody, "No, you cannot truly acquire merit with this fortune which you have obtained in such a terrible way; what you can do is to restore it", one may feel that a restitution, for instance, will help to make more progress than simply passing the money on to any work whatever. One may see things in this way—one can't make rules. This is what I never stop telling you: it is impossible to make a rule. In every case it is different. But you must not think that the money is affected; money as a terrestrial force is not affected by the way in which it is obtained, that can in no way affect it. Money remains the same, your note remains the same, your piece of gold remains the same, and as it carries its force, its force remains there. It harms only the person who has done wrong, that is evident. The question remains: in what state of mind and for what reasons does your dishonest man want to pass on his money to a work he considers divine? Is it a measure of safety, through prudence or to lay his heart at rest? Evidently this is not a very good motive and it cannot be encouraged, but if he feels a kind of repentance and regret for what he has done and the feeling that there is but one thing to do and that is precisely to deprive himself of what he has wrongly acquired and utilise it for the general good as much as possible, then there is nothing to say against that. One cannot decide in a general way—it depends upon the instance. Only, if I understand well what you mean, if one knows that a man has acquired money by the most unnamable means, obviously it would not be good to go and *ask* him for money for some divine work, because that would be like "rehabilitating" his way of gaining money. One cannot ask, that is not possible. If, spontaneously, for some reason, he gives it, there is no reason to refuse it. But it is quite impossible

to go and ask him for it, because it is as though one legitimised his manner of acquiring money. That makes a great difference.

And generally, in these cases, those who go and ask money from rascals use means of intimidation: they frighten them, not physically but about their future life, about what may happen to them, they give them a fright. It is not very nice. These are procedures one ought not to use.

Besides money, what are the other divine powers "delegated" here on earth?

All. All the divine powers are manifested here and deformed here—light, life, love, force—all—harmony, ananda—all, all, there is nothing which is not divine in its origin and which does not exist here under a completely distorted, travestied form. The other day we spoke at length about the way in which divine Love is deformed in its manifestation here, it is the same thing.

How can money be reconquered for the Mother?

Ah! ...There is a hint here. Three things are interdependent (Sri Aurobindo says here): power, money and sex. I believe the three are interdependent and that all three have to be conquered to be sure of having any one—when you want to conquer one you must have the other two. Unless one has mastered these three things, desire for power, desire for money and desire for sex, one cannot truly possess any of them firmly and surely. What gives so great an importance to money in the world as it is today is not so much money itself, for apart from a few fools who heap up money and are happy because they can heap it up and count it, generally money is desired and acquired for the satisfactions it brings. And this is almost reciprocal: each of these three things not only has its own value in the world of desires, but leans upon the other two. I have related to you that vision, that big black serpent which kept watch over the riches of the world, terrestrial wealth—he demanded the mastery of the sex-impulse. Because, according to certain theories, the very need of power has its end in this satisfaction, and if one mastered that, if one abolished that from human consciousness, much of the need for power and desire for money would disappear automatically. Evidently, these are the three great obstacles in the terrestrial human life and, unless they are conquered, there is scarcely a chance for humanity to change.

Does an individual mastery over desire suffice or is a general, collective mastery necessary?

Ah! there we are.... Is it possible to attain a total personal transformation without there being at least a correspondence in the collectivity?... This does not seem possible to me. There is such an interdependence between the individual and the col-

lectivity that unless one does what the ascetics have preached, that is, escapes from the world, goes out of it completely, leaves it where it is and runs away selfishly leaving all the work to others, unless one does that.... And even so I have my doubts. Is it possible to accomplish a total transformation of one's being so long as the collectivity has not reached at least a certain degree of transformation? I don't think so. Human nature remains what it is—one can attain a great change of consciousness, that yes, one can purify one's consciousness, but the total conquest, the material transformation depends definitely to a large extent, on a certain degree of progress in the collectivity. Buddha said with reason that as long as you have in you a vibration of desire, this vibration will spread in the world and all those who are ready to receive it will receive it. In the same way, if you have in you the least receptivity to a vibration of desire, you will be open to all the vibrations of desire which circulate constantly in the world. And that is why he concluded: Get out of this illusion, withdraw entirely and you will be free. I find this relatively very selfish, but after all, that was the only way he foresaw. There is another: to identify oneself so well with the divine Power as to be able to act constantly and consciously upon all vibrations circulating through the world. Then the undesirable vibrations no longer have any effect upon you, but you have an effect upon them, that is, instead of an undesirable vibration entering into you without being perceived and doing its work there, it is perceived and immediately on its arrival you act upon it to transform it, and it goes back into the world transformed, to do its beneficent work and prepare others for the same realisation. This is exactly what Sri Aurobindo proposes to do and, more clearly, what he asks you to do, what he intends us to do:

Instead of running away, to bring into oneself the power which can conquer.

Note that things are arranged in such a way that if the tiniest atom of ambition remained and one wanted this Power for one's personal satisfaction, one could never have it, that Power would never come. Its deformed limitations, of the kind seen in the vital and physical world, those yes, one may have them, and there are many people who have them, but the true Power, the Power Sri Aurobindo calls "supramental", unless one is absolutely free from all egoism under all its forms, one will never be able to manifest. So there is no danger of its being misused. It will not manifest except through a being who has attained the perfection of a complete inner detachment. I have told you, this is what Sri Aurobindo expects us to do—you may tell me it is difficult, but I repeat that we are not here to do easy things, we are here to do difficult ones.

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1984)

August 8, 1940

P: The Viceroy has issued a declaration that the expansion of the Council can't be delayed any more. India will have the right to frame her own constitution as soon as possible after the war.

SRI AUROBINDO: Did he say that?

P: Yes, and he has invited Abul Kalam to see him.

SRI AUROBINDO: But how is the constitution to be framed? What procedure?

P: He doesn't say. It may not be again a Round Table Conference.

SRI AUROBINDO: Will the Indian leaders be able to come to an agreement? If the Congress stands for the Constituent Assembly, Jinnah won't consent.

S: If the Viceroy has conceded our right to frame our own constitution, it is quite reasonable.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, only people don't listen to reason nowadays.

S: And it is a greater step than Dominion Status.

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly.

S: And the expansion of the Council, that is also quite reasonable.

N: But one must know what part they would play.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so. But the government can't be expected to pass all authority to people who have no idea about war and no experience of it.

P: But what will be the procedure for the Constitution?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is better not to quarrel over that now. The Indians can themselves decide that afterwards and they ought to be able to do it if they can speak of National Government.

S: On the whole it is a very good advance unless there is some catch. One must read the text first.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so. It depends also on what power they give to the Council. The Viceroy ought to have seen C. R.¹ too. Perhaps he was not at Madras during the Viceroy's stay.

S: Yes, C. R. is the leader now.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, Gandhi is the leader. But he doesn't want to lead and the others refuse to follow him. (*laughter*)

P: Perhaps there may be a conference of Premiers in which C. R. will be present. Now only the Punjab and Bengal are left to decide. Sind also to some extent.

SRI AUROBINDO: Sind's stand is almost near to that of the Congress.

P: But the Princes may stand in the way. They ought to make a common cause.

SRI AUROBINDO: How can they when the Congress has intimated that they have no right to exist and that in a free India they may have no place? If the Congress had

¹ Rajagopalachariar.

kept its claims moderate, then by an inner pressure of circumstances they would have come round. You have read C. P. Ramaswamy's speech the other day? It is a very telling speech. He says—you ask us to depend on you, but you have already spoken about our extinction in the future constitution of India. How can we acquiesce in that extinction?

By the way, the Viceroy has banned only drills with any weapons and what they call para-military uniforms, *i.e.*, any that may have a military-uniform semblance. Apart from that, organisations can exist.

N: Somebody said to Charu Dutt—"You speak of the dominating influence of Sri Aurobindo over the sadhaks. How is it then that idiots living under his influence produce only third-rate works?"

SRI AUROBINDO: Has the "somebody" read Nishikanta's poems? If he calls that also third-rate, he must be an idiot himself.

N: Dutt was speaking—as in fact all, Dilip, etc.—highly of Jyoti's book. *Sandhāne* [In Quest]. According to Dutt she has taken a long stride from *Rakta Golāp* [Red Rose], her last book.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see!

N: Dutt says *Rakta Golāp* is an imitation of Tagore's poetic-prose novel *Chār Adhyāya* [Four Chapters]. Only the style is very good. That is true to some extent. She gave most of her attention to style and tried to make it poetic. And *Sandhāne* she wrote long ago. *Rakta Golāp* was the latest.

(*Sri Aurobindo amused to hear that the latest was inferior to the previous book*):

What does the idiot say about it?

N: He may not have read it.

SRI AUROBINDO: But can a novel be written in a poetic style?

N: Tagore's is not a novel but a novelette, one may say.

SRI AUROBINDO: One can write a romance in such a style.

P: Tagore is doing so many new things. They say he has written mystic poems too about death after his recent serious illness—what death is like, one's feelings about it and so on.

SRI AUROBINDO: Anybody can write that out of imagination, one needn't have any experience.

N: And everywhere he is talking of his approaching death.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has been dying for the last twenty years. When he came here, he spoke of it.

P: Even his stories are not very good.

N: Not true. He is considered one of the best story-writers.

P: I mean like Chatterjee.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but he is not a novelist.

N: No.

P: You have seen *Patrika's* review of Nishikanta's book? Where Tagore has praised his *chhanda* and *bhasha*, there people call it halty and Sanskritised.

SRI AUROBINDO: Stupid review!

Evening

S: It is in the Commonwealth.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, free and equal partnership in the Commonwealth.

N: It is virtually the same thing as said before, only with a war-board added. But nobody knows what its function would be.

SRI AUROBINDO: The British have more of diplomacy but less of the right spirit. A great deal depends on the way things are put. This statement is most uninspiring and unconvincing. And there is a snag too. If the Constitution is unacceptable to large and important sections, then the government can't agree. That means that if Jinnah and the Princes don't accept, there is no settlement.

S: Nehru says the Sevadal won't be dissolved. They will keep their organisation.

N: With *lath*?

S: Why *lathi*? It is non-violent.

SRI AUROBINDO: Or is the *lathi* for others to beat them with? (*laughter*)

P: Yes, they can offer their *lathi* to the opponent and ask to be thrashed.

S: That would be ideal non-violence.

SRI AUROBINDO: A hundred per cent!

P: Somaliland is now being attacked by the Italians.

SRI AUROBINDO: I thought they had already taken it.

N: The British are retiring after inflicting heavy losses.

SRI AUROBINDO: And without any loss to themselves! Bhasker has again put an exclamation sign. (*laughter*) They don't seem to have any force there at all.

P: Only camel corps.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't understand their war strategy. There is no head or tail to it.

P: They think if they win the war, they can take the place back.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but if Egypt is lost, their winning the war will be jeopardised. Egypt occupies an important position....

N: Shyama Prasad has given a one-month time-limit to the Bengal government.

SRI AUROBINDO: Inspired by Bose's success? But there won't be any Muslim to join him.

N: Tagore is made Oxford Doctor and got a Latin address.

SRI AUROBINDO: And he replied in Sanskrit. Gwayer could have spoken in Irish.

(*To be continued*)

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1984)

I AM closing the chapter of Sri Aurobindo's letters to me with these last three letters. I am adding them with a view to demonstrate how Sri Aurobindo used to write in detail even on trivial things in spite of his shortage of time. On the one hand he was busy with composing his great epic *Savitri*, while on the other he was writing these letters with such care and affection. Among these three letters, the first one needs special mention. The two ladies referred to in it were our relatives and had come to visit the Ashram for the first time, they were not residents. Sri Aurobindo has here given precise instructions even for trifling things like getting milk for them. He used to write many such letters to various sadhaks and sadhikas, from which we get glimpses of his personality as well as that of the Mother and catch hints of what they truly were.

Sri Aurobindo's Letters

(1) For today we told Dyuman to supply the milk for Nolina; but in future it is better to get it from Amrita direct from the Dairy. The simplest thing would be for one of Maya's servants to take the milk for both at 5 o'clock or thereabouts and leave Nolina's at her place on the way to Maya's. We are informing Amrita.

10.2.33

(2) This book, returned herewith, is not in my opinion suitable for the purpose. The author wanted to make it look like a translation of a romance in Sanskrit and he has therefore made the spirit and even partly the form of the language more Indian than English. It is not therefore useful for getting into the spirit of the English language. Indians have naturally in writing English a tendency to be too coloured, sometimes flowery, sometimes rhetorical and a book like this would increase the tendency. One ought to have in writing English a style which is at its base capable of going to the point, saying with a simple and energetic straightforwardness what one means to say so that one can add grace of language without disturbing his basis. Arnold is a very good model for this purpose. Emerson less, but his book will also do.

It is surely better to write your own thoughts. The exercise of writing in your words what another has said or written is a good exercise or test for accuracy, clear understanding of ideas, an observant intelligence; but your object is, I suppose, to be able to understand English and express *yourself* in good English.

16.5.32

Why do you walk about on your bad foot? Keep it at rest; bathe it in hot water with the salts Mother is sending you. You must keep it 20 minutes in the water. A full tablespoon of salt in a full basin of water, the whole part paining must be bathed twice a day. It remains hot each time for 15 to 20 minutes. 30.12.32

*

From my childhood I have been hearing that God is compassionate and is the Avatar of compassion. When I came to Pondicherry I had the direct perception of that by the gracious touch of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. During my Ashram life of over 50 years they have poured upon me numerous experiences which cannot be shared with all. But I shall reveal one experience and shall then close my casquet of reminiscences.

A few days after I had arrived here, I felt that I was no longer moved by the name of Krishna and the songs about him. Love and devotion, tears in the eyes, exhilarating states of the heart and mind were diminishing and in their place emotions were crystallising from the very depths around the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. While singing about them, I felt as if all inner doors were flung open. The entire inner being came out with a feeling which is beyond description. The feeling I used to have when singing the padavalis on Krishna were now absent, and the change brought about an inner conflict for some time. I thought: "They are all divine; only different in form and name. Why then regarding one I should have feelings and not regarding another? Why should they diminish?" This tormented me. Then I had a splendid experience which resolved all my doubts. I need not explain the experience; I need only mention that I had the vision of Sri Krishna. Wonderful, ineffable was that experience. I saw before me his image full of a dazzling blue light, and my whole being with tears flowing fell prostrate at his feet and went on repeating "My Lord, my God!" In that utterance I felt such "oneness" with him that I was plunged into a marvellous ananda which took the form of this exclamation, "Oh! how intimate, how intimate! so intimate that in the whole world there could be none so much my own!" Nothing more can one utter about that feeling of oneness and "ownness". Overwhelming me with this feeling he melted away with these benedictions: "Why do you worry so much? I am united with Sri Aurobindo." I wrote all this to Sri Aurobindo and asked, "How shall I, a poor person, take this experience?" He answered: "Who else can unite with me except Krishna?"

Om Namo Bhagavate
Sri Aurobindo Sharanam Mama

(Concluded)

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1984)

The Mother's Message

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



(34)

ON 1st May 1957 the Mother sent another kind of Egyptian crown which had two magnificent wings, one on either side of a bird. The crown had been embroidered artistically by Vasudha.

The Mother asked me to paint one side only.

I first drew it, but did not start painting. Meanwhile I painted the flower *Michelia*—Supramentalized Psychological Perfection—“A psychological perfection aspiring to be divinised.”

Unfortunately the flower put me in an awkward position while I was painting it. It started opening and I lost the previous composition. However, I finished the picture and showed it to the Mother in the evening at the playground. I told her what had happened during the painting. She laughed and told me a true story about a painter:

“Years ago one of the greatest French artists painted a portrait of a king who was riding a galloping horse. Now the artist wanted to show foam on the mouth of the horse. Somehow he could not manage it and he became very angry and threw his brushes at the painting. But the result was marvellous. He got just what he had wanted!”

She added:

“Nevertheless, I like your painting of the flower because I feel the vibrations when I see it.”

The Mother has given a striking description of the flower *Michelia* in *Flowers and Their Messages*, p. 167:

“This flower has twelve petals in three rows of four. We call it ‘Supramentalized Psychological Perfection.’ I had never noticed that it had three rows: a small row, another a little bigger, and a third bigger still. They are in gradations of four: four petals, four petals, four petals. Well, if one wants to see exactly in the forms of Nature a symbolic expression, one can see a centre which is the supreme Truth, and a triple manifestation (because four indicates manifestation) in three superimposed worlds: the outermost (these are the largest petals, the best formed), that is the physical world, then a vital world and a mental world and then at the centre, the supramental Truth.”

*

I painted the Egyptian crown. The Mother saw it and said enthusiastically:

“Oh! it is good! I have already planned how to arrange the paintings in the exhibition. It is a happy progress, whatever people may say or think. It is a miraculous progress.”

I answered: "But, Mother, without your help is it possible for me to draw even a line and go any further towards my goal?"

She smiled and fondled my dark brown hair and asked:

"Child, can you draw a face with the crown which you have painted?"

I replied: "Yes, Mother, I will try."

She made several sketches of a face with the crown just to show me how it could be done. Then suddenly she looked at me and said:

"Ah! but you know that I have features like an Egyptian!"

I gladly caught a hint!

I found one of the photographs of the Mother in the Japanese dress—*Kimono*—and sketched her face. Now how could I draw the crown on her head? The crown was made out of cloth and it would not stay on the table. So I put it on a round globe-like table-lamp and managed to finish the drawing.

The Mother saw my sketch. Amusement quivered in her voice as she asked me:

"Child, from which photograph have you done the sketch?"

I showed her the photograph. She exclaimed:

"Well, eyes, lips and nose are not correct. Do you mind if I alter the drawing?"

I replied: "Not at all, Mother." Then she opened a painted glass-box, which my younger sister—Usha—had sent her, from East Africa, and took out her hand-mirror and gazed at her reflection in it. It was a thrilling sight to watch the Mother do her own portrait with so much concentration and serenity. Time and again her lips were touched by a sweet smile.

After completing it, and handing the sheet of paper to me, she spoke:

"Ah! voilà! The Supreme Mother herself came and showed her face. In this picture, my child, dwells my soul, and I give it to you. Indeed, you are a very lucky girl."

I was so much moved that I could not utter a word. She took my face between her hands and looked at me intently. There was a warm deep glow in her eyes with an exceptional charm I had never seen before. Then she drew me closer and pressed my head against her heart. I felt immense relief.

Her mysterious face is yet very vivid in the recess of my heart, and these verses from *Savitri* spring into my mind:

A Mother Might brooded upon the world;
 A Consciousness revealed its marvellous front
 Transcending all that is, denying none:
 Imperishable above our fallen heads
 He felt a rapturous and unstumbling Force.
 The undying Truth appeared, the enduring Power
 Of all that here is made and then destroyed,
 The Mother of all godheads and all strengths
 Who, mediatrix, binds earth to the Supreme.
 The Enigma ceased that rules our nature's night,
 The covering Nescience was unmasked and slain;
 Its mind of error was stripped off from things
 And the dull moods of its perverting will.
 Illumined by her all-seeing identity
 Knowledge and Ignorance could strive no more;
 No longer could the titan Opposites,
 Antagonist poles of the world's artifice,
 Impose the illusion of their twofold screen
 Throwing their figures between us and her.
 The Wisdom was near, disguised by its own works,
 Of which the darkened universe is the robe.
 No more existence seemed an aimless fall,
 Extinction was no more the sole release.
 The hidden Word was found, the long-sought clue,
 Revealed was the meaning of our spirit's birth,
 Condemned to an imperfect body and mind,
 In the inconscience of material things
 And the indignity of mortal life.
 A Heart was felt in the space wide and bare,
 A burning Love from white spiritual founts
 Annulled the sorrow of the ignorant depths;
 Suffering was lost in her immortal smile.

The Mother's sketch was photographed. She asked me to hang the picture in my Meditation Room when my apartment at Huta-House would be ready. One copy was taken straight away from the photographer by an American lady—Eleanor Montgomery—without my knowledge. Another was given to Laljibhai with the Mother's permission.

*

On Monday—6th May—I received a drawing of a bag done by the Mother. Underneath it she had written:

“To be painted hanging on a white background with the red handkerchief coming out as in the sketch.”

Somehow I managed to hang the bag and did the drawing for the Mother’s approval. The following day I completed the painting. She saw it and remarked:

“It is excellent.”

I also showed her some new sketch-books and pencils. To my surprise she took a pencil and one of my sketch-books and said:

“Take off your glasses, I want to draw your portrait—the profile only.”

I sat the way she wanted. She did my sketch with so much zeal and love. It took her less than half an hour to finish it. While looking at the drawing, she said:

“This is your soul. When you wish to find your soul, just concentrate on the picture and you will find it.”

Unhappily, I never concentrated on the portrait owing to my incessant struggle and sorrow. I could not possibly believe the Mother’s assuring words.

Indeed what Sri Aurobindo has written in *Savitri* is true:

“Our souls accept what our blind thoughts refuse.”

I well recall the scene. While the Mother was wrapping up the picture, she kept looking at it over and over again as if she had fallen in love with the soul she had caught in it. It is true that she had caught the soul there. I wish I could realise in my surface being this innocent, pure and true self that peeps out from the picture!

Beautiful are Sri Aurobindo’s words:

“He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite.”

I should like to quote these lines from Sri Aurobindo Cent. Ed., Vol. 17, p. 130:

“My soul is the captive of God, taken by Him in battle; it still remembers the war, though so far from it, with delight and alarm and wonder.”

I cannot restrain excerpting this passage from Sri Aurobindo. It has appeared in Cent. Ed., Vol. 21, p. 144:

“The soul goes to the Mother-Soul in all its desires and troubles, and the Divine Mother wishes that it should be so, so that she may pour out her heart of love. It turns to her too because of the self-existent nature of this love and because that points us to the home towards which we turn from our wanderings in the world and to the bosom in which we find our rest....”

*

I received from the Mother a Japanese low cushioned stool. The edge of the cushion was embroidered with pearls. The Japanese use the stool as an arm-supporter when they sit on the floor. The Mother had brought it from Japan. She placed a coloured scarf on it. Along with all these came her drawing of them. I had to paint these objects.

I made a sketch of the stool and the scarf. The Mother found the composition a bit small, but I did not dare to redo it, lest I should ruin the arrangement. I had no confidence and that was my weak point.

The Mother liked the painting but was yet not satisfied with the proportions of the stool. I left the picture as it was.

Next I painted a Chinese bowl sent by the Mother. She found the painting interesting.

On 12th May, an old Dutch vase came from the Mother. I first drew it. She approved my sketch. But I could not do the painting, because for some time I had been in a funny whimsical mood, in which, instead of painting, I sent the objects back to the Mother. She, however, would not give in. She always sent the same things back and I painted them all at the end.

I completed the painting of the Dutch vase. The Mother said after seeing it:

“It is nice. Without telling you, I wanted you to paint it on a white background, and you have done so.”

Further she said:

“You cannot possibly learn painting merely by words, from books or from teachers. You should develop the inner consciousness and vision and then you can express the splendour of inner beauties.

“You must bring something new from within and with the help of the true consciousness execute the new things. Nevertheless, it needs constant practice, patience and persistence.

“For example, take an object. In different ways and styles, by giving different strokes, you can express it.

“Here there is no value in an object as such; the important thing is how you paint it.

“Now, take a carved stone. You should apply different colours as required for the painting by giving different strokes with a little thick brush and, with some more colour on the brush, bring out the shape. Then you can give shades with the same brush.

“But there you must remember that the strokes of the brush must be accurate, there must not be any break in them.

“You can also give the shape—round, oval, straight and so on.

“Naturally, you should use different brushes of various sizes when you do detailed and fine work.

“When the consciousness becomes more expressive, active and luminous, the hands too become full of consciousness. Then without any doubt, you can express the wonders of the inner truth and vision.

“But, of course, you must have this capacity to express the marvellous inner things.”

Sri Aurobindo has written about true art:

“Art is not only technique or form of Beauty, not only the discovery or the expression of Beauty—it is a self-expression of consciousness under the conditions of aesthetic vision and a perfect execution.”

(To be continued)

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A FRAGMENT OF A POETIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY

We are publishing as a separate piece what formed part of a book as "A Personal Preface" to the nearly hundred poems making up the collection entitled The Adventure of the Apocalypse written from May 9 to August 9 in 1948. A large number of people have not read this introductory fragment of a poetic autobiography because they have shied away from the book simply owing to its being a series of verses. Poetry is to most people an exercise in unrealistic phraseology celebrating things too far from concrete concerns. They seldom suspect that momentous life-experiences could be behind it. What we are reproducing recounts the living background to the poems bearing the somewhat forbidding title we have mentioned. Perhaps it may induce some readers to look at the verse itself. But even if nobody is led there the story of the experience undergone before the poems took birth may prove of interest and value to the psychologist in general and to the student of spiritual states in particular and all the more to one who happens to be, like the author, a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

BETWEEN the heart-strain known as myocardial defect and the heart-strain, the *cri du cœur*, that is poetry, no connection has been noted by either doctor or critic. But the story of the poems here collected has its beginning in a collapse due to over-tension of the poet's heart-muscle.

I was rushing about a good deal in order to manage certain financial ventures undertaken to meet demands with which pure literature is proverbially incapable of coping. On top of this were months of intensive research in the philosophical implications of modern physics. Making a close and wide study of relativity theory and quantum theory and trying to find what lay at the back of so many and often such conflicting interpretations was quite a tax on the mind, especially as even mathematical technicalities had to be attacked. The result of the physical exertion and this scientific exploration was a general tired feeling. Another result was the receding of whatever poetic faculty I had into the background.

Then came the sudden collapse—on the 8th of May, 1948. I was coming home after a rather strenuous morning. There was some fatigue, but nothing more unusual than was the order every day. However, when I reached home at nearly 3 p.m. and was climbing the hillock on which our house is perched, I found myself breathing very hard and suffering from a drained-out sensation in the middle of the chest. I had to make two or three halts. With difficulty I reached the gate and slowly, step after determined step, I got up to the first floor.

I was in no state either to eat or to undress. With my habitual rashness I tried to do both. But I seemed to drip ice from my face and be forcibly bent and broken. So there was nothing else I could do except creep into bed and lie flat. The feeling of a hollow in my chest was growing deeper and deeper. So sucked in and dragged

down I felt that I thought I would soon die. Various medicines were given me to keep me up. Yet the terrible sinking increased. It struck me that the only decisive help could be drawn by inwardly appealing to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in whose Ashram at Pondicherry I had spent eight years and whose disciple I still was. With all my power of faith and aspiration I kept outstretching invisible hands to them, calling and calling. I pulled at the saving and healing light that is their Yogic consciousness and when I thought a blue sheen and a gold glow enveloped my heart I sensed a subtle supporting strength gradually taking outward effect.

A doctor had been summoned. By the time he came I had emerged to a considerable extent from the vacuity in the heart-region. He gave me an injection and advised complete rest, saying my heart had been strained. I lay for a couple of hours, safe now but still weary with the terrible passage. As the evening wore on I found my mind getting extraordinarily quiet and clear, until I seemed to look into a new dimension of things. Suddenly the whole universe appeared to be a great living being, a wonderful substance of Spirit, and every piece of matter tingled with a divine presence drawing my worship; the very chairs and tables of my room were like gods and goddesses to whom I could have knelt down. I had an intense impulse to read that canto of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, which is named *The World-Soul*. It is a thrilled cry of mystical insight bringing up image on strange yet apt image of some hidden Heart of Hearts which in its many-toned unity carries all experience transfigured into bliss. For the first time the entire canto came to me glowing with an absolute perfection. Not even a word anywhere was to my mind human and flawed. This impression extended then to the whole of *Savitri* and I could not help worshipping the Yogic power that was embodied in it.

Night came, but I was wide-awake. I closed my eyes and in a short while could see right through their lids. I saw the whole room in a thin dark haze. I marked my wife's posture in the next bed and opened my eyes to verify the impression. The verification was complete. After a time a flood of poetry raced through my mind. Line after line, charged with spontaneous vision and symbol, ran before my shut eyes. I had the sense that I was composing and yet it would be equally true to say I was reading off the lines as they themselves appeared. The two processes were aspects of the same phenomenon. Composition was being rapidly done by a "me" which was more than myself; and the lines, as far as the habitual "I" was concerned, were like living creatures acting on their own. Whenever there was a slight pause in their appearance I applied a little pressure of attention, as it were, and the vivid phrases glimmered out. This went on and on. It may sound presumptuous but I felt as if a new canto of *Savitri* were being written. I have never in my life had such a flow of inspiration sustained through such a length of time. As the doctor had advised as much sleep as possible, I begged the sweet immortal presences, that were seeming to be shaped into words, to withdraw for a while, though never to be lost. There was not the slightest heed taken of my appeal.

More and more lines streamed past as I lay in that state of in-drawnness. But

it was difficult to remember them. I had to focus my mind on them to be able to retain a few and set them down. Every one or two minutes I would emerge out of the semi-trance and scribble verses on the back and cover and other blank pages of the copy of *Savitri* which, together with a pencil to mark passages in it, I had near me in bed. I was writing in total darkness and with extreme rapidity. There was no time to halt and make sure about anything; I had to hurry because the moment I opened my eyes the lines started slipping away and because to get new lines I must return to my semi-trance which might not come if I waited awake too long. This continued up to four o'clock in the morning. Then I dozed off.

I got up again quite early without any sense of fatigue. Throughout the day there was no sleepy feeling. Two nights back I had kept awake similarly; but there had been no poetic inspiration. I had, however, been making inward contact again and again with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and hearing what I hear in my best and calmest moods, a low universal croon, a far-away rhythm with a deep monotone overlaid with small variations: even the variations repeat one and the same softly trembling theme: some ultimate Mother Spirit seems to be gently singing to her child the cosmos.... The next morning I had felt absolutely fresh, just as I was now.

Almost the first thing I did on waking now was to go through the night's *scrawl*. It was in a jumble: several lines had been written over one another. Even those that stood legible were a series of snatches caught out of the night's flowing song. I willed them to cohere, and waited. Out of the many different strains one short *ensemble* was the first to result; whatever gaps had been there were filled by means of a conscious entering into the mood of the existing lines to create a continuation. This conscious effort must have pulled at the inner being which had come into contact with the afflatus at night. For, soon two new poems quite apart from what had been scribbled took shape. They were in a different tempo, so to speak—more lyrical—but still with what appeared to me a living touch on the occult. The next day, some of the remaining lines from the semi-trance pieced together. And the rest became connected soon after. All of them (as also many written later) have a vein of surrealism though without, I hope, the capricious and the chaotic which usually mark surrealism in Europe and which strike one as rather the froth of the dream-consciousness than its true supra-physical profundity, its genuine plumbing of mysterious universes behind the one we know in ordinary waking moments.

I was now in a hypersensitive condition. Molière's Monsieur Jourdain was surprised to find he had talked prose all his life: I was discovering that, when I talked prose, there came suddenly in the midst of commonplace language bright poetic phrases that led me away from the conversation along strange trails of image and rhythm. Or, out of the talk of others, some casual word would bring me vivid suggestions and set me off to write a poem. And at the oddest moments poetry would rush in: while being sponged, for instance, I would be all lit up with ideas

that ran into rhythmic expression. Poems would start also from words or phrases in the books I read. My reading was mainly of *Savitri* and it tended to keep my faculties at concert-pitch. A dip now and then into the first canto of *The Ring and the Book* by Browning struck, too, on some creative hints, but I could not abide Browning for long: he had a vigorously found felicity, yet not much lift. That extremely poetic and mystically pregnant novel by Elizabeth Myers, *A Well Full of Leaves*, was the only other reading-matter at my bedside. I tried on occasion to look at less congenial stuff, but so strong a "No" swept out from within my chest that I got most uncomfortable and had soon to drop it.

Day after day brought more and more poetry. I was writing with a kind of automatic energy. It was as if I were a mere gate through which poems strode out. Occasionally I had to pull them forth and also correct on afterthought, but there was little now of the piecemeal writing and the long and careful chiselling to which I had been accustomed in the old days of poetic composition. I seemed to be plastic in the hands of the inner being. As the heart specialist called by my doctor had found my electro-cardiogram clearly indicative of muscular strain, I had been ordered to be in bed for at least eight weeks—until the "muffled first sound" (as medical jargon has it) should become normal. I had been asked to avoid even lifting my head up. I did not take this regime seriously and spent hours resting in a slanted position. I felt that if I could open myself to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother they would effect a cure much sooner than the doctor expected. I kept concentrating more and more intensely on them, feeling that a grip had broken loose in my chest, with no longer a dreadful hollow as in the experience on May 8, but a sweet warm restful wideness that held deeper and deeper their presence. The poetic inspiration and their presence were really one and the same thing—and after each poem had been written I could not help inwardly divesting myself of its authorship and offering it into their hands. This was like putting away from me the poetic power, but actually with each gesture of offering I found myself richer—a larger room grew in me for both spiritual and poetic experience.

I knew a happiness such as I had never known. The weeks I spent in bed, regularly taking injections and medicines, floated in a sea of bliss and light. I would not for anything have missed the heart-strain which brought so much inward nourishment and strength and so much poetic flowering. The doctor told me I would have to go easy for a long time and avoid doing a lot of things I used to. Nothing dampened my spirits. I was getting the best nursing imaginable from my wife, so even the physical routine of being in bed was not irksome. I drank my bed-riddenness like pure nectar, though never, of course, encouraging the suggestion of illness. I was eager to get well soon; but, while I lay unwell, there was no fretting—on the contrary, a happy realisation of how through the worst the best could come and how the Divine could utilise everything for a purpose beyond our calculation.

The poetic impulse kept me in an excitement which no doctor would have sanctioned—if he had seen what was happening. So vivid were the symbols that

made their impact on my consciousness that my whole body appeared to live with them; almost automatically I would move my hands to feel the visions that dawned on me; my limbs would tend to act out a response to what they signified; it was as if the scenes and figures had been physically in my room and as they grew and found expression they kindled my eyes with wonder and drew exclamations from my lips. Often the words in which they got uttered would be found by me with forceful physical gestures. And several of the rhythms came plunging from some remote wideness and thundering out with a bursting sensation in my chest: the opening passage of the poem entitled *The Two Crosses* is a typical example. The heart would beat faster and I would be thrilled through and through and left somewhat exhausted. But behind all the excitement there was a great peace and every act of exertion brought in its wake an intense depth of contact with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. What I did and experienced might not have been according to medical rules, yet it helped me immensely and kept me so cheerful that the doctor said he simply loved to visit me and have a chat with me and listen to my comments and jokes. The heart was improving—and every phase of its history I communicated by letter to the Mother. In fact I was writing to her every day and sending poem after poem. I was sure I was on the right lines in doing what I did and in believing that she would look after me and anyhow put me again on my feet. Her reply to one of my letters set the seal on my own conviction. She wrote: "My dear child, I quite agree with you that there is a power other and much more powerful than that of the doctors and the medicines and I am glad to see that you put your trust in it. Surely it will lead you throughout all difficulties and in spite of all catastrophic warnings. Keep your faith intact and all will be all right."

After eight weeks I was allowed to toddle about a little. The poetry did not cease when I left bed. It grew, however, a bit less abundant and towards the close of the third month there was marked diminution and I was afraid that soon the flow might stop. Stop it did—almost exactly at the termination of the third month. But it left me with a certain confidence I had always lacked even when during my stay in the Ashram I had been writing poetry pretty often. I used to wonder whether I would ever be able to write a long poem. The present collection does not contain any really long poem, but a number of pieces have a distinct tendency to length, several took birth on one and the same day and I was conscious of an irresistible drive in nearly everything I wrote: all this has made me feel as though a whole sea of unuttered song were waiting somewhere in the deep background of the being and might some day flow out if I opened myself sufficiently to the influence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Till then, the present collection must stand as my most fluent and prolific art-experience of what a poem of mine calls the adventure of the apocalypse. I hope the three months' mass it forms, with its many moods simple or complex and its various turns of sight and speech, gives at least some promise that, should the prayed-for outburst come, its quality would not lag too far behind its quantity.

K. D. SETHNA

VASUDHA—“THE COMPASSIONATE EARTH”

(Vasudha, whose name signifies what the title of this reminiscence calls her, expired on December 7, 1983.)

THE Mother's birthday card of 1963 read: "To Vasudha whose precious help prevents my feet from being hurt by the stones on the way."

It was not only Vasudha's physical help that removed the stones. It was her profound sensibility and her compassion for all those who came for the Mother. She was willing and eager to help them reach her. Champaklal was also like that. I never heard Vasudha voice the opinion that anybody should be debarred from the Mother's room for whatever reason. This generosity in Vasudha made it possible for the Mother to give without constraint, to give herself and even of her things. When the Mother wanted to make a present to a disciple or a devotee Vasudha was at hand to help her select something nice. She seemed devoid of jealousy and pettiness. Perhaps no human being is born without flaws, and one knows from Vasudha's letters to the Mother that she had her struggles when young. But I can only record that I never witnessed meanness in Vasudha, only nobility and generosity.

I do not want to overlook the practical side of Vasudha's service to the Mother. She was indefatigable and the Mother made use of her service and skill. Here is a letter from the Mother to her written in 1949 which shows how the Mother depended on her help: "Would you bring me a waistcoat to the playground at about 6 o'clock in the evening? It is really too hot to put it on before I leave the house and without it at sunset I would feel cold. I am asking you to bring it instead of taking it myself in the car, because I need you to pin the veil properly on it...."

In Vasudha skill and service were combined and the Mother paid tribute to both in her birthday card of the same year:

To Vasudha, faithful companion
skilled in service.

Now I would like to say something of my own experience with Vasudha. When I started coming to the Mother every day it was a very intoxicating experience. The Mother moreover showered so much love on me that I became unaware of other people. I did small things for her, small services which were part of Vasudha's job like placing the cushion under her feet when she came in after her bath or taking the glass out of her hand when she had finished drinking. I had seen Vasudha doing it and knowing that these things had to be done I went ahead. Anybody else might have been offended but Vasudha with a big smile always pointed out that it was the Little Fairy, as the Mother called me, who had done the service. So inside the Mother's room which always seemed to me suspended

halfway between heaven and earth, Vasudha, instead of vying with me for service, fostered harmony. There was something very simple and warm about her sweetness and nothing soppy or sugary about it. She was always direct and straightforward and quite capable of speaking out without fear of anybody, but usually this was in defence of somebody who had been wronged. With all her service for the Divine, Vasudha never lost her compassion for people. She was not at all a person who trampled on humans or forgot about them to get to the Divine. On the contrary, she had room in her heart for many people. I remember seeing her, on her coming down from the Mother's room one afternoon, hugging Amma (Meenakshi), her friend, with warmth and love and, nestling against her shoulders, she said: "What a lovely mummy I have." I still remember the smile of happiness on Amma's serene features. How many people Vasudha enriched with her own riches.

Vasudha was always ready to teach everybody and anybody what she knew. I remember watching her give Sanskrit classes in the dispensary after the Mother had left the body; but what people went to her for mostly was to learn embroidery and she taught many Ashram girls to make beautiful things, specially things that they wanted to offer the Mother on their birthdays. It was not only Ashram girls she taught. She would teach anybody. She would tell the servants whose children did not go to school to bring them so that they might learn some thing useful with her.

One of the Ashram girls remembers the words with which Vasudha greeted her when she first came to learn embroidery. Her mother worked in Vasudha's Department and when she came Vasudha said: "I have been waiting for you." They became fast friends and, when Bharati's mother had to leave the Ashram for health reasons and voiced her anxiety about her daughter, Vasudha told her not to worry for she herself would adopt her as her own daughter. And so it was and Bharati was one of the two people who cared for Vasudha's body in her sickness right to the end. The other girl was Shanta.

Seldom have I seen anybody nursed with so much love and constancy as Vasudha was by her two younger friends but if there is any such thing as deserts nobody deserved it more than Vasudha who had given her life to serving the Mother and who from 1958 started tending to the Mother's person. When the Mother needed physical help she stayed with her day and night for years on end.

There is one more quality of Vasudha's that I should like to mention. Perhaps it is part of her compassionate nature of which I spoke at the beginning. It happens to be one which I value highly and which was something very necessary in the Mother's room: her discretion and respect for the confidences made to the Mother by the disciples. Everybody poured out their hearts and their most private selves to the Mother in their letters and revealed things they would never have revealed to anybody else and would not have wanted anybody else to know. I read many such letters to the Mother myself and it was painful to find that on occasion these confessions had been overheard, commented on, made the rounds and

were being made fun of. Vasudha, though she was the repository of a great many secrets, never made use of what she had heard in the Mother's room. She had too much understanding of humanity for that.

There are many photos of Vasudha with the Mother and in nearly all of them she is smiling radiantly so that it is not difficult to understand why the Mother from the start called her "Mon Petit Sourire", ("My Little Smile") but perhaps my favourite photo of her with the Mother is the one of July 6th 1969 in which she is not smiling. She is helping the Mother to drape a scarf around her shoulders. She is in concentration and her mouth is set rather tight from the effort of her position: you can see as I saw so many times that her whole will is bent on making things easy for the Mother and that she is, while serving, forgetful of herself.

I have that photo before me now as I write and I turn over the pages and see the Mother's letters which begin "My little smile", "My dear little smile", "My little Eternal Smile" and one where the Mother was very cross, with just "Vasudha", because Vasudha had washed the floor by pouring water over it, against the Mother's orders.

And what of Vasudha's letters? For most of her years she went to the Mother daily. Many of the letters of the early years go like this: "My dear Maman, today I worked on your sari for ten hours. I shall bring you something else also. What is it, Maman? Guess." They are simple childish letters and tell us that most days Vasudha worked at least ten hours and often more to make the works of art that were the Mother's saris and blouses and hangings that can still be seen in her collection. There are other letters telling of the struggles which she had with herself and which any sincere sadhak must endure to win through to peace and to the Eternal Smile. But Vasudha did win through and even in her great suffering she was radiant—and serene inside as was evident from her face and expression. How lovely her face was.

During the last two years she spent many months on her back unable to move. People often asked her whether she wouldn't like a television set in her room or a radio but she had no need of such things; she said that she was all right inside. "Don't you get bored?" people would ask her and she would say, no she never got bored. I was in her room one night when friends brought some recorded Sanskrit chanting. She gave it her entire attention and appreciated it but she looked no different than when she was alone with Amma and one of her two attendants. She appeared to me to have reached a high degree of equanimity.

She has told us the secret of this which was revealed to her in a dream and though I have tried to avoid repeating too much what Vasudha said in her talks to the students of the Centre of Education and what has appeared in *Mother India*. Vasudha's dream about the roses is so central to her life and is so beautiful that it bears repetition. Here it is in her own words:

"It was a very short dream. I was then very small. I had just had my first Darshan of Sri Aurobindo. A few days later, I had a dream:

"I was standing in the Guest House in the upstairs verandah, leaning against a window. I was standing there with four country roses (meaning 'surrender') on a single stalk in my hand. The door of the room in front of me opened and I saw Sri Aurobindo standing in the doorway. He called me just by a gesture, without any word. I thought within me that he wanted to smell the roses, and that after smelling them he would give them back to me. So I went near him and stretched out my hand. He just took the bunch from my hand and disappeared inside the room. The dream ended there.

"But when I woke up I felt so delightfully happy, I felt I had really seen Sri Aurobindo! The feeling was even more intense and real than the one I had had on first seeing him physically on the Darshan day. My feeling after the dream was quite different. Constantly I kept feeling 'I have seen Sri Aurobindo, I have seen Sri Aurobindo....' This went on within me like a Mantra. It lasted for full three days. The dream was a very short one, but its effects have been felt throughout my life."

It was only after twenty-five years that the meaning of this dream became clear to Vasudha:

"I saw and felt that everything I did or everything that I could do in sadhana was actually done by my Master, Sri Aurobindo. The four roses mean the surrender of the whole being (mental, vital, physical and psychic) which is not so easy to make by one's own effort. By my own effort I could never do it. So Sri Aurobindo himself, in his deep compassion, asked them of me, and took them. I have been really fortunate and am so grateful to him that he did it for me! It shows how much he loves us and does for each one of us everything if we are sincere and willing to do sadhana. In everything that happens in my life—in all that has happened so far—I see nothing but his grace, his great compassion."

There is something in me that says very strongly that there is nothing more to be said after that dream. It is Vasudha's life. One who has chosen the Divine has been chosen by the Divine.

But there is something else almost equally strong which says that that is a general truth, and this writing is about Vasudha in particular. The dream came to her just after her arrival when she was still a child. Sri Aurobindo took the roses and at the same time as the dream Vasudha's life with the Mother began to unfold. She had come on what appeared to be a misunderstanding but which was in fact her destiny. The little girl who had accompanied her brother on a visit never returned home. Again Vasudha's words:

"It so happened that after a few days of my coming here I saw [the Mother] wearing a velvet band with jari-work on it. It was made out of a jari topi—such as worn in North India—embroidered with gold and silver threads. The Ashramites called the band a 'crown'. Now, I had learnt that kind of work in my school and said to the Mother in Gujarati when I went to her for soup, 'I know this kind of work.' She could not understand what I was saying and she called Champaklal who was

in the next room, 'Champaklal, Champaklal', and he came running. Mother said, 'What is she saying?' I told him what I had said and he repeated it to her in English. Then Mother smiled and kept quiet.

"The next day Datta called me. When I went to her, what do you think she gave me? Not the work I had said I could do, but an old piece of Bengali bamboo mat. You know the kind of fine mat which is very cool for people to lie on in summer. Datta gave me this piece and said that Mother wanted me to make some vase-mats—mats to put under vases—of different sizes and shapes. I had never done this kind of work before. I said, 'All right', as I never said 'No' for any work. But, to make vase-mats, one requires materials—a piece of cloth and some fancy threads for binding the edges. Datta did not give me anything—nor did I ask for anything, because I couldn't talk in English! I brought the old piece home; I had a pair of scissors, so I started cutting all sorts of geometrical shapes—round, square, triangular, hexagonal, octagonal."

Vasudha got her brother to take her to the bazar. She bought ink material and blue thread. When she had applied the piping she took the work to Datta who had come to India with the Mother as her companion. Vasudha was then given the Mother's blouses to sew and gradually her work increased. One day the Mother came to the house where Vasudha stayed, the present Embroidery Department, and asked her whether she would embroider a sari for her. Vasudha replied, "Oh yes!" and the Mother imitated her "Oh yes!"

Thus it was that in 1929 Vasudha started embroidering the first sari for the Mother. The design was Amal's. It was a white lotus on a white background and the Mother wore it for her birthday the following year.

The work increased and Vasudha began washing, ironing and mending the Mother's clothes. And always the embroidery. You could say that Vasudha's surrender was made through her stitches at first. There may have been moments of difficulty and dryness but Vasudha had given Sri Aurobindo her four surrender roses and she never took them back. I won't speak here about all the lovely moments spent with Vasudha or the memories, for *Mother India* has no room for a full-length book but I do want to record that after the Mother's body had been placed inside the Samadhi with Sri Aurobindo's, I left the Ashram with the intention of going home but I was in a semi-trance and my steps took me left out of the gate instead of right, towards my home. I was, as we all were on that day, very much absorbed in the Mother. I found myself in front of Vasudha's door. Without thinking I went in. When I saw Vasudha I knew the Mother had guided me there. We embraced wordlessly and in that moment I knew what Vasudha meant to me and understood all her goodness as never before. It was a revelation of something joyful and beautiful in my life which I had somehow taken for granted and I knew we would never be separated. In November of 1982 both Nata and I dreamt of Vasudha and we wrote our dreams down for her. Vasudha wrote back:

"Il y a quelques jours que j'ai rêvé, moi aussi, de vous trois.* Nous étions tous à quelque distance dans une rue, dans un lieu tout à fait étranger que je ne connais pas.... En tout cas vous êtes tous les trois dans mes pensées et je vous aime beaucoup. Ma douce petite fée de Douce Mère,

Votre Sourire éternel d'autrefois."

("A few days back I too dreamt of the three* of you. We were in a distant and altogether unknown place. In any case you are all three in my thoughts and I love you very much. My sweet Mother's sweet little fairy,

Your Eternal Smile of bygone days.")

Not only of bygone days—for all those who knew Vasudha she is the Mother's Eternal Smile.

MAGGI LIDCHI

* The third is Ishita who loved Vasudha very much. One of her greatest treasures is a silk hand-painted fan that Vasudha gave.

THE GAME GOES ON

So the game went on night after night, week after week, month after month. I would fill up trays with my small gold and silver trinkets and offer valuables in ivory and rare curios which I wished to offer to the Mother. I would put all these in the Mother's car after Her distribution of sweets or groundnuts when people dispersed and the road was empty. The car was always parked just opposite our house. By this time I had enough of heaven—offering things to Her and getting Her appreciation; I wanted Her to keep quiet. I felt like imitating Donne and saying 'For God's sake speak no word but let me give.' The Mother sensed my feeling and said very little but obviously She knew where the trays came from. In the mornings She smiled knowingly or made an expressive face or pinched my cheek or just said "Oh, yes, the things on the trays were good." Once I sent Her a dress brought to me from Hungary by an uncle of mine. She commented: "It is very good, a genuine Magyar national dress." It was really very beautiful with exquisite embroidery in silk and beads.

For a private person my collection was considerable. Some objects I had collected myself, some were heirlooms. Sanat was very helpful. Once he actually took part of my collection to a dealer in New Delhi and asked for an assessment of its prices. I had an ivory casket which he said would cost me Rs. 10,000 if I were to buy a new one. Naturally I wanted to give it to the Mother. But it was too expensive a thing to put on the tray, so one night I took it to Her myself. The Mother was a connoisseur of art-objects as we all could guess. Her collection was vast. She took keen interest in the casket, looked at every detail and finally commented: "It is of the finest ivory and the work is excellent." She put it in one of the almirahs just in front of the Darshan room. One can still see it, for I saw it there the last time I went upstairs. "What have you got there?" She asked, looking at my hands. "Just the box I brought the casket in." "Let me see," She said and surveyed the box, one might say with equal interest as the casket itself. For I had covered the card-board box with satin and ribbons and silver cords. "You have done that yourself?" She inquired and gave me a wonderful smile when I said yes. She remembered, it seemed, how awkward I had once been with thread and needle, and She noted how much I had improved to be able to make such a beautiful box all by myself. That was just like the Mother. Progressing under Her supervision was no difficulty at all, for She knew how to encourage people and appreciate one's sincere work. She took the box from me.

One day my eyes fell upon my grandfather's gold watch. It took off the chain to keep as a memento. Most people of my generation, or older ones, will remember that in grandfather's time there were no wrist-watches. Men wore their watches in their waist-coat pockets tied with a chain to a button-hole of the waist-coat. For the rich all were of gold; the poorer people had silver ones but the fashion was the same. That night I had the shock of my life. "Are you emptying your house?" asked the

Mother in a husky voice, yet looking delightful. I was frightened out of my skin. "Non, Douce Mère," I mumbled in bewilderment. The question was simple, but what the Mother put into me I do not know. It glowed around my heart like the sheen of my grandfather's watch. I would stand on the veranda blankly looking at the trees and hear, "Are you emptying your house?" It took the shiver out of my frame no matter how cold and damp the wind blew.

In Nepal Sanat had bought a *Tanka*, a painting by some Tibetan Lama artist some two hundred years earlier. He knew a lot about Tibetan art and had rejected some hundred pieces brought to us from the mountains before he chose this one. Naturally he wanted to give it to the Mother. He accompanied me that night when I went to say good night to the Mother at 10 p.m. Their conversation was a pleasure to hear. Both knew a lot but of course the Mother knew more. Each would say what he or she thought was good in the painting and applaud each other for the knowledge. Finally the Mother said, "This is an excellent piece, I have never seen anything so beautiful and genuine before." Sanat felt he was getting the full price for the exorbitant sum he had spent for this *Tanka*.

Sanat was warming up. Sometime later he told me to bring out his diamond ring, a wedding present from my parents. Next he asked for the real gold pencil that he had but never used, a gift from my father who had worn it for luck when playing bridge. It had originally been bought in London at Asprey's by my grandfather. Sanat's offering was rewarded, for the Mother said it was very beautiful and added, "I will always keep it in my handbag." This was almost like saying, "I will always keep you in my consciousness. Don't worry over your difficulties." It reminded us of what She had once said when we had been sheer newcomers. "I send out my emanation to those whom I consider my children, and it protects them no matter how deep the abyss the anti-forces push them into." Life became very sweet.

I had already offered to the Mother my heavy gold ornaments and diamonds and other jewellery. She said they were very beautiful and the settings remarkable. She was so kind and happy it almost seemed She was grateful to receive them instead of I being grateful that She should receive them so graciously. Sometime later, She announced that anyone who wanted to offer money for the new University She intended to open could do so and in return She would give the donor a piece of Her jewellery. Of course it was understood that the present from Her would be at Her own discretion and not according to the money offered. One fine morning I found the Mother giving someone an ear-bob that had belonged to me. Next day a ring, the next a string of pearls. It was only on the third day that it occurred to me that She was doing that purposely. The fourth day somehow a soft laugh escaped my lips and the Mother at once looked at me. Her face was—as Shakespeare appeared anticipatively to say—"Like a rich jewel on an Ethiop's ear, Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear." When my turn came, she patted my cheeks in appreciation of the fact that I was neither jealous nor unhappy that she was giving away my things to others. In fact I was always very happy whenever I saw Her making use of my

things. For what use of my giving if they were to lie as junk in one corner of Her room, unused?

I and Sanat too in turn offered some money for Her University. I write here "University", for that was the name given at first to the Mother's institution now called Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. I was so happy the Mother changed it to this designation, for any Tom, Dick and Harry who made a name for himself somehow got for his reward a university named after him. But the new name is just appropriate and explains the use the Mother and Sri Aurobindo wanted to make of the institution. It is a school for the whole world.

The Mother one night brought two very small rings one of agate and the other of amethyst. "For a long time I have been wondering whom to give these two very small rings. One will surely fit you." Saying this, She slipped the amethyst ring on to the small finger of my right hand. She took me to a place where the light was brilliant and said, "See, there are two colours here, one blue and the other red. Combined, they give out a rare lustre." So the ring still stays on my finger and no matter how heavy the blow of Fortune, it has—like the ring of Sita (traced on the ground by Lakshman for her protection)—protected me. Merci, Mère.

CHAUNDONA BANERJI

THE GREAT SILENCE

OUT of the great Silence, over the whitened steeps
 Slowly and softly a hymn arises
 From the snowfields' sacred deeps.
 Over the echoing vastnesses of the Traveller's hidden lore
 The ancient epiphany moves at ease
 Like a ship from Slumber's shore.

Lifting the bars of a Time-born lease,
 The Spirit-ship floats there and never can it cease.
 One with the rumour, a Fire-enchanted roar,
 The poised inscrutable Silence
 Guards the Eternal's Door.

P. P.

THE FRIENDS OF PAUL—LUKE AND MARK

DID THEY AUTHOR ANY BOOKS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1984)

3

SIDE by side with the disqualification of Paul's Luke from being the man generally taken to be behind the third Gospel and Acts, there is involved the disqualification of Paul's John Mark from having the identity which the Jerusalem Bible,¹ following "traditional dating from the 2nd century", gives to him: "John Mark, a disciple from Jerusalem (Ac 12:12) who assisted Paul in his apostolic work (Ac 12:25; 13:5, 13; Phm 24; 2 Tm) and Barnabas his cousin (Ac 15:37, 39; Col 4:10) and Peter (1 P 5:13), whose 'interpreter' he was, put Peter's preaching down in writing at Rome." But the book called "The Gospel according to Mark" could not be the work of John Mark to whom Paul refers towards the end of his Colossians: "Aristarchus, who is here in prison with me, sends his greetings, and so does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas..." (4:10).² For, like Paul's 'dear friend Luke, the doctor', John Mark is shown by the "greetings" sent in his name to have been listening while Colossians, with its poem on the pre-existence of Jesus, was composed by Paul with Timothy as his scribe. By contrast, the author of "The Gospel according to Mark" lacks the pre-existence Christology and favours the Christology describable broadly as Adoptionist, in which at the baptism of Jesus there was an adoption of him as God's Son: "No sooner had he come out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you'" (1:10-11).³

What, then, are we to make of the old tradition reported by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* (III, 39) in the 4th century A.D. from Papias, a 2nd-century bishop of Hierapolis, on which the Jerusalem Bible relies to figure Mark as an associate of Peter and thus the same Mark whom Paul knew? D. E. Nineham⁴ has a very appropriate comment:

"It may well be that some of the material in the Gospel does derive ultimately from Peter, but in the last forty years or so Papias's statement has come in for a good

¹ Published by Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1966, p. 5 (Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels).

² P. 340.

³ P. 65. We say "describable broadly as Adoptionist", because, strictly speaking, Adoptionism came to connote the stance of the "heresy" known as Gnosticism and Docetism which held that at Jesus' baptism a supernatural being entered one who was not himself divine and worked through him as a receptacle for a time and left him before the Crucifixion, so that Jesus was merely a "seeming" or "phantasmal" Son of God and not truly born as such in the flesh.

⁴ *The Gospel of Saint Mark* (The Penguin New Testament Commentaries, Penguin books, Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 27.

deal of criticism, and most contemporary scholars agree that in places St Mark's material bears all the signs of having been community tradition and cannot therefore be derived directly from St Peter or any other eye-witness. But once that admission has been made about some of St Mark's material, it seems only logical to go on and make it about all his material, for, ... all of it, without exception, seems to bear the characteristic marks of communal tradition."

This means "that the tradition on which the Gospels are based was handed on during the greater part of the oral period in the context of public and formal occasions; that is to say, the people by whom it was passed on were preachers and teachers, speaking at meetings for public worship or addressing groups of catechumens and the like".¹ The grounds for this important claim are set out convincingly in such works as R. H. Rawlinson's *History and Interpretation in the Gospels*, especially Chapter II. The result is that, although an amount of information in Mark is such that it can be termed reminiscence, at a second or third remove, from Peter, there is a distinct distance from Peter's time or Peter's own words. A straightforward bearing of the Apostle on the contents here collected cannot be attested at all.

This conclusion vitally affects the problem of the Evangelist's identity. Nineham,² again, has very apt words on the problem. He sees no reason to doubt the tradition that the Evangelist's name was Mark. "No one of that name is known to have been in specially close relationship with our Lord or to have been particularly prominent in the early Church, so there would have been no good reason for attributing the Gospel to Mark unless he had been known to have written it. It is less certain that the tradition is right in identifying the Mark who wrote the Gospel with the John Mark of Acts (e.g. 12:12, 25, etc.) and the Mark of I Pet. 5:13 (cf. also Col. 4:10, 2 Tim. 4:11, Philem. 24). The early Church was in the habit of assuming that all occurrences of a given name in the New Testament referred to a single individual, but when we remember that Mark (Marcus) was the commonest Latin name in the Roman Empire³ and that the early Church must have contained innumerable Marks, we realize how precarious any assumption of identity is in this case. In favour of identifying the Evangelist with the Mark of I Pet. 5:13 it is often pointed out that the Mark there referred to is expressly associated with Peter, as the Evangelist is by Papias, and that the two are associated together in Babylon, the code name often used by early Christians for Rome, the traditional birthplace of the Gospel. For its full force this argument rests on the belief that I Peter was written by Simon Peter [the chief of the Apostles chosen by Jesus], a belief not shared by many scholars; and even if it was, we must reckon very seriously with the possibility that the Papias tradition is itself a deduction from the verse in I Peter taken together with the fact that the Gospel was known to have been written by someone called Mark.⁴ In favour of the Evangelist's being

¹ *Ibid*, pp. 39-40. ² *Ibid*, pp. 21-22.

³ Cf. Marcus Tullius Cicero, Marcus Brutus, Marcus Aurelius, Mark Antony, etc., etc.

⁴ See H. J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, pp. 85ff, who rightly points out how largely second-century statements about the authorship of biblical books was based on conjecture.

the John Mark of Acts it is pointed out that the latter was a native of Palestine and so his authorship would account for the knowledge of Palestine and its conditions which the Gospel betrays. Certainly, as the commentary will show, the general picture in the Gospel is remarkably true to the conditions of Palestine in Jesus' day, and from time to time Aramaic expressions are quoted in the original; but it is not clear how far all this is due to the Evangelist and how far to the tradition; and numerous vaguenesses and inaccuracies are most naturally explained if the Evangelist was *not* directly acquainted with Palestine. (See the commentary on e.g. 5:1, 6:45, 7:2-4, 7:31, 8:22, 10:1, 11:1.)"

Nineham¹ ends on the note that certainty with regard to the author is clearly unattainable. However, if I Peter is taken as the crucial point, Nineham's mention of scholarly uncertainty on its authorship can be modified radically by an argument in the "Biblical Glossary" of the 1979-80 edition of *Pears Cyclopaedia* (S21, col. 2), dealing with the two letters alleged to be from the Apostle Peter whose death is traditionally put during Nero's persecution of A.D. 64: "The first letter is written to encourage Christians in Asia Minor who are suffering or are likely to suffer, for their Christian faith. If this were written during a specific period of persecution it would almost certainly have been that under the Roman emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96), since Nero's persecution does not appear to have extended far beyond the capital, and this would rule out authorship by Peter if he had died in A.D. 64."

A plausible alternative, even more explicitly against I Peter being from the chief Apostle's pen, is in a comment in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:² "The milieu of the letter seems to reflect the time and temper of the correspondence of the emperor Trajan with Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia (c. 117) [in Asia Minor]. Pliny requested clarification as to the punishment of Christians 'for the name itself' or for crimes supposedly associated with being a Christian. I Peter, chapter 4, verse 15, appears to reflect this situation: that a Christian be blameless of all crimes and, if punished, be persecuted only 'as a Christian'... The warning in I Peter, Chapter 3, on a Christian's manner of defense and submission to authority points to a date in the first quarter of the 2nd century. Such a date does not preclude reflection on earlier persecutions, such as those under Domitian."

It is extremely unlikely, if not downright impossible, for Paul's John Mark to have authored the Gospel. Christologically, however, this Gospel, which is nearest in time (the 60s A.D.) than any other to Paul, is not so different from the Pauline view as is Luke's. The latter not only lacks the Pauline Christology of pre-existence: it also introduces the Virgin-Birth doctrine of which Paul has no trace: indeed, as Brown³ admits, "Paul never mentions Mary by name and shows no interest in her" and, when Paul speaks of Jesus in relation to his mother, he has the phrase "born of a woman" (Galatians 4:5) which, according to Brown⁴ "is meant to stress what Jesus

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 40. ² *Macropaedia* (1977), Vol. 2, p. 969, col. 2.

³ *The Birth of the Messiah* (New York: Image Books, 1979), p. 340.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 519.

shared with those whom he redeemed, precisely because it is applicable to everyone who walks this earth", as Brown¹ himself exemplifies by quoting Matthew 11:11 and Luke 7:28 where we read of Jesus telling his disciples: "Among those born of women, none is greater than John the Baptist..." Mark, in this connection, is Pauline in more than one respect. Apart from his utter omission of Jesus' infancy and boyhood as if there were nothing of note about them, he creates—unlike Luke—situations absolutely out of accord with Mary having any extraordinary grace from God. Brown² has not failed to take account of them. He refers to Mark 6:4 "where Jesus compares himself to a prophet without honor in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house." Next, Brown³ writes: "A similar low estimate of the relations between Jesus and his family is found in 3:21, 31-35. There Mark first tells us that 'his own' thought that Jesus was beside himself (or frenzied) and went out to seize him; then Mark tells us that Jesus' mother and brothers came and, standing outside the place where he was, sent in to call him. Apparently, Mark includes Jesus' mother among the 'his own' who thought he was frenzied. Mark goes on to have Jesus distinguish his natural family, who are standing outside, from those inside listening to him, a family constituted by doing the will of God. Such an uncomplimentary view of Mary's relationship to Jesus is scarcely reconcilable with a knowledge of the virginal conception." Elsewhere Brown⁴ has touched on the same context and commented on its light upon Mary: "...the Marcan scene in which she features is scarcely favorable to her."

Thus Mark of the Gospel is doctrinally not so far as Luke from Paul, but the absence of the Christology of pre-existence from his work and, instead, the broadly Adoptionist posture and, furthermore, the total lack of objective evidence to equate him with his namesake known to Peter—all these factors undermine the case for identifying him with the Mark of Paul's Epistles.

(Concluded)

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *Ibid.*, fn. 5a.

³ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 520.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

NOLINIDA—A VOYAGER TOWARDS IMMORTALITY

IN one of his talks, while speaking about the earlier life of the great vedic sage Yajnavalkya, Nolinida said: "Now our Yajnavalkya in the normal course of things has passed through the stage of *brahmacharya*, he has also pursued the stage of domestic life and is at the end of it. He thinks the time has come for him to take to the spiritual life and enter into *Vanaprastha*. He had married and had two wives. So one day he called the first wife, Katyayani, and said to her: 'Katyayani, I am now leaving this life and entering the spiritual life. You have given me comfort and happiness. I am thankful to you for that. Whatever I have, my possessions, movable and immovable, I have divided into two. This is your portion.' Katyayani accepted the decision without a murmur. She answered: 'Since you are my lord and husband, as you ask me so shall I do.' Then Yajnavalkya went to his second wife, Maitreyee; to Maitreyee too he said the same thing as he had said to Katyayani: 'Maitreyee, I am leaving this life, I am taking to the spiritual life. I have given to Katyayani her share of my possessions. This is your share.' But Maitreyee answered: 'Wherever you go, I will follow you, I will also give up the world and its life.' Yajnavalkya said: 'No, Maitreyee, it is a very hard, very difficult life, particularly for a woman. Follow the life to which you have been accustomed. Enjoy freely the possessions I leave you.' Then Maitreyee uttered those famous words which you must have heard and which have been ringing through the centuries down to us also, even today: 'All these possessions, will they give me immortality?' Yajnavalkya answered: 'No, Maitreyee, that they will not give you, it is quite another matter.' Maitreyee answered—uttering a *mantra* as it were—'What am I to do with that which does not give me immortality?'"¹

I still remember with what great emphasis Nolinida uttered those words of Maitreyee: "What am I to do with that which does not give me immortality?" In fact, it is only Nolinida who can probably utter these words with such emphasis, for he himself is a rich shareholder of immortality, a daring adventurer towards the summits of immortality in the tracks of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who may be figured as the spiritual Tenzing and Hilary who were the first to reach the highest Himalayan heights.

What is immortality after all? It is the establishment of identity with That which is immortal and eternal. It is something progressive and could be attained in various parts of our being. Accordingly, in the case of the mind or the mental being, it becomes immortal when it is merged in and filled with That whom we call the Supreme Brahman or God and when it is enlightened by the light of His divine consciousness; or, in our familiar terms, we may say, when the mind knows nothing else but the Mother, thinks of nothing else but the Mother or even understands nothing else but the Mother, always thinking about Her and Her alone, enlightened by Her light, when it has become fully infused with Her consciousness, then the mental being is immortal. Similarly, in the case of

¹ *Collected Works of Nohn Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 5, p 54

the vital, when all its urges and inspirations and enthusiasms are the natural outflow of the divine urges and inspirations, when it is fully surrendered to the Mother without reserve and without any condition, and the Mother, after purging out all its impurities, is shaping it according to Her own divine will and guiding and inducing all its movements for the fulfilment of the divine plan, when the vital is full of the Mother's consciousness, inspired by Her divine inspiration alone, then it is immortal. Immortality for the body means that when the body, freed from slavery to the mind and the vital, is open to the Mother, to Her light, force and consciousness in all its parts, in the very cells, in each drop of its blood, when Her light and consciousness have flowed into the very veins and arteries and even suffused the bones and marrows, when the body is active only by the Mother directing it to be active, and remains tranced in inaction within Her and under Her influence alone, then the body is said to be immortal. Above all, in other words, when the mental, the vital and the physical beings are always under the unfaltering direct guidance and full control of the central psychic being, which has the presence of the Divine Mother within it, and when it is the Mother herself who acts through these instruments spontaneously, they are said to be immortal.

If that be so, if that is the definition of immortality, then surely Nolinida was the daring adventurer on the path of more and more perfect immortality. Danger and fear and dire resistance of the forces of darkness lurked at each turn and step of this formidable journey and Nolinida was advancing towards more and more perfect perfection, more and more complete transformation, crossing over all the obstacles on the way. It may be said, the Mother was leading him, holding tight his hand, through this very long and difficult path of sadhana, encouraging him all the while: "*Nolini, en avant vers la perfection... en avant vers la transformation.*" And is it not a fact that the Mother is telling him the very same words even now? Because, on this endless path of the sadhana of transformation, Nolinida, the forerunner, the leading adventurer of this infinite adventure, will continue to tread the "sunlit path" in a ceaseless and uninterrupted ever-forward movement of consciousness—the Mother is holding his hand, why only his hand?, his entire being in her golden grip of affection—and Nolinida will move on and on in a journey which knows no end.

Let me conclude my reflection on this voyage ethereal with some earthly humour. Amritada was Nolinida's closest and all-time companion as if they were twins—Nolini-Amrita, the twins of the Divine Mother. At the time Amritada left his body, and also even very recently, Nolinida was said to have given an indication that when he would leave his body, it should be buried near Amrita's. In fact, Nolinida, plunged in eternal trance, was at the head of the long silent procession from Mahasamadhi to Casanove garden towards Amrita, whose very name connotes "the immortal". In that respect too, he is a voyager towards immortality, is he not?

WHAT AM I?

I HAVE played a thousand times
Daughter, sister, wife and mother—
Roles stale, now let them fade.
Never more, O my Maker, this masquerade.

A child, I lisped and cried,
Looked up and obeyed the pair
Of whom I used to be the pride.
How sapless and unreal seems
It now, like shadowy dreams
In a phantom play.

A sister I loved and lived,
Called on that dear head
All the riches of the world.
Those twin souls inseparable
Now live asunder. Their life-streams move
To different seas. That fathomless love
Turns out to be skin-deep.

In countless arms in births unnumbered
I sang the nonsense
Of eternal love and souls that are rhymes—
Valueless words of a harlot
Who professes love to different
Lovers in different times.

A part of my flesh, my heart, my very life,
I kept him in my womb and wove
Around him a magic cocoon of love.
His smile was my sunshine, his least pain I
Felt like my death.
I begged, fought, strove for my star-child.
Now the sapling stands bright and high
And from a distance I note
That the ripples in him are not mine.

A praying cipher,
 I stand at Thy door and cry:
 "Take away the mirages,
 Unveil the Reality,
 Vanquish the doer's pride.
 Reveal, O Master, who is this 'me'—
 Daughter, sister, wife or mother?
 What am I to Thee?"

SHYAM KUMARI

BY THE SAMADHI, NOT BEING THERE...

WHEN slow remembrance grows upon the soul,
 It flies into those unfettered wonder-days
 When yet we saw a Smile linger upon our ways,
 And felt a blessing warmly pressing near.

Deep in my heart a crypt of effulgent Mystery
 Draws close my steps to its enchanted sleep
 Each footfall like a miraculous leap
 Overpasses worlds of dreaming stars.

To the regions where our timeless Mother dwells
 As to a pool of light in quenchless thirst I move,
 And atom and atom of intimate Love
 Breach the dark spaces of my ignorance.

My burning brow on golden marble laid,
 Suffused with a density of light it glows,
 Marble and body of one substance made,
 Divinity lambent in matter that knows.

On the quiet journey earthward bound,
 Rapt in a nameless memory of peace,
 Bridging overflown gulfs with mantric sound
 I bring a secret Presence that death and pain may cease.

ARVIND HABBU

INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY INHERENT IN INTEGRAL YOGA

IN THE WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1984)

The Chakras—The Yogic Subtle Centres of Consciousness and the Integral Personality

WE can easily see how largely man, even though in his being an embodied soul, is in his earthly nature the physical and vital being and how, at first sight at least, his mental activities seem to depend almost entirely on his body and his nervous system. Modern Science and psychology have even held, for a time, this dependence to be in fact an identity; they have tried to establish that there is no such separate entity as mind or soul and that all mental operations are in reality physical functionings. Even otherwise, apart from this untenable hypothesis, the dependence is so exaggerated that it has been supposed to be an altogether binding condition, and any such thing as the control of the vital and bodily functionings by the mind or its power to detach itself from them has long been treated as an error, a morbid state of the mind or a hallucination. Therefore the dependence has remained absolute, and Science neither finds nor seeks for the real key of the dependence and therefore can discover for us no secret of release and mastery.

The psycho-physical science of Yoga does not make this mistake. It seeks for the key, finds it and is able to effect the release; for it takes account of the psychical or mental body behind of which the physical is a sort of reproduction in gross form, and is able to discover thereby secrets of the physical body which do not appear to a purely physical enquiry. This mental or psychical body, which the soul keeps even after death, has also a subtle pranic force in it corresponding to its own subtle nature and substance,—for wherever there is life of any kind, there must be the pranic energy and a substance in which it can work,—and this force is directed through a system of numerous channels, called *nāḍīs*,—the subtle nervous organisation of the psychic body,—which are gathered up into six (or really seven) centres called technically lotuses or circles, *chakra*, and which rise in an ascending scale to the summit where there is the thousand-petalled lotus from which all the mental and vital energy flows. Each of these lotuses is the centre and the storing-house of its own particular system of psychological powers, energies and operations,—each system corresponding to a plane of our psychological existence,—and these flow out and return in the stream of the pranic energies as they course through the *nāḍīs*.

This arrangement of the psychic body is reproduced in the physical with the spinal column as a rod and the ganglionic centres as the *chakras* which rise up from the bottom of the column, where the lowest is attached, to the brain and find their

summit in the *brahma-randhra* at the top of the skull. These chakras or lotuses, however, are in physical man closed or only partly open, with the consequence that only such powers and only so much of them are active in him as are sufficient for his ordinary physical life, and so much mind and soul only is at play as will accord with its needs. This is the real reason, looked at from the mechanical point of view, why the embodied soul seems so dependent on the bodily and nervous life,—though the dependence is neither so complete nor so real as it seems. The whole energy of the soul is not at play in the physical body and life, the secret powers of mind are not awake in it, the bodily and nervous energies predominate. But all the while the supreme energy is there, asleep; it is said to be coiled up and slumbering like a snake,—therefore it is called the *kunḍalīnī* shakti,—in the lowest of the chakras in the *mūlādhāra*. When by pranayama the division between the upper and lower prana currents in the body is dissolved, this Kundalini is struck and awakened, it uncoils itself and begins to rise upward like a fiery serpent breaking open each lotus as it ascends until the Shakti meets the Purusha in the *brahma-randhra* in a deep samadhi of union.

Put less symbolically, in more philosophical though perhaps less profound language, this means that the real energy of our being is lying asleep and inconscient in the depths of our vital system, and is awakened by the practice of Pranayama. In its expansion it opens up all the centres of our psychological being in which reside the powers and the consciousness of what would now be called perhaps our subliminal self; therefore as each centre of power and consciousness is opened up, we get access to successive psychological planes and are able to put ourselves in communication with the worlds or cosmic states of being which correspond to them; all the psychic powers abnormal to physical man, but natural to the soul develop in us. Finally, at the summit of the ascension, this arising and expanding energy meets with the superconscient self which sits concealed behind and above our physical and mental existence; this meeting leads to a profound samadhi of union in which our waking consciousness loses itself in the superconscient. Thus by the thorough and unremitting practice of Pranayama the Hathayogin attains in his own way the psychic and spiritual results which are pursued through more directly psychical and spiritual methods in other Yogas. The one mental aid which he conjoins with it, is the use of the mantra, sacred syllable, name or mystic formula which is of so much importance in the Indian systems of Yoga and common to them all. This secret of the power of the mantra, the six chakras and the Kundalini Shakti is one of the central truths of all that complex psycho-physical science and practice of which the Tantric philosophy claims to give us a rationale and the most complete compendium of methods. All religions and disciplines in India which use largely the psycho-physical method, depend more or less upon it for their practices.¹

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¹ *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 20, pp. 514-16.

On the whole, for an integral Yoga the special methods of Rajayoga and Hathayoga may be useful at times in certain stages of the progress, but are not indispensable. It is true that their principal aims must be included in the integrality of the Yoga; but they can be brought about by other means. For the methods of the integral Yoga must be mainly spiritual, and dependence on physical methods or fixed psychic or psycho-physical processes on a large scale would be the substitution of a lower for a higher action.¹

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All these centres are in the middle of the body; they are supposed to be attached to the spinal cord; but in fact all these things are in the subtle body, *sūkṣma deha*, though one has the feeling of their activities as if in the physical body when the consciousness is awake.²

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In the process of our yoga the centres have each a fixed psychological use and general function which base all their special powers and functionings. The *mūlādhāra* governs the physical down to the subconscious; the abdominal centre—*svādhiṣṭhāna*—governs the lower vital; the navel centre—*nābhīpadma* or *manipura*—governs the larger vital; the heart centre—*hṛdīpadma* or *anāhata*—governs the emotional being; the throat centre—*viśuddha*—governs the expressive and externalising mind; the centre between the eye-brows—*ājñāchakra*—governs the dynamic mind, will, vision, mental formation; the thousand-petalled lotus—*sahasradala*—above commands the higher thinking mind, houses the still higher illumined mind and at the highest opens to the intuition through which or else by an overflowing directness the overmind can have with the rest communication or an immediate contact.³

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In the outer surface nature mind, psychic, vital, physical are jumbled together and it needs a strong power of introspection, self-analysis, close observation and disentanglement of the threads of thought, feeling and impulse to find out the composition of our nature and the relation and interaction of these parts upon each other. But when we go inside, we find the sources of all this surface action and there the parts of our being are quite clearly distinct from each other; it is as if we were a group-being, each member of the group with its separate place and function, and all directed by a central being who is sometimes in front above the others, sometimes behind the scenes.

(To be continued)

Compiled by INDRA SEN

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 520. ² *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 365.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 23, p. 1018.

OF HIM AND HER

TALK BY C. V. DEVAN NAIR AT THE COMMEMORATION MEETING ON THE MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY—FEBRUARY 21, 1984—HELD AT THE SRI AUROBINDO LIBRARY, SINGAPORE

“His walk through time outstripped the human stride.
Lonely his days and splendid like the sun's.”

THIS was Sri Aurobindo writing about Aswapathy, Savitri's human father, in his Godward climb. The lines so aptly bespeak Sri Aurobindo himself. His walk through time certainly outstripped the human stride. Lonely his days, but a loneliness teeming with the riches of the Infinite. And splendid, but infinitely more splendid his days, than the sun's! They must have been, for he had touched and drawn down the supramental light and power into his own body.

Terrible too, at the same time, must have been his days. Armed with the splendours of the heights he had scaled, he did something which nobody before him had attempted. He “plunged through the body's alleys blind”. In “A God's Labour” he told us:

“He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.

Coercing my godhead I have come down
Here on the sordid earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night
To bring the fire to man;
But the hate of hell and human spite
Are my meed since the world began.”

In a paradoxical sense, Sri Aurobindo's was the preamble of the Mother's

journey, just as he was the culmination to which she aspired. "I saw him supramental on his bed," she had said. We can only hope to know them if we aspire to follow in their "footprints' tracks". Not an altogether impossible journey, simply because they had already hacked the way to the world's next future. As spiritual cartographers of the human journey in time, they have left, if not a complete map of the territories to be traversed, at least significant signposts.

Spiritual cartography is different from that of physical geography. For the territories concerned are quite other than those dealt with by the merely physical vision. And for the same reason, they do not lend themselves to verbalisation. I read somewhere that Sri Aurobindo had said about his monumental treatise *The Life Divine* that he had written it in the hope of helping people to silence their minds.

When we talk about Sri Aurobindo, we also talk about the Mother. For she said, "Without Him I exist not. Without me He is unmanifest."

Who, then, was the Mother? This, at least, we know. She was a pioneer. A pioneer is one who ventures into areas of physical, mental, vital or spiritual space and experience which no one has ventured into before. In unforgettable words, she invites us to what she called "the Great Adventure":

"There are people who love adventure. It is these I call, and I tell them this: 'I invite you to the Great Adventure.'

It is not a question of repeating spiritually what others have done before us for our adventure begins beyond that. It is a question of a new creation, entirely new, with all the unforeseen events, the risks, the hazards it entails—a *real adventure*, whose goal is certain victory, but the road to which is unknown and must be traced out, step by step in the unexplored. Something that has never been in this present universe and that will *never* be again in the same way. If that interests you.... Well, let us embark. What will happen to you tomorrow—I have no idea.

One must put aside all that has been foreseen, all that has been devised, all that has been constructed, and then...set off walking into the unknown. And—come what may! There."

Now, it requires courage of a quite exceptional kind to take a leap into the unknown. She enjoined only one condition for the great leap—complete self-surrender.

"If your aim is to be free, in the freedom of the Spirit, you must get rid of all the ties that are not the inner truth of your being, but come from subconscious habits. If you wish to consecrate yourself entirely, absolutely and exclusively to the Divine, you must do it in all completeness; you must not leave bits of yourself tied here and there....

When you come to the Yoga, you must be ready to have all your mental buildings, and all your vital scaffoldings shattered to pieces. You must be prepared to be suspended in the air with nothing to support you except your faith. You will have to forget your past self and its clings altogether, to pluck it out of your consciousness and be born anew, free from every kind of bondage. Think not of what you were, but of what you aspire to be; be altogether in what you want to realise. Turn from your dead past and look straight towards the future. Your religion, country, family lie there; it is the DIVINE."

What was this great adventure to which she beckoned us? It is best put in the words of Sri Aurobindo:

"To know, possess and be the divine being in an animal and egoistic consciousness, to convert our twilit or obscure physical mentality into the plenary supramental illumination, to build peace and a self-existent bliss where there is only a stress of transitory satisfactions besieged by physical pain and emotional suffering, to establish an infinite freedom in a world which presents itself as a group of mechanical necessities, to discover and realise the immortal life in a body subjected to death and constant mutation,—this is offered to us as the manifestation of God in Matter and the goal of Nature in her terrestrial evolution. To the ordinary material intellect which takes its present organisation of consciousness for the limit of its possibilities, the direct contradiction of the unrealised ideals with the realised fact is a final argument against their validity. But if we take a more deliberate view of the world's workings, that direct opposition appears rather as part of Nature's profoundest method and the seal of her completest sanction."

The final earthly years of both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were not spent in attempts at self-extinction in an ineffable Nirvana. Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple:

"No, it is not with the Empyrean that I am busy, I wish it were. It is rather with the opposite end of things."

The opposite end of things was what they called the Yoga of the body, attempting to unlock the secret divinity in the very cells of their bodies. The Divine on His heights they had already experienced. Their yoga was an attempt to discover the same Divine in the darkest, most material depths. Each was a "Pilgrim of the Night".

"I made an assignation with the Night;
 In the abyss was fixed our rendezvous:
 In my breast carrying God's deathless light
 I came her dark and dangerous heart to woo.

I left the glory of the illumined Mind
 And the calm rapture of the divinised soul
 And travelled through a vastness dim and blind
 To the grey shore where her ignorant waters roll.
 I walk by the chill wave through the dull slime
 And still that weary journeying knows no end;
 Lost is the lustrous godhead beyond Time,
 There comes no voice of the celestial Friend,
 And yet I know my footprints' track shall be
 A pathway towards Immortality."

This is what made Sri Aurobindo and the Mother radically different from all the materialists and spiritualists of the past. Their great sadhana was not to find ways of escape from life and matter, but to ensure that "Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face."

Only they know the end-results of their yoga. But Sri Aurobindo did leave behind the assurance that "the supramental change is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of the earth-consciousness".

And what are we to make of their passing? Was it about his own past lives that Sri Aurobindo spoke in his sonnet "In the Battle"?

"Often, in the slow ages' long retreat
 On Life's thin ridge through Time's enormous sea,
 I have accepted death and borne defeat
 To gain some vantage by my fall for Thee.
 For Thou hast given the Inconscient the dark right
 To oppose the shining passage of my soul
 And levy at each step the tax of Night:
 Doom, her august accountant, keeps the roll.
 All around me now the Titan forces press;
 This world is theirs, they hold its days in fee;
 I am full of wounds and the fight merciless.
 Is it not yet Thy hour of victory?
 Even as Thou wilt! What still to Fate Thou owest,
 O Ancient of the worlds, Thou knowest, Thou knowest."

We might also legitimately wonder whether it was not in fact about the Mother and her passing (and probably his own as well) that Sri Aurobindo spoke in a beautiful and mysterious passage in *Savitri*. The undertones and overtones of prophetic utterance in the last four lines are overwhelming.

"All mights and greatnesses shall join in her;
 Beauty shall walk celestial on the earth,

Delight shall sleep in the cloud-net of her hair
 And in her body as on his homing tree
 Immortal Love shall beat his glorious wings.
 A music of griefless things shall weave her charm;
 The harps of the Perfect shall attune her voice,
 The streams of Heaven shall murmur in her laugh,
 Her lips shall be the honeycombs of God,
 Her limbs his golden jars of ecstasy,
 Her breasts the rapture-flowers of Paradise.
 She shall bear Wisdom in her voiceless bosom,
 Strength shall be with her like a conqueror's sword
 And from her eyes the Eternal's bliss shall gaze.
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."

I join you all in paying homage to One whom I believe to be the greatest spiritual warrior the world has ever known, The Mother—the very same Mother whom Sri Aurobindo delineated in probably the greatest handbook of spiritual sadhana ever written, called *The Mother*.

It is not merely the calm, beautiful and majestic prose which attracts us. For what makes Sri Aurobindo's prose majestic is the imperious call for a total and uncompromising commitment to the goal. It is a call from the summit to the abyss. But we are free to shut our ears to the call. We are told:

“The Supreme demands your surrender to her, but does not impose it: you are free at every moment, till the irrevocable transformation comes, to deny and to reject the Divine or to recall your self-giving; if you are willing to suffer the spiritual consequence. Your surrender must be self-made and free; it must be the surrender of a living being; not of an inert automaton or mechanical tool.”

But if you accept the call: “The personal effort required is a triple labour of aspiration, rejection and surrender; an aspiration vigilant, constant, unceasing—the mind's will, the heart's seeking; the assent of the vital being; the will to open and make plastic the physical consciousness and nature; rejection of the movements of the lower nature—rejection of the mind's ideas, opinions, preferences, habits, constructions, so that the true knowledge may find free room in a silent mind,—rejection of the vital nature's desires, demands, cravings, sensations, passions, selfishness, pride, arrogance, lust, greed, jealousy, envy, hostility to the Truth, so that the true power and joy may pour from above into a calm, large, strong and consecrated vital being;—rejection of the physical nature's stupidity, doubt, disbelief, obscurity, obstinacy,

pettiness, laziness, unwillingness to change, Tamas, so that the true stability of Light, Power, Ananda may establish itself in a body growing always more divine; surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the Shakti.”

There is nothing namby-pamby about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. They clearly did not care to dole out soothing sedatives and tranquilizers to spiritual aspirants. Nor did they indulge in any kind of occult pyrotechnics in order to cater to the needs or demands of the shallow and the gullible. The demands they make, but do not for a moment impose on the unwilling or the unready, may appear daunting to our small frontal egos, mired as we are in our transient, petty and selfish passions and interests.

And yet something in some of us does respond. We may find assurance in the knowledge that only like can possibly respond to like. There must be, after all, something in us which is akin to THAT which moved Him and Her to live their lives, to do what they did and to say what they said.

And some of us may echo Aswapathy's heart's cry to the Divine Mother:

“How shall I rest content with mortal days
And the dull measure of terrestrial things,
I who have seen behind the cosmic mask
The glory and the beauty of Thy face?”

STAMMERING—ITS CAUSE AND CURE

We are quoting this article by Miss M. C. da Cunha, L.C.P.S., D.G.O., from The Antiseptic, a Monthly Journal of Medicine and Surgery, the issue of 15 August 1953, for its thorough treatment of a common defect and the practical mode it delineates of a cure. The innovator of the curative system was one Mr. M. S. Rami about whom a sadhak wrote to the Mother from Bombay. Nolini Kanta Gupta replied in a letter dated Pondicherry 21.10.1951:

“What Dr. Rami says about stammering and its cure Mother finds very interesting. There is a good deal of truth in his elucidation. Mother approves of your trying the method.”

Introduction—The language function is defined as the perception and understanding of the spoken and written word together with the expressive abilities of speaking, spelling and handwriting. Disorders in the development or efficiency of any part of this function may result in emotional conflict, social maladjustment and scholastic retardation. The converse, by no means less frequent, is likewise true. Speech disorders are of two kinds:—(1) congenital or developmental disturbances which prevent or hinder the proper acquisition of speech; and (2) deterioration which causes speech, though normally developed, later to become defective. We are here concerned with deteriorated or defective speech.

Defective speech may be of various types such as: (1) faulty articulation or lisp; (2) Echolalia: here there is a parrot-like repetition of words spoken by others without understanding their meaning; (3) Aphasia which is a disability in proper verbal expression (motor) or comprehension (sensory); (4) Psychogenic: here due to self-consciousness, speech becomes too rapid and complex, and as a result defective; (5) stuttering or dysphemia, where there is more or less constant inability to speak freely. It is this type of defective speech which forms the subject matter of this paper.

Inability to speak freely may result in (a) a *stutter*, where there is repetition, in some cases slow, in other cases rapid, of a word or syllable before the following word or syllable can be uttered; (b) or the speech may be *spastic*. Here there is a noticeable hypertonicity of the nerve fibres actuating the muscles used in speaking as well as a marked contraction of the facial muscles; (c) or the speech may show *hesitation*. This is marked by a silent choking effort often accompanied by a fruitless closing and opening of the mouth; (d) there may be a *stammer*. Here the person is unable to begin a word or a sentence and his effort to speak is accompanied by marked muscular contractions and pronounced spasmodic efforts resulting in all sorts of facial contortions, grimaces and uncontrolled jerking of the head, body and limbs; (e) then there are cases of combined *stuttering and stammering* or there may be a combination of any two or more of the above described types.

All these different variations have the following characteristics in common.

These patients can—(1) sing without difficulty; (2) talk normally when alone or when talking to animals; (3) cannot talk and do something else at the same time; (4) show an intermittent tendency i.e., there are times or periods when they can talk normally but these are of short duration and the trouble always comes back; (5) the trouble cannot be outgrown; (6) there is a progressive tendency which becomes worse as the child grows older; and then it is more difficult to correct.

Pathogenesis—Inability to speak freely is usually due to a defect anywhere in the peripheral speech mechanism, which consists of (1) the muscles of respiration—intercostals and diaphragm; (2) muscles of the larynx which control the vocal chords and glottis; (3) the tongue; (4) the soft palate; (5) jaws; (6) cheeks; and (7) lips. What takes place when there is inability to speak freely may be better understood if the process of normal speech is reviewed.

The voice box or larynx situated at the top of the trachea may be regarded as a wind-reed musical instrument which produces sound as a result of air being directed upon the reeds which consequently are thrown into vibrations producing a tone which will have pitch, length and steadiness in accordance with the amount of breath which has been taken and the control thereof. If it is allowed to escape before tone is initiated and continues to do so during its production the voice will be “breathy” or if the air is directed suddenly and forcibly against the reeds, the tone will be started explosively and the voice as a result will be harsh and unmusical. The “reeds” in the larynx are called the vocal chords and are wedge-shaped bands which are not free anywhere except at their inner edge, being attached closely to the sides of the larynx. These chords are apart in silence. They approximate for the production of voice and this they must do, at the exact moment air reaches them in its outward and upward passage. When there is an inco-ordination here, stammering results. But stammering may also occur because though the vocal chords approximate, the quantity of air breathed is not sufficient to produce sound. Here the fault lies with the respiratory apparatus. That the muscles of respiration are at fault in the case of almost all stammerers has been proved, by measuring the vital capacity of the lungs of stammerers. This when compared with the normal for that particular person is found to be only half or two-thirds of what it should have been. Again examination of the stammerer under the fluoroscopic screen shows the movements of the diaphragm and the intercostals very sluggish, sometimes jerky and altogether abnormal, thus proving that the lung capacity for air is also below normal. Thus derangement of breathing is a major causative factor in stammering both as to the amount of air inspired and to the way in which it is taken and above all to the lack of control of it, and therefore as we shall see later, re-education and training of the muscles of respiration is a very important step in the treatment of stammering. This may be all that is required in early cases, but later on other muscles concerned start acting wrongly and these also have to be re-educated. These may be, as we said above, the closing muscles of the vocal chords, and the soft palate, which may be, and often is in these cases, spasmodic in its movements. Then again the tongue often becomes unruly to

a degree which is little understood. This is caused by the diaphragmatic spasm producing reflex spasms in the tongue. The most marked of these are at the back, retracting the entire tongue, almost closing the back of the throat and preventing the true emission of the voice. This brings about a fault in enunciation also—as it prevents the tip of the tongue from coming sufficiently forward in the mouth, both for the pure formation of vowels and for the clear articulation of consonants especially those which are formed by it and the hard palate just behind the upper front teeth. Then there is the clenching of the jaw which prevents the mouth from opening sufficiently to permit the voice to pass out freely. Faulty action is also present in the muscles of the cheeks and lips. Nasal insufficiency, though not a cause of stammering, may prevent cure. Stammerers are extraordinarily sensitive to any interference with either the free upward and outward passage of the voice or to the co-vibration which normally takes place in the nasal cavity. Any nasal impediments such as a deflected septum or adenoids should therefore be removed before a successful issue to treatment is expected.

Spinal curvatures, knock-knees, and flat feet are often seen in stammerers. This seems to cause an irritation and nerve tension and speech is very much benefited when these faults are corrected. Knock-knees and flat feet with their concomitant of faulty distribution of weight also contribute materially to and in some cases are the primary causes of faulty balance and general lack of co-ordination found in stammerers. The flattened ribs in scoliosis impede the expansion of one lung and bring about version of the diaphragm, causing the spasmodic irregular breathing of the stammerer. So also do other abnormalities in the framework of the thorax. In these cases, treatment should be started early by graded breathing exercises, to restore the contours of the thorax and thus bring about normal breathing with consequent marked improvement in stammering. We see from the above what exactly happens in stammering and how the peripheral speech mechanism is at fault. The causes of faulty action are mainly: (1) organic diseases of the brain; (2) psychogenic; (3) diseases of the peripheral speech mechanism; and (4) mimicry. The organic diseases of the brain usually blamed are encephalitis from various causes, meningitis, chorea, polio etc. These usually act affecting the speech centre in the brain. Any one of these may initiate the faulty speech, which if not corrected immediately is then kept up by the muscles concerned getting into the habit of wrong action. So also stammering may be initiated by disease affecting any part of the respiratory tract and causing derangement of breathing which, if not corrected, may continue through force of habit of wrong action of the respiratory muscles. Mimicry as a cause of stammering acts also through force of habit. It is because of this that stammering is found running in families and has given rise to the mistaken idea that stammering is hereditary. At most there may be a predisposing tendency which together with the imitateness natural to children seems to be responsible for finding more than one stammerer in the family.

Lastly we come to the psychogenic causes of stammering. These may be a result of something psychical. A fall or an operation may not be responsible organically

for the stammering and yet produce a psychological trauma which deranges normal breathing by throwing all the muscles of respiration, voice and articulation into confusion. The same thing happens when there is a psychological maladjustment in the family, as a result of a faulty parent-child relationship. So also checking left-handedness or thumb-sucking too drastically may result in stammering. Trying to cure stammering by ridiculing the child or beating it makes the condition worse, as it enhances the nervous factor so often responsible for the trouble.

Treatment—The muscles concerned in speech must be trained separately and then co-ordinated and brought under the control of the brain. Next, the body as a whole is trained to ensure smooth controlled movements. Next, study of good delivery and acquirement of good musical speech are undertaken. Side by side the underlying fears and nervous apprehensions must be overcome. In very early cases before wrong muscle action has become established, treatment of the nervous aspect alone may bring about good results. But this does not occur later on, except where the causative agents have been disasters such as concussion, nervous shocks of various kinds etc.

In children, treatment should be started as soon as the trouble starts. It should not be delayed in the hope that it may be outgrown. These children are usually between 3 and 5 years of age and treatment should be started immediately the trouble starts. The history should be gone into very carefully for chest troubles, falls, operation etc., as well as maladjustment in the family. The habits and hygiene of the patient should be carefully attended to. Improper food and the habit of bolting it down causes indigestion and often brings back a stammer even after the wrong way of breathing has been corrected. The general health therefore must be optimum. Needless to say the child should not be bullied or teased, as this will only serve to perpetuate the trouble. After all this has been attended to, the active treatment should be started. This in the child consists in correcting the deranged breathing and psycho-analytic treatment if the causative factor is a psychogenic one. In the adult or when the case is of fairly long duration, in addition to correction of wrong breathing re-education of the muscles of voice and articulation will be required. Together with this will be the need to deal with the fear complex which in the adult will be deep-rooted and long established. Reflex spasms of the laryngeal muscles of the soft palate, tongue, jaw, face and lips will have become habitual. Moreover when the stammerer finds himself unable to articulate a letter or word he usually tries to force it out, thereby making the lock still greater, and often breaking into a perspiration in his efforts. The entire body becomes rigid and he cannot let go anywhere, worst of all he is certain to have taken breath with a quick gasp, and the breath will have become jammed.

The first step in the treatment is to teach the patient to relax and this usually takes a great deal of time and work. Until this has been accomplished, no direct work on the stammerer should be attempted; as the ability to relax is gained, it will almost imperceptibly merge into being able to "let the breath go", a thing which is at first incredibly difficult. Again and again it will be found that the stammerer has employed

force to exhale and no progress towards normal speech will be possible, till the breath can be released without any trace of effort.

For correct speech, inspiration and expiration must go on slowly and smoothly, and it is useless to request the stammerer to speak on normal breathing till abnormality has been overcome. Then and not till then can work be begun to bring about the coordination between the muscles of respiration and voice which is always faulty and often completely lacking in the stammerer. This in most stammerers' clinics is achieved by the practice of singing long notes softly and smoothly on controlled expiration.

The Rami method—But in the cases I had watched being treated by Mr. M. S. Rami in his clinic at Bombay, a device invented by the doctor brings about correct breathing in a very short time, and obviates long hours of singing practice, which may be quite difficult in young children and in adults who have no ear for music. Besides, the course of treatment is cut short and the patient with the device in his mouth, starts immediately on the uttering of short sentences. The method followed by Mr. Rami was:—The first step in his treatment consisted of preparing a special device for each individual patient. The device is a light arc-shaped fixture which the patient puts on in such a way that it closes the palate completely. Then the patient is trained to press the tongue against the device from below in such a way that the entire breathing through the mouth is restricted to a small aperture in the middle of the device. All the breath-taking is done through the mouth and through the aperture in the device; and is done in a continuous inflow of air till the patient has stored enough breath in his lungs for a normal articulation of a period. This breath is then used to expire a monosyllabic word which is unduly prolonged. After repeated practice the word to be uttered is a diplosyllabic one, and while articulating this word the first syllable is unduly prolonged in a sing-song way. Progressively the word practised next is of three, and then of four syllables. The next stage is uttering of short phrases and sentences—always observing the principle that the breath taken in is finished by the time the “foot” of a certain number of syllables is uttered, and always seeing to it that the first syllable of this “foot” is prolonged.

From the point of view of timing, the practice starts with about 30 words per minute, this speed being increased gradually to 90 or 100 words, which is the speed attained by the patient at the end of a normal training. The patient is made to sit or stand at perfect ease and to relax completely. The articulation practice is done smoothly but firmly without any faltering of the voice. The pitch adopted is the normal one used in conversation, but during the reading lessons and elocutions it is raised to secure audibility.

On an average the patient spends about six to eight hours every day with the Director of the Rami Clinic in various types of exercises. Though reading out is the common mode of exercise, the patient also gets a chance of conversing with fellow patients but always in the same rhythmic style and always prolonging the first syllable after each intake of breath. After about a week of continuous practice in the clinic

the patient is tested for speed and style. When the patient is fully at ease with his fellow patients and gains a speed of about fifty words, he is invited to partake in the debates held in the clinic every day. Whether the participants read out previously prepared speeches, or recite their pieces by heart or speak *ex-tempore*, the rules of speech are rigidly followed.

For about the first two weeks of treatment the patient is not allowed to speak to anybody outside the clinic. Since the clinic has no hostel accommodation, strict silence is enjoined on the patients after leaving the clinic and before coming back the next morning. The one reason that can be adduced in support of this rule would be that outside the clinic the patient would naturally fight shy of the new style of speaking and might relapse into the normal style with the inevitable relapse of the trouble. In my opinion what is of greater benefit in the Rami method of treatment is not the reading or supervised conversations and dialogues, but the fact that all the patients seem to forget the "unusualness" of the new mode of speech, which would sound very amusing to the outsider. In the earlier stages *i.e.*, until the patient regains full mastery over the entire chain of expressions (consonants, compound consonants, vowels, exclamations *etc.*) the speech of the patient under treatment sounds mechanical, monotonous and from the point of pronunciation, sometimes absolutely wrong. For instance, to say, "Doctor, may I go to drink a cup of tea?", the patient is made to say, "D-o-o-o-ctor, m-a-a-ay I go-o-o-o to dr-e-e-e-nk a c-u-u-up of t-e-e-ea?" While a non-stammerer would not much notice the elongation of words like "Doctor," "may," "go," and "tea," the drawing out of the vowels in "drink" and "cup" would raise a smile, which would naturally make the patient more self-conscious and avoid the clinic style in private conversations.

During the group practice in articulation, *viz.*, during debates, narrations, platform reading, *etc.* the patients gain not only a practice in the new style of speech, but get rid of the deep self-consciousness and nervousness which are invariably associated with stammerers. Volunteer patients are allowed to take part in these group practices even if they have finished only three days of treatment. All the languages known to each patient are used for individual and group practices and conversation, so that stammerers who are bad in any particular language are given a chance of overcoming their individual defects in all languages known to them. In order to encourage the patients to speak out in front of strangers, outsiders are sometimes invited to watch the debate meetings.

When the Director felt satisfied that an individual patient had regained a rhythmic mode of speech without stuttering or stammering even once from the commencement of the treatment and when the patient had attained about 80 words' speed, he was taken out of the clinic by Mr. Rami for practice with strangers who did not know the patient or know that he was under treatment. He was encouraged to create short conversations with total strangers by inquiring for the prices of various commodities at various shop-fronts, by telephoning to strangers on some pretext or other, by buying tickets at cinema or railway stalls, by asking the time from wayfarers, by seeking direc-

tions from traffic policemen etc. All such essays into conversation with strangers were personally supervised by Mr. Rami himself or by an advanced patient detailed by him. This "outside" practice commenced with tackling about 15 strangers on the first day, and progressively fifty to seventy-five strangers per day subsequently. Before being declared to be completely cured, each patient will thus have spoken to about 500 to 750 strangers.

Since the incidence of stammer is the greatest under the stress of physical stress or exhaustion or excitement, the patient gets a further trial of speaking under these handicaps after about three weeks from the commencement of treatment. The patient for instance is confronted by a sudden but pre-arranged outburst of fury from the doctor or another patient, by sudden questions after a good stretch of running, an unwarranted discussion about the taxi-metre hire with the cab-man, a deliberately planned minor accident like a surprise tilting of the patient's chair from behind etc. Until and unless the patient is able to handle all such unexpected situations in the rhythmic mode of talk, he is not declared to be free from stammer.

Case Reports —Being very much interested in Mr. Rami's method I followed several cases at his clinic, of which the following are a few representative histories:

Case I. R. L., aged 22, Punjabi Hindu.

History:—The trouble started when the boy was about 6 years old, soon after tonsillectomy. About this time, he was very much in the company of a cousin who was a very bad stammerer. So in this case, in addition to the shock of the operation, there may also have been present an element of mimicry. He was seen by me on 29-6-'52. At that time my findings were as follows:

General appearance: healthy. Weight 130 lb. Pulse 80. Temperature 98.4°F. Throat, lips, mouth, tongue: normal. Heart and lungs: normal. The nervous system was thoroughly investigated to rule out organic disease as cause of the trouble, and the findings were:

(1) Intelligence normal. (2) Speech: case of pure stammering. Stammers at the beginning of a sentence or phrase. Stammers less with strangers, and more with people he has a respect for: father, elderly friends of the family, girls etc. Gets exhausted after a short conversation on account of undue expenditure of breath. Stammers more in Hindi and Punjabi than in English. Reading speed about 90 to 100 words per minute. (3) No sign of organic disease was detected.

The device was fitted on the 30th of June '52 and the patient was taught to breathe with the device on: He was taught to read, and speak observing the following rules: (a) Lengthen the first syllable after intake of breath and break off at the third or fourth syllable as the case may be; (b) speak slowly, smoothly but firmly, practise the lengthening of the first syllable of a word or group of words for a long time every day.

12th July 1952:—I saw the patient again this day. His speed in reading was 50 sounds or syllables a minute and he did not have to make any effort of the facial muscles to articulate nor did he get exhausted. In the first 9 days of the treatment he was able to talk at 30 syllables per minute, then from the 10th to 18th day, 50 syllables per minute,

18th to 24th day, 70 syllables. His general health was very much improved and he was apparently getting over the inferiority complex which is so common in these patients.

18th July 1952:—The speed on this day was 75 syllables a minute.

9th August 1952:—The speed was 100 syllables a minute. He talked quite freely and was quite satisfied. He was made to speak very fast for a test at 150 to 200 syllables per minute. He did not stammer even once. For the next few days he was made to go for walks accompanied by Mr. Rami. On the way they spoke to at least a hundred strangers, and as he did not stammer at all, he was considered cured. The people he was made to talk to, were shopkeepers, pedestrians, ladies in the bus-queues etc. He was also made to speak to a number of people on the telephone.

He went back to Delhi towards the middle of August. His subsequent letters show that his people are quite satisfied with the results of treatment and the normal speech which he has now acquired continues unimpaired.

Case II. V. C., aged 31. Weight 98 lbs. Complained of stuttering, stammering and lispng.

History:—The trouble started when the patient was 5 years old. Gives no history of any disease or operation as the immediate precursor of the trouble. Says he had no opportunity for mimicry. The condition is progressive. He stammers more with strangers and elders or superiors. He can sing quite well and without difficulty. Does not give a history of any remissions as are seen in many cases. Stammers at almost every word. General appearance on 30-6-'52: rather on the thin side, temperature 97°F. Pulse 80. Throat and mouth, eyes and tongue: normal. Heart and lungs: normal. The nervous system was thoroughly investigated to make sure no organic disease, as cause of the trouble, was present. The findings were: (1) Intelligence: normal. (2) Speech: stuttering, stammering and lispng present. Had difficulty in uttering every word, moved the head spasmodically whilst talking. The condition was progressive without any remissions at all. Very much worried over his handicap—as a result had developed an inferiority complex. (3) No sign of organic disease was detected.

The device was fitted on the 1st of July 1952, and he was taught to speak as detailed under Case I.

12-7-'52:—Speed 40 to 45 syllables a minute. Could read smoothly, speak smoothly also. Speech rhythmical. Took breath regularly and evenly after every 4 syllables. Seemed happier, not self-conscious of his new mode of speech, and appeared to have adopted this mode even when talking to total strangers. Much improved in health, and felt that he would get over his impediments.

20-7-'52:—Speed 70 syllables a minute. Improvement continued. No hesitation. In the first week he was made to speak 30 syllables a minute, 50 during the second week, 70 during the third week and 100 during the 4th week. He was told that the last speed had to be maintained for at least 6 months.

9-8-'52:—Fifth week: Speed 100 syllables per minute. From the 12th onwards i.e., at the end of the 6th week, he was taken round to speak to perfect strangers and

he came out of the test with flying colours, and left the clinic, as another of the many completely cured and happy patients.

Case III. R. M., aged 22 years.

History:—Started quite early in life. Seems to have imitated a servant girl in the house, who used to stammer. There is a cousin who stammers. No history of any fright, or operation or organic disease that may have initiated the trouble.

Examination:—Pulse 86. Temperature 98.4°F. Weight 125 lbs. Height 5'4½". Lips, mouth, throat: normal. Heart and lungs: normal. Chronic discharge from the left ear accompanied by deafness.

The findings were:—(1) Intelligence: normal. (2) Speech: case of pure stammering. Stammers so badly that his speed was hardly 40 words per minute. Stammered irrespective of who was present. Did not stammer when alone. No remissions. Took very long to get started on a sentence. Painful rigidity about the lips and the facial muscles during attempts to articulate. (3) No sign of organic disease was detected.

The patient was first seen on the 14th of July '52, and the next day the device was put on. I saw him again on the 26th of July i.e., the 12th day of treatment, and found him very much improved. His speech was now 52 syllables a minute. The first syllable came out immediately without any effort. I saw him again on the 9th of August, the 27th day of treatment and found he had retrogressed. This was because he was self-conscious, and would not continue the mode of speech described above, which was taught to him, after leaving the clinic every day. This brings us to one handicap under which the Rami Clinic works, viz., lack of facilities for residential accommodation during the period of treatment. The particular patient described in this case report was ostensibly ashamed or shy of speaking before his usual associates outside the clinic in the peculiarly drawn-out style. I saw him after some months of treatment i.e., some time in November 1952 and found a great deal of improvement which however, might have accrued earlier if he had been more co-operative or if he could have been counselled to adopt the system in residential surroundings more congenial to his natural self-consciousness.

Case IV. C. K., aged 16. This was a case of very bad lispng without being complicated by stammering or stuttering symptoms. He was first seen on 5th July '52. Temperature 98.0°F. Pulse 90. Weight 108 lbs. Heart and lungs: normal. Lips, throat, palate, teeth, tongue: normal.

History:—He had delayed milestones as a child and used to lisp from the very start. The father has a squint as a result of fright at his own shadow when he was a child of three.

The findings were:—He was inclined to be exceedingly nervous. (1) Intelligence: normal. (2) Speech: Nearly 23 letters of the English alphabet were defectively pronounced, so much so that not a single sentence in a reading demonstration of 15 minutes was intelligible. Some of his typical mispronunciations were the following: thuth (church) lun (run), thime (time), ethleet (streets), mole (more), peth (fetched),

thath (dad), aye (hay), ath (has), Lam (Ram) etc. Since the Nagari alphabet is a more representative and scientific one, he was asked to read out the consonants in Nagari. Out of the 39 primary consonants he could pronounce only 7 correctly, which he also used for the remaining 32. Finally he pronounced his own name Chandru as "Thandhlu". (3) No sign of organic disease.

I saw the patient again on the 26th July i.e., 21st day of treatment. I found him speaking much better. He seemed to have got over every one of the defects. His health was better and his look less of a neurotic type. The nervousness which was initially very marked, seemed to have passed away completely.

Mr. Rami had to take much more pains with this case, and the period of treatment was longer. But eventually the patient left the clinic completely cured of every defect of lisping. He could pronounce even compound consonants clearly, though slowly. In this case also, the cure was effected on the basis of breath-control and practice, but without the aid of the palate device.

Biographical note on Mr. M. S. Rami—It is deeply regretted that Mr. M. S. Rami whose method of Stammer Therapy has been detailed above died suddenly in Bombay on the 20th of April 1953.

Mr. M. S. Rami was born at Patan (Gujerat) about 44 years ago. At the age of eight he developed a slight stammer as a result of an accidental fall. The trouble was accentuated and confirmed within three years owing to his having been segregated in the class-room.

At the age of twenty-three, after having undergone all the systems of therapy commonly adopted in this country, *viz.*, speaking with pebbles in the mouth, standing in neck-deep water and shouting etc., he lost all hope of ever regaining normal speech. He left for Japan in order to learn Dentistry (he held a Diploma from Tokyo and thus came to be known as Dr. Rami), and while moulding dentures for his patients conceived the theory which was destined to be the genesis of his sensational method of curing stammerers: he thought that if a method could be found to control the intake and expenditure of breath of a stammerer artificially, the trouble could be solved. He invented a palate device for himself and practised laboriously at controlled respiration and articulation. Without any precedent for this method and without anyone's guidance he attained such a measure of success in curing himself that on his return to India he undertook the treatment of stammer cases in Nagpur, Ahmedabad and Bombay. The records at his clinic show a success in almost all of the hundreds of cases undertaken by him, with the exception of those whose speech defects were caused by organic malformation or damage.

Still what impressed one most was not so much the measure of success achieved by him as the amount of labour and sympathy he devoted to each individual case: patients were being accepted by him with due regard to their paying capacities, very poor ones being treated entirely free.

Though unfortunately his premature death removes from the Indian field the only recognized authority in handling speech defects successfully, the method of therapy perfected by him is still in use at the Rami Clinic in Bombay.

THE STRANGE COW

A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY

HUNDREDS of years ago Uzhavarkarai, a village near Pondicherry, was inhabited by rich landlords. In those days when one's wealth was measured by the number of cattle one kept and the acres of land one owned, the richest man acted as the headman of the village.

The headman of Uzhavarkarai was so affluent that he wore sandals made of gold. He had more than a hundred servants to care for his cattle and land. Nearly a dozen servants were at his beck and call.

Cowherds and shepherds drove the headman's cattle to a nearby wood at dawn and brought them back to their sheds in the afternoon. Before it was dusk every cow was milked and the headman himself supervised the work.

The headman had a soft corner for a strange cow. It was pitch black in colour and its little horns were like a stag's. It was fat and sleek. Above all, the measures of milk that the black cow gave outnumbered those of any other cows of high breed.

One day the headman was taken aback when it was reported to him that the udder of the black cow seemed wizened and not a drop of milk could be extracted from any of its teats.

The headman enquired of the cowherds. But all of them reported that at mid-day they had seen the cow's udder swollen with milk.

One full week passed. The black cow gave not a drop of milk. The country Veterinary surgeon was consulted. After a close examination, he reported that the cow was hale and hearty.

Doubts clouded the headman. He resolved to unravel the mystery.

On the morning of the next day the cowherds and shepherds herded the cattle to the wood. The headman too stole into the wood without getting noticed.

He climbed up a tall and bushy tree and sat comfortably on its topmost branch. From there he had a complete view of the wood. He spotted the black cow in the herd and carefully watched its movements.

By midday its udder swelled and looked like a woman pregnant with twins.

"My God! What happens to so much milk!" he exclaimed in astonishment.

When the sun was seen exactly in mid-sky, the black cow hurried in a different direction. The headman's eyes followed it. The cow came to a sudden halt when it reached a thick bush. Statuelike it stood, and milk jetted out of its teats down into the bush.

Struck with wonder the headman climbed down the tree and tip-toed towards the bush.

To his great shock he saw his black cow standing on a bush and its udder stood exactly above a termite-hill partly hidden by creepers. The milk was flowing into the termite-hill.

He had found out the cause for the loss of milk. Yet a greater portion of the mystery remained unsolved.

The headman ran towards the place where a few of his cowherds were sitting together and playing a game of dice. When they saw their master, they stood up to inquire about the cause of his anxiety.

“Come with me... Come with me...,” cried the headman in a hurried tone and ran towards the bush.

The cowherds followed him, only to stand still at the sight of the milk-jetting cow.

Heedless of the men around, the cow went on up to its last drop. Its udder shrank. The cow went away to graze again.

“What is there inside the termite-hill? To whom does it offer all its milk?” the headman asked.

“Certainly there should be serpents,” replied a pious cowherd.

“But I cannot find any reason for the cow giving milk to poisonous serpents,” said another.

“Yes!” the headman said with determination. “We have to find out what is inside the termite-hill.”

The cowherds, as if waiting for such an order, began digging the termite-hill. No serpent came out but they hit at a stone. They gently removed the earth, using their hands, and carefully excavated a big stone.

It turned out to be a Shiva Linga. The headman and the cowherds prostrated themselves before it and went to the village to report this sudden appearance of a Shiva Linga and the strange behaviour of the black cow.

Very soon a temple for the newly excavated Shiva Linga was constructed and the black cow, thereafter considered to be sacred, gave the Shiva Linga a milk-bath every day.

Compiled & Retold by P. RAJA