

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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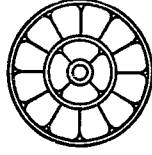
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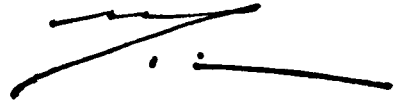


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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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# BODILY LIFE, SELF-INTEGRATION, DEATH

A TALK OF THE MOTHER TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN  
ON JULY 1, 1953

*“The human being is at home and safe in the material body; the body is his protection. There are some who are full of contempt for their bodies and think that things will be much better and easier after death without them. But in fact the body is your fortress and your shelter. While you are lodged in it the forces of the hostile world find it difficult to have a direct hold upon you.... Directly you enter any realm of this [vital] world, its beings gather round you to get out of you all you have, to draw what they can and make it a food and a prey. If you have no strong light and force radiating from within you, you move there without your body as if you had no coat to protect you against a chill and bleak atmosphere, no house to shield you, even no skin covering you, your nerves exposed and bare. There are men who say, ‘How unhappy I am in this body’, and think of death as an escape! But after death you have the same vital surroundings and are in danger from the same forces that are the cause of your misery in this life....*

*“It is here upon earth, in the body itself, that you must acquire a complete knowledge and learn to use a full and complete power. Only when you have done that will you be free to move about with entire security in all the worlds.”*

*Questions and Answers 1929 (12 May)*

*(A child) After death people enter the vital world, but those who do good go to paradise?*

WHERE is your paradise? Who has taught you that? They have spoken to you of heaven and hell and purgatory?...No? Not of all that? From where did you gather your idea of paradise? From which book?

*I have heard about it.*

But from whom?

*I do not remember now.*

It is generally what religious priests say to the faithful to encourage them to do good. For it is a notorious fact that life is not more easy for the good than for the wicked; usually it is the contrary: the wicked succeed better than the good! So people who are not very spiritual say to themselves: “Why should I take the trouble of being good? It is better to be wicked and have an easy life.” It is very difficult to make them understand that there are many kinds of good and

that sometimes it is worth the trouble perhaps to make an effort to be good. So to make this intelligible to the least intelligent, they are told: "There, it is very simple. If you are quite obedient, quite nice, quite unselfish, if you always do good deeds, and if you believe in the dogmas we teach, well, when you die, God will send you to Paradise. If you have sometimes good will, sometimes bad, if sometimes you do good, sometimes you don't and if you think very much of yourself and very little of others, then when you die, you will be sent to Purgatory for another experience. And then if you are thoroughly wicked, if you are always doing harm to others, doing all kinds of bad things and you do not care about the good of anyone and particularly if you do not believe in the dogma that we teach you, then you will go straight to Hell and for eternity."

This is one of the prettiest inventions I have ever heard of: they have invented *eternal hell*. That is to say, once you are in hell, it is for eternity.... You understand what that means, for eternity? You will be tortured and burnt (in the hot countries you are burnt, in the cold countries you are frozen), and that for eternity. That is it. So I do not know who taught you those pretty things; but they are simply inventions to make people obey, to keep them under control.

There are teachings which are not like that. There are religions which are not like that. But still one can, in a poetic, picturesque, descriptive manner speak of a paradise; because this paradise means a wonderful place where there is utmost joy and happiness and comfort.... And yet that depends upon the religion to which you belong. For there are heavens where you pass your time singing praises to God, you do nothing else—but in the end that must be somewhat wearisome; however, there you pass your time playing music and singing the praises of God. There are other heavens, on the contrary, where you enjoy all possible pleasures, all that you desired to have during your life, you have in heaven. There are heavens where you are constantly in blissful meditation—but for people who are not keen on meditating, that must be rather tiresome. However, that depends, you know: they have invented all kinds of things so that people may really want to be wise and obey the laws given to them.

And man's imagination is so creative, such a form-maker, that there really are in the world places like these heavens. There are places also like these hells and there are places like these purgatories. Man creates out of nothing the things he imagines. If your consciousness is enlightened, then you can be pulled out of these places; otherwise you are shut up, imprisoned there by the very belief you had when alive. You will tell me that it is equal to a life, but it is an altogether illusory and extremely limited existence. It is real only for those who think like that. As soon as you think differently, it does not exist for you any longer; you can come out of it. You can pull a person out of these places, and immediately he perceives that he was imprisoned in his own formation.

Man has an extraordinary power of creation. He has created a whole set of godheads in his own image, having the same faults as himself, doing on a bigger

scale, with greater power whatever he does. These beings have a relative existence, but still it is an independent existence, just like your thought. When you have a thought, a well-made mental formation which goes out of you, it becomes an independent entity and continues on its way and it does that for which it was made. It continues to act independently of you. That is why you must be on your guard. If you have made such a formation and it has gone out, it has gone out to do its work; and after a time you find out that it was perhaps not a very happy thing to have a thought like that, that this formation was not very beneficial; now that it has gone out, it is very difficult for you to get hold of it again. You must have considerable occult knowledge. It has gone out and is moving on its way.... Supposing in a moment of great anger (I do not say that you do so, but still) when you were in quite a rage against someone, you said: "Ah! couldn't some misfortune befall him?" Your formation has gone on its way. It has gone out and you have no longer any control over it; and it goes and organises some misfortune or other: it is going to do its work. And after some time the misfortune arrives. Happily, you do not usually have sufficient knowledge to tell yourself: "Oh ! It is I who am responsible", but that is the truth.

Note that this power of formation has a great advantage, if one knows how to use it. You can make good formations and if you make them properly, they will act in the same way as the others. You can do a lot of good to people just by sitting quietly in your room, perhaps even more good than by undergoing a lot of trouble externally. If you know how to think correctly, with force and intelligence and kindness, if you love someone and wish him well very sincerely, deeply, with all your heart, that does him much good, much more certainly than you think. I have said this often; for example, to those who are here, who learn that someone in their family is very ill and feel that childish impulse of wanting to rush immediately to the spot to attend to the sick person. I tell you, unless it is an exceptional case and there is nobody to attend on the sick person (and at times even in such a case), if you know how to keep the right attitude and concentrate with affection and good will upon the sick person, if you know how to pray for him and make helpful formations, you will do him much more good than if you go to nurse him, feed him, help him wash himself; indeed all that everybody can do. Anybody can nurse a person. But not everybody can make good formations and send out forces that act for healing.

In any case, to come back to our paradise, it is a childish deformation—ignorant or political—of something which is true in a sense but not quite like that...I have told you many times and I could not repeat it too often, that one is not built up of one single piece. We have within us many states of being and each state of being has its own life. All this is put together in one single body, so long as you have a body, and acts through that single body; so that gives you the feeling that it is one single person, a single being. But there are many beings and particularly there are concentrations on different levels: just as you have a phy-

sical being, you have a vital being, you have a mental being, you have a psychic being, you have many others and all possible intermediaries. But it is a little complicated, you might not understand. Suppose you were living a life of desire, passion and impulse: you live with your vital being dominant in you; but if you live with spiritual effort, with great good will, the desire to do things well and an unselfishness, a will for progress, you live with the psychic being dominant in you. Then, when you are about to leave your body, all these beings start to disperse. Only if you are a very advanced yogi and have been able to unify your being around the divine centre, do these beings remain bound together. If you have not known how to unify yourself, then at the time of death all that is dispersed: each one returns to its domain. For example, with regard to the vital being, all your different desires will be separated and each one run towards its own realisation, quite independently, for the physical being will no longer be there to hold them together. But if you have united your consciousness with the psychic consciousness, when you die you remain conscious of your psychic being and the psychic being returns to the psychic world which is a world of bliss and delight and peace and tranquillity and of a growing knowledge. So, if you like to call that a paradise, it is all right; because in fact, to the extent to which you are identified with your psychic being, you remain conscious of it, you are one with it, and it is immortal and goes to its immortal domain to enjoy a perfectly happy life or rest. If you like to call that paradise, call it paradise. If you are good, if you have become conscious of your psychic and live in it, well, when your body dies, you will go with your psychic being to take rest in the psychic world, in a blissful state.

But if you have lived in your vital with all its impulses, each impulse will try to realise itself here and there... For example, a miser who is concentrated upon his money, when he dies, the part of the vital that was interested in his money will be stuck there and will continue to watch over the money so that nobody may take it. People do not see him, but he is there all the same, and is very unhappy if something happens to his precious money. I knew quite well a lady who had a good amount of money and children; she had five children who were all prodigals each one more than the other. The same amount of care she had taken in amassing the money, they seemed to take in squandering it; they spent it at random. So when the poor old lady died, she came to see me and told me: "Ah, now they are going to squander my money!" And she was extremely unhappy. I consoled her a little, but I had a good deal of difficulty in persuading her not to keep watching over her money so that it might not be wasted.

Now, if you live exclusively in your physical consciousness (it is difficult, for you have, after all, thoughts and feelings, but if you live exclusively in your physical), when the physical being disappears, you disappear at the same time, it is finished... There is a spirit of the form: your form has a spirit which persists for seven days after your death. The doctors have declared that you are dead, but the spirit of your form lives, and not only does it live but it is conscious in most of the cases. But

that lasts for seven or eight days and afterwards it is dissolved. I am not speaking of yogis; I am speaking of ordinary people. Yogis have no laws, it is quite different; for them the world is different. I am speaking to you of ordinary men living an ordinary life; for these it is like that.

So the conclusion is that if you want to preserve your consciousness, it would be better to centralise it on a part of your being that is immortal; otherwise it will vanish like a flame in the air. And it is very fortunate, for if it were otherwise, there would be perhaps gods or types of superior men who would create hells and heavens as they do in their material imagination, where they would imprison you; you would be imprisoned in heaven or in hell according as you pleased or displeased them. It would be a very critical situation and happily it is not like that.

*It is said that there is a god of Death. Is it true?*

Yes, I call it the spirit of Death. I know it very well. And that is an extraordinary organisation. You do not know to what an extent it is organised.

I believe there are many of these spirits of death, I believe there are hundreds. I have met at least two of them. One I met in France and the other in Japan, and they were very different; which leads one to believe that probably in accordance with the mental culture, the education, the country and beliefs there should be different spirits. But there are spirits of all the manifestations of Nature: there are spirits of fire, spirits of air, of water, of rain, of wind; and there are spirits of death.

Each spirit of death, whatever it may be, has a claim to a certain number of deaths per day. Indeed it is a fantastic organisation; it is a kind of alliance between the vital forces and the forces of Nature. For example, if the spirit of death has decided: "That is the number of people to which I am entitled", let us say four or five or six, or one or two persons, it depends on the day; it has decided that certain persons would die, it goes straight and settles down beside the person about to die. But if you happen to be conscious (not the person), if you see the spirit going to a person and you do not want him to die, then you can, if you possess a certain occult power, tell it: "No, I forbid you to take him." It is a thing that has happened, not once but several times, in Japan and here. It was not the same spirit. That is what makes me say that there must be many.

"I don't want him to die."

"But I have a right to one death!"

"Go and find someone who is ready to die."

So I have seen several cases: sometimes it is just a neighbour who dies suddenly in place of the other, sometimes it is an acquaintance and sometimes it is an enemy. Naturally, there is a relation, good or bad, of neighbourhood (or anything else) which externally looks like chance. But it is the spirit who has taken *its* dead. The spirit has a claim to one death, it will have one death. You can tell it: "I forbid



you to take this one”, and have the power of sending it away, and the spirit can do nothing but go away; but it does not give up its due and goes elsewhere. There is another death.

It is the same thing with fire. I saw the spirit of fire, particularly in Japan because fire is an extraordinary thing in that country. When a fire starts, some eighty houses burn: a whole quarter. It is something fantastic. The houses are of wood and they burn like match-boxes; you see a fire kindling and then all of a sudden, puff!... You have never seen a match-box catching fire? a flash! like that, a flash! one, two, three, ten, twenty houses burnt down before my eyes!... So there are spirits of fire. One day, I was in my bed. I was concentrating, looking at people. Suddenly I saw something like a cloud of flames drawing close to the house. I looked and I saw it was a conscious being.

“Eh! what are you here for?”

“I have the right to burn the house, start a fire.”

“That’s possible, I told it, but not here.”

And it could not resist.

It is a question of who proves the stronger. I said: “No, here you can’t burn, that’s all!” Five minutes later I heard cries: “Ah! Ah!” Two or three houses farther away, a house had caught fire. It had gone there as I had forbidden it to come to my house. It had a claim to one house. There we are!

*Sometimes when people are dying, they know that they are about to die. Why don't they tell the spirit to go away?*

Ah! well, that depends upon the people. Two things are necessary. First of all, nothing in your being, no part of your being should want to die. That does not happen often. You have always a defeatist in you somewhere: something that is tired, that something that is disgusted, something that has had enough of it, something that is lazy, something that does not want to struggle and says: “Well! Ah! Let it be finished, so much the better.” That is sufficient, you are dead.

But it is a fact: if nothing, absolutely nothing in you consents to die, you will not die. For someone to die, there is always a second, perhaps the hundredth part of a second when he gives his consent. If there is not this second of consent, he does not die.

I knew people who should have really died according to all physical and vital laws; and they refused. They said: “No, I will not die”, and they lived. There are others who do not need at all to die, but they are of that kind and say: “Ah! Well! Yes, so much the better, it will be finished”, and it is finished. Even that much, even nothing more than that: you need not have a persistent wish, you have only to say: “Well, yes, I have had enough!” and it is finished. So it is truly like that. As you say, you may have death standing by your bedside and tell him: “I do not want you, go away”, and it will be obliged to go away. But usually one gives way, for one must

struggle, one must be strong, one must be very courageous and enduring, must have a great faith in the necessity of life; like someone, for example, who feels very strongly that he has still something to do and he must absolutely do it. But who is sure he has not within him the least bit of a defeatist, somewhere, who just yields and says: "It is all right"?... It is here, the necessity of unifying oneself.

Whatever the way we follow, the subject we study, we always arrive at the same result. The most important thing for an individual is to unify himself around his divine centre; in that way he becomes a true individual, master of himself and his destiny. Otherwise, he is a plaything of forces that toss him about like a piece of cork on a river. He goes where he does not want to go, he is made to do things he does not want to do, and finally he loses himself in a hole without having any strength to recover. But if you are consciously organised, unified around the divine centre, ruled and directed by it, you are master of your destiny. That is worth the trouble of attempting.... In any case, I find it preferable to be the master rather than the slave. It is a rather unpleasant sensation to feel yourself pulled by the strings and made to do things whether you want to or not—that is quite irrelevant—but to be compelled to act because something pulls you by the strings, something which you do not even see—that is exasperating. However, I do not know, but I found it very exasperating, even when I was quite a child. At five, it began to seem to me quite intolerable and I sought for a way so that it might be otherwise—without people getting a chance to scold me. For I knew nobody who could help me and I did not have the chance that you have, someone who can tell you: "This is what you have to do!" There was nobody to tell me that. I had to find it out all by myself. And I found it. I started at five. And you, you were five long ago....

*Voilà.*

*(Questions and Answers 1953, pp. 130-140)*

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of June 1984)

August 11, 1940

P: It seems that behind Japan's claim, there must be Hitler's pressure on the Pétain government to accede to the Japanese demand.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite possible.

P: Hitler may want the Japanese as a check against the British and keep them engaged in the East while he carries out the invasion.

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps. Japan is still talking of Indochina, the East Indies and the South Sea Isles and not talking further than that. But she may start an attack on Singapore after settling in those places. In that way the Japanese are a remarkable people. To them first thing comes first; they can wait for the next. Once their scheme is fixed, they can wait for years to carry it out, and when the right moment comes they strike. Japan's influence in the East is of course good for us. It will serve as a counterpoise against Hitler and Stalin if England goes down and in the meantime we can prepare as much as we can unless we fly at each other's throat. We heard the other day—I don't know where—maybe on the radio, that the Kuomintang met and spoke of limiting the suffering of the people. The leaders wanted to adopt a pro-fascist policy by lining up with Germany. That means the whole of the Far East for Japan. There was no confirmation of that news.

P: Everybody is becoming pro-German now. The result of the French collapse.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, they think England will go down but are not quite sure. This is the first time the French government is yielding like that—so flat and miserable. Must be very decadent.

S: Malaviya is doing Shanti Swastyana now.

N: There was in the *New Statesman and Nation* a controversy over the efficacy of prayer. A taxi-driver said that the Belgian defection was the result of prayer.

SRI AUROBINDO: A humorous taxi-driver!

S: And another person said that the evacuation at Dunkirk was also the result of prayer.

N: Some people here said jokingly that the Mother's gift to France was responsible for the collapse, as it came one week after the gift and they hope that England won't have such consequences after the gift to England.

SRI AUROBINDO: It may be said that this Channel victory (60 German planes lost) was due to that. Someone else may say something else. But the real purpose of the gift was to counteract the pro-Nazi propaganda in the Ashram and in that it has been successful.

P: Hitler's 10th August has passed and nothing happened.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. The threat to Indochina may be the event of the 10th.

*Evening*

S: One M. P. has contributed £100,000 to replace the 16 aeroplanes lost in the last German raid. Madras has given some money for two aeroplanes—for training or for the Air Force, we don't know.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Madras Squadron of one aeroplane. (*Laughter*)

N: Dr. Mahendra Sircar has written to Mr. Charu Dutt that the Mother's gift to the Indian government has surprised many in Calcutta. He wants some elucidation.

S: Why has Mahendra Sircar suddenly taken interest?

SRI AUROBINDO: There have been many others. Somebody has come from Calcutta to get elucidation on it. Jatin Sen Gupta protested first when we gave 10,000 francs to France. But this gift to the Indian government he has appreciated. But it should be plain enough: I want Hitler to be knocked down.

N: I don't understand how Dr. Sircar asks that question. Is he anti-British?

P: He doesn't know what will happen to him if Hitler came to India?

SRI AUROBINDO: He will lose his pension or Mussolini may allow it because of old times!

August 12, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO (*addressing P*): Do you remember when Bose was arrested?

P: It must be about a month back—in July.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then how do they say that Bose met Baron on the 4th? Not only that, even after the interview Baron met the Bengal Governor, expressed his confidence in Bose. What is the matter then?

P: Then perhaps the Indian government has taken steps over the head of the Bengal government. But even so, they always inform the local government.

*Evening*

P: About Baron, perhaps Bonvain is trying to be in tune with the Pétain government and at the same time satisfy the British. Baron spoke openly in favour of the British alliance in Calcutta.

SRI AUROBINDO: It seems to be a mystery. The Indian government is refusing telegrams of the French people, it seems. If so, it may be retaliation against the French for their action against the British in Syria....

Have you read Gandhi's argument in favour of Ahimsa? He says that non-violence has been in progression and now De Gaulle also has advised it to the French.

P: That is because they have no other way.

SRI AUROBINDO: Gandhi also admits that.

(*Sri Aurobindo was given Moni's article to read in reply to Meghnad Saha. Nolini Sen was much hurt by his personal attack.*)

SRI AUROBINDO: I have read Moni's article—(*and then added laughing*) it is personal all through. One can't but feel the sting there and the force. But Meghnad also has made personal attacks. So nobody has any reason to complain.

P: No. Moni's criticism can't be without personal attack.

August 13, 1940

N: Azad has refused to see the Viceroy.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has refused?

N: Yes, he says that as there is no common ground, no use of any interview.

S: They will send a formal reply after the Working Committee meeting.

N: And Nehru finds a wide gulf between the Congress demand and the Viceroy's statement.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh Nehru! But he should have seen the Viceroy. At least Gandhi would have done that.

P: No. All the same since Kher and others are meeting the Viceroy they will know what he has to say.

SRI AUROBINDO: Where is the Viceroy now? In Hyderabad?

P: Perhaps. He wants 20 crores from the Nizam, it seems.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is because the Nizam is anti-British, perhaps? So the Viceroy wants to squeeze out whatever he can before the English go down. Doesn't want to leave anything for Hitler. (*Laughter*)

N: But why is the Nizam anti-British?

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't know, this is a funny world—a joke.

P: Montbrun has already made a broadcast from Madras. He has now left for England to fight for England. He wants to be somebody and if England wins, he may be that.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, if England wins. But that is a risk an ambitious person has to take, and he is very ambitious.

P: Dara has become double now. How fat he has grown!

SRI AUROBINDO: Is there room for that? And will his room hold him?

August 14, 1940

(*About Amery's statement, Sri Aurobindo remarked that the minority question is a black spot because it leaves the power of vetoing with them.*)

August 15, 16, 1940

(*Today's evening radio says that 144 German planes have been brought down in England—the biggest number so far.*)

C: That is the result of Darshan.

SRI AUROBINDO (*Laughing*): The day of Hitler's triumphal entry in to England!

N: It seems Anandamayee of Dacca is dead.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh! she is dead.

N: It is reported in the paper.

SRI AUROBINDO: The disciples have killed her as they tried to do Maharshi by giving him dyspepsia?

N: They say it must be due to the Divine Will.

SRI AUROBINDO: Everything is due to the Divine Will because the Divine Will is at the back of everything. But what is the Divine Will? The will works through various factors—*e.g.*, forces, one's own nature, etc. The murderer also can say that behind his murder there is the Divine Will. Then his being hanged also has to be taken in that light. Lele supported his queer acts by saying they were due to the Divine Will. If everything is taken like that, what is the use of doing Yoga?...  
(*To P*) I hear that the Darshan was very happy.

P: Yes, many people say that. Plenty of people saw you smiling.

N: Dilip also said it was a very happy Darshan. But they want to know what your impression was.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh, that!... Ali looked as if he was the Nizam.

P: You recognised Dutt this time?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, I recognised him by the old cut of his face as well as by the man behind.

August 17, 1940

P: Italy is trying to foment trouble in Greece.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, and she says it is for the sake of the Albanians. Wonderful people these!...

N: I asked Ajit Chakra his opinion about Dilip's poetry and why Dilip is not appreciated in Bengal. He says that Dilip has not been able to blend *bhāva* and *bhāṣā* together and there are many lapses in his poetry. Of course, some of his pieces are very good, but they are very few. He doesn't consider that because Dilip has cut a new line he is not popular.

SRI AUROBINDO: The reason why they don't like his poetry is because it is not traditional. It is mental poetry and not emotional like Nishikanta's.

S (*Before the topic could proceed further*): We all heard Bhishma's music last night. (*All of us expressed our appreciation of it in spite of its being only raga music.*)

SRI AUROBINDO (*after listening to us quietly, without making any remarks and then smiling*): Like the other arts, music doesn't seem to have been modernised. There is no room for Cubism in music.

*Evening*

(*Some friend has written to P that he considers that as everything is happening according to the Divine Will, there is no such thing as right or wrong.*)

SRI AUROBINDO: Does he actually feel or perceive it or is it only a mental conception?

P: Can't say. Looks as though he perceives.

SRI AUROBINDO: What he may perceive may be the Cosmic Force. But what we seek is something higher than the Cosmic Force. One may say that the Cosmic Force is also Divine or the Mother's Force. Yes, but the Mother's Force is acting through it under certain conditions for a certain purpose. The Cosmic Force works through nature which one has to observe and reject. Then it is not the question of right or wrong that is to be considered, but ignorance and knowledge. The Cosmic Force works in Ignorance according to the Laws of Ignorance, whereas one has to pass from Ignorance to Knowledge.

*(To be continued)*

NIRODBARAN

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## A QUEST

WORDS like whispers on a flute  
stream across the setting sun.  
Silent mirror of a lily pool  
suddenly breaks  
strewing hues over evening canticles.

Memory blurs upon the frosting glass of Time.  
Everything concentrates into present and now  
and mingles back again in eternity.

\*

Chirping birds have gone to sleep.

A night bird hovers around  
the lone meditative tree  
signing illegibly  
upon huge canvas of gloom.

The little star above the distant palm  
blinks a code of messages for who-knows-whom.

Soft touch of a whispering flute  
groping for words for a new dawn  
cajoles the dreaming earth at midnight.

RABI PADHI

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

*(Continued from the issue of June 1984)*

## The Mother's Message

This is the  
interesting story of  
how a being Surrendered  
to Divine Love



(36)

THE month of June 1957 began. Summer was in full swing.

On the 1st a lovely card came from the Mother, depicting daffodils around a turquoise lake. The meaning the Mother has given to the flower is:

“Power of Beauty—Beauty does not get its full power except when it is surrendered to the Divine.”



She had written on the card:

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

A charming poem by Wordsworth ran across my mind—a poem I had learnt at school:

“I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.”

The Mother went into the Prosperity Room as she did on every 1st of the month. From there she went to play tennis.

We had a brief meditation in her room at the Playground.

As usual on Saturdays there were movies. Sometimes I saw them, sometimes not.

The following day I received a card from the Mother, showing a bamboo tree

and some chickens nearby. She had inscribed on the card:

“To my dear little child Huta  
This is a very artistic Chinese painting.  
With all my love and sweetness.”

In the evening when I met the Mother, she said charmingly:

“Ah!... child, do you like the card I sent you this morning? You see, in Chinese and Japanese paintings we can find most of the space vacant: only in one corner you can see the picture. They are simple and beautiful.”

\*

Four days elapsed with the same pattern of life. Unfailingly the Mother sent me attractive cards with her love and sweetness, along with bouquets of white roses.

I was not near any solution of the inner and outer strife which tormented me day in and day out. I could not possibly face the world as it was.

The Mother was fully aware of each and every turn of my life and she dealt with it accordingly.

The incessant struggle affected my general health. Many questions crowded in my brain. I thought to myself: “When the divine Grace and Love are there with me, why should I suffer continuously from ill-health and a restless mind?”

Once again depression, despondency and disgust gripped my consciousness. The Mother wrote to me on the 7th:

“Whatever is the *Truth* of your being, *that will be* and nothing else. It is the revolt against this Truth—the Divine’s Will—that makes you ill and weak and miserable; stop revolting and you will be all right.

“My sweetest love is always with you.

“You might have a little touch of influenza, you may consult Nripendra about it.”

When I saw the Mother in the evening, my eyes filled with tears. I was sorry I was unable to receive her Force. My life seemed a big cypher. She looked at me for some time, full of compassion. After giving me various flowers, she embraced me tenderly. I took my leave.

Despite my precarious state I continued my practice of drawing. But I knew right from the start that I was poor at it. I felt that it was necessary to master the art. Otherwise I would not achieve my purpose. Furthermore, the Mother could not devote her valuable time only to teaching me drawing and painting. So

once again I decided that I should go to the Ashram School to learn the subjects. I informed the Mother.

She answered:

“I have just read your letter of yesterday. You can very well go to school for the painting. Jayanti will teach you all you want to know. He will take you with the others to study landscapes.

“I told him to lend you the books I had spoken to you about and if you ask him he will give you the books which you can keep with you as long as you find them useful.

“This evening I shall see you at 6 o’clock.

“With my love and blessings.”

O dear! Why didn’t I drown myself in the deepest sea before I wrote to her that letter? Where in the whole world could I find a perfect divine Teacher like her? That very instant I dropped the silly idea and afterwards I never thrust my caprice again upon her.

Though occasionally I found the Mother’s ways hard to stomach, I frequently thought of turning over a new leaf and starting my life anew. Yet I harboured in my mind an inferiority complex. My head was still in a whirl of speculation and apprehension. When I saw the Mother in the evening, I told her: “Mother, I will learn all that you will teach me. I am truly ashamed of the letter I wrote to you. Please forgive me.”

She bent forward from her couch and cupped my chin in her hands and stared down at me with the look I knew so well. I had watched that same light kindle in her blue-grey eyes when she had been pleased. Then she said:

“C’est très bien, mon petit.”

She wanted me to learn solely her technique. I am fortunate to have grasped her style.

The Mother had come in contact with great artists of the time and communicated with them for quite a number of years. Naturally she had observed their work with great interest and enthusiasm.

\*

On 11th June, the Mother sent a Russian porcelain doll which the Russian Gymnasts had given her when they had come to the Ashram the previous year to demonstrate their physical feats.

She asked me to paint it on a white background. I drew it on a canvas and took it to the Mother along with the doll. She corrected the drawing and sketched the doll on a sheet of paper.

The next day I completed the painting. The Mother was pleased with it. She said:

“I shall send you crayons. You must draw ponds, trees, birds, flowers, the sky and people. It will be indeed a very good practice. If you go on sketching various things and repeat each thing, you will see how quickly you will learn to draw accurately.”

She sent me a box of crayons together with a card and white roses.

Since the Mother had asked me to draw people, I did a portrait of my nephew Harish. The Mother viewed it in the evening. She said:

“It is good. But more details like light and shadow are necessary to bring out the fullness of the face. Just see whether your nephew is in the Playground.”

I said: “Yes, Mother. When I came here, he was doing gymnastics. I will certainly call him.”

I went out from her room and looked around everywhere. He was not to be found. On my return I told the Mother: “I am sorry he is not there. He must have finished his gymnastics and gone home.”

Then from my drawing she sketched my nephew’s portrait on another bit of paper to show me how it could be done precisely. Amazingly, she brought out the exact likeness of his face. She smiled after giving her sketch to me and said:

“Child, practise more and more in order to do perfect drawings.”

I sketched numerous things at random though not to my satisfaction.

On 14th June, the Mother called me in the morning. The wonderful setting of the objects was a real sight in the Meditation Hall upstairs. On a stool I saw an exquisite crystal plate-on-stand, with luscious grapes in it. One of the bunches hung artistically from the dish. On the opposite side, near the base of the dish to keep the balance with the bunch of grapes there was a light pink hibiscus—“Consciousness one with the Divine Consciousness—smiling and happy it knows no shadows any longer.”

The Mother came smiling, bringing a few white roses for me. She sat on her high-backed chair and pointed to the harmonious composition. She also showed me the sketch she had done of the objects. I was asked to paint them on a white background.

I took all the things to my room in Golconde, placed them on a stool as instructed by the Mother, and sketched them on a canvas board.

At the same time I painted a few grapes on a small separate board.

First she saw the sketch and approved of it. Then after seeing the painted grapes, she remarked:

“They are not at all bad. But, my child, you should give more definite form to the grapes and a shine on them to make them vivid.”

I asked: “Mother, in that case, may I come to your apartment in the morning to have a look at the painting you did when you were in Paris? Then surely I shall get some ideas.”

The Mother replied:

“Yes, I will have the painting ready for you. Come in the morning after 10 o'clock.”

The succeeding morning she sent me a card bearing a reproduction of the painting “Heads of Angels” by Sir Joshua Reynolds—with these words:

“The aspiration is always the sign of the possibility and perseverance leads to the certitude of realisation.

With all my love and sweetness.”

After arranging near her photograph the white roses which she had sent me I took my sketch-book and crayons and set out for the Meditation Hall upstairs where I found the Mother’s painting lying on a carpet. I attempted to copy the grapes from it. Meanwhile the Mother entered the room. I got up and greeted her with the flowers I had brought for her. She accepted them with a gracious smile and said:

“While painting, you must show grapes in a mauvish-greenish tint. I can tell you that it is not easy to bring out the effect of mauve. I tried several times when I painted them. Also you must try to make them translucent and give a shine to them to make them look frosty.”

After a pause she indicated her painting and said:

“You know, this painting was exhibited in Paris many many years ago, and I won the first prize for it!”

And she laughed merrily. I was not surprised. For, I found it full of lustre and living vibrations. She further said:

“Show me your painting in the evening at the Playground. Au-revoir.”

And with a swirl of her gown she went into the other room leaving a faint delicate whiff of perfume—Jasmine La Galion Paris.

I took a deep breath and resumed my work of copying so that while painting I would know the exact hues.

I went back to Golconde and started the painting. I took a break only for my lunch. As always the Mother sent varieties of 'Prasad.' It was out of the question to take my siesta, because the work had to be finished as scheduled.

When the Mother saw the painting, she exclaimed:

"Why, child, it is very good. Next you must try to draw the face of an angel."

Instantly I remembered the card she had sent me the preceding morning. I said to her that I would certainly try. Then suddenly I asked the Mother: "I have finished painting the grapes. What should I do with them?"

Usually I sent all the objects back to her after I had finished my job. Those grapes were so big and nice. I was puzzled as to what could be done with them.

The Mother laughed softly and said:

"Eat them up!"

I could not possibly eat them up alone. I shared the grapes with my fellow sadhaks and sadhikas in Golconde. They were appreciative and encouraged me to paint this sort of thing more frequently! And we all laughed. These were the moments we could laugh easily, otherwise outer and inner struggles showed on the faces of people, no matter how hard they tried to conceal them.

Outsiders think that we are happy-go-lucky people without any aim.

The Mother has written in *Sri Aurobindo Ashram*, pp. 11-12:

"What we are attempting here is to prove to the world, through a concrete example, that by some inner psychological realisation and some outer organisation a world can be created where most of the causes of human misery will cease to exist."

She has written :

"None of the present achievements of humanity, however great they are, can be for us an ideal to follow. The wide world is there as a field of experiment for human ideals.

Our purpose is quite different and if our chances of success are small just now, we are sure that we are working to prepare the future.

I know that from the external point of view, we are below many of the present achievements in this world, but our aim is not a perfection in accordance with human standards. We are endeavouring for something else which belongs to the future.

The Ashram has been founded and is meant to be the cradle of the new world.

The inspiration is from above, the guiding force is from above, the creative power is from above, at work for the descent of the new realisation.

It is only by its shortcomings, its deficiencies and its failures that the Ashram belongs to the present world.

None of the present achievements of humanity have the power to pull the Ashram out of its difficulties.

It is only a total conversion of all its members and an integral opening to the descending Light of Truth that can help it to realise itself.

The task, no doubt, is a formidable one, but we received the command to accomplish it and we are upon earth for that purpose alone.

We shall continue up to the end with an unfailing trust in the Will and the Help of the Supreme.

The door is open and will always remain open to all those who decide to give their life for that purpose.”

\*

I expressed my wish to the Mother for outdoor sketching. She arranged with Abhaysingh to take me out every Sunday.

She used to write notes on Sundays about what time Abhaysingh would pick me up from Golconde. This was the first one she wrote:

“Abhaysingh will take you this morning at 8.30 to Cazanove. You can come up at 8.15 before going.”

I went to the Mother first and then went to Cazanove. Occasionally, I visited several other gardens and fields. But more often I sketched in Cazanove.

I recall the words of Dante:

“Natural beauty in its most profound sense is the highest form of beauty.”

And to capture that beauty was no joke. When I tried to draw birds on a tree they flew away, when I attempted to sketch trees they moved in the breeze and I could not catch their correct position, when I tried to draw the sky the clouds dispersed. I thought: “How can I illustrate this formidable Nature on a piece of paper?” I gave up going outside, feeling totally baffled.

I painted the face of an angel in water-colour as the Mother had wished. To my surprise, it looked as if I had done it in oils. In fact, I was not used to water-colour and I was not good at it. I showed the picture to the Mother and told her about water-colours. She said:

“Stick only to oil colours.”

I was glad, because with oil colours I could run riot.

She was about to enter into a trance. I asked her: “Mother, how to check vagrant thoughts and concentrate on the Divine?”

Her eyes widened. Then a gentle smile outlined her lips when she said:

“Indeed, the mind is just like a squirrel which is turning round and round in a cage that also is revolving. But you should gather all thoughts to a point at the centre of the forehead and then bring them down to the heart, go deep within—by turning fully inward, as if you were going into a well which is not very broad. You have to go down step by step. First of all, of course, you will move on the surface and then go deep inside and there you can find the real thing and see everything with your inner eyes.

“There is also another way. It is like this: Imagine that there is an inner chamber, into which you can step back—the chamber has an outer door through which you must pass.

“You must pull all your thoughts inside yourself like tortoises, whenever wrong suggestions come and attack you.

“You should awaken your inner sense and have a psychic touch. Then, no doubt, you can find the Truth; otherwise it is understood that you have not yet started the inner journey to find the Divine. Nevertheless, this needs a lot of practice—it cannot come in a day. It takes years and years.”

That night once again I grew solemn and pondered over the sentence the Mother had spoken:

“You should awaken your inner sense and have a psychic touch. Then, no doubt, you can find the Truth; otherwise it is understood that you have not yet started the inner journey to find the Divine....”

The psychological struggle, the restless mind and an anguished heart were gigantic obstructions in my way. With a deep sigh I buried my face in the pillow, and although I was sure I would never sleep, oblivion quickly claimed me.

Indeed, Ramakrishna said correctly:

“It is an old saying: ‘Whoever is perfect in meditation is near to liberation.’ Do you know when a man is perfect in meditation? When as soon as he sits to meditate the atmosphere of the Divine is around him and his soul is in touch with the Ineffable.”



I received from the Mother a bamboo vase along with green blade-like leaves to paint. As always I drew the objects. She saw the sketch and made some corrections.

On Friday the 21st I finished the painting but could not take it with me to the Mother in the evening, because of heavy rain. The downpour came in a solid grey-white curtain wiping out everything. I wondered whether I could go to her. But it abated a little when I entered her room.

I told the Mother that I had finished the painting but could not bring it owing to the rain. She said:

“Ah! rain!”

And she closed her eyes while holding my hands. She awoke from her trance and looked intently into my eyes. Then instantly she took from the dish which was beside her a few leaves of Basil—*Ocimum Sanctum*—Tulsi—Devotion—“Modest and fragrant, it gives itself without seeking for anything in return”—and popped them into my mouth. She said firmly:

“Eat them up, my child, it is the decision of the Divine Grace that you will participate in the Divine’s work.”

I thought with sheer wonderment that what she had announced was incredible. For I deserved not a single iota of the Divine’s Grace.

The Mother had gained an insight into my feeling. At once, there and then, she wrote on a sheet of paper:

“Behind the sorrow and loneliness, behind the emptiness and feeling of incapacity, there is the golden light of the Divine Presence shining soft and warm.”

She gave the sheet to me with assurance.

I put my head on her lap as if my soul had left its destiny entirely to her. But I could not bring my stupid and sceptic mind to believe this divine boon and promise.

Days dragged on. I grew weary of sketching and painting, harbouring in my petty mind the notion that doing only these things could not make me collaborate in the Divine’s work.

I was too exhausted to do anything.

(To be continued)

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## THE INSPIRATION OF *PARADISE LOST*

*(With acknowledgements to the Sri Aurobindo Circle Annual in which this series first appeared we are reproducing it, with a little emendation at places, in Mother India on the recommendation of some lovers of literature who consider its chapters the best work of critical appreciation the author has done. We hope our readers will not find the recommendation too much of an enthusiastic mistake.)*

### I

#### Milton's Spaciousness of Soul and Sound

*Paradise Lost*—here we have an epic which would seem almost to make paradise worth losing, since without that loss Milton could not have sung so sublimely and almost regained Paradise for poetry-mad people like the present writer. But more than three hundred years after its composition, years during which a lot of poetry-mad people have had their say about it, it is difficult to avoid making just a rehash of past critical comments. Yet, difficult or no, if one feels that the last word has not yet been spoken, one must make the attempt to bring new aspects forward or at least to present certain shades of old aspects with a new emphasis.

Difficulty is a thing no lover of Milton can shirk without being false to the Miltonic spirit, the spirit of one who, blind and lonely in his old age, amidst a political regime hostile to him and his hopes, kept on fashioning the greatest poetic work by any Englishman, outside the dramas of Shakespeare. The quintessence of this spirit are the words put into the mouth of Satan while that Archangel admonishes one of his despairing followers:

“Fall'n Cherub, to be weak is miserable,  
Doing or suffering...”<sup>1</sup>

But while the admonition has tremendous power, it does not convey the Miltonic spirit's expansive sweep. It is power pared down to the bare bone of heroism. Power widely and richly deployed in a thunder of the whole heroic body's manifold movement is also Milton's. And, as he somewhere says, “if great things to small may be compared”,<sup>2</sup> then apropos of the difficult attempt I am going to make of finding Miltonic matters not yet fully explored, I may illustrate the poet's expansive sweep by quoting some lines about a most difficult attempt from a speech of Beëlzebub, the next in strength to Satan among the rebel Angels.

After a long debate in Hell, Beëlzebub suggests that the best way to continue

<sup>1</sup> Bk. I, 157-8.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. X, 306

war is not so much by direct action against Heaven's King as by a subtle attack on the soul of God's latest creation, Adam. But far indeed from the depths of Hell is the starry universe which in Milton's Cosmology hangs by a golden chain from God's Empyrean and at whose centre is the Earth where Adam is placed in the garden of Eden. Between Hell and Earth, in the Miltonic Cosmology, is the realm of Chaos and Old Night surrounding the starry universe as an enormous ocean a tiny island. So Beëlzebub, when his strategy is accepted and his plan of entering Earth endorsed, raises the great question:

“But, first, whom shall we send  
In search of this new world? Whom shall we find  
Sufficient? Who shall attempt with wandering feet  
The dark, unbottomed, infinite Abyss,  
And through the palpable obscure find out  
His uncouth way, or spread his aery flight  
Upborne with indefatigable wings  
Over the vast Abruapt, ere we arrive  
The happy Isle ? What strength, what art, can then  
Suffice...?”<sup>1</sup>

Face to face with such a passage we ourselves may well employ the words : “What strength, what art!” Take the line:

The dark, unbottomed, infinite Abyss.

It is not so much the intrinsic quality of the adjectives that constitutes the strength or the art here: the adjectives are not novel, at least not at all to us and not quite to Milton's contemporaries, but mark the apt combination of their grand commonplaces in just this order. It creates not only an impression of length beyond length baffling the sight: it creates also what I may term a downward crescendo, a mounting sense of hollow after hollow heaped on each other. And the total effect of the three adjectives is that of two particulars and one generality. “Dark” is a defining word, so too is “unbottomed”: they both have a concreteness, but “infinite” has a mysterious abstract neutrality about it, giving the two preceding qualities an immense continuation as if into nothingness, a void continuation borne out in sound by the three consecutive short *i*'s, the first of which gets its shortness specially enforced by a stress while the remaining vaguely carry on to meet—across the unstressed opening syllable of the next word “Abyss”—the closing syllable of it, which is again a short *i*-sound heavily stressed. This word, after the adjectival trio massed before it, comes as a most natural climax that is—to borrow an expression from submarine warfare—an explosive

<sup>1</sup> Bk. II, 402-11.

depth-charge hissing into an unimaginable horror. And the horror-is all the more vivified at the line's close by the phrase standing at the close of the line preceding this: "wandering feet." It is feet unpractised and fumbling that have to dare an empty profundity which supplies no ground for support, no slightest foot-hold. The contrast between small substantial things and a vacuous amplitude renders our line doubly dreadful: a keen dramatic quality, with a tinge of pathos, is infused into the picture. The dramatic quality is increased by the arrangement of pauses in the passage. Each of the lines prior to the one about the Abyss has a break somewhere. There is in them a tentative movement pressing on; now this movement is taken up and, without being annulled, it is assimilated into a full line-long phrase—a phrase holding with each of the three epithets a sort of pause yet forming one indissoluble whole with which both the significance and the rhythm reach a forceful fulfilment.

However, we are not allowed to stop. The sentence proceeds: the next phrase at the same time that it is separate by means of the conjunction "and", gets interwoven with the earlier because of the understood "who shall". The syntax is just right for the theme of a lengthy yet uninterrupted journey. And in the new phrases we get two expressions joining up with the descriptions "dark" and "unbottomed". Either phrase has an adjective welded to another boldly used as a noun: "the palpable obscure", "the vast A abrupt". The first brings home to us the darkness all around by suggesting an oppressive overwhelming intensity of it: the darkness is such as may be physically felt. The second phrase makes the unbottomed character of the Abyss a nerve-shaking phenomenon: we get the sense as if an endless chasm suddenly broke open below what we had been led to believe was something solid. It is as though a precipice unexpectedly edged off into sheer space. The idea here of something solid ceasing and giving place to thin air is as natural as it is startling; for "the vast A abrupt" opposes no less than continues "the palpable obscure"—it suggests the disappearance of that which seemed dense like a solid. The suggestion of the same thing under two surprisingly opposed aspects is conveyed in terms of sound by the *b* and *p* repeated in "A abrupt" from the earlier phrase.

A further vivification is there of the menace of what we may call in the lingo of modern aviation a never-ending "air-pocket". A huge effort to counteract the menace is conjured up, as a vital necessity, in the words:

or spread his aery flight  
Upborne with indefatigable wings...

That six-syllabled epithet—"indefatigable"—catches up into a final heave of collected breath the difficult endeavour required of keeping afloat above instead of plunging helplessly into the nihil which all the time sucks down.

Several other points of poetic power may be elaborated. But as we shall meet similar ones in passages to be quoted later, we shall refrain here. The strength, the art we have appreciated must suffice—except that we should mention the sustained

largeness of the sensitively modulated rhythm. This rhythmic largeness is unique to Milton among English poets. Several attain it, but never all through. Almost from the first line to the last of many thousands in *Paradise Lost* we have—though at varying altitudes—a spaciousness of sound which seems to be the echo of the very soul of Milton. Writers on Milton have justifiably found certain sides of his personality unsympathetic, even as they have done in the case of another poet who too dealt with a cosmic theme—the Italian Dante. But only sheer wrong-headedness, as in the modern poet-critic Robert Graves, can deny the spaciousness of soul which Milton's expressive rhythm indicates. When Wordsworth spoke of Milton he could not help saying in a line which is itself a piece of Miltonese:

Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart.

When contemplating what an anomaly of nothing Man would be if his teeming purposes were declared a product of Nature's purposelessness, his life a brief flash ending in total gloom, Coleridge could not better bring to a head the enormous oddity of denying immortality than by exclaiming:

If even a soul like Milton's could know death...

When Sri Aurobindo wants to characterise the cause of the height at which move Milton's best outbursts—the opening Books of *Paradise Lost*—he points to “the greatness of the soul that finds expression in its harmonies of speech and sound and the greatness of its sight”.<sup>1</sup> Even in those parts where the supreme poetic vitality is missing, the soul-spaciousness haunts the language and rhythm: what does not live amply from within has still a fine external amplitude. As Sri Aurobindo, noting the absence here of the deeper fire, immediately adds: “Milton writing poetry could never fail in a certain greatness and power,... the method and idea retain sublimity.”<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the reader will ask: “What exactly is meant by Milton's soul when we call it great or spacious ?” The word is here used in a certain general fashion. We do not mean just what in our Yoga we understand by the “psychic being”, the secret spark of the Divine in the deep heart, which has to be realised by a spiritual discipline. Of course, whatever we may name as the soul must have something to do with this spark, but there may be nothing direct. Milton was far from practising Yoga. So, with the psychic being as the hidden support, his soul should be conceived as that in him which had a poise of selfhood within the processes of thinking, willing, feeling, sensing—his intellectual individuality which tended to rule the common nature in him and to dynamise this nature with its own vision. The true posture of this individuality is best caught in that phrase of his:

<sup>1</sup> *The Future Poetry* Sri Aurobindo Ashram, (Pondicherry, 1953), p. 120

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

The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.<sup>1</sup>

And the core of this individuality's vision was powerfully religious. Indeed, at the centre of anything we can call the soul, there must be, in the broad meaning of the term, a religious position—religious inasmuch as it concerns the individual's relation to what he momentarily confronts as the immense ultimate Reality by which alone himself and all things else are explicable and interrelated. One may confront this Reality as spiritual or as no more than physical: one may even hang in a final doubt over its true character. In each case one has exercised—positively, negatively or neutrally—the central life of one's soul and found a position that is, broadly speaking, religious.

Now this position *vis-à-vis* the immensity of the ultimately real may be charged with different imaginative attitudes. The imaginative attitude may be oriented chiefly towards the multiform world-activity in which the ultimately real manifests itself. Shakespeare is the outstanding example of such an attitude and we rightly designate his genius as protean or myriad-minded. Dante exemplifies an attitude oriented in the main towards human life set in a wider complex scheme of an inhuman or super-human Hereafter, created with a clear-cut diversity by a precise divine Wisdom and Grace. Hence Dante's forceful ranging across religious mysteries with an exact defining penetration of sight, a concentration upon keen details against a background of ultimate immensity. To Milton the ultimate immensity is itself the principal fact of both personal and poetic imagination though not of mystical intuition, much less of spiritual experience. Milton the man, Milton the poet, the whole individuality of him, his entire soul is charged with the boundless, the unfeatured, the supra-mundane which is ever losing itself into an infinity of the invisible. It is this that renders his soul spacious. No doubt, his vision seizes on particulars—he could not be a poet without a moved precision of sight in one way or another, but what his sight makes most precise is the fading of every particular's outlines into the indescribable and the shadowing of every particular's contents by that circumambience of the vast and vague. The thrilled sense of immensity that is natural to Milton has constructed for us in *Paradise Lost* a coherent story of world-wide significance within an all-enveloping cosmic picture whose magnitude overpasses any that the epic spirit of Europe has put forth.

Let us focus for a moment our minds upon this picture which we have already sketched. We may begin with our starry universe as seen distantly by Satan when at last he has traversed Chaos and reached this new creation, deep within which Man has been placed by Heaven's Lord. Satan beheld

Far off the empyrean Heaven extended wide  
In circuit, undetermined square or round,

<sup>1</sup> Bk. I, 254-55.

With opal towers and battlements adorned  
 Of living sapphire, once his native seat,  
 And fast by, hanging in a golden chain,  
 This pendent World, in bigness as a star  
 Of smallest magnitude, close by the moon.<sup>1</sup>

The pendent World is not our earth: it is the entire collection of stars including our solar system. This entire collection is also called by Milton the "orbicular World": it is a hollow globe of space spangled with constellations and enormous to human eyes but actually a mere pin-point in comparison to Heaven or the Empyrean, just as the tiniest possible star would be by the side of the moon—the under-side, we may say, if we are to make the moon stand in general for the Empyrean, below which the starry universe hangs. Stretched out above the World-drop is the boundary of Heaven, so wide a boundary that one could not say whether it was the straight side of a square or the curve of a circle. In fact, Milton has left it really "undetermined" whether the Empyrean was a circle or a square: in one place his Beëlzebub speaks of "Heaven's whole circumference",<sup>2</sup> while in another the daughter of Satan, Sin, refers to God's "quadrature"<sup>3</sup> as distinguished from the "orbicular World" which Satan succeeded in subverting. Perhaps Milton means to create a mystery about the shape of the Empyrean. But this Empyrean, though vast, is not boundless, as is evident from the fact that there are things beneath it. Beneath it is not only the sphere of stars: there is also the region of Hell, between whose roof and the bottom of the stellar sphere the distance is half of that which is between the bottom and the top of this sphere.<sup>4</sup> Both the starry universe and the region of Hell are within the amorphous expanse of black Chaos—the expanse which originally occupied the whole lower half, as it were, of the infinity—the primeval circle of unlimited radius—whose whole upper half was occupied by the Empyrean. This infinite space is a state of God's eternal omnipresence, though He has His immediate and visible habitation in the midst of the Light, Freedom, Happiness and Glory that is spread out as Heaven.

Appositely does David Masson exclaim: "The physical universe of Dante's great poem would go into a nutshell as compared with that to which the imagination must stretch itself out in *Paradise Lost*..."<sup>5</sup> The extreme immensity of existence through which the poem sweeps with a living vision is a measure of the spaciousness of Milton's poet-soul. And the rhythmic thrill with which he communicates his vision constitutes the spaciousness of sound pervading all of his epic and especially the opening Books where the inner and the outer, the inspiration and the expression, are totally blended.

<sup>1</sup> Bk. II, 1047-53.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. II, 53.

<sup>3</sup> Bk. X, 381.

<sup>4</sup> Bk. I, 73-4.

<sup>5</sup> Introduction to *Paradise Lost* in *The Poetical Works of John Milton* (London, 1934), p. 32.

The few lines we have culled from *Paradise Lost* belong to these Books and we may say their strength and art are enough to relieve every fallen Cherub from the misery of weakness. To read Milton is to be energised, expanded, uplifted. For flagging and dwindling spirits there is no tonic finer than the poetry that is Miltonic.

## 2

**Milton, Macaulay and Sri Aurobindo**

I hope my introductory words have toned up the reader to an interest in *Paradise Lost* and in the difficult job I have taken on myself under the influence of the ardours and rigours of Milton's epic inspiration. But before I actually start, let me evoke two pictures in which our poet does not directly figure yet which may aid our minds better to appreciate him.

Go back by over a century and a quarter: 1834, to be accurate. A British ship is on way to India. In those days it used to take five months to make the voyage and there were many hazards: the ships were far more at the mercy of storms than our modern luxury-liners. And this particular boat was caught in a storm. If we may quote from *Paradise Lost*, it was surrounded by

a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,  
Up from the bottom turned by furious winds  
And surging waves, as mountains to assault  
Heaven's height, and with the centre mix the pole.<sup>1</sup>

A complete catastrophe was feared. Men were rushing about the deck and all hearts were flurried—all except one. A young man stood in a corner and with a firm low voice was reciting *Paradise Lost*, as if by its superb organised thunder he could quell that hullabaloo of the elements. This was Thomas Babington Macaulay going to India, destined to mould the educational policy of the foreign rulers there and to spread in our country the literature of his own, including Milton's epic. He was perhaps not altogether gracious in the way he pushed English literature forward at the expense of indigenous writing. But now as he stood on that pitching and tossing deck of the frail merchantman he seemed almost to shadow out something of the heavenly Power that Milton describes as going forth to create our universe in the Chaos which was, according to his epic, like an outrageous sea and to which that Power addressed its creative fiat. To quote *Paradise Lost* again:

“Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou Deep, peace!”  
Said then the omnific Word: “your discord end!”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bk. VII, 212-15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 216-17.



I do not know how and when exactly the discord around Macaulay ended. But even if it had continued for a full day, he could have gone on reciting the epic. For he knew the whole of it by heart. He once declared that if all the copies of this poem were destroyed he could reproduce it correctly down to the comma. And, in knowing it by heart, his affections were really engaged. Of all the poetic masterpieces of the past he loved it the best, and the very first piece of his own writing that burst into fame in the world was a long brilliant essay on Milton.

Essay on Milton—this brings us to our second picture. Instead of a young Englishman going to India, we have a younger Indian at Cambridge, the University of both Macaulay and Milton. This Indian undergraduate has lately come up from St. Paul's School of London, the very school which Milton had attended. Now the year is 1890. On the second of December the student, aged 18, pens a letter to his father across the seas. The subject is an invitation the previous night to coffee with one of the dons in whose room was waiting "the great O.B., otherwise Oscar Browning." Don't mix up Oscar Browning with either Robert Browning who often wrote poetry like prose or Oscar Wilde who often wrote prose like poetry. Oscar Browning was a super-don, nothing more, but he had a fine literary sense and could pick out good writing—poetry or prose—unerringly. The letter from King's College, Cambridge, after calling O. B. "the feature *par excellence* of King's", reads: "He said to me: 'I suppose you know you passed an extraordinarily high examination. I have examined papers at thirteen examinations and I have never during that time seen such excellent papers as yours (meaning my classical papers, at the scholarship examination). As for your essay, it was wonderful.'" Then the letter to the fond father continues in a personal vein: "In this essay (a comparison between Shakespeare and Milton), I indulged my oriental tastes to the top of their bent, it overflowed with rich and tropical imagery, it abounded in antitheses and epigrams and it expressed my real feelings without restraint or reservation. I thought myself that it was the best thing I had ever done, but at school it would have been condemned as extraordinarily Asiatic and bombastic."

Thus the earliest piece of worth-while critical writing we know of as Sri Aurobindo's was on Milton as well as Shakespeare—reminding us in one-half of it of Macaulay's first famous theme. There is the further curious coincidence that the earliest piece of writing by Milton himself, which the world came to know of, was a poem on Shakespeare, a tribute published in the Shakespeare Folio of 1632 though written a couple of years earlier. And it is not only in a style dramatic, bright with epigram, charged with "metaphysical" wit and imagery: in addition, it hints a comparison between Shakespeare's spontaneous exuberance and Milton's own laboriously reached perfection during that period:

...to the shame of slow-endeavouring art,  
Thy easy numbers flow...<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *On Shakespeare*, 9-10.

Some further facts in connection with Milton and Sri Aurobindo deserve our notice. When I asked Sri Aurobindo in 1933 about influences of other poets on his own work, the first name he mentioned, after speaking of his older contemporary Stephen Phillips, in relation to *Love and Death*, was Milton. He wrote: "I dare say some influence of most of the great English poets and of others also, not English, can be traced in my poetry—I can myself see that of Milton, sometimes of Wordsworth and Arnold...."<sup>1</sup> Again, just as his earliest critical writing (which unfortunately has not survived) dealt at some length with Milton, the last general critical pronouncement he made on a poet's work was on Milton's achievement. In May, 1947, he wrote in a long letter on his own poetry a passage broadly comparing *Lycidas* and *Paradise Lost*. I may quote some lines: "If *Lycidas* with its beauty and perfection had been the supreme thing done by Milton even with all the lyrical poetry and the sonnets added to it, Milton would still have been a great poet but he would not have ranked among the dozen greatest; it is *Paradise Lost* that gives him that place. There are deficiencies if not failures in almost all the great epics, the *Odyssey* and perhaps the *Divina Commedia* being the only exceptions, but still they are throughout in spite of them great epics. So too is *Paradise Lost*. The grandeur of his verse and language is constant and unsinking to the end and makes the presentation always sublime."<sup>2</sup>

I may remark that this estimate is a little different from the one which Sri Aurobindo gave in *The Future Poetry* nearly a quarter century before. In some literary matters Sri Aurobindo in his later years shows, if not quite a change of view, at least a certain change of emphasis. And he granted to Milton a somewhat higher status than he had already done. In *The Future Poetry*<sup>3</sup> he had said: "*Paradise Lost* is assuredly a great poem, one of the five great epical poems of European literature, and in certain qualities it reaches heights which no other of them had attained, even though as a whole it comes a long way behind them... *Paradise Lost* commands admiration, but as a whole, apart from its opening, it has failed either to go home to the heart of the world and lodge itself in its imagination or to enrich sovereignly what we may describe as the acquired stock of its more intimate poetical thought and experience. But the poem that does neither of these things, however fine its powers of language and rhythm, has missed its best aim." In the later view, Sri Aurobindo, though not in the least unconscious of Milton's shortcomings, the disparities between the initial and the subsequent Books of the epic, is yet inclined to allow those sustained powers of language and rhythm a truer inward animation in even the inferior portions than he was ready to do in *The Future Poetry*. For, after saying in his 1947 letter, "I am prepared to admit the very patent defects of *Paradise Lost*", he can still call for a sympathetic sense and affirm: "We have to accept for the moment Milton's dry Puritan theology and his all too human picture of the celestial world and its denizens and then we can feel the full greatness of the epic."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life—Literature—Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry (1952), p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 117, 118.      <sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

Sri Aurobindo has written several other things on *Paradise Lost*. We shall draw upon them as we go along. At the moment we are concerned with generalities and with the way Milton gets broadly related to Sri Aurobindo. The most striking and important relation, though perhaps the most general and impersonal, is that the two sole full-blown epics that have seen the light in English are Milton's *Paradise Lost*—10,565 lines—and Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*, whose lines add up to 23,813.

Perhaps their inevitable juxtaposition has led many a critic in India to describe Sri Aurobindo's blank verse in *Savitri* as Miltonic. Also perhaps because Sri Aurobindo, like Milton, energises and expands and uplifts us, criticism is led to this description. But, while to be Miltonic is to impart energy, expansion, upliftment, all that imparts them need not be in Milton's style. *Savitri* differs from *Paradise Lost* both in style and substance, word-craft and vision. We shall dwell on the difference at a subsequent stage. Here we shall emphasise only the similarity of essential effect in terms of the energetic, the expansive, the uplifting. Cast your mind back to the perils of the journey through the unknown that Satan ultimately attempted. Now feel the dangers of a luminous and ecstatic soul-exposure—an experience through which Savitri's father, the Yogi-king Aswapathy, passed:

His nature shuddered in the Unknown's grasp.  
 In a moment shorter than Death, longer than Time,  
 By a power more ruthless than Love, happier than Heaven,  
 Taken sovereignly into eternal arms,  
 Haled and coerced by a stark absolute bliss,  
 Hurried into unimaginable depths,  
 Upborne into immeasurable heights,  
 It was torn out from its mortality  
 And underwent a new and bourneless change.<sup>1</sup>

In a less sweeping and more controlled yet equally powerful language Sri Aurobindo gives us Savitri, the Avatar of the Supreme Mother, confronted by a mysterious Presence who works in the dark depths of our evolving universe and demands of her a sacrifice suited to her divine humanity:

One dealt with her who meets the burdened great.  
 Assigner of the ordeal and the path  
 Who chooses in this holocaust of the soul  
 Death, fall and sorrow as the spirit's goads,  
 The dubious godhead with his torch of pain  
 Lit up the chasm of the unfinished world  
 And called her to fill with her vast self the abyss.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry (1954), p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Sri Aurobindo has said that in certain qualities *Paradise Lost* reaches heights which no other epic has attained. "Rhythm and speech," he tells us, "have never attained to a mightier amplitude of epic expression and movement, seldom to an equal sublimity."<sup>1</sup> Then he refers to "that peculiar grandeur in both the soul and manner of the utterance and in both the soul and the gait of the rhythm which belongs to him alone of the poets."<sup>2</sup> But with those two passages from *Savitri* before us—examples of many similar articulations—we may say these "heights" were never reached again until Sri Aurobindo composed his own epic. For, poetic grandeur, inward and outward, of a rare eminence indeed is resonant in them and I am sore tempted to analyse the technique serving as the vehicle of the spiritual afflatus. But I am not speaking on Sri Aurobindo and I have already devoted two books to the Aurobindonian inspiration and art, one of them still unpublished as a whole though all its parts have been printed in various journals. What I may just remark apropos of the resonant of the passages is that many a passage of such grandeur was dictated rather than written by Sri Aurobindo. And the lucky scribe, Dr. Nirodbaran, testifies that at times there was a rush of composition: once two or three hundred lines were dictated non-stop and few of them required reshaping afterwards. *Paradise Lost*, too, was not written out by Milton at all: it is unique among European epics in that everything was dictated, and when we think of the conditions under which Milton created most of it,

with mortal voice unchanged  
 To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days,  
 On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues,  
 In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,  
 And solitude,<sup>3</sup>

the picture of young Macaulay, threatened with shipwreck, reciting the Miltonic pentameters, is rather apposite: the ship of state, whose course Milton had helped to steer, the Commonwealth established by Cromwell, was sinking when he commenced *Paradise Lost* and the poet's own life was soon threatened. But the dictating voice never faltered. Poetically no less than morally it kept fluent and steady. And it is with its poetic fluency and steadiness that I shall begin my comment proper on the inspiration of *Paradise Lost*. I shall spotlight not any scene from the great story told in the poem but the scene of the poet in the act of composing his masterpiece. This scene, of which the unflinching dictation forms part, is necessary to bear in mind if the true quality of the poem is to come alive to our imagination.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

<sup>1</sup> *The Future Poetry*, p. 117.

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

<sup>3</sup> Bk. VII, 24-8.

# INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY INHERENT IN INTEGRAL YOGA

## IN THE WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

### A Note on the Previous Excerpt about “Chakras” and the Following Ones about “Branches of Psychology”

(I)

INTEGRAL Psychology means the psychology of the Integral Personality, and Integral Personality means a personality with its conscious, subconscious and superconscious domains integrated into a powerful personality, a personality of wide and large capacities of Knowing, Feeling and Willing. But our ordinary personality is a thing of reactions to environmental stimuli.

When we withdraw from our commitment to these superficial reactions, to this ‘me’ and to this ‘situation’, we get behind the finite appearances into a wider background of ‘Self’ and of ‘Environment’, a more generalised form of both of them. With that an awareness of the subtler centres of consciousness or the *chakras* tends to emerge and these command the varied functions and capacities of the Integral Personality. And a concentration on the various centres leads to the development of the same progressively. The writer, in his pursuit of yoga, has during the last year or so (since May ’83) in particular wanted to improve the quality of his sleep as also of his dreams. To this end, he wanted to get at the centre at the soles of the feet, which commands specifically the subconscious. This is particularly an identification of Integral Yoga. It took some time to get at the sole-centre in a conscious way. That more or less achieved, concentration there became enjoyable. And the modifications noticed in sleep and the content of the dreams has been all a matter of joy and surprise. And this gives a greater zest to the pursuit for the future. The modifications noticed have been these. A feeling of awareness and some control regarding the night, reposefulness of sleep, less disorderliness in the dream activity and a sense of continuity between the day and the night, waking and sleeping. Previously the nights were gaps, interruptions in the waking life. Dreams showed much disorderliness, pleasure-gratifications, less quietude and peacefulness.

These chakras are common knowledge for Hathayoga, Rajayoga, Tantra and most other forms of Sadhana. The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother confirms their existence and functions though it does not insist on the necessity of activating them directly. As integration proceeds by the processes of Integral Yoga, they get into prominence of themselves.

The modern science of psychology cannot afford to limit itself to reactions alone. It has to explore ways and means of discovering these centres of larger functions of personality.

(2)

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga involves Integral Psychology of human personality. That is quite comprehensive. On Social Psychology too Sri Aurobindo wrote comprehensively. On education briefly, but the central idea is clear and strong. On illness, physical as well as mental, we have a clear standpoint. The psychology of animals presents new insights. The psychology of plants is a new branch. All these reflect the standpoint of Integral Psychology and admit of investigation and elaboration.

INDRA SEN

### **Branches of Psychology**

#### **The Psychology of Social Development**

The primal law and purpose of the individual life is to seek its own self-development. Consciously or half-consciously or with an obscure unconscious groping it strives always and rightly strives at self-formulation,—to find self, to discover within itself the law and power of its own being and to fulfil it. This aim in it is fundamental, right, inevitable because, even after all qualifications have been made and caveats entered, the individual is not merely the ephemeral physical creature, a form of mind and body that aggregates and dissolves, but a being, a living power of the eternal Truth, a self-manifesting spirit. In the same way the primal law and purpose of a society, community or nation is to seek its own self-fulfilment; it strives rightly to find itself, to become aware within itself of the law and power of its own being and to fulfil it as perfectly as possible, to realise all its potentialities, to live its own self-revealing life. The reason is the same; for this too is a being, a living power of the eternal Truth, a self-manifestation of the cosmic Spirit, and it is there to express and fulfil in its own way and to the degree of its capacities the special truth and power and meaning of the cosmic Spirit that is within it. The nation or society, like the individual, has a body, an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and a soul behind all these signs and powers for the sake of which they exist. One may see even that, like the individual, it essentially is a soul rather than has one; it is a group-soul that, once having attained to a separate distinctness, must become more and more self-conscious and find itself more and more fully as it develops its corporate action and mentality and its organic self-expressive life.<sup>1</sup>

\*

A change of this kind, the change from the mental and vital to the spiritual order of life, must necessarily be accomplished in the individual and in a great number of individuals before it can lay an effective hold upon the community. The Spirit in

<sup>1</sup> *SABCL*, vol. 15, p. 29.

humanity discovers, develops, builds into form in the individual man: it is through the progressive and formative individual that it offers the discovery and the chance of new self-creation to the mind of the race. For the communal mind holds things subconsciously at first or, if consciously, then in a confused chaotic manner: it is only through the individual mind that the mass can arrive at a clear knowledge and creation of the thing it held in its subconscious self. Thinkers, historians, sociologists who belittle the individual and would like to lose him in the mass or think of him chiefly as a cell, an atom, have got hold only of the obscurer side of the truth of Nature's workings in humanity. It is because man is not like the material formations of Nature or like the animal, because she intends in him a more and more conscious evolution, that individuality is so much developed in him and so absolutely important and indispensable. No doubt what comes out in the individual and afterwards moves the mass, must have been there already in the universal Mind and the individual is only an instrument for its manifestation, discovery, development; but he is an indispensable instrument and an instrument not merely of subconscious Nature, not merely of an instinctive urge that moves the mass, but more directly of the Spirit of whom that Nature is itself the instrument and the matrix of his creations. All great changes therefore find their first clear and effective power and their direct shaping force in the mind and spirit of an individual or of a limited number of individuals. The mass follows, but unfortunately in a very imperfect and confused fashion which often or even usually ends in the failure or distortion of the thing created. If it were not so, mankind could have advanced on its way with a victorious rapidity instead of with the lumbering hesitations and soon exhausted rushes that seem to be all of which it has yet been capable.<sup>1</sup>

### **Child Psychology and Educational Psychology**

The discovery that education must be a bringing out of the child's own intellectual and moral capacities to their highest possible value and must be based on the psychology of the child-nature was a step forward towards a more healthy because a more subjective system; but it still fell short because it regarded the child as an object to be handled and moulded by the teacher, to be educated. But at least there was a glimmering of the realisation that each human being is a self-developing soul and that the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material. It is not yet realised what this soul is or that the true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call it into the foreground as "the leader of the march set in our front," will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacity of the psycholo-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 231-32.

gical being towards a realisation of its potentialities of which our present mechanical view of life and man and external routine methods of dealing with them prevents us from having any experience or forming any conception. These new educational methods are on the straight way to this truer dealing. The closer touch attempted with the psychical entity behind the vital and physical mentality and an increasing reliance on its possibilities must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine and that the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life if it would find and live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being.<sup>1</sup>

### **Psychology of the Animals and the Plants**

Animals are predominantly the vital creation on earth—the mind in them also is a vital mind—they act according to the push of the forces and have a vital but not a mental will.

\*

Even the animal is more in touch with a certain harmony in things than man. Man's only superiority is a more complex consciousness and capacity (but terribly perverted and twisted by misuse of mind) and the ability (not much used as yet) of reaching towards higher things.

\*

Human life and mind are neither in tune with Nature like the animals nor with Spirit—it is disturbed, incoherent, conflicting with itself, without harmony and balance. We can then regard it as diseased, if not itself a disease.

\*

The plants are very psychic, but they can express it only by silence and beauty.

\*

It is true that the plant world—even the animals if one takes them the right way—can be much better than human beings. It is the mental distortion that makes men worse.

\*

...It is a more simple and honest consciousness—that of the animal. Of course it expects something, but even if it does not get, the affection remains. Many animals,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.



even if ill-treated, do not lose their love which means a remarkable psychic development in the vital.

\*

The emotional being of animals is often much more psychic than that of men who can be very insensitive. There were recently pictures of the tame tigress kept by a family and afterwards given by them to a Zoo. The look of sorrow on the face of the tigress in her cage at once gentle and tragically poignant is so intense as to be heart-breaking.

\*

Most animals do not usually attack unless they are menaced or frightened or somehow made angry—and they can feel the atmosphere of people.

\*

...to watch the animals with the right perception of their consciousness helps to get out of the human mental limitations and see the Cosmic Consciousness on earth individualising itself in all forms—plant, animal, man and growing towards what is beyond man.<sup>1</sup>

*(To be continued)*

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, pp. 498-501.

## PAST AND FUTURE

WHAT matters is the point  
Where past and future meet  
and melt together  
not asking whether  
their hearts are to beat  
as single or joint.

If the past doggedly clings  
it takes the future's room  
and the present fails  
and thus entails  
an unnecessary doom  
with glued clipped wings.

It is self-pity and fearing  
which prevent the real destiny  
denying the higher guide,  
the finding of groom and bride.  
The lack of inner scrutiny  
gives to falsehood the steering.

Past and future don't divide.  
They anticipate and realize,  
if they flow in release  
not being enemies  
or choked by hampering lies  
striving to win or abide.

If they lend each other a hand  
the meeting points will bloom,  
and every moment of life  
is with happy experience rife.  
The scents pervade the room  
and spread out over the land.

We need not forget the past  
nor ponder on the time to come,  
only take up the hints  
pointing to the distant glints  
remaining tacit or dumb  
trusting the power of the vast.

URSULA

## HOW TO WRITE WITH STYLE

NEWSPAPER reporters and technical writers are trained to reveal almost nothing about themselves in their writings. This makes them freaks in the world of writers, since almost all of the other ink-stained wretches in that world reveal a lot about themselves to readers. We call these revelations, accidental and intentional, elements of style.

These revelations tell us as readers what sort of person it is with whom we are spending time. Does the writer sound ignorant or informed, stupid or bright, crooked or honest, humorless or playful—? And on and on.

Why should you examine your writing style with the idea of improving it? Do so as a mark of respect for your readers, whatever you're writing. If you scribble your thoughts any which way, your readers will surely feel that you care nothing about them. They will mark you down as an egomaniac or a chowderhead—or, worse, they will stop reading you.

The most damning revelation you can make about yourself is that you do not know what is interesting and what is not. Don't you yourself like or dislike writers mainly for what they choose to show you or make you think about? Did you ever admire an empty-headed writer for his or her mastery of the language? No.

So your own winning style must begin with ideas in your head.

### 1. Find a subject you care about

Find a subject you care about and which you in your heart feel others should care about. It is this genuine caring, and not your games with language, which will be the most compelling and seductive element in your style.

I am not urging you to write a novel, by the way—although I would not be sorry if you wrote one, provided you genuinely cared about something. A petition to the mayor about a pothole in front of your house or a love letter to the girl next door will do.

### 2. Do not ramble, though

I won't ramble on about that.

### 3. Keep it simple

As for your use of language: Remember that two great masters of language, William Shakespeare and James Joyce, wrote sentences which were almost childlike when their subjects were most profound. "To be or not to be?" asks Shakespeare's Hamlet. The longest word is three letters long. Joyce, when he was frisky, could put together a sentence as intricate and as glittering as a necklace for Cleopatra, but my favorite sentence in his short story "Eveline" is this one: "She was tired." At

that point in the story, no other words could break the heart of a reader as those three words do.

Simplicity of language is not only reputable, but perhaps even sacred. The *Bible* opens with a sentence well within the writing skills of a lively fourteen year-old: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

#### **4. Have the guts to cut**

It may be that you, too, are capable of making necklaces for Cleopatra, so to speak. But your eloquence should be the servant of the ideas in your head. Your rule might be this: If a sentence, no matter how excellent, does not illuminate your subject in some new and useful way, scratch it out.

#### **5. Sound like yourself**

The writing style which is most natural for you is bound to echo the speech you heard when a child. English was the novelist Joseph Conrad's third language, and much that seems piquant in his use of English was no doubt colored by his first language, which was Polish. And lucky indeed is the writer who has grown up in Ireland, for the English spoken there is so amusing and musical. I myself grew up in Indianapolis, where common speech sounds like a band saw cutting galvanized tin, and employs a vocabulary as unornamental as a monkey wrench.

In some of the more remote hollows of Appalachia, children still grow up hearing songs and locutions of Elizabethan times. Yes, and many Americans grow up hearing a language other than English, or an English dialect a majority of Americans cannot understand.

All these varieties of speech are beautiful, just as the varieties of butterflies are beautiful. No matter what your first language, you should treasure it all your life. If it happens not to be standard English, and if it shows itself when you write standard English, the result is usually delightful, like a very pretty girl with one eye that is green and one that is blue.

I myself find that I trust my own writing most, and others seem to trust it most, too, when I sound most like a person from Indianapolis, which is what I am. What alternatives do I have? The one most vehemently recommended by teachers has no doubt been pressed on you, as well: to write like cultivated Englishmen of a century or more ago.

#### **6. Say what you mean to say**

I used to be exasperated by such teachers, but am no more. I understand now that all those antique essays and stories with which I was to compare my own work were not magnificent for their datedness or foreignness, but for saying precisely what

their authors meant them to say. My teachers wished me to write accurately, always selecting the most effective words, and relating the words to one another unambiguously, rigidly, like parts of a machine. The teachers did not want to turn me into an Englishman after all. They hoped that I would become understandable—and therefore understood. And there went my dream of doing with words what Pablo Picasso did with paint or what any number of jazz idols did with music. If I broke all the rules of punctuation, had words mean whatever I wanted them to mean, and strung them together higgledy-piggledy, I would simply not be understood. So you, too, had better avoid Picasso-style or jazz-style writing, if you have something worth saying and wish to be understood.

Readers want our pages to look very much like pages they have seen before. Why? This is because they themselves have a tough job to do, and they need all the help they can get from us.

### 7. Pity the readers

They have to indentify thousands of little marks on paper, and make sense of them immediately. They have to *read*, an art so difficult that most people don't really master it even after having studied it all through grade school and high school—twelve long years.

So this discussion must finally acknowledge that our stylistic options as writers are neither numerous nor glamorous, since our readers are bound to be such imperfect artists. Our audience requires us to be sympathetic and patient teachers, ever willing to simplify and clarify—whereas we would rather soar high above the crowd, singing like nightingales.

That is the bad news. The good news is that we Americans are governed under a unique Constitution, which allows us to write whatever we please without fear of punishment. So the most meaningful aspect of our styles, which is what we choose to write about, is utterly unlimited.

### 8. For really detailed advice

For a discussion of literary style in a narrower sense, in a more technical sense, I commend to your attention *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White (Macmillan, 1979). E. B. White is, of course, one of the most admirable literary stylists this country has so far produced.

You should realize, too, that no one would care how well or badly Mr. White expressed himself, if he did not have perfectly enchanting things to say.

KURT VONNEGUT

*With acknowledgments to the International Paper Co.*

## ADARSHA BALAKA SAMMELAN

In the year 1952, on 20th July, the Adarsha Balaka Sannelan was organised in Baroda with the Blessings of the Mother. Shri A. B. Purani presided over the Conference.

Shri Sundaram's message to the Baroda Conference for "Ideal Child" on 20-7-52 went thus:

"I leave it to you to feel the Mother's direct inspiration for the way in which to work for the spread of Her message. The presence of the Mother will help you because Her Divine Consciousness is always there in a subtle way to help us when we call for it. It awakes within us, it inspires us, it leads us, it gives us light and strength. Thus we have with us the highest and greatest support available to Man. The work which you are going to take up has been blessed by the Mother. Any doubt and despair you may feel in your heart must be rejected, and you must advance with the faith and the confidence that She for whom you are working will take care of the work."

He ended his message by saying "Let this book reach *every child*", emphasising the words "every child". In the province of Gujarat, committees were formed district-wise to carry forward the project of "Ideal Child". They were to spread its message, and, as specially directed by the Mother, reach at least one lakh children by 21.2.53. This booklet is a message given by the Mother, a small but powerful message of the Supreme Consciousness. Thus when you give this little invaluable book to a child, you are actually giving him something of the Supreme Consciousness. In the beginning the child may not understand everything written there, but with the passage of time he will grow and then this message will flash across his soul, and the light, for which he has been waiting for many lives perhaps, will illuminate his consciousness and show him the aim of life and the way to achieve it. In short, this is the seed-word or Mantra of the Mother for the New Creation. And not only the child but the person who is instrumental in spreading this message will also feel his consciousness uplifted.

In 1978, the Mother's Centenary year, the project of "Ideal Child" was revived and today about 14,00,000 copies, printed in twenty languages, have been distributed to children all over the world. It has been printed in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Flemish, Gujarati, Hindi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Marathi, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Oriya, Assamese, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada, and it is being translated into still other languages.

It is hoped that by Divine Grace, children all over the world will get a copy of this book. We invite all those who aspire for a new world of Joy, Peace, Harmony, Brotherhood, Sportsmanship and Equality to collaborate in this endeavour by way of translation-work or by way of financial help for printing and distribution.

Any advice regarding translation and distribution to the children is welcome.

We invite your sincere efforts towards this work and your help in seeing that this booklet reaches every child in your circle.

The contribution for one thousand copies in any Indian language is Rs. 400/- only and Rs. 1200/- or \$ 120/- for despatch by surface mail outside India. The receipt for the contribution carries tax benefit to the donors.

Bank drafts, cheques, etc. should be made payable to Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry (outside India, in U.S. Dollars). All correspondence should be addressed to KESHAVJI, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002.

Yours truly,  
KESHAVJI

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## A VAGRANT SOUL

My life I live in leisurely ways,  
That wend to eternity,  
Alone I pass my pilgrim's days,  
My thoughts I keep with me.

In a pleasant mirth of insolent ease  
I love myself alone,  
I talk aloud whenever I please  
Though hearers I have none.

I sing or else a flute I play,  
Nobody's there to grudge,  
My soulful life is happy and gay,  
From me I never budge.

A nectarous manna nourishes me  
With sempiternal light  
And so I journey merrily  
Through peaceful day and night.

An aimless vagrant I may be,  
But my life is not in vain.  
I cherish all enormously,  
I claim no earthly gain.

Erratic tramp I well may seem,  
Yet where I go is known;  
Enamoured with a golden dream  
My faith's gigantic grown.

SAILEN ROY

## WHEN DID CIVILIZATION BEGIN?

By accurately dating the distant past, scientists shed fresh light on pre-history.

If you had studied cultural history a decade or so ago, you would have learnt that civilization was born in the Middle East some 8000 years ago, when man turned from a nomadic hunting-gathering economy and settled down in villages to cultivate the native wild wheat and barley, and to domesticate animals. By assuring the food supply, agriculture gave men leisure for other pursuits, leading to new cultural advances. Basket work was developed, and the weaving of cloth. Pottery was first made in Mesopotamia around 5000 B. C. and copper smelting began in Chaldea a millennium later. By 3000 B. C., brick cities and temples had arisen, and the Sumerians had developed the art of writing.

From the Middle Eastern heartland, the textbooks went on, knowledge of the new techniques diffused eastwards to India and China, southwards to Egypt—whose 4,700-year-old pyramids were considered the oldest stone monuments—and westwards to Troy and Crete, reaching Mycenaean Greece by 1600 B.C.

This chronology was based on two principal dating methods. The relative ages of older objects and sites were determined by stratigraphy—measuring the depth of the strata in which they lay and estimating how long it had taken the layers of earth or rubble above to accumulate. For “historic” times (i.e., after men learned to write), the dating scheme was more reliable. The Sumerians, Assyrians and, in particular, Egyptians had left records of dynasties back to a little before 3000 B.C., along with observations of star positions during important events. Thus modern astronomers could date the incidents quite accurately.

Once the chronology of ancient Egypt had been determined, it was used to establish dates in lands with which the Egyptians traded. Thus, when stone vases known to have been made in Egypt in the third millennium B.C. were found in tombs in Crete, it established the possibility that the Minoan civilization of Crete was at least that old. But such cross-dating could not be used for early western Europe, since artifacts of provable Egyptian or Aegean manufacture were not found there. So, on the reasonable assumption that illiterate peoples must be more primitive than those who could read, it was taken for granted that European monuments were built later.

Thus, the megaliths and massive stone tombs of Britain, Iberia, Ireland, Scandinavia and western France were considered crude imitations of the more sophisticated structures of the East. However, such a masterpiece as Stonehenge could have been erected only under the direction of Mycenaean architects, it was claimed. European pre-history, as one savant summed it up, is “the irradiation of Western barbarism by Eastern enlightenment.”

### March of Time

This sequence of civilization was logical, supported by seemingly irrefutable



evidence—and taught as fact. Yet practically all of the assumptions on which it was based were wrong. Recent discoveries and more accurate scientific dating techniques now reveal, for instance, that domestication of plants and grain began independently in Thailand perhaps as early as in the Middle East, and only a short time later in Peru and Mexico; that the Japanese were making pottery before people in the Near East; and that the natives of Romania may have invented a form of writing centuries before the Sumerians. Equally disconcerting has been the discovery that the earliest megalithic tomb of western Europe is about 2,000 years older than Egyptian pyramids, and that the Mycenaeans could never have built Stonehenge, since it was essentially completed centuries before Mycenaean civilization began.

The new findings have made a shambles of the traditional theory of pre-history. Although the Middle-East Aegean area is still recognised as a major cradle of the civilized arts, it no longer holds a monopoly on their invention. Indeed, in some respects civilization arrived here comparatively late. The intricate spiral carvings on the stone temples of Malta, once held to be imitations of those in Minoan palaces, are now known to be earlier, indicating that if there was any diffusion of architectural ideas, it was not from east to west, but the other way round.

This archaeological upheaval began when nuclear scientist Willard Libby developed radio-carbon dating in 1949. He established that when nitrogen in the air is bombarded by neutrons (which are produced by cosmic rays from space), some of its atoms are transmuted into radioactive carbon-14 which combines with oxygen to form carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. This is absorbed by plants during photosynthesis. Animals eat plants, or other animals eat these that eat plants, so that all living things contain the same tiny proportion of radio-active carbon-14 atoms as the atmosphere.

When a plant or animal dies, it stops taking in radio-carbon, and what is already in the tissues proceeds to break down at a known rate until it eventually disappears. Thus by measuring the amount of radioactivity still present, the ages of any dead organic material—wood ashes, grain, beeswax, cloth, antlers or bone—could be determined, give or take a few decades.

### Root of the Matter

Archaeologists were delighted by the first radio-carbon reports, for they appeared to confirm accepted chronologies. But this enthusiasm was short-lived. Radio-carbon analysis of the tree rings of the oldest living things on earth, the bristlecone pines of the White Mountains of California (see "Secrets of the Ancient Pines," *Reader's Digest*, February 1973), some of which have been growing for almost 5,000 years, revealed that the planet had been subjected to much heavier doses of cosmic rays in ages past.

Thus, plant and animal remains originally dated at 4000 B.C., for example, were actually 600 years older. With these new, corrected carbon dates, the traditional

chronologies of prehistoric man and his works have collapsed.

Carbon dating has limitations, however. It cannot be applied to inorganic matter such as stone tools, pottery shards or metal artifacts nor can it reliably date organic remains much beyond 40,000 years of age, because there is too little radio-carbon left to be measured. To meet these difficulties, several new radio-active "clocks" have been developed. The age of pottery can now be determined by the thermoluminescent technique, which measures the intensity of the photon glow emitted by ground-up shards when rapidly heated to high temperatures.

The ages of bones can now be dated back as far back as several hundred thousand years through a process called aspartic-acid racemization, which measures the ratio of D-amino acid to L-amino acid in their structure. The larger the proportion of D-amino acid, the older the bone. Racemization tests of ancient skeletons found in California suggest man arrived in North America at least 50,000 years ago.

For fossils, camp sites and artifacts older than several hundred thousand years, dating can be done by measuring the extent to which radio-active potassium has decayed into argon gas in the volcanic strata in which they lie. Such tests indicate that man may have appeared more than three million years ago.

How do historians explain the new and earlier dates for important inventions that have been popping up in such unexpected spots? In place of the traditional scenario of "cultural diffusion" from a central source, they speak of "independent inventions", meaning that tools, farming, villages, pottery, metallurgy, cities, kings and states developed in different parts of the world independently of each other—and not necessarily in any standard order. Each culture developed in a manner dictated by its own needs, resources and ingenuity.

The first known potters on earth were Japanese fishermen, not Near Eastern farmers as theory insisted they should have been. Nor did agriculture necessarily tie man to sedentary village life. Mexicans remained nomadic for about three thousand years after they had learnt to cultivate corn, and early European farmers used a slash-and-burn method of cultivation which forced them to move as the old fields were worked out. The Maya of southern Mexico and Central America built great pyramids and developed a written script, but had no great cities, while the later Incas in Peru built grandiose cities, roads and a political empire without learning to write—and neither people discovered the wheel.

### **Deeds Not Words**

Consider the Stone-Age Britons of the third millennium B. C., whom a respected archaeologist a generation ago depicted as "disgusting savages." They were illiterate, sparsely scattered over the land, without towns, cities or kings. Yet the building of Stonehenge, their supreme accomplishment, would have dazzled the Sumerians and Egyptians of the time. Radio-carbon dating of charcoal, and of animal antlers which the Britons used as picks, indicates that construction began around 2700 B.C.

and continued for more than a millennium. Long, flat stones weighing up to 50 tons were cut and hauled 40 km to the building site.

All told, building Stonehenge is calculated to have required more than 18 million man-hours of labour, occupying most of the working population for years at a time. We can only guess why people endured such exhausting toil. But it is likely that Stonehenge was used for religious ceremonies, in which the celestial bodies played a key role. For, as Professor Alexander Thom, Emeritus Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, showed in 1974, the structure is an astronomical observatory, laid out with geometric precision. When viewed from the heart of the circle, the sun's rays on Midsummer-Day—when the sun has reached its most northerly point—rise over the Heel Stone.

Other massive stones of the monument's inner horseshoe framed the rising and setting of the moon and sun at the solstices. The early Britons were master astronomers and mathematicians, as well as master builders. Some "savages"!

Nor was the life of early man as "nasty and brutish" as believed. Found in the Shanidar cave of Iraq was a 50,000-year-old skeleton of an arthritic Neanderthal male, one of whose arms had been amputated in childhood and who was evidently blind in one eye. Unable to fend for himself, he had been cared for by his companions until his death at the then ripe age of 40. Hunters of mammoths at the Dolni Vestonice site in Czechoslovakia made music on bone flutes over 20,000 years ago; especially moving are the 9,000-year-old child-sized sandals found in a cave in North America. They were lined with rabbit fur to protect tender feet.

### **Ancient and Modern**

The finds of the past few years have been vast, and sophisticated search devices have quickened the pace of discovery. Sonar sounders are locating ancient, previously unsuspected underwater structures and shipwrecks. Magnetometers have mapped the deeply buried ruins of buildings, such as in the sixth century B.C. Greek city of Sybaris in southern Italy. Aerial photography had disclosed traces of ancient earthworks, roads and villages.

Just how far back in time man and his culture may eventually be traced, no one can foretell. But the dates are retreating ever further from the innocent days of the seventeenth century when Irish Archbishop Ussher and his followers, using the genealogies of the Book of Genesis as their source, calculated that the world had been created in the year 4004 B.C., on October 23, at nine o'clock in the morning.

(With acknowledgements to *Reader's Digest*, October 1975)

# IGNORANCE: ITS ORIGIN, ITS LOGICAL- PHILOSOPHICAL NECESSITY AND ITS PURPOSE

## A CRITICAL STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF THE NIRVISHESHA ADWAITA OF SHANKARA AND THE INTEGRAL ADWAITA OF SRI AUROBINDO

*(Continued from the issue of June, 1984)*

ACCORDING to Shankara, Nirguna Brahman is not only timeless and spaceless but moveless, and there cannot be any movement except through the agency of Maya. It is not possible to account for world-movement and the very word, Jagat, means movement. This world cannot come into being from Nirguna Brahman except through Maya, that is, Ignorance in the sense of the Nirvishesha Adwaita. This illustrates Dr. Maitra's statement which we have already quoted. Creative force is shown as natural to and inherent in consciousness so that Sri Aurobindo denotes consciousness as Consciousness-Force. Still, stability and movement have to be integrated into Sachchidananda.

First "stability and movement are our psychological representations of the Absolute even as are oneness and multitude".<sup>1</sup> "The emergence of the movement from the immutable is an eternal phenomenon and it is only because we cannot conceive it in that beginningless, endless, ever-new moment, which is the eternity of the timeless that our notions and perceptions are compelled to place it in a temporal eternity of successive duration to which are attached the ideas of an always recurrent beginning, middle and end."<sup>2</sup> The original status of the Reality is timeless and spaceless. Space and Time would be the same Reality self-extended to contain the development of what was within it. This is manifestation or creation. "We can speak of creation in the sense of the Being becoming in form and movement what it already is in substance of form."<sup>3</sup> Becoming is a dependent reality, just as the pot with regard to clay, and it cannot be unreal or an illusion on that account. "Being is the fundamental Reality; the Becoming is an effectual Reality; it is a dynamic power and result, a creative energy, a working out of the Being."<sup>4</sup> Those philosophies that make Becoming sufficient as the truth are no doubt valid, because they contain a truth, though partial, because Being is not separate from the Becoming but present in it, constructive of it, and inherent in it. It is the source and basis of the Becoming. Therefore there are two fundamental facts of existence: pure existence and world-existence: the former is Being and the latter Becoming. "To deny one or the other is easy; to recognise the facts of consciousness and find out their relation is the true and fruitful wisdom."<sup>5</sup> We shall now see how Sri Aurobindo relates Being and Becoming.

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 446.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 94.

Shankara does not believe in manifestation. So there cannot be movement or becoming or even being, except pure being, that is not even self-conscious, except through the medium of Maya. Sri Aurobindo shows how Being and Becoming can co-exist and how Becoming is only becoming of what is potential in Being. So "the passive consciousness of Brahman, that is, Being, and its active consciousness, that is, Becoming, are not two different, conflicting and incompatible things; they are the same consciousness, the same energy, at one end in a state of self-reservation, at the other end cast into motion of self-giving and self-deploying like the stillness of a reservoir and the coursing of the channels which flow from it."<sup>1</sup> Shankara does not conceive that stillness and movement can co-exist, because it offends against the purity of Brahman and its unity too. This dual status, quiescent and creative, Sri Aurobindo tells us, is a most important distinction of Indian philosophy. Shankara cannot think of their co-existence; the creative consciousness is Maya or Avidya Shakti, material energy that must disappear along with the creation at the transcendental level. Now Sri Aurobindo affirms his simultaneous spiritual experience of passive and active consciousness. "It is besides a fact of spiritual experience."<sup>2</sup> He further elaborates: "Brahman does not pass alternately from passivity to activity and back to passivity by cessation of its dynamic force of being. If that were true of the Integral Reality, then, while the universe continued, there would be no passive Brahman in existence, all would be action, and if the universe were dissolved, there would be passive Brahman, all would become cessation and immobile stillness. But this is not so and we can become aware of an eternal passivity and self-concentrated calm penetrating and upholding all the cosmic activity and all its multiple concentrated movements and this could not be, if, so long as an activity continued, the concentrated passivity did not exist supporting it and within it. Integral Brahman possesses both the passivity and the activity simultaneously."<sup>3</sup>

The Nirvishesha Adwaitin objects that the existence of inner passivity and outer activity does not by itself prove that passivity and activity are related and that the passivity is the basis and support of the active universe. The activity of the universe can still be Maya, as it is now the activity of Saguna Brahman, Ishwara, not deluded by Maya but Lord of it. The Nirguna Brahman would still be the true Reality, while Ishwara and the Universe are mayic or phenomenal reality.

In support of his argument the Nirvishesha Adwaitin cites the case of the highest Brahmajnani called Brahmavidvarishtha. In the Mundaka Upanishad, 3-1-4, such a Brahmajnani is described, *ātma-kṛīḍa ātma-ratiḥ kṛyāvāneṣa brahmavidāṁ varishthaḥ* ("In the Self his delight, at play in the Self, doing works,—the best is he among the knowers of the Eternal"<sup>4</sup>). But this is not what Integral Yoga is. There is still a perfect compartmentalisation between the passivity and the activity. The gulf between the two states still exists and so Maya is still required, for bridging the chasm—

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 339.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 342-43.

<sup>4</sup> *Gleanings from the Upanishads*, 1969, by M. P. Pandit, published by Dipti Publications, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

Maya that exists phenomenally and not transcendently. That is the reason why a Brahmajñani is said to behave like a child, *bālavat*, like an inert mass, *jaḍavat*, like a madman, *unmattavat*, or like a lower vital being, *piśāchavat*. All this happens because there is no coherent connection between the inner and the outer. All is absolute peace and bliss inside but it does not reflect outside nor does it exercise any control on the outside nature. The Brahmajñani, referred to as the best among Jñanis or knowers of Brahman, is one who, either by training or by divine will, directed towards a purpose, behaves quite coherently and purposefully and meaningfully, but there is still the "great divide". Unless this is bridged and the activity is consciously possessed without falling from the passivity, the outer activity along with the universe must appear as the work of the lower Maya. Sri Aurobindo himself explains this in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 389.

Listen to the voice of his knowledge: "This status of an inner passivity and an outer action independent of each other is a state of entire spiritual freedom; the yogi, as the Gita says, even in acting does no actions, for it is not he, but the universal nature directed by the Lord of nature, which is the worker." It is outer action of the mere organs, and universal nature acts through them, *kevalair indriyair*. "He is not bound by his works, nor do they leave any after-effects or consequences in his mind, nor cling to or leave any mark on his soul; they vanish and are dissolved (*pravīṇyante karmāṇi*) by their very execution and leave the immutable self unaffected and the soul unmodified. Then this would seem to be the very poise for the uplifted soul to take, if it has still to preserve any relations with human action in the world-existence, an unalterable silence, tranquillity, passivity within, an action without, regulated by the universal will and wisdom which works, as the Gita says, without being involved in, bound by or ignorantly attached to, works. And certainly this poise of a perfect activity founded on a perfect inner passivity is that which the yogi has to possess as we have seen in the Yoga of Works. But here in this state of self-knowledge at which we have arrived, there is an evident absence of integrality; for there is still a gulf, an unrealised unity or cleft of consciousness between the passive and active Brahman. We have still to possess consciously the active Brahman without losing possession of the silent Self." This is fully dealt with by Sri Aurobindo in the Chapter on "Passive and Active Brahman" in *The Synthesis of Yoga*. We have quoted from it to make the point that perfect inner passivity and perfect outer activity can be disjunctive or disjointed and yet co-exist like water and oil. So Maya is here necessary to bridge the gulf. The Real bridging can only be by traversing the planes of consciousness between Mind and Supermind.

There may be people who doubt if there are such planes at all. Says the Master about Mayavada with its sole stress on Nirvana: "If the Mind were the last word and there were nothing except the pure spirit, I would not be averse to accepting it as the only way out. For what the mind with its perceptions and the vital with its desires have made of life in this world, is a very bad mess, and if there were nothing better to be hoped for, the shortest cut to an exit would be the best. But my exper-

ience is that there is something beyond mind. Mind is not the last word of the Spirit. Mind is an ignorance-consciousness and its perceptions cannot be anything else than either false, mixed or imperfect—even when true, a partial reflection of the Truth and not the very body of Truth herself. But there is a truth-consciousness, not static only and self-introspective, but also dynamic and creative and I prefer to get at that and see what it says about things and can do rather than take the short cut away from things offered as its own end by the Ignorance.”<sup>1</sup>

Without traversing these planes, the gulf cannot be bridged. “The divine Maya delimits from the vast illimitable Truth and translates the static truth of essential being into ordered truth of active being, that is, the play of all in all is turned into the play of all in each and each in all. The play or Lila becomes the play of existence with existence, consciousness with consciousness, force with force, delight with delight of all in each and each in all. The highest mind cannot grasp this and the mental maya or lower maya persuades each that he is in all but not all is in him and that he is in all as a separated being not as a being inseparably one with the rest of existence.”<sup>2</sup> But this knowledge that each is always inseparably one with the rest of existence, not in essence only, but in fact and action too, cannot experientially be ours, until we traverse the planes from Mind to Supermind without taking a leap from Buddhi to Brahman, in which the chasm remains yawning so that this universe of activity, nay, all activity appears foreign to the Nirguna Brahman. So this mental Maya has to be embraced and overpassed. Then only the “each” and the “all” can be felt experientially to co-exist in the inseparable unity of the one truth and the multiple symbol. It is because Shankara did not care to know the truth of this manifestation, which can be known only by rising to the height of the Supermind after traversing the intermediate steps, he could not unravel the riddle of this universe. In Supermind alone, the essential truth, the total truth and individual truth are closely knit together and the unity is maintained. In the Overmind these three modalities of the truth are maintained but the integrality is not there. That is why the highest Brahmajñani called *Brahmavidvariṣṭha* also feels this oneness or unity with Brahman, cosmos and individual in essence only. So in result he feels that he is in all of them and not they in him, because the becoming and being are not integrated. We find even in the Gita—Chapter 7 sloka 12—something like this. The Lord says: *na tu aham teṣu te mayi*,” “I am not in them, they are in me.” The Gita speaks of the experience of the highest Brahmajñani in a reverse way, as the Lord of Nature, Sri Krishna, is speaking. He is an Avatar or Descent and Advent and not a mere *Brahmavidvariṣṭha*, who has risen to “godhood” from manhood, while the Lord has descended to manhood from “godhood” and so they should be in Him and not He in them, while it is the other way around with the highest Brahmajñani. Shankara explains this sloka of the Gita as the Lord not depending on them but they depending on

<sup>1</sup> *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (Sri Aurobindo International University Centre Collection, Vol I, published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953), p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 138.

the Lord. The interpretation is, to say the least, puerile, for how can the Lord be dependent on them? Naturally they depend on him. For example, we are dependent on air but air is not dependent on us. One cannot help seeing the hollowness of this interpretation of Shankara's. Sri Aurobindo interprets that the Lord is not in them, though they are all in Him, in the sense that they are his becomings and so they are in Him but He as Being who has descended as the Avatar is not in them, that is, they are not the essentiality of the Lord. Thus the chasm between passivity and activity continues, as it is not he but the cosmic force that acts according to the divine will through his organs. That is why Shankara had to interpret the One alone as the truth and the Many as Mithya. If not, he would have had to accept, like Ramanuja, Brahman as determinate and the changing world as his body, and then the unity of Brahman is compromised without any reasonable explanation. Shankara's greatness is that the Absolute is seen as transcendent, exceeding all relations. But he "confines" the Absolute in that misprision.

It has been said that the planes of consciousness higher than mind are there to bridge the gulf between the passivity and the activity. Except for the Vedic and Upanishadic Rishis, probably none thought of them. The memory of these planes is almost lost to the spiritual tradition of the race so that Buddhi became the highest plane. "In that connection I may say in the Upanishad (usually the Taittiriya) there are some indications of these higher planes and their nature and the possibility of gathering up the whole consciousness and rising into them. But this was forgotten afterwards, and people spoke only of the Buddhi as the highest thing with the Purusha or Self just above, but there was no clear idea of these higher planes."<sup>1</sup> So until Supermind actively establishes itself and takes hold by linking itself with the Supermind involved in Matter and coming out on account of the pressure of the Supermind that has descended and is active on Mother Earth, Ignorance cannot fade away from this our *terra firma*.

(To be continued)

P. KRISHNAMURTY

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother, pp. 1975-76.

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### NOTICE

I request the people of all the Sri Aurobindo Centres and all who are devotees of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo not to translate my books without my permission. Thank you.

HUTA

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## EUROPE 1974

### A TRAVELOGUE

(51)

ONE of the most prized and proud possessions of the British Museum is the Rosetta Stone. Scholars from all over the world go to see it and stay nonplussed as if they were seeing some heavenly vision.

European scholars for a long time tried to decipher the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing. A clue was needed from where to start and that clue was missing till the Rosetta Stone was found. The word, hieroglyph comes from the Greek words, *sacred carving*. Some people prefer to call it *graffiti culture*. Writing on the wall is an Egyptian speciality, no people or culture has done it with such devotion, writing that can be called a fine art. The Egyptians were obsessed with immortality and eternity. So each generation tried to record the happenings of that period as graphically as possible, names of the great men, accounts of the great achievements were all written on the walls and pillars of monuments and temples. By a superficial survey one would not know whether they were embellishment or historical writing. Artistically this workmanship on stone from floor to ceiling is matchless. In Egypt as in some other places the archaeologist did not have to hunt for the sites. The Pyramids, the Sphinx, the temples of Luxor and Karnak are all there for anyone to see, the hot dry air of Egypt has preserved all their temples, tombs and public works, furniture, equipment, jewels, clothes and even their bodies, and they have left their history in exquisite written symbols. But before the Rosetta Stone was found no one could read their hieroglyphs.

Athanasius Kircher, a German scholar, wrote a book in 1643: *Lingua Aegyptica*. He presumed he had deciphered the Egyptian hieroglyph but it was all his own imagination. The people in Europe had a vague idea that their next-door neighbour, strange and different, had something great in the past which was worth unveiling but not until Napoleon invaded Egypt did Egypt become a headline and Egyptian antiquity fashionable. Napoleon took along with his army an army of scholars, scientists, linguists, draughtsmen and archaeologists. The wealth of information that these men collected in due time spread all over Europe and it awakened people and aroused the desire to know more about this mysterious civilisation. Fashionable ladies wore jewels with Egyptain motifs. Chairs had lion-feet and sphinx-arm-terminals. While the savants hoped to decipher the hieroglyphs the soldiers spent time target-practising on priceless monuments and sacred places.

At a place called Rosetta near Alexandria a group of soldiers were repairing their fort St. Julien. In a delta-country all gravel sand, any rock found was used up. A stone found could have been used up with other stones. Fortunately it fell into the hands of one Bouchard who had, it seems, some sense, and thought these writings

might be of use to the archaeologists. So he saved it, a black basalt measuring roughly 114×71 cms and on it were three types of writings: Hieroglyph of the priests and the scholars, then Demotic of the common people which was a cursive writing, and finally Greek. Taking the stone to France was impossible because of the Napoleonic wars. But everyone heard about it. So, when the French were defeated at Waterloo, in the terms of the peace treaty was a clause demanding the surrender of the Rosetta Stone. The French naturally felt greatly humiliated. However, they were allowed to take casts and prints of the stone before it was shipped to London. But nature vindicated France in another way, for it was a French scholar who deciphered the Rosetta Stone and ultimately the Egyptian hieroglyph.

In England Thomas Young at once started working on the Stone. But his work though noble was not completely satisfactory. Then came the famous French scholar Jean François Champollion. A genius from his early childhood he learned Latin, Greek and Hebrew when other boys were learning nursery rhymes. He now started learning Chinese, Persian, Arabic, and coptic Pahlavi in 1822. At first he had to produce an essay to enable him to join the Grenoble Lycée. M. Dacier acclaimed it as an undisputed piece of scholarship. Ignoring Horapollon the Greek authority on the hieroglyph, Champollion started a fresh line of advance. For to him Horapollon was mainly concerned with symbolism and iconograph and not hieroglyph. Champollion argued that all royal names were put within a cartouche—that is, an oval ring. He took two names “Ptolemy” and “Cleopatra.”

C could not be in Ptolemy—it was not.

L should be the fourth letter in Ptolemy—it was.

O should be the third letter in Ptolemy—it was.

He proceeded word by word and found that the hieroglyph could be read from both sides: all depended on which way the pictorial signs faced. An epoch-making linguistic discovery was made by a Frenchman of encyclopaedic learning with an incisive mind and fresh and original approach.

Another Rosetta Stone and a stele were found in 1866 by the German Egyptologist R. Lepsius. These revealed much of the civilisation extending over three and a half millenniums, although much still remained to be done and known.

Sanat, a veritable polyglot, who knew seven Indian languages and five European ones, remained glued to the Rosetta stone for almost half an hour while I wanted to see Egyptian jewelry.

*(To be continued)*

CHAUNDONA S. BANERJI

# WHAT'S WRITTEN CANNOT BE ERASED

## A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY\*

LONG long ago there lived an astrologer. He was a master in the study of stars and knew what was going to happen to everyone, including himself.

Hundreds of people from various villages flocked to consult him. The astrologer spoke about their past, present and future quite fluently.

"Astrology is the art of reading what is written by God. You should never be overjoyed when I tell you something pleasing. And if you feel that there is something unpleasant in my words, you should never be disheartened. Never should you forget that life is full of good and evil." That was how he began to speak to his clients, when the fee was paid.

Then he would unroll a square piece of skin with some charts on it, take half a dozen *cowrie* shells, rattle them in his closed palms and throw them on the skin. He would observe where the shells fell on the chart and do some calculations muttering to himself. His clients sat spellbound till he finished.

The astrologer's fame spread far and wide. The king came to hear of his scholarship and appointed him court-astrologer. Whenever there was a problem, the king and his minister called upon the astrologer. He foresaw the shape of things for them and put them on their guard.

One day he was summoned by the king to read the future of his new-born son. The astrologer was getting ready to go to the palace. Just then a cobbler arrived to deliver a pair of sandals the astrologer had ordered.

"I'm going to the palace. Leave the sandals inside. I'll pay you later," said the astrologer.

"Sir!" interrupted the cobbler. "That is all right. But today my wife gave birth to a son. Will you please spare a few minutes to read his future? You won't have to pay for your sandals."

The astrologer spread a mat on the floor and sat down on it. He then took out the chart and *cowrie* shells. After the calculation, he said: "Your son will be a king."

The cobbler was amazed. The astrologer continued: "Yes, what I predict will come true. Your son's stars tell me that he is destined to be known as a king at least for a few hours..." He rolled up his mat, tucked it under his armpit and left for the palace.

The cobbler giggled and said to himself: "The astrologer, in his hurry, speaks like a madcap. Son of a cobbler is to be a king!"

When the astrologer reached the palace, the king and his minister welcomed him and led him into the queen's chamber where he saw the new-born babe.

The astrologer studied the various places the *cowrie* shells fell on the chart and,

\* From *Folktales of Pondicherry* by P. Raja, to be shortly published by Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., New Delhi, under the *Folktales of India* series.

after a couple of minutes of calculation, said, "My Lord! The stars tell me that the prince has an excellent future, but he is also destined to be a beggar before he is ten!"

"Absurd!" shouted the queen.

"Yes, your majesty," he proceeded. "Life is a wheel and one can't entirely escape ill-luck however lucky one may be. The prince is destined to beg at least for a while."

The king's face became red. For a minute he lost control over himself and commanded his guards, "Throw this astrologer into prison. His tongue deserves to be taught a lesson. My son will be a beggar, eh? What audacity!"

"I knew, my Lord, what will be the reward for my prophecy. But what is written in fate cannot be erased. I am destined to be behind the bars for some years. There is no escape from it," said the astrologer and the guards led him to the prison.

From that day the royal couple began to take extra care of their son and they were over-cautious in their deeds. The king invaded many countries, conquered and brought them under his control. He levied tax after tax on the conquered states and collected enough wealth in the royal treasury, so that his son would not be forced to beg. He allowed his son to play with all children, regardless of the parents' status, so that all would become his friends.

Years passed. The prince had grown up to be a jolly boy of nine. His companions were from all sections of the society. The cobbler's son was very close to him.

One day the public announcer beat his tom-tom and announced the place and time of a drama. He invited everyone to attend it.

Commoners and courtiers thronged to see the drama. On the special request of their son who was also acting, the king too went to witness the play.

"What role is our son playing in the drama?" the king asked the queen.

"I don't know," said the queen. "He told me that he would play a major role and we may try to identify him."

The drama was about to begin. The clown appeared and welcomed the audience. He requested them to identify the players and name them as they saw the drama.

The drama began. The player-king on the throne was seen holding counsel with his ministers.

The king presumed that the player-king was his son. He was about to say, "The king is my son." But he stopped when he heard a voice from the audience, "My son is the king."

"Yes! Yes! The king is none other than the cobbler's son," many agreed with the cobbler.

The drama went on. It was about a tyrant who learned wisdom from a beggar and later became a saint.

The audience was able to identify all the players. But the beggar was so perfectly disguised that none could identify him till the end of the drama.

When the drama was over all the players including those who had lost their lives under the rule of the tyrant stood in a row before the audience.

The audience applauded and then asked in unison, "Who played, the beggar?"

The clown laughed and said, "He who can never be a beggar... the prince!"

"This was in the boy's destiny," said the amused king... "I must thank God that our son became a beggar only in the play. The astrologer must be rewarded and honoured. I must apologise to him too!"

The king hurried to the prison.

*Collected and retold by P. RAJA*

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## A PRAYER

O DIVINE Child, hidden in the secret core of being,  
grow up and come to the fore.

O Resplendent, break down the rigid walls and set aflame  
the cells of my body with immortal aspiration.

Sublimate the life-force in me  
and destroy the deceptive ways of nature  
to pour in them Thy eternal iridescence.

Let the fickle dance of mind merge with Thy tranquillity  
and Thy voice alone ring in my inner ear.

O Beauty, leap forth in ideas and words, feelings and forms  
to create a new art with the soul's ecstasy.

Thou art the mystic Sun in the boundless vasts above  
with gaze fixed always on the earth below.

Even so the secret flame in the bosom of earth  
seeks Thee and knows none but Thyself...

O Lord and Lover, hurl Thy Disc of Truth  
to shatter all evolutionary obstacles  
and let Thy footfall usher in a world  
divinely luminous and free...

CHUNILAL CHAUDHURY