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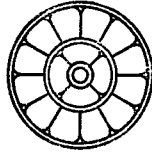
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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AUGUST 15

I

FROM A LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO TO MOTILAL ROY IN LATE AUGUST 1912*

15TH August is usually a turning point or a notable day for me personally either in sadhana or life—indirectly only for others. This time it has been very important to me. My subjective sadhana may be said to have received its final seal and something like its consummation by a prolonged realisation and dwelling in Parabrahman for many hours. Since then, egoism is dead for all in me except the Annamaya Atma,—the physical self which awaits one further realisation before it is entirely liberated from occasional visitings or external touches of the old separated existence.

My future sadhana is for life, practical knowledge and shakti,—not the essential knowledge or shakti in itself which I have got already—but knowledge and shakti established in the same physical self and directed to my work in life. I am now getting a clearer idea of that work. I may as well impart something of that idea to you; since you look to me as the centre, you should know what is likely to radiate out of that centre.

1. To reexplain the Sanatana Dharma to the human intellect in all its parts, from a new standpoint. This work is already beginning, and three parts of it are being clearly worked out. Srikrishna has shown me the true meaning of the Vedas, not only so but he has shown me a new Science of philology showing the process and origins of human speech so that a new Nirukta can be formed and the new interpretation of the Veda based upon it. He has also shown me the meaning of all in the Upanishads that is not understood either by Indians or Europeans. I have therefore to reexplain the whole Vedanta and Veda in such a way that it will be seen how all religion arises out of it and is one everywhere. In this way it will be proved that India is the centre of the religious life of the world and its destined saviour through the Sanatana Dharma.

2. On the basis of Vedic knowledge to establish a Yogic sadhana which will not only liberate the soul, but prepare a perfect humanity and help in the restoration of the Satyayuga. That work has to begin now but will not be complete till the end of the Kali.

3. India being the centre to work for her restoration to her proper place in the world; but this restoration must be effected as a part of the above work and by means of Yoga applied to human means and instruments, not otherwise.

4. A perfect humanity being intended, society will have to be remodelled so as to be fit to contain that perfection.

* As fixed with great probability by the Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research.

You must remember that I have not given you the whole Yogic sadhana. What I have given you is only the beginning. You have to get rid of ahankara and desire and surrender yourself to God, in order that the rest may come. You speak of printing *Yoga and its Objects*. But remember that what I have sent you is only the first part which gives the path, not the objects or the circumstances. If you print it, print it as the first of a series, with the subtitle, the Path. I am now busy with an explanation of the Isha Upanishad in twelve chapters; I am at the eleventh now and will finish in a few days. Afterwards I shall begin the second part of the series and send it to you when finished.

I have also begun, but on a very small scale the second part of my work which will consist in making men for the new age by imparting whatever siddhi I get to those who are chosen. From this point of view our little colony here is a sort of seed plot and a laboratory. The things I work out in it, are then extended outside. Here the work is progressing at last on definite lines and with a certain steadiness, not very rapid; but still definite results are forming. I should be glad to have from you clearer knowledge of the results you speak of over there; for my drishti is not yet sufficiently free from obstructions for me to know all that I need to know at this stage.

As to other work (Tantric), I am not yet in possession of knowledge. The Shakti is only preparing to pour herself out there, but I don't know what course she will take. You must remember I never plan or fix anything for myself. She must choose her own paddhati or rather follow the line Krishna fixes for her.

I am glad you have arranged something about money. It is indifferent to me whether you get it from others or provide it yourselves, so long as my energies which are badly needed for sadhana and for the heavy work laid on me, are not diverted at present into this lower effort in which they would be sorely wasted. You will be relieved of the burden as soon as this physical resistance is overcome, but I do not know yet how soon or late that will be. Reward, of course, those who give to God, shall have; but what reward He will determine. Remember the importance of keeping up this centre, for all my future work depends on what I work out there.

2

WHAT SRI AUROBINDO SAID ON THIS DAY IN 1923*

You all know that the Supramental Truth has to descend into our life. That Truth is symbolised by this day. But there are several obstacles in the way of its coming down. There is the Mind and the mental ideas that grasp at the Truth coming from above and try to utilise it for their own aims. There is the Vital, or the Life-force, which seizes upon the Higher Force and wants to throw itself out into impure actions. The Truth that is coming down is not mental, it is Supramental. In order that it may be able to work properly, all the lower instruments must be Supramentalised.

* A report based on A. B. Purani's notes.

The lower forces want to utilise this higher Truth for the satisfaction of their ordinary movements. Whenever a man enjoys the pleasures of life, or spends his life in pursuit of his selfish ends, it is, really speaking, these universal forces that take enjoyment through and in him.

For the higher Truth to be able to work in its purity, one has to open oneself to the greater Power above, to give oneself up to it and remove all that stands in the way of the higher Truth. The capacity to surrender consists in these three things.

I have been working all these years to meet the obstacles and remove them and prepare and clear the path so that the task may not be very difficult for you. As for helping you in that task, it all depends upon your capacity to receive the help. I can give any amount that you can take. There is an idea that to-day every sadhak gets a new experience. That depends upon your capacity to receive the Truth in yourself. Real spiritual surrender is, of course, quite a matter by itself; but if any of you have experienced even a degree of it, even some faint reflection, then the purpose of the 15th will have been served.

3

**A TALK BY THE MOTHER TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN
ON AUGUST 15, 1958***

As today is Sri Aurobindo's birthday I thought that instead of reading the *Dhammapada* I could read to you something which will both interest you and show you how Sri Aurobindo visualised our relation with the gods.

You know, don't you, that in India especially, there are countless categories of gods, who are all on different planes, some very close to man, others very close to the Supreme, with many intermediaries.

You will understand better what I want to tell you if I mention the gods of the Puranas—like those we saw the other day in the film—who in many ways are, I must say, inferior to man (!) although they have infinitely more power.

There are gods of the Overmind who are the great creators of the earth—until now. There are the gods of the Vedas who are mentioned in everything that has come down from the Rishis. And there are the gods of the Supermind, those who are going to manifest on earth, although of course they exist from all eternity on their own plane.

Here Sri Aurobindo is speaking mostly about the Vedic gods, but not exclusively nor in a very definite way. At any rate these gods are higher than the gods of the Puranas.

Here is what Sri Aurobindo tells us.

In fact, it is a prayer:

* This short talk was given on a Friday, the day on which the *Dhammapada* was usually read during that year.

Be wide in me, O Varuna;
 be mighty in me, O Indra;
 O Sun, be very bright and luminous;
 O Moon, be full of charm and sweetness.
 Be fierce and terrible, O Rudra;
 be impetuous and swift, O Maruts;
 be strong and bold, O Aryama;
 be voluptuous and pleasurable, O Bhaga;
 be tender and kind and loving and passionate, O Mitra.
 Be bright and revealing, O Dawn;
 O Night, be solemn and pregnant.
 O Life, be full, ready and buoyant;
 O Death, lead my steps from mansion to mansion.
 Harmonise all these, O Brahmanaspati.
 Let me not be subject to these gods, O Kali.¹

So Sri Aurobindo makes Kali the great liberating power who ardently impels you towards progress and leaves no ties within you which would hinder you from progressing.

I think this will be a good subject for meditation.

(*Questions and Answers 1958, pp. 476-7*)

¹ *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, Cent. 17, p. 85.

A LETTER ABOUT AUGUST 15

AUGUST 15 has been associated with two events, the birth of Sri Aurobindo and the birth of Independent India. There is a third event also which took place on August 15, the birth of the National College at Calcutta, a milestone, if not a turning-point, in the life of Sri Aurobindo. As far as I know, this fact has escaped the notice of Sri Aurobindo's biographers. Here is the proof.

Dharmanand Kosambi, the well-known Buddhist Bhikshu and Pali scholar, writes in his autobiography that Sri Aurobindo's elder brother Monomohan Ghose, who was Professor of English at Presidency College, Calcutta, persuaded the National College Committee to include Pali in the curriculum and Dharmanand was appointed Professor of Pali at Rs. 30 a month. The College was opened on August 15, 1906, under the Principalship of Sri Aurobindo.

CHANDRAVADAN C. BHATT

THE PSYCHIC BEING AND ITS WORKINGS

A TALK BY THE MOTHER TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN
ON AUGUST 5, 1953

Does the Psychic being always progress?

THERE are in the psychic being two very different kinds of progress: one consisting in its formation, building and organisation. For the psychic starts by being only a kind of tiny divine spark inside the being and out of this spark will emerge progressively an independent conscious being having its own action and will. The psychic being at its origin is only a spark of the divine consciousness and it is through successive lives that it builds up a conscious individuality. It is a progress similar to that of a growing child. It is a thing in the making. For a long time, in most human beings the psychic is a being in the making. It is not a fully individualised, fully conscious being and master of itself and it needs all its rebirths, one after another, in order to build itself and become fully conscious.

But this sort of progress has an end. There comes a time when the being is fully developed, fully individualised, fully master of itself and its destiny. When this being, or one of these psychic beings at that state, takes birth in a human being, that makes a very great difference: the human being, so to say, is born free. He is not tied to circumstances, to surroundings, to his origin and atavism, like ordinary people. He comes into the world with the purpose of doing something, with a work to carry out, a mission to fulfil. From this point of view his progress in growth has come to an end, that is, it is not indispensable for him to take birth again in a body. Till then rebirth is a necessity, for it is through rebirth that he grows; it is in the physical life and in a physical body that he gradually develops and becomes a fully conscious being. But once he is fully formed, he is free, in this sense that he can take birth or not, at will. So there, one kind of progress stops.

But if this fully formed being wants to become an instrument of work for the Divine, if instead of retiring to repose in a psychic bliss, in its own domain, he chooses to be a worker upon earth to help in the fulfilment of the Divine Work then he has a fresh progress to make, a progress in the capacity for work, for organisation of his work and for expression of the Divine Will. So there is a time when the thing changes. So long as he remains in the world, so long as he chooses to work for the Divine, he will progress. Only if he withdraws into the psychic world and refuses to continue doing the Divine Work or renounces it, can he remain in a static condition outside all progress, because as I have told you, only upon earth is there progress, only in the physical world; it is not acquired everywhere. In the psychic world there is a kind of blissful repose. One remains what one is, without any movement.

But for those who are not conscious of their psychic?

They are compelled to progress whether they want it or not.

The psychic being itself progresses in them and they are not conscious of it. But they themselves are compelled to progress. That is to say, they follow a curve. They follow an ascent in life. It is the same progress as that of the growing child; there comes a time when it is at the summit of its growth and then, unless it changes the plane of progress, unless the purely physical progress turns into a mental progress, a psychic progress, a spiritual progress, it goes down the curve and then there will be a decomposition and it will not exist any longer.

It is just because progress is not constant and perpetual in the physical world that there is growth, an apogee, a decline and a decomposition. For anything that does not advance falls back; all that does not progress, regresses.

So this is just what happens physically. The physical world has not learnt how to progress indefinitely; it arrives at a certain point, then it is either tired of progressing or is not capable of progressing in the present constitution, but in any case it stops progressing and after a time decomposes. Those who lead a purely physical life reach a kind of summit, then they slide down very quickly. But now, with the general collective human progress, there is behind the physical progress a vital progress and a mental progress, so that the mental progress can go on for a very long time, even after the physical progress has come to a stop, and through this mental progress one keeps up a kind of ascent long after the physical has ceased to progress.

And then there are those who do yoga, who become conscious of their psychic being, are united with it, participate in its life; these, indeed, progress till the last breath of their life. And they do not stop even after death, when they have left their body under the plea that the body cannot last any longer: they continue to progress.

It is the incapacity of the body to transform itself, to continue progressing that causes it to regress and in the end become more and more open to the inner disequilibrium until one day that becomes strong enough to bring about a total imbalance and it can no longer regain its balance and health.... It is only in the pure spiritual life—that which is outside all physical and terrestrial existence, including the mental—that there is no progress. You reach a static state and are outside all movements of progress. But at the same time you are outside the manifestation also. When you reach that state, you no longer belong to the manifestation, you go out of the manifested world. One must go out of the manifested world in order to go out of all progress, because the two are identical: manifestation means progress and progress means manifestation.

Many men think and write through inspiration. From where does it come?

Many! That it is indeed a wonderful thing. I did not think there have been so many.... So?

Poets, when they write poems...

Ah! Inspirations come from very many different places. There are inspirations that may be very material, there are inspirations that may be vital, there are inspirations that come from all kinds of mental planes, and there are very, very rare inspirations that come from the higher mind or from a still higher region. All inspirations do not come from the same place. Hence, to be inspired does not necessarily mean that one is a higher being.... One may be inspired also to do and say many stupid things!

What does "inspired" mean?

It means receiving something which is beyond you, which was not within you; to open yourself to an influence which is outside your individual conscious being.

Indeed, one can have also an inspiration to commit a murder ! In countries where they decapitate murderers, cut off their heads, this causes a very brutal death which throws out the vital being, not allowing it the time to decompose for coming out of the body; the vital being is violently thrown out of the body, with all its impulses; and generally it goes and lodges itself in one of those present there, men half horrified, half with a kind of unhealthy curiosity. That makes the opening and it enters within. Statistics have proved that most young murderers admit that the impulse came to them when they were present at the death of another murderer. It was an "inspiration", but of a detestable kind.

Fundamentally it is a moment of openness to something which was not within your personal consciousness, which comes from outside and rushes into you and makes you do something. This is the widest formula that can be given.

Now, generally, when people say: "Oh! he is an inspired poet", it means he has received something from high above and expressed it in a remarkable manner. But one should rather say that his inspiration is of a high quality.

Does it not come, Mother, whenever one wants it?

Whenever one wants it? Generally not, for one does not know the mechanism of one's being and cannot open the doors at will.

It is a thing that can be done. It is one of the earliest things that you are taught to do in Yoga; to open the door whenever one wants. It is the result of meditation or concentration or aspiration: all these processes are followed to open the door somewhere.

And generally you try to open it precisely towards the highest thing, not towards anything whatever. For the other kind of receptivity people unfortunately always have.... It is impossible to be altogether shut up in an ivory tower—besides, I believe it would not be very favourable, it would be impossible to progress if one were completely shut up in oneself. One would be able only to rearrange whatever was in oneself. Just imagine you were like a closed globe, altogether closed, that there

was no communication with outside—you put out nothing, you receive nothing, you are shut up—you have a few elements of consciousness, movements, vibrations (call them what you like), all that is contained as within a ball, along with your consciousness also. You have no relation with things outside, you are conscious only of yourself. What can you do?... Change the organisation within; that you can do, you can do many things by changing this organisation. But it is confined to that. It is a kind of inner progress, but there is no true progress in relation to the forces outside oneself. You would find yourself extremely limited after a time, you would be tired of yourself: turning and turning again, turning and turning again the elements inside—not very pleasant.

But all the while you externalise yourself and all the while you bring back something from this externalisation; it is like something porous: a force goes out and then a force comes in. There are pulsations like that. And this is why it is so important to choose the environment in which one lives, because there is constantly a kind of interchange between what you give and what you receive. People who throw themselves out a great deal in activity, receive more. But they receive on the same level, the level of their activity. Children, for example, who are younger, who always move about, always shout and romp and jump (very rarely do they keep quiet, except while asleep, and perhaps not even so), well, they spend much and they receive much, and generally it is the physical and vital energy that is spent and it is physical and vital energies that are received. They recuperate a good part of what they spend. So there, it is very important for them to be in surroundings where they can, after they have spent or while they are spending, recover something that is at least equal in quality to theirs, that is not of an inferior quality.

When you no longer have this generosity in your movements, you receive much less and this is one of the reasons—one of the chief reasons—why physical progress stops. It is because you become thrifty, you try not to waste; the mind intervenes: "Take care, don't tire yourself, don't do too much, etc." The mind intervenes and physical receptivity diminishes a great deal. Finally, you do not grow any more—by growing reasonable, you stop growing altogether!

But receptivity opens to other levels. Those who live in a world of desires and passions, increase their vital receptivity so much at times that it reaches proportions very unpleasant to themselves and to their surroundings. And then there are those who live in the mental consciousness; their mental receptivity grows very much. All who create mentally, study and live in mental activity, if the mental activity is constant, can progress indefinitely. Mind in the human being does not stop functioning even when the physical instrument has deteriorated. It may no longer manifest its intelligence materially, if there is a lesion in the brain, for example, but the mind itself, independently of the instrument, nothing can prevent from progressing, from continuing to grow. It is a being that lasts infinitely longer than the physical. It is still young when physically one is already old. Only when you do not take enough care to keep your brain in a good state, only if accidents occur and there are

lesions then you can no longer express yourself. But the mind in itself continues to grow. And those who have a sufficient physical balance, for example, those who have not gone to excesses of any kind, who have never maltreated their body, who have never poisoned themselves like most people—who have never smoked, drunk alcohol and so on—keep their brain in a relatively good condition and they can progress, even in their expression, till the end of their life. It is only if in the last years of their life they make a kind of withdrawal within themselves, that they lose their power of expression. But the mind goes on progressing.

The vital is by nature immortal. But it is not organised, and in its normal state, it is over-excited, full of contradictory passions and impulses. So with all that it destroys itself. But otherwise the elements continue to exist. A desire, a passion is a very living thing and continues to live for a very long time, even independently of the being who... undergoes them, I might say, rather than creates them, because they are things that one undergoes, that rush upon you from outside like a storm that seizes you and carries you away, unless you keep very calm like that, very still, very quiet, as though one were clinging to something solid and immobile in oneself, allowing the storm to pass over when it begins to blow—it blows, but one must not stir, one must not let oneself tremble or shiver or shake; one must remain altogether immobile and know that these are passing storms. And when the storm has blown over, it passes and goes away; then one can heave a deep breath and resume one's normal balance; and there has been only a minimum destruction. In such cases, generally, things turn out well in the end.

But those who are like a piece of cork on water and rush about in all directions and do not succeed in recovering their poise and watching themselves, are liable to any occurrence. They may be drawn into a whirlpool all of a sudden and lo! engulfed. And there remains nothing.

That's all?

There are people who do foolish things...

Yes.

And they know they are doing so, but their mind does not justify them, it gives no support, no excuse, no reasoning or explanation. What is this state?¹

What is this state? People who know that they are doing foolish things, who are conscious, but who are not able to refrain from them, because their mind does not have enough strength to check them?...

But the mind never has sufficient strength to check them! For the mind is an

¹ "This physical mind is usually in a kind of alliance with the lower vital consciousness and its movements; when the lower vital manifests certain desires and impulses, the more material mind comes to its aid and justifies and supports them with specious explanations and reasonings and excuses."
Questions and Answers (26 May)

instrument made to see all things from all sides. Then how can you expect to have a will strong enough to resist an impulse when the mind looks at it first from this side and then from that side? And then it says: "After all, it is like that and why should it not be like that?" And so, where is your will?...

As I said there,¹ it always finds a way to explain everything, justify everything and give admirable reasons for all things.

It is only the psychic being that has the strength to intervene. If your mind is in contact with your psychic being, if it receives the influence of the psychic being, then it is strong enough to organise the resistance. It knows what the true thing is and what the false; and knowing what the true thing is, if it has the goodwill, it will organise the resistance, give battle and gain the victory. But that is the only condition: it must be in contact with the psychic being.

For even the most beautiful theories, even if one knows mentally many things and holds admirable principles, that is not sufficiently strong to create a will capable of resisting an impulse. At one time you are quite determined, you have decided that it would be thus—for example, that you would not do such a thing: it is settled, you will not do it—but how is it that suddenly (you do not know how or why nor what has happened), you have not decided anything at all! And then you immediately find in yourself an excellent reason for doing the thing.... Among others, there is a certain kind of excuse which is always given: "Well, if I do it this time, at least I shall be convinced that it is very bad and I shall do it no longer and this will be the last time." It is the prettiest excuse one always gives to oneself: "This is the last time I am doing it. This time, I am doing it to understand perfectly that it is bad and that it must not be done and I shall not do it any more. This is the last time." Every time, it is the last time! and you begin again.

Of course there are some who have less clear ideas and who say to themselves: "After all, why don't I want to do it? These are theories, they are principles that might not be true. If I have this impulse, what is it that tells me that this impulse is not better than a theory?..." It is not for them the last time. It is something they accept as quite natural.

Between these two extremes there are all the possibilities. But the most dangerous of all is to say: "Well, I am doing it once more this time, that will purify me of this. Afterwards I shall no longer do it." Now the purification is never enough!

It happens only when you have decided: "Well, this time, I am going to try not to do it, and I shall not do it, I shall apply all my strength and I shall not do it." Even if you have just a little success, it is much. Not a big success, but just a small success, a very partial success: you do not carry out what you yearn to do; but the yearning, the desire, the passion is still there and that produces whirls within, but outside you resist, "I shall not do it, I shall not move; even if I have to bind myself hand and foot, I shall not do it." It is a partial success—but it is a great victory because, due to this, next time you will be able to do a little more. That is to say, in-

¹ Please refer to the footnote on the previous page.

stead of holding all the violent passions within yourself, you can begin calming them a little; and you will calm them slowly at first, with difficulty. They will remain long, they will come back, they will trouble you, vex you, produce in you a great disgust, all that, but if you resist well and say: "No, I shall carry out nothing; whatever the cost, I shall not carry out anything; I will stay like a rock", then little by little, little by little, that thins out, thins out and you begin to learn the second attitude: "Now I want my consciousness to be above those things. There will still be many battles but if my consciousness stands above that, little by little there will come a time when this will return no longer." And then there is a time when you feel that you are absolutely free: you do not even perceive it, and then that is all. It may take a long time, it may come soon: that depends on the strength of character, on the sincerity of the aspiration. But even for people who have just a little sincerity, if they subject themselves to this process, they succeed. It takes time. They succeed in the first item: in not expressing. All forces upon earth tend towards expressing themselves. These forces come with the object of manifesting themselves and if you place a barrier and refuse expression, they may try to beat against the barrier for a time, but in the end, they will tire themselves out and not being manifested, they will withdraw and leave you quiet.

So you must never say: "I shall first purify my thought, purify my body, purify my vital and then later I shall purify my action." That is the normal order, but it never succeeds. The effective order is to begin from the outside: "The very first thing is that I do not do it, and afterwards, I desire it no longer and next I close my doors completely to all impulses: they no longer exist for me, I am now outside all that." This is the true order, the order that is effective. First, not to do it. And then you will no longer desire and after that it will go out of your consciousness completely.

When the psychic is about to enter into the world, does it choose in advance the form it is going to take?

It is an interesting question. That depends. As I have just told you, there are psychic beings who are in the making, on the way to progress; these generally, right at the outset, cannot choose much, but when they have arrived at a certain degree of growth and of consciousness (generally while they are still in a physical body and have had a certain amount of experience), they decide at that time what their next field of experience will be like.

I can give you some rather external examples. For instance, a psychic being needed to have the experience of mastery, of power in order to know the reactions and how it is possible to turn all these movements towards the Divine: to learn what a life of power may teach you. It took birth in a king or a queen. These enjoyed some power and during that time they had their experiences; they reached the end of the field of experience. Now, they know what they wanted to know, they are about

to go, they are going to leave their body that's now become useless, and they are going to prepare for the next experience. Well, at that time, when the psychic being is still in the body and has noted what it has learnt, it decides for the next occasion. And sometimes it is a movement of action and reaction: because it has studied one entire field, it needs to study the opposite field. And very often it chooses a very different life from the one it had. So before leaving, it says: "Next time, it is in this domain that I shall take birth..." Suppose, for example, the psychic has reached a stage of growth when it would like to have the chance of working on the physical body to make it capable of coming consciously into contact with the Divine and of transforming it. Now, it is about to leave the body in which it had authority, power, activity, the body it has used for its growth; it says: "Next time I shall take birth in a neutral environment, neither low nor high, where it will not be necessary (how to put it?) to have a highly external life, where one will have neither great power nor great misery —altogether neutral, as you know, the life in between." It chooses that. It returns to its own psychic world for the necessary rest, for assimilation of the experience gained, for preparation of the future experience. It naturally remembers its choice and, before coming down once more, when it has finished its assimilation, when it is time to return, to come down upon earth, it cannot, from that domain, see material things as we see them, you know: they appear to it in another form. But still the differences can be foreseen: the differences of environment, differences of activity in the environment are clearly seen, quite perceptible. It can have a vision that is total or global. It can choose. At times it chooses the country; when it wants a certain kind of education, civilisation, influence, it can choose its country beforehand. Sometimes it can't, sometimes it chooses only its environment and the kind of life it will lead. And then from up there, before it comes down, it looks for the kind of vibrations it wants; it sees them very clearly. It is as though it was aiming at the place where it is going to drop. But it is an approximation because of the fact that another condition is necessary: not only its choice but also a receptivity from below and an aspiration. There must be someone in the environment it has chosen, generally the mother (sometimes both the parents, but the most indispensable is the mother), she must have an aspiration or a receptivity, something sufficiently passive and open or a conscious aspiration towards something higher. And that kindles for the psychic being a little light. In the mass representing for it the environment in which it wants to be born, if under the influence of its own projected will a small light is kindled, then it knows that it is there it must go.

It is necessary, it is this that makes the difference in months or days, perhaps, not so much perhaps in years; however, this creates an uncertainty, and that is why it cannot foretell the exact date: "On that date, that day, at that hour I shall take birth." It needs to find someone receptive. When it sees that, it rushes down. But what happens is something like an image: it is not exactly that, but something very similar. It throws itself down into an unconsciousness, because the physical world, even human consciousness whatever it may be, is very unconscious in comparison

with the psychic consciousness. So it rushes into an unconsciousness. It is as though it fell head foremost. That stuns it. And so generally, apart from some very very rare exceptions, for a long time it does not know any longer where it is nor what it is doing nor why it is there, nothing at all. It finds a great difficulty in expressing itself, especially through a baby that has no brain, naturally; it is only the embryo of a brain which is hardly formed and it does not have the elements for manifesting itself. So it is very rare for a child to manifest immediately the exceptional being it contains.... That happens. Such things we have heard being narrated. It happens, but generally some time is needed. Only slowly it awakens from its stupor and becomes aware that it is there for some reason and by choice. And usually this coincides with the intensive mental education which shuts you completely from the psychic consciousness. So a mass of circumstances, happenings of all kinds, emotions, all sorts of things are necessary to open the inner doors so that one might begin to remember that after all one has come from another world and one has come for a precise reason.

Otherwise, if all went normally, it could very quickly have a connection, very quickly. If it had the luck to find someone possessing a little knowledge, and instead of falling into a world of ignorance, it fell upon a little bit of knowledge, everything would be done quite quickly.

But the psychic will and psychic growth escape completely all common notions of justice, of reward and punishment as men understand them. There are religions, there are philosophies that tell you all kinds of stories, which are simply the application of notions of human justice to the invisible world, and so these are stupidities. For it is not at all like that truly, the notion of reward and punishment as man understands it is an absurdity. That does not apply at all, not at all to the inner realities. So once you enter the true spiritual world, all that becomes really stupidities. For things are not at all like that.

A large number of people come and tell me: "What then have I done in my previous life to be now in such difficult conditions, with such misfortunes happening to me?" And most often I am obliged to tell them: "But don't you see that it is a blessing upon you, a grace? And perhaps in your previous life you have asked for it so that you could make a greater progress...." These ideas are quite current: "Oh! I am ill. Oh! my body is in a bad condition, what have I done? What crime have I committed in the other life so that in this..." This is all childishness.

So there you are. *Au revoir*, my children.

(*Questions and Answers, 1953, pp. 205-218*)

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

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

(Continued from the issue of July 1984)

August 18, 1940

(Last night there was Bhishma's music and all of us heard and enjoyed it very much.)

N: Some time ago a long controversy was going on in Bengal regarding the place of *kathā* in music. Whether *kathā* is great or *sur*. Though we know nothing of musical technique, we liked Bhishma's music so much that *kathā* didn't seem at all necessary. Pure *sur* seems to have as much appeal.

SRI AUROBINDO: Pure music need not have any words. If words are there, they are an addition. They are not absolutely necessary. *(Sri Aurobindo repeated this twice for emphasis.)* If you can't have pure music without words, you can also say you can't paint a subject which is not literary.

N: Tagore places a great value on words and he has developed his new Bengali music with importance given to *kathā* and his own particular *sur* which nobody is allowed to vary.

SRI AUROBINDO: Is Tagore a musician?

N: If I am right, Dilip also agrees with Tagore about the value of words and their place in music.

SRI AUROBINDO: Does he? That means then that he is a singer and not a musician. Like all other arts music has its own medium and it stands by itself. If it depended on words or poetry, it would be the poet's music.

S: Veena, sitar, etc., have no words to express, but their tunes are music all the same.

N: Tagore contends that *ustādi* music has become now much a matter of technique. There is no life in it. Perhaps because of that he doesn't like it.

SRI AUROBINDO: If it is technique only, it is not music.

N: He says Bengali music must take its own way of expression and words will have a great place.

SRI AUROBINDO: Is music to be a commentary on words?

N: He thinks that *ustādi* music is dead and has no chance of revival, its age is past.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is because classical music has degenerated. But it doesn't mean that it shouldn't be revived and the remedy is not to give value to words or poetry, but to the soul of music. To leave it or forget it is not the way out. If words are indispensable for appreciation of music, how can an Englishman hear Italian music and like it?

S: Appreciation of pure music requires training.

P: Everybody can't appreciate or criticise music. The ear and the aesthetic faculty have to be trained. You can see in Bhishmadev and Biren that they enter into the spirit of music. Beethoven's Symphonies are played with instruments only. When Bhishmadev sings you can see that he is conscious only of notes and not of the words and he tries to communicate his emotion through the notes.

N: Some people say Dilip's music is spiritual and Bhishmadev's is aesthetic.

S: That is because Dilip sings *bhajans* and religious songs.

P: What I have found in Dilip's music is that the atmosphere created is due to something else than music—his personality, maybe.

N: Can pure music be spiritual?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course.

S: So far as the spiritual atmosphere is concerned, it doesn't require a great musician to bring it. A spiritual person singing some devotional songs can create it.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is why I don't grant the contention of the modernist poets that in order to appreciate modern poetry you must read the poems aloud, because a clever elocutionist can make much out of bad and commonplace poetry. A poem which has no rhythm will sound very beautiful if read by an elocutionist.

N: The same thing is said of Dilip's poetry: that when he reads it aloud, people like it, but they call it অগাঠ্য (unreadable) when they themselves try to read. That is due, I think, to his new technique. Unless one knows the *chhanda*, one will stumble. It is not Tagore's simple and smooth *chhanda*.

SRI AUROBINDO: There are two things in Dilip's poetry—subject and treatment. As regards the subject, he follows the pre-Tagore Bengali poetry—which is intellectual poetry—perhaps due to his father's influence which I liked and missed in later poetry. He takes up an idea and puts it into poetical form. It is a poetry written from the poetic intelligence, as I say. The treatment is, as you say, his own technique which is his departure from old tradition. Tagore brought in a new element of feeling and imagination and, as he is a genius, his poetry is beautiful. Tagore can diffuse himself into 50-60 lines and even then his idea doesn't come out. After Tagore, Bengali poetry has become wishy-washy. There is no intellectual backbone.

N: Motilal has a certain originality.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

P: Even in poetry Tagore is talking of death.

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling*): Yes. In his Oxford Convocation address also he did that. It is perhaps as self-defence. He may believe that by talking of death constantly, he will avoid it.

Evening

SRI AUROBINDO (*addressing P*): Have you read Gandhi's new programme for mankind?

P: No. What does he say?

SRI AUROBINDO: He wants to make everybody equal. Everybody will have a good house to live in and good food and of course khaddar. Nobody has yet been able to do it, not even Russia!

P: We would like to see how he does it.... The Pétain government has again declared its intention to resist a Japanese move in Indochina.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): Yes, they are adopting a see-saw policy. First they started hobnobbing with Japan, then tried to be fraternal, then tried to be friendly with China, turned again towards Japan and now combine against her. If the news is true, it means that Hitler doesn't want Japan to be master of the East.

August 19, 1940

N: This eccentric Ajit Chakravarty asked Sisir—

SRI AUROBINDO: Is he an eccentric?

N: No, I mean unsteady. He asked Sisir what he thinks and feels about you. Sisir replied, "That is a needless question. What did you feel?" Ajit said he felt as if you could shake the world (*Sri Aurobindo smiled*) and about Mother he felt extreme sweetness. He is also a great lover of poetry.

P: He met Moni. He likes Moni's poetry better than his prose.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am afraid I can't agree. That is because he is a lover of poetry. Moni's prose has a force, especially his imaginative prose is remarkable. His prose *Hasanter patra* (Letters of Hasanter) is also good, but the other is better. In the prose of *Hasanter patra* one cannot but feel the sting.

N: Ajit likes Jyoti's prose better than her poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is because her prose may be more mature. Her poetry is brilliant, but not mature yet.

N: About her prose in that book *Sandhāne* (In quest) Ajit said it is mature writing, though it was written earlier than *Rakta Golāp* (Red Rose). About *Rakta Golāp* he is not very keen. The style is very good, the poetry also and there is suggestion etc.; but it is not a mature work. That is true, I think, her whole concentration was on style and the plot is a sort of a misty mysticism.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mysticism in a novel? That is good in a short story.

P: And there is plenty of talk and discussion.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is Dilip. That is better left to him. I turned the pages of his books here and there, and everywhere I found people talking and talking.

N: That is the type and character of the intellectual novel, they say, which is not story only.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is the Western influence, probably. In the *New Statesman and Nation* I read somebody saying that now the novel is made a vehicle for every-

thing, business, politics, religion etc.

N: Ajit found a mistake in a poem of mine where I had written "Cast away on a shoreless sea". He says that "cast away" means on an island or on a shore, but not in the sense of cast adrift.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not bound by that meaning. If it is used as a single word, it may mean that.

N: And about Dilip's poetry, he says his English is better than his Bengali.

SRI AUROBINDO: He is mistaken.

N: According to him, Dilip has not been able to blend *bhava* and expression correctly. About the expression "unbargaining hyaline" which Dilip has used somewhere, Ajit says it is not good English.

SRI AUROBINDO: Can't say without knowing the context. If it is something like "unbargaining hyaline of aspiration" it is all right.

N: He seems to mean that "hyaline" is a fine word, while "bargaining" is common. So the two don't blend.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is an old idea. Sometimes such things are used more effectively, with more force.

N: It seems that, while in Shantiniketan, he used to be so absorbed in classes that he used to take 3-4 hours at a stretch, at the expense of the other professors.

SRI AUROBINDO: Is that why he has been driven off from there?

N: Don't know; more probably due to his habits.

Evening

(Anilbaran, discussing in one of his articles the causes of the degeneration of India, has written that the vitality was lost but one can't offer any explanation why it was lost.)

SRI AUROBINDO: Why no explanation? Things get stereotyped and tied to forms and so degeneration sets in. It is everywhere the same. After long periods of activity, the degeneration comes in unless the race finds a renewing source. For instance, when Buddhism came in as a shock, it pervaded the whole life and brought a new current everywhere. The saints and bhaktas can't exert that influence because their urge doesn't pervade the whole life. It is confined to religion and hence degeneration may come in the life of a nation in spite of saints and bhaktas.

Anilbaran's point about Russian religion being mere superstition is only an echo.

N: *(After everybody had gone away)*: Dilip says music to be spiritual must be conscious.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is all right.

N: But can't one unconsciously be spiritual while singing? Can't one write spiritual poetry without knowing it?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't see how one can. If one writes spiritual poetry, one will be conscious of it. César Franck had a spiritual influence in his music. When Mother

asked him if he knew that, he said, "Of course!" Dilip's music is spiritual due both to long periods of devotional singing with words and music combined.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

HIS TRIDENT OF TRANSFORMATION

Not towards Heaven but plunged in Night-hills
Burns his gaze like a fire of triple splendour—
A gleam quivering in the feet-abys of God,
A pink lotus aglow in passions of the heart
And across the rainbow-rapture where no sun dims,
A Truth-thought blazing in the gold-blue sky.
In the noon of that intense heat he gathered
The day which must awake to the summit-self
And turn into spiritual boon the earth-stuff.
Deepest pierced his Trident of Transformation:
The strength of his calm bore all infinity
Even as the atomic void made room for bliss.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of July 1984)

The Mother's Message

This is the
interesting story of
how a being *Jesus*
the Divine Life



(37)

ON 25th June 1957 I received from the Mother a card reproducing a painting of the Madonna and child by Botticelli. She had written on it:

"Nobody can say, 'there is no hope for me', because the Divine *Grace is there*.
"With all my love and sweetness."

The Mother saw me in the evening in her room at the Playground. We meditated. Then she embraced me warmly and gave me flowers. Each gesture of hers was a sweet caress.

Before I retired that night, I felt my courage falter before the dreadful assault of the hostile forces. An endless labyrinth of dark phases chilled my heart.

Terrible idiotic notions ran swiftly through my mind. A nervous tremor shook me totally. My heart grew heavier each time I thought of my present state and the future in front of me.

I felt unwell. I wished to give up everything. I stopped the work of drawing and painting for several days.

My nephews and one of my brothers Vasantbhai were still here. I could not possibly confide in them, because they would not understand my inner condition. Sometimes when my attitude towards them may have seemed strange, God alone knew what they thought about me. I must have been misunderstood greatly. But I was helpless.

I went to the Mother in a melancholy mood. She looked at me intently for a few seconds, then said while handing me a piece of paper and a pencil and pointing to a small side-table:

“Look, child, I have arranged two tiny pink roses—divine tenderness—in this pen-holder. Now let both of us do this drawing and we shall see who will finish it first!”

A faint smile touched my lips and I told myself: “She is the most Divine Diplomat I have ever met!”

We both finished the sketch at the same time. But naturally her drawing was more vivid than mine.

The following morning the Mother sent me a card—reproduction of the painting “Saint George and the Dragon” by Raphael. And her words on it were:

“To my dear little child Huta
With all the Power of my sweetest love.”

I looked at all the previous cards the Mother had sent me. At once I remembered she had asked me to copy one of the cards sent by her on the 17th. But I had failed to do so despite all my efforts. Now once again I started drawing the face of Saint Teresa of Avila. The card had reproduced the painting by El Greco.

The sketch was done and seen by the Mother. She drew more details on my drawing by showing the accuracy of light and shadow. She said:

“You must never do any drawing in haste. Do every detail very carefully and precisely so that the drawing may look more living.”

She was right. For I did not bother to look at objects with keen eyes and, if I drew things at all, I did so in a hurry leaving out all particulars. No wonder she found my sketches flat and lifeless.

The reproductions of the extraordinary paintings done by great artists appeared in the frame of my mind, and I questioned myself: "Am I really competent to do such paintings?" There were so many questions. But unhappily all the answers were missing.

I have read a book, *Living Biographies of Great Painters*, by Henry Thomas and Dana Lee Thomas. In their introduction regarding the painters, they have stated:

"They were different from us in but a single respect. Their feeling was more sensitive, and therefore their vision was more keen. And, thanks to the sensitivity of their feeling and the keenness of their vision, they have enriched us with the immortality of their creations. They have enabled us, in short, to become partakers of their own immortality.

"But let us remember this fact—that great art comes out of great suffering. It is only those who live intensely that can create beautifully. Their nerves are so delicately adjusted to the external stimuli of the world that they can transmute the most ordinary objects and landscapes into the lines and colours of genius. And, in so transmuting them, they interpret them for the rest of us, so that we begin to see the 'inner light' that shines within the life of our everyday world.

"All gratitude, therefore, to our fellowmen who suffer and paint that we may see and enjoy."

I quote from the book what the great artists have to say:

Rubens once wrote: "To reach the highest degree of perfection as a painter, it is necessary not only to be acquainted with the ancient statues, but to be inwardly imbued with a thorough comprehension of them."

Leonardo da Vinci suffered much from the malice of his enemies and the envy of his friends. But he bore his sufferings and his insults with a patient dignity. "Patience," Leonardo da Vinci wrote in one of his manuscripts, "serves as a protection against wrongs as clothes do against cold. For if you put on more clothes as the cold increases, it will have no power to hurt you. So in like manner you must grow in patience when you meet with great wrongs and they will then be powerless to vex your mind."

"Do not follow others," Jean Baptiste Camille Corot said. "He who follows is always blind... You must interpret Nature with entire simplicity and according to your personal sentiment, altogether detaching yourself from what you know of the old masters or of contemporaries. Only in this way will you do work of real feeling.

“My only mistress is Nature. To her alone I shall remain faithful all my life.” He never married.

“Art is not diversion,” Millet said. “It is a conflict, a complication of wheels in which one is crushed.”

“If you were to see how beautiful the forest is!” he said. “I run there sometimes at the end of the day when my work is over and come back every time crushed. The calmness and grandeur are appalling: so much so, that I find myself really frightened. I do not know what those rascals of trees say to one another, but that is because we don’t talk the same language.”

Paul Cezanne when he painted a portrait, would tell the subject “To sit like an apple.” “You wretch,” he told Vollard one day, while he was doing his portrait, “you have spoiled the pose. Do I have to tell you again that you must sit like an apple? Does an apple move?”

Vincent Van Gogh speaks often of insanity and points out how many great men have fallen victim to it. These men sacrificed their wits to realise their ideal. “Our new painters are treated like madmen by society, and because of this treatment they actually become so.” Or—“The more I am a crackpot, by so much more am I the artist.”

Throughout his life Pierre Auguste Renoir had the spiritual temperament of a child. When he was asked how he managed to create his splendid colours he replied: “I don’t know, I arrange my subject as I want it, and then I begin to paint—just like a child, if you please.”

One afternoon when Winslow Homer was enjoying a half holiday, he went into Bobson’s picture gallery. He stopped before a genre (story telling) painting by Edouard Frère. An art connoisseur looked at him for a while and then walked up to him. “You like good paintings?” he asked.

“Yes sir... I intend to become a painter myself.”

“Really? What particular line of work are you planning to take up?”

“Something like that, sir”—pointing to Frère’s picture—“only a damned sight better.”

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Now back to the story: I painted a Chinese rice box the Mother had sent me earlier with her note saying:

“Chinese rice box on a sap green background.”

When She viewed the painting, she remarked:

"I like it. You see, my child, in China they have a ceremony for everything: when they serve tea, open the rice box and so on. The Chinese hold chopsticks in a certain way while eating rice that not a grain may fall down. Do you know how to eat with chopsticks? I tried them when I was in Japan. It is not very difficult."

I smiled and said: "Mother, if I tried chopsticks I might eat them instead of the rice!"

She laughed.

On the 29th the Mother sent me the image of a god made of clay, to paint on a yellow background.

In the evening I showed her a drawing of it. I had also taken the image with me from which the Mother drew a sketch to show me the right technique. At the same time on the same paper she drew a face to teach me how the profile could be done.

Then pointing to the idol she said:

"Do you know who it is? This is the God of Wealth—Kubera."

The succeeding morning I started painting but everything seemed to go wrong. I painted several times, scraped all the colours off from the board. Again I tried, but could not achieve the result. I went to the Mother that very morning and showed her the half-finished painting. My eyes were filled with tears. I said: "Mother, take a look at this picture. How ugly, how messy it is. I cannot see myself becoming a perfectionist..."

She drew me closer to her and said while lifting my chin:

"Child, if you will not copy exactly from the object given, you will never be able to learn or progress. Do you know that through painting you can realise the truth and attain your goal?"

I returned no answer. I didn't believe her and I was too fatigued to dispute that I was incapable of doing anything, least of all to reach my destination. I went away from her as quickly as possible. To my shame, I felt tears come to burn painfully in my eyes when I reached the privacy of my room.

I brushed my tears off and once again commenced to paint the image so that I might show it to the Mother in the evening. Unfortunately I could not sit for a long time. I was exhausted—I felt as if my spine would break into pieces. To crown all this, the painting looked an imbroglio.

I met the Mother in the evening and told her of my predicament. She put her hand on my head. The pressure of the powerful hand brought a glow of warmth in-

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to my heart and a coolness in my head. The intense waves of those vibrations comforted my whole being. All at once I felt absolutely calm, level-headed, ready for anything, come what might. My ears stopped buzzing, my heart now was at ease and my thinking ceased.

Then she said softly:

“Child, put your head on my lap for a few minutes.”

I did so. She fondled my hair tenderly. An immense relief came over me. I never wanted to raise my head from her lap.

Afterwards she asked me to take proper rest.

At last I completed the painting of the image. She found it pleasing.

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June gave way to July. Still it was unbearably hot.

A card came from the Mother together with a bouquet of white roses. The card illustrated golden roses and was accompanied by these lines:

“To my dear little child Huta

With all my love and sweetness, and the assurance of your soul’s victory on all what opposes it in your exterior nature.

Glory to the Divine the Supreme Victor.”

There were countless things accumulated in my consciousness—all sorts of illusion, doubt, fear, dejection, depression, hopelessness. I was struggling bitterly to control my chaotic emotions. I found no solution. My life seemed to sway like a circus performer on a tight rope.

How often I had read and heard the Mother’s promising words. I found everything non-existent. All hope and courage ebbed away from my heart; despondency and despair crept into my very bones.

I did not go to the Mother. I was too sick of the same pattern of life and work.

I wrote to the Mother that I had been losing faith in her, and that I felt ashamed to show my face after committing so many mistakes and revolting against her Grace and Love. She answered on 3rd July 1957:

“The best is to come to me in all simplicity. I can see all your ‘faces’. I know them all and it makes no difference to my love that sees behind the appearances.

“Come to the playground this evening at 6.15. I shall be back from the Sportsground round about that time.

“With my love and blessings always.”

I needed both time and space to get my consciousness in order. It seemed that I would never get them in this life. Would I live long enough to achieve anything?

In the evening I went to the Mother with an anguished heart. She received me

with all her solicitude. My eyes welled up with tears when I looked at her and told her in a choking voice: "Mother, I do not wish to remain in this world any more. Please release me."

She was alarmed and looked at me as if she could not believe her ears. Then she went into a profound meditation for more than an hour. She awoke and related to me her vision:

"Just now I went to the world of your soul. On the ethereal white expanse there was a white hut. I knocked three times, but there was no answer. I grew anxious and wondered whether your soul really wished to withdraw from your body. I was about to return. Meanwhile the door of the hut was flung open and your soul came out rushing and clung to me."

Then the Mother wrote the following on a piece of paper:

*"I want to live until
the integral power is
manifested in me."*

3.7.57

This is what Huta's soul told me

M. —

I was bemused and kept quiet. She gently kissed my forehead. I was dazed and puzzled, because I knew very little about my soul and its aspiration.

The next day as always I received from her a card and white roses. The day stretched ahead of me in a vista of loneliness.

It was Thursday. I skipped the Mother's French Translation Class. I even avoided going to her. I slumped in my chair and dabbed my eyes with a little handkerchief again and again. The whole world seemed gloomy and full of menace. I sank into a dark despair. I got up from the chair and took a drink of water. I cried myself asleep.

In the morning I awoke with the unhappy feeling of something unpleasant hanging over my head. The card from the Mother and the lovely white roses failed to solace me.

In the evening the Mother saw me in her room at the playground. She took my hands into hers and closed her eyes for a moment or two. Then she said solemnly:

“It is human beings who make life complicated.

“That which is within is strong, luminous and full of beauty. The outer being is full of defects and has many chinks. The inner being must come out to accomplish the work of perfection in the whole nature.

“The seeds of the Truth are there deep inside. When the beauty of the Truth comes out from within, it brings divine happiness and divine joy to life. In the outer being also there are seeds of good things. So the outer being must collaborate with the inner.

“For instance, a man is truthful within himself—that is, sincere to the Divine—and a liar outside—that is, to the ordinary world. The Truth must come out and cover the whole being—for this he must aspire and pray constantly to the Divine. For prayer and aspiration, there is no exact or special method, no way of superficial knowledge. It comes spontaneously from within and takes possession of the outer being; then naturally everything becomes easy and wonderful.”

At that time the state of my mind was not in tune with the light of my psychic being. The mind and vital desperately opposed the Truth the Mother had spoken. They denied something fundamental to my happiness.

*

I was totally ignorant about the facts of life. During my childhood and early teens I lived in seclusion. I remained in the domain of my own secret world of beauty and avoided as much as I could gatherings of people, parties, social receptions and visits. Books were my companions. Nobody knew then or believed in my future plan to lead the spiritual life. People thought me queer—still I am not free from this adjective!

Now in the Ashram my full attention was on my work, the Mother's teaching and my goal. Meanwhile I was made aware of the opposite sex. I did not realise it at that time. But sometime later I felt that a man tried to approach me and, fool that I was, I never sensed his intention. On the contrary I talked to him freely. The man thought that I was after him. But, as a matter of fact, I was not at all in love with him or had any genuine attraction or feeling. Only an illusive confusion added to my inner and outer struggle. I was fed up with Ashram life.

I wrote to the Mother:

“My sweet Mother,

I think that my mind is entangled in so many things which give me no repose. How can I contemplate on the Divine? Added to this, a man approaches me for whom I have no affinity. In fact, I do not wish to get involved with anybody. It is true that I am flattered by his praise of my paintings.

“Mother, please believe me, I am hopeless for the Integral Yoga. I wish to go back to Africa. I have already written to Laljibhai.

“I never knew that this life would be so tough, tedious and full of jumbles.

“Nevertheless, I truly want the Divine and I love you dearly.

Yours

Huta”

She replied:

“My dear little child,

Surely such a small thing cannot be allowed to interfere with your seeking of the Divine and your spiritual endeavour. You must attach *no importance* whatever to such a movement and do as I told you to do and I am helping you to do, that is to say, *throw* the whole thing out of your mind. The man and the feeling must be inexistent to the extent that it does not matter if he is here, there or nowhere.

“The one thing that is important is your seeking and realising the Divine — all the rest is *zero*.

“And I am always with you for that realisation.

“With my love and blessings.”

“P.S. I do not see any good reason for going, even for a short time. But now that you have written to Laljibhai about it, the only thing to do is to wait for his answer.”

I must thank my lucky stars. Without losing a moment, I wrote to Laljibhai that I had changed my mind.

Gradually the Mother worked in me so that I became absolutely indifferent to men and their sweet-nothings. I never was and never am seriously interested in them.

Nonetheless, I have to work with men often but never thought of any involvement with them. I am happy about it.

Days passed by. I felt that until and unless my soul awoke fully, the divine Presence and Peace could not be established and for this realisation I had to aspire ardently. My prayers to the Supreme were ceaseless in spite of my topsy-turvy situation.

On the morning of the 12th the Mother sent me a beautiful card showing “Yaksha with the garland—a Bas-relief in the stupa of Hadda 3rd & 5th centuries.” These words accompanied the card:

“To my dear little child Huta,

“With my sweetest love

“A tout à l’heure.”

I went to the Meditation Hall upstairs. The Mother came with a bouquet of white roses and while giving it to me said:

“I have for you a nice object to paint. Look, this is a Japanese vase on which you can see a picture of the celebrated Fuji Yama. You must paint both.

“Arrange a few white roses in the vase and paint the whole thing on a white background.”

I went back to Golconde and looked at the vase minutely. Indeed the picture of Fuji Yama was fascinating.

A famous Japanese mountain 65m. w.s.w. of Tokyo, it is a quiescent volcano, noted for its conical form. It is a favourite subject in Japanese painting, and is visited by pilgrims for its religious significance. Its height is 12,000 ft. The name of the divinity of Fuji Yama is Sengen-Sama.

I did a half-finished painting of the vase and white roses. The Mother saw it, altered it a little and explained how it could be done accurately.

That very night I saw a vision of the same painting. The white roses were full of a golden and pink light. This was just a glimpse from the inner plane to make me aware of how often the Mother saw in my paintings the Light of which she spoke to me.

The following morning she sent me white roses and a note saying:

“I am sending you flowers to choose for finishing your painting as I explained.”

I commenced the painting after putting the roses in the vase. I finished the work, but was not sure of my success. I showed it to the Mother. She asked me to change the composition of the roses. She made some marks on the board with a pencil.

The next day I altered the painting according to her instructions. She saw it in the morning at her apartment and said:

“I like the painting and this too will go to the exhibition.”

Then I put it in the Darshan Room along with the other paintings.

I was still hesitant to paint freely and boldly. There was a fear in me lest I should spoil pictures while giving the strokes with different colours.

Truly speaking, I was not satisfied with my work and life.

A card was received by me from the Mother on 16th July 1957. It depicted mauvish-reddish chrysanthemums and the promising words on it were:

“To my dear little child, my true Huta.

With all my power I will help you to realise the truth of your being, the Divine.

“My sweetest love is always with you.”

In the evening the Mother and I had a long meditation. It was always nice to be with her. I was extremely attached to her physical being, and did not feel her sufficiently in my inner self. The peculiar heaviness in my heart brought tears to my eyes. I had gone through this state for quite some time. Now it became acute. I wrote to the Mother:

“My dearest Mother,

This heaviness in my heart drives me crazy. I do not really know what is going on in me. Tears are unrestrained. Oh! Mother, help me.

Love.

Huta”

She answered:

“It is when the contact with the psychic being is established that the heart feels this strange heaviness, the heaviness of all what is still in the nature preventing the complete union with the soul—and this heaviness brings always tears in the eyes—but the tears are sweet and the heaviness itself is sweet if one keeps quiet and concentrated, turned inwardly with surrender and confidence.”

Sri Aurobindo has stated in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 24, p. 1119:

“The weeping that comes to you comes from the psychic being—it is the tears of psychic yearning and aspiration. At a particular stage it so comes to many and is a very good sign. The other feelings and tendencies are also from the same source. They show that the psychic is exercising a strong influence and preparing, as we say, to come in front. Accept the movement and let it fulfil itself.”

Six days elapsed—vainly I groped in the dense darkness of my whole being in order to get some solution. Everything around me, within me, simply stifled me to death. There were as if colossal rocks which deprived me from seeing a ray of light. It was very difficult for me to define my condition which was beyond words. Silent tears rolled drop by drop down my cheeks.

On 24th July the Mother sent me a card illustrating an egg, and an explanatory note:

“I am sending you the picture of an egg, because the soul is like the bird in the egg—This strange feeling you have in your heart of something tight, comes when the moment is come for the soul to burst out of the egg and it is pressing from inside.”

Sri Aurobindo has written remarkably in Cent. Ed., Vol. 24, p. 1095 about the soul :

“The soul, the psychic being is in direct touch with the Divine Truth, but it is hidden in man by the mind and the vital being and the physical nature. One may practise yoga and get illuminations in the mind and the reason; one may conquer power and luxuriate in all kinds of experiences in the vital; one may establish even surprisingly physical Siddhis; but if the true soul-power behind does not manifest, if the psychic nature does not come into the front, nothing genuine has been done. In this yoga the psychic being is that which opens the rest of the nature to the true supramental light and finally to the supreme Ananda...”

I was so ignorant, so opaque that I knew nothing about the psychic being and its contact. Everything seemed double-dutch to me.

But now gradually this is dawning on me and I realise that if I had not been conscious of my soul I could not have continued the spiritual life and would have quitted the Ashram long ago.

Mention of the psychic being leads me to recollect these wonderful verses from *Savitri*, Bk. 7, C. 5, pp. 526-27 about Savitri’s “Secret Soul”:

“She had come into the mortal body’s room...
 But since she knows the toil of mind and life
 As a mother feels and shares her children’s life
 She puts forth a small portion of herself,
 A being no bigger than the thumb of man
 Into a hidden region of the heart
 To face the pang and to forget the bliss,
 To share the suffering and endure earth’s wounds
 And labour mid the labour of the stars.”

Sri Aurobindo cites an Upanishadic sloka in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 12, p. 256:

“The Purusha that is within us is no larger than the finger of a man: He is like a blazing fire that is without smoke, He is lord of His past and His future. He alone is today and He alone shall be tomorrow. *That is That thou seekest.*

Katha Upanishad 13

(*To be continued*)

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MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

To meet the second anniversary of the death of a poet well known to the readers of Mother India and to spread more knowledge about her as both person and poet, we are reproducing the following piece which served as "Introduction" to the book of her selected poems, Deep Footprints, brought out last year.

THIS little book is the realisation of an old dream of its author. It might have been published earlier—in the author's life-time—but for her modesty and her dislike of "push" in personal concerns. Like everything else in her life, the poems she wrote were inwardly offered into the hands of her spiritual gurus, Sri Aurobindo and his collaborator the Mother whom he had put in charge of his Ashram of Integral Yoga at Pondicherry. The inward act of offering her work to them must have frequently seemed sufficient to her and so the idea of publication not pressing enough.

Although Sri Aurobindo was always Lord and Master to her and initially her literary guide, she had enjoyed only one physical *darshan* of him, while she had met the Mother many times and all her problems used to be submitted to her in particular. Even the poems, when published, were to be dedicated to the Mother and the general title chosen for them by the poet referred to her, as will be clear from the lyric bearing the same title and, for that reason, made the opening piece in this book and italicised. The rest are arranged, as far as they are datable, in a chronological order. The poems have been selected by her eldest brother, the writer of this Introduction, in whose judgment she always had confidence and with whose help, according to the instructions found among her papers, she was to be published some day. The publication itself is due to the loving enterprise of the family she has left behind.

Minnie N. Canteenwalla (*née* Minnie D. Sethna) started to write verse in her early teens, but her true flowering came when she began to visit the Ashram. On seeing a poem of hers, composed during her second visit at the age of 18, Sri Aurobindo immediately discerned the authentic note and gave her full encouragement. Apropos of this poem, "At Eventide", Minnie has written in her memories of Pondicherry penned in 1952, just over two decades later: "As you walk from the Dupleix Statue on to the beach-road the first building is the famous light-house—the first awakener of the poet in me!" What followed this awakening she has indicated in the same account: "My having come in contact with the Divine Grace let loose within me a fountain of poetry." But, of course, no poet's "fountain" is constant. And Minnie has well observed the varying play of it: "There were times when it flowed and flowed, there were times when to give birth to a poem was almost as hard as giving birth to a child, and there were times when I would be tied up in knots and the fountainhead turn completely dry." She has marked also the different phases of her inspiration. "My poems from the merely descriptive went on to the reflective and the kind that flowed miles and miles was and is the mystic. The 'mystic' comes to me most easily." In Pondicherry I have watched her jot down lines at odd mo-

ments and later murmur them to herself again and again in the attempt to give them their final form. Her husband reports how in Bombay she would occasionally get up in the middle of the night and scribble on little scraps of paper snatched from anywhere, a hanging calendar or a stray bill. She would also copy out some of her verses several times, changing a word or a phrase here and there.

In several of her best creations the three strands she has distinguished—the descriptive, the reflective, the mystic—are fused, with the result often of a subtle and suggestive spiritual impressionism. The inner eye catches glimpses of “psychic” realities with brief outbreaks, as it were, of colours and contours accompanying them out of the day-to-day familiar vision. Nothing recondite or complex as a rule—rather a moving play of penetrating simplicity—moving both by a passage from object to object and by an appeal of feeling to feeling.

The fusion I have spoken of was inevitable; for, from her early years Minnie’s wistful reveries were always shot with an intense response to the beauty and majesty of natural scenes. The response helped the emergence of a skilful artist in pencil and crayon no less than of a vivid poet. The latter, however, was much more in front and it was made most happy by trips to a place at some distance from Bombay. A few hundred miles away there is a “hill station” known as “Matheran”, a name which implies “A mountain whose head is a forest”. Minnie’s grandparents had built a cottage there on the edge of a valley.

Across the dip a parallel hill called “Prabal”, could be seen in all its many-shaded participations in the mystery-mood, at once entrancing and elevating, of “the sleep that is among the lonely hills”, the mood which, along with “the silence that is in the starry sky”, was one of Minnie’s soul-teachers as much as Wordsworth’s. Beyond Prabal lay a vast stretch of field and stream and scattered habitation right up to the outskirts of far-off Bombay. In Matheran itself there were diverse spells of loveliness speaking endlessly their secrets to the poetic heart. Added to these spells was the exhilaration of horse-riding to which Minnie had been an expert addict ever since her father whom she lost in her late childhood set her in a saddle.

Minnie’s devotion to what one can only term the divinity presiding over Matheran and over the grand prospect it commanded was merged in her with her allegiance to the divinity she recognised as soul-seizingly incarnate in the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Their residential town on the Coromondal coast was to her as much charged with beauty and majesty as Matheran, though from the ordinary viewpoint Pondicherry had some inaesthetic features side by side with a charm of bursting greenery on the one hand and a glory of splashing waves on the other. To Minnie everything in this town, once the capital of French India, was steeped in the presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: everything here assumed an aspect of their spiritual height and depth and came to her lit with an occult message. Both Matheran and Pondicherry with their differing yet essentially single-toned revelations to her gaze brought her a host of contemplative moments, most of them not separately voiced but interwoven with her sense of “natural magic” as well as her awareness of

what I may call "supernatural wizardry". The awareness was of a transforming touch from the mystic attainment which she felt in her two Gurus. This attainment was to her at the same time a sweeping up into unearthly ecstasy and a gathering together of the whole being into the most intimate relationship, here and now, with what might seem to be beyond earth.

The discovery of that wonderful warmth rendered her own heart's spontaneity richer in all its interchanges with the common world. Minnie's was not a mysticism excluding life. Of course, at the centre of her being she belonged to none save her Gurus, but in spite of her longing to be physically near them they appear to have ruled that she should live in the common world with the light of her ideal to guide her through its chequer of gay and grim. Attractive face with a quickness of friendly smile, steady eyes holding both images and dreams, expression that for all its sensitiveness hinted at a secret strength, intelligence with not only a breadth of interest and a depth of understanding but also a birdlike eagerness for the new and the strange—such could be a snapshot of Minnie in most of her average hours. Her person was a pleasure too in the role of a happy patient teacher of children—first her own three and then others at a number of schools—or as a cordial weaver of social ties wherever she went or when she gave her heart to animals. Always self-critical, never pretending to be above human shortcomings she yet proved to be an admirable daughter, wife and mother—as well as the sweetest of sisters from afar to her brother in the Ashram and a profoundly attuned companion to him on her visits there, as previously in the years when he had been a resident of Bombay. Her keen love for all her near relatives is evident in about half a dozen poems, but everywhere to a greater or lesser degree one feels it suffused with a rare soul-colour, for, no matter how much she worried to look after them and kept anxious about their welfare, she ultimately saw all her loved ones as lying in the lap of the Divine Mother at whose feet her heart always lay.

Born on 7 September 1913 she lived out her inwardly motivated outward days up to 10 August 1982. It was her repeatedly expressed aspiration to spend a long time in the Ashram, but her wish was granted only a short while before she passed away. She got a chance of spending three full months within the radiant ambience of the Samadhi in which the bodies of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have been laid and at which she would frequently sit with eyes shut and a cheek pressed against its marble edge, one with the mood enshrined in it—a silence transcending time's unrest. After this boon she looked ready to leave her own body which had suffered a good deal from cardiac damage. She even told me that it was her last visit. Perhaps the right thing to say here is that she was now more ready to go beyond than at other periods. For, while her mysticism did not exclude life, there was never any feverish clinging in it to earthly existence as such. She knew the glorious meaning put into this existence by her Gurus, but she knew also that her Gurus were greater than their visible embodiments. Her inner submission to their will for life or death is most acutely perceived in the poem she wrote after an 11-hour operation ("triple bypass")

performed on her ailing heart in 1976. In her brief memoirs of the visit she and her husband paid to their elder son in the U.S.A. where unexpectedly the dire need arose of the triple bypass, she has recorded:

“I knew I was in a serious condition, but was not in the least afraid. There was a complete inner surrender to the Mother. I was constantly communicating to Her that I was absolutely ready if I had to come to Her and that I was ready also to accept whatever else she ordained for me. I kept on saying within myself, addressing both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo: ‘You have the key to the garden’—what garden I was referring to I do not know even today.”

We may guess that Minnie’s “garden” is a symbol of the “*Pulchritudo antiqua et semper nova*”—“the Beauty of ancient days that is ever new”, the multifariously manifesting and all-perfecting Consciousness of the Supreme who is apostrophised in Sri Aurobindo’s epic *Savitri*:

O Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the Universe,
Creatrix, the Eternal’s artist-bride...

And it is in the fitness of things poetic that, before Minnie died 6 years after the operation, she left to her family the request that a handful of ashes from her cremated body should be scattered over one of the Mother’s rose-gardens.

Although her long-cherished desire—that she should die in the Ashram and her body mingle with the dust that had borne the Mother’s “deep footprints”—was not fulfilled, the essence of the craved final self-giving to the Divine whom she had found physically at Pondicherry during her life was served by the ash-scattering which, in obedience to her request, was carried out in this town after her life had ended in Bombay.

But can a being like her cease to live? To Minnie the true sense of living was inmost oneness with the Undying Spirit whose light and love she experienced throughout the major part of her 69 years. As that Spirit is still amongst us with the Ashram as its radiating centre of world-work, Minnie as a worshipper of it is ever in our midst and this small volume of her poems, most of which breathe of that Spirit, bears vocal testimony to her presence, especially with those whom she held most dear and who deeply responded to her devotion.

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

A JOURNEY'S END

LET not Your eyes look grave
In anger when You look on me.
More than ever I need
Your sweet compassion to see
My readiness, my work fulfilled.
How eager I am, begging Peace,
To be with You eternally—
This body hungering for release—
Seeking it not from agony
But from an inward joy,
A deep satisfaction of completed work,
A jubilant readiness—a Journey's End.

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

AWARDED PH.D ON SRI AUROBINDO'S *SAVITRI*

PROFESSOR C.P. Malhotra, M.A., of the Department of English, S.A. Jain College, Ambala City, Haryana State, has been awarded the Ph.D. degree by the Punjab University, Chandigarh, for his thesis "Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* as a Modern Revelatory Epic". The Research Supervisor was Dr. D. D. Jyoti, the present Secretary to the Vice-Chancellor, Punjab University, and formerly Director of Regional Institute in English. The thesis-examiners were Professor Manoj Das of Pondicherry and Professor V. Seturaman of Andhra Pradesh. There are six chapters in the thesis, which discuss and elucidate *Savitri* under the heads: (1) a successful synthesis of Eastern and Western epic traditions, (2) a symbol and a legend, (3) theme and structural technique, (4) the concept of Integral Yoga, (5) theory of spiritual evolution, and (6) an Indian classic as well as a world classic.

The U.G.C. sanctioned a grant of Rs. 1,500 for purchase of the 30-volume set of Sri Aurobindo's complete works and for visits to the Sri Aurobindo Library at Pondicherry.

FRONTIER

ON the pure lonely frontier of material Space,
An abyss like a rampart-threshold stands.
Twixt rimless deep and receding ground,
Indrawn, alone on discovery's verge,
Awaiting some signal from the unguessed Beyond,
My soul looked through closed lids, and waking stirred.

In a swift movement's motionless breadth,
A Goddess lion-borne, assailing with fire the body's nerves,
Broke through from Infinity mission-charged.
Keenly Her axe, in a revelatory stroke
Of pitiless Might and shattering Peace,
Drove through ignorant mind and will,
Cut speech into silence, felled heart's desire.
As when lightning strikes leaving no trace,
It opened a portal beyond death and life,
Where all forever is
And a vast Light flows deep like Truth;
The wide murmuring rumour of cosmos fails,
And the Abyss's unspoken cry.

Of Destiny irrevocable She spoke.
A deep-uttered mantra incandescently sweet,
The sound grew upon me like a choric chant,
As when seers speak the Name of deity
The air thrilling is filled with the Unseen
Vibrating like dawn on the external sense,
Smiting body and breath into stone-tranquillity.
Brimming a world rises beneath our feet,
Our paths unsealed widen to highways of God,
Great world-wandering souls are ours;
Across the dividing line of human time
We step safe into our Goddess-Mother's sunlit arms.

ARVIND HABBU

THE VISION OF AYURVEDA

INDIA, ancient land of magic, mystery and mysticism, with her brooding Himalayan peaks, her eternal Ganges and her innumerable gods, stands at the fountainhead of many of the world's great religions, the inspiration for man's eternal quest for the ultimate meaning of life.

It is said in the ancient writings of the Vedas that of all the marvels and mysteries of this universe, which includes billions and billions of galaxies and staggering immensities of time and space, nothing is more marvellous than the human being made up of body, life-force and mind and the Spirit that stands behind our mysterious self.

Man is the microcosmic version of the universe and is subject to laws identical to the laws of nature which govern the universe. He must, therefore, live in harmony and in relationship with his environment and let himself be governed by the laws of nature. The ancient discipline was based on these principles.

The Vedas which date back thousands of years originated during one of the greatest periods in history. Hundreds of inspired rishis then worshipped the truth. It seems that numerous discoveries in various fields were made in the Vedic and particularly in the Rigvedic eras—from Ayurveda to music and from self-defence to spirituality.

Rishi Vishwamitra, the father of Ayurveda, was supposed to have received his inspiration from Lord Indra, the God of Medicine, and Lord Brahma, the Creator, through whom the Vedas were revealed.

During the time of the Samaveda, an epoch after the Rigveda, the gods were worshipped through music and great artists were born whose inspirations built our heritage of music.

Then the Atharva Veda—we have Sanskrit manuscripts dating back to antiquity. Rishi Atharva brought Ayurvedic knowledge to humanity from the Himalayas and helped the sick and the suffering. It is said in the ancient writings that our body which is the means of attaining the four aims of life, namely kama, artha, moksha and dharma (pleasure, worldly pursuits, liberation and virtues), is subject to diseases which emaciate and weaken it, deprive the senses of their functions and cause extreme pain, thus bringing premature death.

Ayurveda concerns itself with life and its dynamic force, their regulation and control. It treats the man and not the disease. It is the method of treatment based on the principles of controlling life.

In Ayurveda the treatment of all pathological conditions has but one aim and line of therapeutic procedure, namely, to bring back to normal the working of the governing factors. The rest follows as light follows the rising sun.

Our body, the microcosmic version of the universe, is made of the following elements:

1. Prithvi: earth compactness—bones and tissues
2. Jala: water—in the form of liquid secretions: blood, saliva, etc.
3. Teja: sun or fire—the digestive system, combustion, etc.
4. Vayu: wind
5. Akasa: space—hollowness, osmotic air, pores, etc.

There are seven *Dhātus* which support the physical body:

1. Rasa: the churning process of the digestive system
2. Rakta: blood
3. Maansa: flesh
4. Meda: fat
5. Asthi: bones
6. Majja: bone marrow
7. Virya: semen

Tridosha Theory

The three divisions of the life-force were known fundamentally as VATA, PITTA, KAPHA: air, fire, water. These represent the will to be, the will to assert, the will to enjoy. On the subtle-physical plane they are consciousness, effort, satisfaction; on the psychic plane impulse, hot emotion, cool emotion; on the material plane the nervous system, catabolic functions, anabolic functions. Thus we can call them the stimulator, the accelerator and the regulator. A combination of the three in their separate types of function are to be traced in every cell of our organism.

These are the governing factors of life and a balance of the three maintains good health while any imbalance would bring about signs and symptoms which can be determined and differentiated by pulse-reading.

The ancient science of life called Ayurveda can well be regarded as the mother of all medical sciences. Historians have traced in most ancient Sanskrit manuscripts such depth of medical thought as shows a deep study and progressive insight into the secrets of life and the laws of its preservation. The course of Indian Ayurvedic medicine, across centuries of its evolution, passed into China and Japan during the Buddhist era and then into Persia, Greece and the Arab countries.

We have evidence that Acupuncture, among other forms of treatment, existed in India thousands of years ago. The traditional custom of wearing gold earrings, nose-rings and other ornaments came into practice because all had their various helpful effects in maintaining the equilibrium of the body. Even today, in some of the Hindu temples priests on occasions insert into their bodies 108 needles made of gold or silver. The points for such insertions were known as murmas (ah-shi in Chinese). They are known to be the sensitive areas of the body. Each of the murmas has a significant name in Sanskrit.

In the past, such knowledge was kept secret by the learned who passed it on to their successors only after they had undergone the years of discipline and devotion needed to master these ancient sciences.

Unfortunately, due to the trend in history which has shaped us today, most of these works are lost and have yet to be rediscovered. Wars, destruction of other kinds and invasion by alien cultures over several centuries have been responsible for the loss.

It is known from manuscripts newly found in Colombo (Sri Lanka) and Varanasi (in Uttar Pradesh in India) that several Chinese scholars came to India during the Buddhist era and carried with them some of our knowledge to the Far Eastern countries. The science of Acupuncture was perhaps one of the things that went with them. We must give all credit to the Chinese for having preserved and developed this science and given it to the world.

Man's quest for knowledge can never cease. Some of the past knowledge is being revived. The medicinal branch of Ayurveda, Hatha Yoga and Acupuncture are used in all forms of treatment today and, with further progress in research, man will have to turn towards the Vedic knowledge of the remote past, supposed to have been given to the world by Brahma, the Creator. In all forms of scientific research, particularly concerning health, man is faced with intricate difficulties. The life-style of man needs to change radically if he does not wish to move towards a catastrophe which would bring endless suffering to humanity.

In the Vedic ages, the arts were taught only to those who were humble and sincere seekers of the truth. The knowledge of healing, too, was not taught to those who hankered after profit and, therefore, it remained a secret. No distinction in the choice of students was made on the basis of caste or creed. A solemn oath of dedication, devotion, understanding and sacrifice in a selfless service to the sick and the suffering was regarded as necessary. And lastly, to place the knowledge at the service of the Supreme was the practitioner's motive. "Gnana deepena bhaswata atourasya antara praveshya," states an ancient rule, which means, "When you treat a patient you have to enter deep into his heart with a brilliant light of knowledge, understanding and intuition."

Health is the harmony, balance and well-proportioned action of innumerable organs coordinating themselves through the neuro-muscular system which is alone visible to our eyes. But behind these millions of blood vessels and nerves, a sort of wireless system pervades the pranic or vital energy that is created by breathing and the intake of food. It is this energy called *prāna* that governs the mind and our actions. Sri Aurobindo's explanation of this ancient knowledge of the five energies that circulate in the body is illuminating. In the *Karmayogin* he says:

"In this, the noblest type of physical evolution, Prana manifests itself in five distinct vital powers, to which the names, Prana, Samana, Vyana, Apana and Udana have been given by the ancient writers. *Prāna*, the vital force par excellence has its seat in the upper part of the body and conducts all mental operations, the indrawing

and the outdrawing of the breath and the induction of food. *Samāna*, seated centrally in the body, balances, equalizes and harmonizes the vital operations and is the agent for the assimilation of food. *Vyāna* pervades the whole body, on it depends the circulation of the blood and the distribution of the essential part of the food eaten and digested throughout the body. *Apāna*, situated in the lower part of the trunk, presides over the lower functions, especially over the emission of such parts of the food as are rejected by the body and over procreation; it is intimately connected with the processes of decay and death. *Udāna* is the vital power which connects bodily life with the spiritual element in man. As in the purely vital operations, so also in the motional and volitional Prana is still the great agent of Will, and conducts such operations of Mind also as depend on the sense-organs for their instruments. Prana is the regent of the body, ministering to the Mind and through that great intermediary executing the behests of the concealed sovereign of existence, the Will.”

Many doctors and scientists are baffled by this energy and wonder what it is. But its realization in many forms has been experienced by our rishis and seers. The Prana's own conscious effort is only the *will* in Pranayama (breathing exercises in Hatha Yoga). The will leads one to concentration and intuition, and then to self-realization.

Through Acupuncture and also Hatha Yoga, many scientists are now discovering certain clues to this complex energy system. And many scholars now believe too that there must be some truth in the existence of beings in subtler and occult planes who are highly advanced and who embody much knowledge.

We will now give some features of the ancient system which are practised to this day.

The Ayurveda or Ashtanga Ayurveda—the 8 branches of Ayurveda:

1. Kaya Chikitsa: treatment through herbal medicines, salts, etc.
2. Shalya Chikitsa: surgery
3. Shalakyā Chikitsa: puncturing with needles of gold, silver, etc. (5 metals in all); and Pancha Karma:
 - Sneha—(oil) Mardana (massage) with different herbal oils
 - Bastikriya—hydrotherapy enemas (by intake of water) and water treatment
 - Virechana—laxative herbs
 - Varisara—cleansing the stomach by water intake (dhauti-
neti) and vomiting (vamana)
 - Swedha—moxibustion—cupping
4. Rasayan: science of rejuvenation
5. Vajikaran: sexology
6. Kaumabritya and Prasutitantra: pediatrics and gynaecology
7. Vishtantra: toxicology

8. Bhutvidya: psychiatry—treatment of mental disorder.

It is now clear that the ancients not only fought against death and disease in the physical but also passed through all stages of purification of the mind and its actions.

To prevent disease and prolong life Hatha Yoga has six distinct divisions for the purification of the body and control of its energies: Dhouti, Basti, Neti, Asana, Mudra, Pranayama. In the treatment of diseases, diet play a big role.

The most important *Chikitsā* (treatment) is performed by means of water: for cleansing the stomach of excess acid and phlegm. Several glasses of warm water with a few lemon-drops should be drunk early in the morning and vomited out. It should be done gradually by letting the water alone come out during the first few days. Later on some sour acid should accompany the water expelled by vomiting. This is called *Vamana*. Cleansing must be done once or twice a week.

Bastikriyā: According to this, several postures are performed with the intake of warm water through the mouth and accumulated toxins are removed by way of enemas through the large intestine.

Neti: Cleansing of the nose by the intake of warm water and a pinch of salt through the nose and bringing it out by the mouth. This method helps to remove obstructions caused by sinus and the accumulation of toxins in the head area.

Mudrās: These help to bring back proper functioning of the glandular system. The glands are the controlling keyboards of our body and their responsibility is to preserve the functions of all the organs and to maintain mental equilibrium. If the body becomes weak due to malfunctioning of the glands, their ability to be good conductors fails and man loses the harmony of his being.

Āsānas: These are postures for maintaining the strength and flexibility of the muscular system. With correct breathing and gradual practice, a few Asanas done daily could maintain good health.

We have now looked at Hatha Yoga and how the energies of the body can be controlled.

Although not visible to our physical eyes, there is a protection around the body of a subtle cover of consciousness. It is only a spiritual alertness that can keep this protective cover intact, preventing attack by the forces of illness.

I conclude with a few lines from Sri Aurobindo:

“All illnesses pass through the nervous or vital physical sheath of the subtle consciousness and subtle body before they enter the physical. If one is conscious of the subtle body, or with the subtle consciousness, one can stop an illness on its way and prevent it from entering the physical body. But it may have come without one’s noticing, or when one is asleep or through the subconscious, or in a sudden rush when one is off one’s guard; then there is nothing to do but to fight it out from a hold already gained on the body. Self-defence by these inner means may become so strong that the body becomes practically immune as many yogis are. Still this ‘practically’ does not mean ‘absolutely’. The absolute immunity can only come

with the supramental change. For below the supramental it is the result of an action of a Force among many forces and can be disturbed by a disruption of the equilibrium established—in the supramental it is a law of the nature; in a supramentalized body immunity from illness would be automatic, inherent in its new nature.”

And the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry has said:

“The body should reject illness as energetically as in the mind we reject falsehood.”

KALU SARKAR

BEYOND THE AZURE

Who laughs there beyond the azure?
 I seek and surmise
 But cannot recognise
 Who rules there beyond all rule.
 So far yet near
 Sometimes from the dark,
 And sometimes from the clear,
 Who gazes and sees
 And binds and frees?
 Whose mirth, overflowing, has sent
 This avalanche of life—
 Event after event,
 Species on species
 Tumbling down?
 Who is He—the tireless player,
 The indefatigable jester
 Beyond the blue?
 The Unknowable One who is All, the True?

SHYAM KUMARI

THE HUMAN CONDITION AS SEEN IN *THE SOUND AND THE FURY*

AN INTERPRETATION

In choosing his title from Macbeth's last soliloquy—

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing—

did Faulkner intend to suggest that life as portrayed in *The Sound and the Fury*, signifies nothing? The fact that he has said that literature should be written to uplift men's hearts¹ would indicate that he had another inclination.

The scene from which *The Sound and the Fury* sprang might be interpreted as a metaphor for the condition of mankind. This metaphor is only fully developed, however, in light of the directions the characters take as adults.

This scene takes place as four children, Caddy, Benjy, Jason and Quentin are given to the care of their servant, Dilsey, and shooed out of the way to keep them from knowing about their grandmother's funeral. Caddy's repeated questions about the reason for their hurried dismissal receive no reply. She then asks to be in charge so that everyone can "mind her". This privilege is given and the children traipse out of the house on Caddy's prompting, while Dilsey is busy elsewhere. Caddy is curious to see what is going on and climbs a tree, straining to see in the window. As the brothers look on from below, all they can see are her drawers which she had muddied in the creek earlier. Dilsey catches them all outside, gathers them up, cleans Caddy up a bit and puts them all to bed in her own home.

This could be interpreted in light of the human condition in which there seem to be three general aspects of human nature: the physical, the emotional and the rational. In addition to them some see a "soul force" which, when allowed to operate freely, unifies and harmonizes the various parts of the personality. These four aspects, however, are not able to function well because of their lack of ability to relate to one another without the constraints and distortions of vision stemming from their own excessive self-involvement. Caddy, in climbing the tree to look in the window and in trying to make the others mind her, represents a spiritual force which seeks to rise above, to know, and to use her knowledge to achieve a balance of the lower triple nature. The three brothers, representing the more human sides of the nature remain firmly on the ground and look to Caddy out of their individual needs. By virtue of their position, however, they can only see her soiled drawers which represent her undue involvement in human nature. Benjy, a retarded boy, is the physical being

whose only perceptions are those of the senses. He looks to Caddy for the physical comforts: the cuddling, the smell, the provision of his favorite cushion. Benjy is sorely upset when Caddy wears perfume and, in her promiscuity, loses her smell. Quentin is the emotional being who looks to Caddy to fulfil his ideals of honor and virtue. He is quite concerned when, down by the creek, Caddy tries to take off her dress to dry. When later she transgresses his ideals more seriously by becoming pregnant and being married, Quentin kills himself. Jason is the coldly rational being who seeks only for his own benefit. He wants Caddy to provide him with a coveted bank position. Caddy's illegitimate pregnancy ends her marriage and this denies Jason his opportunity. He then turns all his rational powers to gaining whatever he can from his family; in the process he robs his mother and his niece.

All the brothers see Caddy's soiled virtue as an obstacle to their fulfilment. They can't see the searching part of Caddy, nor have they any inkling of that which she seeks. Caddy, with her view from above, could be more understanding of her brothers, but because she has dirtied herself she is unable to take her place as an overseeing, unifying and harmonizing force. The brothers won't "mind her" as she strives to make them do.

Neither do any of the brothers understand or have any meaningful contact with one another. They are self-absorbed and isolated even though they belong to the same family.

In their isolation, each part of what should be a whole does seem to signify nothing. Benjy's life is the "tale told by an idiot". He is totally immersed in his senses and although able to perceive things others may miss (i.e. Caddy's loss of virginity) he is yet unable to comprehend or control the forces shaping his life. His pasture is taken away, Caddy leaves, and he is castrated but he can only bellow hopelessly.

Quentin is a "walking shadow" obsessed with his ideas of virtue and honor. Unable to reconcile these ideas with the reality of Caddy's lost virginity, he drifts away from life and merges himself with his shadow in the river.

Jason "struts and frets" as a "poor player" who only acts in his role of provider and supporter for the family, but in fact he robs them and destroys the family. He induces his mother to cut off any contact with Caddy, prompts his niece Quentin to run away (with another actor) and sends Benjy to Jackson. He does not fulfil his given role nor does he find success in his chosen one as his hoardings give him no satisfaction and eventually are stolen from him.

Caddy transcends these forces of life to a degree and yet because her pants are still soiled, being immersed in human nature, she can't rise cleanly above to take charge. To be able to direct these forces she would have to be able to supersede them. The fruit of her sin, or her immersion in human nature, her daughter Quentin renders her impotent to effect a harmony because it results in her brother Quentin committing suicide, and in her being cut off from the family. At the same time, she becomes dependent on her family to raise her child. Thus her position as an overseeing, guiding force is reversed, and Caddy's loving nature, which could have achieved a

balance in her family, seems to degenerate into a life of physical excess.

Dilsey, however, comes out to find the children in and under the tree and gathers them all together. In this act there is a unification of all the aspects of human nature. Without this unity there can be no transcendence. All the parts have to work together as a whole to provide the basis for further ventures of the spirit.

Although Dilsey unifies these four aspects, she is as yet unable to master them. She cannot provide a complete bath for Caddy (she can only wipe her off) and she is forced to act upon the family's whims. Dilsey is able to endure the lack of harmony existent even in the unification of the aspects, because while she provides care for the children, she still keeps herself from being too involved. She doesn't advocate "bothering your head" about other people's affairs.

Only she, however, who draws together, even without mastering, all of these parts is able to transcend them and see them in their entirety. Thus, when she goes to church on Easter she hears the words of the preacher far more than the sound and the fury that the others heard. While they are impressed by the manner of preaching, she goes beyond the words and has something of a realization. She weeps quietly, "I've seed de first and de last."²

Life, in its isolated aspects, then, can be full of sound and fury and signify nothing, but in the unification of these parts one is able to transcend it and glimpse a brighter world. Perhaps in their mastery one would be able to live in that world.

NANCY WHITLOW

NOTES

¹ William Faulkner, *The Faulkner Reader* (New York: Random House, 1971), p. viii.

² Faulkner, p. 220.

HOW THE SQUIRREL GOT STRIPES

A STORY FOR CHILDREN, BOTH LITTLE AND GROWN-UP

INDIAN squirrels are quite different from European ones: in Europe the squirrels are bigger, have pointed noses and pointed ears with tufts on them, and their tails are really huge and bushy, as big as all the rest of the squirrel put together. There are black ones, and beautiful reddish-brown ones, and more and more these days the fierce grey ones that came originally from North America and are gradually supplanting the older native squirrels.

In India, in the jungles, you may perhaps be lucky enough to see a Giant Squirrel—he looks something like a small bear with a bushy tail; strange to see him scampering about in the tree-tops! But the normal everyday squirrel, to be found in every park and garden in the cities, as well as in the countryside, looks more like the creatures called “chipmunks” in North America—small and rounded, with round ears and nose. And it is very difficult to tell two squirrels apart, for they all have the same coloration and markings: a kind of speckled grey-brown fur, more grey underneath and more brown on top and, running down their backs, three golden-brown stripes.

There is a story about how the squirrels got their stripes. It has to do with something that happened long ago in India, so long ago that nobody really remembers *when* it happened; but *what* happened is remembered very well, and told and re-told over and over again in Indian families, not only for children at bedtime, but for grown-ups too; and not only for simple villagers around their evening fires, but for educated people in beautiful drawing-rooms, and for wise people in ashramas and temples—the wonderful stories of the life of Sri Rama, who was not only handsome and lovable and strong, a good king and a great hero, but in fact the great god Vishnu himself taking a human birth and living upon the earth as a man.

During his life on earth Sri Rama did many great and wonderful deeds, and Indian people love to tell and hear these stories and think about what they mean and remember those glorious times. Sri Rama came to earth to destroy a very wicked being—Ravana, the King of Lanka, who was so powerful that even the gods feared him, to say nothing of ordinary men and women. And in order to fight with Ravana, Sri Rama had to cross over the sea to the island of Lanka, taking with him the great army of Bears and Monkeys who were helping him. Now, how to do that? They decided to build a great bridge—and some people say that the remains of that bridge can still be seen: a chain of small islands strung across the straits that divide India from Sri Lanka. I am not sure about that, but perhaps one day you will go there and see and decide for yourselves.

Anyway, this is how they went about building the bridge: Those great strong, clever monkeys would choose two big boulders each, and with a sharp pebble they

would scratch on one the sign ऋ, and on the other the sign म—these are the signs for the two halves of Lord Rama's name, in Sanskrit writing: Rā and Ma. Then they would pick up one stone under each arm, or in each hand and carry them down to the shore and out along the part of the bridge that was already built, out to the end, and then they would just concentrate for a second, remember Rama in their minds, murmur his name and just drop the stones into the water. And because of the power of the name of the Lord those two stones would float! Not only that—they would rush together and join fast, without any mortar, because one stone said ऋ and the other said म and together that makes Rama! So there was the bridge of floating stones, all with Rama's name written; and because there were very many monkeys and very many bears (I think the bears only carried one stone at a time, they must have had a different method) and because they all worked very hard the bridge was growing fast.

Lord Rama himself sat on the beach in a special place they had made ready for him, raised up a little bit so that he might see all the work and so that they might see him while they worked, for it gave them fresh strength and energy every time they looked at his radiant figure and face—they were so very happy to serve him. And Hanuman—the strongest monkey of all and Rama's greatest devotee, the one who can never be separated from him, so that whenever people think of Rama they think also of Hanuman, and whenever they remember Hanuman they immediately remember Rama—Hanuman was supervising the work, and keeping order, seeing that everyone dropped their stones in the right place, and that no-one trod on anyone else's toes, or jostled them into the water or anything like that.

Now, as Rama sat there and watched all those faithful animals working so hard only for his sake, and as he saw how they just invoked his name with full faith and that was enough to make those heavy boulders float, a doubt crept into his mind. He began to wonder—if *he* dropped a stone himself, would it float?

You may wonder how he could have such a thought, but you must remember that he was not only God, not only Vishnu himself, but also a man, just like you or me; and though those monkeys and bears saw him with the eyes of their souls as God and drew strength and power from the sight, he experienced himself as a man, who could feel anger and grief and gratitude and happiness—and doubt—just as we do.

So he wondered. And it bothered him so much that he felt he simply must try it and see. But of course he didn't want to do it right there in front of everybody. So, trying to make himself as inconspicuous as possible, he slipped away from the beach, moving behind some bushes and off to a little bay that was out of sight beyond a headland. There he looked around him very carefully to make sure that no-one was about: then he picked up a stone (not a very big one to start with, just a medium-sized pebble) and dropped it into the water. It sank—like a stone. Rama's heart sank too, and he looked guiltily over his shoulder in case anyone should have seen that dreadful thing... and there was Hanuman—Hanuman who was Rama's shadow,

how could he have got away from Hanuman, or concealed anything from him? Hanuman at once understood his Lord's thoughts and feelings, and out of his deep love came the wisdom to know exactly what to say.

"O Lord," said that great monkey, grinning, "You are the upholder of the whole universe—even a mere stick or straw will sink if *You* don't uphold it but let go of it—what then of a stone?"

"What about the squirrels?" you must be thinking. Well, yes—that was just to let you know what was going on; and as the days went by and the bridge grew and grew, somebody or other was always tripping over a squirrel, so that Hanuman got cross and shouted: "Get away from here! What are you doing, always underfoot? This is no place for squirrels! Can't you see we're busy?"

But then after a while it happened again ... and this time Hanuman made a lunge, caught hold of the little squirrel by the scruff of her neck and shouted: "I told you! Keep off this bridge!" and he threw her hard onto the shore. The poor little squirrel was bruised and shaken, and wept a few tears to herself, but after a while Rama, from his seat high up on the beach, noticed her once more on the bridge. So he watched very carefully what she was doing. First he saw her, on the bridge, shaking herself very vigorously, as a wet dog does. Then she frisked back to the beach, dodging those big apes with their boulders, threw herself into the water, then rolled in the sand, and then ran back along the bridge and perhaps because she had sand in her eyes and couldn't see so well, yet again somebody tripped and shouted and there was a big fuss.

"Hanuman," said Lord Rama, "bring that little squirrel to me."

So Hanuman brought her dangling her between his strong monkey fingers as if she were something that smelt bad.

"Little squirrel," said Rama, "tell me, what are you doing? Why are you endangering your life, and getting in the way of all these hard workers?"

Although he said it very gently, that timid squirrel was much too shy and overwhelmed to utter a single squeak.

Then Hanuman put her down, and said gruffly but not unkindly, "Come, come... when the Lord asks a question, you should answer. Tell us, what is it?"

The little squirrel looked around her, looked up at Lord Rama with devotion, looked at Hanuman, then scampered right up his hairy arm, stood on his shoulder and whispered something in his ear. Hanuman's expression changed, and little tears crept into his eyes as he said very humbly, "Lord, she says that she saw all of us working so hard for you, and a great longing came into her heart to do something for you also. So she looked and looked and tried to understand what we were doing. After a while she noticed that between the big stones were little gaps and unevennesses, and she thought that when you walk on the bridge, you might catch your foot and stumble. So she wanted to fill all those chinks and crannies with sand." Hanuman hung his head and looked away.

Then Lord Rama took the little squirrel on his left hand, and with the three

middle fingers of his right hand he stroked her gently and blessed her. And, where the Lord's fingers touched, the brown fur turned to gold. To this day, every squirrel in India bears the marks of the Lord's fingers to remind great creatures like you and me and Hanuman that even such small creatures helped to build the great bridge to Lanka for Lord Rama's victory.

SHRADDHAVAN'

INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY INHERENT IN INTEGRAL YOGA

IN THE WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of July 1984)

The Science and Art of Healing

THE human body has always been in the habit of answering to whatever forces chose to lay hands on it and illness is the price it pays for its inertia and ignorance. It has to learn to answer to the one Force alone, but that is not easy for it to learn....

All illnesses pass through the nervous or vital-physical sheath of the subtle consciousness and subtle body before they enter the physical. If one is conscious of the subtle body or with the subtle consciousness, one can stop an illness on its way and prevent it from entering the physical body. But it may have come without one's noticing, or when one is asleep or through the subconscious, or in a sudden rush when one is off one's guard; then there is nothing to do but to fight it out from a hold already gained on the body. Self-defence by these inner means may become so strong that the body becomes practically immune as many yogis are. Still this "practically" does not mean "absolutely". The absolute immunity can only come with the supramental change. For below the supramental it is the result of an action of a Force among many forces and can be disturbed by a disruption of the equilibrium established—in the supramental it is a law of the nature; in a supramentalised body immunity from illness would be automatic, inherent in its new nature.¹

*

...illnesses try to come from one person to another—they attack, by a suggestion...the nervous being and try to come in. Even if the illness is not contagious, this often happens, but it comes more easily in contagious illnesses. The suggestion or touch has to be thrown off at once.

There is a sort of protection round the body which we call the nervous envelope—if this remains strong and refuses entrance to the illness force, then one can remain well even in the midst of plague or other epidemics—if the envelope is pierced or weak, then the illness can come in.²

*

Your theory of illness is rather a perilous creed—for illness is a thing to be eliminated, not accepted or enjoyed. There *is* something in the being that enjoys ill-

¹ The Birth Centenary Edition, Vol. 24, pp. 1564-65.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1565.

ness, it is possible even to turn the pains of illness like any other pain into a form of pleasure; for pain and pleasure are both of them degradations of an original Ananda and can be reduced into the terms of each other or else sublimated into their original principle of Ananda. It is true also that one must be able to bear illness with calm, equanimity, endurance, even recognition of it, since it has come, as something that had to be passed through in the course of experience. But to accept and enjoy it means to help it to last and that will not do; for illness is a deformation of the physical nature just as lust, anger, jealousy, etc., are deformations of the vital nature and error and prejudice and indulgence of falsehood are deformations of the mental nature. All these things have to be eliminated and rejection is the first condition of their disappearance while acceptance has a contrary effect altogether.¹

*

Illness marks some imperfection or weakness or else opening to adverse touches in the physical nature and is often connected also with some obscurity or disharmony in the lower vital or the physical mind or elsewhere.²

*

It is very good if one can get rid of illness entirely by faith and yoga-power or the influx of the Divine Force. But very often this is not altogether possible, because the whole nature is not open or able to respond to the Force. The mind may have faith and respond, but the lower vital and the body may not follow. Or, if the mind and vital are ready, the body may not respond, or may respond only partially, because it has the habit of replying to the forces which produce a particular illness, and habit is a very obstinate force in the material part of the nature. In such cases the use of the physical means can be resorted to,—not as the main means, but as a help or material support to the action of the Force. Not strong and violent remedies, but those that are beneficial without disturbing the body.³

*

The way in which the pains went shows you how to deal with the whole nature,—for it is the same with the mental and vital as with the physical causes of illness and disturbance. To remain quiet within, to hold on to the faith and experience that to be quiet and open and let the Force work is the one way. Naturally, to be wholly conscious is not possible yet, but to feel it, to open, to let it work, to observe its result, that is the first thing. It is the beginning of consciousness and the way to complete consciousness.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1566.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1568.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1568.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1722.

The Psychical Phenomena

The phenomena of this vital consciousness and sense, this direct sensation and perception of and response to the play of subtler forces than the physical, are often included without distinction under the head of psychical phenomena.¹

*

...There are, however, two different kinds of action of these inner ranges of the consciousness. The first is a more outer and confused activity of the awakening subliminal mind and life which is clogged with and subject to the grosser desires and illusions of the mind and vital being and vitiated in spite of its wider range of experience and power and capacities by an enormous mass of error and deformations of the will and knowledge, full of false suggestions and images, false and distorted intuitions and inspirations and impulses, the latter often even depraved and perverse, and vitiated too by the interference of the physical mind and its obscurities. This is an inferior activity to which clairvoyants, psychists, spiritists, occultists, seekers of powers and siddhis are very liable and to which all the warnings against the dangers and errors of this kind of seeking are more especially applicable.²

*

The range of the psychic consciousness and its experiences is almost illimitable and the variety and complexity of its phenomena almost infinite. Only some of the broad lines and main features can be noted here. The first and most prominent is the activity of the psychic senses of which the sight is the most developed ordinarily and the first to manifest itself with any largeness when the veil of the absorption in the surface consciousness which prevents the inner vision is broken. But all the physical senses have their corresponding powers in the psychical being, there is a psychical hearing, touch, smell, taste: indeed the physical senses are themselves in reality only a projection of the inner sense into a limited and externalised operation in and through and upon the phenomena of gross matter. The psychical sight receives characteristically the images that are formed in the subtle matter of the mental or psychical ether, *cittākāśa*. These may be transcriptions there or impresses of physical things, persons, scenes, happenings, whatever is, was or will be or may be in the physical universe. These images are very variously seen and under all kinds of conditions; in Samadhi or in the waking state, and in the latter with the bodily eyes closed or open, projected on or into a physical object or medium or seen as if materialised in the physical atmosphere or only in a psychical ether revealing itself through this grosser physical atmosphere; seen through the physical eyes themselves

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 21, p. 843.

² *Ibid.*

as a secondary instrument and as if under the conditions of the physical vision or by the psychical vision alone and independently of the relations of our ordinary sight to space. The real agent is always the psychical sight and the power indicates that the consciousness is more or less awake, intermittently or normally and more or less perfectly, in the psychical body. It is possible to see in this way the transcriptions or impressions of things at any distance beyond the range of the physical vision or the images of the past or the future.

Besides these transcriptions or impresses the psychical vision receives thought images and other forms created by constant activity of consciousness in ourselves or in other human beings, and these may be according to the character of the activity images of truth or falsehood or else mixed things, partly true, partly false, and may be too either mere shells and representations or images inspired with a temporary life and consciousness and, it may be, carrying in them in one way or another some kind of beneficent or maleficent action or some willed or unwilled effectiveness on our minds or vital being or through them even on the body. These transcriptions, impresses, thought images, life images, projections of the consciousness may also be representations or creations not of the physical world, but of vital, psychic or mental worlds beyond us, seen in our minds or projected from other than human beings. And as there is this psychical vision of which some of the more external and ordinary manifestations are well enough known by the name of clairvoyance, so there is a psychical hearing and psychical touch, taste, smell,—clairaudience, clairsentience are the more external manifestations,—with precisely the same range each in its own kind, the same fields and manner and conditions and varieties of their phenomena.¹

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The awakening of the psychical consciousness liberates in us the direct use of the mind as a sixth sense, and this power may be made constant and normal. The physical consciousness can only communicate with the minds of others or know the happenings of the world around us through external means and signs and indications, and it has beyond this limited action only a vague and haphazard use of the mind's more direct capacities, a poor range of occasional presentiments, intuitions and messages. Our minds are indeed constantly acting and acted upon by the minds of others through hidden currents of which we are not aware, but we have no knowledge or control of these agencies. The psychical consciousness, as it develops, makes us aware of the great mass of thoughts, feelings, suggestions, wills, impacts, influences of all kinds that we are receiving from others or sending to others or imbibing from and throwing into the general mind atmosphere around us. As it evolves in power, precision and clearness, we are able to trace these to their source or feel immediately their origin and transit to us and direct consciously and with an intelligent will our

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 844-45.

own messages. It becomes possible to be aware, more or less accurately and discerningly, of the activities of minds whether near to us physically or at a distance, to understand, feel or identify ourselves with their temperament, character, thoughts, feelings, reactions, whether by a psychic sense or a direct mental perception or by a very sensible and often intensely concrete reception of them into our mind or on its recording surface. At the same time we can consciously make at least the inner selves and, if they are sufficiently sensitive, the surface minds of others aware of our own inner mental or psychic self and plastic to its thoughts, suggestions, influences or even cast it or its active image in influence into their subjective, even into their vital and physical being to work there as a helping or moulding or dominating power and presence.¹

Spiritism

It is quite possible for the dead or rather the departed—for they are not dead—who are still in regions near the earth to have communication with the living; sometimes it happens automatically, sometimes by an effort at communication on one side of the curtain or the other. There is no impossibility of such communication by the means used by the spiritists; usually, however, genuine communications or a contact can only be with those who are yet in a world which is a sort of idealised replica of the earth-consciousness and in which the same personality, ideas, memories persist that the person had here. But all that pretends to be communications with departed souls is not genuine, especially when it is done through a paid professional medium. There is there an enormous amount of mixture of a very undesirable kind—for apart from the great mass of unconscious suggestions from the sitters or the contributions of the medium's subliminal consciousness, one gets into contact with a world of beings which is of a very deceptive or self-deceptive illusory nature. Many of these come and claim to be the departed souls of relatives, acquaintances, well-known men, famous personalities, etc. There are also beings who pick up the discarded feelings and memories of the dead and masquerade with them. There are a great number of beings who come to such séances only to play with the consciousness of men or exercise their powers through this contact with the earth and who dope the mediums and sitters with their falsehoods, tricks and illusions. (I am supposing, of course, the case of mediums who are not themselves tricksters.) A contact with such a plane of spirits can be harmful (most mediums become nervously or morally unbalanced) and spiritually dangerous. Of course, all pretended communications with the famous dead of long-past times are in their very nature deceptive and most of those with the recent ones also—that is evident from the character of these communications. Through conscientious mediums one may get sound results (in the matter of the dead), but even these are very ignorant of the nature of the forces they

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 847.

are handling and have no discrimination which can guard them against trickery from the other side of the veil. Very little genuine knowledge of the nature of the after-life can be gathered from these séances; a true knowledge is more often gained by the experience of individuals who make serious contact or are able in one way or another to cross the border.¹

(To be continued)

Compiled by INDRA SEN

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, pp. 485-86.

DEGENERATION IN MODERN INDIAN ART?

WHEN I was in Bombay certain friends of mine who had come to visit me said that it was a great pity that in modern times Indian art had degenerated.

I was very much shocked to hear this, because my experience was quite different. I told them that on the contrary I had noticed that Indian art was as beautiful as in the days of Ellora and Ajanta. I had seen a picture of the image of a Goddess belonging to a temple of South India. It was done in black stone and the expression on the face of this Goddess was a marvel. I had gazed and gazed and wondered at the capacity of our sculptors to bring such an expression on the face of this black-stone Goddess. I told my friends about it.

Then another marvel I had seen during the construction of a Jain temple not very far away from my house in Bombay. I used to take my clothes for washing to a washerman on Harkness Road, and one day I was astonished to see that the place had been cleared for building. A Jain temple was already half done. A statue and other carvings on the temple were simply breath-taking.

They were done in marble and there was a very young man who was doing the work of carving several celestial beings. I told my friends that if they didn't believe me they could themselves go and see the temple which was being built. Then they would know that Indian art is as beautiful and elegant as it ever was in the past.

A further thing which I told them was that the husband of my servant Hira who was a devotee of our Divine Mother had done a small statue of Krishna in marble. He was hardly an admirable man, as he was rude and proud. But this wonderful gift was in him of producing a statue of such amazing beauty. I offered to pay any amount of money for the statue if he would let me have it. But he could not give it to me, because it was for a temple. Never can you imagine the beauty of expression of Sri Krishna's face, unless you see the statue. What sweetness, what compassion, what Grace and Love! And this man, every year, took leave from his work to do many statues of Ganapati at the festival time. He was also a very gifted carpenter. I said, "You see, my friends, I have observed that Indian art, far from degenerating, is as beautiful today as it was before."

Only in certain paintings, at some exhibitions, had the artist taken to modernist ways. But the Mother has explained that even in these so-called strange ways of expression there is a deeper meaning behind. So let us never believe that our artists and sculptors are moving backward.

LALITA

OUR LADY WITH A LAMP

SOMEONE was sick and I had to go to see her. They told me that the Nursing Home could be reached directly by walking along the sea-shore. So I decided to walk. After a mile's walking someone pointed out, "There, that is the Nursing Home." The building was not yet complete; elaborate construction was still going on, there was yet much to be done. The situation was admirable, the building was almost on the brink of the sea. The waves came and went, breaking on the big boulders put to protect the parapet. The lines of Amal Kiran came back to me, "The waves foam-garland all the saffron shore." An ideal place, no doubt, for the sick and invalid people who could not themselves move but could sit in the alcove and watch the endless play of the waters restless and roaring.

Entering the gate I saw in my imagination rows of white beds with sick-people—walls and floors spotlessly clean giving out the odour of strong solutions of disinfectant and cleansing fluid. I had not bargained for what I saw a few minutes later. Climbing a flight of stairs I landed on a sort of alley, cool and protected from the glare of the harsh mid-day sun. Suddenly my eyes fell upon the two statues of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I was transfixed. The statues were of white marble and Sri Aurobindo wore the traditional Indian clothes and the Mother was in European dress with one hand raised up in such a fashion that I read the suggestion of a torch. At once I remembered Longfellow's lines on Florence Nightingale:

"A Lady with the lamp shall stand
In the great history of our land,
A nobler type of good
Heroic womanhood."

Here was the Divine Mother-soul nursing and lulling to rest the harassed souls put out in time and space to do Her work on earth. A wave of light and love and force passed in me from head to toe. I fell to silent praying. It was one of those moments when I loved Her most. The Mother Herself once in Her class described this particular situation. In dire difficulty and pain we really do go back consciously or even unconsciously to Her, helpless and weeping for solace. And these are the moments that she could help us most, for at these moments we shed our human pomposity and pride.

Lives of great women passed through my mind in a cinematographic manner. Their work and courage and strength were superhuman. Whose power were they using if not the Great Mother's? The Mother Herself encouraged us to think on these lines by uttering: "Whenever and wherever there was a chance of *greatening* the consciousness I was there." Which of these births were the whole of the Mother and which were Her partial emanations? We choose and speculate and sometimes the dates play tricks on us. Some were even contemporaries of each other!

We read *Savitri's* Book Seven Canto Four and try to clear our minds. The first Madonna cries out to journeying Savitri:

“O Savitri, I am thy secret soul.
To share the suffering of the world I came.
I draw my children’s pangs into my breast,
I am the nurse of the dolour beneath the stars;
I am the soul of all who wailing writhe
Under the ruthless harrow of the Gods.
I am woman, nurse and slave and beaten beast.”

And Savitri replies:

“Madonna of suffering, Mother of grief divine,
Thou art a portion of my soul put forth
To bear the unbearable sorrow of the world.
Because thou art, men yield not to their doom
But ask for happiness and strive with Fate...”

The utterance of the second Madonna is equally remarkable:

“O Savitri, I am thy secret soul.
I have come down into the human world
And the movement watched by an unsleeping Eye
And the dark contrariety of earth’s fate
And the battle of the bright and sombre Powers.
I stand upon earth’s paths of danger and grief
And help the unfortunate and save the doomed...”
I am Durga, goddess of the proud and strong,
And Lakshmi, queen of the fair and fortunate;
I wear the face of Kali when I kill,
I trample the corpses of the demon hordes....”

And Savitri answered:

“Madonna of might, Mother of works and force,
Thou art a portion of my soul put forth
To help mankind and help the travail of time.
Because thou art in him, man hopes and dares;
Because thou art, men’s souls can climb the heavens...”

In this strain the conversation went on between the Madonnas and Savitri. “Thou

art a portion of my soul put forth," she said again and again. We do act sometimes and show superhuman strength but forget the source.

Even the Gods forget. "Ours is this victory, ours is this greatness," cried the Gods. But they could not discern That; so they said to Agni, "O Knower of all Births, this discern, what is this mighty Daemon?" Agni rushed forward but, That only gave him a blade of grass and said, "This burn." Agni could not. And the Upanishadic story runs that when all the Gods failed they appealed to Uma daughter of the snowy summits. She gave them knowledge: "It is the Eternal. Of the Eternal is this victory in which ye shall grow to greatness."

Neither should we show too much concern over our petty accomplishments, for Baji the Prabhou tells us:

"Not in this living net
Of flesh and nerve, nor in the flickering mind
Is a man's manhood seated. God within
Rules us, who in the Brahmin and the dog
Can, if He will, show equal godhead. Not
By men is mightiness achieved; Baji
Or Malsure is but a name, a robe,
And covers One alone. We but employ
Bhavani's strength, who in an arm of flesh
Is mighty as in the thunder and the storm."

And when Malsure taunts him, Baji answers:

"Me thou shalt not burn;
For this five feet or more of bone and flesh,
Whether pure flame or jackal of the hills
Be fattened with its rags, may well concern
Others not Baji Prabhou."

The Renaissance was about to bypass Russia. Catherine the Great, a woman and none too highly educated, caught the elusive spirit and turned it towards her country and achieved something never heard of before and all this in a rough and tough world of men. Elizabeth I by sheer excellence of her brain brushed aside the most fearful array of enemies a woman ever had to encounter. Finally she brought England, a second-rate power not much respected abroad, to a position it had never reached before. This to name just two great women. The horrors of Scutari in the Crimean War no student of European history can forget. A single woman cleaned the Augean stable.

When we came as visitors to the Ashram, Mithran, Doraiswamy's eldest son, was very ill. He was given a room just opposite the Mother's room in an adjacent building inside the Ashram Courtyard. The Mother went to see him every day at

about ten in the morning. I was always in the courtyard and the Mother never failed to give me a quick smile. No doubt, she never nursed Mithran with her physical hands: at the most she held his hand and kissed his forehead, a gift to his psychic being. But even as an outsider I could feel her rocking his soul on Her bosom and pouring balm on his tortured being. At the moment he died, Ila-di saw his soul going in a haze of light to the Mother's room. When I heard of this I could almost see the Mother standing with outstretched arms waiting to receive his soul into her being. The Mother used to play at throwing toffees at people when Mithran was not ill. Everybody failed to catch Her toffee after two or three times. It was Mithran who could continue for fifteen or twenty times. It was sheer delight to see the Mother's face applauding him with a wonderful smile, and watch the handsome face of Mithran, eager and alert not to miss the toffee.

A time came when Ila-di's own son Siddhartha died in an air-crash. Naturally she was overwhelmed. But the Mother told her to be courageous and stop weeping. She just called her to Her room and told her to sit there quietly—no doubt to nurse her soul and to give peace and faith and strength. So her soul was healed. What has happened had to happen, but Sweet Mother was there, she would look after the soul that had come to her as her son.

We forget that the Mother is soothing us every moment. There is nothing to be afraid of. But we weep and wail and cry. In our agony we fail to remember that the Mother is always helping us. It had been worthwhile going to the Nursing Home.

CHAUNDONA S. BANERJI

STOP, WAYFARER! READ BEFORE YOU PROCEED

“HERE this tomb suffices a man for whom the whole world was not sufficient.”

This is the inscription found on the tomb-stone of Alexander the Great, whom all the world looked up to and was afraid of. Needless to point out, the inscription speaks of the futility of man’s ambition. When a man returns to the dust of which he was made he has no attendant but the worm, no food but earth, and none to flatter him but the epitaph.

An epitaph is an inscription upon a tomb or monument in honour or memory of one dead. Since people all over the world had made it customary to revile mercilessly the living and praise magnanimously the dead, an epitaph, by extension of usage, is a brief composition characterising a dead person, written ostensibly for that purpose, whether to be cut on his tomb-stone or not.

The ancient Egyptians were the first to write epitaphs. Though the contents of these epitaphs varied, the form was stereotyped. They were nothing more than prayers.

Ancient Greek epitaphs, unlike the Egyptian, are of great literary interest. Latin inscriptions usually began with the appropriate words *Siste Viator* or *Aspice Viator*, which in translation reads ‘Stop Wayfarer’. Generally epigrammatic in form they are rich and varied in expression; and they display often a sense of deep and tender feelings. Here is one on Dionysius of Tarsus, which while it provokes a laugh also makes one think. In a modernised form it runs:

“I lived quite glad
without a dame.
I wish my dad
had done the same.”

Unlike the Greeks, who distinguished only their illustrious men by epitaphs, the Romans regularly recorded upon tombstones the names of unknown people. Even a five-year old child was honoured with an epitaph:

“As his years were not many
So were his troubles small.”

A remarkable feature of many of the Roman epitaphs was the curse they often pronounced upon those who might violate the tomb. The Inscription found on the tomb of William Shakespeare at Stratford-on-Avon, said to have been written by the poet himself, is modelled on such an intimidating type:

“Good friend, for Jesus’ sake, forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here,

Blest be the man that spares these stones
And cursed be he that moves my bones."

His bones to this day remain undisturbed.

It must be noted that the Christian countries followed the practice of the Romans who honoured all their dead with an epitaph.

Epitaphs in English began to assume a distinct literary character and value only during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Many verse-writers made their living purely by writing epitaphs and selling them at fairs. But many of the best known ones are primarily literary memorials, not necessarily intended to be placed on a tomb. Great men are reputed to have written their own epitaphs.

Ben Jonson's epitaph on the Countess of Pembroke is a remarkable one:

"Underneath this sable hearse
Lies the subject of true verse,—
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother,
Death, ere thou hast slain another,
Learn'd and fair and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee."

Though Alexander Pope also wrote one on John Gay, given below is the one Gay wrote on himself:

"Life is a jest, and all things show it;
I thought so once, and now I know it."

Walter Savage Landor, remembered for his *Imaginary Conversations*, boasted of his virility thus:

"Here lies Landor.
They thought him a Goose,
But he proved a Gander."

"Compose an epitaph on me, which when I die shall be inscribed on my tombstone," requested Charles II. The Earl of Pembroke readily agreed and wrote:

"He never said a foolish thing,
Nor ever did a wise one."

To this the King who had a fine sense of humour replied: "My words are my own, but my actions are my ministers'."

John Keats who died a victim of tuberculosis is reported to have said that he

wanted no name upon his grave, no epitaph but only the words:

“Here lies one whose name was writ in water.”

That was the dejected Keats who thought that recognition was out of his reach and his life as a poet a failure.

Robert Ross whose friendship with Oscar Wilde brought him sorrows, troubles and worries was once asked by a friend what he would choose to be written on his grave-stone. He replied that at the end of so stormy a career the appropriate inscription would be:

“Here lies one whose name is writ in hot water.”

Abel Evans satirically wrote the following epitaph on the famous architect Sir John Vanbrugh:

“Lie heavy on him, Earth! for he
Laid many heavy loads on thee.”

Here is a serious epitaph made comic because of grammatical accident:

“Erected to the memory of John MacFarlane drowned in the water of Leith by a few affectionate friends.”

An interesting epitaph on a robber, found in Covent Garden Church, reads:

“Here lies Du Vall, reader, if male thou art,
Look to thy purse, if female, to thy heart.”

Bernard Shaw the dare-devil composed one quite in character on himself:

“Who the devil was he?”

Samuel Butler of *Hudibras* fame is honoured with one by Wesley the Younger. Since Butler died a pauper, the epitaph reads:

“While Butler, needy wretch! was still alive
No generous patron would a dinner give.
See him, when starved to death and turned to dust,
Presented with a monumental bust,
He asked for bread and he received a stone.”

Belloc No less an essayist than Hilaire Belloc wrote a pungent epitaph on a politician:

“Here, richly, with ridiculous display,
The Politician’s corpse was laid away,
While all of his acquaintance sneered and slanged.
I wept, for I had longed to see him hanged.”

The most remarkable epitaph is the one Belloc wrote on the author in himself:

“When I am dead, I hope it may be said:
‘His sins were scarlet, but his books were read’.”

Marriage doubtless brings bliss to the privileged few but to many it spells disaster. Nine out of every ten men believe in the saying: “Bachelors are in need of wives: married men want to get rid of them.” Read below an epitaph by a relieved husband:

“Here lies my wife,
Here let her lie!
Now she’s at rest.
And so am I.”

And don’t you like to know what a wife wrote on the death of her husband?

“Rest in peace
Until we meet again.”

P. RAJA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo—Volumes 1 & 2, 1983, SABDA, Pondicherry - 605002, 1221 pages, Rs. 150/-.

SPRING seems everlasting in the garden of the Aurobindonian yoga evoked by these twin volumes of truth and beauty, edited with love and efficiency. The correspondence of the great usually satisfies one's nostalgia for the vanished past or curiosity regarding contemporary relationships. Neither is the main reason that makes the *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* such a significant publication. It is dear and almost indispensable to us because it is a Guide to Yoga without tears, and as enlightening as it is entertaining and enjoyable. It is as though Sri Aurobindo is here again in person to lead us on the steep and narrow path of yoga, with high seriousness and effervescent humour by turns. Fun and laughter, the mingling of the sublime and the mundane, the spray of anxiety and comfort make the tomes a continuing feast of wisdom and flow of wit and humour. The Divine is Anandamaya, and the bliss divine spangles the replies, notes and comments that are elicited by Nirodbaran's persistent questionings, chronic despondencies and anxious queries.

When, as a young medical graduate returned from England, Nirodbaran came under the spell of Sri Aurobindo, he had no idea of what he was going to be except that—well, yes—he would be an inmate in the Pondicherry Ashram imbibing its elected atmosphere and perhaps daring the upward climb in the spiral of consciousness. As things turned out, the Teaching was to percolate mainly through the correspondence, while he was of course also asked by the Mother to engage in the way of works. This Karma Yoga could mean anything: doing gate-duty at the Ashram entrance, dusting the library books, helping to dispense medicines. He would, however, have no direct contact with Sri Aurobindo. But if he couldn't meet the Master and talk to him, he might at least write! Thus came into being a series of notebooks with Nirodbaran's questions written in his clear hand, followed by or interspersed with Sri Aurobindo's answers and comments in his tiny handwriting winding about fascinatingly like a golden chain. The correspondence began in February 1933 and ended in November 1938 when Sri Aurobindo injured his right leg and Nirodbaran became one of his personal attendants. What went on in that upanishadic situation of personal contact, apart from Nirodbaran's playing the amanuensis when Sri Aurobindo dictated *Savitri*? The story is partly told in Nirodbaran's *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, but the full record of the earlier five-year correspondence must ever remain a treasure-house of immeasurable value.

Nirodbaran's desire to become a poet and his experiences as a sadhak form the two main Kingsways of the Correspondence. For the rest, there really seems to have been no restriction regarding the subject matter discussed, and the excellent 33-page Index, with three columns on each page, offers a key to the phenomenal riches garnered in the two volumes. Here is 'God's Plenty' indeed, and it is almost like turning

the leaves of a Sun-lit cyclopaedia. Thus the sadhak in the Introduction:

“As regards subject matter he gave me a wide field to range over. Super-mind, literature, art, religion, spirituality, Avatarhood, love, women, marriage, medical matters, sex-gland, any topical question, such as goat-sacrifice at Kalighat, Bengal political atrocities, sectarian fanaticism, hunger-strike, India’s freedom, etc., etc. were my rich pabulum. I need not labour the point that in the process emeralds and lapis-lazulis of rare value were the reward extracted from his supramental quarry, though at the cost of being dubbed a ‘wooden head’ and many other complimentary epithets. Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Napoleon, Virgil, Shaw, Joyce, Hitler, Mussolini, Negus, Spanish Civil War, General Miaja, romping in, oh, the world-theatre seen at a glance exhibiting many-coloured movements for the eye’s, the ear’s and the soul’s rejoicing.” (p. xi)

Oh, the incredible incommensurable divine patience of the Master! Sri Aurobindo was already known as the Father of the Indian Revolution who had now become a wonderful Yogi. He had already given to the world *The Life Divine*, *The Secret of the Veda*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, and *Essays on the Gita*. He was widely respected as a narrative, dramatic and lyric poet and was said to be engaged in revising his *Savitri*. He had a thousand claims on his time, yet he found the time to return such detailed answers with never a trace of irritation, short-temper or indifference. No subject is deemed too trivial to merit consideration, no philosophical query is dismissed as too intricate for the young disciple. Everywhere there is an even spread of luminous calm, like the milky ocean around Ananta on whom the Lord rests in transcendent repose. Each answer—long or short—is packed with the Aurobindonian plea for an adventure of consciousness pushing onwards to a sublime future. Despondency and defeatism are the two words banished from this brave new world. When Nirodbaran asks Sri Aurobindo about the latter’s having contemplated suicide at one time, sharp comes the correction:

“What nonsense! Suicide! Who the devil told you that? Even if I knew that all was going to collapse tomorrow, I would not think of suicide, but go on to do what I still could for the future.” (p. 265)

Sri Aurobindo untiringly coaxes Nirod to come out of his Man of Sorrows garb and view life cheerfully and view it whole. Originating from his Ananda consciousness, Sri Aurobindo’s answers willingly come down to the student’s level sparkling with the beaded bubbles of humour and winking at the brim of the cup that gives light and delight together. The style is the man always, and the man is Sri Aurobindo the master of magnificence of phrase and thought revealing the spirit behind. For Nirodbaran—and for us—he is the Head Fairy waving his wand with its triple potencies of wide-ranging scholarship, poetic afflatus and immaculate love. When

the dear disciple ails from a boil inside the left nostril and begs for a “dose of Force”, the Master readily obliges by inditing a stotra:

“O blessed blessed boil within the nostril,
How with pure pleasure dost thou make thy boss thrill!
He sings of thee with sobbing trill and cross trill,
O blessed, blessed boil within the nostril.” (p. 668)

The serious poems of Nirodbaran, however, receive a detailed, line by line correction and coverage. Sri Aurobindo’s comments are as heart-warming and fascinating as a mother helping a toddler to walk. Here, for example, is Reassurance a-plenty:

“Nonsense! No poet can always write well—If even Homer nods, Nirod can often doze—that’s no reason for getting morally bilious.” (p. 885)

With exemplary patience, he teaches the art of scansion, and writes about rhythm, stress and the other elements of prosody, himself checking with the Oxford Dictionary at times. However the secret of good and great poetry is something undefinable, after all:

“Poetry depends on power of thought, feeling, language—not on abundance of images. Some poets are rich in images, all need not be.”

One after another, more and more satisfying poems are coaxed out of Nirodbaran. However, when Nirod’s entrance like a god, his brow crowned with “an eagle-sun, infinity-shod”, is announced in a poem, the Master painlessly moderates the mistaken exuberance:

“Look here now! Neither eagles nor suns are in the habit of wearing shoes. Besides this idea of somebody’s shoes on your head is extremely awkward and takes away entirely from the triumphal and godlike majesty of your entrance.” (p. 1152)

When a novice (J.) confesses to the ambition of writing an epic poem, Sri Aurobindo does not brush it aside as folly. Instead he makes a gentle suggestion:

“I suppose it is best done by reading the epic writers until you get the epic rush or sweep ... Epic writing needs a sustained energy of rhythm and word which is not easy to get or maintain. I am not sure whether you can get it now. I think you would first have to practise maintaining the level of the more energetic among the lines you have been writing...” (p. 925)

Such attention to detail, such clarity of presentation, and such radiant simplicity in expression also mark the elucidation of aspects of yoga in various places. One should not take to miraculism for an easy passage, nor need one be intimidated by the apparent difficulties of the yogic path:

“Yoga is an endeavour, a tapasya—it can cease to be so only when one surrenders sincerely to a higher Action and keeps the surrender and makes it complete. It is not a fantasia,* devoid of all reason and coherence or a mere miracle. It has its laws and conditions and I do not see how you can demand of the Divine to do everything by a violent miracle.” (p. 29)

The earnest disciple feels chagrined from time to time by the slow tempo of change, indeed so slow that it is almost imperceptible. In this predicament, only Sri Aurobindo can quieten him with a message dipped in thought-provoking fun and touched with encouraging hope:

“What the deuce is three years in yoga? There are people who have to wait twice or three times or four times that time before they get the real sign. A child of nine might say look here. I have been studying for 2 years and yet nobody has decided to propose me as the Vice Chancellor of the Calcutta University.

You have had signs that you can get Ananda, that a channel can be made through your physical brain (your poetry) for something that wasn't there before. That's sign enough.” (p. 454)

Here as elsewhere, Sri Aurobindo is actually talking to us. Nirodbaran is the eternal seeker, the Arjuna of the Gita, the Nachiketas of the Katha, the Narada of the Chhandogya, the Maitreyi of the Brihadaranyaka. We hear the voice of Krishna, of Yama, of Sanat Kumar, of Yajnavalkya repeatedly directing us to the life divine:

“Outer human nature can only change either by an intense psychic development or a strong and all-pervading influence from above. It is the inner being that has to change first—a change which is not always visible outside.” (p. 745)

Eschew fear, learn to smile, “send the Man of Sorrows with his planks to the devil”, do not yield to tamasic surrender, continue with personal effort, but beware! beware of the “riot of mental activity and vital jumping!” A million sun-rays of knowledge and moon-rays of delight touch us as Sri Aurobindo speaks on the Mother, on love, on poets, on the epic possibilities of the Krishna-Gautami myth, on narrative poetry, on the great poets of the world, on world peace. On the other hand, the grousy letter of Nirodbaran about the accusations hurled at him by others elicits only this brief knock-out from the Master:

“Imagination+inference+joy of the perspicacious psychologist+joy of fault-finding+several other vital joys+joy of communicating to others, usually called gossip. Quite enough to explain. No other reason wanted.” (p. 233)

After reading and pondering over the above, dare we indulge in this sort of weakness any more? And here is the advice that could always insulate us from all narrowness in thought and behaviour:

“My dear Sir, be less narrowly logical (with a very deficient logic even as logic)—take a wider sweep; swim out of your bathing pool into the open sea and waltz round the horizons! For anything that happens there are a hundred factors at work and not only the one just under your nose; but to perceive that you have to become cosmic and intuitive or overmental and what not.” (p. 312)

Again, Sri Aurobindo the master phrase-maker is also active to brilliant effect in some of these letters, as for example in: “shipwreck in a teacup”, “just roll, royce and ripple”, “blumming into buzzific intensities”. The correspondence drenches us in refreshing nectarean joy as if answering the Taittiriya prayer: अमृतस्य देव धारणो भूयासम्—“Of the immortal, O God, the possessor may I be!”

If the answers are from the Mind of Light, the individual soul's queries also have their own shimmering magnetism. At times a child clinging to the mother, now a student at his lessons, presently a young man engaged in good works, a friend with his own charmed circle (Nishikanta, Amal Kiran, Dilip), a physician involved in the good and bad of Vichy water and Listerine, arnica and nux vomica, a scanner of the political horizon, a writer of Bengali and English poetry, but ever and always the spiritual pilgrim: and Nirodbaran uncannily understands the stairway of a mystic's soul when formulating questions day after day with a candid and painstaking-honesty.

“I have become a persistent tea-drinker, going against your instruction, though the mind does not see any harm in a cup of tea.” (p. 37)

“I am so tired with this ‘play’ of yours, Sir, that sometimes I have a longing to jump into the silence of Nirvana. However, what shall I hear from the mighty pen as a remedy to my chronic despair and impatience?” (p. 317)

But opening to the brilliant sun of Sri Aurobindo's humour, the lotus of Nirod's heart too laughs in gay abandon at times:

“Let me know
How 'tis so
A dullard like me
Bursting like a sea
With the heart of the Muse
Makes his rhythms fuse?” (p. 493)

Prompt comes the delightful echo of the Master:

“You are opening, opening, opening,
Into a wider, wider scopening
That fills me with a sudden hopening
That I may carry you in spite of gropening
Your soul into the supramental ropening.” (p. 493)

But Nirodbaran and Sri Aurobindo are dangerous correspondents for the reviewer, as they are both infectious and irresistibly quotable. All that one can and should do is go to the source of the Ganga as she descends in torrents from beyond, drink deep and allow oneself to become part of this bliss of life, a sure preview of the Supramental Future.

PREMA NANDAKUMAR