

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

March 1985

Price: Rs. 3.50

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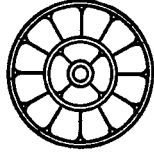
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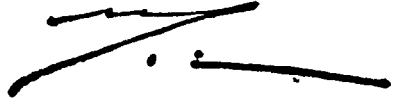


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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Editor's Phone: 4782

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Published by: P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY - 605 002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry - 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

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

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXVII

No. 3

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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail.”

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# A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON MARCH 17, 1954

This talk is based upon Mother's essay "The Four Austerities and the Four Liberations", Part I.

*Here you have said: "The avowed purpose of such [ascetic] practices is to abolish all sensation so that the body may no longer stand in the way of one's flight towards the Spirit."*

IN the old spiritual doctrines, the body was always considered incapable of being transformed and only as something inert and useless obstructing the path—the spirit had to be made to go out of his body so that, free, it could have all possible experiences. And so they ill-treated the body as much as they could to take away from it its vitality and strength, to keep it very quiet like something utterly useless.

The physical consciousness was for them something to be done away with.

That was it. I am speaking as they themselves spoke. I am putting myself in their place.

*Last time, in the text it was said: "They [those who have faith in a God, their God] belong to him integrally; all the events of their lives are an expression of the divine will and they accept them not merely with calm submission but with gratitude, for they are convinced that whatever happens to them is always for their own good."*

*What is the difference between a calm and a grateful submission?*

A calm and a grateful submission?... When you receive an order, you may carry it out with resignation because you have resolved to submit; so you carry out this order without any joy or pleasure, just very drily and superficially, and you tell yourself, "I was told to do this and I am doing it." This means that you do not try to understand and make no effort to adhere willingly to what is asked. This is resigned submission. You accept your fate and if you do not complain it is because you have determined not to complain, it is because of this determination, otherwise you would complain.

The other instance is of understanding why an order was given, of grasping its inner value and wanting to express what has been asked with all one's strength, with the knowledge and joy that it is something, perforce, that's bound to bring the Divine closer and give you full satisfaction. Then you are happy, you are satisfied and you collaborate. That makes quite a considerable difference.

*In a calm submission, doesn't one feel happy?*

Usually one is very proud of oneself! One becomes vain, tells oneself that one is doing something remarkable. One doesn't question, doesn't try to understand: one obeys, and besides is resigned. One doesn't even ask oneself if it is good or not: one is too superior! One is puffed up with pride. There are many people of this kind here.

*So it is not a true submission, is it?*

I think the other one is better. At least here one has the satisfaction of understanding why he does things; one does them with joy and feels strengthened through the very fact of doing them, while in the first instance one bends the head lower and lower and feels as though one were a poor victim of some despotic authority crushing one with its omnipotence.

*In the temples people offer animals to the Divine. In this case can it be called cruelty?*

This comes much closer to ignorance and unconsciousness than to cruelty. They don't do it because they are cruel—there are exceptions—but still, generally speaking, it is not that they feel a special pleasure in killing but they are afraid of a particular god and think that by such killing they will win his favour.

Close by here, near the seashore, there is a fishermen's temple—Virampatnam, I think; when you go as far as Ariancouppam and from there turn to the left and go towards the sea, at the end of the road there is a temple. It is the temple of a strange godhead... it is one of the Kalis. Well, extraordinary stories are told about this Kali, but in any case, the custom is to kill a fairly large number of chickens every year in her honour. I happened to go down there—I believe it was the day after the festival had been celebrated: one could still see all the feathers scattered on the sands—and, above all, there was in that place an atmosphere of creepy dread and total ignorance, and also (I don't know the practice—who eats the chickens? whether it is the one who kills them or the priests—but here truly there were too many! If the priests ate all that they would be quite sick! So it must probably have been also the people who had killed the chickens), there was that atmosphere of greed, not only greed but of gluttony, of people who think about eating. And there was that Kali who was particularly satisfied with all the vital forces of all those poor little chickens; they had been killed off by hundreds and each one had a little vital force which escaped when its throat was cut, and so that Kali was feeding upon all that: she was very happy. And there was evidently—I don't know if it could be called cruelty, it was rather greed—greed of vital forces, of a very unconscious vital force, for these poor chickens don't have anything very conscious. And the whole thing created a very low, very heavy, very unconscious and painful atmosphere, yet not of the intensity of cruelty. So it can't be said that this practice is due to cruelty, I don't think so. Perhaps some of these people, had they to sacrifice a little kid, a little lamb they loved, perhaps they would even find this a little sad. It is rather a great uncon-

sciousness and a great fear. Oh, fear! In religions there is so much fear! Fear: "If I don't do this or that, if I don't cut the throat of a dozen chickens, disastrous things will happen to me all my life through or at least the whole of this year. My children will be ill, I shall lose my job, I won't be able to earn my living; very, very unpleasant things will happen to me." ...And so, let us sacrifice the dozen chickens. But it is not from the desire to kill. It can't be said that it's through cruelty: it's through unconsciousness.

*What did that Kali do when you went to see her?*

You know the story, don't you?... I did not know the place, but there is a bit of a road between Ariancouppam and this temple. And so, half-way, I was seated quietly in my car knowing nothing—I knew nothing,—neither the story of that Kali nor of the chickens nor anything—I was seated in my car when suddenly I saw a black being coming, with hair all dishevelled, who asked me to make a pact. And she assumed a tone of great supplication and told me, "Ah! if you wish, if you wish to adopt me and come to help me, how many people would come, how very glorious this place would become." She was a funny little creature. She was black, dishevelled, quite thin, she didn't seem to be flourishing much! Later I was told—I don't know the story exactly, I can't say—that some misfortune had befallen her: her head had been cut off, wasn't that it? something like that. (*Turning to a disciple*) Amrita, do you know the story of the Kali of Virampatanam?... No, you don't? Someone had related it to me, anyway it was not very interesting, it was an unfortunate Kali. I told her to remain quiet and that I did not understand what she wanted of me, that I came... that if she had a sincere aspiration, well, there would be a response to her aspiration. The next moment we reached the temple; then I began to understand that this was the person for whom the temple had been built. Later we went to walk on the seashore under the casuarina trees, and there we saw all the feathers and drops of blood and the remains of the fire—the fire on which, evidently, people had cooked their chickens. And we asked for the story. And I knew then the story of that Kali and how for that festival chickens were massacred in great numbers.

So, that's it. I don't suppose that creature felt any considerable satisfaction in seeing the chickens killed—I know nothing about it. As I said, all the profit she could get out of it was the absorption of some vital forces coming out of the chickens. But it was evident that she felt an enormous satisfaction in seeing a large crowd—the more people came there and the more chickens were killed, the greater was the sign of success. This proved that she had become a person of considerable importance! And so in her ingenuousness she came to ask my help, telling me that if I wanted to help her and give her something of my vital force and vital presence, there would be still more people and more chickens! Then that would be a very great success. I replied that as things stood it was quite enough, that she should remain quiet.

*To what plane did she belong, Mother ?*

The most material vital.

*Why is she called Kali ?*

I don't know. It is one of the Kalis—I have a vague impression that her head was cut off or that she was buried up to the neck or I don't know what. Something like that. There is a story of a head which comes out of the sand, buried up to the neck. But that, anyone in this country will tell you the story, I don't remember it. It is a form of Kali—there are countless forms of Kali. Each believer has his image, has his particular relation with a certain Kali. Sometimes it is their own Kali: there are family Kalis—lots of family Kalis. I knew families who had very dangerous Kalis. If what they wanted was not done, always some misfortune befell the family members. There was a very strong formation. I suppose it was the family members who were still more responsible than their Kali. And I knew people who, when the misfortune came, a real misfortune in the family—someone's death—took the image of Kali and went and threw it into the Ganges.

*This Kali has no connection with Mahakali, has she ?*

No. She has a very close connection with the human mind. I believe these are almost exclusively constructions of the human mind.... But I have found that there is really a Ganapati—something I didn't believe, I used to think it was a purely human formation, that story of the elephant head—but there is a being like that. I saw it, it is quite alive, and it is not a formation. So too there is a black Kali with her garland of skulls and her huge hanging tongue. I have seen her. I saw her entering my room with her eyes wide open. So I am sure she exists. And it was not a human formation: it was a being—a real being. Now, it is possible that some of the details may have been added by human thought. But still the being was a real being, it was not purely a formation.

*What does that black Kali do ?*

Well, I believe she does fairly bad things! It is obvious that she takes a great pleasure in destruction.

That one—it was at the time of the First World War, the early days of the First War. I was here. I was staying in the house on Dupleix Street, Dupleix House. From the terrace of that house could be seen Sri Aurobindo's room, the one in the Guest House. Sri Aurobindo was staying there. He had two rooms and the small terrace. And from the terrace of the Dupleix House the terrace of the Guest House could be seen. I don't know if it can still be seen; that depends on the houses in



between, but at that time it could be. And I used to sit on the terrace to meditate every morning, facing Sri Aurobindo's room. That day I was in my room, but looking at Sri Aurobindo's room through a small window. I was in meditation but my eyes were open. I saw this Kali entering through my door; I asked her, "What do you want?" And she was dancing, a truly savage dance. She told me. "Paris is taken, Paris will be destroyed." We used to have no news, it was just at the beginning of the war. I was in meditation. I turned towards her and told her, "No, Paris will not be taken, Paris will be saved", quietly, just like this, but with a certain force. She made a face and went away. And the next day, we received the "dispatch". In those days there were no radios yet, we had telegraph messages, "dispatches", which were proclaimed, posted on the gate of the Government House. We got the news that the Germans had been marching upon Paris, that Paris was not defended; the way was quite open, they had to advance only a few kilometres more and they would have entered the city. But when they saw that the road was clear, that there was nobody to oppose them, they felt convinced that it was an ambush, that a trap had been set for them. So they turned round and went back! (*Laughter*) And when the French armies saw that, naturally they gave chase and caught them, and there was a battle. It was the decisive battle: they were stopped. Well, evidently it was that. It took this form: When I said to Kali, "No", they were panic-stricken. They turned back. Otherwise, if they had continued to advance it would have been all over.

*What is Mahakali like?*

Well, my children, when you see her, you can tell me! She is not like that Kali. All I can tell you is that she is not black, she doesn't stick out a big tongue, and she doesn't wear a necklace of human heads!

*Here you have said: "The sadhu's recourse to the bed of nails or the Christian anchorite's resort to the whip and the hair-shirt are the result of a more or less veiled sadistic tendency, unavowed and unavowable; it is an unhealthy seeking or a subconscious need for violent sensations."*

Ah! you know there are ascetics who sleep on nails. Have you never seen them? I have seen some photographs myself. This sort of thing is done; they sleep upon a nail-bed. Even quite recently I saw a photograph like that. Well, they do that for... I don't know if it is to prove their saintliness. You know, when they do this in public, one always suspects that it is a bit of histrionics. But still there are those who can do it sincerely, in the sense that they don't do it for display. And so these, if they are asked why they do it, say that it is to prove to themselves that they are detached from the body. And there are others who go still farther: they say that the body must be made to suffer in order to liberate the spirit. Well, if you ask me, I would say that behind this there is a vital taste for suffering which imposes suffering

on the body because the vital takes a very perverse pleasure in suffering. I have known children who had hurt themselves somewhere or other and who pressed as hard as they could on the injury to make it hurt still more! And they took pleasure in it. I have known grown-ups also. Morally, it is a very well-known fact. I spend my time telling people, "If you are unhappy, it is because you want to be. If you suffer, it is because you like suffering, otherwise you would not suffer." This sort of thing I call unhealthy, for it is against harmony and beauty, it is a kind of morbid need for strong sensations.

I don't know if you know that China is a country where the most frightful tortures have been invented, unthinkable things. When I was in Japan I asked a Japanese, who liked the Chinese very much (which is very rare) and always spoke very highly about China, why this was so. He told me, "It is because all the peoples of the Far East, including the Japanese themselves, have a very blunted sensitivity. They feel very little; unless the suffering is extremely strong, they feel nothing. And so this has compelled them to use their intelligence to invent extremely acute sufferings." Well, all these people who are unconscious, the more unconscious they are, the more tamasic they are; the more blunted their sensibility, the more do they need strong sensations to feel something. And usually this is what makes people cruel, for cruelty gives very strong sensations. That kind of nervous tension obtained through suffering imposed upon somebody, that gives a sensation, and they need it in order to feel; otherwise they feel nothing. And that is why entire races are particularly cruel. They are very unconscious—vitaly unconscious. They may not be unconscious mentally or otherwise, but they are unconscious vitaly or physically—above all physically.

*Can those who have a sense of beauty also become cruel?*

That's a psychological problem. It depends on where their sense of beauty is located. One may have a physical sense of beauty, a vital sense of beauty, a mental sense of beauty. If one has a moral sense of beauty—a sense of moral beauty and nobility—one will never be cruel. One will always be generous and magnanimous in all circumstances. But as men are made of many different pieces... For instance, I was thinking about all the artists I knew—I knew all the greatest artists of the last century or the beginning of this century, and they truly had a sense of beauty, but morally, some of them were very cruel. When the artist was seen at his work, he lived in a magnificent beauty but when you saw the gentleman at home, he had only a very limited contact with the artist in himself and usually he became someone very vulgar, very ordinary. Many of them did, I am sure of it. But those who were unified, in the sense that they truly lived their art—those, no; they were generous and good.

I remember a very amusing story that Rodin told me. You know Rodin—not the man but what he has done? Rodin put a question to me one day; he

asked me "How can one prevent two women from being jealous of each other?" (*laughter*) I said to him, "Ah, here's a problem indeed! But won't you please tell me why?" Then he told me, "It's like this: most of my work I do in clay, at least much of it, before sculpting it in stone or casting it in bronze. And so this is what happens: at times I go away for a day or two or more. I leave my clay model covered with a wet cloth because if it dries up it cracks and all the work is lost, I have to do it over again." All sculptors know this. And this is what happened to that poor man: he had a wife, and he had his favourite model who was quite... very intimate in the house, she came in when she liked—she was the model he used for his sculptures. Now, the wife wanted to be the wife. And when Rodin was absent, she came early every morning to the studio and sprinkled water on all the cloths, all the heads or bodies, everything. It was all covered up, wrapped in wet cloth. Water is sprinkled upon it as on plants. So she came and sprayed them. And then, after a while, two or three hours later, there came the model who had the key to the studio. She opened the studio and she sprayed them. She saw very well that it was all wet, but she had the privilege of looking after the sculpture of her sculptor—and so she sprayed it. "And so," said Rodin to me, "the result is that when I return from my travels, all my sculpture is flowing and nothing of what I had done is any longer there!"

He was an old man, already old at that time. He was magnificent. He had a faun's head, like a Greek faun. He was short, quite thick-set, solid; he had shrewd eyes. He was remarkably ironical and a little... He laughed at it, but still he would have preferred to find his sculpture intact!

*And what was your reply?* (*Laughter*)

I don't remember now. (*Laughter*) Perhaps I answered by a joke. No, I remember one thing, I asked him. "But why don't you say: this one will sprinkle the water?" He then pulled at the little hair that was left on his head and said, "But that would be a war to the knife." (*Laughter*)

*Voilà, good night.*

*(Questions and Answers 1954, pp. 63-73)*

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1985)

*(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. Mamilal, Dr. Becharlal, 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 attempts for the speeches of the others.)*

September 18, 1940<sup>1</sup>

N: Gandhi says he won't embarrass the British government; at the same time he is asking permission to start non-violent non-participation in the war. This statement seems queer.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it is very funny. He may as well hope for the Viceroy and other Englishmen to walk out of India non-violently. But does he think non-participation will remain non-violent? (*Looking at P*) You have seen the incident at Madras? (*There was police firing and riot in a Congress meeting.*)

P: Gandhi in his interview may ask for clarification of the whole question again and, if the government doesn't give satisfactory reforms, he may ask to allow the situation to remain as it is, instead of this extension of councils, etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is what the Working Committee said, wasn't it?

P: Yes.

N: It seemed from Gandhi's speech that he almost wished he had stuck to his first statement.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

N: People make wonderful statements. Nehru said they were not bargaining with the British Government, and now Gandhi again makes another contradictory statement.

SRI AUROBINDO: Original ideas!

### *Evening*

P: Anilkumar was asking me if it is true that Italy has invaded Egypt.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, not invasion. Mussolini wants to deliver Egypt. Anilkumar seems to be innocent.

N: He doesn't read the papers.

P: This man Sumer is also saying that though Spain is quiet now, it doesn't mean that Spain has no interest in the new world order in Europe. When the time

<sup>1</sup> This talk was inadvertently omitted in the earlier instalment.

comes, Spain will take her share. He has gone to Germany. Perhaps Hitler may persuade or force him to join him.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Siam is also claiming from the French her bit of territory, not by any force but only as a concession. However, if France doesn't listen, Siam will renounce the non-aggression pact!

P: It must be the Japanese pressure behind.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

September 22, 1940

P: It seems Bonvain called all the European officials today to discuss the support to De Gaulle.

SRI AUROBINDO: How do you know? It may not be for that.

P: What else could it be for?

SRI AUROBINDO: We are not told so. It seems the representative of De Gaulle found the French people lacking in enthusiasm.

P: Yes. They all want safety and self-interest. Even the Governor's statement looks dubious.

SRI AUROBINDO: How?

P: He has said, "The Vichy Government have said to us 'Marchez avec les voisins.' According to the advice we have joined De Gaulle." (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: He is not sure of British victory. If the British lose, then he will say to Vichy, "You asked me to be friendly with them." He wants to keep his path clear. De Gaulle is getting very good support, it seems. He wants to raise a French army and take offensive action in France.

P: That would be very good. They may have many supporters there too.

S: But it won't be an easy job. The number has to be very high.

N: They have one million, they say.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not only number, they must have equipment too. De Gaulle is a man who stands for equipment; without it he won't do anything.

*Evening*

Sri Aurobindo (*just after reading Bonvain's statement*): He can be compared with Mark Twain! (*Laughter*) Bonvain doesn't believe that England will win.

P: It seems the French were asking De Gaulle's representative many questions about their future state if England got defeated. How can one answer all that now? Besides, one must take a certain amount of risk.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so. He has replied to them as far as he could, but also said, "If we go on foreseeing from now, we will lose everything." In times of revolution everything is unsettled; how can anything be said definitely? Some risk has to be taken. When a course of life is chosen, emergencies have to be met with as they come.

S: According to an Italian source, the British have a 230,000-strong army in Egypt.

SRI AUROBINDO: How the devil do they give an exact figure? If it is really true, they are almost equal to the Italians. Why don't they then come into an encounter?

S: I think it is either to prove their prowess or prepare their people for any reverses. (*Laughter*)

*(To be continued)*

NIRODBARAN

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

*(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1985)*

## The Mother's Message

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



(43)

ON 12th November 1957 the Mother sent me a beautiful card. Underneath she had inscribed:

“Garden of a Japanese temple.”

She had continued:

“To my dear little child Huta  
With all my love, quiet strength and sweet compassion.”

She also sent me a lovely bouquet of white roses, which I was inspired to paint. I showed my work to her in the evening. She viewed the painting with a magnifying glass and said:

“I like the painting, this is a very good technique.”

After several years, the painting of these roses was printed as the cover of my book, *White Roses*.

The next morning I received from the Mother a card depicting a seated Buddha on a Lion Throne. Her words on the card were:

“To my dear little child Huta  
With all my love, quiet strength, true knowledge and sweet compassion.”

The Mother states about true knowledge in *Questions and Answers—1956*, p. 313:

“True knowledge acting in the outer being gives true power. That seems to be an explanation, the real explanation of that very familiar saying which is not understood in its essence but expresses a truth: ‘Where there’s a will, there’s a way’, to will is to have the power. It is quite evident that this does not refer to ‘willings’, that is, to the more or less incoherent expression of desires but to the true will expressing a true knowledge; for this true will carries in itself the force of truth which gives power—an invincible power. And so, when one expresses ‘willings’, to be able to apply them in life and make them effective, effort must intervene—it is through personal effort that one progresses, and it is with effort that one imposes his willings upon life to bend it to their demands—but when these are no longer willings, when it is the true will expressing the true knowledge, effort is no longer required, for the force is all-powerful.”

\*

I was still submerged in my little self. I felt dull, lonely, lost. I did not really know what made me so unhappy, grief-stricken and gloomy. I was puzzled by countless contradictions and conflicts in my being, which could not be defined. A sudden apprehension smote me. I lapsed into pensive dejection and dissolved into tears. I stared at tall trees through the shutters of my room in Golconde. These



mute trees would bear repeated witness to my struggle and agony.

On the 16th a card came from the Mother. She had written quotations on it:

“The disciple should think that all things in this world are subject to a constant transformation...”

“All is movement and nothing is fixed; we cannot cross over the same stream twice.”

“Therefore seek one thing only, the kingdom of the permanent.”

“The Divine alone is eternal.”

She continued:

“To my dear little child Huta  
With all my love and compassion.”

The quotations she sent me recall to my mind two inspiring passages from *Questions and Answers—1950-51*, p. 315:

The transformation is irrevocable when your consciousness is transformed in such a way that you can no longer go back to your old condition. There is a moment when the change is so complete that it is impossible to become once again what one was before.

The transformation may be partial. The transformation Sri Aurobindo speaks about here is a reversal of consciousness: instead of being egoistical and turned towards personal satisfactions, the consciousness is turned towards the Divine in surrender. And he has explained clearly that the surrender could be partial at first—there are parts which surrender and parts which don't. So it is only when the entire being, integrally, in all its movements, has made its surrender, that it is irrevocable. It is an irrevocable transformation of attitude.”

As always in the evening the Mother and I had meditation in her room at the Playground.

The following morning she received me in the Meditation Hall upstairs.

It was impossible for me to express through words the state of my mind. Nevertheless, she knew and was perfectly aware of my plight. She was exceedingly patient with me.

The Mother went into a trance while holding my hand—then gradually opened her eyes. She looked intently into my eyes and with a smile patted my cheeks.

I took my leave after collecting the flowers given by her. On my way to Golconde, I thought: “Oh, why didn't she say something since she knew each and every thing about me—my problems, my struggles and my miseries? Oh! why

didn't she release me from my agony? Is she really the Divine?"

The Mother and I met in the evening. We just exchanged flowers and smiles. She went to her French Class, I went to Golconde.

I wrote a letter to her in which I tried to explain my difficulties and feelings.

The succeeding morning she answered on a card illustrating an enchanting lotus:

"To my dear little child Huta,

Knowing so well what you ought to be, what prevents you from being so?

Just the trust that *you can be*—that is all.

"Let the sun of *confidence* enter your heart and everything will become easy.

With all my love and sweet compassion."

That day she sent me a vase along with white roses to paint. I painted them. She saw my work and said:

"It is a successful painting."

But I was not convinced. I thought that I was not a professional artist, I was not highly educated, I was not intellectual, I was good for nothing—I was a big cypher. When my future was hazy, how could I be what I ought to be? I went to Golconde with a heavy heart.

I did not take my dinner. I could never eat alone. In the evening Maniben took her dinner with her family members. Many a time I skipped my dinner. I lost my appetite. My health was not up to much; often I felt fatigued.

At night I sat in my chair and pondered over what the Mother had written to me in the morning. My vagrant thoughts ceased for awhile, but suddenly a dreadful fear sent a cold feeling into the pit of my stomach. It was beyond my ability to be something, to be useful, to be what my soul wanted. Besides, to realise the Divine and unite with the higher Consciousness was just a mirage. There were more than a thousand complications in my whole being—both outward and inward. I wondered whether the Mother could make me attain my goal.

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We had already transferred all the things from the Mother's Stores to the Exhibition Hall and started arranging the objects galore which the Mother had selected.

Jayantilal, Krishnalal, Lakshmi and myself had been organising everything. Meanwhile Lakshmi was taken suddenly ill; so in addition to my work the whole burden fell on me. Of course, there were helpers but the right display of things depended on Jayantilal, Krishnalal, Lakshmi and me. Frequently I got exhausted

owing to overstrain. My nerves were shattered. It was a wonder to me how I could stand the situation. I could not confide anything to anyone. I managed to put on a show of normality and even carried on light-hearted conversations with the people around me. Time was running short and yet I had not done anything worthwhile, authentic and concrete in my life.

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Days passed. It was 24th November 1957—*The Realisation Day*. The Mother sent me a card indicating two pretty Dahlias—mauve-pink and orange-yellow—together with these words:

“To my dear little child Huta  
With all my love and protection.  
“À tout à l’heure.”

Swarms of people went to the Meditation Hall upstairs to receive the Message and blessings from the Mother. I followed suit.

The Message read:

“Who is the superman? He who can rise above this matter-regarding broken mental human unit and possess himself universalised and deified in a divine force, a divine love and joy and a divine knowledge.

“If thou keepest this limited human ego and thinkest thyself the superman, thou art but the fool of thy own pride, the plaything of thy own force and the instrument of thy own illusions.”

—SRI AUROBINDO

In the afternoon the Mother declared the exhibition open. She was very happy and expressed her satisfaction with the whole show.

When she left I saw her blue-grey eyes sweep over me with a brief but all-embracing love.

The next morning a lovely card came from the Mother, depicting various coloured flowers—Gazania—“Seeking for clarity—like to say clearly what has to be said.” She had written on it:

“To my dear little child Huta  
In appreciation of her so excellent work and artistic taste. With all my love, steady cheerfulness, quiet strength and sweet compassion.”

In the *Bulletin* February 1958, p. 114 all about this exhibition was recounted thus:

“On the 24th November there was an exhibition of Indian Handicrafts at our Exhibition House and an interesting selection of various kinds of handicrafts

in bone, ivory, brass, cloth, etc. was put on show. India is a land of handicrafts and there is a great wealth of material from which to choose. But a feature of this exhibition was the very tasteful manner in which the pieces were presented. Even simple articles like brass pots acquired an interesting look when placed in an artistic arrangement. This exhibition was very largely attended on all the days it was open."

The Mother appreciated my work at the exhibition. My memory flew back to the letter of the previous year in which she had written:

"I am with you in your work which is quite successful."

It was true that without her Grace and Force nothing was and is possible.

The exhibition was now over. It took quite some time to rearrange everything in the Mother's Stores.

Days flew. My health was gradually failing. I was nowhere near a solution of the persistent assaults by the hostile forces and the restless mind.

Intellectual people with a materialistic turn may think such assaults sheer fantasies. It is indeed hard to explain the truth to them.

Uneasiness, unhappiness, restless mind, sickness, ill-health, all these are attacks from invisible entities.

I could not understand the action of the adverse forces except that suddenly I would get upset, disturbed, have an uneasy feeling and even be taken ill. These are invisible attacks. But a few months back I had a terrible experience which took me unawares. Here the hidden forces used a visible medium. It happened that a person appeared quite suddenly from nowhere and flung at me poisonous vibrations. Instantly I felt as if I had been stung by a thousand scorpions—as if numerous hot needles had been jabbed into my whole being. To crown it all, I felt a severe blow in my solar plexus, leaving me on the verge of fainting with a vomiting sensation. I had also a shooting pain in my liver and colon. I had been perfectly normal before—and now I was totally ill.

This experience recalls to my mind these verses from *Savitri* Bk. Two, Canto Seven, p. 205:

"And ominous beings passed him on the road  
Whose very gaze was a calamity."

It really took me long to recover. When I could not bear the effect any more, I entered my Meditation Room and prayed ardently to Sri Aurobindo: "O Lord, whatever has been thrown upon me, I offer to you. Kindly obliterate everything—make me all right."

Then after a few hours I emerged from the wave of filth which had swept over me.

This unpleasant incident meant only to show the countless ways in which one may fall victim to hostile powers. As a matter of fact, I never could have believed that the body could be so much affected in so concrete a fashion through so material an agent. Nevertheless, I am exceedingly grateful to the Supreme Lord for making me aware of various powers and their functions.

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While writing the *Story*, once more I read the Message of 24th November 1957. Now I have understood what the Mother has explained about the Siddhi Day in her *Collected Works*, Vol. 9. pp. 147-48:

“Sri Aurobindo had given me charge of the outer work because he wanted to withdraw into concentration in order to hasten the manifestation of the supramental consciousness and he had announced to the few people who were there that he was entrusting to me the work of helping and guiding them, that I would remain in contact with him, naturally, and that through me he would do the work. Suddenly, immediately, things took a certain shape: a very brilliant creation was worked out in extraordinary detail, with marvellous experiences, contacts with divine beings, and all kinds of manifestations which are considered miraculous. Experiences followed one upon another, and, well, things were unfolding altogether brilliantly and... I must say, in an extremely interesting way.

One day, I went as usual to relate to Sri Aurobindo what had been happening—we had come to something really very interesting, and perhaps I showed a little enthusiasm in my account of what had taken place—then Sri Aurobindo looked at me... and said: ‘Yes, this is an Overmind creation. It is very interesting, very well done. You will perform miracles which will make you famous throughout the world, you will be able to turn all events on earth topsy-turvy, indeed,...’ and then he smiled and said: ‘It will be a *great* success. But it is an Overmind creation. And it is not success that we want; we want to establish the Supermind on earth. One must know how to renounce immediate success in order to create the new world, the supramental world in its integrality.’

“With my inner consciousness I understood immediately: a few hours later the creation was gone... and from that moment we started on other bases.”

To be more precise as regards the 24th November, I may quote from the *Cent. Ed.*, Vol. 26, p. 136:

“24th was the descent of Krishna into the physical. Krishna is not the supramental Light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually, the descent of Supermind and

Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards the Ananda.”

It is really interesting to learn from one of Sri Aurobindo’s letters to a Sadhak:

“I thought I had already told you that your turn towards Krishna was not an obstacle. In any case, I affirm that positively in answer to your question. If we consider the large and indeed predominant part he played in my own Sadhana, it would be strange if the part he has in your Sadhana could be considered objectionable. Sectarianism is a matter of dogma, ritual, etc., not of spiritual experience; the concentration on Krishna is a self-offering to the *ishta-deva*. If you reach Krishna you reach the Divine; if you can give yourself to him, you give yourself to me. Your inability to identify may be because you are laying too much stress on the physical aspects, consciously or unconsciously.”

But, of course, while one with Krishna on the Anandamaya level, Sri Aurobindo’s action is through the Supermind.

“Certainly, when the Supramental does touch earth with a sufficient force to dig itself in into the earth consciousness, there will be no more chance of any success or survival for the Asuric Maya.

The rest that I spoke of about the human and the divine had to do with the intermediate period between before it is done. What I meant was that if the Mother were able to bring out the Divine Personalities and Powers into her body and physical being as she was doing for several months without break some years ago, the brightest period in the history of the Ashram, things would be much more easy and all these dangerous attacks that now take place would be dealt with rapidly and would in fact be impossible. In those days when the Mother was either receiving the Sadhaks for meditation or otherwise working and concentrating all night and day without sleep and with very irregular food, there was no ill-health and no fatigue in her and things were proceeding with a lightning swiftness. The Power used was not that of the Supermind, but of the Overmind but it was sufficient for what was being done. Afterwards, because the lower vital and physical of the Sadhaks could not follow, the Mother had to push the Divine Personalities and Powers, through which she was doing the action, behind a veil and come down into the physical human level and act according to its conditions and that means difficulties, struggle, illness, ignorance and inertia. All has been for long, slow, difficult, almost sterile in appearance, and now it is again becoming possible to go forward. But for the advance to be anything like general or swift in its process, the attitude of the Sadhaks, not of a few only, must change. They must cling less to the conditions and feelings of the external physical consciousness and open themselves to the true consciousness of the Yogin and Sadhak.”

Many people have notions that Sri Aurobindo never went through any hardship in his life. How untrue! Sri Aurobindo explains in one of his letters to a Sadhak:

“But what strange ideas again!—that I was born with a supramental temperament and that I know nothing of hard realities! Good God! My whole life has been a struggle with hard realities, from hardships, starvation in England and constant dangers and fierce difficulties to the far greater difficulties continually cropping up here in Pondicherry, external and internal. My life has been a battle from its early years and is still a battle: the fact that I wage it now from a room upstairs and by spiritual means as well as others that are external makes no difference to its character. But, of course, as we have not been shouting about these things, it is natural, I suppose, for others to think that I am living in an august, glamorous, lotus-eating dreamland where no hard facts of life or Nature present themselves. But what an illusion all the same!”

The Mother has said in *Questions and Answers* 1950-51, p. 338:

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

The Mother wrote to me on 16th December 1965 about the *Sadhana*:

“At present the *Sadhana* is bringing down the higher forces (forces of Truth and Love) into the material planes to prepare the Transformation. That is why so much work is done in the Subconscient; and after the Subconscient will come *last*, the Inconscient which will be prepared to become *conscious*, and with the end of the Inconscient will dawn the time of the Transformation which will bring with it not only the knowledge but also the *experience* of all the worlds, even the highest.

So, you can be sure that your aspiration will be fulfilled.”

One evening I went to the Mother at the Playground. My heart was beating uncontrollably fast—my nerves in a jumble. I sat near her feet, feeling totally nervous and lost. She leaned forward from her couch, taking my hands into hers, and said sympathetically:

“Child, be peaceful. Put your head on the couch. Presently we shall hear the music composed by Sunil. It is the ‘Light without obscurity’ ”.

Then she called Gauri, Sunil’s wife and the Mother’s attendant in the Playground, and asked her to instruct the people of the Projector Room to play the piece. She also asked her to switch off the light. This was done.

I sat near her feet—her couch was low so I just put my head on it. The Mother caressed my hair. The music started. A heavenly atmosphere was created. Peace descended—her warm proximity, her delicate perfume mingled with the scents of flowers intoxicated me. I lost my existence in her bliss.

The music was extremely soothing—I felt as if I were relaxing on huge waves of the ocean. I really wanted it to go on and on forever.... But the music stopped. I was dazed and drowsy. With a great effort I opened my eyes and raised my head from the couch.

The Mother and I looked at each other in utter silence. She smiled and gave me flowers. I left. But I had been reluctant to budge from her room.

I had never met Sunil at that time, yet his music haunted me. After several years the Mother introduced me to him. Then she decided that he should compose *Savitri* music.

Sunil has been composing his music from a very high level.

When I gave him all the tapes I had made of the Mother’s recitations of *Savitri*, he was grateful and said that it had been always his aspiration to compose *Savitri* music.

I am very happy that many people are now enjoying and profiting by the Mother’s recitations of *Savitri* and Sunil’s music.

I love these verses written so beautifully by Sri Aurobindo:

“Nearer and nearer now the music draws,  
 Life shudders with a strange felicity;  
 All Nature is a wide enamoured pause  
 Hoping her lord to touch, to clasp, to be.  
 For this one moment lived the ages past....”

(To be continued)

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# PRADYOT

## THE EVOLUTION OF A SOUL

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1985)

### The Ashram: Pondicherry—The Mother's Instrument

SOON after Pradyot had become an inmate of the Ashram the Mother formed two committees: A. C. C. and T. C. C.—agricultural and technological. All the members concerned were called by the Mother and she herself inaugurated the meeting, introduced Pradyot to them and said that he had acquired a vast experience and his technical knowledge and constructive wisdom would be of great help in their collective work. She asked them to meet regularly and discuss their problems with him as their chairman. The Mother was the President. As I was not directly involved, I cannot go into the intricate problems associated with the work. I noticed that Pradyot used to meet the Mother every day for some months. When the Committees' hundredth sitting was completed, the Mother came and congratulated the chairman for the fine role he had played in conducting their affairs.

Long afterwards, when "Sri Aurobindo's Action" was formed, the Mother made him the chairman of it. On another occasion, when Pradyot reported that he had been made chairman of an outside body, she remarked, "You are a born chairman."

In addition to the Ashram work which was not really much, considered in proportion to his ability and efficiency, he became with the Mother's approval Consultant Engineer to the Bengal and Bihar Governments. He had to pay them regular visits, for which a handsome allowance was accorded to him. He used to offer all that sum personally to the Mother on the day of his arrival. The Mother had given instructions that he could see her with the money at any hour of the day. Even at other times before he departed on his visits he used to consult her on the various relevant problems of the country—political, social, technical. His questions were short, precise and direct and similar were the answers of the Mother. I have published some specimens in my book *Sweetness and Light*.

Once a leader of a political group had gone on a sham hunger-strike before the Ashram gate. It continued for several days, and the Mother seems to have instructed people that they need pay no attention to him. One fine morning, he was conspicuous by his absence. What had happened was that one day Pradyot went to see the Mother and asked her, "Why don't you stop the hunger-strike?" She replied, "The Divine alone can do it." "But are you not the Divine?" he retorted. "Yes, but I am telling you what people say." The next day the Divine acted.

So this was Pradyot's way with the Mother. About his reports to her on people's problems, she once said, "When you report, you become transparent; I see people

speaking through you.<sup>f</sup> You are one of the few who say things without colouring them.”

Now he was made a special instrument for collecting funds for the Ashram. We were passing through difficult times after Sri Aurobindo had left his body. In 1958, the Mother called Pradyot and said, “I have no money. I shall have to go to the Himalayas.” “How much do you need, Mother? How long will the crisis last?” he asked. The answer: “I need ten lakhs. Will you be able to get five lakhs at least?” “I shall try, Mother.” “But how? If people become paupers as a result?” She queried. “What of that? What if they get broke? Can anyone become a pauper on the score of offering money to the Divine?” he added. The Mother smiled, “No!” Pradyot left for Calcutta, assembled all friends and devotees and placed before them the predicament. There was a generous response. Somebody even sold his car. Thus the crisis was averted. When he returned, the Mother said, “I was thinking how you could go on such a bold venture. I looked into your past and got the answer.”

During a second crisis, the Mother had to sell her saris, ornaments, etc. Dyuman appeared one day before Pradyot with a box of these ornaments for disposal. He went to Calcutta and disposed of them to his familiar associates at whatever reasonable or unreasonable price struck him as fitting. On another occasion, Sri Aurobindo himself said to the Mother, “Ask Pradyot.”

Pradyot helped Dr. Sanyal to meet part of his expenses for his treatment in America for Parkinson's Disease!

At another time an Australian who had worked for many years in an Ashram garden wanted to return home, but he was short of adequate funds. He had a costly shawl in exchange for which he wished to get a big sum. The Mother called Pradyot and said, “Look at this shawl. How pretty it is!” She was going to spread out its beauty. He understood the Mother's motive and said, “Don't unfold it, Mother. Tell me how much you want.” “Ten thousand rupees, he says.” “Very well, Mother.” He got the money. The Mother obviously wanted to recompense the man for his long service to her; the shawl was an excuse.

Whenever Pradyot brought these offerings, he noted the names, amounts, addresses of all the people, however small the sums contributed, and sent the Mother's blessings to every donor. Once, back from Calcutta with the offerings, he said to Gargi, his adopted daughter, “Now I can sit in my easy-chair and enjoy rest.” Hearing of this, the Mother remarked, “You can't change the world sitting in an easy-chair.”

Here the question likely to be asked is: “From where did Pradyot get his power? How could he hold such power?”

There are many reasons. But the main one, I believe, can be found in Sri Aurobindo's book, *The Mother*. Sri Aurobindo says about money, “When you ask for the Mother, you must feel that it is she who is demanding through you a very little of what belongs to her and the man from whom you ask will be judged by his

response. If you are free from the money-taint but without any ascetic withdrawal, you will have a greater power to command the money for the divine work....” I believe Pradyot fulfilled this condition admirably.

The second reason is to be discovered in the history of his past which the Mother indicated.

The third reason is, of course, the Mother’s occult Force acting through and behind him. She once gave him what looked like an old coin with the figure of a snake carved on it. She effaced this figure as the snake is a symbol of the sex-power. She gave also a talisman. Both these represented the money-power. She said, “Keep them with you.”

In this context Pradyot told the Mother, “Mother, where lies any credit for me in all this? It is your Force which is doing everything. Anybody can be your instrument.” The Mother smiled and replied, “It is so, but you can’t play the piano on a log of wood.”

On another occasion the Electric Board at Calcutta encountered a difficulty in establishing electric communication across the Ganges, for each time they tried to drive in the poles on the banks of the river the banks gave way. In this quandary, they appealed to the Mother for help. She asked Pradyot, “Who are these people? Do they believe in the gods? Have they worshipped Ganga Devi before they ventured on this project? However, take this stone with you. Throw it into the water without anyone perceiving it.” Pradyot carried out the direction and the project came through.

Pradyot’s second commission was of a different kind and more serious. It was during the Indo-Chinese War. The Government had opened a War-fund. The Mother sent a few of her ornaments to Nehru through Pradyot, saying that the box must reach him on 1st November. Pradyot delivered it accordingly, mentioning the date selected. Nehru opened the box and said, “Give it to Indira.” She was sitting there. Indira looked at the ornaments and told her father, “They mean that the Mother’s help is with us.” Then she asked Pradyot, “Why was the 1st November chosen?” Pradyot replied, “I don’t know that.” On his return he narrated the story to the Mother. The answer she gave about the date is now forgotten.

The third commission was more delicate. Once Pradyot told me that the Mother had been asking him about the political condition of the country and if he knew anyone who could be a leader. She had added, “I want a man with your understanding and with the body of a Kshatriya.” Pradyot always kept himself informed of the political situation of the country as well as movements in other fields. He had quite a bit of insight regarding the trends of events and persons. He was always up-to-date in his general and technical knowledge, which gave him ascendancy over other people. I have seen him reading journals on electricity till his last days. After a lapse of months, a person of the Mother’s description was supposed to have been found. A contact was made with him; he came to visit the Ashram incognito and interviewed the Mother. But it transpired that he had

no intention of entering politics. He had done a very strenuous and responsible job and he desired a quiet and peaceful life. That was the end of Pradyot's political mission. Soon after, Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister and we know what followed: the Mother considered her an excellent instrument. During her visit to the Ashram, when Pradyot was introduced to her, she said, "Yes, I know him."

I need not speak here of his constant help to the Ashram in various ways due to his contact with people of influence outside.

On one of his birthdays in the 1960's, the Mother said to Champaklal, "Tomorrow is Pradyot's birthday. Prepare a card for him with that picture of me which signifies 'Realisation'. On the left side of the picture, near about my chest, fix the head of a lion." The next day, the Mother, wishing Pradyot "Bonne Fête", gave him the card. From that day, his house was converted into a quiet den of lions pictured in various poses: they were hanging in the curtains, sitting on the tables, watching from above the staircase and protecting Pradyot in his bedroom. Once the Mother sketched a lion surrounded by smaller animals and presented the picture to him, saying, "it is a symbolic image of your action."

In 1972 I went to see him. He gave me a letter of the Mother to read. I was very happy to note that the Mother had appointed him one of the Trustees of the Ashram. In this capacity he rendered invaluable service with his rich knowledge and experience, and he developed a natural insight which helped him in taking a correct decision in many matters. He used to say that he was needed most when a decision was in question. At a time when the Ashram had opened itself to a subtle attack from outside forces, his shrewdness and firmness stood it in good stead and made it tide over the difficulty.

At times people complained that he was harsh and even rude. But this aspect of him was more of a show. Of course he could roar too. Then he would ascribe it to his Brahmanic blood which could not bear any falsehood. All this does not mean that he made no mistakes. To my mind, he committed quite a few serious blunders, but always from a sense, however misapplied, of justice. At times the ways of the outside world to which he had been long accustomed dominated his conduct, but I must avow that in the latter part of his life he had become much chastened and tolerant. He had displeased people and people displeased him, even disappointed him, but he did not bear any ill-feeling towards them and rarely criticised anybody. In many ways he could be called a true gentleman.

### **Rani-di**

As I have already said, Rani-di was Pradyot's wife, and a very devoted one too. At first she was not quite well-disposed towards the Ashram, because she thought we were a band of sadhus who had given up all contact with the world. If Pradyot took up such a life, the country would lose a very fine and capable worker when it

was in dire need of such people. In one of her visits afterwards she spoke highly of Pradyot's technical acumen and proudly of his being called to an eminent post at the Centre. On her account Pradyot could not make up his mind to come away to the Ashram and he said that as long as his wife was not willing he could not do so. Things changed, however, after a few visits by her to the Ashram. At one darshan, she seems to have felt that Sri Aurobindo was Christ come back. When both she and Pradyot had settled here, one day the Mother told Rani-di, "I want you to be happy here." She was not keeping in good health. She had a cataract in one eye and a tumour in the uterus. Pradyot was rather concerned. One thing I had noticed in him was that the suffering of anyone near to him caused him much anxiety. The tumour-trouble was referred to the Mother. She frowned upon the idea of an operation and it was decided that the tumour had to go. I witnessed myself its gradual disappearance. The cataract on the other hand was less amenable and, according to medical opinion, it turned towards glaucoma. The Mother advised Rani-di to remain quiet. One evening she had a fall. So someone had to look after her, Pradyot being constantly away in Calcutta. Fortunately, Gargi had by then become a member of the household.

One evening I was called to see Rani-di. She was moaning from pain in the back. I took it to be a muscular ache and, prescribing a sedative, came away. After 11 p.m. I was called up from sleep and told that she had passed away. It was a shock indeed, and Pradyot in Calcutta! It turned out to have been a heart-attack which ended in an agonising departure. This was on 22nd November 1962. And on the same date of the same month 22 years later Pradyot himself departed after a painful heart-attack.

In the morning the Mother was informed of Rani-di's death. A telegram was sent to Pradyot, but since the body could not be kept for him, the decision was taken for cremation in the afternoon.

Pradyot arrived. I accompanied him to his house and gave him the details of the sad event. As soon as he reached home he threw himself prone on Rani-di's bed for a while and then came out, calm and composed, to meet a number of friends. He remarked afterwards that she had not liked his going so frequently to Calcutta and that she had taken advantage of his absence to slip away.

### **The "Home of Grace" and Another Institution**

Hitherto, whenever Pradyot had visited Calcutta he had stayed in premier hotels. Now the Mother asked him to take up residence in the "Home of Grace" along with Arun Tagore. The "Home of Grace" is a very big edifice in Regent Park, belonging to one Lakshmi Devi and called Lakshmi's House after her name. She had offered the house to the Mother in memory of her dead husband. The Mother wrote, "We shall call it Lakshmi's House and it will be the Home of Grace." Arun Tagore, attorney and friend of the family, was invited by the lady

to come and settle there and look after the house. Arun was a great friend of Pradyot's. Pradyot thought that the house could be turned into a Centre of the Ashram and utilised for the Mother's work. So the Sri Aurobindo Institute of Culture came into existence. It started with opening a Nursery School. The Mother named it "Arun Nursery." Arun died soon after and the entire burden of its maintenance and supervision fell upon Pradyot's shoulders.

Pradyot had taken up a tremendous responsibility which needed above all a big monthly expenditure for the upkeep of the House. On the other hand, his creative genius saw for itself a vast scope which was not available in the Ashram. Difficulties and obstacles never daunted his spirit when he had undertaken some work. He relied on the Mother's help and on his confidence in himself. Sri Aurobindo's relics were placed in a beautiful setting in the "Home of Grace". Besides the Nursery School, cultural training in music, singing, dancing, medical treatment, a printing press, lectures on the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were set going one after another. Recently, saris, gamchas, napkins have been supplied free of cost to the Ashram from this establishment's own weaving machines. Pradyot's eye was constantly fixed on how to be of service to the Ashram. Most opportunely, he found an admirable and efficient organiser in Jaya Mitra who is in charge of the administration. Pradyot also built up a group of friends who were ready to do whatever he requested of them.

Those who have visited the Institute have showered praise on Pradyot for his creative ability in many directions and for the quiet atmosphere, the meticulous care in keeping the place spotlessly clean so that one could at once feel the presence of the Mother as in a temple. Of late he had engaged the service of Sanjukta Panigrahi, the premier Orissa dancer, to train students in her art. Pradyot gave shelter to society's unwanted and lost members and reoriented them to a better way of life. Uday Shankar, the famous dancer of Bengal, had lost grace with the public and it seemed he was jobless, fallen on dark days. He heard of Pradyot and came to him seeking a job. Pradyot employed him at once, in return for which Uday Shankar exclaimed, "I now believe that there is God!" This story was narrated to me by Pradyot himself. A grave problem facing him was that the quarter in which the Institute was located was a den of Naxalites. Gradually it has been cleansed of all bad influences and transformed into a respectable place, I have been told.

Another heavy responsibility Pradyot had taken up was the consultantship of the Development Consultant Committee Private Ltd. to which was added the Kuljian farm of America. Its proprietor is one Sadhan Datta, a young engineer-friend of Pradyot's, whom later Pradyot regarded as his son. Datta's enterprise had spread far and wide all over the world, but behind it was Pradyot's brain, guided as always by the Mother's Light. At this time the Mother told him, "I saw in a vision that you were building countries after countries and I told you, 'You are indeed busy.'" Pradyot was utterly nonplussed at the moment but later on when Sadhan Datta began to get offers of huge contracts in America, Japan, the Middle

East, the Phillipines, etc., besides India, Pradyot understood what the Mother's vision had implied. He advised Sadhan to take them up as the Mother's work.

Apropos of this, there was an occasion of dissension caused by one of Pradyot's close associates. Pradyot dictated these strong words to him: "Co-operate wholeheartedly without mental reservation with Sadhan because he is doing all these jobs inside and outside the country for which the Mother gave me the responsibility and he is helping me to materialise the Mother's vision. Always remember you are invited to do the Mother's work and in doing it faithfully and sincerely you will realise your highest good in this life and beyond." Sadhan flew all the way from America when he heard the news of Pradyot's death.

This in short is the story of the origin, growth and development of two Institutions, both of which—particularly the "Home of Grace"—are attracting the public eye.

In order to fulfil the demand of these external organisations, Pradyot had to visit Calcutta every month. I believe it must have exacted from him much more energy than he could afford.

*(To be continued)*

NIRODBARAN

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### A CORRECTION

In the article "Pradyot" by Nirodbaran in the February *Mother India*, p. 83, end of para 2, the temple at Benares should be taken as that of Vishwanath and it was to his darshan that his consort the Mother-Goddess, suddenly appearing, turned Pradyot.

# THE INSPIRATION OF *PARADISE LOST*

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1985)

8

## Poetry of the Thought-Mind—"Overhead Poetry"— Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*

MILTON knew himself to be for "an audience fit, though few." It is impossible for many to address him in their minds as he makes Eve address Adam:

O sole in whom my thoughts find all repose,  
My glory, my perfection!<sup>1</sup>

But in a poetic sense Milton can be likened to Adam and regarded as our glory and perfection if we interpret from the standpoint of poetic psychology the phrase:

O sole in whom my thoughts find all repose.

For, Milton is the first English poet to fashion the language of poetic thought: he is the Adam of the creative intelligence in English poetry, and poetic thinking really finds in him all repose—no strain, no gesticulation, an intellectual utterance achieved with sovereign ease on a gigantic scale: the thought-power in us can see its glory and perfection in him and solely in him who has used this power masterfully through 10,565 lines of pentametrical blank verse. Of course, we should not particularly look here for the inner mind, much less the domains still more occult. "Milton's architecture of thought and verse," writes Sri Aurobindo,<sup>2</sup> "is high and powerful and massive, but there are usually no subtle echoes there, no deep chambers: the occult things in man's being are foreign to his intelligence,—for it is in the light of the poetic intelligence that he creates." Then Sri Aurobindo, referring to Vedic imagery, adds: "he does not stray into 'the mystic cavern of the heart', does not follow the inner fire entering like a thief with the Cow of Light into the secrecy of secrecies. Shakespeare does sometimes get in as if by a splendid psychic accident in spite of his preoccupation with the colours and shows of life."

Yes, Milton's mind, as we have already remarked, is not really mystical although it took Heaven and Hell to range over. His achievement, however, is not to be judged by what his mind could not do: the sweep of its positive virtues must be the determinant of our appraisal. Sri Aurobindo<sup>3</sup> sums up his triumph: "he has given

<sup>1</sup> Bk. V, 28-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (Third Series), pp. 118-9.

<sup>3</sup> *The Future Poetry*, p. 117.



English poetic speech a language of intellectual thought which is of itself highly poetic without depending in the least on any of the formal aids of poetic expression except those which are always essential and indispensable, a speech which is in its very grain poetry and in its very grain intellectual thought-utterance. This is always the aim of the classical poet in his style and movement, and Milton has fulfilled it..."

Perhaps the claim that Milton is the innovator of English poetry of the thought-mind will be challenged on behalf of Donne. Has not Donne made poetic speech a vehicle of intense thinking? Does he not press all the rest of man's parts into the service of a quivering complicated thought? Well, the very form in which we are led to make the claim for him is an index to the half-way-house position he occupies. His mind is more recognisably free than Shakespeare's from the Life-urge, but it is yet caught in that urge and is constantly allured to function from within it rather than to work on its own and seize it for vitalising the authentic creations of another power than the nervous being and its dynamic and dramatic thought-quiverings. Donne is trying at the same time to be mental and vital. His is a restless personality and the double effort brings with it all that violence, disturbed rhythm, counterpointed expression which are extremely effective on occasion but often strike us as no more than a clever torture of the language. The poetic intelligence has not found its proper voice in him. Although his mental ingenuities come alive frequently enough, the genuine orientation of the mind towards intellectual thought is baulked of consummation because a style suitable for the dominant play of the poised intelligence has not yet been launched. Donne was so different a personality from Milton that it is not easy to institute illuminating comparisons except in a very general manner; but we may catch the essential difference between their dealings with the creative intelligence and its native accent by juxtaposing the last stanza of Donne's "Prayer" from his *Litany* with the end of the exordium to Milton's Book I of *Paradise Lost*. Donne finely breathes into poetic diction a semi-colloquial tone and an argumentative urgency:

O Holy Ghost, whose temple I  
Am, but of mud walls and condensed dust,  
And being sacrilegiously  
Half wasted with youth's fires, of pride and lust,  
Must with new storms be weather-beat;  
Double in my heart Thy flame,  
Which let devout sad tears intend; and let  
(Though this glass lanthorn, flesh, do suffer maim)  
Fire, Sacrifice, Priest, Altar be the same.

Milton, though not infused with the speaking voice's accent, articulates his poetic diction with a high naturalness of insistent thinking:

And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer  
 Before all temples the upright heart and pure,  
 Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first  
 Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,  
 Dovelike sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss,  
 And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark  
 Illumine, what is low raise and support;  
 That, to the highth of this great argument,  
 I may assert Eternal Providence,  
 And justify the ways of God to men.<sup>1</sup>

Here we have the thought-mind perfectly free in its own clear air and, from above, charging the creative vitality with its poetic burden, even as the Divine Spirit whose wide wings are seen by Milton alighting and brooding over the Abyss to impregnate it. The Elizabethan Life Force had already come under the stress of intellectuality before Milton and the speech of Classicism had been essayed: there was even a pressure towards something more than mind, a pressure which we feel best perhaps in Vaughan whose life (1622-95) overlapped with Donne's old age as well as much of Milton's career. But in Milton we have both the liberation and the consummation of the mind's native tongue; for, in Sri Aurobindo's words, *Paradise Lost* "is the one supreme fruit of the attempt of English poetry to seize the classical manner, to achieve a poetic expression disciplined by a high intellectual severity and to forge a complete balance and measured perfection of form".<sup>2</sup>

But when we speak of the mind's native tongue being Milton's, we do not yet hit off the whole quality of his mental poetry. For, such poetry has several kinds of movement. And in the age—the so-called English "Augustan"—which succeeded that of Milton we have a skilful language of the mind—the language of Dryden, Pope and others—yet without the natural nobility which moves in Milton. Rather there is a polished efficiency arranging glitters of thought. Even when a finer note is added, a tinge of truer feeling, there remains a lack of the authentically uplifting breath; and a well-turned idea, warmed by some sentiment, expresses itself in a meticulously but superficially finished style and proves attractive to the average reader by an artistic coating of the commonplace. We may take an instance from Gray which has some connection with Milton. In his extremely popular *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* Gray has a stanza recalling our minds to a passage in the speech of Belial from which we have quoted *in extenso*. Gray tries to convey the pathos of a soul about to lose its earthly existence, standing on the verge of death but looking back before crossing over:

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,  
 This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,

<sup>1</sup> Bk. I, 17-26.

<sup>2</sup> *The Future Poetry*, p. 114.

Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,  
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?<sup>1</sup>

How different is the accent of the Miltonic utterance—elegiac too in temper yet pitched in a nobler key:

...for who would lose,  
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,  
Those thoughts that wander through Eternity,  
To perish rather, swallowed up and lost  
In the wide womb of uncreated Night,  
Devoid of sense and motion?<sup>2</sup>

No doubt, the line about “those thoughts” is extraordinary even in Milton and is incomparable; but the passage, to stand out against Gray’s, could well do with a lesser Miltonic line. Suppose we pick up a phrase<sup>3</sup> from elsewhere and read:

this intellectual being,  
That to the highth of deity aspired...

The passage would still be worlds apart from the stanza by Gray. Even if we took the expression of a more “intellectual being” than Gray’s we should feel Milton’s distinctive quality. Here are some verses from a poem of Coleridge in an intellectual vein;

If dead, we cease to be; if total gloom  
Swallow up life’s brief flash for aye, we fare  
As summer-gusts, of sudden birth and doom,  
Whose sound and motion not alone declare,  
But are their whole of being!...<sup>4</sup>

This is the genuine language of the thinking mind, with actually a Miltonic influence on some of the verbal turns. And yet what is often termed Milton’s “organ-voice” is wanting—something in the manner and still more in the rhythm, that makes the miracle of the line about “those thoughts” not a sheer freak of revelatory music but an exceptional upsurge from a sort of constant base in the rhythm-roll of *Paradise Lost*. The reason for this is that, though mostly limited to the mental range of vision and not piercing beyond it to a recognisable spiritual sight as distinguished from a high theological view, the thought-mind in Milton echoes the movement of a greater

<sup>1</sup> 85-8.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. II, 146-51.

<sup>3</sup> Bk. IX, 167.

<sup>4</sup> *Human Life: On the Denial of Immortality*, 1-5.

power of cognition: its breath of expressive sound seems caught from a level of consciousness which Sri Aurobindo's system of Yogic psychology considers the first "plane" in the hierarchy of "planes" above the mental level whose instrumental centre is in our brain.

Sri Aurobindo writes of "overhead poetry"—poetry coming from vastnesses of being and consciousness that are as yet unreached by mental man and whose manifestations in him have been rare and sporadic so far. At the top of the gradation which they form is what he calls Overmind, the world of the great Gods who are essentially One Existence and who, from the utterly divine and till now unmanifested Supermind, draw a delegated dynamism for their cosmic functions. The poetic word hailing from the Overmind is the *Mantra*. We have<sup>1</sup> already spoken of its characteristics. Leading up to it from the mental plane there are the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuition. Unlike the Mind proper, the Higher Mind carries a natural awareness of the One Self everywhere and knows and sees through a lofty and comprehensive thought-force. It has "a strong tread often with bare unsandalled feet and moves in a clear-cut light: a divine power, measure, dignity is its most frequent character".<sup>1</sup> The One Self everywhere is common to all the overhead planes, but the force at work varies: the Illumined Mind visions rather than thinks. "The outflow of the Illumined Mind comes in a flood brilliant with revealing words or a light of crowding images, sometimes surcharged with its burden of revelations, sometimes with a luminous sweep."<sup>2</sup> The Intuition, which must be differentiated from the swift sudden leap of thought which occasionally takes place on the mental level, "is usually a lightning flash showing up a single spot or plot of ground or scene with an entire and miraculous completeness of vision to the surprised ecstasy of the inner eye; its rhythm has a decisive inevitable sound which leaves nothing essential unheard, but very commonly is embodied in a single stroke."<sup>3</sup> Although none of these three planes has the overwhelming massiveness of the Overmind word and its vibration as from infinite to infinite, all of them have an intrinsic wideness which is not the same as the expansive tension of mental or any other poetry at its most cogent. And Milton has a spontaneous spaciousness of rhythm because, in spite of his thought and word generally lacking in the spiritual depth of the overhead, his rhythm echoes the Higher Mind.

Sri Aurobindo says: "When Milton starts his poem—

Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit  
Of that forbidden Tree—

he is evidently writing from the poetic intelligence. There is nothing of the Higher Mind knowledge or vision either in the substance or the style. But there is a largeness of rhythm and sweep of the language which has a certain kinship to the manner

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (Third Series), p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*      <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

natural to what is above.”<sup>1</sup> In another place Sri Aurobindo designates Milton’s “grand style” a derivation or substitute for the manner of the “Higher Thought”. And here he brings in a comparison with Shakespeare’s poetry which too has an affinity with an overhead plane. This affinity seems to be more by the way the vision works than by the sound of its working. Sri Aurobindo<sup>2</sup> begins by asking us to take Milton’s grand style anywhere at its ordinary level or in its higher elevations: there is always or almost always, he tells us, an echo of the Higher Thought. After citing again the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*, Sri Aurobindo wants us to consider as an instance,

On evil days though fall’n, and evil tongues,

or

Blind Thamyris and blind Maeonides  
And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old.

Then Sri Aurobindo goes on: “Shakespeare’s poetry coruscates with a play of the hues of imagination which we may regard as a mental substitute for the inspiration of the Illumined Mind and sometimes by aiming at an exalted note he links on to the Illumined overhead inspiration itself as in the lines I have more than once quoted:

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast  
Seal up the shipboy’s eyes, and rock his brains  
In cradle of the rude imperious surge?

The rest of that passage falls away in spite of its high-pitched language and resonant rhythm far below the overhead strain. So it is easy for the mind to mistake and take the higher for the lower inspiration or *vice versa*. Thus Milton’s lines might at first sight be taken because of a certain depth of emotion in their large lingering rhythm as having the overhead complexion, but this rhythm loses something of its sovereign right because there are no depths of sense behind it. It conveys nothing but the noble and dignified pathos of the blindness and old age of a great personality fallen into evil days.”<sup>3</sup>

Not that Sri Aurobindo altogether denies to Milton the substance and the expression making the large lingering rhythm exercise its sovereign right. He grants: “Naturally, something from the higher planes can come into a poetry whose medium is the poetic intelligence and uplift it.”<sup>4</sup> A direct uplifting into the Mantric Overmind cannot be expected more frequently than once or twice, but now and again the other overhead levels do mingle their voices with the mental Miltonic or else draw it into themselves: most often their influence, when it does enter in, plays upon a Higher-Mind transfiguration of the mental Miltonic. Perhaps the Higher Mind is directly vocal in:

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 117-8.

Wild above rule or art, enormous bliss...<sup>1</sup>

The Illumined Mind seems to put its own stamp on a Higher-Mind expression when we hear:

Thou Sun, of this great world both eye and soul...<sup>2</sup>

The deeply suggestive touch of the Intuition appears to lie on a similar utterance that we have already culled:

Then feed on thoughts that voluntary move  
Harmonious numbers...<sup>3</sup>

Possibly a breath of the Overmind itself passes faintly over the same basic speech with the phrase in God's mouth before the creation of the world out of Chaos:

Boundless the Deep, because I am who fill  
Infinitude...<sup>4</sup>

All these phrases, however, are rare wingings that must be carefully distinguished from the general level of *Paradise Lost* where repeatedly we meet with mental reflections of the overhead. Thus we might easily be tempted to cry "Higher Mind" on reading:

bring back

Through the world's wilderness long-wandered Man  
Safe to eternal Paradise of rest.<sup>5</sup>

But, for all the solemn exquisiteness and expansive poignancy of the second line, a touch of the profundities is still somewhat absent, such as found in the more simple-worded yet more subtle-thoughted sweep from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*:

Bear; thou shalt find at last thy road to bliss.  
Bliss is the secret stuff of all that lives.<sup>6</sup>

Again, we may imagine the Illumined Mind flashing out of Milton's vivid account of how Satan

Springs upward like a pyramid of fire  
Into the wild expanse<sup>7</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> Bk. V, 297.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>3</sup> Bk. III, 37-8.

<sup>4</sup> Bk. VII, 168-9.

<sup>5</sup> Bk. XII 311-4.

<sup>6</sup> Bk. VI, Can to 2.

<sup>7</sup> Bk. II, 1013-4.

or fusing with the Intuition in the phrase about the Eternal Eye that

forth from his holy mount,  
And from within the golden lamps that burn  
Nightly before him, saw without their light  
Rebellion rising...<sup>1</sup>

But we should be able to distinguish these semblances from the Illumined Mind truly breaking through the Higher Thought when we get Sri Aurobindo's:

One-pointed to the immaculate Delight,  
Questing for God as for a splendid prey,  
He mounted burning like a cone of fire—<sup>2</sup>

and we rise sheer beyond all possible affinities with Milton's "pyramid of fire" or even his "Eternal Eye" when the Illumined Mind comes assimilated into the Intuition in the suddenly revelatory:

Our minds hush to a bright Omniscient.<sup>3</sup>

Nor should we be seduced into mixing up the Intuition proper with the suggestive intensity of Milton's

which way shall I fly  
Infinite wrath and infinite despair?  
Which way I fly is Hell: myself am Hell<sup>4</sup>—

or the suggestive obscurity of his

yet from those flames  
No light but rather darkness visible  
Served only to discover sights of woe...<sup>5</sup>

The Intuition proper disturbs our depths in Sri Aurobindo's verses on Hell's weird "epiphanies"—

And serpent grandeurs couching in the mire  
Drew adoration to a gleam of slime,<sup>6</sup>

or pierces to a sacred secrecy within us with

<sup>1</sup> Bk. V, 712-5,

<sup>2</sup> Bk. I, Canto 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto 4.

<sup>4</sup> Bk. IV, 73-5.

<sup>5</sup> Bk. I, 62-4.

<sup>6</sup> Bk. II, Canto 7.

This dark knew dumbly, immensely the Unknown.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, though the Miltonic poetry can be profoundly moving as well as mighty, we do not yet receive the accent of the Overmind from:

Long were to tell  
What I have done, what suffered, with what pain  
Voyaged the unreal, vast, unbounded Deep  
Of horrible confusion...<sup>2</sup>

We get the clear Overmind accent in those forceful lines already cited from Sri Aurobindo about Savitri's sacrificial Avatarhood for the evolving world's perfection:

The dubious godhead with his torch of pain  
Lit up the chasm of the unfinished world  
And called her to fill with her vast self the abyss.<sup>3</sup>

Here I may appropriately quote what Sri Aurobindo wrote to me when in a poem which he had considered "overhead" the line—

An ultimate crown of inexhaustible joy—

was found unsatisfactory by him and I asked him whether it was bad poetry or not "overhead" enough and therefore not in tune with its context. Sri Aurobindo replied: "The line is strong and dignified, but it impresses me as too mental and Miltonic. Milton has very usually (in *Paradise Lost*) some of the largeness and rhythm of the Higher Mind, but his substance is—except at certain heights—mental, mentally grand and noble. The interference of the mental Miltonic is one of the great stumbling blocks when one tries to write from 'above'."<sup>4</sup> I changed the line to:

An ultimate crown of joy's infinity.

Sri Aurobindo considered this to be more acceptable as part of the poem concerned. It may be noticed that a small shift is made from the abstractly effective to the concretely effective, from poetic ideation to poetic suggestion, from the conceived spiritual to the perceived spiritual. "Inexhaustible joy" transmits a powerful thought about something beyond the thought-mind: "joy's infinity" conveys a direct vivid sense of the supra-intellectual reality. This reality is now before us with its intrinsic novelty, its natural transcendence of common or human fact: previously it needed to be imagined from a strong hint partly negating such fact and partly magnifying

<sup>1</sup> Bk. VII, Canto 5.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. X, 469-72.

<sup>3</sup> Bk. I, Canto 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Life—Literature—Yoga*, p. 38.



it. Joy is now identified with an infinity: an infinity already there in its own right, with its very being a divine Ananda, hangs upon our view, and when called "an ultimate crown" it immediately brings up the suggestion of a vast overhanging sky free from all trammels. Joy, described as "inexhaustible", had no clear skiey implication: when combined with "an ultimate crown", it carried only a massive idea of something domelike above, unhampered by pain.

Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* employs constantly and in the highest degree a style presenting spiritual vision and experience in all their concreteness. Even in the moments where a thought-form is prominent, spiritual vision and experience have moulded thought to their own luminous truths instead of thought essaying to capture them in a mental cast for intelligible communication. The style of *Savitri* thus is different from that of *Paradise Lost* in very temper and texture. We should commit a psychological mistake to term it Miltonic. Miltonic it is in so far as it organises a stupendous energy with a stupendous control and in so far as Milton has always a spaciousness of utterance. But to dub it Miltonic all round, as most reviews of *Savitri* have done, is to skim the mere surface of style-quality.

And it differs from the mental Miltonic not only in basic psychology: it differs also in expressive attitude and technical posture. The ends of criticism are hardly served by seeing Miltonism as soon as we have anywhere a high-pitched blank verse embodying at some length an epic theme. The technique of Miltonism is in the first place enjambment, the running over of lines, the sense drawn out inseparably from one verse to another, but with pauses set at varying places within the lines—as in the passage about Beëlzebub when fear and desire were swaying his fellow-demons:

Which when Beëlzebub perceived—than whom,  
Satan except, none higher sat—with grave  
Aspect he rose, and in his rising seemed  
A pillar of state. Deep on his front engraven  
Deliberation sat, and public care;  
And princely counsel in his face yet shone,  
Majestic though in ruin. Sage he stood,  
With Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear  
The weight of mightiest monarchies; his look  
Drew audience and attention still as night  
Or summer's noonday air...<sup>1</sup>

*Savitri* has quite a different technique. Take the lines on the heroine herself, conscious of her great transformative mission:

A work she had to do, a word to speak;  
Writing the unfinished story of her soul

<sup>1</sup> Bk. II, 299-309.

In thoughts and actions graved in Nature's book  
 She accepted not to close the luminous page,  
 Cancel her commerce with eternity,  
 Or set a signature of weak assent  
 To the brute balance of the world's exchange.<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has made, in a letter, some general remarks on his technique in *Savitri*. "*Savitri*," he says, "is blank verse without enjambment (except rarely)—each line a thing by itself and arranged in paragraphs of one, two, three, four, five lines (rarely a longer series), in an attempt to catch something of the Upanishadic and Kalidasian movement, so far as that is a possibility in English...<sup>2</sup> Pauses hardly exist in this kind of blank verse; variations of rhythm as between the lines, of caesura, of the distribution of long and short, clipped and open syllables, manifold constructions of vowel and consonant sounds, alliteration, assonances, etc., distribution into one line, two line, three or four or five line, many line sentences, care to make each line tell by itself in its own mass and force and at the same time form a harmonious whole—these are the important things."<sup>3</sup>

Yes, *Savitri* is mostly end-stopped while *Paradise Lost* is mainly enjambed, but we must avoid the mistake of reading Milton as if there were to be no retardation of the voice at the close of a line. Although we may not halt as much as we would in an end-stopped structure, we must never forget that poetry is broken up into lines of a certain metrical pattern and the line-unit must be felt to however small a degree. John Diekhoff has even mustered some external evidence that Milton himself, in spite of thinking in run-over blocks and "verse-paragraphs", regarded the line as a more or less isolated unit to be indicated as such by some sort of breath, pause, or lingering at the end.<sup>4</sup>

The general difference in expressive attitude Sri Aurobindo well touches off half-humourously in a remark drawn by a critic's attachment of the label "Miltonic" to his lines:

The Gods above and Nature sole below  
 Were the spectators of that mighty strife.

"Miltonic?" asks Sri Aurobindo and goes on to answer: "Surely not. The Miltonic has a statelier more spreading rhythm and a less direct more loftily arranged language. Miltonically I should have written

Only the Sons of Heaven and that executive She  
 Watched the arbitrament of the high dispute."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bk. I, Canto 2.      <sup>2</sup> *Savitri* (1954), p. 821.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 825.

<sup>4</sup> "Terminal Pause in Milton's Verse", *Studies in Philology*, XXXII (1935), pp. 235-9.

<sup>5</sup> *Savitri*, pp. 861-2.

Sri Aurobindo's syntactical construction too is not markedly Latinised like Milton's in numerous places, nor have we in him the typical Miltonic flux and reflux of words except on a very rare occasion as when he says:

A greater darkness waited, a worse reign,  
If worse can be where all is evil's extreme;  
Yet to the cloaked the uncloaked is naked worst.<sup>1</sup>

(*To be continued*)

K. D. SETHNA

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk. II, Canto 7.

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## REMEMBRANCES

Among those who passed away last year were two contributors to *Mother India* on a number of occasions. One was Norman Dowsett, a member of the Ashram from fairly early days as well as one-time teacher at the International Centre of Education. He was an officer in the RAF during World War II and joined the Ashram, along with his wife and two children, soon after hostilities had ceased. Latterly he was in charge of the Sri Aurobindo Society's department of Educational Research.

The other contributor was A. Venkataranga. He had a long friendship with the editor, a never-wavering affection offered in a touching humble way right up to the end of his life on December 6 at the age of 66. He first came to the Ashram when he was 27 for the darshan of August 15, 1946. In 1950 he brought his wife for darshan and 10 years later not only his wife but also his four children came to settle in the Ashram. After his wife's death in 1977 he retired from his service with the L.I.C., which he had joined at the age of 26, and settled with his children.

Both he and Dowsett were poets of considerable talent, whose works are likely to come out in book-form.

## OF DUNG-HEAPS, DIAMONDS, AND OURSELVES

*(Concluded from the issue of February 21, 1985)*

It is crucial to understand that we in this Space Age are largely victims, and not masters, of unprecedented change. We are participants in the most radical transformation in history, to which no change in the past can be compared, either in scope or rapidity. We are told that 30% of all the people who ever lived are alive today; that 90% of all the scientists who ever lived are living now; the amount of technical information available trebles every ten years; throughout the world, about 100,000 learned journals are published in more than sixty languages, and the number doubles every fifteen years. And the population explosion goes on. These estimates were made by William Vogt some fifteen years ago. The silicon chip and new generation computers promise to intensify the processes of change in even more mind-boggling fashion. The challenge of change is so immense, and our responses, in both East and West, so puny. But not all responses.

A particularly brilliant diamond from the dung-heap was Sri Aurobindo's description of the nature of the crisis of change I mentioned. He did so with crystal clarity. I quote:

“At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of the external life has been raised up by man's ever-active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organised collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fulness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it.”

Sri Aurobindo's was a global vision, and what he said is certainly true of modern civilisation taken as a whole. But let us note that “this basic fulness of life” he alludes to as “a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it” is conspicuous by its absence in developing countries like India. Sprawling squalor and grinding poverty are a far cry from “this basic fulness of life”. Sri Aurobindo

was himself aware of this. And before him, Sri Ramakrishna had also declared: "Religion cannot exist on empty bellies."

All will agree that the basic challenge of developing countries is to clear the dung-heaps. Extolling India's spiritual superiority over other nations, for example, or China's cultural superiority, from the top of dung-heaps, rightly invite Naipaulian sneers of derision. A dung-heap can be improved in one way only: out of existence!

Spiritual and cultural diamonds are of little use if they do not help to transform life. The ultimate spiritual victory must manifest, not in an individual escape into extra-terrestrial Nirvanic beatitudes, but in transformed human lives in transformed human societies. And the individual is the key to social transformation, not the other way round, as the communist systems have proven by their own failures in social transformation, without first achieving a prior individual transformation.

In this connection, the American thinker, Emerson, made a pertinent observation: "The true test of civilisation is, not the census, nor the size of cities, nor the crops—no, but the kind of man the country turns out." Vivekananda had understood this, which was why he stormed about India calling for "a man-making education". But alas, the blue-bottles will disappear only if the dung-heaps do.

One of the casualties of the rapidity of social change ushered in by modern science and technology is the qualifications and attributes we expect of our national leaders. Indeed, the tragedy is that we do not lay down the need for special spiritual, moral and academic qualifications for those whom we put in charge of our governments.

We expect our engineers, scientists, doctors, surgeons and dentists to be highly trained and qualified for their jobs. We would be horrified if meat butchers were allowed into the operating theatres of our hospitals, if carpenters were asked to build our modern bridges, or if trishaw riders were deemed fit to pilot sophisticated modern aircraft. Specialised training and qualifications are therefore rightly required for all fields and professions in modern society, except in the government of human societies.

Men of talent, integrity, character and commitment either keep out, or are kept out, of the political process in too many developing countries. Mediocrities and rogues therefore walk the corridors of power, with disastrous consequences for so many societies and nations.

Ideology makes no difference. Right, Left or Centre, politics is far too often reduced into a race between scoundrels for the power to plunder one's fellow men. And in some countries, there is no political race to speak of. Mark those nations "liberated" by the communists. Power, privilege and plunder are the exclusive preserves of communist party cadres.

In ancient India and China, they had clear ideas about the qualifications required of the rulers of human society. There was no free-for-all as we witness

today. Let us unearth a diamond from the Chinese dung-heaps.

2,500 years ago, Confucius laid down the requirements of government. I quote:

“The requisites of government are that there be sufficiency of food, sufficiency of military equipment and the confidence of the people in their ruler. If the people have no faith in their ruler, there is no standing for the state.

“To govern means to rectify. If you lead the people with correctness, who will dare not to be correct?

“If a minister makes his own conduct correct, what difficulty will he have in assisting in government? If he cannot rectify himself, what has he to do with others?

“People who desire to have clear moral harmony in the world would first order their national life; those who desire to order their national life would first regulate their home life; those who desire to regulate their home life would first cultivate their personal lives.

“Those who desire to cultivate their personal lives would first set their hearts right; those who desire to set their hearts right would first make their wills sincere; those who desire to make their wills sincere would first arrive at understanding.

“Understanding comes from the exploration of knowledge of things. From the Son of Heaven down to the common man, the cultivation of the personal life is the foundation for all.”

How many political parties in India and elsewhere in the world care to employ such wide and stringent criteria in their selection of candidates for government?

Based on the teachings of Confucius, the Chinese developed the elaborate Mandarinate system. Only Mandarins could fill positions of power and responsibility in government. And in order to become a Mandarin, one had to study and sit for a series of very exacting public examinations in all branches of Chinese learning, science and culture, above all in Confucian ethics.

The Mandarinate system was not fool-proof. It succumbed to abuse. Chinese history shows that lip-service to principles was a poor substitute for the principles themselves. But that is another story, which we need not go into here.

In ancient India it was generally understood that only those who possessed the qualities of the Kshatriya—valour and skill in arms, justice and righteousness—should govern. This rule was often broken, of course, but the qualities and attributes of those in positions of power and responsibility were implicit, if not explicit, in Hindu culture. And behind the rulers were the rishis, the seers. Their general influence was so great that often they appeared as king-makers. They made and unmade kings. Only a very foolish ruler would care to incur the negative shake of a rishi's head.

It is clearly impractical to resuscitate past models. Modern science, technology and culture are vastly different. But we do require to discuss and develop criteria, values and standards to determine the selection of the leaders of government and society. Venality and corruption in public life, the bane of so many developing countries, can only be eradicated if they are first of all abolished at the top.

There are surely men of talent, integrity, character and commitment in all developing countries, including India, who can and ought to be mobilised for good and honest government. Indeed, they ought perhaps to mobilise themselves.

“Leave government to the clowns” appears to be the attitude of the finest minds in too many countries. “We shall confine ourselves to our own nobler pursuits.” The implication here is that the government of a nation and society can safely be left to less noble and less able minds and hands.

But would you leave surgery to barbers and the ailments of your children to nostrum-vendors? Surely governing a country is just as important as running a reputable hospital or university. If you leave the running of your country to mediocrities and clowns, you and your people end up as hostages to fortune.

Merely talking or reading about moral and spiritual values will get us nowhere. They need to be realised in the minds and hearts of individuals, and then be consciously and deliberately practised in the life of the collectivity. “The kingdom of God within,” said Sri Aurobindo, “is the sole possible foundation of the kingdom of God without.” And we might add that the kingdom of God within, which I believe to be the chief objective of individual life, will remain unfulfilled, if it is not realised in a kingdom of God without. And if that is not the ultimate object of the evolutionary endeavour on our planet, one wonders why the Divine bothered to cast Himself into His multitudinous creation, to so little purpose. For the scheme of things as they are, is surely diabolical.

Surely we are not witnessing in the modern world an inevitable plunge down the Gadarene slopes to final perdition—for dung-heaps and diamonds alike! But a still, small voice seems calmly, confidently, to insist—No, this cannot be. This WILL NOT be. And one recalls the words of Sri Aurobindo. “The changes we see in the world today are intellectual, moral, physical in their ideal and intention: the spiritual revolution waits for its hour and throws up meanwhile its waves here and there. Until it comes the sense of the others cannot be understood and till then all interpretations of present happening and forecasts of man’s future are vain things. For its nature, power, event are that which will determine the next cycle of our humanity.”

Only inspired beliefs and values of an all-embracing universal kind, issuing forth in inspired individual and social action can remove the dung-heaps of the Third World. The higher things of life like spirituality, literature, art and music, should not be regarded as ivory towers, as means of escape from the dung-heaps of reality. We would be totally ineffectual “holy” humbugs if we did so regard them.

We must thrill with the same inspiration which coursed through Vivekananda's veins when he wrote in a remarkable letter:

"I have lost all wish for my salvation.... May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God that I believe in, the sum total of all souls,—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.

"He who is the high and the low, the saint and the sinner, the God and the worm, Him worship, the visible, the knowable, the real, the Omnipresent, and break all other idols.

"In Whom there is neither past life nor future birth, nor death nor going nor coming, in Whom we always have been and always will be one, Him worship, and break all other idols."

To the prophetic vision of Sri Aurobindo, an "unfolding Image showed the things to come." What was this unfolding Image?

"A giant dance of Shiva tore the past,  
 There was a thunder as of worlds that fall;  
 Earth was o'errun with fire and the roar of Death  
 Clamouring to slay a world his hunger had made;  
 There was a clangour of Destruction's wings:  
 The Titan's battle-cry was in my ears,  
 Alarm and rumour shook the armoured Night.  
 I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers  
 Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life  
 Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;  
 Forerunners of a divine multitude  
 Out of the paths of the morning star they came  
 Into the little room of mortal life.  
 I saw them cross the twilight of an age,  
 The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,  
 The great creators with wide brows of calm,  
 The massive barrier-breakers of the world  
 And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,  
 The labourers in the quarries of the gods,  
 The messengers of the Incommunicable,  
 The architects of immortality.  
 Into the fallen human sphere they came,  
 Faces that wore the Immortal's glory still,  
 Voices that communed still with the thoughts of God,



Bodies made beautiful by the Spirit's light,  
 Carrying the magic word, the mystic fire,  
 Carrying the Dionysian cup of joy,  
 Approaching eyes of a diviner man,  
 Lips chanting an unknown anthem of the soul,  
 Feet echoing in the corridors of Time.  
 High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and bliss,  
 Discoverers of beauty's sunlit ways  
 And swimmers of Love's laughing fiery floods  
 And dancers within rapture's golden doors,  
 Their tread one day shall change the suffering earth  
 And justify the light on Nature's face.  
 Although Fate lingers in the high Beyond  
 And the work seems vain on which our heart's force was spent,  
 All shall be done for which our pain was borne.  
 Even as of old man came behind the beast  
 This high divine successor surely shall come  
 Behind man's inefficient mortal pace,  
 Behind his vain labour, sweat and blood and tears:  
 He shall know what mortal mind barely durst think,  
 He shall do what the heart of the mortal could not dare.  
 Inheritor of the toil of human time  
 He shall take on him the burden of the gods;  
 All heavenly light shall visit the earth's thoughts,  
 The might of heaven shall fortify earthly hearts;  
 Earth's deeds shall touch the superhuman's height,  
 Earth's seeing widen into the infinite."

Let us not forget that "the sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn" will be our own descendants. And must not parents deserve their children, and children deserve their parents? We ought to begin with ourselves. And the diamonds we find in ourselves, and in our cultures, can and ought to help us deal with the dung-heaps around us. A better future beckons. The choice of destiny is ours.

May we begin?

*(Concluded)*

C. V. DEVAN NAIR

## A MIRACULOUS CHANGE

My husband Mehelli was never interested in the spiritual life, or anything connected with higher things. He was an automobile engineer of a high degree, and loved motor cycling more than riding in his forty-year-old Rover car, and his foreign friends, when they visited India, came to consult him if they had any difficulties regarding their vehicles. After Sri Aurobindo's departure, I begged of him to come with me to the Ashram to take the Divine Mother's blessings. But he was not willing at first. I told him what the Mother had said, that if she saw a person even for a few seconds she would be responsible for his or her soul ever after. So gradually he changed his mind and we decided to go to the Mother for his birthday in November.

Happily we had a good and honest girl servant called Hira who also loved the Mother in her own way, and sent through me some pretty crochet-worked tray-covers. She promised to look after our house and our cats, so we wrote to the Mother and came here for Mehelli's birthday.

The Mother wanted us to stay at Golconde, but as Mehelli refused to give up his pipe-smoking we were put up at Castellini Guest House where we were given two rooms and were well looked after.

Mehelli liked French and as he came to know that the Mother was a French lady he decided to speak in French with Her. So he looked up some books and learnt some sentences by heart. When we reached Madras we found that Subodh Vashishth had come with a car to receive us. As soon as we got down from the train Mehelli embraced him like a long-lost friend, and was also very kind to the driver.

All along the road they spoke about the workshop and the cars of the Ashram, and both were quite happy. I felt certain that if Mehelli decided to stay in the Ashram he could work in our Automobile Department and be very useful there.

We stayed at Castellini for a few days and then we were given the chance to see the Mother.

Champaklal asked me if we would like to go to the Mother together or separately. I said separately, so Mehelli kept asking what he was supposed to do when he saw the Mother.

I explained to him how he should make pranam, etc., but Champaklal said that he should do what he felt like doing, and not be guided by any conventions. So both of us went on our own.

When Mehelli saw the Mother he spoke to her in French, and the Mother was surprised as well as pleased.

After some time he said to her, "If you are my Mother, why don't you kiss me?" So the Mother kissed him on his forehead gently. But Mehelli took hold of her face and kissed it all over.

Everybody present were amused and surprised. And when he came down, people began to tell me of his strange behaviour, laughing all the while. But Mehelli only smiled.

Even the Mother must have been surprised, for, as far as I know, no visitor could have done this before.

I was very happy, but all this did not make him give up his old life and come and live in the Ashram, as I repeatedly pleaded with him to do.

His love of cats was also due to his being open to the Mother, for he adored them, and no sacrifice was too big to be given for them.

Since his soul was so open to the Divine Mother I felt certain that she must have taken him to the right place after his death, and I was consoled. May he rest with her for ever.

LALITA

## ON INDIRA GANDHI

ON that day of fate,  
She had put on no impenetrable armour  
To face the hail of bullets,  
Waiting for her under the flowering creepers—  
She who always had petals  
Showered on her by adoring crowds  
And had drunk  
The love of her country's teeming millions  
Like a heavenly wine.  
In return for their worshipping love  
She granted the boon of her whole self  
And gave her being to her country  
With a goddess's largesse.  
For a brief interval, the crowds had made  
Their ears deaf to her.  
They expected solutions by her of their weaknesses,  
In spite of their many grievous lapses,  
Their shameful grab at the immediate and present,  
Their greed, their blindness and total lack of purpose.  
But this turning was momentary and of the mind's surface.  
Their hearts had never rejected her—  
Their daughter, sister, friend and mother.  
She on her side responded totally,  
Holding nothing back, shrinking from no burdens or battles.  
Like a lioness to the cry of her young  
She responded to the supplications of oppressed East Bengal.  
And when streamed into the Bay  
The nuclear fleet of misguided Nixon  
She faced all opposition firmly,  
A problem that might have cowed a lesser soul.  
Yet, Indira—the indomitable daughter of Nehru—  
In the hour of victory,  
Following the hallowed tradition of Buddha, Asoka and Dayananda  
Let go peacefully home eighty thousand prisoners,  
The thoughtless soldiers of the tyrant Yahya.  
Though treachery is the rule in the international arena,  
India under Indira never coveted others' land,  
Never wished others but well.  
Yet neither would she cede an inch  
Of the sacred soil of India,

She fought tooth and nail all enemies of her country,  
This daughter of Durga.

That morn, like a thousand others,  
After finishing a part of her weighty task,  
She stood erect, to continue her labours,  
To stave, to lessen, India's endless problems.  
Often her heart grew weary and trepidant  
When she longed to lay down the heavy burden  
At the feet of the Divine Mother.  
But she was elected to be Durga's shield-bearer,  
Hers to plough the endless furrow,  
Choice she had none,  
For she was the Divine's luminous arrow.  
Her eyes were sometimes sad  
For those illiterate souls, her own people.  
She sighed at their ignorance,  
Their lack of joy and their dreary existence,  
A new dawn, an utopia, an empyrean,  
This is what she aspired and toiled for,  
To make real for Mother India.  
Each act of violence, all insentience,  
Indians' lack of high purpose, lack of refinement  
Pained her, and most grievously the country's estrangement  
From her Divine Source. Thus she thought,  
"The hut of the holy hermit  
And the hunger of an ascetic may be ennobling,  
But where, O where, was the greatness  
In the babel of million illiterates,  
In the crowding metropolitan masses?"  
Even the riches and the learning  
Held a shameful banner of inequality  
Since the power of money was used mostly  
In degrading themselves and depriving the poor by the rich.  
In her inner moments when she communed with the deity,  
She constantly prayed for her country.  
She was not like the sannyasin,  
Concerned with only her own solitary uplift.  
Nay! She wanted to uplift her country,  
To gather its people in her arms  
And to cry out, "My brothers and sisters,  
In the name of our Mother, arise!

Throw away the fetters of incapacity,  
 Each of you like a glorious sun arise!  
 Be each a might of Mother India,  
 Be each a mighty Himalaya.  
 O my fellow countrymen,  
 The face and features, the colour and complexion  
 Of two brothers may be different,  
 They remain brothers none the less.  
 Come! Sit together at life's feast,  
 Share the banquet served to you.  
 Each of you, a piece of the Mother's human heart,  
 Each of you is precious to her equally.  
 Your country never attacked or subjugated another,  
 You are the people with an eye always on the beyond,  
 For whom God has been more real  
 Than the rewards of the now and here.  
 Why have you renounced your glory,  
 Your pact with the Eternal, your high-questing queries?  
 Why have you lost the hero's dauntless courage,  
 The martyr's high sight and sublime purpose,  
 The presently needed ascetic's self-denial,  
 You who indulge in senseless quarrels? For a loaf  
 Will you cut up Mother India's body, her sacred soil  
 For an inheritance?"

Anguish was there, but bitterness none in her thoughts,  
 Because she knew one day God would accomplish his goal,  
 And His chosen people, though now divided,  
 Would stand a united phalanx  
 To face every onslaught from Time's garrisons.  
 "Surely Mother India will never abandon  
 Her erring misguided children,"  
 Thinking thus she talked with others,  
 And walked briskly through the gates,  
 Her love going to the lush grass, the brilliant flowers.  
 An enigmatic smile played on her lips  
 When she—the formidable warrior—  
 Found death stride towards her from under  
 The bougainvillaea creepers.  
 She flinched not,  
 For she had kept her promise to her soul,  
 She had accomplished her noble purpose,

She had acted out her role, for the time allotted to her.  
The guards answered with bullets to her smile,  
She fell and her blood mixed with the sacred soil,  
As her last offering, a last holocaust,  
As she had aspired the evening before:  
To enrich the Motherland with the last drop of her blood.

In that split second, when death was charging,  
Sure it is she did not think of Rajiv,  
Or of her departed spouse, or her dead son,  
Or of the greatness that had sired her,  
Or of the grandiose future held in her grandchildren.  
In utter anguish her soul must have cried,  
“Mother Durga! Save my country, save my India.”

On that pyre slept a face calm and majestic—  
One who had kept her tryst with her country's destiny.

SHYAM KUMARI

## WORDS, THE SILENT SPACE AND A SMILE

THE words we utter  
are often negligible,  
We might stammer or stutter,  
evade or even quibble.

If the antennae are intact  
we read the silent space;  
it is not the naked fact  
that gives expression to a gaze.

We see more through the inner eye,  
its images have deeper sense.  
We easily detect a lie  
neatly disguised by falsehood's fence.

Or sometimes words are made-up truth;  
objectively, they are a fake,  
but if they serve a subtle ruth  
they are not told for falsehood's sake.

One look can even replace  
an elaborate conversation  
and the single smile of a face  
enchant a whole nation.

Finally spreading out over the earth  
it prepares the new light's birth.

URSULA

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## IN SADHANA

In Sadhana an instant occurs  
When there is fulfilment, brought by  
Demands so intense—greed burns at that heat—  
Aspiration so persistent—no space is left for envy's flight.

The ego seeks succour,  
Time attempts rescue and finds itself  
Lengthening like a ribbon, or shortening to a point  
When it faces the faceless force of single intent.

Thoughts used to being loosed to dissect and destroy  
Were once asked to gather feathers of knowledge  
Floating here and there and to build a mighty weapon;  
The ego searched for that now, deep in the mind.

Always seeking, failing to find, it reached the far cave,  
Blank it was but for ghoulish thoughts, the wall beckoned,  
The tired ego rested its head, then it heard and felt  
Whispers of silence, thick and bright, seep through pores.

Pressure of the resting head opened crevices  
In mind's wall that can open and close like a lattice.  
Used at last by the inner soul, the ego breathed  
The rushing winds of peace.

Stirred awake by the higher calm  
The ego awoke, turned and felt free  
As it looked back on its vast kingdom  
With joy and thrill, old hence welcome.

I await return of that instant,  
I know, it always recurs.

DINKAR PALANDE

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND ITS ADVENT IN COLLECTIVE LIFE

## The Kingdom of God upon Earth

THERE is always an element of asceticism or other-worldliness in an attempt to discover the Spirit. It is natural because it is the result of one's refusal to accept the limitations imposed by the outer life. But it has not prevented great souls from looking upon the suffering of others with compassion and love. They are moved by the sense of unity with all beings, motivated by the will to work for the good of all creatures. Though the discovery of the Spirit is their main business, helping others towards the same goal is their real service to the race. The Amitabha Buddha is a famous case in point. When he was on the verge of entering the supreme state of Nirvana, he turned back in order to open that way to others and took the vow never to enter it as long as a single being was in suffering. We find a similar attitude in the case of a devotee mentioned in the Bhagavata Purana: "I desire not the supreme state with all its eight siddhis nor the cessation of rebirth; may I assume the sorrow of all creatures who suffer and enter into them so that they may be made free from grief."<sup>1</sup> The words of Swami Vivekananda are memorable in this context. He says he has lost all wish for personal salvation and adds: "May I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum-total of all souls,—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species is the special object of my worship."<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, reviewing human aspirations through the ages, observes: "there has even been the dream or a psychic pre-vision of a fulfilment exceeding the individual transformation, a new earth and heaven, a city of God, a divine descent upon earth, a reign of the spiritually perfect, a kingdom of God not only within us but outside, in a collective human life."<sup>3</sup>

It is true that the desire to place the knowledge of spirit as the goal of collective life is overwhelming to those who possess that knowledge; but it is also true that in practice such an attempt is vitiated by the imperfections of the mass. The collective man is far below the level of the ordinary individual man, and so the imperfections of the former are more deep-rooted and less amenable to any conscious discipline than those of the latter. He is in the grip of heavy inertia and dominated by physical resistance, turbid vital passions and impulses, and mental incertitudes, denials and obscurities. These are not conditions in which any ideal can be pursued, leave alone the ideal of a spiritual life. Apart from these imperfections, the collective life is always turned outwards and insists on outer methods of control and physical possession. To realise the spiritual ideal the whole emphasis must be shifted from

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Centenary Ed., p. 257.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Sri Aurobindo, *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Centenary Ed., p. 846.

outward life to inward life, from surface existence to inmost self, from physical possession to inner mastery. A spiritual ideal can be achieved only by a spiritual method and not by a non-spiritual or external method. Hence the gap between the spiritual ideal and the collective practice has been a problem right from the beginning, but our spiritual history bears testimony to several marvellous attempts to overcome the gap and establish a linking principle. The aim of these endeavours is to work out a wide cultural harmony which would draw the whole human race upward to the highest light.

### The Formula of Symbolic Worship

The first ever known effort in the direction of finding a harmony between the spirit and the collective life of man was made by our Vedic forefathers, *purve pitaraḥ manuṣyaḥ*. They found that the collective man was physical and the instrument they could use was the physical mind. The physical mind is always oriented towards physical things and the aims of the material world. The means, symbols, rites and figures used in the Vedic worship of God were drawn from the physical things with which the common man was familiar. In those days men saw behind the manifestations of the world great living powers and godheads and offered to them worship and propitiation and atonement. They established a relationship between themselves and the Nature-Gods through ritual and physical sacrifice. The Vedic religion evolved a symbolic system of worship out of these natural materials in order to integrate the highly subtle spiritual knowledge with the physical mind of the collective man. The Vedic religion, therefore, had a double significance: "the exterior form of the sacrifice and the inner meaning of all its circumstances." For example, the symbols of sacrifice "represent a calling of the gods into the human being, a connecting sacrifice, an intimate interchange, a mutual aid, a communion", "a building of the powers of the godheads within man and a formation in him of the universality of the divine nature."<sup>1</sup> As long as the centre of the collective man was the physical mind he lived on the surface of the religion and enjoyed the material benefits. But when his centre shifted to the highest level, he could easily pass into the other side of the symbolic religion and inherit the spiritual opulence of the mystics.

As a result of the double emphasis of the Vedic religion the whole society was practically divided into two groups: the initiates and the ordinary men. The initiates had access to the secret knowledge of the symbolic worship and were in possession of self-knowledge and God-knowledge. They had the authority to reveal the secret knowledge to those who were eligible to receive it. The ordinary men who practised the symbolic religion in its outer and physical sense constituted the vast majority and looked up to the initiates as the leaders of the society. In comparison with the large group of ordinary men the initiates formed a small minority in whose custody was all that was best in the society and necessary for a perfect life.

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, Centenary Ed., p. 145.

Since the classification was based on a practical idea and an inner readiness of men, it did not turn into a rigid social system which refused admission into the sacred simply because the ordinary men belonged to a lower status in social life. We know that men of inferior or doubtful birth too could rise to the level of the spiritual teachers in those days. Janasruti and Satyakama Jabali are the two great examples. Janasruti was a wealthy servant, while Satyakama Jabali was the son of a servant girl who did not know who his father was. But both of them rose to the position of great teachers. Though the twofold division did not turn into a rigid social system, it did restrict the upward mobility of the mass because the mass could not easily meet the psychological requirements. The aim of the ancients was indeed to draw all men and all life upward, but in practice only the few elect could reach the heights.

Apart from the fact that the collective man had not yet developed the necessary faculty to receive the spiritual knowledge directly, there was another important consideration which disqualified him to have access to the higher light. By an application of the spiritual knowledge to the material world the mystics "discovered secrets and powers of Nature which were not those of the physical world but which could bring occult mastery over the physical world and physical things and to systematise this occult knowledge and power was also one of their strong preoccupations. But all this could only be safely done by a difficult and careful training, discipline, purification of the nature; it could not be done by the ordinary man. If men entered into these things without a severe test and training it would be dangerous to themselves and others; this knowledge, these powers could be misused, misinterpreted, turned from truth to falsehood, from good to evil."<sup>1</sup> As a precautionary measure the mystics concealed this knowledge behind physical figures and formulas. The creation of a symbolic religion really served a double purpose: the symbols not only held the key to the spiritual knowledge in secrecy but protected the occult knowledge from misuse by the profane. This was another reason why the inner truth of the symbols was revealed to the initiates but kept back from the ordinary men.

From the social point of view, the presence of a small number of perfect beings amidst a large group of ordinary men, whose main preoccupation was material prosperity and enjoyment, was an imbalance and the society had to return to its original harmony by gradually reducing the size of the small group to the point of wiping it out. With the disappearance of the mystics the symbolic significance of the Vedic religion was lost and passed into an impenetrable obscurity. But the Vedic formula of symbolic worship was indeed a grand idea because it effected a harmonious relationship between the spiritual knowledge of the mystics and the physical mentality of the collective life. Though it could not serve to open the light of spirituality to the mass of the people, it did succeed in placing the spiritually perfect men as the leaders of the society and thereby bringing the mass under the indirect but beneficial influence of the spirit. This laid a firm foundation for the progress of the future humanity.

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, Centenary Ed., p. 4.

### The Formula of Typal Pattern and Gradual Progress

With the decline of the Vedic culture the first phase came to an end. Now “the human race in its cycle of civilisation needed a large-lined advance; it called for a more and more generalised intellectual, ethical and aesthetic evolution to help it to grow into the light”.<sup>1</sup> When the second phase began, another formula of harmony emerged and shaped itself into a system of *varṇa* and *āśrama*, a system of four graded classes of society and four successive stages of human life.

The idea of *chaturvarṇa* occurs originally in the Purushasukta of the Veda. The sukta says that the four orders—the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya and the Sudra—have originated from the cosmic Person, from his head, arms, genitals and feet. Sri Aurobindo points out that the idea does not refer to the existence of a fourfold order as it was understood in the later period, for it is a symbol which signifies the manifestation of the cosmic Purusha in the human society. It refers to the four expressions of the cosmic Person—the Person as knowledge in man, the Person as power, the Person as production, enjoyment and mutuality, the Person as service, obedience, and work.<sup>2</sup> In reality the four divisions of the society answer to “four cosmic principles, the Wisdom that conceives the order and principle of things, the Power that sanctions, upholds and enforces it, the Harmony that creates the arrangement of its parts, the Work that carries out what the rest direct”.<sup>3</sup> When the Vedic religion began to lose its symbolic sense, the idea of the four orders as the direct expressions of the divine Being receded into the background and finally disappeared from the practice of life. Therefore the idea of *chaturvarṇa* as known subsequently represents a typal institution which is totally different from what it signified for the Vedic mystics.

From the psychological point of view, men fall into four types. Each type is determined by the inner nature, spiritual temperament and essential character, *svabhāva*; and *svabhāva* determines the natural works of each type, *svadharmā*. In the Brahmin the sattvic quality predominates and this constitutes his *svabhāva*; in the Kshatriya his *svabhāva* arises mainly out of a combination of rajas and sattva where the rajasic quality receives the emphasis; in the Vaisya his *svabhāva* is primarily constituted of a combination of tamas and rajas with an emphasis on the tamasic quality; in the Sudra it is the tamasic quality which predominates and determines his *svabhāva*. By the law of nature, the Brahmin is a man of knowledge, the Kshatriya a man of power, the Vaisya the economic man, and the Sudra the physical man. The works of the Brahmin are learning and religious ministrations; the works of the Kshatriya are political leadership and rule; the works of the Vaisya are production and commerce; and the works of the Sudra are unskilled labour and menial service.

<sup>1</sup> *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Social and Political Thought*, Centenary Ed., p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

The works assigned to each type, *varṇa dharma*, are not only expressive of the corresponding law of nature but effective means of growing into that law. But these works are too general and can only create a suitable environment for inner development. So for inner development certain specific works, besides the general ones, become necessary. Since the rhythm of inner development varies according to the stage of life an individual passes through, these specific works, *āśrama dharma*, are accordingly classified and added to the general works. Regardless of the type to which a man belongs, he develops through four successive stages of life, *āśrama*—the student, the householder, the forest-dweller, and the recluse. A combination of these two principles, the type and the successive stages, creates a well-organised social framework for a steady upward movement of the human race.

The first stage of life begins with a thorough training in the Vedic formula of spiritual knowledge and arts and sciences. The education is comprehensive and offers the student all that he ought to know, do and be. It prepares him in some degree for the four great aims of human life—*artha*, *kāma*, *dharma* and *mokṣa*. During the second stage the householder fulfils the physical and vital needs, *artha* and *kāma* according to their own law of fulfilment, *dharma*, pays his debt to his society and the gods and prepares himself for the highest ideal, *mokṣa*. In the third stage he lives in isolation and works out the truth of his soul. When the final and fourth stage arrives, he gains entry into the kingdom of spirit. The governing principle of this scheme is that “fullness of life must precede the surpassing of life.” Sri Aurobindo says: “The debt to the family, the community and the gods could not be scamped; earth must have her due and the relative its play, even if beyond it there was the glory of heaven or the peace of the Absolute.”<sup>1</sup> This scheme of four stages and four ideals is common to all except the members of the Sudra class, because all except the Sudra were capable of entering into the second birth by initiation and allowed to receive the Vedic education. But in practice the Brahmin and the Kshatriya alone had the advantage of receiving the Vedic education and the opportunity to develop the spiritual faculty. The Vaisya stayed behind because his disposition was “not so favourable to a sattvic or spiritual action of nature”.<sup>2</sup>

Normally the upward movement of the mass of the people is likely to be crippled by three conditions: lack of variation, incompleteness, and disharmony. If there is no room for a wide or free variation in respect of the degree and turn of development for each individual, if the growth does not involve a gradual transition from stage to stage, if the aim of life does not insist on the perfection of all aspects without a single exception, then the upward movement becomes rigid, incomplete, and disharmonious. But the formula of typical pattern was so designed that it fulfilled all these conditions of variation, completeness, and harmony. As a result, the collective man was able to bring to the surface a faculty far higher than the physical mind and responded to the spiritual ideal from his more developed conscious parts.

<sup>1</sup> *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, Centenary Ed., p. 498.

This was no ordinary achievement. The whole credit for this must go to the systematic educational training to which young men in those days were subjected. All they received through the teaching and personal example of their great masters at their impressionable age sank in and laid the foundation for what they were supposed to become in later years. Commenting on the formula of typical pattern and progressive growth, Sri Aurobindo writes: "while it is the generous office of culture to enrich, enlarge and encourage human life, it must also give the vital forces a guiding law, subject them to some moral and rational government and lead them beyond their first natural formulations, until it can find for life the clue to a spiritual freedom, perfection and greatness. The pre-eminent value of the ancient Indian civilization lay in the power with which it did this work, the profound wisdom and high and subtle skill with which it based society and ordered the individual life, and encouraged and guided the propensities of human nature and finally turned them all towards the realisation of its master idea. The mind it was training, while not called away from its immediate aims, was never allowed to lose sight of the use of life as a discipline for spiritual perfection and a passage to the Infinite."<sup>1</sup> A limitation of this formula is that though it extended the spiritual possibility to a larger section in the society now than before, it could not universalise it for two reasons: (1) on purpose the Vedic system of education was denied to the Sudra; (2) though the system was not intended to exclude the Vaisya, it failed to reach him in practice.

In the beginning the type of a person was known primarily by his inner constitution, his faculty and capacity, though birth was used as an index. Birth and type may go together, but they need not correspond with each other. In India heredity was a factor of great importance. The family into which a soul was born was considered to be the right circumstance determined by its previous birth. But still birth played only a secondary role in determining the type of a person. In course of time the emphasis shifted itself from inner endowment to birth. The typical institution began to lose its value and finally petrified into a system of caste. It marked the end of the second phase in the process of civilising the mass and directing it towards the ideal of spiritual perfection. Though the typical institution lost its spiritual value, it left the collective man in a better position now than at the end of the first phase. He was no longer the physical mind but something more, for his ethical and intellectual faculties had developed and come to the surface. Therefore the end of the second phase was not just a decline or disintegration but the unseen promise of a brighter future.

*(To be continued)*

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

<sup>1</sup> *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 102.

# THE DELIVERANCE OF THE ELEPHANT KING

RETOLD BY SHRADDHAVAN

LONG, long ago, in the Spring of Time, a herd of elephants roamed the vast forests of South India. Their leader was a magnificent bull of exceptional size and strength. Like a true king he protected his herd of females and young ones, leading them to good grazing grounds and by his vigilance and courage defending them from danger.

In that area rose the beautiful mountain known as Trikuta, on whose slopes lay the garden of the Lord of the Seasons, filled with shady trees constantly covered in fragrant flowers and gleaming fruits; within that garden stretched a lake of clear and delicious water, where delicate pink and white lotus-blossoms swayed among their broad green leaves, and there the heavenly nymphs would often come to bathe and splash and play, their lonely laughter making mingled music with the breezes and the birdsong. No lovelier spot can be imagined.

To this enchanting lake the King of the Elephants one day led his thirsty herd. From far he had scented the breeze-borne fragrance of the lotuses and known that where they blew water was sure to be found. The dusty, weary elephants gathered on the shore behind their leader. He first quenched his thirst, and found the water sweet and good. Then he purified his limbs of the dust and weariness of their long journey. When this was done he raised his trunk and trumpeted praise and thanks to the gods for their goodness. Then, taking water in his trunk, he poured it into the mouths of his thirsty companions, showered them with its refreshing coolness, stroked and soothed their sides.

The happy elephants crowded into the lake, and soon the younger ones began to play and frolic, splashing with their feet, squirting water with their trunks, slapping mud-cakes on each other's backs, squealing and hooting in delight. What could be more joyful than a herd of elephants at play! But in the midst of all this rejoicing their leader suddenly let out a deafening bellow of anguish that sent them all rushing out of the water in alarm and consternation. Their King too tried to leave the water but could not... despite his vast size and strength and cleverness, a huge crocodile held him fast by the foot and would not let go!

Then began a dreadful combat. As the two powerful beasts struggled for mastery, the lovely waters grew dull with churned-up mud and the blood of the wounded King; the delicate lotus blossoms were bruised and torn and destroyed by the thrashings and plungings of the combatants. In panic and dismay the whole herd of elephants watched the danger of their lord, not knowing how to give him aid. The struggle went on and on.

Now this magnificent elephant had once been born as a man... indeed as a human king, Indradyumna by name, of the mighty race of the Pandavas. In his reign there was peace and prosperity, and his kingly duties were not onerous. To the business and pleasures of a mighty ruler, Indradyumna much preferred the



solitary search for true wisdom and the absorbed contemplation of the Lord. He passed more and more of his time in these pursuits, and finally, leaving his realm in the charge of a competent successor, he renounced all and went to the forest, clad in a simple garment of bark. No regrets or anxieties troubled his mind; observing silence and concentration he lived the life of a solitary contemplative. How could such an exalted soul become imprisoned in the body of an elephant? It happened like this:

One morning when Indradyumna had completed his ablutions and ritual worship and was sitting as usual in meditation beneath a tree, the great sage Agastya chanced to pass that way with a company of disciples. Agastya was angered at receiving no welcome from Indradyumna, and cried out, "You who fail to do proper reverence to the sages... you are as thick and insensitive as the skin of an elephant. An elephant's body would be more fitting to you than that of a man!"

And so it came to pass that the being who was once Indradyumna now inhabited this elephant's body. But his past holiness and *tapasyā* had given him vast strength, and he could not easily be overcome—even though his adversary the crocodile had also once been a holy Rishi, now under a similar curse. So their combat was no ordinary struggle between two wild beasts, but a conflict of great, even superhuman powers, which went on and on and on, till the forests of Trikuta re-echoed with the bellows of the anguished elephant and the thrashings of the crocodile's enormous scaly tail, and even the gods leaned out of their cloud-palaces to watch and wonder which of these mighty beings would gain the victory.

Up to that moment in all his long life the elephant King had never been vanquished by any enemy; he could not even conceive that he could be defeated—he, the strongest of all the beasts of the forest. But nevertheless, as the struggle went on and on, he felt his forces beginning to flag. He had been weary from a long and difficult journey when he reached that lake, and had only a few moments of refreshment there; besides, he was wounded, and had been losing blood continuously from the great gashes made in his leg by the crocodile's massive jaws. Moreover, the crocodile was in his native element, the water; the elephant, his feet sinking into the soft sand and mud, was only losing strength, while his assailant continually gained fresh force. So a moment came when that mighty King lost the conviction of his own invincibility, lost faith in his own great prowess, and understood that he was really in danger of his life from an enemy he could not grip and crush. The crocodile, sensing this weakening, grew even fiercer and more sure of himself, until at last it seemed to the watching gods that the outcome of the struggle was decided.

But at that moment, when the elephant's pride in his own strength faltered and failed, his past existence as a single-minded devotee of the Lord bore fruit; within his consciousness a wonderful prayer formulated itself, like a flame-flower rising from his heart and filling all his being. The mountain-forest, the lake, his attacker, his companions watching fearfully from the shore, his own pain and rage, all faded from his awareness... only his prayer was real.

This is the prayer that surged and throbbed all through him:

“O Lord, You are the very essence of this Universe, You inhabit all beings and existences here, You are the Lord without whom none of all this could exist for a moment; You breathe life and consciousness into all this and awaken us to a sense of Your glory.

“At your feet I bow down and take refuge.

“My whole being is yearning for You—You who remain when all is destroyed; You alone are my refuge.

“All forms are Your appearances, but even the Gods have never seen Your own real Form; for love of You the Rishis and Saints abandon all earthly pleasures and delights. To You, O all-powerful, all-beautiful, all wonderful Lord, I bow down and take refuge at Your feet.

“I do not want to go on living in this body compounded of ignorance. I want only to be delivered from all darkness, to become the true light of my soul; no-one can achieve that by his own efforts—it can be gained only through Your Grace, that bestows true consciousness, true knowledge. Your Grace, O Lord, delivers us beyond Life and Death. At Your feet, I bow down and take refuge.

“I am enveloped by Your ego-maya, and the beauty of the true Self, Soul of the Universe, is veiled from me... but Your Glory is limitless, O Lord! Though You lie for ever beyond my perceptions, I bow down to You. O Lord of all Strength and all Sweetness, I take refuge at Your feet.”

When this wonderful prayer reached the Lord, he left everything and hastened to save his devotee.

The elephant had been dragged deep into the water, so that only his great head remained above the surface of the lake. He had lost all awareness of his surroundings and was entirely concentrated deep within himself. But out of the mist before his eyes he now became aware of the gleaming four-armed figure approaching, and recognised Lord Vishnu himself mounted upon his great eagle Garuda. A blissful flood of gratitude swept through all his limbs. In all that wonderful lake only one single lotus blossom remained undamaged and serene amid all the destruction... with his last strength the elephant King stretched out his trunk, plucked that perfect flower and held it up to the Lord in single-hearted adoration.

With an adorable smile of benediction, Lord Vishnu sent his *chakra* whirling towards the crocodile. The watching gods rained flowers and rattled their drums, and all the forest beings cried out in wonder. All Praise and Glory to Him, who at a single stroke of his all-powerful compassion delivered both these holy men from the curses that had bound them!

*“It is when all seems lost that all can be saved.”*

*“When you have lost confidence in your personal power, then you should have faith in the Divine Grace.”*

*The Mother*

(With acknowledgments to *Collaboration*, Matagiri, New York)

# STORIES FROM TAMIL LITERATURE

*(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1985)*

## 9. NANNAN, THE WOMAN-KILLER

PERHAPS in all history of the early Tamil Kings we read of no one else held in so poor esteem in the eyes of poets as king Nannan. And there is no record of his being bad in general or committing any unworthy act except one heartless deed. It was his putting to death a young maiden for a flimsy reason. And for that he goes down in Tamil history as a villain no less despicable than Tarquim in the history of the Roman people.

The Tamil kings were fond of the symbols of their authority, power or honour. A Tree of Sanctity was one such symbol. A king chose a tree of his own liking. Nannan chose a mango-tree to be his special tree. It was a large tree and it grew by the riverside. The king's soldiers guarded it day and night. Anyone who would harm a single leaf of it would be guilty of sacrilege and liable to be put to death.

All the fruits the tree bore went to the palace. Not even the guards were permitted to pluck any and eat it. It was their duty during the fruiting season to keep a jealous watch over every mango the tree bore. As such, the soldiers did a daily count of all the mangoes ripe and unripe before they were satisfied that not one of them was missing.

The tree had large branches overhanging the river. One day when the soldiers were not looking, one of the mangoes accidentally fell into the river. Some distance down the river a young maiden was bathing and the mango came floating to her. Quite naturally she picked it up and, tempted by its lusty flesh, ran her teeth into it with relish. She was still enjoying the mango when the soldiers, missing it, came in search of it along the river bank. Finding the half eaten mango in the girl's hand they arrested her and brought her before the king. The king found her guilty and so according to the special law about the Tree of Sanctity he sentenced her to death.

Hearing this cruel news people gathered at the palace. The girl's parents fell at the feet of the king and begged for mercy. Poets and elders of the city intervened on behalf of the girl. The girl did not commit any sacrilege intentionally. She only took the mango from the river and that too without knowing that it was from the Tree of Sanctity. But all arguments and entreaties fell on deaf ears. The king was adamant that the law should have its normal course. Still people could not reconcile themselves to such strict adherence to a law when the crime was not a serious one. In a final appeal to the king the girl's relatives promised to bring to him, in expiation, a life-size replica of the girl in solid gold. Even that did not change the king's mind.

Silence fell on the court. With heavy hearts and tears and open curses against the king, people left the court one by one. There stood the unfortunate girl timid

and trembling as a deer before a tiger, terror-stricken, forlorn and full of tears. But the cruel king ordered her to be taken away and executed.

From that day onwards King Nannan was looked upon by people as a mean-minded villain and a cruel sadist. Poets stopped singing of him. Many of his councillors stayed away from the court. Some of them left the city to live elsewhere. And Nannan has come down in Tamil history as Nannan the woman-killer.

### 10. KUMANAN

Kumanan was the ruler over the mountain-country of Mudirai. He was one of the seven great givers eulogised by the poets. Unfortunately he had a brother called Amanan, who was just the opposite of Kumanan in every respect. He was greedy of wealth and position and couldn't bear to see the riches of the palace going away into the hands of idle poets and mendicant minstrels.

So Amanan plotted against his brother. Kumanan came to know of this and could have easily crushed his brother if he had so thought. But knowing Amanan's ambitions and greed for power, he chose to abdicate. He went in voluntary exile and began to live as a hermit in the forest.

Amanan became the ruler. His hatred for poets was well known. One by one poets began to stay away from his court and Amanan was happy.

Soon people began to talk very ill of him. They openly spoke of Kumanan's magnanimity and the new king's niggardliness. Wherever his secret messengers went they brought back news of the people's love for Kumanan and hatred for his brother.

This angered Amanan still more against his brother. He foolishly thought that if Kumanan were dead, people might stop talking highly of him and view Amanan in a favourable light. So he set a prize on his brother's head. He announced that a thousand gold coins would be given to anyone who brought him his brother's head.

People were shocked, but no one paid any importance to the announcement. Kumanan was still so popular and lovable that not a single person wanted to benefit by killing him.

Months passed. One day a poet called Perunthalai Sathanar came to the land of Mudirai. He had heard of Kumanan's munificence but knew nothing of the latest developments. When people told him what had happened, he was sad, but decided to see Kumanan, just to pay him his homage and depart.

So he enquired his way to the forest-abode and met Kumanan. Kumanan asked him kindly about his life. The poet told him everything about himself, of his poverty, of his ambition to receive gifts from Kumanan and his great disappointment. He added that he had come now to see him in his forest abode, not to get anything from him but to pay him homage. Kumanan listened to the poet and became sad. What a great treat the poet would have received if he had come during

his reign! Now he had nothing to give. Suddenly he remembered the price on his head and became overjoyed. He could still help a poet in want.

Without any word he drew his sword from its sheath and placed it in the hands of the poet. "There is a price on my head," Kumanan said, "cut it off and take it to my brother. He will give you a thousand gold coins."

Sathanar was overwhelmed with remorse. He fell at Kumanan's feet and wept. "Great indeed is your magnanimity, O King," he cried, "but how could you expect me to be so heartless as to take your life?" Kumanan raised the poet up, but could say nothing to him. For a minute there was silence between the two, but suddenly the poet had an idea. His face brightened. He wiped his tears and asked Kumanan just to lend him his sword for a few days, after which he would come and return it. Kumanan readily gave him his sword.

A few days later, Amanan was in his court when poet Sathanar appeared before him with Kumanan's sword in one hand and a severed head on the other covered with a muslin cloth. Blood was dripping from the sword and from the head as well. Everybody in the court was shocked. The poet addressed Amanan, "O King, you set a price on your brother's head. Here is that head. Give me the thousand gold coins." Already Amanan had identified the sword as his brother's. Now the poet removed the covering and there was the head of Kumanan hanging from the poet's hand and dripping with blood. He told Amanan how magnanimously the king offered his head himself to be cut and taken to his brother. He started recounting the virtues of Kumanan while suddenly Amanan broke down and wept. The sight of his brother's severed head was too much for him. His hardness melted away and he was overcome with remorse. Unable to bear seeing the poet any longer he waved him away and fell on his knees before the head and begged forgiveness of his brother, "You were magnanimous in your death. How mean I had become to cause your very death... Oh, I can have no forgiveness...."

"Take heart, O King," said the poet. "Your brother is not dead. He is alive and well. This head is a clever replica. Come and take a close look at this." All the court rushed to see. It was indeed an exact replica of Kumanan's head cleverly sculptured out of some soft material and painted to be life-like. A great shout of joy rent the ceiling of the court. "Long live Kumanan," the people shouted. Amanan's grief vanished but he was a thoroughly changed man now. He blamed himself for all his past misdeeds and asked forgiveness of his people openly. "I will no more be king. Let us all go to the forest and bring back my brother to rule as before," he said. The poet Sathanar stood in a corner and shed tears of joy.

M. L. THANGAPPA

# A WISE JUDGE

## A STORY FOR CHILDREN

ONCE upon a time there was a king. In one of his towns he had posted a judge. People spoke very highly of the judge. "No rogue can ever escape punishment and never an innocent can be victimised in his court," they said.

The king decided to see the judge when he was holding court. He set out on horseback in the disguise of a merchant.

Upon reaching the town he rested for a while at an inn.

When he was about to mount his horse, a tired and haggard-looking man approached him and said, "Sir! I am a weary traveller. My horse died on the way. Will you please allow me to ride with you as far as the market square, where I can buy a horse?"

"Why not?" said the disguised king taking pity on the traveller. He made the traveller sit behind him and rode on. When they reached the market square, the merchant brought his horse to a halt and asked the traveller to dismount.

The fellow, who was a rogue, shouted at the top of his voice: "What? Must you try to cheat me? Is this the reward I deserve for helping you reach this place?"

The merchant sat stunned. Meanwhile a crowd had collected.

The rogue told the crowd: "This horse is mine. I carried this gentleman from the suburb to the market square. Now, look at his knavery! He refuses to dismount!"

The king sat still stupefied over the cunning of the traveller. Someone in the crowd proposed, "Why not go to our wise judge?"

The merchant and the traveller went to the court.

There were other complainants there and the judge called them one by one. Before he took up the case of the merchant and the traveller, he heard a butcher and an oil-merchant.

The butcher held a bagful of money in his hand, and the oil-merchant held the butcher's hand in his grip.

"This butcher came to my shop and asked me to change a gold coin for him. When I opened my money-bag he snatched it and began to run away. But I pursued him and caught him, as you see, my lord, and brought him here."

"Don't believe this man, my lord. He is a liar. He came to my shop in order to buy meat and asked me if I could give him change for a gold coin. When I took out my money-bag, he seized it and tried to run away. But I was alert. I caught hold of him," said the butcher.

"Give that bag of money to me," said the judge.

When the bag changed hands, the judge ordered his attendant to bring a bucket, half-filled with water. When the bucket was brought, the judge emptied the money-bag into it.

Seconds later blobs of oil emerged to the surface of the water.

“The one who has collected the coins deals in oil. Hence the bag belongs to the oil-merchant. It should go to him. What should go to the butcher? A hundred strokes by an oily cane,” said the judge.

The oil-merchant went away with his money, thanking the judge. The butcher was dragged away to receive his punishment.

Then the judge called the disguised king and the rogue.

The traveller began first. When he finished, the merchant gave his version of the case. The judge listened to them intently. He then ordered his servant to lead the horse to the stable of a rich landlord.

“Would you be able to recognise your horse when it is amidst other horses?” he asked the merchant.

“Certainly,” replied the merchant.

“And you?” he asked the rogue.

“I won’t fail to recognise it, my lord, since the horse is mine!” asserted the rogue.

The judge then led them to the stable. There were more than twenty-five horses.

First the merchant was asked to point out the horse in question. He instantly did it. The rogue too pointed out the horse without any difficulty.

The judge then returned to his court and his judgement ran thus: “Though the merchant and the traveller pointed out the same horse, the horse certainly belongs to the merchant. When he approached the horse, it turned its head and stretched its neck towards him. That is how horses behave with those familiar with them. But when the traveller approached the same horse it turned back its ears and lifted one hoof. That is how they behave with strangers. Hence the merchant will get back his horse and the traveller shall get a sentence of six months in jail.”

The king was immensely pleased with the wisdom and intelligence of the judge. He revealed his identity to him and made him his minister.

P. RAJA

## NEPAL

OCHTERLONY was neither a great general, nor a great man, nor a handsome person. What he had in bountiful measure was luck. He certainly did not deserve the enormous monument raised in the Calcutta *maidan* in his honour. And what a site!—across the soft green turf about two miles away is Curzon's famous Victoria Memorial. Curzon wanted to outshine the Taj. Even if that is a vain ambition, one must concede that the memorial is a beautiful and harmonious building. Curzon stands just outside the gate in his "I-am-an-important-person" posture on a huge pedestal. Looking at it one cannot but wonder: "Whose memorial was he building—the Queen's or his own?"

Ochterlony advised war with Nepal, and the East India Company chose him as the general. For the company it was the right choice. The Nepalese were invincible fighters so far as their fearlessness and their *kukri* were concerned. But they were handicapped by old outmoded war-weapons, while the Company had imported the latest in gun and canon from London. If the Nepalese had a tremendous advantage by knowing their hilly terrain as no outsiders can, the English, once they had found the natives, bombarded their stronghold with mobile artillery so as to make the defenders flee from the back-door. Even then the English did not find it easy to defeat the Nepalese. Odd as it may sound, on the eve of the conflict the Nepalese Kingdom was the largest ever. It stretched from the Sikkim border on the East to the borders of Kashmir. The governors ruled like so many independent rulers, yet the final say in all important matters lay with Amar Sing Thappa, king in Kathmandu. People thought the next move would be the Punjab, at least the part not yet conquered by Ranjit Singh.

The dispute started over the border question. No one knew for certain where India ended or Nepal started. The *tarai* belonged to the Nawab of Oudh, and he had the habit of presenting pieces of his kingdom to the Company. This was not notified to the Nepalese kingdom. The Nepalese governors thought the border villages were theirs, while the Company complained that the Nawab had given them the right to collect the taxes there. There was then no such thing as the Macmohan Line on this side of the mountain or that side. The Lumbini Gardens were theirs, claimed the Nepalese, their sacred place since Buddha had been born there. "Oh no," cried the Company. Outposts were attacked and raided on both sides. Then was heard the drums of Ochterlony. The details of this encounter could make the toughest man shudder. In the treaty Nepal was reduced to half of its former self. The Company's resident in Kathmandu and a huge indemnity were agreed upon. Even then the English did not find it convenient to take Nepal completely; the idea was: if China attacked ever, let the Nepalese bear the brunt.

For the next hundred years Nepal remained peaceful, independent and isolated from the world exactly as the Ranas wanted it to be. No foreigners were allowed inside the kingdom, the Ranas ruled in an autocratic manner. They say that on the



crown of the Maharaja the biggest emerald in the world hangs or used to hang, a present from Nana Sahib of India. The only contact was the Gurkha soldiers. They are a race from a place called Gorkha, a little north-west of Kathmandu. All Nepalese are not Gurkhas, although in India we are apt to think them synonyms. Gurkhas were inducted in large numbers into the British Indian army, known as they were for their dauntlessness. And to their merit they won many a V.C. in the two wars. In Nepal there was no poverty, food was plentiful and enough wool available to cover their bodies. The Nepalese Ranas were taken for granted, for the people had never known of any other government or even heard of any. Political freedom was a term unknown in the Nepalese dictionary.

The next great event in Nepalese history was the coming of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII). No less than six hundred elephants and ten thousand Gurkha soldiers were mustered. His Britannic Majesty is said to have shot twenty tigers, ten rhinoceroses and two bears. For his entertainment His Highness the Maharaja Sree Chandra Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana was given the Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order, two thousand rifles and five million rounds of ammunition.

In spite of all, a revolution did come in due course. But it was not hatched on Nepalese soil but in Benares (Varanasi). Writes Regmi in 1948: "We have a Prime-minister who has no political education, a Commander-in-chief who had no military training, a Chief Justice who never went to school." The air was changing but the Ranas chose not to read the signs of the time. "If there were some shivering somewhere, a mumble or an earthquake," thought Maharaja Mohan Shumsher, "a few more jails and stricter regulations would set things right."

In all the revolutions in the world one point remains similar everywhere: the rise of the under-dogs instigated by a handful of educated Middle Class against the King. And the King is made the scapegoat of all the ills of the time. But Nepal has a different story to tell. The people and their advisers wanted their king. They wanted their king to come out of prison and rule. So the central figure in the revolution of 1950-51 in Nepal that ousted the Ranas was no other than His Majesty King Tribhuban Bir Bikram Shah Deva himself.

The King lived in an enclosed compound with several palaces. But his eldest son lived elsewhere. Naturally he wanted to see his son sometimes. On these occasions a Rana C.I.D. man sat beside the driver. The King jumped inside, changed into rough ordinary clothes and with the help of ladders went down on the other side of the wall on the road where the freedom-fighters assembled to meet their King. As luck would have it, help came in an unthinkable way. The Senior Queen had trouble with her sinews in 1949. A German masseuse Fraulein Erika Leuchtag was imported from Germany. Erika, a cultured woman, made friends with the whole household including the King. It was another case of *Anna and the King of Siam*. A bit of a Conan Doyle story was enacted. Erica would go out to meet the people and became the intermediary between the King and the leaders. She gives us a fine picture of the King. He was an excellent athlete. He would ride two horses at a time with his two

legs on either horse. Erica taught him waltz and foxtrot with the help of Victor Sylvester's records. He did not drink or do anything that undermined his natural energy. He had the impression that his father and grandfather were purposely spoilt so that they would become almost useless characters. Even teachers were told to educate them in such a way that their minds were allowed to wander and stopped from developing in the right manner and in the right direction. So Tribhuban was so very careful. Erika also communicated with the Indian Ambassador.

One day the King planned a hunt-*cum*-picnic party for his household. The first few miles to the mountain had to be covered by automobiles. Five cars were assembled. Four would be driven by the King and his three sons. Another by a trusted servant. Naturally the Rana C.I.D. men would be in every car. Huge baskets of food-stuff were loaded in the back of the car. At the first crossroads the road turning left went towards the mountain and the right turn took one to the Indian Embassy. Slowly the motorcade filed out of the Palace-gate and made a show of turning left, then suddenly turned right and entered the Embassy gate kept invitingly ajar. The C.I.D. men could do nothing, for the Embassy ground was India. The Indian Ambassador came down hurriedly with outstretched hands: "Your Majesty, asylum has been granted to you."

The Royal Family stayed with the Ambassador for a few days; then a plane arrived from New Delhi to take them to the Capital. But the Embassy had been ready to protect the royal family for three months. New wells were dug. Candles and kerosene oil were stored that could last three months. New cows were brought and provisions stored lest the Ranas should want the family to go hungry. The Ranas declared that Tribhuban was no longer their king but the small prince still in Nepal (eldest son of Mahendra who is king today). Pandit Nehru would have none of it. Grudgingly the Ranas had to yield. Also a democratic government in the near future was planned. The people of Nepal of course had no experience in democracy. After many trials and errors and ordeals Nepal has not yet arrived at its destination. The Panchayat system was more successful; perhaps that is the system Nepal will finally adopt with its popular king at the head.

Nepal now has three hotels. The royal is owned by a White Russian. He is very popular even with the royal family: in fact his hotel building is a one-time palace. He was in charge of catering for the royal banquet at the King's coronation. There is another hotel owned by a princess but managed by trained men from elsewhere. The name of this hotel is Annapurna. But the building is not at all as it should be. The third one is owned by Prince Himalaya, the second brother of the late king Mahendra. It is called Soaltee (Beloved).

*(To be continued)*

CHAUNDONA S. BANERJI

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Statement about ownership and other particulars about the Newspaper *Mother India* to be published in the first issue every year after the last day of February

*FORM IV* ( See Rule 8 )

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|--|--|
| 1. Place of Publication  | Sri Aurobindo Ashram,<br>Pondicherry - 605 002       |
| 2. Periodicity of its publication  | Monthly  |
| 3. Printer's Name  | Amiyo Ranjan Ganguli                                 |
| Nationality  | Indian   |
| Address  | Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press,<br>Pondicherry - 605 002 |
| 4. Publisher's Name  | P. Counouma  |
| Nationality  | Indian   |
| Address  | Sri Aurobindo Ashram,<br>Pondicherry - 605 002       |
| 5. Editor's Name   | K.D. Sethna  |
| Nationality  | Indian   |
| Address  | Sri Aurobindo Ashram,<br>Pondicherry - 605 002       |
| 6. Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one per cent of the total capital | Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust,<br>Pondicherry - 605 002 |

I, P. Counouma hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

(Sd.) P. Counouma  
*Signature of Publisher*

March, 1985