

# MOTHER INDIA

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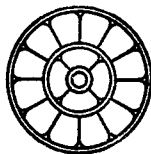
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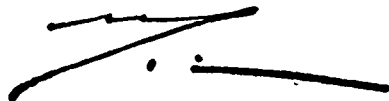
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."*

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# AGNI—THE MYSTIC FIRE

## A COMPILATION FROM SRI AUROBINDO

AGNI in the Veda is always presented in the double aspect of force and light. He is the divine power that builds up the worlds, a power which acts always with a perfect Knowledge, for it is *ṣātavedas*, knower of all births, *viśvāni vāyunāni vidvān*,—it knows all manifestations or phenomena, or it possesses all forms and activities of the divine wisdom. Moreover, it is repeatedly said that the gods have established Agni as the immortal in mortals, the divine power in man, the energy of fulfilment through which they do their work in him. It is this work which is symbolised by the sacrifice.

Agni is a seer-will, *kavikratu*, he is the will in the heart, *kratu-hṛdi*. The word *kratu* means ordinarily work or sacrifice, but it also means intelligence, power or resolution and especially the power of the intelligence that determines the work, the will.

Psychologically, then, we may take Agni to be the divine will perfectly inspired by divine Wisdom, and indeed one with it, which is the active or effective power of the Truth-Consciousness. This is the obvious sense of the word *kavi-kratuḥ*, the whose active will or power of effectivity is that of the seer,—who works with the knowledge which comes by the Truth-consciousness and in which there is no misapplication or error.

It is the power of Agni to apply the Truth in the work, symbolised by the sacrifice, that makes him the object of human invocation. The importance of the sacrificial fire in the outward ritual corresponds to the importance of this inward force of unified Light and Power in the inward rite by which there is communication and interchange between the mortal and the Immortal. Agni is frequently described as the envoy, *dūta*, the medium of that communication and interchange.

Our sacrifice is a journey, a pilgrimage and a battle,—a travel towards the Gods and we also make that journey with Agni, the inner Flame, as our path-finder and leader. Our human things are raised up by the mystic Fire into the immortal being, into the Great Heaven, and the things divine come into us.

It is a continual self-offering by the mortal of what one is and has to the Immortal, with an invocation of the gods as powers of the Truth to raise man out of the falsehoods of the mortal mind in order to attain by this Truth an immortal state of perfect good and felicity.

The Gods call man to a divine companionship and alliance; they attract and uplift him to their luminous fraternity, invite his aid and offer theirs against the sons of Darkness and Division. Man in return calls the Gods to his sacrifice.

To what Gods shall the sacrifice be offered? Who shall be invoked to manifest and protect in the human being this increasing godhead?

Agni first, for without him the sacrificial flame cannot burn on the altar of the

soul. That flame of Agni is the seven-tongued power of the Will, a Force of God, instinct with Knowledge. This conscious and forceful will is the immortal guest in our mortality, a pure priest and a divine worker, the mediator between earth and heaven. It carries what we offer to the higher Powers and brings back in return their force and light and joy into our humanity.

It is a continual resort day by day, in the night and in the light,—in all states of consciousness, whether illumined or obscure,—a continual resort of thought in the human being with submission, adoration and self-surrender to the divine Will and Wisdom, represented by Agni.

Every shining godward Thought that arises from the secret abysses of the heart is a priest and a creator and chants a divine hymn of luminous realisation and puissant fulfilment. We seek for the shining gold of the Truth; we lust after a heavenly treasure.

The soul of man is a world full of beings, a kingdom in which armies clash to help or hinder a supreme conquest, a house where the gods are our guests and which the demons strive to possess. There must be a constant submission and reference of all activities to the divine control. For whether by day or night Agni shines out in the sacrifices; he is the guardian of the Truth, of the *ṛtam* in man and defends it from the powers of darkness, he is the constant illumination burning up even in obscure and besieged states of mind.

It is a continual self-offering of the human to the divine and a continual descent of the divine into the human, symbolised in the sacrifice.

Let the sacrificial Fire burn ceaselessly in the soul of man. Let the fullness of its energies and wideness of its being make a seat of sacrifice spread, arranged and purified for a celestial session.

“May Agni, priest of the offering, whose will towards action is that of the seer, who is true, most rich in the varied inspiration, come, a god with gods.”

*(A compilation by Kailash Jhaveri from Sri Aurobindo's Hymns to the Mystic Fire and On the Veda with a slight re-arrangement of a word, a phrase, a sentence or a paragraph for a continuous reading.)*

# A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON APRIL 14, 1954

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

*Sweet Mother, I did not understand this: "At the beginning of this manifestation, in the purity of its origin, love is composed of two movements, two complementary poles of the urge towards complete oneness. On the one hand there is the supreme power of attraction and on the other the irresistible need for absolute self-giving."*

THERE is nothing to understand; it is a fact. You don't know what "the power of attraction" means? You don't know what "the need for self-giving" means?... Well, you put them face to face and when they unite, that creates love. It is as simple as that. If you wish, it is like the obverse and reverse of the same medal; but it is not the obverse and reverse. These two things are destined to unite by their very nature and it is through this meeting that love in its external manifestation is born.

*After that you have said: "No other movement could have better bridged the abyss that was created when in the individual being consciousness was separated from its origin and became unconsciousness."*

Yes, because the moment the individual consciousness broke off from the divine Consciousness, from its divine source, it created the sense of separation. The moment the individual consciousness ceased to follow, did not remain identified with the movement of the divine Consciousness, this produced a separation. The divine Consciousness follows its own movement, and if the individual consciousness does not remain united and does not follow or changes the course or slows down on the way, this creates a separation. And it is this separation that is the cause of all misery. All the miseries in the universe are the result of this separation of the individual consciousness which, for some reason or other, did not remain identified with the primal Consciousness, its origin, and separated from it. Separated... it did not deliberately separate itself, but it did not remain identified. So, not remaining identified, while the divine Consciousness followed one particular movement, it followed another, and naturally this caused them to move farther and farther away from each other. Let us take an illustration: one goes forward with a certain movement, a certain speed, and the other, not having remained united, is unable to follow and consequently, little by little, falls farther and farther behind, far, far, very far; the first one goes ahead and the other is left behind. It goes limping along while the first one flies; it takes one step while the other leaps. So this brings about a greater

and greater separation. And it is this separation which has created all other separations, and it is all these separations which have caused universal misery—or in any case the misery on earth, the one we know. It began by a separation of consciousness and finished with a separation of worlds and of the elements of matter. It began by a division of consciousness and ended with the kind of division we see (*Mother points at those around her*). There are thousands of things all separated from one another and it is due to this that there are all these miseries. If they had remained united in consciousness, there would have been no misery. But as the consciousness was separated, this separation of consciousness caused the separation of forms and the separation of forms produced all the miseries.

If the sense of unity were re-established, the miseries would disappear.

*Before our nature is transformed, can a person love another truly?*

Love another? I have said there that it is impossible. I have said that if one wants to know what love is, one must love the Divine. Then there is a chance of knowing what love is. I have said that one grows into the likeness of what one loves. So if one loves the Divine, gradually, through this effort of love, one grows more and more like the Divine, and then one can be identified with the divine love and know what it is, otherwise one can't.

Inevitably, love between two human beings, whatever it may be, is always made of ignorance, lack of understanding, weakness and that terrible sense of separation. It is as though one wanted to enter the presence of a unique Splendour and the first thing one did was to put a curtain, two curtains, three curtains between oneself and that Splendour, and one is quite surprised to have only a vague impression and not at all the thing itself. The first thing to do is to remove the curtains, to take them all away, to go through and find oneself in the presence of the Splendour. And then you will know what that Splendour is. But if you put veil after veil between it and yourself, you will never see it. You may have a sort of vague feeling like "Oh! there is something", but that is all.

Naturally, there are all those who don't care for the Splendour, who turn their back upon it and live in their instincts, who are just animals, a little perfected. Let us not speak of these. We have only to let them do what they like, that is of no importance at all. They don't affect us. It is not for them that I have written these things.

*In order to know how to love truly, should the nature be transformed?*

The quality of the love is in proportion to the transformation of your consciousness.

*I don't understand.*



It is childishly simple. If you have the consciousness of an animal, you will love like an animal. If you have the consciousness of an ordinary man, you will love like an ordinary man. If you have the consciousness of an élite being, you will love like an élite being, and if you have a god's consciousness, you will love like a god. It is simple! That's what I have said. And so, if by an effort for progress and inner transformation, by aspiration and growth, you pass from one consciousness to the other and your consciousness becomes vaster and vaster, well, the love you experience will be vaster and vaster. That is quite clear!

You take the purest water, water from the crystalline rocks, you collect it in a fairly large vase, and then, in this vase there is a little mud, or much, or a huge quantity of mud. And you could not say it is the same water which came down, yet it is the same, only you have mixed it with so many things in your vase that it no longer resembles it at all! Well, love in its essence is an absolutely pure, crystalline, perfect thing. In the human consciousness it gets mixed with a fairly considerable amount of mud. So it becomes more and more muddy in proportion to the amount of mud.

It has been said that the tiger's need for devouring is one of the first expressions of love in the world. I think that long before the tiger, there must have been primitive creatures in the depths of the sea which had only this one function: a stomach. They existed only as stomachs. And so they swallowed—that was their one occupation. Evidently that was one of the first results of the Power of Love infiltrating into Matter, for before this there was nothing: there was perfect inconscience, complete immobility, nothing stirred. With Love movement began: the awakening of consciousness and the movement of transformation. Well, the first forms, it may be said, were the first expression of Love in Matter. So we can go from the need of swallowing which is the only consciousness—a need of swallowing, of uniting—right up to... Excuse me, we say that Love is the power of the world—it is a primitive way of uniting with things, but it is a very direct way: one swallows and absorbs the thing; well, the tiger indeed takes a great joy in it. So there is a joy already, it is already quite a high form of love. You may go higher and end up with one of the highest expressions of love in human beings: the total self-giving to what is loved, that is, to die for one's country or to give one's life to defend somebody, and things like that. That indeed is already... fairly high. It is still mixed with some mud. It is not the highest form but it is already something. And you see all the steps, don't you? Well, from this one has still to climb a good deal to reach the true expression, to reach what I have described, which is at the summit of the ascent—I would not like to travesty my own words (*Mother takes her copy of "The Four Austerities" and reads*):

*"Love is, in its essence, the joy of identity; it finds its expression in the bliss of union."*

At first before the emanation of love, there is something which we may express very

clumsily by "the joy of identity". That indeed is very difficult to conceive, for human thought cannot conceive of things except by their opposites, while the supreme phase comes when love has gone the whole round of the universe in order to climb back to its origin; then it has the result of all that experience it gained and it returns to its starting-point. It goes back to its starting-point with something *more* which it did not have before starting: the experience of the universe. And fundamentally, that is the very *raison d'être* of creation. It is because the consciousness would not be what it is if it had not expressed itself in a creation. Well, the return from creation—which, mark it, is not something that takes place in time—is very difficult to conceive, for we conceive time and space and for us things are successive, one thing follows another, but if it were possible to conceive a total movement which would englobe everything and be at once the beginning and the end, and which would contain everything, well, this return, which would not be a return in time, which would be a return in consciousness—how shall I explain that to you?—the return of love to its origin, instead of being simply the joy of identity, becomes the ecstasy of union—and obviously, if one sees from the pure psychological point of view, there is an enriching of consciousness which comes from the experience gained in the universe; that is, there is a richness of content and a plenitude of consciousness which would not be there if there had been no manifested universe. And that obviously is the most logical explanation, the most logical reason for the creation.

*What does this sentence mean, Sweet Mother: "Each time an individual breaks the narrow limitations in which he is imprisoned by his ego and emerges into the open air, through self-giving, whether for the sake of another human being or his family, his country or his faith, he finds in this self-forgetfulness a foretaste of the marvellous delight of love, and this gives him the impression that he has come into contact with the Divine. But most often it is only a fleeting contact, for in the human being love is immediately mixed with lower egoistic movements which debase it and rob it of its power of purity. But even if it remained pure, this contact with the divine existence could not last for ever, for love is only one aspect of the Divine, an aspect which here on earth has suffered the same distortions as the others."*

What is it, what haven't you understood? That the universe and the world as it is, are a deformation of the Divine? The world as it is, in the state of consciousness in which it is, is a deformation of the Divine, and love here also is a deformation of the Divine. So, even if your love remained as pure as it can be in the manifested world, it could not keep you in constant contact with the Divine unless all the rest was transformed. For it is deformed in the same way as the rest. For it should be said, surely, that purity as conceived on earth has nothing to do with divine purity. At the best it is an approximation.

Haven't understood? It will come one day.

*Sweet Mother, what kind of love do parents have for their children?*

What kind? A human love, don't they? Like all human loves: frightfully mixed, with all sorts of things. The need of possession, a formidable egoism. At first, I must tell you that a wonderful picture has been painted... many books written, wonderful things said about a mother's love for her children. I assure you that except for the capacity of speaking about the subject in flowery phrases, the love of the higher animals like the... well, the mammals for their children is exactly of the same nature: the same devotion, the same self-forgetfulness, the same self-denial, the same care for education, the same patience, the same... I have seen absolutely marvellous things, and if they had been written down and applied to a woman instead of to a cat, superb novels would have been made, people would have said: "What a person! how marvellously devoted are these women in their maternal love!" Exactly the same thing. Only, cats could not use flowery language. That's all. They could not write books and make speeches, that is the only difference. But I have seen absolutely astonishing things. And that kind of self-giving and self-oblivion—as soon as there is the beginning of love, it comes. But men... I sincerely believe, from all that I have studied, that there is perhaps a greater purity in animals for they do not think, while human beings with their mental power, their capacity of reflecting, reasoning, analysing, studying, all that, oh! they spoil the most lovely movement. They begin to calculate, reason, doubt, organise.

Take, for instance, parents. At the risk of removing many illusions in your consciousness, I must tell you something about the source of a mother's love for her child. It is because this child is made of her very own substance, and for quite a long time, relatively long, the material link, the link of substance, between mother and child is *extremely* close—it is as though a bit of her flesh had been taken out and put apart at a distance—and it is only much later that the tie between the two is completely cut. There is a kind of tie, of subtle sensation, such that the mother feels exactly what the child feels, as she would feel it in herself. That then is the material basis of the mother's attachment for the child. It is a basis of material identity, nothing else but that. Feeling comes much later (it may come earlier, that depends on people), but I am speaking of the majority: feeling comes only long afterwards, and it is conditioned. There are all kinds of things... I could speak to you for hours on the subject. But still this must not be mixed up with love. It is a material identification which makes the mother feel intimately, feel quite concretely and tangibly what the child is feeling: if the child receives a shock, well, the mother feels it. This lasts at least for two months.

This is the basis. The rest comes from people's nature, their state of development, their consciousness, education and capacity for feeling. This is added to the first. And then there are all the collective suggestions which go to the making of novels—for people are wonderful at constructing novels. They write novels about everything. They have used their minds to build imaginations which circulate in the

atmosphere and then are caught just like that. So some catch a certain type of these, others another kind, and then, as imagination is a force of propulsion, with it one begins to act, and then finally one lives a novel in his life, if he is in the least imaginative.... This has absolutely nothing to do with the true consciousness, with the psychic being, nothing at all, but people come to speak to you in a florid style and tell you stories—all that is in wandering imaginations. If one could see, that is, if *you* could see this mental atmosphere, that of the physical mind, which is circulating everywhere, making you move, making you feel, making you think, making you act, oh, good heavens! you would lose many of your illusions about your personality. But indeed it is like that. Whether one knows it or not, it is like that.

There are many souls upon earth, human beings.... Obviously, those who have a certain culture, a certain development, a certain individualisation gather together usually: instinctively they get together, form groups. And so one can find in space and time a number—not considerable but still sufficiently large—of cultured beings who are united, but one must not believe that this gives the exact proportion of the culture and development of human beings. It is only like a sort of foam that has been brought up and is on the surface. But even among these latter, even among these beings who are already a selection, there is hardly one in a thousand who is a truly individual being, conscious of himself, united with his psychic being, governed by his inner law and, consequently, almost if not totally free from external influences; for being conscious, when these influences come, he sees them: those that seem to him to harmonise with his inner development and normal growth he accepts; those which are opposed he refuses. And so, instead of being a chaos—or in any case a frightful mixture—they are organised beings, individual, conscious of themselves, walking through life knowing where they want to go and how they want to.

Of these, if you like, we may say that they are men. That is, they are what Nature may produce of the best as far as men go—they are still men. But this is the summit of man. They are ready to become something else. But unless one is *that*, one is to a great extent an animal still and a very slight beginning of a man. Only *that* can be called man. So there you are, you have only to look into yourselves and know... whether you are men or not.

*Au revoir.*

I am saying this in the hope that you will become that.

(*Questions and Answers 1954, pp 100-108*)

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of March 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. Manilal, 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 attempt for the speeches of the others.)*

September 23, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO (*looking at P*): Is Hitler waiting for the fog?

P: It seems he is more busy in the East settling Rumanian questions in the warm climate.... Japan seems to have toned down. It must be due to the Anglo-American alliance regarding the Singapore naval base.

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously. Everything is getting queer. They make war without declaring war, alliance without calling it alliance.

S: What has happened to Japan's ultimatum?

SRI AUROBINDO: Modified. If this alliance takes place, it will be dangerous for Japan; for Singapore is a strong naval fortress, but at present the British have only a few ships. Alliance with America will bring in American ships.

S: I don't think Hitler has given up the idea of attack. Perhaps he is delaying because of differences among his Generals.

SRI AUROBINDO: He may attack. There have always been differences; in spite of them he has acted on his own. He is trying to establish his air superiority. Hitherto all his tricks have failed.

S: The war will last a long time, it seems.

SRI AUROBINDO: At any rate, it won't end now.

P: The Egyptian cabinet is meeting to decide what Italy's intention could be. (*Laughter*) The President has already said that their intention is very clear, so they must act at once.

S: Do they think the Italians are coming to embrace them?

SRI AUROBINDO: Or perhaps they think that they will blow a kiss from Sidi Barani and withdraw. (*Laughter*)

P: We had a joke at Rajangam's cost. He has received a letter from France. We told him that the Vichy government was calling him.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why from France?

P: It's from a medical firm. It was posted before the armistice.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see. But the firm may not exist now—like a star that has

itself gone out although its light still comes to us. (*Laughter*)

*Evening*

S: Plenty of people are writing to Doraiswamy about your donation. They don't understand why you have done it.

P: Why? The reason was very plain in the statement itself.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so.

S: They don't see how you can stand for the culture and civilisation of the British and their allies.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not? They ought to see what Hitler is doing everywhere.

N: The difficulty is that they are too much biased with an anti-British feeling.

SRI AUROBINDO: But I am not biased like them.

S: They are political people, not yogis.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then they should have political insight....

P: The Egyptian ministers have resigned. It seems the Egyptian government is pro-fascist in tendency; that is why it is hesitating.

SRI AUROBINDO: If it has only a 20,000-strong army, of course that won't count for much, but why is the government pro-fascist?

P: It is Mussolini's work, I suspect. Mussolini has been working and preparing the field there for a long time. He has perhaps promised these old Pashas high offices and posts.

SRI AUROBINDO: They must be idiots if they believe him even now.

P: Yes, and the King also is centralising power in his hands.

SRI AUROBINDO: They ought to have abolished the King as was done in Turkey.

N: Is it because of Egypt's neutrality that the British are not attacking the Italians?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. Egypt won't dare to prevent them unless they turn hostile.

September 24, 1940

*(Radio said that De Gaulle had gone to Dakar as there had been some rumour of a revolt among the people.)*

SRI AUROBINDO: He can't act simply on a rumour.

*(There was confused and meagre news from there. It was reported that naval fighting was going on between the French and the British. Here P described how France had given up the fight in spite of having much material—the usual story—how the leaders and the French people had betrayed the cause, etc.)*

S: France would have been in a better position if she had not joined the war.

SRI AUROBINDO: How? She would have been attacked one day. Italy was already talking of her colonies. In that case British help wouldn't have been available. They could have hoped that Hitler would attack Russia first but it is doubtful if Italy would have waited such a long time.

*(Sri Aurobindo had been styled a Brahma leader by some American paper in connection with Nakashima's talk about Nishtha—Margaret Wilson, daughter of the one-time President of the U.S.A.)*

SRI AUROBINDO: So I am called a savant (British radio), a Brahma leader and an ascetic (Bombay Times)!

*(Some Egyptian prince had come to India and, visiting Hyderabad, called it "marvellous".)*

P: If he finds Hyderabad marvellous then one wonders what Egypt would be like.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): Yes, Hyderabad is still half in the Middle Ages! You know Dara's story? One of two brothers from there came for Darshan. After going back they had some quarrel over property and that brother filed a suit and asked our help. He won the case. Now the other brother came for Darshan and after going back he filed a suit against the brother who had won, and he also asked our help. This brother now got the judgment in his favour. I don't understand how it was possible to give opposite judgments when the judge was the same.

### *Evening*

SRI AUROBINDO: Bhasker reports his radio saying, "It must be remembered that the British have been shelling Dakar." (*Smiling*) How can we remember when we never heard of it before? There seems to be a mystery around the whole affair.

P: Yes; all sorts of conflicting news coming in. Nobody knows what the truth is.

SRI AUROBINDO: It appears from an Englishman bringing news from Rome that Hitler will try to take Gibraltar first, then cross to Morocco, capture Egypt, the Suez, the whole of Africa and finally invade England.

P: If the French forces side with England in Africa, even now there may be a chance of victory. There are fine French forces in Morocco.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes If Hitler takes Gibraltar, the British can occupy Tangiers as a counterblow.

September 25, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO: The situation about Dakar seems to be a little clear now. It appears that De Gaulle had gone with free French forces supported by British

warships, sent an ultimatum to the authorities and the fight is going on as they didn't surrender. But I don't understand why De Gaulle wants to land troops at Dakar. It will be very difficult. He could have landed them in the neighbouring British territory and from there marched to Dakar.

P: Yes; in that case he may have got the support of the people too without any fight.

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps there is no good port for landing.

*(To be continued)*

NIRODBARAN

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## TWO POEMS

### TIME

TIME is a trend, a turn,  
 We see not the road beyond,  
 Only hear Thy tread on it,  
 And wait expectantly  
 That Thou mayst wander in.  
 If only we could step beyond the trend,  
 The mirage termed past, present and future  
 Will be destroyed in a trice,  
 And then will merge Thou and I—  
 Timelessness and Time

### ADIEU

Adieu—  
 My cherished grandiose schemes,  
 To change the course of Time-streams;  
 To write a new uni-verse;  
 Which might improve upon the Lord's work!  
 Now let me learn the alphabet of life,  
 Take tottering toddler-steps awhile.  
 Adieu! my airy dreams.  
 Those God-transcending schemes.

SHYAM KUMARI



# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

*(Continued from the issue of March 1985)*

## The Mother's Message

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



(44)

Now it was 1st December 1957. I received a card showing lovely Tulips of various colours. The meaning given to these flowers by the Mother is: "Blossoming—Result of trust and success."

She had written on the card:

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

In the afternoon she gave blessings to people in the Prosperity Room to begin the new month. Disciples got their requirements from Prosperity.

As always the Mother went to play tennis. Afterwards in the evening we all saw with the Mother a dance representation of the Mother’s play, “Virtues”, a selection from Sri Aurobindo’s writings, “Ananda”, and finally a drama in French named “Light without obscurity”, based on symbolism and the messages of flowers. Sunil’s music was played. He had composed it specially for this drama.

On the 2nd there was a grand demonstration of Gymnastics at the Sports Ground.

On the 3rd they repeated the Drama for visitors and interested people in the town. This had not been done ever before in the Ashram.

Days rolled on. The Mother unflinchingly sent me cards with her constant love and sweetness.

It was Tuesday the 6th. I painted a crystal vase with two white Chrysanthemums sent by the Mother.

She regarded the painting in the evening in her room at the Playground, and was pleased with it. Then she said with a smile:

“I shall now explain to you how to show transparency in painting.

First do the background. When it is completely dried, you can paint flowers or any object on it by giving lights and shades with different colours and strokes as required. Then apply a very thin layer of white or pale colour over the painted objects as well as the background. Then an intermediary tone will be created. Then you will see that flowers or any objects will look more light and transparent.”

The following morning I painted Chrysanthemums on a pale green background according to the Mother’s explanation.

When she saw the painting, she remarked:

“Ah! the painting is very nice. The flowers are full of Light.”

The Mother sent me the flowers called Amazon Lily—“Light without obscurity—All-powerful in its simplicity.”

I painted them. She liked the result. But I was not satisfied with my work—something was still lacking.

It was the day of her French Class—so we had a short meditation. As on other days the Mother took me in her arms for a moment or two in order to strengthen my soul’s aspiration.

Once more she sent me three Chrysanthemums. I painted them impressionistically. As I have mentioned before, I never had an inclination to be a realistic painter, because personally I felt that in realistic art one confined oneself within a certain limit while in impressionism one could be free with colours and express one's soul's inspiration without restraint.

In fact, I never wished to be bound by any rules and regulations in painting.

Impressionism always gave me the feeling and sense of a magnificent visionary dreamland. I have greater admiration for the impressionists than for the realists. The modern and abstract arts do not exist for me.

\*

Now I started painting a variety of flowers.

On the 12th, in the morning I received from the Mother Pomegranate flowers —“The Divine's Love—A flower which is said to bloom even in a desert.”

Chrysanthemums too came. I painted both the kinds with the new technique. The Mother remarked:

“Oh! I like them. They are full of light and vibrations.”

Then she looked at me for some time and said:

“There is a German lady, Sulamith Wulfin, who is an artist. She really does nice paintings and sends me their reproductions through Medhananda.<sup>1</sup> They are mostly visions. One can similarly do the visions which are in *Savitri*.”

And she laughed softly. She lapsed into silence for a moment or two, then spoke:

“Do you know, one of your drawings on a tinted paper—a face with a flame of aspiration—is similar to one of her paintings?”

I uttered inwardly: “My God!”

Her blue-grey eyes glistened with laughter and joy, and she added:

“On the 20th I shall call you in the morning and show you all the reproduction of this lady's paintings.”

At that time it did not occur to my mind that she had been giving hints to express *Savitri* through paintings in the future. My head was full of a hotch-potch of conceptions. I lived too much in an egoistic, physical consciousness.

If the Mother were preparing and planning for a big work, I did not take any-

<sup>1</sup> A German sadhak.

thing seriously. How was I to give any thought to such a notion when impossibility was stamped on my consciousness? Besides, what knowledge did I have of *Savitri*? I gave no response to this fantastic idea, feeling sure that she would try in vain.

\*

Monday passed with incredible lassitude, Tuesday seemed to be similar.

On Wednesday, 14th December, I painted a Dahlia of an orange-yellow hue. The meaning given to it was "Supramentalised Mental Dignity—Tolerates no pettiness in its thought turned towards the Truth."

The Mother saw my work very minutely and asked:

"Child, I wonder how you did the background. Tell me, did you paint it before or after, because it is simply wonderful."

I answered: "Mother, to tell you the truth, I myself do not know how the painting was done."

She smiled delightedly, ruffled my hair and said:

"You are very clever."

After a couple of years this painting was printed. The Mother wrote its message thus:

"Nobility of thought, feeling and action is the true aristocracy."

She used the reproduction as a Christmas and a New Year card.

Next I painted a beautiful Japanese vase on which two dragons had been engraved. I put in it a lovely stalk of Tuberoses: "The new creation—strong, lasting and fragrant, it rises straight towards the sky."

The tuberoses were sent by the Mother along with a card and the invariable white roses.

I also painted the Chrysanthemums which she had sent me earlier. The Mother said:

"I like both the paintings. Now you must try to paint a landscape".

I agreed. But I thought that it was not easy to do this. Previously I had tried without much success.

However, I painted a small corner of Golconde, full of tiny flowers and grass.

The Mother saw it and asked me to alter it a little. I did so. I had a book—

*Drawing Self-taught* by Arthur Zaidenberg. I read at that time what he had written about landscape:

“All things in Nature are quite wonderfully contrived and perhaps indispensable in the scheme of things, but things acquire artistic validity only when isolated or tastefully joined with selected other things in order to achieve a satisfying unity.

“In choosing a landscape to draw or paint, the artist is confronted with this multiplicity of striking detail. To attempt to copy all he sees would be impossible as well as undesirable. He must make a few drastic decisions immediately when looking about for a vista to paint.

- (1) What part can he encompass on his limited space of canvas?
- (2) What is the most striking character of the area he is looking at?
- (3) What is the most valid overall mood of the limited area he has chosen?
- (4) How to achieve that mood with the greatest economy. The three major planes in which the scene of landscape will lie.
  - (1) The ground, or the plane nearest to his eye;
  - (2) the middle distance, the second important plane of his vista;
  - (3) the background which would be the horizon or sky or the most distant area of that vista.”

Everything was double Dutch to me. I just wanted to play with colours, banning all the theories and methods.

\*

I got exhausted. Life was burdensome. My inferiority complex, subtle fear and doubt still persisted. I wanted very much to go out of the Ashram for awhile, yet paradoxically I desperately wished to stay near the Mother.

On the 17th in the evening the Mother spoke to me after a short meditation:

“What can be in the utmost depth of our hearts except the Divine? If we expect Him to be always present, He is always present in our hearts. If we expect the Divine to be all merciful and compassionate, He is always there to make things easy and smooth. But if we doubt His mercy and compassion, then there is no mercy and no compassion.

“If we trust the Divine, He is always with us to guide us and protect us. Such is He in relation with us. If we are convinced that there is the Divine within us, surely He is always there.”

I like to quote Sri Aurobindo who has written in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 21, p. 571 about the Presence of the Divine:

“The Divine reveals himself in the world around us when we look upon that with a spiritual desire of delight that seeks him in all things. There is often a sudden opening by which the veil of forms is itself turned into a revelation. A universal spiritual Presence, a universal peace, a universal infinite Delight has manifested, immanent, embracing, all-penetrating. This Presence by our love of it, our delight in it, our constant thought of it returns and grows upon us; it becomes the thing that we see and all else is only its habitation, form and symbol. Even all that is most outward, the body, the form, the sound, whatever our senses seize, are seen as this Presence; they cease to be physical and are changed into a substance of spirit. This transformation means a transformation of our own inner consciousness; we are taken by the surrounding Presence into itself and we become part of it. Our own mind, life, body become to us only its habitation and temple, a form of its working and an instrument of its self-expression. All is only soul and body of this delight.”

Pleasing lines from Hala Satavahana:

“However far my eye may wander  
 Thou standest before me!  
 For the heavens and the splendour  
 Of the stars  
 Are Thy image!

\*

It was Monday, 19th December 1957.

I painted Chrysanthemums and white Dahlias.

After regarding the pictures, the Mother held my hands and said with enthusiasm:

“Child, we shall express the Supramental Truth through painting.”

And she laughed tenderly.

At that very instant a prayer surged spontaneously in my heart when I spoke: “O Mother, let your will be done.” She pressed my hands and affirmed forcefully:

“Yes.”

I did not realise at that moment what I had bubbled out. But later at night I became aware and chided myself: “Fool, do you think that to express the Supreme Truth is an easy thing? Stupid, the Mother was talking about superior and higher things. You have to live that Truth first....”

Tears rolled unchecked down my cheeks. I knew, and knew it perfectly well, that it was impossible for me to express anything—to create anything. I was incapable, hopeless. Panic fluttered in my whole being like the beating of a thousand frenzied wings. A series of thoughts swarmed into my brain and vibrated intensely. Sleep was elusive, my mind too active and I was very much conscious of my imperfections.

But William Blake said:

“Great things are done when men and mountains meet.  
This is not done by jostling in the street.”

The succeeding morning of 20th December I received a big professional easel from England. It was to be installed in my apartment which was still under renovation.

In the morning the easel was taken to the Meditation Hall upstairs. The Mother entered the Hall and met me according to the previous arrangement. Her eyes widened when she saw the easel, she examined it very meticulously, and expressed her happiness.

Then, instead of sitting in her usual chair, she sat in one of the chairs which were against the wall on the right side of her high-backed carved chair. She asked me to sit on a chair beside her. I refused, and then sat near her feet.

The Mother showed me quite a number of reproductions of the German lady's paintings. They were extremely inspiring.

I exclaimed: “Mother, do you remember, you sent me one of the reproductions on 4th October 1957? It depicted a beautiful new-born babe sleeping peacefully in the heart of a luminous rose?”

She smiled and nodded.

Afterwards she took my hands into hers and went into a profound meditation. I thought it never-ending. It lasted more than an hour. I was completely indrawn, feeling within me a comforting peace and deep silence. But suddenly I was startled. The Mother slapped my hands very hard. Instantly I opened my eyes and looked at her inquiringly.

She leaned from her chair, caressed my hands tenderly, joined them and said with a smile:

“Do not be alarmed, my child, I have now filled your hands with consciousness, light, force and skill.”

Then she gazed at my hands intently for a few seconds and patted them once again.

The wonderful boon she gave me was not fantasy or imagination, but a reality. She surely did something to my hands of which I was not fully aware.

In the evening once more we meditated.

At night numerous questions arose in my head: "Why does the Mother take so much trouble? Why me and not others? What intention is in her mind?"

There was a train of "Whys" without clear answers. I was mystified to the very core of my heart.

*(To be continued)*

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# PRADYOT

## THE EVOLUTION OF A SOUL

(Continued from the issue of March 1985)

### Physical Health

SINCE his boyhood, Pradyot had enjoyed good health. Though he was not physically robust, he did not suffer from intercurrent diseases, as I did for instance. I came to know that his father had trained him in simple austerities regarding the outer and inner conduct of his life. He was disciplined in all respects. Among all his brothers and sisters he was the son of promise and every care was taken to mould him into a boy of firm character and bright intelligence. He was even precocious, it seems. He used to correct the mistakes of his brothers and give them counsels for which he was nick-named "Munsef". His father was a moral and religious man. When Pradyot could not appear in the Matric Exam along with us owing to his being under-age, his father would not sign, as others did, any affidavit to declare his eligibility. In Glasgow he had no physical trouble as far as I know. Only at Jamshedpur the first symptoms of a stomach ulcer were heard of and he attributed its origin to a phase of rigorous fasting during the Non-co-operation movement. He informed Sri Aurobindo about it and for twelve years he was free from further symptoms, but he was always careful about his diet. When he had settled here, I noticed that he used to have what he termed colitis which would subside with drugs. In 1960, there was a recurrence of the ulcer symptoms and the Mother was informed. In 1962, there was a moderate attack and I spent two or three nights in his house. Dr. Sanyal was treating him. In this year his wife passed away and Gargi became a member of the household and looked after her "Daddy" with the same care as bestowed by Rani-di.

In 1967 the Mother wrote to Pradyot *à propos* of his illness, "Pradyot, my dear child, I need you as my instrument, and you will remain so. Be very quiet—endure with courage. I am with you in love and in victory."

Along with this ailment, he developed symptoms of prostatic enlargement in 1968. Dr. Sanyal recommended an operation. Pradyot wrote to the Mother, "I pray for your decision, whether or not to undergo an operation for the prostate. At present, I am wearing a catheter which can only be removed if the flow is restored. Life with a catheter is not specially attractive. I should like to serve you. Kindly grant this without an operation, if possible; with an operation, if necessary."

The Mother, of course, vetoed the operation and he was free from the trouble. As an auxiliary measure, he took homeopathic drugs for some time. Again in 1969 he wrote, "Mother, grant that I may collaborate entirely with you so that only what

you will happens to me and nothing else." The Mother replied, "It is already granted and for ever."

In another interesting letter in 1968 he wrote, "In a dream I met someone whose business seems to cause breakdowns in machines and plants. He and I came to an understanding, and he agreed to spare the works in which I am or may be interested. I do not know how seriously I am to take it, but it suggests a prayer, 'Grant that this is true as long as I work for you.'" "Very good," was the reply.

But it is not known when he developed the blood disease. It was in 1979 that the ailment was detected quite accidentally. He had gone to Calcutta in uncertain health to attend to his business. After a week or so he suddenly felt weak and uneasy and began to perspire without any apparent reason. Fortunately a doctor-friend of his was near at hand. He transferred him at once to a nursing home of another intimate doctor-friend. There the doctor, when he examined the patient's blood, was startled beyond words to discover that the haemoglobin rate was very high. He was in extreme anxiety and wanted to send Pradyot back to the Ashram at the earliest, for the responsibility was too great for him. There was only one drug that could be effective; and after a mad hunt all over Calcutta he found it. Pradyot remained unperturbed throughout, as if it were nothing serious. As soon as the condition had slightly improved he was sent back with a detailed account of his disease to our doctor. Here the blood was examined again and the diagnosis was confirmed. It was Dr. Bose who first told me the story with some alarm. Dr. Datta said that the condition was serious, no doubt, but it could be kept under control with the specific drug. The disease itself was beyond cure. I was really shaken, but the marvel of it was that the patient was as happy and cheerful as ever. He used to crack jokes and make fun of our medical science, but did not fail to abide by the medical directions. He had elicited from the doctor the truth about the nature, course and sequelae of the disease. Every month the blood used to be examined and the treatment regulated accordingly. I could not but admire Pradyot's *sang-froid* in this predicament. I am almost convinced that any other patient would have been half dead out of fear. But Pradyot had a well of strength in him and faith to boot.

With this ailment he had carried on his work from 1979 to 1984. There was no relaxation, no abatement of his industry, not a moment's gloominess. He paid regular visits to Calcutta once a month. Two big responsibilities had settled upon his frail but resilient shoulders—the D.C.P.L. and Lakshmi's House. The proprietor of the former, Sadhan Datta, was most of the time abroad leaving Pradyot to look after the firm in his absence. Then the palatial Lakshmi's House or Home of Grace as it came to be known had to be maintained and developed. It began to flourish in many directions. Pradyot used to relate with an inner pride the various activities going on and the functions held there, and showed us their various colourful photographs. One could realise that he was the head and crown of the institution. The Bengal Government used to consult him from time to time regarding their engineering problems. Besides all these occupations, a constant stream of visitors

approached him about various personal problems of health, family troubles, business concerns, etc., etc. After a late dinner, he would chat with his close associates before retiring to bed. He was even looked upon as a guru. When the Mother heard about it, she said, "Not as a guru, but a demi-god."

In short it was a life of hectic activities. At times he used to return to the Ashram quite fagged out, but before he had recuperated he was ready for the next visit. We were really worried and the Trustees said once, "Pradyot's life is more precious to us than these occupations." Complaints from Lakshmi's House used to reach us that he was eating less, but it mattered little to him. We noticed that his complexion was turning ash-grey. He was unusually harassed by mosquito-bites. He used to remark, "Look, these dark spots—they are all due to mosquito-kisses. They must have found the taste of honey in my blood." Indeed, scattered stigmata of dark blood were visible in exposed parts of his body. Probably the increased haemoglobin content, and therefore the increased density of the blood had a special attraction for mosquitoes. His light manner and jovial temper made us forget the lurking shadow and even believe that there was nothing seriously amiss. But at times I could not suppress my apprehension that he was living under the harrow of doom. He was, however, free from these ominous musings; he thought that there was no imminent danger. He would often repeat, "Man never dies from a disease. He dies because the soul decides."

On 6th November, he received the news that one of our close friends had died. When he had not been keeping well, Pradyot had him brought over to Lakshmi's House from Jamshedpur since there he had nobody to look after him. This friend's sudden death was a sore loss to Pradyot. He then came to see me and giving me the news in a grave tone said, "I have got his last offering. Can I go and give it to the Mother upstairs?" It was arranged accordingly. I observed how he tried to control himself.

### **"I am Going to My Work"**

He had returned from Calcutta a few days before 17th November. We were having tea on his spacious terrace and were talking about things in general. The talk turned to politics and Indira Gandhi. He was visibly moved and said, "Tears are very rarely seen in my eyes. But when I heard of Indira Gandhi's death, two drops rolled down."

Jaya, Pradyot's secretary and "daughter" in Calcutta who was in charge of Lakshmi's House, had accompanied him, for she feared that everything was not well with him. She had noticed that Pradyot was suffering from a certain kind of malaise in his throat and was covering his neck with a piece of cloth. This was an ominous sign for her, for on the eve of his first heart attack she had observed the same symptom. Hence she did not dare allow Pradyot to come alone, though he did not like that she should take any trouble. He said to her, "Mother is my doctor and

faith my medicine." On reaching the Ashram, Jaya at once apprised Dr. Datta of her misgivings. Dr. Datta, heart specialist and Pradyot's physician, took his blood and sent it to the General Hospital for examination. The report was not bad. The E.C.G. taken by Dr. Datta showed only signs of ischaemia; the heart was all right. When I went to see Pradyot, he had a cloth wrapped round his neck. He said, "Some uneasiness is there in the heart-region, but more than that this feeling of compression around the neck is rather unpleasant. What is it due to?" "Some congestion, probably," I replied, but I was not sure. "The heart is all right, the doctor says," he said, and repeated it more than once as if to give reassurance to himself. Since there was no relief, Dr. Datta had his blood examined again, in our Laboratory. Now it was discovered that the haemoglobin content had gone up to a frightening degree. The doctor prescribed the specific drug, but its effect, he said, would be visible after a week. The other way was to let out a certain quantity of blood. This was, of course, turned down.

Gargi related to me that one day when she and Pradyot were returning from their usual visit to the Ashram, Pradyot started sweating and was on the point of collapse. At once a car was fetched and he was put into it. She asked the driver to take a few rounds along the seaside. When they returned home, Pradyot asked, "What happened to me?" It seems he had been in the habit of going out of his body, and had now been totally unconscious of the surroundings.

The 17th was Darshan Day. As others, he visited the Mother's Room. On the afternoon of the 18th he was to come to my birthday party. Suddenly at noon he turned up with Gargi and asked me to excuse him from attending the party, for he wanted to avoid the crowd. This was not his way. Naturally I protested saying, "How can that be? Come then at the very end." I missed the hint that he needed rest. He came, however. There were a few people. He took very little food. Somebody proposed to take our photograph. That was the last one of us together. Next day, when I went to see him, I learnt that the doctor had advised him not to move out of the house, particularly not to climb stairs. That meant he should not come to the Darshan of the 24th. He was discouraged.

To buck him up I said, "There are still a few days to go. Besides, it doesn't matter much." On the afternoon of the 22nd I went to see him; I found that Gargi and Jaya were chatting with him and gently massaging his feet. In the lulls of the conversation it was as if he were trying to control his pain. He asked Gargi to show me the Mother's letter telling him, "An unshakable faith in the Divine's grace and no disharmony can resist that action." Datta arrived and took his blood pressure. After a short while, Pradyot went to the bathroom; Gargi followed him. I was told later that since the afternoon he had been taking a drug for heart-pain almost every hour. From the bathroom he went back to his bedroom and sent for us. I found him tired but he said he was free from pain. Then, surprisingly, he added, "But if pain recurs at night, I don't know if I shall be able to bear it." Datta replied, "No, no, there won't be pain. I am sticking this new medical plaster below your heart-region;

it will prevent the pain. You can take also the tablet if needed. I shall come back at 9 p.m.” As I had to come away, I said, “I’m going, Sahib. Keep well.” He stretched his hand and gripped mine. That was not his habit. It was I who always would say, “Sahib, give me your hand. Your hand is so soft!” Truly so; it was the small hand of a child. Who would say it was an engineer’s hand? Did his gesture mean that it was farewell for good?

Next day, the 23rd, I had finished my Samadhi work at 4 a.m. and was going back to my room when I saw Dyuman waiting for me. I thought he wanted news of Pradyot’s condition. Instead it was he who delivered the dreadful news: “Pradyot passed away last night at 11:30.” “What?” I cried. “Yes,” he repeated. I was stunned. I felt my eyes grow moist. Dyuman continued, “I was called at night. They asked me to inform you. I said that you must be sleeping and I would give you the news on my return. I saw that Datta was giving intravenous saline or glucose. Suddenly at one time Pradyot started up restless and the next moment everything was quiet.” Dyuman and I went at 4:30 a.m. to see the body. Pradyot was lying calmly on a spacious bed, like a prince, the Mother’s picture with the lion at his head. A martyr to the Divine Cause!

Later on, I was told that when Datta had arrived he had noticed Pradyot’s blood pressure going down. He had given an injection and a saline transfusion. He had not given up hope. But Pradyot woke up from sleep in an agitated condition and was as if looking for something or somebody. Gargi was called. She sat by his side; Pradyot rested his head in his daughter’s lap. She asked him to utter “Ma, Ma.” He opened his lips and made an inaudible movement and breathed his last.

In the first part of the night, that is around 11 p.m., while I was sleeping in Sri Aurobindo’s room, I had a dream. Through a window I saw in the eastern sky in the midst of clouds a bright gold sun. I wondered what it meant. It happened to be the time when Pradyot’s soul had left.

The previous night Pradyot had chatted with his intimate circle till midnight. He was in a self-revealing mood and reiterated his conviction that one does not die unless the soul decides. He confided that though he had been able to change his pain into ananda, transformation had not been possible; that is, he had tried but could not cure his disease. He also said to Gargi that the coming night would be critical for her. Then in a somewhat dreamy tone he recalled that the Divine had given him name, fame, friends, position, money—things that man desires. He had nothing to complain of. He had been taken care of by some invisible Hand in all his ventures. However, he had quite his fill of disease: gastric ulcer, colitis, prostate-enlargement and lastly blood-cancer. Then, I don’t remember in what context, he embraced Gargi and exclaimed, “I shall sell you at such a price that nobody will be able to buy you.” This is *à propos* of a story told by a friend on the 18th during my birthday party. Pradyot liked it very much. It runs thus. A small boy was playing some pranks. His mother, vexed, slapped him gently. The boy was hurt and said, “Ma, I shall sell you off.” She replied, “Come, do it. Let’s go.” She made herself ready. The boy

got frightened at her seriousness, pondered a moment and added, "All right, but I will set such a price on you that nobody shall be able to buy you." The mother embraced him and covered him with kisses.

The body was to be taken for cremation in the afternoon of the 23rd. Gargi heard clearly her Daddy's voice, "You people must not go there. I am going to my work. The sadhak always looks forward, not backward."

This was Pradyot's true soul-scripture: work, service. Instead of dragging on with a disabled frame, to come back equipped with a new body was the secret of his departure. So, when he had realised that his illness was incurable and there would be a painful existence, he was not sorry to go.

Very few, except his most close ones, will miss him in the Ashram, for his services to the Ashram are not known so well. To quite a number he figured only as one of the Trustees. But Lakshmi's House and the D.V.C.L. at Calcutta (including the Kuljean firm) bear the seal and signature of his creative genius. His unwavering faith in the Mother's Force was the key-stone of his success. And no sacrifice was too much—even the sacrifice of his life. His self-effacement used to come out so well even in his childlike pranam at the feet of the Mother. The Mother has showered on him many compliments. I have mentioned some. Another was, "You don't suffer from *amour-propre*."

"Daddy" 's children and members of the Sri Aurobindo Institute of Culture at Calcutta paid their respectful homage with love and gratitude to their beloved "Daddy" and Chairman of the Institute at Lakshmi's House on 2nd December, 1984. On this occasion, we have been told, there was a large gathering; all the front-rank engineers of Calcutta, besides other notable persons, had come to offer their tribute. Sadhan, his *mānasaputra*, said that he could never repay what he had received from Pradyot. Let us hope these devoted children of their "Daddy" will hold aloft the torch he had lighted, burning and mounting for ever.

Finally, as I look back in my reminiscent mood, I see this pageant passing across my mind's screen. Two boys get admission into the Government School of the town in the same class. A romantic friendship grows up between them, though they are different in every way: nature, character, complexion, intelligence and religion. One vital, the other mental and moral. And that friendship is devoid of any outer expression. Five years they grow together yet hardly five words do they exchange. After the Matric Exam., one friend joins the Gandhi movement, and goes to jail, the other obtains a scholarship and joins the College. After a year both meet in the same College—one studying Arts, the other Science. Passing their Intermediate, they sail for England, one to Edinburgh, the other to Glasgow. There their barrier of reserve and shyness falls down and the foreign climate knits them closer. The engineer takes up, after his return, a job in Tata. The doctor goes to Burma, the bond almost forgotten. After three years the doctor comes away to the Ashram and tries to draw his friend there. The friend responds, but the root is not deep yet. A sudden change intervenes; he inclines towards the Mother. From then, the sleep-

ing child-angel in him awakes and he comes closer to her, the other is hooked on to Sri Aurobindo. The child-angel, nourished by the Mother's love, develops like the arc of the moon and when on the verge of becoming the full orb the moon sets to rise elsewhere. The other remains behind to write his reminiscence. He asks himself, "What mystery bound us together?"

(Concluded)

NIRODBARAN

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### A CORRECTIVE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I want to draw your attention to "A Note to the Editor" entitled "Sankaracharya on the Glory of Siva" published on p. 491 of the November 1984 issue of *Mother India*. According to the "Note" the Sivamahimastotra was written by Sankara, but to my knowledge it was written by Pushpadanta. What is published is the thirty-second verse, but the fortieth verse shows that Pushpadanta was the author of the stotra. There is an interesting story behind the origin of the stotra. Pushpadanta was a Gandharva who used to steal flowers from a king's garden for worshipping Siva. One night he was in danger of being caught. Then he poured out his heart before the Lord Siva and was saved through His grace.

RAJESHWAR G. OJHA

Editor's Note: The above information has been verified by the Sanskrit scholar Jagannath Vedalankar of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

# THE INSPIRATION OF *PARADISE LOST*

(Continued from the issue of March 1985)

9

## Early Milton and what *Paradise Lost* might have been—Clues from early Sri Aurobindo

*SAVITRI* is in many respects unMiltonic. However, Sri Aurobindo's early blank verse which assimilates several influences into a varied vigorous originality mingles *Paradise Lost* most with the chief immediate influence—Stephen Phillips's *Christ in Hades* and *Marpessa*—and the principal background influence—Kalidasa's *Vicramorvasie*. And this blank verse is of particular interest because of a certain question raised by Sri Aurobindo in connection with Milton: "One might speculate on what we might have had if, instead of writing after the long silence during which he was absorbed in political controversy until public and private calamities compelled him to go back into himself, he had written his master-work in a continuity of ripening from his earlier style and vision. Nothing quite so great perhaps, but surely something more opulent and otherwise satisfying."<sup>1</sup> What exactly the ripe result would have been like may be gauged from other remarks of Sri Aurobindo's in the same context.

He speaks of the intellectual age dawning on English poetry after the Elizabethan outburst of the Life-Force. But, according to him, "we have at first an intermediate manner, that of Milton's early work and of the Caroline poets, in which the Elizabethan impulse prolongs itself but is fading away under the stress of an increasing intellectuality."<sup>2</sup> "Milton's early poetry is the fruit of a strong classical intellectuality still touched with the glow and beauty of a receding romantic colour, emotion and vital intuition. Many softer influences have woven themselves together into his high language and rhythm and been fused in his personality into something wonderfully strong and rich and beautiful. Suggestions and secrets have been caught from Chaucer, Peele, Spencer, Shakespeare, and their hints have given a strange grace to a style whose austerity of power has been nourished by great classical influences; Virgilian beauty and majesty, Lucretian grandeur and Aeschylean sublimity coloured or mel-  
lowed by the romantic elements and toned into each other under the stress of an original personality make the early Miltonic manner which maintains a peculiar blending of sweetness and beauty not elsewhere found in English verse."<sup>3</sup> The later Milton, though achieving a greatness of speech and form, "has turned away from the richer beauty and promise of his youth, lost the Virgilian accent, put away from him all delicacies of colour and grace and sweetness."<sup>4</sup> Perhaps it is a bit of an

<sup>1</sup> *The Future Poetry* (1953), p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114-5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 116.



exaggeration to say that delicacies of colour and grace and sweetness have *all* been put away: the early sensuousness and tenderness break in at several moments. But even through them runs a sterner temper than before, and where the inspiration is not plenary a dry breath often blows over the play of sensation and emotion, preventing them from vivifying, as they should, the intellectual motive. And Sri Aurobindo is right in that whatever sensuousness and tenderness are actually there cannot be called either the high consummation of the Virgilian accent haunting the youthful ventures, or the final ripening of the early romantic strain whose variegated roots were in the soil of the Elizabethan imagination.

To illustrate the sort of fulfilment on a large scale which a continuity of development from the young to the old poet would have brought about, we may be tempted to look at some lines in *Paradise Lost* which Milton's nephew Edward Phillips has marked as written a number of years earlier when the poem was tentatively projected not as an epic but as a tragedy. Aubrey's *Memoir of Milton* gives precision to Phillips's piece of information by reporting Phillips himself as putting those lines 15 or 16 years before the epic commenced. This takes us from 1558, the date of the epic's commencement, to 1542, just five years after Milton's early poetry had come to a close with the writing of *Lycidas*. The lines in question, therefore, may suggest themselves as a stage of direct growth from that poetry to the epic. But are they really so? They are ten lines standing at present in Book IV: they form part of Satan's speech on first alighting on the Earth and seeing, among the glories of the newly created stellar universe, the Sun full-blazing at noon-day. Here they are:

O thou that, with surpassing glory crowned,  
 Look'st from thy sole dominion like the god  
 Of this new World—at whose sight all the stars  
 Hide their diminished heads—to thee I call,  
 O Sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams,  
 That bring to my remembrance from what state  
 I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere,  
 Till pride and worse ambition threw me down,  
 Warring in Heaven against Heaven's matchless King!<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps there is a slightly tenderer, more romantic note in a few phrases of the passage, but it is hardly the promise of a temper and style much different from what we observe in Satan's first speech in Hell to Beëlzëbub:

If thou beest he—but Oh how fall'n! how changed  
 From him!—who, in the happy realms of light,  
 Clothed with transcendent brightness, didst outshine

<sup>1</sup> Bk. IV, 32-41.

Myriads, though bright—if he whom mutual league,  
 United thoughts and counsel, equal hope  
 And hazard in the glorious enterprise,  
 Joined with me once, now misery hath joined  
 In equal ruin; into what pit thou seest  
 From what highth fall'n...<sup>1</sup>

Or that description of Satan:

His form had not yet lost  
 All her original brightness, nor appeared  
 Less than Archangel ruined, and the excess  
 Of glory obscured: as when the sun new-risen  
 Looks through the horizontal misty air  
 Shorn of his beams, or, from behind the moon,  
 In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds  
 On half the nations, and with fear of change  
 Perplexes monarchs.<sup>2</sup>

The temper and style which we are looking for and which Milton failed on the whole to develop from his early work are, to my mind, discoverable in Sri Aurobindo's *Love and Death*, written in his twenty-seventh year—discoverable everywhere except in those moments when Kalidasa's glorious voluptuousness comes to the fore. Of course, we cannot expect to illustrate our point by any passage very closely parallel in matter to anything in *Paradise Lost*. We can only make a suggestive comparison and what is to be seized is the difference of expressive spirit within a context of broadly affined moods. We shall take two passages from Milton. One of them is already familiar to us in part:

Me miserable! which way shall I fly  
 Infinite wrath and infinite despair?  
 Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;  
 And, in the lowest deep, a lower deep  
 Still threatening to devour me opens wide,  
 To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heaven.  
 O then at last relent! Is there no place  
 Left for repentance, none for pardon left?  
 None left but by submission; and that word  
 Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame  
 Among the Spirits beneath, whom I seduced

<sup>1</sup> Bk. I, 84-92.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. I, 591-9.

With other promises and other vaunts  
 Than to submit, boasting I could subdue  
 The Omnipotent. Ay me! they little know  
 How dearly I abide that boast so vain,  
 Under what torments inwardly I groan!"<sup>1</sup>

The other passage is Adam's outcry on being shown by Michael a prevision of "many shapes of Death" and "the ways that lead to his grim cave":

O miserable Mankind, to what fall  
 Degraded, to what wretched state reserved!  
 Better end here unborn. Why is life given  
 To be thus wrested from us? rather why  
 Obtruded on us thus? who, if we knew  
 What we receive, would either not accept  
 Life offered, or soon beg to lay it down,  
 Glad to be so dismissed in peace. Can thus  
 The image of God in Man, created once  
 So goodly and erect, though faulty since,  
 To such unsightly sufferings be debased  
 Under inhuman pains?<sup>2</sup>

Now, keeping both the passages in mind, with the turns of manner in which the thought and the emotion are expressed, let us appreciate the stylistic spirit of Ruru's exclamation in Sri Aurobindo's *Love and Death* at the piteous sight of the people in the Underworld where he has ventured in search of his prematurely lost Priyumvada:

O miserable race of men,  
 With violent and passionate souls you come  
 Foredoomed upon the earth and live brief days  
 In fear and anguish, catching at stray beams  
 Of sunlight, little fragrances of flowers;  
 Then from your spacious earth in a great horror  
 Descend into this night, and here too soon  
 Must expiate your brief inadequate joys.  
 O bargain hard! Death helps us not. He leads  
 Alarmed, all shivering from his chill embrace,  
 The naked spirit here. Oh my sweet flower,  
 Art thou too whelmed in this fierce wailing flood?  
 Ah me! But I will haste and deeply plunge

<sup>1</sup> Bk. IV, 73-88.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. XI, 500-11.

Into its hopeless pools and either bring  
 Thy old warm beauty back beneath the stars,  
 Or find thee out and clasp thy tortured bosom  
 And kiss thy sweet wrung lips and hush thy cries.  
 Love shall draw half thy pain into my limbs;  
 Then we shall triumph glad of agony.<sup>1</sup>

The Miltonic mode of speech is quite evident. Enjambment is freely practised: the grand style is at command (especially from line 6 to the middle of line 11): exquisite yet power-suffused rhythm is constant and reaches a climax in

Art thou too whelmed in this fierce wailing flood?

We may put together a series of exclamations too. The one in the opening line of each passage is quite evident; there are also "O then at last relent" and "Ay me!" in the first Milton answered by "O bargain hard!" and "Ah me!" in the Sri Aurobindo. But, in the midst of resemblances to *Paradise Lost*, we have a most distinct play of colour and grace and sweetness, an absolutely unmistakable Virgilian accent. Caught up into the general classical sense of form, the disciplined language and technique, we perceive the romantic poignancy, the emotional vital intuition: it is as if Milton matured the rare rich promise of his life's dawn within the spacious "intellectual being" of its evening—it is as if, recalling and addressing that promise, he worked with the resolution of Ruru, to bring

Thy old warm beauty back beneath the stars.

No doubt, the "intellectual being" is more active in *Paradise Lost* than in *Love and Death*: the latter is not charged directly with philosophical values, its temperament is more akin to the Elizabethans than to the poets of the next age, but just as in the early Milton the intellect and its imagination manage to make the moods of the Life-Force a material for reflective brooding, so also Sri Aurobindo in *Love and Death* infuses the play of idealistic passion and aesthetic sensation with thought-values though as yet the intellectual vision has not fully detached itself to bring a poetry of its own. In some places we find even a subtler operation of thought-values assimilated into the sweep of high emotion, than in Milton's more clearly intellectual poetry. Look at those verses of Milton on old age, Michael's words to Adam:

So may'st thou live, till, like ripe fruit, thou drop  
 Into thy mother's lap, or be with ease  
 Gathered, not harshly plucked, for death mature.

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Poems and Plays* (1942), Vol. I, p. 106.

This is old age; but then thou must outlive  
 Thy youth, thy strength, thy beauty, which will change  
 To withered, weak, and grey; thy senses then,  
 Obtuse, all taste of pleasure must forgo  
 To what thou hast; and, for the air of youth,  
 Hopeful and cheerful, in thy blood will reign  
 A melancholy damp of cold and dry,  
 To weight thy spirits down, and last consume  
 The balm of life.<sup>1</sup>

Now listen to the lines on old age in *Love and Death*:

Not as a tedious evil nor to be  
 Lightly rejected gave the gods old age,  
 But tranquil, but august, but making easy  
 The steep ascent to God. Therefore must Time  
 Still batter down the glory and form of youth  
 And animal magnificent strong ease,  
 To warn the earthward man that he is spirit  
 Dallying with transience, nor by death he ends,  
 Nor to the dumb warm mother's arms is bound,  
 But called unborn into the unborn skies.<sup>2</sup>

Even the extreme note of intellect transfigured into intensest spiritual movement that we have in

Those thoughts that wander through Eternity

seems compassed by *Love and Death* amidst its other qualities:

Long months he travelled between grief and grief,  
 Reliving thoughts of her with every pace,  
 Measuring vast pain in his immortal mind.  
 And his heart cried in him as when a fire  
 Roars through wide forests and the branches cry  
 Burning towards heaven in torture glorious.  
 So burned, immense, his grief within him; he raised  
 His young pure face all solemnised with pain,  
 Voiceless. Then Fate was shaken and the Gods  
 Grieved for him, of his silence grown afraid.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bk. XI, 535-46.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. III.

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

Here, together with the pervading majesty, there comes the sheer transcendent revelation of word and rhythm which that Miltonic line examples: I mean Sri Aurobindo's phrase—

Measuring vast pain in his immortal mind.

And perhaps the whole passage illustrates most completely, though in a somewhat subtler fashion than those already quoted, what *Paradise Lost* might have been if Milton had written it in a continuity of ripening from his earlier style and vision instead of putting the romantic glow of the Elizabethans far behind him. I say "most completely" because one of Milton's grandest passages can be picked out for comparison to it as a whole. The ones we have so far juxtaposed with citations from *Love and Death* have shown Milton in a slightly mixed form, Milton ascending and descending, his top not quite constant. Now we can represent him by lines which have been considered some of the loftiest in the language—the description of Satan's army of rebels:

Cruel his eye, but cast  
Signs of remorse and passion, to behold  
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather  
(Far other once beheld in bliss), condemned  
For ever now to have their lot in pain—  
Millions of spirits for his fault amerced  
Of Heaven and from eternal splendours flung  
For his revolt—yet faithful how they stood,  
Their glory withered; as, when heaven's fire  
Hath scathed the forest oaks or mountain pines,  
With singèd top their stately growth, though bare,  
Stands on the blasted heath.<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to decide which passage is more nobly conceived and executed, and which of the two analogous similes more stupendously splendid in originality of application. It is even difficult to distinguish the Aurobindonian grand style from the Miltonic. Yet a very sensitive perception can feel that there passes through the Aurobindonian a faint quiver of beauty, a secret breath of sweetness, a touch part Virgil part Shakespeare and part Spenser, which the Miltonic with its austerer accent has all but lost to power and greatness.

Not that Milton's passage is the least bit inferior in poetic quality, nor can we regret that Milton wrote it with the temper and style characteristic of his old age. All we can say is that if he had retained, more actively than he occasionally did, the earlier double-strained soul and manner—if he had kept as a regular element the glow and grace which his semi-romantic youthful verse carried in a blend with the

<sup>1</sup> Bk. I, 604-15.

clear cogency of the classical intelligence turning upon life from its own centre of reflective vision—the poetic level of *Paradise Lost* would have been more opulent in the bulk and more equally sustained in perfection of living speech. For, although Milton never fails as an artist, the art-intensity tends to be less inward in many parts as *Paradise Lost* progresses. In his early work, in spite of the fact that his substance is often slight because as yet his imagination rather than his whole self and mind is using the poetic form, the art-intensity is such as can be more consistently alive. This is due to the drive and warmth of the colourful Life-Force caught by him from the just preceding Elizabethan age. That Life-Force, if it had continued in the later work, would not only have brought a richer expression: it would also have saved him from stumbling time and again over what Sri Aurobindo terms “the rock of offence that always awaits poetry in which the intellectual element becomes too predominant, the fatal danger of a failure of vision.” The Life-Force has a more natural impulsion than the thinking mind: hence the sight and insight needed for genuine poetry can be stirred more continually when the poetic part in one is functioning from within the vital being or in close contact with it even when the intellectual being is lord of one’s self.

And there is one particular element which the intellectual Milton, by outgrowing his vital being’s Elizabethan inspiration, lost to the radical detriment of the substance of his great epic. A poem dealing with Heaven and Hell requires in its substance a more than conceptual-imaginative sense of worlds other than earth: it may achieve fine poetry without such super-sense, but it will not be heavenly or hellish enough, its truth will lack the lights and shadows belonging to the inner dimensions of reality. We have already noted two things about Milton *vis-à-vis* these dimensions. First, although there is a *Kubla-Khan* quality in parts of *Paradise Lost*, a quality not sufficiently appreciated by critics, what we get is not so much the occult seizing the outer consciousness as the outer consciousness infusing itself into the occult and almost taking away the sting of strangeness. Secondly, Milton’s mind at the time of his epic is powerful in thought but with little subtlety in the matter of the supra-intellectual; it has hardly the mystical bent, it is more philosophico-theological and ethical than genuinely spiritual: usually it has, as Sri Aurobindo has said, “no subtle echoes, no deep chambers”. And yet the early Milton held promise of something subtle, something deep, a strangeness beyond or behind the mind. We have inklings of it in a felicitous phrase like

Then long Eternity shall greet our bliss  
With an individual kiss,<sup>1</sup>

or,

And looks commercing with the skies,  
The rapt soul sitting in thine eyes,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *On Time*, 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> *Il Pensero*, 39-40.

where, by the way, “commerce” is piquantly used for the first time in English as a verb signifying “commune”. And we get hints of the same strangeness in the rhythmic no less than verbal suggestions of the couplets,

Oft, on a plat of rising ground,  
I hear the far-off curfew sound,  
Over some wide-watered shore,  
Swinging slow with sullen roar<sup>1</sup>—

or those blank verses,

What might this be? A thousand fantasies  
Begin to throng into my memory,  
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,  
And airy tongues that syllable men’s names  
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses<sup>2</sup>—

or just the line:

And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell...<sup>3</sup>

Then there is that conceit transfigured into rich and strange about musical “raptures” breathed into the air:

How sweetly did they float upon the wings  
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,  
At every fall smoothing the raven down  
Of darkness till it smiled!<sup>4</sup>

Of course, we must realise that Milton is not speaking of darkness as a raven, a crow-like bird, being smoothed down by the musical cadences as by soft stroking fingers. Such an image would lead to the grotesquerie of the raven smiling. “Raven” here is an adjective, standing for “glossy black” and qualifying the noun “down” which means “soft hair”: the down belongs to darkness and it is darkness that is caressed into smiling. A queer yet fascinating secret presence is conjured up and the music which is the theme becomes too a live thing. Nor does Milton’s *Comus* stop with them. He goes on to compare the ravishing effect with what supernatural creatures like his mother “Circe with the Sirens three” used to produce in “prisoned souls”, lapping them in Elysium:

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Comus*, 205-9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 250-3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 260-4.



Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense,  
 And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;  
 But such a sacred and home-felt delight,  
 Such sober certainty of waking bliss,  
 I never heard till now.<sup>1</sup>

In lines 3 and 4 here we have an extremely apt pointer to a state of being which a mystic who has made God a constant glow and intensity in his heart might well speak of. No doubt, Comus is far from any sainthood: still, the words show the simple yet subtle precision of a verbal artistry which may prove adequate to profound spiritual purposes.

Finally, we may instance those famous verses from *Lucidas* whose exact meaning has not yet been determined by critics. They come soon after Milton has talked of the greed of the new clergy, the failure of the pastors to look after their flock of believers. After recounting this clergy's slothful wickedness Milton caps the description of the harm done with the semi-mysterious lines—

Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
 Daily devours apace, and nothing done<sup>2</sup>—

lines which perhaps have the Church of Rome in view: the word "wolf" may be an allusion to the legendary she-wolf which suckled the founders of Rome. But the real "baffler" arrives soon on the heels of these lines. Milton breaks out into a most sombre warning:

But that two-handed engine at the door  
 Stands ready to smite once and smite no more.<sup>3</sup>

This is terrific. The presence of an unerring and inevitable doom as if from weird regions beyond the human confronts us. Various explanations have been offered, including the extremely prosaic one that makes the two-handed engine the Parliament with its two Houses—the Commons and the Lords. Whatever Milton may have had in mind, he has given us a most stirring symbol through which something beyond all earthly authority gets manifested: a touch of the Omnipotent is felt in a profoundly mysterious manner.

There is nothing in *Paradise Lost* like it: the nearest we approach to it is the vaguely awesome ending of the phrase about Satan when he collects all this might and poises himself to oppose the angelic squadron trying to hem him round:

His stature reached the sky, and on his crest  
 Sat Horror plumed...<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 260-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Lucidas*, 128-9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-1.

<sup>4</sup> Bk III, 488-9.

Next to this phrase in dreadful suggestion is the more elaborate passage on the second of the two Shapes Satan meets at Hell's gate when he tries to get out:

The other Shape—  
 If shape it might be called that shape had none  
 Distinguishable in number, joint, or limb;  
 Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,  
 For each seemed either—black it stood as Night,  
 Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell,  
 And shook a dreadful dart: what seemed his head  
 The likeness of a kingly crown had on.<sup>1</sup>

Later we come to know that this Shape is Death. The picture is very impressive and deserves the praise of Coleridge for its abstract vagueness whose appeal to the imagination has a subtle force which concrete, clearly defined imagery would lack altogether. But the depths in us are not directly shaken: the outer mind shudders and transmits some shadow of its feeling to the depths. The same thing happens when we read of Satan and Death ready to fight:

So frowned the mighty combatants that Hell  
 Grew darker at their frown...<sup>2</sup>

And it is interesting to note that in this context Milton has words harking back to part of the "engine"-verses in *Lycidas*:

Each at the head  
 Levelled his deadly aim; their fatal hands  
 No second stroke intend...<sup>3</sup>

But there is not the mystery of the two-handed engine's single smite to end anything. And a more relevant comparison, showing the same lack, is made possible by two passages in another context in *Paradise Lost*. The first actually lends some precision to the *Lycidas*-image by its picture of the angel Michael, the leader of God's armies, fighting against Satan and his rebel hosts:

the sword of Michael smote and felled  
 Squadrons at once: with huge two-handed sway  
 Brandished aloft, the horrid edge came down  
 Wide-wasting...<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bk II, 666-73.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 719-20

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 711-3.

<sup>4</sup> Bk. VI, 260-3.

This is magnificently formidable yet not mysteriously so; and, although we know Michael to be a divine warrior and we cannot identify the retributive power in the *Lycidas*-lines, we feel a greater and more fundamental wrath conveyed by them. The force of this wrath goes home deeper also in their reference to the decisiveness of the blow than in what Milton says soon after the mention of the angel wielding his long heavy sword with both hands. Now Michael and Satan are pictured as opposed, their swords about to slash down:

Together both, with next to almighty arm  
Uplifted imminent, one stroke they aimed  
That might determine, and not need repeat...<sup>1</sup>

Here we have the exact equivalent of

Stands ready to smite once and smite no more.

But with all its power it has not the same reverberations in the secret places of the heart.

Sri Aurobindo's *Love and Death* has something of them in the midst of the later Miltonic manner. We may cite a few passages:

He turned and saw astride the dolorous flood  
A mighty bridge paved with mosaic fire,  
All restless, and a woman clothed in flame,  
With hands calamitous that held a sword,  
Stood of the quaking passage sentinel.<sup>2</sup>

... caverns  
That into silent blackness huge recede....<sup>3</sup>

Shapes he saw,  
And heard the hiss and knew the lambent light  
Loathsome, but passed compelling his strong soul.<sup>4</sup>

He entered and beheld a silent hall  
Dim and unbanded; moving then like one  
Who up a dismal stair seeks ever light,  
Attained a dais brilliant doubtfully  
With flaming pediment and round it coiled

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 316-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Collected Poems and Plays*, I, p. 107.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.      <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Python and Naga monstrous, Joruthcaru,  
Tuxuc and Vasuki himself, immense,  
Magic Carcotaca all flecked with fire...<sup>1</sup>

How wanting in the occult atmosphere, though poetically powerful and mythologically significant, is Milton's account of Satan and his devils in Hell changed into serpent forms!—

Dreadful was the din  
Of hissing through the hall, thick-swarming now  
With complicated monsters, head and tail—  
Scorpion, and Asp, and Amphisbaena dire,  
Cerastes horned, Hydras, and Ellops drear,  
And Dipsas (not so thick swarmed once the soil  
Bedropt with blood of Gorgon, or the isle  
Ophiusa); but still greatest he the midst,  
Now Dragon grown, larger than whom the Sun  
Engendered in the Pythian vale on slime,  
Huge Python...<sup>2</sup>

To return to Sri Aurobindo—a passage which is perhaps the most successful in *Love and Death* in the *genre* we are illustrating:

He held the flower out subtly glimmering.  
And like a living thing the huge sea trembled,  
Then rose, calling, and filled the sight with waves,  
Converging all its giant crests; towards him  
Innumerable waters loomed and heaven  
Threatened. Horizon on horizon moved  
Dreadfully swift; then with a prone wide sound  
All Ocean hollowing drew him swiftly in,  
Curving with monstrous menace over him.  
He down the gulf where the loud waves collapsed  
Descending, saw with floating hair arise  
The daughters of the sea in pale green light,  
A million mystic breasts suddenly bare,  
And came beneath the flood and stunned beheld  
A mute stupendous march of waters race  
To reach some viewless pit beneath the world.<sup>3</sup>

Not weird, but semi-spiritually suggestive like some of the early-Milton effects, is the line in the above passage:

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. X, 521-31.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 104-5.

A million mystic breasts suddenly bare.

*Love and Death* has other subtleties too, with a pointer soft or strong to strange profundities of which the young Milton held the vivid promise:

This passionate face of earth with Eden touched...<sup>1</sup>

But Love has joys for spirits born divine  
More bleeding-lovely than his thornless rose...<sup>2</sup>

He heard  
Through the great silence that was now his soul  
The forest sounds...<sup>3</sup>

And the young mother's passionate deep look,  
Earth's high similitude of One not earth...<sup>4</sup>

Men live like stars that see each other in heaven,  
But one knows not the pleasure and the grief  
The others feel: he lonely rapture has,  
Or bears his incommunicable pain.<sup>5</sup>

Wonderful age with those approaching skies.<sup>6</sup>

Enough of what Milton might and could have written! We may now ask why he did not write it and what interfered with the natural curve of his development.

(*To be continued*)

K. D. SETHNA

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100-1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND ITS ADVENT IN COLLECTIVE LIFE

(Continued from the issue of March 1985)

## The Formula of Psychic Worship

BEFORE the third phase in the upward march of the human race could begin, an ascetic formula came into existence with an exaggerated emphasis on the spiritual ideal. The intellectual and ethical disciplines, which the typical formula imposed on the collective life, contributed to a general improvement in consciousness and equipped it with a will and capacity to lose itself in the pursuit of the spirit in total disregard of the demands of outer life. Once the mind has a capacity like this to surpass the limitations of life, its natural tendency is to work out that possibility into an extreme position. Buddhism and Shankara utilised this endowment in the society and arrived at a lofty result by converting the spiritual seeking into an exclusive occupation. Describing the turn given by the ascetic formula to the collective life, Sri Aurobindo writes: "The ancient Aryan culture recognised all human possibilities, but put this (*i.e.*, the spiritual possibility) highest of all and graded life according to a transitional scale in its system of the four classes and the four orders. Buddhism first gave an exaggerated and enormous extension to the ascetic ideal and the monastic impulse, erased the transition and upset the balance. Its victorious system left only two orders, the householder and the ascetic, the monk and the layman, an effect which subsists to the present day".<sup>1</sup> The monk followed the path of renunciation, whereas the layman the path of desire. They are opposite paths and cancel each other. Unless the layman gives up the path of desire, he is not qualified for the path of the ascetic, the path of renunciation. The path of desire leads to suffering, whereas the path of renunciation puts an end to suffering and grants freedom. For Shankara also the society had only two divisions: those who followed the ideal of knowledge, *jnana* and those who followed the ideal of works, *karma*. They are mutually exclusive and have nothing in common. Knowledge leads to liberation, whereas works generate bondage and suffering. In teaching and practice there is hardly any difference between Buddhism and the thought of Shankara. The difference is superficial and terminological. This is the reason why Shankara was denounced by his opponents as a Buddhist in disguise. Since the spiritual ideal was presented not as the highest of the ideals but as an exclusive aim in opposition to those of social life, neither Buddhism nor Shankara favoured a natural or gradual transition from one group to another group, from the householder group to the ascetic group. As a result of this antagonism not all individuals could accept the call of the spirit and renounce life for the sake of an otherworldly ideal. In practice this left out a vast majority of people with the deep impression that they were not cut out for the ideal

<sup>1</sup> *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, Centenary Ed., p. 71.

life. Therefore the ascetics were the only ones who had the privilege to enter into the kingdom of spirit and enjoy its benefits. As all exaggerated movement carries its own remedy, the ascetic formula, when carried beyond the normal limits, gave rise to another formula as a corrective to the ills of imbalance.

As a protest against the extreme asceticism which kept the spiritual ideal at a great distance and advocated a total renunciation of life as the condition for the spiritual seeking, the formula of psychic worship came into existence. In fact the extreme asceticism was itself an offshoot of the qualified asceticism of the typical formula which had held the view that the spiritual practice could commence only at the final stage of a man's life when he had severed his connections with the society. The one important thing which facilitated the emergence of the psychic formula was the opening of the inner vital of the collective man which the previous cycle had prepared by awakening his inner mind. Both the inner mind and the inner vital are aspects of the subliminal part of man's personality which is closer to the soul than his surface personality. Since the inner mind was already open, it became possible now to open the inner vital also in the collective man. So the advent of the psychic formula marked the commencement of a third phase in working out a large harmony between the spirit and the human mass. The chief architects of this formula were the founders of Saivism and Vaishnavism.

According to the psychic formula the Spirit is not only beyond the world but behind all forms, all movements, all events and all circumstances. They are the manifestations of the supreme Person, and the aim of his manifestations is to realise in a myriad forms the delight of union through a hide-and-seek game with his souls. The devotee sees the Divine everywhere and at all times; he always walks in the company of the Divine and never misses his presence. Whatever he sees and hears, whatever he touches and senses, all of them become that which he worships and serves. All is turned into the image of the Divine and perceived as its dwelling place. He does all works as an offering to the Divine. "In this way of doing and seeing, all works and all life become only a daily dynamic worship and service of the Divine in the unbounded temple of his own vast cosmic existence".<sup>1</sup> He accepts "the fullness of life and the world in its entirety as the play of the Divine" and "offers up the whole being into his possession".<sup>2</sup> Since life itself becomes an expression of the Divine and a means of reaching the Godhead, the original conflict between spirit and life disappears and gives way to a true harmony. When the Lord says in the Gita, "doing all actions for my sake, verily thou shalt attain perfection", he offers the psychic formula as a principle of harmony.<sup>3</sup>

Our cultural history bears witness to the fact that whenever the collective man turned towards the psychic formula, he did so under the impact of a great spiritual teacher. The teacher's influence and example brought the subliminal in him to the

<sup>1</sup> *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Cent. Ed., p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 548.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 12-16.

surface and established the psychic rule over his outgoing thought, action and relations. The entire human race was moulded in the light of the Dharma formulated by the teacher and all activities in the society acquired a deeper spiritual content and significance, though in this process the existing social structure and its hierarchy were left undisturbed. Since this process of inner reorientation was extended to all levels of existence and all forms of activity in the society, the human race as a whole could advance towards the divine ideal. All could participate in the great march towards the spiritual ideal, irrespective of what they did or which group they belonged to. This is borne out by the Gita when it says that even a *sudra* or *chandala* can rise to spiritual perfection by turning his life Godwards.<sup>1</sup>

But the psychic formula has its own limitation. Though the subliminal becomes predominant in the collective man through the work of the teacher, it is obliged to operate through the gross and obscure outer mind because the latter is the chief instrument of outgoing life. As a result the collective man is always exposed to the risk of surrendering to the rule of the outer mind when it has an occasion to assert its supremacy over the subliminal. In fact this is what happened many times in our cultural history. As soon as the collective man was removed far away from the living influence and visible example of the teacher, his subliminal self receded to the background and the outer mind reestablished its rule in his life. This is a major setback in the psychic formula: though it has the unique capacity to take the entire human race in its fold, it cannot establish itself as an enduring force which nothing on earth can conquer or weaken. But the problem has been provisionally solved by a despatching of spiritual teachers from time to time whose work is to revive the Dharma and prevent the race from falling apart and wandering aimlessly. This is the true significance of the famous verse in the Gita where the Lord says: "I am born from age to age for the enthroning of the Dharma".<sup>2</sup>

But is it possible for the eternal Dharma to be an enduring force in humanity? Is it possible for the outer mind to accommodate the eternal Law in such a way that the latter can hold its sway over humanity unhindered and unvitiated by the opposite forces? From Sri Aurobindo's point of view, we may answer the question in the affirmative and say that if evolutionary Nature successfully calls down in full measure the native light and power of the supreme Spirit and manifests it in the earth life, the problem is likely to be solved.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that with the full descent of the original creative power of the transcendent Spirit a new order of beings, who have risen to the greater spiritual level of the earth nature by a radical transformation of their mental, vital and physical parts, will come into existence. Under the natural leadership of these new beings called gnostic beings by Sri Aurobindo the spiritual future of the human race will be shaped. As the transformation of their outer nature implies a transformation of the general mind, life and body nature also, they will possess a high degree

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 9-32.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 4-8.



of world-mastery through their self-mastery. This will enable them to be inwardly in contact with the inner self of things and beings and act even upon their gross nature with an uncompromising independence. Inevitably their influence "on earth would fall upon the life of Ignorance and impose harmony on it within its limits".<sup>1</sup> The untransformed part of humanity will be responsive to the light of the gnostic beings. It would become more and more evolved and lead "upwards the less evolved in a true fraternity born of the sense of the manifestation of the One Divine in all beings".<sup>2</sup>

Since the gnostic individuals are evolutionary beings and not preparatory ones who periodically appear on earth for a limited purpose of assisting a certain line of growth which makes an evolutionary change possible, their influence on the mass of the ordinary people will be not only decisive but uninterrupted. The subliminal self of the collective man will readily respond to this influence and impose a certain measure of inward life on him. An aspiration for growing into the law of spirit will steadily flower in him. Therefore the question of the fading of the Dharma in the absence of the spiritual personality does not arise. As the transformation in the outer existence of the gnostic being has brought about a change in the mental, vital and physical environment, the eternal Law becomes an enduring force in the mass, unvitiated to a certain extent by the obscurity and grossness of the outer mind. This resolves the problem of the law of the outer mind overpowering the law of the inner being to a significant extent, though the conflict between the two still persists, because the central will of humanity is firmly established in its outer existence. However, this will prepare the human race for an increasing involvement in inward life and an ultimate growth into the law of spirit because that is what it ought to seek. For "not a humanity leading its ordinary life, what is now its normal round, touched by spiritual influences, but a humanity aspiring whole-heartedly to a law that is now abnormal to it until its whole life has been elevated into spirituality, is the steep way that lies before man towards his perfection and the transformation that it has to achieve".<sup>3</sup>

(Concluded)

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine*, Cent. Ed., p. 1064.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1013.

<sup>3</sup> *Social and Political Thought*, Cent. Ed., p. 226.

# A FUTURE MEETING

## A SYMBOLIC MINI-PLAY IN THREE ACTS

*Scene:* A wooded retreat in India near the seashore.

*Characters:* (The five female characters in this play are embodiments in human form of the five major personalities of the Supreme Mother described or suggested in Sri Aurobindo's *The Mother*. Here they have been given Sanskrit names and the following is a description of their appearance and outer manner.)

SATYA (*Truth*, corresponding to Mahasaraswati. She has black-golden hair and a smile that seems to light up the four directions. She is wearing a flowing red and white gown and is almost always actively moving about doing some form of service or other.)

LAVANYA (*Beauty and Harmony*, corresponding to Mahalakshmi. She has beautiful wavy dark tresses that flow over her shoulders. Her sari is shaded in pale green, mauve and pale pink and painted with roses. Her deep-set lotus eyes radiate an inner felicity and she speaks softly, putting forth subtly soothing vibrations on all around. She is not as physically active as Satya, but when she does move it is always with a serene and lovely grace.)

SHAKTI (*Power*, corresponding to Mahakali. She is dressed in bright red and gold and moves quickly from place to place like a ball of fire. She is gentle in her speech, though, and full of an infinite sweetness. She is the manager of the group and all gladly follow her will.

JYOTI (*Light*, corresponding to Maheshwari. She has whitish-golden hair and is dressed in a pale blue sari, trimmed delicately in gold. She has always an air of deep tranquillity and transcendent Wisdom. She looks on all with a high and ennobling compassion that puts the heart at rest.)

PREMANANDA (*Love and Delight*, corresponding to Hladini Shakti, or RADHA. She has short dark hair and her face gives the impression of a glowing globe, the *bindu*, the individual point that yet contains the universal. As the Soul she wears golden-pink and radiates Bliss.)

*Setting:* These five have come together in a propitious spot in India both to enjoy one another's company by interpenetration of their individual powers and to unify their aspiration to bring down their higher world on earth. They are all Powers delegated from the Supreme but they have never before joined together in one place on earth to bring down a divine Manifestation and they first need to know one another thoroughly before they can hope to do anything together. Although they are essentially one, in their outer natures they have yet to discover the *details* of that Oneness, that is, in the Supramental Manifestation on Earth.

The three movements of the Play are that they share their mutual aspirations, Powers and Knowledge, they pour out their Power and Light of Vision over the

world, and then they foresee what each will realise in their experience of being always together.

### Act I

(The five "Goddesses" are seen standing together in a clearing amidst high sky-pointing trees. They spontaneously join hands and move clockwise in a circle for three rounds going progressively faster and then they drop hands and all laugh.)

PREMANANDA: I am soaring up above the trees, carrying our aspirations like a mounting flame to the Supreme Mother. I do so pray that our being together may bring down the Highest for the earth and man.

SHAKTI: Oh yes, without doubt, this is a tremendous moment in the earth's history and I put all my Force behind your flaming Love, Premananda, to bring a powerful response to your prayer. There is no doubt that the time is now to do the thing and the Force of Consciousness is there for all who seek it. My will is for a purification of men and things and a putting forth of my divine energy for all who are ready to receive it and become its instruments. I want to uplift men by the power of my love and rid them of all that weakens and subdues them.

JYOTI: I too seek the way to set men free from bondage to their lower nature. I want them to see the Light of Consciousness that has dawned now on earth and to open themselves to it. I even want to help men transcend what is in the universe itself and seek the Absolute, to find there the Source of all Light and Life and to feel the freedom and wideness of living on the heights of their consciousness. Also I want to give them the Light to run their practical affairs in a wiser, juster, more compassionate spirit. A few men I have lifted up, but I want to raise them all, at least to the heights of their humanness.

LAVANYA: When I look out on the world I feel most the need to refine the sentiments of people and teach them the importance of making all the accompaniments of life as beautiful and inspiring as possible. I want people to understand that Beauty is Power and is of the greatest utility too, for in an environment of spiritual beauty all activities go on more harmoniously; things get done more easily and quickly and people's hearts are ennobled and purified. Many people look on beauty as an accoutrement to be added when all the practical things are done, if you have the time and money for it, but really it is an attitude and a way of being and should take the central role and be carried out in all the functions of everyday living, from hanging the clothes to washing the dishes.

SATYA: Oh yes, Beauty and Harmony, that is what allows me to manifest, for only then can the vibration of Truth come through in its crystalline purity without being deviated. I want men to understand that Truth is a vibration, an inner state, not a dogma or a particular way of looking at things. Through the ages I have tried to iron the crookedness out of men's affairs but they have only succeeded in distorting what I have tried to tell them. Now, though, I can begin to make myself heard and,

because of Sri Aurobindo's Work, can begin to penetrate the consciousness of mankind at last. I need a hundred complete men to fulfil the manifestation of Truth on earth and I wish for the swift consummation of their preparation.

PREMANANDA: We have each given the general lines of our aims, yet there remains the way to approach the problems in their details.

JYOTI: There is only one way that I know of and that is simply to join together and invoke inwardly the Supreme Mother from whom we have all come and let Her pour out the Force which will then take its unique course in each of us.

SHAKTI: Yes, let's go now to the seashore and make our collective call and then pour the energy we receive into the ocean from which it will then be carried over the earth.

(The five clasp hands again in a warmth of unity and leave the wood in the direction of the sea.)

## Act II

(On the broad white beach of the pale sapphire sea the "Mothers" stand together looking out over the broad expanse and then they concentrate deep within and call for the Supreme Mother to manifest Her Power through each of them for Her work in the world. Each of them pronounces a vision of the future to ensure the effectivity of what she wants to realize on earth.)

SHAKTI: O Divine Mother, Thy Power now goes forth to shatter every obstacle and to break the confines of space so that Thy Consciousness may pervade every mind and heart. Thy Puissance captures and enraptures the souls of men so that they cannot escape Thee and Thou wilt lovingly force them to obey Thy Will. Nothing more can stand now against this mighty onslaught. I see Thy waves of Force pouring and pouring over the wide earth and heavens, sweeping the past away at one stroke.

JYOTI: I see the spaces wide and deep with Thee and Thou art seated with Thy Light in the least atom of Matter. I see Thee shining in the cell of every living organism and in the undulations that are streaming from Thy high transcendent source above all manifested things. I see Thee as the Ocean of Mystery that is waiting to be discovered within all things. Now Thou art at last beginning to unveil Thyself. I see Thee too as the play of all colours in all the worlds of being and the great artistry of Thy unfolding manifestation.

LAVANYA: I see Thee, O Mother, in Thy New Body of Bliss standing in its slim whiteness at the apex of the worlds and at its base, and in between I see the goddess forms that are taking birth on earth and beginning the great sowing of divine Beauty on every side. I see every aspect of earth-life and every corner of earth-territory becoming harmonious and lovely, devoid of all sorrow, suffering, and ugliness. I behold the manifest glory of Thy Love filling every heart and soul and flowing from

there into Life and Matter itself to heal its rigidity and strife.

SATYA: This is the future that is more totally true, this the Divinity unveiling itself in form at last, that earth creatures may dwell together in peace. I pour my supramental substance now over the world and let its rays penetrate every opening in any world to stabilise there the principle of Immortality. I sanctify earth with my beneficent streams and I pronounce now the inevitability of the New Creation's victory over that which is old. This sea is my calm, vast, luminous Reality in which I dwell forever and now I cast it like a net over all men.

PREMANANDA : I declare this moment the Advent of the Supreme Bliss as a new world of Being universalised in the consciousness of the earth and organised around the individual soul. Its presence here now ensures the ultimate victory in the transformation of the body within one lifetime, the opening of a new possibility for all men. With this new principle active here now a new freedom opens to all who will receive it, a liberation from the bondage of the lower nature, a possibility for ascent to ever higher realms of Consciousness, Beauty, and Delight, and the bringing down of the Supreme Ananda to effect whatever forms it will in earthly life. Our Work has reached its consummation in this. Let us now retire to our New Home and reveal what new things we have learned about ourselves and what we must further do.

### Act III

(The group enters a translucent dwelling made of a new malleable orange-gold substance which is set in the tranquillity of a wooded clearing and is seen to be slowly changing colour as time goes on. All sit in a circle on a soft ivory carpet in the otherwise bare room.)

LAVANYA: This house will gradually have furnishings of the most beautiful kind as we live together here and our consciousness grows. Each object will manifest as a sign of some progress we have made as a collectivity and in this way we will live in an environment full of the meanings of our spiritual life. I will be in charge of what comes and goes so that all is harmonious, soothing, and beautifully true. I see that as my responsibility now, to take care of the art enhancement for all of you.

PREMANANDA: I feel inspired to say that my work is Love, to daily shower you and all the world with the highest Love and Ananda that flows through me, in order to keep your souls bright and your Spirits unveiled and winging. I hold all of you within myself and know you with the subtlest substance with which I am in contact. Since we were at the sea and my Bliss became universalised, I am no longer concerned primarily with my own sādhana, as such, but find my true Self in all of you. Each day will be a new discovery now and a delight without end.

SATYA: I am the Truth all beings hide and the Light of the undying suns. I am now spread everywhere and in this new house I will daily penetrate all of you and subtilise your very bodies until they shine like the walls of this dwelling with

self-luminosity. I am Sat-Chit-Ananda Brahman, One with all things equally. I carry you all on my vast bosom of Peace. I will make you all everlasting on earth and fortify your inner beings with the eternal foundation so that you may play out your force on that basis. You all rest ultimately on me.

JYOTI: My Light is one with you, O Satya. You use me in spreading yourself and now at last I have found my fulfilment in you. My Light of Consciousness now pervades all the worlds even down to what was once the subconscious and inconscient. No more need earth suffer from her myriad ills, for we are here. I will day after day work to sustain this new progress and increase its magnitude.

SHAKTI: I lay now the seal on all of your Words with all the Might of the Supreme. I sanction the transmittal of all this verbal Energy into a New Manifestation in form. I wrap you all in the powerful Love of the Divine Mother and will look after you from hereon out to see that all the functions of daily life go on quickly and well, and in so doing I will be managing the Universe as well. Our retreat has now become eternal and we will be together forevermore.

(Murals of majestic beauty appear on the walls and celestial music fills the ears. The curtain does not close. The goddesses sit in an indrawn state until the audience either joins them or disappears from view.)

SAMPATTI

## **'HALF AN HOUR WITH THE DIVINE'**

**A TALK GIVEN BY NAVAJATA ON JANUARY 3, 1981**

ONE of the greatest problems of man in both life and yoga is to build communion with the Divine, to build a line of communication by which he can receive guidance and act accordingly. Man doesn't know that he doesn't have to build the line of communication, he doesn't have to do communion himself. The Divine builds the line of communication, the Divine reaches out to you, puts your consciousness in order, says what has to be said and does whatever has to be done. Only, you have to get plugged in, you have to just switch on to Him. That is the only thing needed from your side. All the rest He does.

This is what Sri Aurobindo has said, 'Man should consent to be spiritualised.' So the main thing is your consent, 'I want to be changed, I want to be perfected, I want to be divinised', and to put yourself into His hands, in a very open manner. All your desires, all your preferences, the desire even to serve humanity, the desire even to do good, comes in the way of your opening to the Divine, of your switching on to Him.

The best thing I can advise you from a very practical angle is: When you get up in the morning, spend half an hour with the Divine. Make it a rule of your life: 'I want to spend at least half an hour with Him, just with Him.' Whatever your concept of Him, whatever your own shortcomings, whatever your diffidence, doubt, lack of confidence as to how there could be any easy way to establish a communion or communication with Him, despite all this, make a resolution: 'I want to spend half an hour with the Divine every day in the morning; I want to talk to Him; put my problems before Him; put my aspirations before Him; just as I would put them to somebody dearest to me, the most competent, an omniscient and omnipotent person.' Try it for one day and see the result; for one day, and you will know what happens to you and what can happen to you. Just half an hour one day. And if you can do this properly for one day, you will feel like doing it the whole day, the whole night, the next day and all your life.

This is the first and decisive step in your unity with the Divine for those of you who are ready, who are really feeling the need to be guided by Him, really feeling the need to be perfected. You know, in our consciousness there are established from childhood and from birth and from previous lives a number of things on the mental plane, which obstruct our communication with the Divine. But once you have established this rapport, He puts them right, He cleans them away and everything becomes different for you. So, know that there is no other easy way to clean up your difficulty, every other way is of great tapasya, great difficulty. But this kind of communication with Him, communion with Him, will help you swiftly to see how He puts things right in your consciousness.

You will be surprised, when you try to talk to Him, how even your own imper-

fections of thought disappear, even your imperfections of desires disappear, they disappear automatically. You feel you just can't talk to Him, you feel what you are trying to say to Him is imperfect, it has to take another shape.

So this is what I would like to tell you very briefly: learn to communicate with the Divine and be with Him at least for half an hour every day. This is the best contact you can have during your 24 hours, the half-an-hour you spend with Him. So I would, on this occasion, invoke The Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's special blessings for all of you that you may open to the Supramental Light and Force and that Sri Aurobindo's Consciousness may awaken and settle down in your mind, life and body, and manifest itself so that each one of you may become a radiating centre of His presence and His manifestation. May His blessings be with you.



## THE ONE WHOM I REMEMBER THESE DAYS

PROBABLY all of us like to think back to childhood, back to childhood, back to the events of bygone days.

When our father first went alone to the Ashram we were very small and Pondicherry seemed like a foreign country to us. After his return from that far-away land there was only one thing that both satisfied and filled us with great joy—and that was to hear story after story about the Ashram. Father brought to us the very atmosphere of it all. There was something wonderful about the smile on his face, a special smile which entranced us, as he described the Ashram environment.

As we gathered around to hear his each and every word, he spoke of Nolinida—Nolini with “da” meaning elder brother. A question arose in my young child’s mind. So like a little philosopher I inquired, “Papa, if you call him Nolinida, then is he not our uncle?”

“Yes, yes my child,” he replied absent-mindedly as he continued on with his narrative.

Well, my father’s answer satisfied me completely. I felt so proud that I soon went to my circle of little friends to announce my discovery! And many a happy moment was thereafter spent in day-dreaming about my special uncle whom I had never met.

Many years have now passed since those sweet events of childhood. Now I see many things that I did not notice in those days of old. For instance I know today that jewels are costly and that pretty bits of coloured glass have no value.

Yes, I have changed in several ways. But the joy of that childhood discovery of having an uncle in Pondicherry has remained with me. When I remember Nolinida today I am still a little girl remembering her uncle.

By the time I actually met Nolinida in person I had become quite a big girl. It was on my first visit to the Ashram. How often I remember that day early in the morning when I went to the Ashram with my father to see him. I trembled within as I crossed the Ashram courtyard, my stomach fluttering in anticipation. Beyond the courtyard we proceeded to his small room in the far corner of the Ashram block. Seeing us from some distance, Nolinida motioned to my father.

“Come,” he said, a wonderful smile emerging from under that famous moustache. What affection poured out in that one word of his and what charm in that smile! At first sight I somehow felt such a presence. There was something that made one take notice of his every movement. He wore his dhoti drawn up and draped over both shoulders. I could sense the white of his dhoti mirroring an inner purity.

Over the ensuing years I found him to be a serious man who spoke very little. In his insistence on Truth, he could tolerate no insincerity or falsehood. Perhaps for that reason there were those who mistook his occasional abruptness for hardness, unable to sense the deep love that flowed out from within him.

When with children he became like a child—to which the Ashram children

responded accordingly. He was very affectionate with them, and they loved him very much. He once remarked that after the arrival of children in the Ashram, its very atmosphere had changed.

I knew of a small boy who was quite naughty and afraid of no one. He was very fond of Nolinida and called him Dadu or grandfather. The boy brought all his complaints to him without hesitation. Nolinida would listen with minute attention to each and every detail, and then would hand him a toffee—as if that would solve everything. And perhaps it did.

There were some lovely evenings in the mid-sixties when he would sit outside his small room, reading out articles he had written to those of us who had gathered around. How do I explain the beauty of that atmosphere? The deep resonant sound of his voice brought to me an image of lilies and a feeling of celestial delight. I still carry within me the scene of his stately figure sitting there draped in white and the sound of his sonorous, chanting-like voice. Perhaps *that* was how the Vedic Rishis had sounded!

And then, in his last days, he was in a deep, trance-like state. His voice had taken on an indescribable quality. There was a special sweetness to its timbre and a depth which was impossible for me to fathom. How many times had I stopped outside his room just to hear the sound of that wonderful voice!

And finally, that day last February when I saw our precious Nolinida reposed in eternal sleep I found myself wondering: where were the signs of death? No. It seemed as if his very body had taken on a golden hue!

I stood there amazed, and in my heart offered my pranams to him.

RINA MITRA

## HE

He is One but diffused in many,  
He is many but upheld by One.  
He transcends the universe,  
Yet permeates each atom of it!

He is ever wakeful,  
Looks through suns and stars!  
He is in deep sleep,  
And dwells in nether regions of earth!

In the dark cavern of matter  
Sleeping seeds yearn for light.  
His anklets tinkle to wake them up  
With the rhythm of time!

He brings forth war and storm  
To display His destructive dance.  
Heedless of human sorrows  
He inflicts suffering on all!

He is cruel and hard-hearted,  
Indifferent to pang and cry—  
Yet His compassion knows no bound  
And floods the world with love.

He is unique and absolute!  
Still unending are His hues and forms.  
While life lags in deserts  
Winged beauty adorns the sky.

To some the world is an illusion  
And He is nonexistent here!  
But to the integral Knower  
He is everywhere and Himself the world.

O Thou, the supreme Seer,  
Thy vision of Truth is unfailing!  
Manifest, O Mother of Radiance,  
And bridge forever earth and heaven.

## CATS, HUMANS AND THE DIVINE MOTHER

OUR neighbour, who does not speak with us,  
has a beautiful white tom-cat.  
In our house, where we don't act thus,  
a sweet little pussy has found her mat.  
In the morning he comes to allure  
her, singing his passionate love-song.  
She readily answers his early amour.  
They have never resentment or sense of wrong.

Why cannot people, wise as a cat,  
after a quarrel forget what they said?  
Their hate is not of any practical use.  
They hurt the Divine, they waste and abuse  
His love for the humans, his unending grace.  
Instead of separation there are uniting ways.  
We don't have to hamper and bother about,  
Only open to His will and forget our pout.

All contradictions and opposite things  
are the agents of truth on heavenly wings.  
Exclusiveness cannot create a new town  
and garnish its head with the Spirit's high crown.  
If all goes together at the same time,  
we might overcome the fences and climb  
to the top of the mountain which pierces the clouds.  
Let us trust in the Mother and efface our doubts.

URSULA

## FRONTIER

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

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

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

ARVIND HABBU

## LIFE THE GREAT ADVENTURE

WHEN we joined the Ashram, both the school and the physical culture department were in their nascent stage. At the beginning the Ashram was meant only for grown-up people who strictly did yoga and led an outwardly quiet life. But the Second World War intervened and parents desiring to keep their children out of danger asked permission of the Mother to send their children to Her Ashram. North India was vulnerable but Pondicherry far to the south seemed out of harm's way. This move reminded me of how during the early critical period of the war British children were sent out to Australia and Canada in case the island would really be taken by the enemy. At least a few thousand Britons would still survive and if possible reclaim their island in some distant future. We had seen ship-loads of smiling children sailing away from their home to survive.

Now rose the question of the children's education and how to keep them occupied. To a serious yogic institution, the problem was to create a congenial atmosphere where children could grow up to be normal people with a healthy mind and body. Then they could choose whether they wanted to do yoga or, better still, do the Mother's work here or elsewhere. I myself had met a number of people who had told me that they had been very much attracted by Sri Aurobindo's yoga and left to themselves they perhaps would have joined the Ashram. But what about the children? Would it not be unjust to put the children in an institution the life of which did not suit them at all?

So started the Mother's Herculean task to make the atmosphere of the Ashram congenial to the children. She who had been living so long at so high a level must have found it an ordeal to come down and work for children and ordinary people, ordinary in the sense that they did not come for yoga but to look after their children. In this terrific work the Mother tapped the energy of the two stalwarts Pavitra and Pranab.

Pavitra—P. B. St.-Hilaire at one time—whom the Mother had appointed Her private secretary, She appointed him now Director of Education in the Ashram's school. The Mother had Her own yogic idea of how children should be brought up. Pavitra had studied all the modern systems of education. A sober, polite and dignified person, a student of the Polytechnique in Paris, he was just the person the Mother's new work demanded. Incidentally, Pavitra had been with the Mother's son André in the Polytechnique and was naturally his friend. The story runs that Pavitra was fed up with the modern sophisticated life in Paris. He was looking for someone to lead him to an inner life. He went to Tibet to see if the Lamas could help him. Still unfulfilled, he happened to arrive in Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo, finding him a soul who had done yoga in the line of Paramhansa Dev, invited him to stay on. So P. B. St.-Hilaire became Pavitra (Pure). Thanks to his receptivity to the Mother's inspiration we now have an educational system in the Ashram worthy of note.

Long ago a little boy used to come to the Ashram for Darshan with his parents. Outwardly nothing was visible, yet it seems the Mother had marked him for Her

own. The year he came after graduating, the Mother did not allow him to go back, although the family was planning to send him to Europe. The Mother must have seen in him a wonderful medium through whom She would be able to realise one of Her cherished dreams—the dream of creating an elaborate physical culture department for the Ashram. This was Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya. Pranab to all and Pinu to his family, he is endearingly called Dada by the children. He proved a versatile genius for physical culture with his proficiency in many branches of it and his interest in all.

The place opposite Nanteuil where we stayed was a wooded area where only “ghosties and ghoulies” might live. The Mother bought the land and turned it into a beautiful playground. With Pranab in charge the foundation was laid. The Mother Herself was always present in the evenings and the progress was swift. But, while the Mother lived, Pranab had little time since he had to do duty in the Mother’s room eighteen hours a day. Now he has built a gymnasium touching the skies and rooms to the specification of international standards. Sanat and I were at once captured by this silent figure who was always with the Mother wherever She went, either just walking behind Her or holding Her huge handbag. The Mother arranged elaborate functions on his birthdays. Sanat and I stood near the grass waiting for the people to disperse and then go forward to wish him “Bonne Fête”. To our utter surprise he looked here and there and then suddenly came forward as if he knew why we were waiting. Before we could utter our greetings he himself stretched out both his hands and held ours. We were completely won over. The children put up a great placard “Bonne Fête à Dada”. I found it wonderful, for I had all along wanted a Dada of my own. The Mother made him Director of Physical Education.

A few books, all offerings, were all the Ashram had in the way of a library, a room beside what is today the Reception Hall. Within a few months the Mother bought two large buildings, one for the school and another for a proper library. As luck would have it, a German had arrived from Tahiti just a few months earlier. He was not the Nazi type, rather he had fled the Nazi regime. He did not remind us of steel helmets and bayonets but of Goethe and Max Müller and Hegel and Fahrenheit. He was a counterpart of Pavitra. It was a delight to ask him a question. The Mother put him in charge of the library. One day we heard that he was desirous of seeing Germany which he had left as a little boy. We sent little presents for his mother whom he would be seeing there. To my utter joy he came back with a box of delightful chocolate for me. No present from Germany would have made me happier. For, as little children we had tasted a lot of genuine German and English and Swiss chocolate. But after the war such a delicacy was *non est* in India. Another year he went to Tahiti and brought shell-articles for the Mother, for which he had to pay several hundred rupees as surcharge. I too had my share, in the form of a beautiful fish-and-waves. I had sent a sandalwood casket for his wife, for I thought that it was the most fitting present from India.

CHAUNDONA S. BANERJI

# THE GOLD SEEDS

## A SHORT STORY

THE king woke up with a start. There was a sudden commotion at the palace in the dead of night. He shook off his sleep, got out of his bed, found his shoes and put them on. He was about to make his way out to probe into the matter. But the Chief of the Palace Guards who came rushing into the king's chamber stopped him.

The chief's face was panic-stricken. Gasping for breath he blabbered: "Majesty... thief... burglary...thief ran away... stolen jewels."

"What?" shouted the king. "Burglary in my palace! What were you and your assistants doing when the thief entered? Where were you sleeping when he broke open the treasure-chest? Aren't you ashamed to tell me that the thief ran away with the jewels?"

The chief trembled at the king's angry words that came like venom-tipped arrows. He had no answer to give. All that he did was to bend his head in shame.

His silence only irritated the king further. He lost his temper completely and bawled out: "Run in search of the burglar. Before sunrise I want him alive. Else your head will not be yours. Do what you will but bring the culprit here."

The chief guard was so baffled that he uttered no word but immediately plunged into action. He gathered all his assistants on duty and commanded them to go in diverse directions in search of the burglar and report to him before sunrise. And finally in a tone filled with fright he said: "I will be waiting for you all under the banyan tree near the deserted temple by the riverside. Come with the burglar if you want your heads on your shoulders."

Fear gripped the guards. They rode with a determination to come with the culprit. The chief made himself busy in the hunt.

The birds on the tree-tops began to chirp. Somewhere a cock crew and it was reciprocated by another. The stars disappeared one after another and the darkness from the sky slowly began to give way to dawn.

The chief's heart started to throb against his chest. He felt that his hours were numbered. Yet a little hope lurked somewhere in a corner of his mind. He rode to the deserted temple and halted under the banyan tree near the river. He eagerly awaited the arrival of his assistants. He prayed to God and pleaded with Him to help him trace the burglar.

The guards came one by one. But each answer was the stereotyped "Sorry! I couldn't find the burglar."

The answer fell like a whip-lash on the chief's back. He became restless. He clicked his tongue, pouted his lips, gritted his teeth and wiggled his fingers: "How to solve this problem?" He said without looking at anyone: "Should we die for our negligence?"

The guards stood staring at one another trying to find a way to escape the king's



wrath. Just then a loud yawn that came from the deserted temple arrested their attention. All eyes turned to the entrance of the temple. A half-naked man stood there. He took no notice of the guards and stood facing the East. He lifted his arms above his head, brought his palms together and worshipped the Sun which was already on its punctual parade. The man had a towel tied to his waist. His legs were lean like those of a stork and his torso exhibited all his bones. His hair was matted on the top of his head and he hadn't shaved his chin for days.

The chief's eyes brightened. A smile of hope was seen on his face. Pointing at the half-naked man he cried to the guards: "Catch him. At last we have caught the culprit."

The guards were hesitant. Their conscience didn't allow them to obey their chief. While all stood perturbed, one among them mustered courage and said: "Certainly he is not the man we encountered at the palace last night. This fellow looks like one suffering from famine but that burglar who escaped from our clutches looked as if he was the cause for it."

"Hold your tongue," retorted the chief. "Do what I say... Is this not the only way to solve the problem? We shall sacrifice him to save our necks from the sharp edge of the butcher's knife... Let's drag him to the king and say that this was the fellow who burgled the royal treasure-chest... The king has so much confidence in us that he will without a second thought believe us." He then cautioned his guards, wagging his forefinger: "I warn you... Do not betray yourselves if you are particular about your heads."

The guards nodded their heads in approval. They hid their consciences in their scabbards. While the poor fellow was still at his prayers they handcuffed him. He was so horrified that words refused to find an outlet. When the guards dragged him, he stammered and pleaded not guilty. The heartless captors took no heed. On the way he shouted for help. But no citizen ever bothered about him and in their eyes a poor man with only a towel on deserved no notice.

When the news of the capture of the burglar reached the palace the King was still in bed snoring. The Queen, out of sheer enthusiasm to report the matter, shook her husband from sleep and said in a frenzy: "The burglar is caught... The burglar is caught. Thanks to our duty-conscious guards. How would you like to punish the criminal?"

The heaviness of sleep was so much upon the King that he only half-heard what his wife said. The snoring came to a sudden halt. He turned on his side and without opening his eyes he drawled: "Hang him." The Queen heard the snoring again.

She came out of the bed-chamber. The Chief Minister and the chief of the palace-guards stood in the hall awaiting orders from the King. They pricked their ears.

The Queen threw a meaningful smile at the chief guard. Turning her eyes to the Chief Minister she repeated the words of her husband.

The chief guard heaved a sigh of relief. When the Chief Minister passed on the order to the hangman the accused cried for mercy and blubbered out: "Do I look

like a burglar? Do I deserve such a punishment for being poor and homeless? I am innocent of any crime..." But the hangman dragged him away. Like the helpless goat that follows the butcher to the altar, the poor fellow went ruminating over his fate.

He shrugged his shoulders when an idea dawned on him. Doubtless it was heaven-sent. He knew the margin of safety was slight, but he had a margin.

He made the hangman run to the Chief Minister, the Chief Minister to the Queen and the Queen to the King.

The King could not believe his ears. He beamed with joy: "I should be an idiot to hang such a great man. He is certainly a boon to us." So saying he ran to the scaffold where the half-naked man stood with his hands tied together at the back. The noose hung above his head.

"Untie his hands... untie his hands," shouted the King at the hangman. His order was obeyed.

"Do you really mean what you said?" The King asked the accused.

"Yes, your Majesty. Every word of it. I never told nor would tell a lie in my life," he replied.

"Oh lovely! If you bring your words to action, I will let you go scotfree. You will be given all you need but on no account should you withdraw your words."

"Yes, your Majesty. But on one condition. If you give me all I need."

The King nodded a big 'Yes.'

"To begin with," said the half-naked, "give me an acre of fertile land. Supply me with half a dozen sturdy men with twelve healthy bullocks. They should be under my supervision to till the land to my satisfaction."

"Agreed," said the King.

"Tomorrow being Friday, and that being an auspicious day let the work begin tomorrow at sunrise. The tilling of the land should by all means be over by sunset," suggested the half-naked.

"Give him all he asks. Treat him as our guest," the King commanded his Chief Minister. After a pause he said in a muffled voice, "But don't let him escape."

On the next day at sunrise, the half-naked was escorted to the chosen land. Under his supervision, the tilling began. He gave them special instructions, for the tilling was to be done for a greater purpose. He demonstrated how the soil had to be turned and how deep it should be tilled.

Many citizens and officials including the Chief Minister were witnessing the scene. His instructions and demonstrations created such an impression that everyone looked at him with admiration and respect.

The sky became dusky and the tillers called off work.

"Tomorrow, my Lord," said the half-naked to the Chief Minister, "will be a rest day. And on Sunday at noon the sowing of the seeds should commence. It should be over before dusk. And please be prepared to give me three big baskets full of seeds."

The Chief Minister was stunned at the word "Seeds". Perplexed he asked: "Seeds! What seeds?"

The half-naked smiled mockingly at the Chief Minister and said: "Haven't you heard of the saying 'As you sow, so shall you reap'? If you desire to have a gold harvest, you should sow only gold seeds."

"But where to get gold seeds?"

"Oh! That's simple. Any goldsmith will make them from molten gold... Every seed should necessarily be the size of a grain," advised the man.

"Granted," said the Chief Minister and went to report the matter to the King.

A good number of goldsmiths were busy making gold seeds.

The gold seeds became the talk of the country and there was no one in the land who didn't hear of the great man—perhaps the only one in the whole world who knew the divine secret of cultivating gold in fields.

"Ours will be the richest country in the world," boasted an officer in the court.

"Ours will hereafter be known as the Land of Gold," another puffed up the words.

"If we would remain prosperous forever, we should guard the secret and let no other country know of it," cautioned another.

One among them laughed and jokingly remarked, "Hereafter no one in our country will cultivate foodgrains but we will have enough gold to buy them from our neighbouring countries."

On the morning of the expected Sunday, the King arose cheerfully. He had had a very prosperous dream of buying the whole world with his gold and seen himself its unquestioned monarch. "Last night it was a dream. Today it will be a reality," he fancied.

By the time the sun moved to the mid-sky, a vast crowd had already gathered around the tilled land to see the sowing of the gold seeds. Their spirits elated, many joked and punched each other and they were a gay lot.

The hubbub all on a sudden came to a dead halt, when the palanquins reached the spot. All eyes stood glued to the palanquin in front. Out stepped the King and humbly took his stand by the side of the palanquin. Everyone in the crowd raised their eyebrows when the half-naked man stepped out. What was more surprising to them was the indescribable respect shown by the King towards the half-naked.

The Chief Minister with the courtiers, the Queen with her maidens now reached the field.

The crowd parted and gave way for the royal personages to enter. All of them looked at the half-naked man as though he was from another world.

He threw a smile at the crowd, gazed at the three baskets full of gold seeds and then raised his look towards the sky. "It is time to begin sowing," he said.

Like children listening to a ghost story, everyone became alert.

"Yes. You can begin... How many men do you need to help you sow these gold seeds?" asked the King.

The half-naked man looked at the king and said; "Number does not count here, Your Majesty. Even one is enough if he is honest, sincere and immaculate at heart. Only such a man is fit to sow the seeds. If the corrupt, feigning honesty, makes bold to do this work, an instant death awaits him. Only the man who is certain that he is honest, who is certain that he has never in his life cheated another and who is certain that he has never abducted another man's property is fit to sow the seeds. Only then the gold-yielding plants will grow out of the gold seeds."

The entire crowd stood dazed. The silence was so intense that one might hear even the footsteps of ants.

"I could have done that for you," the half-naked began again. "But your guards have already accused me of burglary... So I am no more honest in the eyes of law. Now, Your Majesty! please send the honest man to sow these seeds."

The King stammered for words and finally said: "I know how honest is my Chief Minister... He will have no difficulty in sowing the seeds."

The Chief Minister began to shiver in his shoes. He scratched his head and no one missed noticing his trembling fingers. "My Lord! who can be more honest than our Finance Minister?" he suggested.

The Finance Minister looked daggers at the Chief Minister who tried to avoid his gaze. Many other ministers and courtiers bent their heads, some looked the other way, so as to escape from the situation. The chief guard moved back and disappeared in the crowd.

"The Queen certainly is the most honest, my Lord", suggested the Finance Minister.

Anger welled up in the Queen. Gritting her teeth she caught the eyes of the Finance Minister and stared them down. She found no words to express herself. All of them looked at her as though they were expecting an answer from her. She beamed at the King and said: "Who can ever be a model of honesty like you, my Lord! I have not an iota of doubt about it... Proceed to sow the seeds, Your Majesty, and allow this land to make the golden harvest."

The King was startled. The half-naked man was enjoying the fun. He bit his nether lip to keep his mouth shut tightly lest he should break into a guffaw. The King gulped down the spittle collected in his mouth. His forehead was pimples with sweat. Turning to the crowd, he proclaimed: "Whoever is honest amidst you can come and sow the gold seeds. Make our country rich. And to the man who comes forward to sow the seeds, half of my kingdom will go as a reward."

Everyone in the crowd looked at one another. The smile had vanished from everyone's face. All of them loved to possess half of the kingdom but none was prepared to die an instant death. The crowd began to melt slowly.

"Your Majesty! Is there no one honest in your kingdom?" asked the half-naked man.

The King kept mum. The half-naked impatiently repeated his question. Ashamed, the King nodded dumbly.

The half-naked asked in a pitiable tone: "Your Majesty! When you do not have even one honest man in your realm, do you, being a representative of God, still desire to hang me for no fault of my own?"

The King had no answer. The Queen stood like a statue. The ministers and courtiers for the first time in their lives understood the meaning of the word 'shame'.

P. RAJA

# STORIES FROM TAMIL LITERATURE

## II. THE KING WITH A GOLDEN ARM

IN those days the kings took personal interest in the welfare of their subjects. They disguised themselves and went round the capital during the night to get first-hand information about the general condition and attitude of the people. They also desired to know if their subjects had any secret grievances against them or their governments.

A Pandian king was thus on his rounds one night. While he was in a certain street he heard voices from a house. His curiosity was aroused. He stealthily walked to the window, hid himself in the dark and eavesdropped.

It seemed that the husband was to leave home for a far-off place early the following morning. He would have to be away for at least three months. The young wife was sad to be left alone. She was very much afraid that something might happen to her during his absence.

“Nothing harmful will happen. You can rest assured.” The husband said. “Our king is a just and benevolent ruler. In his reign there is protection for all.”

The king heard this and was pleased with the confidence the man was placing in him. But that gave him added responsibility. Then and there he decided to keep a watchful eye on that house during his nightly rounds.

All went well for about two months. But one night when the king was passing through that street he heard voices again within the house. He heard feminine giggling and the sound of bangles. Surely the woman was making merry with someone. Since according to the husband’s parting word he was not due to return before three months, this must be someone else, the king thought. Quite impulsively and with some indignation he knocked loudly at the door.

The answering voice that came from within was authoritative. It was the voice of the husband himself. He had returned earlier than intended. The king realised his great folly. He ought to have been a little patient before knocking. Now the position was very delicate. It might bring suspicion on the innocent wife. And the king did not like to reveal himself. Even if he did and explained everything to the husband, still the husband might not believe. On the other hand, if he disappeared before the husband could open the door, the suspicion would be much more strengthened.

What could the poor king do? His brain worked quickly. He stepped down speedily from the house, rushed to every other house on that street knocking loudly at every door. Then he turned round the corner and vanished in a trice.

The man opened the door to find out who it was that had knocked. So did all his neighbours one by one. And they were greatly puzzled. Nothing like that had happened ever before. They could not find any satisfactory explanation and finally assumed that it must be some burglar with a quirk. They decided to meet the king next morning and complain about the mysterious burglar and his knocking.

So the next day when the king was in court all the men from that street came together and complained. The king listened to them patiently and when they were finished he looked at them and said, "I am very sorry that this has happened. But supposing that the thief is caught, what punishment would you like me to give him?" With one voice the men cried, "Cut off the arm that knocked at our doors."

"Let it be so, then. The culprit is here. Let me cut off his arm." So saying the king unsheathed his sword and in a flash cut off his left forearm. Everyone was awestruck. The bodyguards rushed to his help. The palace doctors hurried to stop the blood. Soon the king's stump of a left arm was bandaged. Then the king told the puzzled citizens and courtiers the whole story.

Everyone understood that the king was not to blame, but instead to be admired for the pains he had taken so that no suspicion should fall on the young woman of the house. They also admired the magnanimity with which the king had punished himself. The men who had complained apologized to the king for suggesting such a harsh punishment before knowing the whole truth.

The king was very soon fitted with an artificial forearm, plated in gold. Thus it was that he came to be known as the King with a Golden Arm.

## 12. KARIKAL VALAVAN AND THE FARMERS

Karikal Valavan was one of the most powerful Chola kings. While he was very young, enemies killed his father and young Karikal was thrown in prison. He spent all his early boyhood in enemy prisons. But he was a clever and brave boy and very cunningly he escaped from the last one. With the help of his kinsfolk and friends he gathered a large army, routed all his enemies in a terrible battle and became king at a very young age.

One day a farmer was ploughing his newly purchased field. His ploughshare struck against something hard under the ground. It was buried treasure—a large pot full of gold coins and precious stones. The farmer who was very honest thought that since only very recently he had bought that piece of land he had no right to the treasure. And in those days the state had no claim to such buried luck. So he took the treasure pot to the other farmer who had sold the land to him. The other farmer also was an honest and greedless man and he refused to accept the treasure. He argued that since he had sold away the land he had forfeited his right to anything that lay buried in it. Since both were so honest in their principles each one insisted that the other should have the treasure. Arguments led them nowhere and at last they decided to present their case before their king.

The capital was a long way off. They walked on days together and at last reached the palace. When they were ushered into the court hall they were surprised to find on the throne, not a big and wise-looking king as they had supposed, but almost a boy. They looked at each other and shook their heads skeptically. They paid their obeisance to the king, but without saying anything else they started to leave.

The puzzled king called them back and asked them why they had come and why they were leaving without stating anything. The farmers first hesitated to speak but at last made bold to tell the king that they had a very difficult case to present and that they were afraid that the king being young and inexperienced might not be able to decide the case to their mutual satisfaction.

The young king was not offended. He smiled at them instead. "All right," he said, "but you must not go without your case being decided. I have a very wise and elderly judge who will decide your case justly. If you wait for a few minutes I shall send him to you." So saying Karikal stepped down from the throne and walked into the inner chambers of the palace.

Very soon an elderly judge entered the court. He occupied a seat next to the throne and looked benevolently at the farmers. He was very serene and wise-looking, with grey hair and a flowing white beard. The farmers were impressed and they stated their case.

Wise as the judge was, he was not able to come to any decision. The arguments from both sides were flawless and neither side had the slightest advantage over the other. The judge suggested that they could share the treasure equally between themselves, but the farmers would not agree to that. What could the judge do? The government could take away the treasure from them, but that would be stealing. The judge racked his brains for a long time and then he had an inspiration. He asked the farmers if they had marriageable sons and daughters. It so happened that one of them had a young daughter and the other a fine son. Very tactfully the judge suggested that a happy marriage alliance could be effected between the two families and the treasure given to the young couple as a wedding gift. The farmers saw that under the circumstances this was the best way out. And they were struck by the brilliant idea of the judge. They accepted the decision, thanked the judge and started leaving.

"Wait," the judge said to them, and took his turban off. With the turban went the grey hair of the judge and when the judge again ran his hand through his flowing beard it came away in his hand! And there sat on the judge's seat none other than the young king himself, his eyes twinkling with mischief at the embarrassed farmers.

The farmers knelt before the king and apologised for their earlier impertinence. The king laughed it away and sent them home with some gifts.

*(To be continued)*

M. L. THANGAPPA



## KARPĀSA IN PREHISTORIC INDIA

A Chronological and Cultural Clue

by K. D. SETHNA

WITH AN INTRODUCTION by DR. H. D. SANKALIA

Pp. 200+ ×. Cloth: Rs. 70.

THIS book is a companion volume to the author's first venture in the historical field: *The Problem of Aryan Origins*, published in 1980. It converges on the same goal but by different routes and thus adds strength to the central thesis.

What is attempted is a general revision of ancient Indian history. Taking the aid of archaeological discovery, documentary material and linguistic study, the book seeks to bring about a radical change in (1) comparative chronology, (2) the sequence of cultures and (3) the cultural character of several phases of India's career in antiquity.

By a close investigation of the term *karpāsa* for cotton in Sanskrit literature and by an alignment of its first occurrence with the first ascertained cultivator of the cotton-plant in our country, the body of Indian writing called Sūtras is shown to be in its early stage contemporary with the Harappā Culture, the Indus Valley Civilization, of c. 2500-1500 B.C. The natural consequences are a new date for the R̥gveda which is commonly held to have started in c. 1500 B.C. a thousand years before the Sūtras, and a new understanding of the Indus Valley Civilization as at once a derivative, a development and a deviation from the R̥gveda a millennium after this scripture's beginning in c. 3500 B.C.

However, the argument from *karpāsa* does not stand alone. Its import is buttressed from several other directions. Pointers from India are rendered sharper by significant suggestions caught from the Mesopotamian region with which the Indus Valley had commercial and cultural contacts. In agreement with several scholars but with an eye to more particulars, a name for this Civilization is discerned in the Sumerian records. Meluhha (pronounced Melukhka). It is then matched—again with a closer scrutiny than given before by like-minded scholars—with a name applied from more inland India to people of the Indus Valley for the first time in the Śatapatha Brāhmana which just precedes the earliest Sūtras and would thus synchronize by the new chronology most appropriately with the initial development of the Harappā Culture. The name is Mlechcha which becomes Melakha or Milakha in Prākṛit.

The riddle of the Indus script is also confronted and a fairly long debate is held on the claims of Proto-Tamil and Proto-Prākṛit for the language embodied in it. The latter is adjudged more likely to be the base though other elements as part of the superstructure are not brushed aside.

At the end, as a key-insight, the vocable *karpāsa* itself is disclosed as functioning under a transparent veil in several lists of Sumerian-Akkadian words which are connected with the trade between the Harappā Culture and Sumer.

The above résumé hints at only a few examples of the manifold research pursued along new lines with a sustained thoroughness. Here is a book opening up vista on novel vista for the Indologist without sacrificing any of the scientific rigour with which honest investigation of the past is to be carried on.

Dr. Sankalia of international repute in archaeology writes, among other matters: "There is no doubt that Shri Sethna has made a very intelligent use of his deep knowledge of archaeology and Sanskrit literature." Apropos of the relationship between the R̥gveda and the Harappā Culture, he ends his Introduction: "Shri Sethna's views deserve careful consideration, and should stimulate further research in this vexed problem."

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