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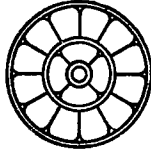
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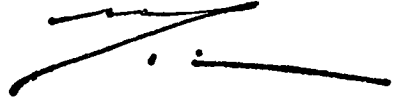


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail.”

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APRIL 4, 1910—APRIL 4, 1985

THE 75th anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Pondicherry was celebrated not only by the Ashram but also by the town in general under Government auspices on a grand scale and with a whole-heartedness that speaks well for the future.

April 4, 1910 is a date which will never be lost

In the dark backward and abysm of time.

For it put history on the way to a method of inner and outer progress whereby the earth's highest ideals would be realised. When Sri Aurobindo made Pondicherry the final seat of the spiritual life to which he had dedicated himself, he set it vibrant with the promise of the Ashram of Integral Yoga. The Ashram as a concrete recognisable body was initiated more than 16 years later under the guidance of Sri Aurobindo's co-worker the Mother. But from the day Sri Aurobindo set foot in Pondicherry he became the focal point of spiritual aspirations from all over India, and a nucleus of the Ashram-to-be was formed. At quite an early stage, seekers of the Spirit from even abroad were drawn here.

There are great cities scattered all over the globe and each has a momentous story to tell. But tiny Pondicherry was graced with a destiny beyond all of them. For nowhere was the seed sown of a new consciousness which could lead man to surpass himself and begin a chapter of superhumanity—or rather of a humanity divinised. Sri Aurobindo brought a spiritual realisation meant to perfect not only the inner self but the complete being down to the very body—not only the individual but the entire collective mass so that a radiant society might take shape from the illumination of the pioneering few.

A prophetic sage of South India had spoken of an *uttara yogi*, a yogi from the north. On Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Pondicherry the prophecy was seen to come true. Owing to the hypothesis of an Aryan invasion of a Dravidian India from outside the country a sense of division had grown up, even though nothing in Indian tradition lent the slightest weight to this supposition. Sri Aurobindo in his writings always combated the popular split into Aryan and Dravidian. He looked upon India as the home of a single race with natural local variations: he even regarded Sanskrit and Tamil as sister-languages deriving from a lost common tongue. His own entry from the north into the south and the establishment of his Yogic life-work in the midst of southerners serves on a profound basic level as a portent of the national unity he always envisioned.

A further vista is opened by the fact that, leaving what then was British India and the stage of his nationalist endeavour to free his country politically from foreign rule, he took refuge from the turmoil of politics in what was then French India. Thus in a symbolic manner a subtle passage was opened between the leading representatives of Western culture who had often been at odds with each other. And this passage brought the East and the West together as well. For he who came from British-held

Calcutta to French-possessed Pondicherry was an Indian *par excellence*.

Yer he was not an Indian in the ordinary sense. Educated in England from his 7th to his 21st year, master of the English language, versed in French literature, not to mention his command over Greek and Latin and his acquaintance with several modern European languages, Sri Aurobindo who came to know with expert depth Sanskrit and with considerable skill a number of contemporary Indian tongues stood as a grand synthesis of the ends of the earth in a pre-eminent Indian form.

The Mother has declared that India will be the spiritual guru of the world. Collaborating with Sri Aurobindo, she must be taken to mean India as a wide-spreading presence from the luminous centre that is Sri Aurobindo—a centre who began shedding light on April 4, 1910 from the little South-Indian town of Pondicherry which promises to be the capital of a unified world-empire of the Divine made human.

Well might this be so in consequence of the life-work of one who did not strive for an individual escape, however superb, into a transcendent Nirvana but took for his guide-line 75 years ago the mighty ideal he has voiced through the heroine of his epic poem *Savitri*:

A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
A soul that has grown one with every soul.
I am a deputy of the aspiring world:
My spirit's liberty I ask for all.

K. D. SETHNA

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON MAY 5, 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Elements of Yoga*, chapter 4 "Sincerity" and chapter 5, "Faith".

Q: What is the right attitude to stick on to this path till the Supramental Truth is realised?

A: There is the psychic condition and sincerity and devotion to the Mother."

What is "the psychic condition"?

THE psychic condition? That means being in relation with one's psychic, I suppose, being governed by one's psychic being.

Sweet Mother, I don't understand very clearly the difference between faith, belief and confidence.

But Sri Aurobindo has given the full explanation here. If you don't understand, then...

He has written "Faith is a feeling in the whole being."

The whole being, yes. Faith, that's the whole being at once. He says that belief is something that occurs in the head, that is purely mental; and confidence is quite different. Confidence—one can have confidence in life, trust in the Divine, trust in others, trust in one's own destiny, that is, one has the feeling that everything is going to help him, to do what he wants to do.

Faith is a certitude without any proof.

Mother, on what does faith depend?

Probably on Divine Grace. Some people have it spontaneously. There are others who need to make a great effort to have it.

How can faith be increased?

Through aspiration, I suppose. Some have it spontaneously...You see, it is difficult to pray if one doesn't have faith, but if one can make prayer a means of increasing one's faith, or aspiring, having an aspiration, having an aspiration to have faith...Most of these qualities require an effort. If one does not have a thing and

wants to have it, well, it needs great, great, great sustained efforts, a constant aspiration, an unflagging will, a sincerity at each moment; then one is sure, it will come one day—it can come in a second. There are people who have it, and then they have contrary movements which come and attack. These people, if their will is sincere, can shield their faith, repel the attacks. There are others who cultivate doubt because it is a kind of dilettantism—that, there's nothing more dangerous than that. It is as though one were letting the worm into the fruit: it eventually eats it up completely. This means that when a movement of this sort comes—it usually comes first into the mind—the first thing to do is to be very plucky and refuse it. Surely one must not enjoy looking on just to see what is going to happen; that kind of curiosity is terribly dangerous.

It is perhaps more difficult for intellectuals to have faith than for those who have a simple, sincere and upright heart, and no intellectual complications. But I think that if an intellectual person has faith, then that becomes very powerful, a very powerful thing which can truly work miracles.

Mother, where does determination come from?

Usually it is in those who have a will and bring their will to bear upon their actions.

If one has faith in the Divine and also trust, what is the difference between faith and trust?

Faith is something much more integral—that is what Sri Aurobindo has written—much more intergal than trust. You see, you have trust in the Divine, in the sense that you are convinced that all that comes from Him will always be the best for you: whatever His decision and whatever the experience He sends you or the circumstances in which He puts you, it will all be always what is best for you. This is trust. But faith—that kind of unshakable certitude in the very existence of God—faith is something that seizes the whole being. It is not only mental, psychic or vital: it is the whole being, entirely, which has faith. Faith leads straight to experience.

Can't trust be total and entire?

Not necessarily. Well, there is a shade of difference—however, I don't know, it is not the same thing.

One has given oneself totally to the divine work, one has faith in it, not only in its possibility, but faith that it is *the* thing which is true and which must be, and one gives oneself entirely to it, without asking what will happen. And so, therein or thereon may be grafted a certitude, a confidence that one is capable of accomplishing it, that is, of participating in it and doing it because one has given oneself to it—a confidence that what one is going to do, what one wants to do, one will be

able to do; that this realisation one wants to attain, one will attain. The first does not put any questions, does not think of the results: it gives itself entirely—it gives itself and then that's all. It is something that absorbs one completely. The other may be grafted upon it. Confidence says: "Yes, I shall participate, realise what I want to realise, I shall surely take part in this work." For the other, one has faith in the Divine, that it is the Divine who is all, and can do all, and does all... and who is the only real existence—and one gives oneself entirely to this faith, to the Divine, that's all. One has faith in the existence of the Divine and gives oneself; and there can also be grafted upon this a trust that this relation one has with the Divine, this faith one has in the Divine, will work in such a way that all that happens to him—whatever it may be, all that happens to him—will not only be an expression of the divine will (that of course is understood) but also the best that could happen, that nothing better could have happened to him, since it is the Divine who is doing it for him. This attitude is not necessarily a part of faith, for faith does not question anything, it does not ask what the consequence of its self-giving will be—it gives itself, and—that's all; while confidence can come and say, "That's what the result will be." And this is an absolute fact, that is, the moment one gives oneself entirely to the Divine, without calculating, in a total faith, without bargaining of any kind—one gives oneself, and then, come what may! "That does not concern me, I just give myself"—automatically it will always be for you, in all circumstances, at every moment, the best that will happen... not the way you conceive of it (naturally, thought knows nothing), but in reality. Well, there is a part of the being which can become aware of this and have this confidence. This is something added on to faith which gives it more strength, a strength—how shall I put it?—of total acceptance and the best utilisation of what happens.

There is a state in which one realises that the effect of things, circumstances, all the movements and actions of life on the consciousness depends almost exclusively upon one's attitude to these things. There is a moment when one becomes sufficiently conscious to realise that things in themselves are truly neither good nor bad: they are this only in relation to us; their effect on us depends absolutely upon the attitude we have towards them. The same thing, identically the same, if we take it as a gift of God, as a divine grace, as the result of the full Harmony, helps us to become more conscious, stronger, more true, while if we take it—exactly the very same circumstance—as a blow from fate, as a bad force wanting to affect us, this constricts us, weighs us down and takes away from us all consciousness and strength and harmony. And the circumstance in itself is *exactly* the same—of this, I should like you all to have the experience, for when you have it, you become master of yourself. Not only master of yourself but, in what concerns you, master of the circumstances of your life. And this depends exclusively upon the attitude you take; it is not an experience that occurs in the head, though it begins there, but an experience which can occur in the body itself. So much so, that—well, it is a realisation which naturally asks for a lot of work, concentration, self-mastery, consciousness

pushed into Matter, but as a result, in accordance with the way the body receives shocks from outside, the effect may be different. And if you attain perfection in that field, you become master of accidents. I hope this will happen. It is possible. It is not only possible, it is *certain*. Only it is just one step forward. That is, this power you have—already fully and formidably realised in the mind—to act upon circumstances to the extent of changing them totally in their action upon you, that power can descend into Matter, into the physical substance itself, the cells of the body, and give the same power to the body in relation to the things around it.

This is not a faith, it is a certitude that comes from experience.

The experience is not total, but it is there.

This opens new horizons to you; it is the path, it is one step on the path leading to transformation.

And the logical conclusion is that there is nothing impossible. It is *we* who put limitations. All the time we say, "That thing is possible, that other, impossible; this, yes, this can be done, that can't be done; oh! yes, this is true, it is feasible, it is even done, but that, that is impossible." It is *we* who all the time put ourselves like slaves into the prison of our limits, of our stupid, narrow, ignorant sense which knows nothing of the laws of life. The laws of life are not *at all* what you think they are nor what the most intelligent people think. They are quite different. Taking a step, especially the first step on the path—one begins to find out.

Mother, here it is written:

"Q: Is it a sign of sincerity to confess one's weakness and faults to the Divine and to others?"

"A: Why to others? One has to confess them to the Divine.

"Q: But if one does some wrong to a person, is it not necessary to confess it to him? Is it enough to confess it to the Divine?"

"A: If it concerns the other person, then it can be done."

It is harmless. You can do it if it gives you pleasure! Fundamentally, if it sets you at rest and allows you to progress, if you feel you must do it in order to progress, it is very good.

Sweet Mother, can it happen that a person is very insincere but unconscious of his insincerity?

I think in a case like this, he is no longer insincere, he is wicked; for if one knows that one is insincere and persists in one's insincerity, it is wickedness, isn't it? It means that one has bad intentions, otherwise why would one persist in one's insincerity?

I said: if one is unconscious.

Then how can one be conscious and unconscious at once? It is just this that is impossible. If one is conscious of one's insincerity, one can't be unconscious of it. It is impossible. The two can't exist simultaneously.

But if one is insincere and doesn't know where this insincerity lies?

Oh! one doesn't know?... That is because one is not sufficiently sincere and doesn't look at oneself. For, I guarantee this, if you are conscious that you are insincere, you know where it lies. Otherwise you could not be aware of your insincerity. For instance, in a certain circumstance one knows, knows that one should do this: "I should do this"; and at the same time one does not wish to do it, eh! And so, within oneself one finds a means, a sort of way of deceiving oneself and not doing it, because one does not want to do it—ah, that happens *very* often! (*Laughter*) And then, if at that moment, the moment when you are doing this little inner work to find an excuse for not doing what you don't want to do, if at that moment you become aware that you are insincere and still continue to do it, this means that you are perverse. If you ask me, this is what I call being wicked, bad. But if you realise that you are insincere, this means that you are conscious that you are insincere, and how can you say "I am not conscious of my insincerity"?... Ninety times out of a hundred one does it without knowing. That indeed is the misery. It is that one deceives oneself with such facility, finds good tricks for not doing what one doesn't want to do, or the contrary: for doing what one wishes to do when one knows very well one shouldn't do it—it is the same thing. So you give yourself good reasons, and, unhappily, as I said, most men are so unconscious that they do it without even realising it. They think they are *very* sincere: "No, sincerely, I thought I had to do it"—like that, quite innocently. But that's because they are not sincere, not at all because they are quite unconscious. But if one is just a little conscious of what is happening within, one perceives very well the little trick one has played and how one has found—has somewhere been so cleverly unearthing—an excellent excuse for doing what one wanted to do. Even when one knows very well one ought not to do it. It is these two, you see: a play between unconsciousness and insincerity, insincerity and unconsciousness, in this way. But if you tell me, "I am conscious of my insincerity", then naturally at that moment this fact faces you: Have you decided to remain in the darkness or do you want to progress? There, the problem comes up. If you are conscious of your insincerity, you have only one thing to do: that is to put a red-hot iron on it and make yourself sincere. That is the feeling. You must take a red-hot iron: it burns well, and then... ouch!... that's the way.

For a moment it hurts a little, afterwards one is left in peace.

Sweet Mother, you have written: "Sincerity is the key to the Divine gates." What does that mean?

It is a literary image, my child, an imaged, figurative, literary way of expressing the fact that with sincerity one can attain everything, even the Divine. If one wants to open a door, a key is necessary, isn't it? Well, for the door separating you from the Divine, sincerity works as a key and opens the door and shows you in, that's all.

Good night.

(Questions and Answers 1954, pp. 120-127)

THE SUN

Thy sun is shining ever
 In a deep inner sky.
 I gaze with happy wonder
 And humbly pray it may never
 Fade or grow less in light.

The hours like a garland I weave
 Around Thy hallowed feet.
 May Thy heart with compassion heed
 My longing to succeed
 One day to give myself complete
 And a healing channel be
 Of Thy love's eternity.

LALITA

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 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 attempts for the speeches of the others.)

September 26, 1940

(Radio announced the cessation of fighting at Dakar by De Gaulle.)

SRI AUROBINDO: Queer end of the expedition. He shouldn't have undertaken it.

N: He wants to spare French blood.

SRI AUROBINDO: But the French at Dakar didn't spare it. *(The French fired at De Gaulle's forces when they tried to land.)* Neither will the British.

N: De Gaulle has still some sentiment left.

SRI AUROBINDO: Gandhian sentiment of non-violence?

P: Mrs. M. N. Roy has written an article in support of war. There she says about Hitler that people consider Hitler great because he is a vegetarian and because he is a bachelor. "But there may be medical reasons for it," she says. *(Laughter)*

SRI AUROBINDO: Any vegetarian who murders people will be great then?

N: That is what the Jains seem to have thought. Plenty of Jain Kings while being strict vegetarians had no hesitation in killing others.

SRI AUROBINDO: You know the story of the two Jain brothers during the invasion by Mahomed of Gazni? The brother who was the king was defeated and taken prisoner. The other brother was made king by Gazni and this brother was handed over to him. He didn't know how to dispose of his brother. At last he found a way. He made a pit below his throne and put the brother there. If he died, it was not his fault. *(Laughter)* It is a fact of history, not a mere story!

September 27, 1940

S: It seems Jinnah carried many files with him to his interview with the Viceroy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Files? All the speeches he delivered to the Muslim league meetings? *(Laughter)* He is making most exacting demands.

P: The Secretary of State has already answered Gandhi's conscientious objection to war.

SRI AUROBINDO: What did he say?

P: He has said that it is the Viceroy's conscientious conviction that India's interest is also involved in the war and so nothing should interfere with India's war effort.

In the recent military pact Japan has been given the right to be the leader of Asia.

SRI AUROBINDO: Asia? How? What of Italy's intentions about Syria and Palestine?

P: I don't see what the pact means or how Japan is going to profit by it.

SRI AUROBINDO: It means nothing. It is like the anti-Comintern pact—implying “we all hate a communism-sort of thing.”

September 28, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO (*After inquiring whether there was any further news regarding the 3-power pact and whether Japan was declared the leader of Asia or the Far East*): Not that it makes any difference.

S: It is the Far East.

SRI AUROBINDO: Italy has an eye on Palestine and Hitler wants Bagdad. How can Japan be allowed the whole of Asia then?

N: Russia left out of the picture?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, perhaps they have seen that she is not in a fighting mood at present.... It seems probable that there is some spy in De Gaulle's camp who gave information of the expedition and so the French government provided the military resistance.

N: But did he expect no resistance?

SRI AUROBINDO: He expected that the people would get hold of the town.

September 29, 1940

(Sri Aurobindo has decided not to give the letter to Abhay as it has been widely known in the Ashram that he has written such a letter. As a matter of fact none of us thought it was a confidential letter. On the other hand we thought that if people knew about Sri Aurobindo's views they would be enlightened. Sri Aurobindo's objection was that it would raise controversies and spoil the work. He didn't want to go into any controversy. When he decided that Abhay shouldn't write anything to Desai, P pleaded that if Sri Aurobindo didn't want it he wouldn't write anything in Sri Aurobindo's name, nor show the letter to anyone.)

S: It will profit many people to know the points, especially Doraiswamy. He is much disturbed.

SRI AUROBINDO: If one does not want to give up his idea nothing will teach him. The facts are there speaking for themselves. There is the 3-power pact. (*After a while, laughing*) Some Patel has written a p.c. to us saying that he is convinced

Hitler is right and we are wrong in supporting Britain.

N: This pact seems against America.

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously!

P: It seems Spain is being persuaded to join the war and allow German troops to pass through Spain to attack Gibraltar.

SRI AUROBINDO: Indo-China's example?

P: But Franco doesn't seem anxious to join the war. He has to reckon with the blockade too.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Monarchists also don't want Fascism in Spain. It is not Republicans alone but Franco's own men who don't want war. Phalangists of course want it. Phalangists are Fascists.

S: Laski says that whenever the India-question is touched he doesn't know what the devil happens to Churchill.

SRI AUROBINDO: At any rate he is allowing discussion on equal terms with the half-naked Indian Fakir.

S (*laughing*): Yes, that was Churchill's own expression.

September 30, 1940

(Yesterday morning Vithallbhai suddenly disappeared somewhere, but returned at night, at about 10 p.m. Somebody gave the news to Sri Aurobindo.)

SRI AUROBINDO: He was too disorganised and so he came back?

(Sri Aurobindo asked if any of us had inquired where he had gone and why. Somebody said perhaps he had been passing through some difficulty.)

SRI AUROBINDO: He has done like Naik. Naik used to have such fits. I suppose it is vital restlessness and dissatisfaction.

S: Perhaps. Some dissatisfaction must have been growing within.

SRI AUROBINDO: He seems to have many minds. He wrote to us he didn't want to be in any organisation. By going out he found himself disorganised, probably. Another time he wrote he wanted to see the influence of other Yogis....

(P brought in Roosevelt in some connection.)

SRI AUROBINDO: It seems this Wilkie is almost certain to be elected. Many democrats are supporting him. All the same Wilkie doesn't appear to be of Roosevelt's standard.

P: No!

Evening

(P narrated a story of how Reynaud was persuaded by his mistress to give up resis-

tance in the North and withdraw into the South, as a result of which the majority of the French army was crushed in Belgium.)

SRI AUROBINDO: Where was that story?

P: The *Sunday Times*.

N: The *Sunday Times*? We didn't see it.

SRI AUROBINDO: No! I would like to see it.

P: I will get the paper tomorrow.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1985)

The Mother's Message

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



(45)

It was 21st December 1957. The weather was slightly cool after the monsoon, but this coolness was yet not to my liking, because I still felt the climate of Pondicherry to be hot.

I painted a pink Dahlia—"Psychic Dignity—Refuse to accept anything that lowers or debases."

The work was complete. I could not wait till the evening to show the painting to the Mother. I sent it to her in the morning. She wrote:

“This is truly remarkable—very luminous and expressive.”

So it happened that more often I finished paintings in the morning and sent them to the Mother, and received her written comments. Here are some of them:

“Both paintings are *very good*—the white roses are truly charming.”

“It is an excellent painting. The harmony of colours is excellent and the technique also.”

“It is a very pretty picture with a fine technique and well composed.”

“It is excellent and the dark background is very effective.”

“This is truly pretty with a *very nice feeling* about it.”

“You have done exactly what was suggested and perfectly well. The picture is indeed very, very good—Bravo!”

“Wonderful! most attractive! the green of the background is delightful and the flower full of life and light—Bravo!”

“It is a good attempt. Continue and you are sure to succeed fully.”

“The expression is very pretty and the scale of colour is good—suppleness and freedom in execution is required. It is bound to come by doing.”

“This is excellent. The inspiration is coming back.”

There was no end to her encouragement, appreciation and support. Still I was not certain about my life and work.

After a few years the Mother chose quite a number of paintings for reproduction. Perhaps by her Grace the time will come for the fulfilment of her hopes.

*

Now the grand preparation for Christmas in Golconde took place. I helped a little in cutting papers and tying the plastic bags of gifts.

It was Saturday the 24th. As usual the Mother saw me in the evening at the Playground. No sooner did I sit near her feet than she glanced down into my eyes. She wore rather a sombre face when she spoke:

“If a person has a bad intention, he constantly throws his ugly thoughts on other people. Naturally each and everything comes back to him and finally he suffers terribly.”

Then she fell into a contemplative silence, I wondered. She spoke again:

“Restful sleep and a sweet smile are like a ray of the sun which melts all obstacles and every bad intention”.

She was totally right. But while I gave smiles to some people they turned their faces! Perhaps my smiles were not sweet enough? I should have tried to do better.

The next morning the Mother sent me a card showing her symbol from which white Light was spreading like rays from the Sun. She had written on the card:

“The New Light.

To my dear little child

With all my love, victorious peace and eternal compassion.”

She also sent a lovely bouquet tied with a red ribbon. It consisted of two white chrysanthemums, some pomegranate flowers, sweet marjoram and a stalk of red gladiolus.

I could not resist painting the flowers. I sent my work to the Mother in the morning. She saw it and sent the picture back with a note:

“This is truly *excellent*—with a very free and expressive technique. Bravo!”

In the evening I went to the Playground. A large Christmas tree had been raised in the centre of the ground. It was decorated with baubles, strands of tinsel, various coloured bulbs and balloons. Near the tree there were numberless bags of gifts. Mona Pinto and her assistants started arranging them and gave finishing touches to the gorgeous tree. The Mother’s chair with velvet cushions was installed very close to the tree. Around the tree and the space occupied by the gifts and the chair and the helpers, there was a barrier so that nobody could enter that area. There was gaiety and joy everywhere. The children were eager to get their gifts.

The Mother came dressed in a beautiful salwar and khamis—looking everywhere with a brilliant smile. First she went to her room. Afterwards she took her seat near the tree. Mona started supplying to her one bag after another which she gave to people who had stood outside the ring in a queue and were now coming to her in turns. The Mother was giving the gifts group-wise. Mona asked me and two other girls to direct people to their exit after receiving gifts from the Mother. It was a pleasure to see the expression of each and every one when they approached the Mother and received their gifts.

At last my turn came. I got a white ball and a cake. I could not wait to open the ball. And lo! I found a pretty silk bookmark with an exquisite fawn painted on it. I was dumbfounded—I remembered that when Tehmi Masalawala had been painting it in her room I had happened to go there and see it. I had been so charmed by the fawn that I had told her jokingly: “Oh it is so nice—I wish I could get

it from the Mother on Christmas Day!" She had smiled and said: "Who knows you may get it."

It was most amusing to see the drama of the small children.

Thus the day came to an end.

*

I did eighteen sketches on tinted papers. I bought an album and stuck the pictures in it. I also selected apposite lines from the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's works and attached them in typescript to the pictures. Here is an example of a picture illustrating the theme:

A being of Light pouring the rays on a soul which is encompassed by the darkness.

These lines from Sri Aurobindo corresponded with the above picture:

"Soul in the ignorance, wake from its stupor,
Flake of the world-fire, spark of Divinity,
Lift up thy mind and thy heart into glory.
Sun in the darkness, recover thy lustre."

I was secretly preparing this album to give it to the Mother on New Year's eve.

For almost one and a half years I had been suffering from liver-trouble. I did not take any medicines—neither did I go to any doctors. I was spent. I became more and more sensitive and at times very touchy.

Nevertheless, the work in the Mother's Stores, painting and drawing were still continued. If I would not have worked, I would have surely gone mad because of an unstable mind and physical illness.

On the 26th the Mother sent me an attractive card showing shepherd boys leading a herd of lambs. One of the boys carried a baby-lamb in his arms. Underneath the card was a quotation from Edwin Markham:

"There is a destiny that makes us brothers.
None goes his way alone.
All that we send into the lives of others
Comes back into our own."

The Mother had written on the same card in red ink:

"Bad thoughts come back under hideous forms and thoughts of love and compassion as luminous and beautiful flowers....

"With all my love and compassion."

Along with the card I had received a typescript signed by the Mother:

“Wake up in yourself a will to conquer. Not mere will in the mind but a will in the very cells of your body.

Without that you can't do anything, e. g. you may take a hundred medicines but they won't cure you unless you have a will to overcome the physical illness.

I may destroy the adverse forces that have possessed you. I may repeat the action a thousand times. But each time that a vacuum is created it will be filled up by one of the many forces that try to rush in. That is why I say wake up the will to conquer.”

In the evening I met the Mother in her room at the Playground. She inquired about my health. She also asked me whether I understood the Message she had sent me in the morning. I answered that I was so much confused that I could not follow it clearly.

She looked at me and lapsed into a deep trance for a few moments. On waking she took my hands into hers and said serenely:

“I recall an incident in Japan when I was there. I set a woman free from a devil who then dissolved in a fire. Indeed, I felt as if I were a murderer. Nevertheless, the woman felt much better for a week. Then once again another devil took possession of her.

“You see, my child, there are innumerable devils and one by one they accomplish their work in poor human beings. As far as I remember, I have taken out these devils from many people but after some time the people revert to what they were, because they are receptive to the evil forces. Once I liberated a man from a devil and he accused me that I had made him powerless—because he felt so. But actually he was not aware that the devil had made him feel powerful. It is truly difficult to deal with the hostile forces.”

Suddenly I exclaimed: “There! Mother! didn't I tell you often that it was extremely difficult to turn a deaf ear to these forces?”

She leaned forward from her couch and with an amused smile patted my cheeks with both her hands.

Once more she plunged into meditation. Then she opened her eyes which were so luminous and powerful. She looked at me as if she had full confidence in my soul's aspiration.

I prayed to her to liberate me from whatever hindered my progress. She nodded and kissed my forehead.

Apropos of her talk I am reminded of the Mother's writing in her *Collected Works* Vol. 5, pp. 97-8, about a certain kind of people:

“Well, here it is truly not worth the trouble. One has only to leave them to their fate. This has happened many a time. In such people, you know, it is a kind of vanity which generally opens the door to those forces; they wished to be big, powerful, to play an important role, to be somebody; that attracts the force and so they become like that, possessed. The thing is taken away from them: all their remarkable capacity disappears at the same time and their self-satisfied vanity as well. They have the feeling they have become something quite ordinary and a tiny little thing within them says: ‘Oh! it was better before...’ For one that is destroyed, there are always ten ready to come in. That’s how it is, it is a strange task!

“You know the story of Durga, don’t you ? Durga who every year has to destroy her asura; and always she is compelled to begin again. It goes on in this way till the end of the reign allotted to the titans. When they will be banished from this world, it will not be thus any longer. But till then, that is as long as they are useful (as I have said in this book) for intensifying the aspiration, clarifying the consciousness, for putting to the test the sincerity of people, they will be there. The day the test will not be needed, the day the sincerity will be pure and self-existent they will disappear. Then that day, Durga will no longer need to begin her battle over again every year.”

That night I could not sleep restfully owing to aches and pains in my body, and, in addition to all this, the incessant thoughts were buzzing in my head giving me nothing except an acute headache.

The morning that followed I went to the Meditation Hall upstairs. The Mother received me compassionately. She and I meditated a little. Her eyes were sombre and thoughtful. I watched her in silence.

I got to my feet after taking flowers from her and made my way to Golconde. Weariness crept over me and I closed my eyes in sheer agony.

I started reviewing the events of the past many days. I thought: “How to surrender the whole being to the Divine? How to invoke the divine force to take possession of my being and disperse the shadow of the vital world which loomed over me?”

The dark forces pursued me with watchful eyes, waiting to pounce on me. My whole being was in a turmoil. Tears of misery and pain filled my eyes.

It was not that I wanted to go back to the ordinary world and lead its life. Far from that. But I wished to go somewhere for a short while to gain my composure and be well again. I knew it was not possible to go anywhere. I could not give any reason to my own people in Africa, because I had not let them know about my ill-health. I feared lest they should misjudge and misunderstand me. I kept quiet and endured as much as I could.

Now it was the last day of 1957. In the evening when I entered the Mother’s room at the Playground, the first thing she asked me was:

“Child, what do you want from me for the New Year?”

At that minute the clock started to strike musically—for it was 6 p.m. At once the Mother drew my attention to the chiming of the clock. I replied: “Mother, I want to be your true child.”

Instantly she said forcefully:

“Granted.”

That very moment the last stroke rang. It was exactly 6 p.m. Number six means “New Creation” according to the Mother.

Later she distributed a Message for the coming year.

While I received it from her we smiled knowingly. For, I knew all about the Message and the wonderful incident.

At night I sat in my armchair and pondered over all that the Mother had told me. I was thinking: “Unhappily, I have achieved nothing—and years are passing, passing without heed for us human beings.”

1957 also ended in the same way.

(END OF VOLUME I)

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THE INSPIRATION OF *PARADISE LOST*

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1985)

10

Why *Paradise Lost* Became What It Is

WE have seen how the manifold greatness of *Paradise Lost* was prepared by Milton through decades and how the growth towards it can be traced from youth along middle age to the poet's fifties. Nothing interfered with its evolution: even the twenty years of ecclesiastical, social and political controversy helped it. But just the things that helped the greatness were responsible for draining out or at least thinning the psychological diversity in which it was one intermixed element, and aggrandising it at their expense. The conventions of controversy in those days permitted harsh language, but Milton the poet of *Comus* and *Lycidas* could not plunge into the *mêlée* of vituperation without doing something that went against his poetic grain. Not that the poet in him ran contrary to the temper of a Juvenal: savage indignation could find a natural tongue in him, as in the condemnatory passage in *Lycidas* about the unscrupulous pastors, the "blind mouths" that eat up instead of feeding their flock. But the sort of abuse to which Milton the pamphleteer delivered himself up with superabundant gusto, putting at its service his marvellous command of the language, could hardly foster the finer traits of the poetic mind. The vigour that went into vituperation could rise to poetry also and the prose works blaze out time and again with inspired utterance; yet this utterance is pitched throughout in the sublime key and never touches the exquisite. Power is henceforth the main attribute of Milton's genius—power variedly deployed with a massive intellectuality and a soaring imagination but not able easily to bend and soften into the sensuous, the subtle, the sweet. This difficulty was increased by the indulgence in unrestrained invective at many places of the prose-works. For the sensuous, the subtle, the sweet had been natural to Milton and the concentration of power constantly in their very opposite resulted in a hardening of his sensibilities which marred his later poetry inasmuch as it led to a grandly lop-sided culmination of his genius.

Another cause of this kind of development was the intense influence exercised on Milton by what we may call the poetic mind of Renaissance Europe aspiring after heroic poetry. Greatness was intrinsic to his being, and even in his youth he looked beyond the fashionable modes of verse in his day and sought for "some graver subject",

Such where the deep transported mind may soar
Above the wheeling poles.¹

¹ *At a Vacation Exercise*, 33-4.

In contemporary Italy he found theories and experiments pointing the way. F. T. Prince in *The Italian Element in Milton's Verse*, has fully brought out what was hitherto a general suspicion that the Renaissance Italian idea of heroic poetry came to complete flower in *Paradise Lost*. Milton is indeed Greek and Roman and Hebrew and even Mediaeval Christian, but he is all these through a profound steeping of himself in the Italian response of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the Classical world.

That response was twofold. First and foremost there was a preoccupation with the grandeur of antiquity as it resounded in the Homeric and the Virgilian epics. Already in the Mediaeval Dante we see the Virgilian epic inspiring the vision of the ancient world. When Dante presents the great figures of that world he gives them a gravity and nobility which strike a new note in Mediaeval literature. This note is absent in the rest of Europe even after Dante. Chaucer, for instance, was versed not only in Dante and Petrarch but also in Virgil. Yet except on rare occasions he has not absorbed anything of the majesty of the Virgilian word. Thus, as a critic has pointed out, he attempts in *The House of Fame* a few lines of paraphrase from Virgil, the start of the *Aeneid*. This is how he puts it:

I wel now singen, yif I kan,
The armes, and also the man
That first cam, thurgh his destinee,
Fugityf of Troy countree.

Have we here the least sensitiveness to the tone of the Virgilian overture?—

Arma virumque cano, Trojae qui primus ab oris
Italiam, fato profugus, Laviniaque venit
Litora...

A hexametrical approximation of the lines would be:

Arms and the man I sing, who first from the coasts of Troya
Came to Italy, reached the shores Lavinian, high fate
Driving him...

In the ears of Renaissance Italy the advent of the arms and the man of Virgil kept a continuous clangour of epic ambition. All the arts and the general conduct of life strove to model themselves by a concept of "magnificence" derived from an idealisation of the Classical world. It is this concept that is said to be active "in 'the vision of an ideal humanity' that inspires Piero's great frescoes at Arezzo" and "in the calm majestic tempo of the Farnese Palace in Rome". "Raised to demonic intensity, it breathes a terrible life into the race of titans who people Michelangelo's paintings."

“A man’s least utterance or gesture, it was felt, should carry a Roman weight of grandeur—*Sempre il magnanimo si magnifica in suo cuore!* How much more then must epic poetry, ‘the greatest work which the soul of man is capable to perform’, be raised to the utmost pitch of splendour.” Again and again an attempt was made in Renaissance Europe and especially Italy to accomplish the perfect epic. We mark it in Tasso no less than in his predecessors. But they fall short of entire success. Milton, with a poetic gift surpassing theirs, inherited their dream and, as Prince states it, “brought to this literary heritage the full heroic temper it required”. Consequently, the aspiration of several centuries flowered in him with a plenitude of grandeur in which all gentler and more delicate motions were almost submerged.

We spoke of a twofold response in Italy to the Classical temper. Over and above the straining after heroic poetry, there was the stress on *art* as the essence of the poetic expression. Virgil, who had been in antiquity the supreme master of poetry as an art, obsessed the Italian mind of the Renaissance with the importance of literary discipline, the need to mould deliberately a fitting diction of choice word and resonant rhythm. The poet as “maker” bulked larger than the poet as “seer”. In the Middle Ages the poems of Virgil constituted a book of inspired wisdom: we hear of the *sortes Virgilianae*, divination by chance selection of passages from Virgil. The Renaissance did not neglect the Latin poet’s substance, but it was more the heroic quality of it than the seerhood that was emphasised, and this quality was almost indissolubly bound up with the texture of the verse, the high language serving as its representative body, the noble structure of phrase in which it made itself felt. Poetry was not just the common language intensified: it was a sifted, refined, special speech prepared for ceremonial uses. Milton did not quite agree with the Italian emphasis, he was too religious-minded to be a devotee of Art instead of a high priest of divine mysteries. To him the heroic quality itself was part of the Seer’s function which was to turn the vision of the Divine into a power on earth. However, he accepted the necessity of unremitting attention to Art, the call for a lofty poetic diction scrupulous in its cast of word, rhythm, syntax, sentence, paragraph. Thus we find *Paradise Lost* far removed from day-to-day speech. Also, it employs no more than about nine thousand different words, in contrast to Shakespeare’s free handling of over twenty-three thousand. People imagine that Milton’s vocabulary was rather limited. But we have only to look at his prose-works to see his enormous vocabulary and linguistic daring no less than his expressive gusto and the uninhibited torrent of his abuse. The energy that is there is of course undeniably present in the poem: if the range of words is smaller, the restriction is voluntary and due to the selectiveness of speech that the idea of poetry as a ceremonial art demanded. The choice words themselves have also to keep up a stately motion: their structure and their sound must answer to the heroic religiosity so typically Milton’s and with a superb stiffness devote themselves single-mindedly to the theme of high seriousness he had adopted—Man’s first disobedience and the fruit of the God-forbidden tree—so that he might rise both verbally and conceptually

...to the highth of this great argument...

We may, however, note that none of the Renaissance poets—neither the Italian Tasso who wrote *Gerusalemme Liberata*, the epic of the Crusades, nor the Portuguese Camoes who penned *Os Lucidos*, the epic of Vasco de Gama and Portuguese colonisation in the East—raised so dense an edifice of song as did Milton. There is more softness in them. Milton has less of it not because the ideal Renaissance epic has to crush out all softness but because of his own phenomenal strength of soul which got its sensibilities considerably hardened by those twenty years of acrimonious and thunder-throated controversy. All the factors in operation we have to take together in order to understand why Milton became so great and in the achievement of a unique greatness sacrificed the more opulent, more uniformly perfect masterpiece that he could have produced.

And there is one further factor to be assessed. We may hold it responsible at the same time for the frequent outwardness rather than inwardness of finished expression which *Paradise Lost* has in some of its later Books and for the entry of the old subtlety and richness and tenderness at several places in the poem in spite of the pervading rigour and grandeur. The factor I am speaking of has a double aspect: on the one side it is Milton's loss of sight and on the other his keen ear for music. The blindness which overtook him in his forty-second year led to some want of freshness in imaginative response to visual objects. The varied impact which the details of Nature make on a poet's eye under different conditions of atmosphere and different circumstances of mood was necessarily lacking in Milton: the old sensitiveness of language following the actual impression does not occur often in *Paradise Lost*. There are fine or majestic generalities. They are quite enough on very many occasions where distinct and detailed seeing is not needed and the effect as a whole rather than in its *minutiae* is aimed at. The long rolling paragraphs which sweep us along shift naturally the emphasis from particularities. But when the energy in these paragraphs has not the plenary inner impulsion and we are not carried off our feet we become aware of the somewhat undistinguished descriptive phrases. Also, when the vagueness is part of what we have considered semi-occult dream-vision mixing with Milton's outer mind which was used to a blind man's blurred contact with shape and colour, we have a positive quality. When, however, the inspiration seizes mostly on the outer mind, it shows up a defect by the conventionalism of the descriptions. A man not blind might have provided to the inspiration an outer mind sufficiently pricked with sensitive observation to be capable of vivid response even on its own plane.

But, while the reader feels a comparative drop in the poetry, Milton himself seems never to have realised that he fell short anywhere. Perhaps fundamentally the constant sense he had of Urania rushing all the words through him prevented any diffidence from creeping in. And what helped his confidence and failed to keep his self-critical power sharp enough was the application almost exclusively of his keen

ear for music as a test to his own poetry. The greatest of poetic rhythmists, he appears often to have been content if his verses sounded well. There is an anecdote illustrating how his ears were eyes to him. Once he heard a lady sing finely and he said: "Now will I swear this lady is handsome." Provided his ear was satisfied with what he composed, on many occasions he felt he had created the perfect form. And the satisfying exercise of the auditory imagination tended to cover up the deficiency in the visual.

Yes, the preoccupation with the sound of verse is often responsible for the outwardness rather than inwardness of finished expression which some of the later Books of *Paradise Lost* exhibit. But it serves on the other hand to evoke at times a few of the characteristics of Milton's early poetry. For, the musical sense is closely connected with the emotional being as well as with a feel for the subtle shade, the delicate suggestion. And on the wing-waft, as it were, of this sense Milton the poet of heroic religiosity brought something of the old tenderness into his epic and cut by the exquisite edge of that tenderness into significant depths of the soul to make up for whatever disadvantages of insight result from the blind man's fate of being

Presented with a universal blank
Of Nature's works,¹

and to counteract the general hardening of sensibilities by those controversial years. The lines on "Proserpin", which are at once intense music and intense emotional significance conveyed with a rare delicacy and subtlety, are an outstanding instance. But there are other instances too. Even in the midst of the most sublime passages of Book I a wonderful emotional touch makes its appearance, creating one of the finest no less than greatest dramatic moments in all poetry. This moment is concerned with Satan's first speech after all his hosts have assembled:

He now prepared
To speak; whereat their double ranks they bend
From wing to wing, and half enclose him round
With all his peers: Attention held them mute.
Thrice he essayed, and thrice, in spite of scorn,
Tears, such as Angels weep, burst forth: at last
Words interwove with sighs found out their way...²

To match this moment there is in *Paradise Lost* another which is to my mind unforgettable in the opposite way. In place of the mood of heroic devilry melting into poignant soulfulness we get the mood of absolutely human gentleness rising to a heavenly heroism in the words of Eve after Adam has uttered a harsh condemnation of

¹ Bk. III, 48-9.

² Bk. I, 618-24.

her for bringing about the fall of them both and provoking God's anger and punishment:

“Forsake me not thus, Adam! witness Heaven
 What love sincere and reverence in my heart
 I bear thee, and unweeting have offended,
 Unhappily deceived! Thy suppliant
 I beg, and clasp thy knees; bereave me not
 Whereon I live, thy gentle looks, thy aid,
 Thy counsel in this uttermost distress,
 My only strength and stay. Forlorn of thee,
 Whither shall I betake me, where subsist?
 While yet we live, scarce one short hour perhaps,
 Between us two let there be peace; both joining,
 As joined in injuries, one enmity
 Against a foe by doom express assigned us,
 That cruel Serpent. On me exercise not
 Thy hatred for this misery befallen—
 On me already lost, me than thyself
 More miserable. Both have sinned; but thou
 Against God only; I against God and thee,
 And to the place of judgment will return,
 There with my cries importune Heaven, that all
 The sentence, from thy head removed, may light
 On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,
 Me, me only, just object of His ire.”¹

I cannot think of a more beautiful piece of tender and profound pathos than those words:

While yet we live, scarce one short hour perhaps,
 Between us two let there be peace...

And how apt is the artistry! A simple movement at the beginning, then a succession of four stressed monosyllables—“scarce one short hour”—as if the words were sobbed out with some effort, then the adverb “perhaps” releasing the tension and suggesting by its *h* a small outflow of the breath in a sort of controlled sigh and then the final phrase, smooth yet with a subtle tug of emotion by means of the semi-inverted accent in the third foot—“let there”—and the general inversion, very naturally managed, of the two parts of the expression—namely,

Between us two let there be peace,
 instead of

Let there be peace between us two.

¹ Bk. X, 915-36.

This general inversion is quadruply effective. For one thing it throws into relief that semi-inverted third foot: without it we should have "let there" at the very start of the line where it would be hardly noticed as anything unusual. Again, the balanced sounds at the commencement and at the termination of the phrase—"between" and "be peace"—would be absent and in their place we should have a crowding of the same combinations of short and long sounds: "be peace between...." Further, without the general inversion, the long sound of "peace" would break upon us suddenly—with some violence, instead of peacefully, whereas at present it is prepared by the second syllable of "between" and comes like a crowning inevitability as though it were an absolute need of the occasion once "between" has started the rhythmic movement. Finally, the hushing sibilance with which we are left at the phrase-end in a culmination of a series of terminal s-sounds running through the rest of the phrase ("scarce", "perhaps", "us") would have disappeared and most of the value of the word "peace" as well as of the total emotional gesture would have been lost.

I may add one more remark. In the midst of an individual situation what I have called in another connection the world-cry enters here with "scarce one short hour perhaps". For, this turn catches the uncertainty of all life lived under the shadow of death: the stab of the brevity threatening human existence everywhere is felt and a statement directly applying to Adam and Eve grows prototypal and fills with a universal tone.

Possibly the lines acquire a special intensity because a personal reminiscence steals both into the drama appropriate to Adam and Eve and into the sense of the ubiquitous human condition. Indeed, the whole passage bears to my mind an autobiographical note. The lines immediately preceding it and expressing Adam's condemnation of Eve and his broad vision of the discord which Woman would bring into Man's life throughout history have been regarded by most commentators as an echo of Milton's own bitter experience at the beginning of his first marriage. But not many care to remember that what commenced as a sort of tragic farce ended in an entirely different strain and that Adam's speech is only one part of Milton's personal expression here: it must be taken together with Eve's speech in order to give a true and complete autobiographical picture.

Let us attend a little to Milton's early married life, all the more with the aim to dispel the common idea that Milton was a rather unpleasant husband to his first wife. Milton was thirty-four in 1642 when he suddenly took a journey into the countryside, nobody knowing why. He went there a bachelor and after a month returned a married man. He brought home Mary Powell, the seventeen-year old daughter of a Royalist Justice of Peace. A little later war broke out between the Royalists and the Roundheads (the Puritans) to whose party Milton belonged. Just before the war Mary's parents invited her to their house. Hardly a month had passed since the marriage. Milton consented to her visit on condition that she would return soon. But Mary prolonged her stay at her parents' place and refused to come back when Milton wrote pressing letters. She shared her parents' Royalist views and it was political

difference that was largely the cause of the breakdown of the marriage: some responsibility should be ascribed also to Mary's rather gay upbringing and Milton's rather serious temperament. Milton was extremely incensed for a while and took the occasion to publish two pamphlets, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and *Tetrachordon*, in which he vehemently argued that incompatibility of mind is more destructive of married happiness than adultery itself which in law is the main ground conceded for divorce. Although his pamphlets came out on the heels of his marital failure we must not imagine that he cooked up his views on divorce to suit his own needs. There is evidence¹ that he held advanced views even earlier and had already projected books on the subjects of ecclesiastical and civil and domestic liberties, all of which he wrote in the course of a few years.

The divorce pamphlets made Milton very unpopular by their bold position and did not bring his wife back. However, when Oxford, her home-town, was in danger of falling to the Roundheads and the King's fortunes were in decline everywhere, her people thought it politic to patch up differences. They were further encouraged in this by the rumour that Milton, considering himself virtually unmarried, was paying court to a gifted young woman, a Miss Davis. So Mary was sent to London, and one evening when Milton was on a customary visit to a relation of his, Mr. Blackborough, she waited in another room. Suddenly she entered. Edward Phillips tells the story: "He was surprised to see one whom he thought to have never seen more making submission and begging pardon on her knees before him. He might probably at first make some show of aversion and rejection; but partly his own generous nature, more inclinable to reconciliation than to perseverance in anger and revenge, and partly the strong intercession of friends on both sides, soon brought him to an act of oblivion, and a firm league for peace for the future..." Mary herself may well have pleaded Eve-like for peace between them.

Three children were born in the rest of their married life. "But," as Phillips writes, "it was not only by children that she increased the number of the family." For, after the fall of Oxford, many of Mary's kindred—her father and mother and several brothers and sisters—came to live with Milton. They got badly on his nerves yet he let them be until Mary's father died, shortly after which the Powells moved out. It showed remarkable magnanimity on the poet's part not only to shelter the pack of his wife's relatives but also to live cheek by jowl for four years with a family temperamentally no less than politically at odds with him. And if he had not been particularly attached to Mary, he could hardly have succeeded in being so magnanimous for so long.

What about his life with Mary up to the time she died in 1652? Is any analogy possible between it and his depiction of Adam's life with Eve? Adam and Eve are shown as most harmonious after their quarrel and reconciliation. But it is generally supposed that Milton's relations with Mary were not particularly happy at any period: she is often looked upon as the model for Dalila in *Samson Agonistes*. This is an

¹ Cf. Kenneth Muir, *Milton*, pp. 64-72, 77-8.

error. Milton's nephews have reported that Mary lived in good accord with her husband until her death. And there is the Sonnet on "my late espoused Saint", in which Milton speaks with much feeling apropos of a dream about his dead wife, and in which the dead wife bends to embrace him. The Sonnet is said to be on his second wife Katharine Woodcock because of two reasons. In it he speaks of his wife having died in childbed and Katharine is said to have died after giving birth to a daughter. Again, the Sonnet speaks of his wife's face being veiled: Milton had married Katharine nearly five years after his total blindness and the dream reflected his lack of physical sight of her. Unfortunately, both the arguments are ineffective.

Professor W. R. Parker has submitted that the Sonnet refers to Mary and not Katharine. For, in the first place, while Mary actually died as the result of childbirth, just three days after her daughter Deborah had been born, Katharine died four months after giving birth to her child and the immediate cause of her death was consumption though the disease may have been brought on by the birth of that child. In the second place, we are being fanciful in interpreting the veiled face as a pointer to the fact that Milton had never seen Katharine physically: the Sonnet itself unequivocally indicates that the poet had seen his wife in reality, for his dream brought her to him

...such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of Her in Heaven without restraint...¹

Now there is no evidence that Milton had seen Katharine five years earlier than his marriage to her, while the biographical fact is that Mary, whom he had married almost ten years previous to his blindness, died a year subsequent to his loss of sight. The lines above bear all this out convincingly: they have the words "once more" which clearly imply that in Heaven he would have "full sight" of her a second time and the phrase "without restraint" suggests that he would resume in Heaven what had been interrupted on earth by his blindness even before her death. If nothing else were there, the turn "once more" would be enough to rule out Katharine as the subject of the poem. And if she is ruled out, who else than Mary can remain? The veiled face can be of none else than her. And since we know that she whom Milton had seen for over nine years was obscured to his eyes for a year or so before her death, the veiling could very easily be understood as symbolising this later obscuration. On a deeper level which is suggested by the whiteness and luminosity associated with her—

Came vested all in white, pure as her mind...
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
So clear as in no face with more delight²—

the veiling could symbolise an element of divine or heavenly mystery entering into

¹ 7-8. ² 9, 11-12.

the dream-figure of the woman who belonged no longer to the earth.

So Milton's relations with Mary in the wake of their quarrel and reconciliation may be traced in those of Adam with Eve. And a personal tone may be considered vibrant in the last passage of *Paradise Lost* which displays their harmony all the more touchingly because its subject is their expulsion from the happy Garden, and which finds the epic Milton in another of his tenderer and most beautiful spells. Archangel Raphael and the Guardian Cherubim of Eden have been missioned by God to see the human pair out of Paradise, not urgently yet with the brandished sword of God blazing high in front and the bright array of Cherubim closing in behind. Raphael personally takes them to the frontier of common earth:

In either hand the hastening Angel caught
Our lingering parents, and to the eastern gate
Led them direct, and down the cliff as fast
To the subjected plain—then disappeared.
They, looking back, all the eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
Waved over by that flaming brand; the gate
With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms.
Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.¹

So wonderfully appropriate a close, in every detail, is this that it should come as a surprise indeed that anybody was not satisfied with it. And yet ever since Addison there has been discussion over the final lines. Addison proposed to omit the last two. He said that they strike a note of sadness which is not in keeping with an epic theme: an epic should, in his view, end cheerfully. Perhaps he meant that there should be an accent of calmness or fortitude and no pathetic touch. But I think Milton has here so subdued a pathos that both fortitude and calmness are conjured up. Four elements have to be considered. The steps of Adam and Eve are slow, because they are not in a hurry to leave Paradise where they have spent a delightful life before the Fall and where they would have best been able to forget the punishment incurred for the falling. The steps are wandering, because there is as yet no fixed goal to their journey beyond and a wide world is before them, through which there can be a great deal of moving about. The pair is now all on its own, the Angels do not keep it company and God will not be directly talking to Adam as He used to do prior to the Fall. But, against the force of the word "solitary" and encompassing all the other suggestions, we have the ruling initial phrase: "hand in hand." Adam and

¹ Bk. XII, 637-44.

Eve were never so united in heart as they are at this moment: hence a deep and happy though humble strength is in them and its presence, put by Milton at the very start of his final phrase, subdues the pathos of the situation and leaves us with a serenity in the sadness, a sweet courage in the ache of exile. To omit the couplet would be to sacrifice poetic subtlety and fineness and a profoundly imaginative precision in picturing *la condition humaine*.

Peck, in opposition to Addison, felt that to omit the last two lines would maim the expression, but he was one with Addison in regarding them as an unsuitable ending. So he proposed putting them before and not after

The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.

I suppose the phrase "and Providence their guide" gives a religio-moralistic colour which appeals to a certain type of mind. And in itself its final position would not be anything objectionable. But we would be shutting the book with a last impression on the mind instead of with a last movement in the heart: perhaps there might also be a *souçon* of smugness. The close which Milton himself has provided is far better. And how will Peck's transposition assort with the line which would now precede the real close? Just see the new combination:

Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.

We have a succession of gestures without any aptness in the series. In the version made by Milton, after the act of wiping the tears, comes the phrase about the world being all before them to choose the place of rest from, and about Providence being their guide. That is a sort of reason for not weeping much. And when Providence was their inner or secret guide, they might well find a silent happiness not only in each other but even in their solitude or outward and seeming God-forsakenness; the words "hand in hand" follow quite felicitously where Milton has placed them and would interrupt the inward logic of the whole situation if transposed anywhere else. Peck's proposal takes off with one hand what it concedes with the other: it is really as *gauche* as Addison's.

But, as noted by F. L. Lucas, perhaps it is Bentley who really takes the cake in *gaucherie*. He holds up the adjective "wandering" and comments in effect: "Erratic steps? Very improper. Was not Providence their guide? Then how can one say 'wandering'? Milton's mind must have been wandering." Bentley falls foul also of "solitary". His opinion is that, since after all Adam had Eve and nobody else and Eve had nobody except Adam, the two of them could not be more solitary out of Paradise than in it. Raising his eyebrows over everything in the couplet, he

proposes an emendment which, according to him, is "as close as may be to the author's words and entirely agreeable to his scheme"; he wishes us to read thus—

Then, hand in hand, with social steps their way
Through Eden took, with Heavenly comfort cheered.

I wonder if even Addison would have concurred with Bentley, despite the word "cheered" by which he literally satisfies Addison's demand for a cheerful termination to an epic.

All attempts to improve Milton are bound to fail: his whole final passage is perfect. And it carries us back to the very beginning of the poem where the theme is enunciated. The "happy seat" in our passage harks back to the "blissful seat" there. Similarly, we have both there and here the mention of "Eden". And Milton gives a further echo in "Providence their guide" and in "solitary way" to the lines with which ends the overture of the epic, the invocation to the Heavenly Muse and the Spirit of God:

That, to the highth of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

The "argument" in this context has the Latin meaning of "theme" and we are led by its presence to take the two lines after it as part of the Miltonic theme—a procedure which is supported by the recurrence of "Providence" in the epic's terminal passage. On the other hand, the "ways" of the initial passage throws a light on the "way" in the terminal and subtly counteracts the adjective "solitary": it is as if, even in the "solitary way" of Adam and Eve, God's "ways" were still present as true justice: thus "solitary way" is brought into rapport with the guidance of Providence mentioned a little earlier. So we have an interesting and helpful crosslight between the two ends of *Paradise Lost* and a general illumination of the depths of the theme.

We shall now discuss briefly these depths. But before we do so, let me note that "Paradise" and "Eden" are not synonymous as we usually suppose. After leaving the gate of "Paradise", Adam and Eve are still in Eden, taking their solitary way through it. The fact is that the "blissful seat" was only a part of the land of Eden, it was situated in Eden's eastern side, as may be gathered from several lines in *Paradise Lost* and most definitely perhaps from these in Book IV:

for blissful Paradise
Of God the garden was, by him in the east
Of Eden planted; Eden stretched her line
From Auran eastward to the royal towers

Of great Seleucia, built by Grecian kings
Or where the sons of Eden long before
Dwelt in Telassar.¹

In Milton's vision, as detailed earlier in the same Book,² the garden of Paradise is the top of a mound in the midst of a plain: hence in the closing passage Adam and Eve are led by the Angel

down the cliff as fast
To the subjected plain...

The adjective "subjected" has the force of the Latin "subjectus", meaning "lying under, bordering".

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

¹ 208-14.

² 132-5.

STUDIES IN INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY

INTEGRAL PSYCHO-THERAPY

The Approach and the Stand-point

MENTAL health is the aim of all psycho-therapy, but integral psycho-therapy will have to aim at a wholesomeness of life and consciousness in appreciation of all the domains and dimensions of Integral Personality, in particular those where wholesomeness exists as a normal quality. It is with their help that wholesomeness would be more easily promoted in the afflicted or disrupted or oppressed and embarrassed parts.

The dimensions and domains of wholesomeness or wholeness are normally not dynamic, *i.e.*, not consciously available to us for practical utilisation. What is available is the ordinarily waking consciousness with all its diverse impulses working under diverse social, moral and religious prohibitions. A working wholeness of personality thus comes into being. It is a personality which is socially serviceable and therefore individually satisfying on the whole, but in fact it is not unified, an effectively organised unit of life. The aim of social conformity and that of moral or religious obedience have to exercise a constant pressure on a host of diverse impulses, some co-operative, some recalcitrant and resistant, some hostile and defiant. When the inner divergence assumes the form of an acute conflict, anxiety becomes abnormal and life grows socially and individually difficult. Such disorders can be very many, but the basic situation perhaps remains the same.

What is to be done?

When the disorder is such that it renders the person too helpless to seek to be well again and incapable of being collaborative in the treatment, physical methods such as electric shock have to be resorted to. But when the person has the will to get well again and seeks a cure, then at the waking level one tries to console, assure and convince him that worry does not help. One tries to divert his mind to other things of the happier sort and so on. This might prove sufficient in some cases and a working feeling of life might return.

But it might not, and then a digging into the subconscious is done to discover the hidden, the old forgotten, the suppressed and repressed cause of anxiety. The person is asked to relax himself on a couch, turn to the past and let memories arise. This is done over a long time and the person reviews himself more or less as a witness. In course of time the hidden thing comes up. He, as it were, recognises it and feels an immediate relief. But this process though long and tedious works only if the person reviews his past as a witness, *i.e.*, in a state of relative detachment. But when a person becomes indulgent in his past experiences, he strengthens his involvement in them, and the release does not come. Then Freudian Free Association does not produce the desired result.

The Freudian 'Anatomy of Personality' will be helpful to understand this working better. Id, Ego and Superego are the main parts of personality. Id consists of the untamed impulses, Ego of the adjustments arrived at with the external social and physical reality, and the Superego of the demands of the society and the moral ideal as to what the conduct should be. Between the Superego and the Id a wide disparity exists. That is the field of constant conflict and tension. The Ego too is only relatively adjusted, not heartily reconciled. It has, on the whole, accepted external reality, but it has not given up the essential wishing and willing of its diverse impulses. The overall picture of personality is thus one of lots of impulses, some of which have become moderated in their self-assertion and are more or less reconciled to external necessities, but persist in their self-assertion in a subdued manner. However, the Superego stands above all these impulses, the untamed ones of the Id and the tamed ones of the Ego, uncompromisingly insisting on its own demands and creating or accentuating the sense of guilt each time they are not fulfilled. The insistence of the Superego and the impulsiveness of the Id between them constitute the warring factors of personality, and psycho-analysis, on the whole, tends to favour the Id, let it have a freer and a fuller play and hold the Superego responsible for the conflict, the guilt feeling and the consequences that follow. In connection with the education of the child, however, Freud says that impulses have to be suppressed but that should be done discreetly. That is, indeed, very realistic.

The essential approach of psycho-analysis is that of analysing the subconscious and raising the repressed cause to the plane of consciousness. This done, a recomposition of personality comes about. The aim thus is a psycho-synthesis, a reorganisation or re-integration of personality. Now for Integral Psycho-therapy, Psycho-synthesis is the dominant interest throughout the process of cure. It, therefore, stresses the will to get well, the hope and the joy of recovery, the faith in the success of the process. These qualities have, as it were, to be communicated to the patient by the Integral Psychologist. The sense of guilt is a handicap, which has to be worked off. Conflicts and tensions of life have to be seen realistically, *i.e.*, as facts of normal nature to be harmonised and pacified. Sex too has to be seen as a normal propensity of human nature intended to serve a purpose in the scheme of cosmic evolution.

Our normal personality is a superficial organisation of reactions to environment. It is egoistic, that is, self-centred in varying degrees. When the self-centredness is keen and strong, adjustments with the environment and objectivity become more difficult. The sense of guilt also tends to be more acute for failure to conform to external demands of physical reality, morality and religion. An appreciation of the universality of human nature with its impulses of sex as well as other impulses facilitates adjustments and reduces guilt feeling. This involves growth in wideness as a corrective to the normal or abnormal narrowness of the ordinary egoistic personality.

But there is another direction of growth, which brings a real liberation from the problems of the superficial outer personality, which is our ordinary quality. That is

growth inwards, in depth, behind the superficial formations of life. This is gained through a process of self-dissociation from the ordinary impulses, through an act of stepping back or of self-detachment. Such a process would sooner or later enable one to feel a deep inner consciousness, a personality by itself, of freedom and joy and peace. In relation to this, the outer reactions and involvements become truly superficial and secondary and the inner sense and feeling essential and real. That makes for liberation from the confusions of the outer personality as nothing else does.

In comparison to this direction of movement the Freudian would be called a movement not in inner depth but rather downward into the past, towards what we have lived before, on what we stand, what is the foundation of the ordinary waking life. The inward movement involves self-dissociation, which brings real freedom from involvements. The delving into the past brings relative detachment only if the reliving of the past experiences is done with some objectivity, as if watched from a distance.

There is yet another direction of movement open to Integral Psycho-therapy. It is upward towards the Superconscious, the wide universal fields of wholeness and greater luminosity of consciousness. If some openness can be created to the Superconscious, it will mean a powerful therapeutic influence.

The integral psycho-therapist, who is a therapist working for a cure but is also a teacher, who promotes growth in wideness, in depth and in height and thereby mobilises therapeutic influences of different qualities. He achieves a cure, but really opens up for the patient a prospect of a larger and a fuller life for the future. Evidently he must, in some degree, himself wield these dimensions of personality or at least have an openness towards them and be able through willing and overt expressed guidance to create a sincere turning in these directions.

All nervous disorders are disorders of the superficial outer personality. They arise out of the divergences and contradictions of its impulses and the self-centredness of human nature. As a basic corrective of this, Integral Psycho-therapy would recommend an attitude of self-offering, self-dedication, self-consecration to the common good of all including his own, himself being one among many. Human nature through its self-centredness, its egoity, its acquisitiveness, ordinarily seeks its exclusive good and that creates conflicts and tensions in the individual as also in society, because of the exclusiveness of the impulses and of the individuals. Now a general basic attitude of consecration to the common good, to the Truth, to Reality, to the Supreme Being would create the most favourable basic condition for mental health, for peace, for harmony for the individual as for society.

A further general attitude needed is of appreciation of human nature, its varied impulses, their insistences, their contradictions, etc. Above all, an appreciation that this character is universal.

A further appreciation that the faults and aberrations of nature are often hard facts and have to be handled with patience and sympathy. And that the attitudes of intolerance, anger and suppression do not help.

Further, that the faults are curable. Nothing is irremediable.

Further, that these faults are confined to the outer personality of contradictory impulses. The inner central personality and the higher Super-consciousness are joyous and harmonious. And that through their help all faults of outer nature can be made good.

Further, that all faults are different involvements and fixations. A stepping back, a detachment, a contact with inner joy and the higher peace is the best way of release from the involvement and the fixation.

The role of the psycho-therapist or the teacher in all this process of cure or re-education is very important. He has to communicate new values of life to the patient. He must evidently be, in some degree, in possession of these values. He must also be free to vary his methods according to circumstances. The approach, the standpoint and the general principles are, of course, more or less fixed. But techniques can be employed or put aside as needed.

The foregoing is a preliminary statement of the approach, the standpoint and a few general principles of Integral Psycho-therapy as embodied in the integral yoga of Sri Auobindo and the Mother and as found useful with individuals and groups in actual practice by the present writer. Public mental health is an issue intimately connected with that of individual mental health. The basic attitudes or valuations needed for the re-education of an individual for the recovery of mental health will obviously have a validity for general public mental health. And then the incidence of individual nervous disorders will tend to become less.

(To be continued)

INDRA SEN

WHAT DO ANIMALS SEE?

WE recently watched, among the visitors to the observation gallery atop the Empire State Building, two boys vying with each other as to the make and model of the various automobiles passing along the street below, on the bottom of the city's canyon. Even to tell a man from a woman among the pedestrians 1,250 feet lower than the observation gallery is a good test of eyesight, and the small details of car design upon which the boys were basing their decisions reach the limit of human vision.

For most people, a cantaloupe at 1,250 feet would be the smallest object visible, and an apple or a mouse would be invisibly small. But to a hawk, chasing pigeons past the observation tower, a dime would be obvious on the sidewalk below. A mouse would be recognizable as food. When using the best vision its eyes allow, a hawk has the equivalent of an eight-power magnifier with which to study the ground.

Man has long been aware of the superior visual abilities of many birds. In the heyday of falconry, it was common practice to carry a small caged bird, such as a shrike, on the saddle horn. When the trained hawk was flown, it often rose too high for human eyes to follow it against the blue sky. The falconer could then tell where his tercel was by watching the antics of the caged shrike. The little bird instinctively feared the hawk and kept its head cocked to hold the falcon in view.

The eye of a honeybee is constructed on an entirely different plan, and at its best the bee's vision is much poorer than our worst. For an object to be visible to a bee, it must be relatively huge—one hundred times as large as for a person to see it. At the edge of the bee's visual field, it must be six thousand times as large.

This seems almost incredible when one recalls the small flowers a bee will seek out. Yet the paradox is easily explained. The bee does not see a single flower until very close to it. Again it is the angle at the eye that is the important factor. Since our eyes cannot focus on objects at very close range without a powerful lens to aid us, we tend to overlook the magnifying effect available to animals which do see things from a distance of an inch or less.

Understanding how the insect sees the individual flower does not account for the bee finding the blossom in the first place. This arises through its ability to detect movements. We often catch sight of a moving object "out of the corner of an eye." If it is a sparrow or an insect, the object is far too small to be seen in the extremities of our visual field—until it moves. Then its image shifts from one area of the light-sensitive retina to another, and our eyes report "something" without identifying it. We turn to look at it directly and gain about sixty times as much detail in this way.

Similarly, if something moves in a bee's visual field, the event is reported to the brain. It makes no difference whether the movement is due to a flower waving in the breeze or the bee flying past the flower. If the blossom affects one part of the

eye after another at a reasonable rate, movement is reported. The bee comes down for a closer look.

An apple tree in full flower, surrounded by green grass or weeds, is an object a bee can see from a fair distance. The white of the tree contrasts well with the background. At closer range the insect may be able to tell that the flowers are in clusters, with green or dark areas between. If the blossom-bearing branches are agitated by the wind, they are far more attractive to honeybees than a tree sheltered from the breeze by a building. The former will be fuller of insects, which have been flagged down by the extra movement of the white areas across their visual fields.

The honeybee needs movement in order to find food, and gains it by flying around. Many hunting animals rely upon patience, crouching motionless until they can detect potential prey. Most snakes, insect-eating lizzards, birds that eat insects and rodents, and the predators among mammals have this habit. Unless some small animal moves, a hawk or a cat may not see it at all.

Often animals see objects familiar to us in an astonishing way, paying attention to aspects we consider secondary. Honeybees can be trained to come for drops of sugar water placed on horizontal panes of thin window glass laid over coarse patterns—circles, triangles or squares. If fed repeatedly over a black disc, the bees will ignore open squares, X marks, or even black rings of the same diameter as the disc. Yet they will not be able to distinguish between black discs, black triangles and black squares if all of these have the same perimeter. An X and an open triangle will be confused if they have the identical number of inches of boundary between black and white.

The insect does not recognize shape as such, although it can associate food with a crude measure of a pattern's outline. This is the feature distinguishing a three-petaled flower from a five-petaled one of the same diameter. It accounts for the bee's ability to visit one kind of flower repeatedly, then ignore those blossoms from which the petals have begun to drop.

For higher animals, too, the significance of patterns can be enigmatic. A newly hatched chick will ignore a duck flying overhead, but react with obvious terror to a hawk. The outline of a hawk and duck are not so different. The outstretched wings of each are comparable while gliding. The long neck of the duck matches the long tail of the hawk, and the short tail of the duck the closely held head of the hawk. The difference lies in which precedes—the long extension or the short. This is the chick's inborn cue. If a black cardboard silhouette of a gliding bird is moved across the chicken run on horizontal wires, and the long extension precedes, the chicks are undisturbed—it's only a duck. But if the long extension trails, they scatter and hide—it's a hawk!

Creatures with conspicuous eyes may use them very little. For the meadow mouse in the grass, scent and touch are enough to guide it to berries and seeds. Vision serves primarily in warning of the approach of an enemy. To help see in all directions simultaneously, the mouse's eye has a greatly enlarged lens that is so

nearly spherical as to give the eye periscopic qualities. There is no need to focus on anything. Instead, the eye sees poorly from horizon to horizon. It is extremely sensitive to any change in the visual field, and warns the mouse to freeze, lest movement or sound betray its position.

The cat and the fox, the hawk and the owl, by contrast, depend largely on vision to locate a meal. They stalk or watch or cruise with seldom a backward glance, for they fear few enemies. Accordingly, their eyes are placed farther forward, and the field of view of each eye overlaps that of the other. This permits binocular vision and doubles the chance of detecting a potential victim.

As long ago as 1773, the English naturalist Gilbert White remarked that "as most nocturnal birds have large eyes and ears, they must have large heads to contain them. Large eyes, I presume, are necessary to collect every ray of light." He was thinking of owls, which do see well at night. The pupils in the big eyes can open wider than those of man, and it seems probable that this type of bird can see in dimmer light than we. Its hearing is so acute, however, that it is difficult to decide how much the owl depends on vision alone in finding active prey at night. Even touch may play a prominent part, since the victims include both mice and smaller creatures such as katydids and earthworms.

Gilbert White did not realize the degree of enlargement of an owl's eyes. In these exceptional birds they are so greatly developed that they cannot be turned in their sockets. Instead they face straight ahead, giving the bird binocular vision but requiring that the entire head be swiveled to change the direction of gaze. Seemingly in consequence, the owl has an extraordinarily flexible neck, capable of turning the head more than a complete circle.

Vision is tremendously important to birds. Indeed, there are no blind birds or even any with degenerate eyes. Yet the huge size of birds' eyes is rarely visible since the lids conceal most of the eye-ball. Actually, all available space in the head has been devoted to the eyes—even at the expense of cramping the brain, especially the sites of reason and memory. Often the eye-balls are so big that their inner surfaces meet on the mid-line. The ancestors from which birds sprang tended toward better vision and dependence upon instinct. Mammals show the other alternative, with poorer vision in small-bodied kinds and greater dependence upon thinking activities and experience.

We find binocular vision extremely helpful for close work, as when trying to thread a needle. Most birds have a binocular field straight ahead of the beak. Yet if a chick is blindfolded on one side, it will still peck accurately at seeds and worms. Binocular cues seem not to be necessary.

Experimenters have discovered that chicks usually ignore seeds on a cloudy day or in a room with such diffuse lighting that the seeds cast no shadows. Even if the birds can use both eyes, they will often peck at seed-colored areas marked on the floor, if each imitation seed has a black shadow painted to one side of it. The shadow seems to be the feature upon which the bird judges size, distance and

shape. Lack of shadows may be the principal reason why so many birds become inactive in dull weather.

Probably most differences in ways of seeing things are related to unlikenesses in eyes. We are aware of the boundary between two gray areas that differ as little as one per cent in the amount of light they reflect. This gives us approximately 500 shades of gray between white and black. But a honeybee must have a 25 per cent difference between two shades of gray to be able to detect the boundary between them. As a result, its eyes can distinguish only about a dozen grays, plus black and white. The little fruit fly *Drosophila*, which has been used so extensively in the study of inheritance, has only three shades of gray in its visual range. The long-necked clam can distinguish even less. Yet it responds to a shadow by contracting its neck and hiding in the muddy beach.

Juncos and catbirds are gray. So are Maltese cats, beech bark, and slate. But otherwise this is not a common shade among natural objects. Most things we see are blue, like sky or larkspur; or green, like chlorophyll; or yellow, like canaries and dandelions; or orange; or red. The grays to which our eyes respond are supplemented by about 128 shades of color. Only when we see these colors translated into grays in a "black-and-white" photograph or on a TV screen do we encounter the world as most animals see it.

Despite popular belief, there is nothing especially attractive about a red flag for a bull. Anything waving excites the animal. A white flag or cape would be far more visible to him, and hence more effective, for the bull is color-blind. So are the cow and horse, the dog and cat, the pig and sheep. Of all the mammals, only man and some primates enjoy the luxury of color vision.

The day-active birds and most reptiles see color. So do all the fish which have been tested carefully. Frogs and salamanders apparently are color-blind. The use of red flannel to induce bullfrogs to snap at a hook on the end of a line is a fallacy like that of the bull and the red flag.

Bees show the magic ability to distinguish a color from any shade of gray. So do a number of crustaceans, the squid and the octopus. But this is not to say that they see colors as we do. In the case of the honeybee, at least, this is far from true.

Part of the difference in the colors an animal can see lies in the extent of its spectrum. One of the most convincing demonstrations on insects was performed a few years ago by the British entomologist, H. Eltringham. He caught several of the common butterflies known as Tortoise-shells, in the pattern of whose wings red is conspicuous. Using a clear red lacquer, he painted over their compound eyes, fitting them in this way with harmless red glasses. Then he let them free, and noted that they flew as well as usual. Apparently the Tortoise-shell could see with red light, which alone could pass through the red lacquer. When the same test was tried on the white butterfly known as the Large Cabbage, the insect flew aimlessly, with reactions like those of a blind insect. These observations match the behavior of the two butterflies, since the Tortoise-shell visits red flowers, whereas the Large

Cabbage rarely does so. Apparently it is unable to see them as more than black shadows.

Many fishermen, who are adept at catching large earthworms for bait when these "night crawlers" expose themselves on lawns in darkness, know that a red lantern or red flashlight lets human eyes see the worms easily without disturbing the quarry. Earthworms are blind to red light, although their skins are sensitive to any other part of the spectrum.

Recently, H. N. Southern of Oxford University Botanic Gardens used a similar method in watching a family of owls. He hung a red lamp close to the nest. Then he sat comfortably at a distance with field glasses, recording the kind of food the parents brought their young on each trip. The owls saw no light, and behaved as though in complete darkness. Yet Mr. Southern was able to discover that earthworms formed an important part of the birds' diet—a fact never before suspected.

It is easy to assume that because human vision is excellent we can see anything that any other animal can—and perhaps a bit more. Yet for many insects the solar spectrum includes a bright band beyond the blue and violet, in the ultraviolet. To a honeybee or housefly, this is the most stimulating part of sunlight. Objects that reflect ultraviolet are far brighter to most insects than objects that do not. Human beings fail to see these differences, since the slightly yellowish lens of our eye absorbs light energy at such short wave lengths.

We can, however, use photographic film sensitive to ultraviolet and learn what an insect sees by means of this component of sunlight. Most things that reflect light visible to us also reflect some ultraviolet. A few provide surprises. The common yellow daisy, for example, absorbs ultraviolet except at the tips of the petals, which are intensely reflecting. In consequence, this flower is visible to insects as a halo of bright ultraviolet spots surrounding the central cone where the nectar and pollen wait.

Even some insects show strange features in ultraviolet. Both the male and female Luna moth are a pastel green to our eyes. But in the ultraviolet, she is a blonde and he a brunet. These differences must be visible to the moths whenever they see one another in daylight.

"By night all cats are gray" is an old proverb, and still a perfectly true statement. Neither we nor any other creature can see colors in very dim light, such as under the moonless night sky. Of course, all cats are gray at any time to another cat. But the cat's eyes still see a great deal at night. This is partly through possession of an extremely sensitive retina, and it depends somewhat on the fact that the cat's eye possesses an internal mirror. Light entering the eye has one opportunity as it goes in to be absorbed and stimulate vision. If it misses being absorbed, it is reflected by the mirror and sent through the retina again—giving it another chance. In dim illumination this represents a one hundred per cent gain for the cat.

The presence of a mirror in a cat's eye accounts for the eye-shine familiar whenever a strong light is shone into the animals' eyes at night. The beam from a

flashlamp enters the wide-open pupil and is reflected back again with such intensity that the cat's eyes seem to glow. A similar mirror accounts for the orange eye-shine of bears, the opalescent green of a bullfrog, the bright yellow of a raccoon, and the ruby red of alligators.

Cats of most kinds are like alligators in preferring to prowl for food at night, making full use of their sensitive eyes; but they enjoy basking in the sun as well. To protect the retina from the glare of daylight, each of these animals has a slit pupil. This consists of a pair of curtains that can be drawn apart widely, admitting all light available. By day they can be pulled together until, as in a cat's eye, only a pinhole above and one below represent the slit.

The circular pupil in our own eyes is operated by fine muscles surrounding it in the iris, the colored part of the eye. When the iris opens, these muscles are stretched. But when the muscles contract to close the pupil, they are in their own way. The limit of closure is reached with the pupil still open nearly one-eighth of an inch. This is fine for a man who sleeps at night, but would never do for a cat.

It seems to be an engineering impossibility to ask a small eye to see well both by day and by night. Perhaps as a result, bats and many snakes which are abroad in darkness seem to ignore vision altogether. Another engineering problem is for an animal to be able to see both in air and under water. We represent one extreme, and a fish or a penguin the other. In air, we see objects clearly that are brought into focus through the combined action of the lens of the eye and of the curved cornea exposed through our tears. Under water, the focusing action of the cornea vanishes. The lens alone is not sufficient to bring objects into focus, and we find ourselves hopelessly farsighted. For this reason we prefer to wear diving goggles or a mask, and keep our tear-wet corneas in air.

The fish and the penguin which chases it have such strong focusing action in the lens of the eye that they need no help from the cornea to see while swimming. But as soon as a penguin emerges into air, the added focusing action of its corneas makes it pathetically nearsighted. It has difficulty distinguishing a stone from an egg at its own feet.

A few creatures are fitted especially for seeing both in air and in water. The black whirligig beetles which spin and cruise on the surface of ponds and lakes have divided compound eyes. One half of each eye faces into the water and is always wet. The other half looks into air, and is located above the water line. The four-eyed fish of Central and South American rivers is similarly equipped. Each eye has two pupils, and the fish swims at the surface with the upper pupils exposed to air, the lower ones looking into the water. In this way it is able to keep apprised of events all around it. The same lens serves both pupils, and the proportions of the eye are correct to allow clear vision through both of them simultaneously.

Ordinary fish have a strange view of the world. Through the water they see objects on the bottom. Directly above them (and to all sides of vertical for an angle of exactly 48.8 degrees), they look through a window bounded by the horizon. This

is due to the bending of light as it enters water. Surrounding this window is a reflection of the bottom, poor or good depending upon how much the wind ruffles the water surface. So used to this queer field of view is any fish that it keeps close watch on every detail: the worm on a hook, tethered by a line; the kingfisher hovering directly overhead; the snail creeping along the bottom—all are of importance.

There is good reason to doubt that a fish can see much color in an angler's dry fly silhouetted against the sky. But its shape and its action are highly visible. So too may be the line that links the fly to the angler's rod. Here again is a measure of ability to see well. Just as our eyes must be supplied with larger and larger type if we are to read into twilight, so too the fisherman may use a coarser and stronger leader on his hook after sunset. As the light dims, the fish is unable to distinguish a string against the sky.

Long before the invention of clocks, these changes were evident to the peoples of the Near East. Day has come to a Mohammedan minaret when the faithful can distinguish a gray thread from a white, night when neither thread can be seen at all.

The Arabs knew too, from living in close association with their horses, that the animal's prowess in the dark is outstanding—matching the fact that it has the largest eyes of any terrestrial creature. The desert dwellers invented a fable on the subject. According to the story, the lion and the horse got into an argument as to which of them could see better. Finally they called in some neutral judges and asked to be given problems that would settle the dispute. The best the lion could do was to locate a white pearl in a saucer of milk. But the horse picked out a black pearl among coal. The judges decided in favor of the horse.

LORUS J. & MARGERY MILNE

(With acknowledgements to *The American Scholar*)

GLIMPSES FROM A. A. MACDONELL'S HISTORY OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE

(Macdonell's book was first published in 1899 and reprinted in 1928 by William Heinemann Ltd., London. Although a classic in its time, its date antiquates it in parts and several chronological as well as exegetical opinions are no longer unchallenged today, especially after the work of Sri Aurobindo on the Rigveda and its spiritual successors. But there is such an amount of interesting and useful information in it that to catch a series of glimpses from the great British scholar's research seems indeed a worthwhile occupation.)

THE enthusiasm with which Voltaire in his *Essai sur les Moeurs et l'Esprit des Nations* greeted the lore of the *Ezour Vedam*, a work brought from India and introduced to his notice in the middle of the [18th] century, was premature. For this work was later proved to be a forgery made in the seventeenth century by a Jesuit missionary. The scepticism justified by his fabrication, and indulged in when the discovery of the genuine Sanskrit literature was announced, survived far into the present century. Thus, Dugald Stewart, the philosopher, wrote an essay in which he endeavoured to prove that not only Sanskrit literature, but also the Sanskrit language, was a forgery made by the crafty Brahmans on the model of Greek after Alexander's conquest. Indeed, this view was elaborately defended by a professor at Dublin as late as the year 1838. (Pp. 2-3)

Considering that the affinity of the oldest form of the Avestan language with the dialect of the Vedas is already so great that, by the mere application of phonetic laws, whole Avestan stanzas may be translated word for word into Vedic, so as to produce verses correct not only in form but in poetic spirit; considering further, that if we know the *Avestan language* at as early a stage as we know the Vedic, the former would necessarily be almost indetical with the latter, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Indian branch must have separated from the Iranian only a very short time before the beginnings of Vedic literature, and can therefore have hardly entered the North-West of India even as early as 1500 B. C.¹ All previous estimates of the antiquity of the Vedic period have been outdone by the recent theory of Professor Jacobi of Bonn, who supposes that period goes back to at least 4000 B. C. This theory is based on astronomical calculations connected with a change in the beginning of the seasons, which Professor Jacobi thinks has taken place since the time of the *Rigveda*. The whole estimate is, however, invalidated by the assumption of a doubtful, and even improbable, meaning in a Vedic word, which forms the very

¹ This is still the majority historical line, but more and more attention is coming to be paid to the fact universally admitted that there is neither documentary nor archaeological evidence as yet for any Aryan invasion of India in c. 1500 B. C. or at any other time. (Editor's Note).

starting-point of the theory. Meanwhile we must rest content with the certainty that Vedic literature in any case is of considerably higher antiquity than that of Greece. (P. 12)

Many centuries later India was visited by three Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, Fa Hian (399 A.D.), Hiouen Tshang (630-645), and I Tsing (671-695). The records of their travels, which have been preserved, and are all now translated into English, shed much light on the social conditions, the religious thought, and the Buddhist antiquities of India in their day. Some general and specific facts about Indian literature also can be gathered from them. Hiouen Tshang especially supplies some important statements about contemporary Sanskrit poets. It is not till his time that we can say of any Sanskrit writer that he was alive in any particular year, excepting only the three Indian astronomers, whose exact dates in the fifth and sixth centuries have been recorded by themselves. It was only the information supplied by the two earlier Chinese writers that made possible the greatest archaeological discovery of the present century in India, that of the site of Buddha's birth-place, Kapila-vastu, identified in December 1896. At the close of our period we have the very valuable account of the country at the time of the Muhammadan conquest by the Arabic author Alberuni, who wrote his *India* in 1030 A. D. (P. 13)

The question of the origin and age of writing in India, long involved in doubt and controversy, has been greatly cleared up by the recent palaeographical researches of Professor Bühler. That great scholar has shown, that of the two kinds of script known in ancient India, the one called *Kharoshthi*, employed in the country of Gandhara (Eastern Afghanistan and Northern Panjab) from the fourth century B. C. to 200 A. D. was borrowed from the Aramaic type of Semitic writing in use during the fifth century B. C. It was always written from right to left, like its original. The other ancient Indian script, called *Brahmi*, is, as Bühler shows, the true national writing of India, because all later Indian alphabets are descended from it, however dissimilar many of them may appear at the present day. It was regularly written from left to right; but that this was not its original direction is indicated by a coin of the fourth century B. C., the inscription on which runs from right to left. Dr. Bühler has shown that this writing is based on the oldest Northern Semitic or Phoenician type, represented on Assyrian weights and on the Moabite stone, which dates from about 890 B.C. He argues, with much probability, that it was introduced about 800 B. C. into India by traders coming by way of Mesopotamia. (P. 15)

The palaeographical evidence of the Açoka inscriptions, in any case, clearly shows that writing was no recent invention in the third century B. C., for most of the letters have several, often very divergent forms, sometimes as many as nine or ten. A considerable length of time was, moreover, needed to elaborate from the

twenty-two borrowed Semitic symbols the full *Brahmi* alphabet of forty-six letters. This complete alphabet, which was evidently worked out by learned Brahmans on phonetic principles, must have existed by 500 B. C., according to the strong arguments adduced by Professor Bühler. This is the alphabet which is recognised in Panini's great Sanskrit grammar of about the fourth century B.C., and has remained unmodified ever since.¹ It not only represents all the sounds of the Sanskrit language, but is arranged on a thoroughly scientific method, the simple vowels (short and long) coming first, then the diphthongs, and lastly the consonants in uniform groups according to the organs of speech with which they are pronounced. Thus, the dental consonants appear together as *t, th, d, dh, n*, and the labials as *p, ph, b, bh, m*. We Europeans, on the other hand, 2,500 years later, and in a scientific age, still employ an alphabet which is not only inadequate to represent all the sounds of our languages, but even preserves the random order in which vowels and consonants are jumbled up as they were in the Greek adaptation of the primitive Semitic arrangement of 3000 years ago. (P. 17)

The actual use of ink (the oldest Indian name of which is *mashi*) is proved for the second century B.C. by an inscription from a Buddhist relic mound, and is rendered very probable for the fourth century B.C. by the statements of Nearchos and Quintus Curtius. (P. 19)

Many really new words have, however, come in through continual borrowings from a lower stratum of language, while already existing words have undergone great changes of meaning.

This later phase of the ancient language of India was stereotyped by the great grammarian *Pāṇini* towards the end of the fourth century B. C. It came to be called Sanskrit, the "refined" or "elaborate" (*saṃ-skṛ-ta* literally "put together"), a term not found in the older grammarians, but occurring in the earliest epic, the *Rāmāyana*. The name is meant to be opposed to that of the popular dialects called *Prākṛta*, and is so opposed, for instance, in the *Kāvyaḍarṣa*, or *Mirror of Poetry*, a work of the sixth century A. D. The older grammarians themselves, from Yaska... onwards, speak of this classical dialect as *Bhāṣā*, "the speech," in distinction from Vedic. The remarks they make about it point to a spoken language... There is, indeed, no doubt that in the second century B. C. Sanskrit was actually spoken in the whole country called by Sanskrit writers *Aryavarta*, or "Land of the Aryans," which lies between the Himalaya and the Vindhya ranges. (pp. 22-23)

Like Italian, as compared with Latin, this early popular speech [the dialect of Magadha] is characterised by the avoidance of conjunct consonantas and by fondness for final vowels. Thus the Sanskrit *sūtra*, "thread," and *dharma*, "duty",

¹ "About the fourth century B.C." is no longer credited and Panini's date is still a matter of controversy. (Editor's Note)

become *sutta* and *dhamma* respectively, while *vidyut*, "lightning," is transformed into *vijju*. The particular form of the popular language which became the sacred idiom of Southern Buddhism is known by the name of Pali. Its original home is still uncertain, but its existence as early as the third century B. C. is proved beyond the range of doubt by the numerous rock and pillar inscriptions of Aṣoka. This dialect was in the third century B. C. introduced into Ceylon, and became the basis of Singhalese, the modern language of the island. (p. 25)

The very name of this class of literature, *sūtra*, "thread" or "clue" (from *śiv*, "to sew"), points to its main characteristic and chief object—extreme conciseness. The prose in which these works are composed is so compressed that the wording of the most laconic telegram would often appear diffuse compared with it. Some of the Sutras attain to an almost algebraic mode of expression, the formulas of which cannot be understood without the help of detailed commentaries. A characteristic aphorism has been preserved, which illustrates this straining after brevity. According to it, the composers of grammatical Sutras delight as much in the saving of a short vowel as in the birth of a son. The full force of this remark can only be understood when it is remembered that a Brahman is deemed incapable of gaining heaven without a son to perform his funeral rites. (p. 35)

The results attained by the Indians in the systematic analysis of language surpass those arrived at by any other nation. Little has been preserved of the earliest attempts in this direction, for all that had been previously done was superseded by the great Sutra work of Panini. Though belonging probably to the middle of the Sutra period, Panini must be regarded as the starting-point of the Sanskrit age, the literature of which is almost entirely dominated by the linguistic standard stereotyped by him. (p. 39)

(*To be continued*)

SRI AUROBINDO'S WORLD-WORK

THE evolution of Consciousness from its first primitive beginnings in the Inconscient to the consciousness of man, the mental being, through its successive appearances in the physical and vital, is not the final end of the process. There is still the spiritual and supramental consciousness to evolve. Although man is the present summit, he is not the last word of the creation. He has still to evolve into a higher and higher spiritual being till the highest, the supramental, is reached.

Man retains the same instincts and impulses which characterise the animal because of his animal background. It is this animal nature of man that has to be changed so that he may grow into his true nature which is entirely free from the longings and desires, the passions and impulses of the lower nature. Till that is done he is to be regarded as only a superior animal. Although he has developed a new element by the addition of reason to his animal consciousness, an element which distinguishes him from all other types of animals, this reason is not always a safe guide. It is dominated and coerced by his crude and aggressively ignorant selfish vital nature and turns traitor the moment his own self-interest is involved. He tries to justify the demands of his vital nature unreasonably by all sorts of perverse arguments that emanate from his life-consciousness. This is as much true of the individual as of the collectivity. This selfishness or egocentrism breeds a sense of separateness from all other individuals like himself, each selfish in his own way and the result is perpetual clash and conflict with others over material and vital interests no less than mental ideals and ideologies which ought to have brought nations together instead of creating an unbridgeable gulf between them. We have only to look at the conflicting ideologies of communism and capitalism reflected in the two antagonistic blocs headed by Russia on the one hand and by America on the other. Thus there is continual and prolonged tension which imperils the existence of the human race itself by global and destructive war.

Moral and religious teachings and preachings from ancient times to this day on truth and non-violence have been incapable of ending the use of force, violence and rapacity by human nature. All the world-wide efforts by men of good-will have failed to bring peace and security in the lives of men and nations. The only explanation for these failures is that most of morality and religion has its origin in the mind which is ignorant and gropes helplessly for truth. Thus any remedy based on mental ideas and mental prescriptions, however wise and enlightened from the human standpoint, is bound to meet with failure. This is what has always happened and is still happening before our eyes, particularly from the First World War to the end of the Second. All mental recipes and formulas to solve human problems grow more and more complex, and become too numerous to tackle. This ought to open the eyes of humanity to the need of other and more effective remedies.

A total and radical change of human consciousness and nature is thus needed to check the downward trend. Among all right-thinking men, the élite of humanity,

there is a persistent cry for change but the will to effectuate a spiritual change is still lacking in the race.

It is at this critical stage of human history that Sri Aurobindo has appeared with his spiritual message which holds out the prospect of a bright and enduring future both individual and collective. He found that the traditional spiritual way served only to liberate a few individuals here and there from bondage to nature, while the rest of mankind suffered from it. These limited illumined souls could not bring about the much-needed transformation of the world-conditions which grew from bad to worse. It was as if the whole inconscient and subconscious nature full of the past instincts and impulses of the animal and even influences from infernal nature rose to the surface and posed the dangerous question of even the survival of the race.

Sri Aurobindo saw that the only way to stem the rot that had set in in human affairs all over the globe was to establish on a permanent basis the highest spiritual force glimpsed by the ancients. This summit of spirituality, once established here, would solve all problems by the inherent force of truth in it. Thus he used all his energies to reach the Supermind and bring it down to earth. When the loss of his own life seemed necessary at a crucial point, he gave it in a supreme sacrifice of his own body in the interest of humanity and the world at large.

The Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, his collaborator in this stupendous work of earth-transformation, carried on his work for 23 years and got the Supermind established in the earth's subtle-physical layer on a permanent basis in 1956. Up to 1973 she tried to bring about the needed supramental change in her body, the last stage of this vast work of transformation, but left before it could be effected.

In any case, their mission was essentially fulfilled. If left to the tardy and difficult process by slow and deliberate workings of the subconscious nature without the conscious collaboration of highly evolved human beings, it might take millions of years to bring about the supramental change. Their mission was to accelerate the pace of evolution and they did it.

The present world-order is in the possession of dark and dangerous anti-divine Asuric forces and they are not going to give up their long-established dominion without a strong and determined opposition to the new supramental force that has come to oust them and be the leader of terrestrial life. How long the battle will continue, it is difficult to predict, but it is certain that the end to the rule of the hostile forces is in sight. It may take some centuries to eliminate them entirely. The Supreme Divine may work through peace and harmony or through revolutionary upheavals and we have to wait with patience and collaborate with the new force to see that it triumphs over the Asuric forces whose interest is to perpetuate their own reign through human instruments. But their days are numbered. Humanity can now look forward to a not-too-remote future for the establishment of the reign of the Divine—a new era of knowledge, power and bliss: in other words, a divine life on earth.

A NEW BIRTH

IN the eternal scheme of evolution and progress India has a very significant role to play. Perhaps this fact has not been clearly understood yet by her own men, not to speak of those of other countries. Her mission to bring about a new and novel pattern of living based on the harmonious blending of the three essential truths of existence, namely, God, Freedom and Unity, still awaits total acceptance by people at home and abroad. So-called democracy cannot be the exclusive ideal of India, nor can she cherish communism as her working principle. These political systems are products of the rational mind and the truths they preach and proclaim are the outcome of the discriminative intellect, whereas India's central pursuit is for the spirit, her aspiration is towards the spiritual ultimate of life. She cannot remain satisfied with ideals devoid of spiritual contents. No doubt, the aforesaid ideals are the fine flowers of the rational age and as such each of them carries in its own way some directing principles of the collective social life of the day. But the pity is that the truths contained in them are themselves partial and fragmentary in character. Besides, whatever truths are present in them cannot, in practice, gain ground on account of other propensities of human nature that are vigorously in action in all the spheres of life—individual, national and international.

Amongst other things, illiteracy in the common mass is a big stumbling block in the way of a true and effective form of democracy. Apart from that, there are a hundred other opposing, anti-rational and dogmatic elements which persist in nature in spite of mental education, and lurk behind all ideals. As a result the categorical ideals prove a failure in solving impartially and without prejudice the most urgent problems of the social life. Rather, at times, they infuse strange elements adding to the complexities of the problems. Under the circumstances, perhaps there is no way out unless we ourselves rise above reason and the anti-rational elements or the situations themselves undergo a radical change. The best way at the moment, therefore, is to make use of the rational powers in their utmost purity and unselfishness possible.

In fact man's mind without the help of any superior power is mostly incapable of tackling any problem rightly. In its attempt to do so it gets assailed very often by lower propensities like arrogance, fanaticism, falsehood, selfishness and hatred, and made to serve those inferior masters to the detriment of progress and social relationship. Mind is not the origin of existence nor is reason the absolute governor or judge of life. There are powers above and within, which uphold and evolve the universal manifestation. In the presence of the pressing evolutionary demand of a united world the separate bundles of fanatic motives and unreasonable appropriations must dissolve and mix their contents in the vast unifying ocean of an integral Truth-Consciousness.

Mind's drive to solve the mystery of creation has by now come face to face with phenomena baffling to rational scrutiny and observation. As regards the origin

of existence three successive stages of the mental discovery are: first matter, then vital energy or life force and lastly mind. All of these have, one after another, proved inconclusive to the seekers as the ultimate solution. There has already been the perception of something beyond which is inexplicable in terms of mind and can only be called unknown or unknowable.

It is apparent that our present world is undergoing a tremendous upheaval. It is swaying to and fro, as it were, with the birth-pang of a new age, the age of the spirit. The emergence of a spiritual age is inevitable in the nature of things to come. The signs of such a birth are evident everywhere. The whole earth is vibrant with the pulsation of the life-breath of this new-comer. But the physical mind opposes the appearance. A strong resistance comes from the vital-physical plane and the subconscious base of the earth. What the world needs now for the safe emergence or delivery of the new age is a physician, a specialist or a maternity surgeon, so to say.

Herein starts the role of India. Which of the nations of the present world has as much experience, knowledge and authority in the way of the spirit as India has? Is it not India where, from the very dawn of civilisation, the Rishis not only had the vision and realisation of the supreme Truth and Reality behind the phenomenal world, but also attempted to establish that Truth in the mind, life and body of the whole society, in all its functions, activities and institutions? Moreover, they preserved in golden letters the seeds of their divine discovery in the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita for posterity to follow and recreate life by that light and realisation—always in accordance with the demand of the new time and circumstances. This most ancient land has since then kept that immortal light ablaze in the heart of humanity by cradling on her bosom the Avatars and outstanding spiritual figures. These gems amongst men have proclaimed time and again the message of India in terms intelligible to all nations, castes and creeds of the world. Considering everything, will we be wrong to adore India as the pioneer of the advent of the new age? Wrong or right, this is the only reason for which India lives, this is the only purpose she is destined to serve. For this only she strove in the past, she exists at present and will rise in the future. She aspires, she acts, she hopes and suffers only for conducting the birth of an unprecedented spiritual age in the world.

The recent picture of India may shake our high hopes and convictions. We may not find in it that glorious image of her which was enshrined with dignity and devotion in the hearts of all her spiritual and patriotic children. We may instead see a problem-infested divided India, an India faced with intricate conspiracy and intrigue. These are, of course, factors demanding much thought and penetrating consideration. In spite of all of them we must not despair. We must find the best way to be followed with intuition, aspiration, vision, courage and unity of purpose and will. Strength is the key-word: strength within and strength without. Short of it, love and knowledge and even spirituality turn out to be tamasic self-complacency. Strength is the first and foremost factor to enable one to stand on one's own legs.

India requires that strength politically, socially, economically, no less than culturally. Strength comes from the soul's confidence in the grace of the Divine Mother, Mahakali. She is the Strength-aspect of the Supreme Mother. Let us have full faith in and reliance on the divine destiny of India and then we shall realise that there is nothing to be worried about. Come what may, we must follow the Divine Mother and what she wants of us up to the end.

In conclusion let us aspire in tune with the ancient Rishi of the Rig-Veda:

“Protect us, O Agni, from the Rakshasa, protect us from the harm of the undelighting, protect us from him who assails and him who would slay us, O Vast of lustre, O mighty and young.”

Indeed it is the central note of all the prayers of all times. It is the prayer of the soul of existence itself. The entire creation prays to be protected from the harm of the undelighting, those who lack in joy of what the Vedics termed the True, the Right, the Vast. That joy the origin of all, that delight is the ultimate aim and goal of all evolutionary aspirations.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

LOTUS FEET OF THE LORD

SOME leave footprints deep
 On the paths of life,
 Etched brightly on the pages of history
 For the pleasure of every eye.
 Some leave an impact sharp
 On the mind of humanity,
 Remembered gladly and gratefully
 Through century on century.
 Others remain seeming cyphers—
 Without leaving a forceful trace
 In the march of time, they escape
 Quietly from some forest hut or mountain cave,
 A humble house or riverside hermitage;
 Equally they destroy or create,
 Unmarked by any mortal eye.
 Thus choose sometimes
 To leave no print or sign
 On the surface of the earth
 The Lotus Feet of the Lord.

SHYAM KUMARI

ARJUNA REMEMBERS

You ask if he was really colored blue,
That Krishna? Well... a sort of smoky hue,
A shifting color that you couldn't name.
The ever changing cover round a flame
That leaped with sudden flare and ran through
The gamut of colors. Now they all say "blue",
A radiant shade as befits a god.
Well, we weren't sure. One minute we'd be awed
By something in him remote, stern, yet bright,
And then he'd joke of Bhima's appetite,
And we were kids again.

I held him dear...

But never dreamed he'd be my charioteer
Until the war came. Then he took the reins,
And through the horses shuddered birth-like pains
Of death-filled days, a world of madness brought
By Karma's law, the revenge our cousin sought.

Against us were the standards of our kin
And teachers, Drona, Bhishma. What greater sin
Was there than to take arms against these two?
They had given freely of all they knew
Of life and war. And were we then to repay
Their love with bitter death?

I began to sway

And gasp for air like a dying elephant,
My quaking guts heaved and moaned. "I can't."
I shrieked at him, "I can't fight this war!"
The world went grey. I sank slowly to the floor.

The rest is vague now. He reasoned long with me
About the warrior's job, tried philosophy...
But Drona taught me the first pull of the bow,
And Bhishma told us of how long ago
Our noble race had come to rule this land.
Govinda tried to make me understand
That what I saw was not the final Truth,
That the soul alone escapes the mouth

Of worms. I listened but could stand no more.
 "Enough talk!" I cried, "Show me a door
 That opens wide, a path I will not lose.
 I am a fighter. You must lead me by the nose!"
 I remember then a smile and a strange sound
 Before the light...

I looked up from the ground
 Trying to recall what he'd said
 About death. Hari stood there, his head
 Aglow still with whirling radiance.
 He looked down. I would not meet his glance
 But quickly rose and climbed into the car.
 The conches' biting call began the war.
 Of course I was the one who had to kill
 The two of them, I who had the skill
 And Shiva's magic bow. But when the time
 Had come we were all so soaked in bloody slime
 You could not tell the living from the dead.
 When Bhishma came for his death I felt the dread
 Again within my bones. And when he saw
 Me crouch behind the hermaphrodite and draw
 My bow, he knew the ancient curse was true
 And calmly flung his weapons down, then drew
 Near with something like relief upon his face.
 My fingers froze on the taut string. The pace
 Of slaughter slowed as all about the field
 The weary warriors waited for the deed
 I could not do. Then Krishna slowly turned
 And smiled upon the rage that flashed and burned
 Within my eyes.

He spoke but one short phrase:
 "And I am born again from age to age."

Boy, I hardly felt the arrow leave the bow
 And never really saw our grandsire fall,
 I wandered lost inside an endless well
 Drowned in light. Bah! How can I tell it?

GORDON KORSTANGE

THE UNFAITHFUL

MANY a time have I been inspired
beneath that tree.
Tired men and munching cattle
Shared its shade with me.
The winged orchestra never did abandon it
and the huge bushy tree sang and sang.

I do not know who poisoned the tree?
Worm? Beast? Man? God?
Or was it simply nature? I do not know.
Not a leaf was there
to sing when winds danced by.
Yet the winged beings were faithful to the tree.

Many a time have I wondered
what those birds had to do with the skeleton.
At times with their different shapes and hues
they made a curious sight.
But I couldn't read their mind.
Only man is blessed with faithlessness.

One cloudy morning, I sat beneath another tree
and was busy composing a poem on GRATITUDE.
A sudden heavy shower drove me
to the nearby temple, abandoned for generations.
But the birds on the dead tree perched unperturbed.
They continued to sing the same song.

A terrible thunder rolled in the sky.
The lightning that came out of it
made the dead tree a burning torch.
Horror-struck I stood witnessing the disaster.
The burnt log fell down. Birds too were made ashes.
But in my heart I could still hear the tree sing.

P. RAJA

AMRITSAR AND THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

A FOLKTALE

LONG back a rich man lived in a village near a forest, close to where Amritsar is now. His daughter happened to be a devotee of Vishnu. The father, an atheist, objected to this. "I will get you married to a leper," he threatened her. Finally he did so. The leper was also a cripple. The daughter submitted, taking it as the will of God.

Begging for food, she would move from place to place. The larger part of the collection she would give to her husband, only the remnants remained for her. So the days passed. Once she put her husband in a basket and went away in search of food.

There was a pond nearby. A little later a crow came, dipped into the waters, changed into pure white and flew away.

The husband, who had noticed it, wondered. A thought came to him. Somehow he managed to take a dip in the pond. And lo, he was a new man.

But his wife on coming back refused to accept him. Soon a crowd collected near the place. Finding that both his wife and the crowd were unconvinced, the man said: "All right. If you doubt what I have said take me to Guru Ramdas, who lives nearby. I shall accept whatever he decides."

Ramdas was the fourth in order of the ten Sikh Gurus. He told the people that the story the leper had narrated was true. And the reason he gave was as follows.

In the past, during the Treta Yuga, Lakshmana had been badly wounded by Ravana. He had lost consciousness. In search of medicine Hanuman had lifted a whole mountain containing the magic herb, "Vishalyakarani", a particle from which had fallen into the pond and given it its magical, curative power.

On hearing the story the people decided to build a temple on the site to honour the event.

This was the origin of the name "Amritsar", which means the "Nectar Pond", and this is how the Golden Temple came to be built. This temple, founded by the great saint Ramdas, is hailed as the most sacred structure by all members of the Sikh faith.

GUNANANDA DAS

THE FIRE-BIRD

A RE-TELLING OF A RUSSIAN FAIRYTALE

Foreword

ALL real 'fairy-tales' have a powerful symbolic content, and tell us truths about the beings and processes of the inner worlds. This seems especially so in Russian tales, perhaps because they were until very recently disseminated among a pre-literate society by professional story-tellers who were aware of the inner significance of the tales they told.

Perhaps readers will find more than 'just a story' in this narrative, if I give them a few clues. The King often represents the Self, the Central Consciousness, and his three sons can be understood as the Body (eldest), Life and Mind (the youngest son); the apple is that fruit which keeps the Self delighted with mundane existence, but that delight fades and proves inadequate when it is stolen away by a touch from some higher power—the Fire-Bird comes from above the Mind. In order to find that elusive, shining prize, one has to leave the normal world, and one's normal life (the horse) and go into the inner kingdoms. The Shining Horse must represent some power of the purified Vital, and Yelena the Fair is perhaps the Jungian *anima* or the psyche, the soul. The Grey Wolf is the Guru, without whose help these wonderful prizes, and especially their physical manifestations (the cage and the bridle), cannot be won from the Powers of the inner worlds.

The transition from one plane to another is often represented in the Russian stories by standard phrases: "Whether he travelled a little way or a long way, a short time or a long one, who can say?" always signals a change of plane; "No-one saw which way he went"—i.e. His journey was not a physical one, but inwards, away from the physical world.

In retelling this traditional tale I have tried to bring out some of these deeper significances, without destroying the charm of the 'fairy-tale'.

I

Once upon a time there was a King who was very proud of his fine orchards. Many beautiful, delicious and unusual fruits grew there, but the tree which the King valued most was an apple-tree. That tree gave one golden apple every day, and as he ate the wonderful fruit each morning the King felt all his youth and strength renewed, so that although he had reigned for many years and had three fine grown-up sons he never felt old or tired or weak.

But one morning when the gardeners went to pluck the golden apple for the King's breakfast...no fruit was there! The head-gardener was very distressed. He

went running to the King and said, "Today your apple-tree has given no fruit!" The King replied, "It cannot be—some thief has come in the night and stolen my apple; set your gardeners to watch tonight and see that no thief comes, or catch him if he dares." So the head gardener himself with some of his assistants stayed in the garden all night. They saw none and they heard none, but in the morning there was no apple for the King.

The King was very worried; he felt tired and unhappy, and lost his appetite. The next night he set his soldiers to watch the apple tree. But though they too saw and heard nothing, still next morning there was no apple for the King. By this time the King was really distressed, and when his sons saw how tired and grey he was looking they asked, "Dear Father, what is troubling you? We have never seen you looking so unwell." When their father told them about the disappearance of his wonderful apples they at once said, "Father do not distress yourself—we will catch the thief for you." And the eldest son declared, "Tonight I will watch in the garden."

He went into the orchard at sunset and sat in the dark beneath the apple-tree for many hours, until, in the deepest part of the night, his eyes began to close by themselves and in utter weariness he fell down and slept until just before dawn. When he awoke... there was no golden apple on the tree.

The moment he went back to the palace his father asked him eagerly, "Well, my son, did you see the thief?" The Prince replied, "Father, I watched all night, without so much as winking an eye, but no thief did I see or hear." So his younger brother said, "Tonight it will be my turn—let us see how I shall fare."

At sunset the middle brother went into the orchard and watched through many dark hours. But in the darkest part of the night, his head too began to nod and his eyes to close and, before he knew it, he had rolled over in a deep sleep. When he awoke just before dawn there was no sign of any thief—and no golden apple anywhere.

As soon as he told this news to his father, the youngest Prince jumped up and said, "Father, to-night it will be my duty, let us see if I have more luck than my brothers."

When the young Prince, whose name was Ivan, went into the orchard, he did not dare to stand still, let alone sit down. He walked up and down all night, and when he felt himself getting sleepy he washed his face with cold dew from the grass, which made him feel wide-awake again. In the deepest, darkest part of the night he saw a light which grew brighter and brighter until it almost dazzled him; at the same time there grew a sweet melody in his ears, a truly enchanting song. Looking up he saw a bird of ravishing beauty sitting in the tree and pecking at his father's apple, its golden feathers making their own brilliant light and its long tail hanging down almost to the ground.

At first Prince Ivan was so delighted and astonished at this wonderful sight that he could not move. But as he watched for a few moments he remembered that

he was supposed to catch the thief and softly he crept up to the tree and laid his hand on the bird's wonderful flowing tail. But the lovely creature immediately spread its burning wings and flew away, swift as a thought, leaving one single golden feather in Prince Ivan's hand.

At breakfast time when his father asked him anxiously, "Well, my son, did you catch the thief?" Prince Ivan replied, "No, father dear, I caught no thief; but I saw who is taking your apples—it is the Fire-Bird; look, he left a token for you." And he handed his father the marvellous feather. The moment the King saw that feather all his anger and anxiety fled away and he felt quite tranquil and content again. "Bless you, my son," he said, "I will not worry about it any more."

2 .

However, as time passed by the King found that his thoughts turned more and more to the wonderful bird who had stolen his apples, and at last he called his three sons to him and said, "My dear sons, I want you to saddle your finest horses and prepare for a long journey. Travel throughout the twenty-seven kingdoms of the world, look in all the four corners, and perhaps somewhere you will be able to find the shining Fire-Bird and bring it to me."

So the three princes took what they needed for the journey, saddled their horses and off they went. The eldest brother went one way, the middle brother another, but which way Prince Ivan went nobody saw or noticed.

So whether he went a long way or a little way none can tell, but sure it is that, as he was journeying, feeling sleepy perhaps in the heat of the day, he dismounted, hobbled his horse so it could not wander far, and lay down in the sweet soft grass and flowers. When he awoke it was nearly evening and, when he looked around for his horse, he could not see him anywhere. He looked and he called, he called and he looked, and at last he found a heap of bones, picked perfectly clean, with his own bright bridle lying nearby. Then indeed he felt downcast! He sat down on a stone feeling very dejected at the loss of his fine horse and the prospect of continuing his journey on foot. As he was sitting there wondering what to do next, a great grey wolf approached him. He looked very ugly, shaggy and fierce, and his voice was gruff and growly, but he proved a good friend to the young prince, as you shall hear.

"Oh ho, young man, who are you, and why are you sitting so sadly here?" said the Wolf in his deep gravelly voice. ♪

The young prince replied politely and told him who he was and the purpose of his journey, and how he had lost his horse.

"Looking for the Fire-Bird, are you?" said the Wolf with a strange twinkle in his eye. "Well, lucky for you that I ate your horse up, for you would never have found the Fire-Bird riding on him! Only I can help you, for you must go beyond the twenty-seven kingdoms into the thirtieth kingdom...and I will take you there upon my back—jump up!"

Without stopping to think, Prince Ivan jumped up on the Grey Wolf's back and they were speeding away, swift as thought, past lakes and forests, fields and cities in the wink of an eye.

3

Whether they travelled for a long time or a little time none can say, but sure it is that at last they came to the thirtieth kingdom, to a castle with high, forbidding walls and great gates shut tight. The Wolf stopped outside the walls and said, "Now, young man, we have come at a fortunate hour: all the guards are sleeping soundly. Climb over the wall and go into the palace. Go up to the highest room of the highest tower; there in the window hangs a golden cage, and in that cage is the Fire-Bird. You can take out the Bird, but do not touch the cage, at your peril. Then come back here to me."

So Prince Ivan boldly did as he was told, and found indeed the tower and the window and the cage with the wonderful Bird. But, as he took the Fire-Bird and it nestled into his bosom as if he were its own master, Prince Ivan's eyes fell upon the cage and he coveted it because of its beauty. "What a pity to leave behind so beautiful a cage...a fit home indeed for my Fire-Bird," he thought. And, longing thus, he forgot the Grey Wolf's warning and stretched out his hand to take the cage.

But the very second that his hand touched the cage, such an alarm shook the castle! Trumpets blew and drums beat and the guards all woke up and came running and of course they caught poor Prince Ivan with the Bird in his bosom and hauled him off to show him to the Tsar.

Tsar Kusman was the ruler of that palace, and he was very, very angry that someone had tried to steal his wonderful bird. Prince Ivan felt extremely foolish and ashamed of himself, but still he stuck up for himself boldly. "You should not let your bird steal apples from my father's garden," he said. The Tsar replied scornfully, "If you had come to me openly and told me the whole story I would have given you the bird and the cage out of respect for your father. But now you are no better than a thief yourself. But there is one treasure that I desire more than any other thing. If you can bring me Golden Mane, the marvellous horse from the stables of Tsar Afron, I will be appeased and give you the Fire-Bird and its cage as your reward."

Prince Ivan felt very crestfallen, though he would not show it. He went back to the Wolf, who of course asked him, "What took you so long? Where is the Bird?... Did you disregard my warning? You foolish boy... so, what did Tsar Kusman ask you to do for him?"

Ivan told the Grey Wolf about the horse Golden Mane who lived in the stables of Tsar Afron. To his surprise the Wolf said, "Well, jump up quick—I will take you there."

So off they sped again, swift as thought, past lakes and meadows, mountains and valleys until they stood outside another forbidding castle. The Grey Wolf said,

“Dismount”, Prince Ivan—we have come at a fortunate hour: the guards are all sleeping. Climb over the wall, go to the stables—there you will find the wonderful horse and, hanging beside him, his bridle. Take the horse, jump him over the wall, and come back here to me; but whatever you do, *do not* touch the bridle, at the risk of your life.”

Full of fresh courage Ivan did as he was told, and found indeed the horse and the bridle, just as the Grey Wolf had said. And when Prince Ivan laid his hand upon the horse it whinnied softly and nuzzled him as if he were its own master. But, as he turned to go out, Ivan’s eyes fell upon the wonderful bridle, all tooled with gold and silver and set with precious gems—a fitting bridle for such a shining steed. He could not bear to leave it behind and, without giving a thought to the Grey Wolf’s warning, he stretched out his hand to take it. The moment he touched it such an uproar arose, trumpets blaring and drums rattling, that all the guards woke up and rushed to the stable and straightway seized Prince Ivan and carried him off to the Tsar.

“So you are Kusman’s thief, are you? You ought to be ashamed of yourself—a King’s son stooping to such dishonourable behaviour. How are you going to redeem yourself now?” Prince Ivan looked back at him boldly, but he didn’t know what to say. So Tsar Afron continued, “Tsar Dalmat has a beautiful daughter, Yelena the Fair. If you can bring her to me, I will forget your misdeeds, and give you Golden Mane and his bridle as your reward.”

Prince Ivan went back to Grey Wolf, very down at heart.

“So, young friend, you disobeyed my warning again, did you? What have you to do this time?”

When the Prince told him about Tsar Dalmat’s beautiful daughter, the Wolf told him once more to jump on his back, and again they sped off past lakes and mountains, rivers and fields in the wink of an eye. Whether they travelled for a long time or a little time, who can tell? But at last they came to Tsar Dalmat’s castle and then the Wolf said, “Prince Ivan, get off my back. This time I will do the business myself. You just wait for me here.”

So saying, he dashed off and was over the walls in a trice. The beautiful Princess Yelena the Fair was walking in her green garden with her maids and companions, and she was indeed beautiful beyond compare. The Wolf waited for his chance and, when the Princess wandered a little away from the others, he dashed up, swung her onto his back and jumped over the wall before anyone could see which way he went.

4

So the Prince, the Wolf and Yelena the Fair started back to Tsar Afron’s country. But the Prince was sad, for he felt that he could never again love any girl but this beautiful Princess, and that she too loved him as his own true bride, and that he could not bear to exchange her for a horse, however magnificent.

But the Wolf knew what Ivan was thinking; and when they came near to Tsar Afron's palace he said to Ivan, "Now we must hide your bride in the forest, and I will go to Afron with you as Yelena the Fair." The Prince was overjoyed. They left Yelena in a safe place in the forest and then the Wolf turned a somersault in the air and became the living image of Yelena the Fair, so that even the Prince could not see the difference. Ivan led her to Tsar Afron, who was bowled over by her beauty. He was only too glad to give the Prince the Horse and bridle and get rid of him quickly so that he could set about the wedding preparations. While Prince Ivan went back with Golden Mane to the forest and his bride, Tsar Afron made a great wedding and a great feast... but when he led his bride into the inner chamber and unveiled her, he saw the muzzle of a Grey Wolf instead of the beautiful face of the Princess, and he was so frightened that he ran away, while the Wolf simply somersaulted back into his own form and dashed off again to the forest where Prince Ivan was waiting for him with his beautiful bride and Golden Mane the marvellous horse.

Together they set out for Tsar Kusman's Kingdom. But Prince Ivan was sad and thoughtful at the prospect of giving away the brilliant steed, who seemed to him a part of his own being, so responsive and loving to him was the horse. How could he exchange him even for the shining Fire-Bird? But of course the Grey Wolf was aware of his thought, and when they came near to Tsar Kusman's castle he said, "Dear Prince, leave your bride and your steed in a secret place, and I will go with you to the Tsar as Golden Mane."

Joyfully the prince hid Yelena the Fair and the marvellous horse in a safe place in the forest, and led the Grey Wolf (who had turned a somersault in the air and become the living likeness of Golden Mane) up to the Tsar.

Tsar Kusman was delighted at last to have his hand upon the horse he had coveted so long, and was only too happy to deliver up to the young prince the Fire-Bird in its golden cage. But when they were gone and he tried to mount his prize, of course it turned into a wolf. The Tsar was so frightened that he fell over, and Grey Wolf dashed off to the forest where Prince Ivan was waiting with Yelena the Fair, with Golden Mane and with the Fire-Bird in its jewelled cage.

5

They turned homewards, and travelled until they came to the place where the Prince had first met Grey Wolf.

"I can go no further with you, Dear Prince; now you must go on alone; but do not say good-bye to me forever, for you may yet have need of me."

Then the Prince bowed down three times to the Wolf and touched his feet with his hands, and bade him farewell with tears in his eyes.

Journeying further, they came near to the King's palace, and there in the heat of the day they sat down to rest, took food, and fell asleep.

And as they slept, the Prince's brothers passed by—also on their way homewards.

When they saw the Prince sleeping there with the Fire-Bird, Golden Mane and the beautiful Princess Yelena beside him they were filled with jealousy and muttered to each other, "We have travelled so far, yet we have nothing; why should he have everything? Let us kill him and divide the spoils between ourselves." No sooner said than done—quickly taking their swords they stabbed to death their younger brother as he slept, and took the Fire-Bird, the Horse and the Princess, and threatened to cut out her tongue if she should say anything to anyone about what had happened.

But in her mind the Princess called upon Grey Wolf for help, and before long he stood beside Prince Ivan as he lay dead where he had been sleeping. He caught hold of a Mother Raven and her fledgling out of their nest in the tree and told the bird, "Go, quickly bring me still water and sparkling water. Then I will let your little one go." What could the Raven do? She quickly did as he had bidden her, and when she brought the two kinds of water the Grey Wolf let her nestling free. First he sprinkled the still water upon Prince Ivan's wounds so that his body became whole again; then he sprinkled the sparkling water over him, so that its life entered his body and he woke up and shook himself and said, "How soundly I was sleeping!" "Nor would you ever have awoken, my Prince, without my help. Your brothers killed you as you were sleeping and they have stolen away your bride, your bird and your horse. Jump quickly on my back—there is still time to catch them!"

So, with the help of his friend the Grey Wolf, Prince Ivan caught up with his treacherous brothers and repaid them in kind for their gentle treatment of him. Then he carried home to his waiting father the Fire-Bird, Golden Mane the marvelous Horse, and Yelena the Fair, his beautiful bride.

SHRADDHAVAN

STORIES FROM TAMIL LITERATURE

13. THE TELEPATHIC FRIENDSHIP

PISIR was a small village on the sea-coast of the Pandia kingdom. It was a beautiful village with the billows breaking on the rocky shore and the spray rising and falling like tiny little beads of glass. The village got its name from that.

In that village there lived a poet called Aandai. Aandai was a very common name in those days and so this Aandai from Pisir was called Pisiraandai, and known as Pisiraandaiyar for respect.

Pisiraandaiyar was a fine poet and a very high-minded gentleman. Even at an extremely ripe old age he looked quite young and his hair did not turn grey. People used to wonder at his youthful appearance and ask him how it was so. And Pisiraandaiyar gave them his answer in a poem:

“You ask me how I don’t have grey hair even at eighty, I have never had to worry over anything in my life. My wife is a gem among women and my children are all full of virtue. My servants seem to know my mind and are very prompt to do my bidding. The ruler of my country is righteous and just. And in this my native village live men of great learning and exalted character, who are my friends. Do you think I have anything to worry my head over?” Such was Pisiraandaiyar.

At that time in the Chola country there ruled a king called Kopperuncholan. He was a poet with a philosophic turn of mind. His noble qualities made him loved and respected not only in his kingdom but all over the three Tamil-speaking southern kingdoms. Pisiraandaiyar and Kopperuncholan, being outstanding men of the times, heard about each other and knew they had like minds. Each hearing of the other and of his activities had great pleasure in knowing how their minds worked alike. They never met each other personally; still they considered themselves friends and professed it openly to their other friends. They seemed to be connected in a telepathic relationship.

Being more a philosopher than a statesman, Kopperuncholan began to have trouble in the palace. There were intrigues against him in which his two sons were involved. The king was indignant at first and wanted to punish the villains. But he calmed down soon. He became tired of the whole thing and decided to renounce the kingdom in favour of his sons and lead a peaceful life of retreat. Even after his abdication things happened that completely destroyed his peace of mind and he became fed up with life.

In those days it was a custom among the nobility that those who felt that their lives’ usefulness was at an end, ended their lives honourably by ‘fasting unto death’. Such suicide was not looked upon as a crime or shame, but was viewed nobly by society since usually the reasons for that act were honourable. The person announced his intention and chose a quiet place. He squatted on the ground facing north and started his fast. When two or three persons happened to have the same intention

they sat together. Other friends came to visit. They held normal conversation among themselves; they even joked and laughed. As days elapsed, their strength wore out and in a couple of weeks or three they passed away.

Kopperuncholan announced his intention to go into his final fasting. Of course his friends and kinsfolk were sad, but as was the custom, no one tried to dissuade him. Some who were very close to him could not bear the thought of living without their noble friend. So they too decided to join him in fasting.

All of them squatted together and started on their fast. Kopperuncholan had a strong feeling inside that Pisiraandaiyar, his unknown friend, might know of his intention and come to fast with him. So he asked his fasting friends to have some space reserved for Pisiraandaiyar in their midst. No one could believe that this would happen. Pisiraandaiyar lived in the far away Pandia country and how could the news reach him so quickly? Even if it did, who would suppose that Pisiraandaiyar, just a friend from hearsay, would be so closely involved with the king at heart as to come and die with him? But Kopperuncholan seemed to be very certain. He said to his companions, "Just wait and see."

The first day passed without any event, and so did a couple of days more. On the fourth day, about noon, the tired figure of a man was seen hurrying towards the fasting group. It was a total stranger but Kopperuncholan knew at heart that it was his friend Pisiraandaiyar. He rose from the ground and tottered towards the oncoming stranger. Pisiraandaiyar also hurried his steps and in the next moment they were in each other's arms. They were very happy to meet for the first time and chatted with great enthusiasm. Then Kopperuncholan introduced Pisiraandaiyar proudly to his dumbfounded friends. The poet treated them most cordially and mixed with them very freely. Then as though he knew everything he asked them which was the place that was reserved for him. Kopperuncholan squatted down and showed him a place next to him. Pisiraandaiyar squatted beside his friend and became one of the fasting group.

14. POTHYAR

As we saw in the previous story, when Kopperuncholan started his fast unto death some of his friends wished to join him in sympathy. Pothiyar the poet was one of them. While the king accepted the company of old and spent men, he denied that privilege to Pothiyar because he was young and married only a few years. Moreover, his wife was pregnant. But Pothiyar who had some sort of a spiritual relationship with the King was very insistent. So the king said, "All right, but not now. Come after your wife bears you a son." The king paused, and looking cryptically at Pothiyar he added, "I will take you with me then."

So Pothiyar had to go away. In a month or two, his wife bore him a son. Meanwhile Kopperuncholan had passed away and Pothiyar's grief was great.

Usually when great men or heroes died people erected monuments for them and

paid their homage. Kopperuncholan had such a monument.

One day an aggrieved and forlorn Pothiyar came and stood before the monument of the king. Memories were poignant and tears ran down his cheeks. He recited a few poems in memory of his friend.

Suddenly, Pothiyar remembered the King saying, "Come afterwards. I will take you with me then." "O friend, how will you take me with you now that you are a monument of stone?" he cried.

The story goes that at the poignant words of the poet, the monument of the King mysteriously cleaved open and that to the bewilderment of all lookers-on the poet gently walked into the crevice and vanished.

M. L. THANGAPPA