

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JUNE 1985

Price: Rs. 3.50

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR 1985

The considerable rise in costs has obliged us to revise our rates by a small margin. We hope our well-wishers will gladly co-operate.

### INLAND

Annual: Rs. 36.00

Life Membership: Rs. 504.00

### OVERSEAS

Sea Mail:

Annual: \$13.00 or £8.00

Life Membership: \$182.00 or £112.00

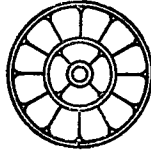
Air Mail:

Annual: \$36.00 for American & Pacific countries

£20.00 for all other countries

Life Membership: \$504.00 for American & Pacific countries

£280.00 for all other countries

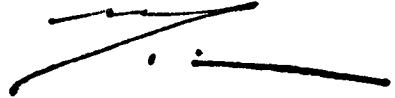


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



All Rights Reserved. No matter appearing in this journal or part thereof may be reproduced or translated without written permission from the publishers except for short extracts as quotations.

All correspondence to be addressed to:

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India

Editor's Phone: 4782

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Published by: P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY - 605 002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry - 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

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

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXVIII

No. 6

---

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

---

## CONTENTS

		<i>Page</i>
THE NEED OF THE COUNTRY	<i>The Mother</i>	... 351
A TALK BY THE MOTHER: TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON JUNE 2, 1954		... 352
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Nirodbaran</i>	... 356
THE RICKSHAW (Poem)	<i>P. Raja</i>	... 359
THE STORY OF A SOUL	<i>Huta</i>	... 360
THE INSPIRATION OF <i>Paradise Lost</i> :		
II. THE COMPLEX THEME OF <i>Paradise Lost</i>	<i>K. D. Sethna</i>	... 368
FURTHER STUDIES IN INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY: CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS CRISIS	<i>Indra Sen</i>	... 379
THE MOTHER'S CALL TO "THE GREAT ADVENTURE", AND HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN IT?	<i>Arvind Akki</i>	... 384
WONDERS:		
A CHORUS FROM SOPHOCLES' <i>Antigone</i>		... 390
TWO POEMS:		
SHE IS SAVITRI		
SHE AWAITS THE WORD	<i>R. Y. Deshpande</i>	... 391
IMMORTAL HAPPENINGS (Poem)	<i>Dinkar Palande</i>	... 392
MY MUSIC TO BE (Poem)	<i>Debanshu</i>	... 393
THE SONG OF THE LORD:		
THE GITA WITHOUT COMMENT	<i>Dhruva</i>	... 394
INDIRA GANDHI—AN UNKNOWN FACET OF HER LIFE	<i>Shyam Kumari</i>	... 398

CONTENTS

FROM A TRAVEL DIARY	"GT"	... 401
GLIMPSES FROM A. A. MACDONELL'S <i>History of Sanskrit Literature</i>		... 405
NEPAL	<i>Chaundona S. Banerji</i>	... 409
STORIES FROM TAMIL LITERATURE:		
15. THE RELEASE OF ILLANTHATHAN		... 413
16. THE SIEGE OF AAVUR		... 414
17. THE RELEASE OF MALAYAMAN'S CHILDREN	<i>M. L. Thangappa</i>	... 414

## *The Need of the Country*

*Q: How to bring about the needed cohesion and faith in the country?*

A: By following Sri Aurobindo's teachings. His Independence Day message on August 15th, 1947, needs to be read and re-read and its significance explained to millions of his compatriots. India needs the conviction and faith of Sri Aurobindo.

THE MOTHER

*Sri Aurobindo & The Mother: On India and Her Destiny*

## A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON JUNE 2, 1954

*This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's Elements of Yoga, Chapter 9, "Experiences and Visions" and Chapter 10, "Work".*

No questions?... I was going to propose a meditation.

*What are the causes for not being able to meditate?*

Because one has not learnt to do it.

Why, suddenly you take a fancy: today I am going to meditate. You have never done so before. You sit down and imagine you are going to begin meditating. But it is something to learn as one learns mathematics or the piano. It is not learnt just like that! It is not enough to sit with crossed arms and crossed legs in order to meditate. You must learn how to meditate. Everywhere all kinds of rules have been given about what should be done in order to be able to meditate.

If, when one was quite young and was taught, for instance, how to squat, if one was taught at the same time not to think or to remain very quiet or to concentrate or gather one's thoughts, or... all sorts of things one must learn to do, like meditating; if, when quite young and at the same time that you were taught to stand straight, for instance, and walk or sit or even eat—you are taught many things but you are not aware of this, for they are taught when you are very small—if you were taught to meditate also, then spontaneously, later, you could, the day you decide to do so, sit down and meditate. But you are not taught this. You are taught absolutely nothing of the kind. Besides, usually you are taught very few things—you are not taught even to sleep. People think that they have only to lie down in their bed and then they sleep. But this is not true! One must learn how to sleep as one must learn to eat, learn to do anything at all. And if one does not learn, well, one does it badly! Or one takes years and years to learn how to do it, and during all those years when it is badly done, all sorts of unpleasant things occur. And it is only after suffering much, making many mistakes, committing many stupidities, that, gradually, when one is old and has white hair, one begins to know how to do something. But if, when you were quite small, your parents or those who looked after you, took the trouble to teach you how to do what you do, do it properly as it should be done, in the right way, then that would help you to avoid all—all these mistakes you make through the years. And not only do you make mistakes, but nobody tells you they are mistakes! And so you are surprised that you fall ill, are tired, don't know how to do what you want to, and that you have never been taught. Some children are not taught anything, and so they need years and years and years to learn the simplest things, even the most elementary thing: to be clean.

It is true that most of the time parents do not teach this because they do not know it themselves! For they themselves did not have anyone to teach them. So they do not know... they have groped in the dark all their life to learn how to live. And so naturally they are not in a position to teach you how to live, for they do not know it themselves. If you are left to yourself, you understand, it needs years, years of experience to learn the simplest thing, and even then you must think about it. If you don't think about it, you will never learn.

To live in the right way is a very difficult art, and unless one begins to learn it when quite young and to make an effort, one never knows it very well. Simply the art of keeping one's body in good health, one's mind quiet and goodwill in one's heart—things which are indispensable in order to live decently—I don't say in comfort, I don't say remarkably, I only say decently. Well, I don't think there are many who take care to teach this to their children.

Is that all?

*Sweet Mother, ought we to do some other work besides studies?*

Some other work? That depends upon you. It depends upon each one and on what one wants. If you want to do sadhana, it is obvious that you must have at least partially an occupation which is not selfish, that is, which is not done for oneself alone. Studies are all very well—very necessary, even quite indispensable, only it is a part of what I was speaking about just a while ago, that you must learn when you are young, for when you are grown-up it becomes much more difficult—but there is an age when you can have the foundation of indispensable studies and when, if you want to begin to do sadhana, you must do something which does not have an exclusively personal motive. One must do something a little unselfish, for if one is exclusively occupied with oneself, one gets shut up in a sort of carapace and is not open to the universal forces. A small unselfish movement, a small action done with no egoistic aim opens a door upon something other than one's own small, very tiny person.

One is usually shut up in a shell and becomes aware of other shells only when there is a shock or friction. But the consciousness of the circulating Force, of the interdependence of beings—this is a very rare thing. It is one of the indispensable stages of sadhana.

*Mother, can't one study for the Divine?*

That means?

*Can one study for the Divine and not for oneself, prepare oneself for the divine work?*

Yes, if you study with the feeling that you must develop yourselves to become instruments. But truly, it is done in a very different spirit, isn't it?—very different. To

begin with, there are no longer subjects you like and those you don't, no longer any classes which bore you and those which don't, no longer any difficult things and things not difficult, no longer any teachers who are pleasant or any who are not—all that disappears immediately. One enters a state in which, whatever happens one takes as an opportunity to learn to prepare oneself for the divine work, and everything becomes interesting. Naturally, if one is doing that, it is quite all right.

*What you have said in the Bulletin, "educating the mind"—this means that one educates oneself for that, lives and studies for the Divine. Then isn't this a work done for the Divine?*

Yes, yes, yes. It is very good if it is done with that aim. But it must be with that aim. For instance, when one wants to understand the deep laws of life, wants to be ready to receive whatever message is sent by the Divine, if one wants to be able to penetrate the secrets of the Manifestation, all this asks for a developed mind, so one studies with that will. But then one no longer needs to make a choice to study, for everything, no matter what, the least little circumstance in life, becomes a teacher who can teach you something, teach you how to think and act. Even—I think I said this precisely—even the reflections of an ignorant child can help you to understand something you didn't understand before. Your attitude is so different. It is always an attitude which is awaiting a discovery, an opportunity for progress, a rectification of a wrong movement, a step ahead, and so it is like a magnet that attracts from all around you opportunities to make this progress. The least things can teach you how to progress. As you have the consciousness and will to progress, everything becomes an opportunity, and you project this consciousness and will to progress upon all things.

And not only is this useful for you, but it is useful for all those around you with whom you have a contact.

Let us take simply a question about your class, shall we?—the school class. Even as an undisciplined, disobedient and ill-willed child can disorganise the class—and this is why at times one is obliged to put him out, because simply by his presence he can completely disorganise the class—so too, if there is a student who has the absolutely right attitude, the will to learn in everything, so that not a word is pronounced, not a gesture made, but it becomes for him an opportunity to learn something—his presence can have the opposite effect and help the class to rise in education. If, consciously, he is in this state of intensity of aspiration to learn and correct himself, he communicates this to the others.... It is true that in the present state of things the bad example is much more contagious than the good one! It is much easier to follow the bad example than the good, but the good too is useful, and a class with a true student who is there only because he wants to learn and apply himself, who is deeply interested in every opportunity to learn—this creates a solid atmosphere.

You can help.



*Mother, why is it that here, in work, some people venture to satisfy their fancies and thus much money is wasted?*

It is not money alone that is wasted!

Energy, Consciousness is *infinitely*, a thousand times more wasted than money. Should there be no wastage...my word, I believe the Ashram couldn't be here! There is not a second when there isn't any wastage—sometimes it is worse than that. There is this habit—hardly conscious, I hope—of absorbing as much Energy, as much Consciousness as one can and using it for one's personal satisfactions. That indeed is something which is happening every minute. If all the Energy, all the Consciousness which is constantly poured out upon you all, were used for the true purpose, that is, for the divine work and the preparation for the divine work, we should be already very far on the road, much farther than we are. But everybody, more or less consciously, and in any case instinctively, absorbs as much Consciousness and Energy as he can and as soon as he feels this Energy in himself, he uses it for his personal ends, his own satisfaction.

Who thinks that all this Force that is here, that is infinitely greater, infinitely more precious than all money-forces, this Force which is here and is given consciously, constantly, with an endless perseverance and patience, only for *one sole purpose*, that of realising the divine work—who thinks of not wasting it? Who realises that it is a sacred duty to make progress, to prepare oneself to understand better and live better? For people live *by* the divine Energy, they live *by* the divine Consciousness, and use them for their personal, selfish ends.

You are shocked when a few thousand rupees are wasted but not shocked when there are...when streams of Consciousness and Energy are diverted from their true purpose!

If one wants to do a divine work upon earth, one must come with tons of patience and endurance. One must know how to live in eternity and wait for the consciousness to awaken in everyone—the consciousness of what *true* integrity is.

*(Questions and Answers, 1954, pp. 151-156)*

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of May 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.)*

October 1, 1940

P: Hitler hasn't given up the idea of attacking Britain. He is concentrating his forces in Norway.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. About 200,000 troops are practising jumping into the sea from the rocks! Is it a preparation in case of reversal to swim back from England? .... Any news about Gandhi's second interview with the Viceroy?

P: No, there is a conjecture that Gandhi may have urged for the release of the political.

SRI AUROBINDO: That means there must have been some settlement.

S: The Muslim League also has refused.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Jinnah wants to know in case some other party comes in later what the League's status will be. He means Congress! It is like speaking of the Berlin-Japan pact—by some other power meaning U.S.A.

S: Jinnah has realised that the Viceroy doesn't want to part with power.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): To the Muslim League? No! Government is in an impossible position. Congress wants Dominion Status now and declaration of independence afterwards; at the same time it doesn't say that it will support Britain in the war, only speaks of defence of India. The Muslims want Pakistan with 50% representation everywhere. The Hindu Mahasabha demands 1/4 seats to be given to Muslims.

S: The Muslim League wants to know the number of members in the council and the personnel of the portfolios.

SRI AUROBINDO: How can it say this now? There seems to be a new age of inspiration, not of reason. Pakistan, Hindustan, the Khaksars, all are inspired; and inspiration is sacred. Gandhi is more rational.

S: He has been till now. This affair about freedom of speech spoiled his reputation a bit.

SRI AUROBINDO: Even after independence there may be civil strife and some dictatorship may be needed.

P: Gandhi doesn't want war.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, no government by force. But if the Khaksars start violence how will he prevent it, or how will he prevent the goondas who take joy in beating and killing? Does Gandhi know that the Nazis are trained to beat people as part of their duty? What will he do then? The British people have two things—1) They are afraid of world opinion, 2) they want to play hide-and-seek with their conscience. If that is exposed, they begin to scratch their heads. But the Nazis have no conscience to deal with and no world-opinion to reckon with.

N: This story about Reynaud's mistress was in *The Indian Express*.

S (*smiling*): Yes. I read it there but I thought it might be in the *Sunday Times* too when P said that.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): P's subconscious thought that *The Sunday Times* was more respectable than *The Indian Express*. (*Laughter*)

### *Evening*

P: Gandhi's freedom of speech hasn't been granted by the Viceroy.

SRI AUROBINDO: No.

P: Gandhi takes up some theoretical issue. C.R. would have been much better in such cases. He had practical sense.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Viceroy has referred to conscientious objectors in England and says that they are not allowed to preach against war among munition workers.

S: Gandhi says the conditions in India are different.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, and he says that though he won't himself preach, others must have the right to do so, if they want—people like Bose etc. How can any government allow that?

P: The Jinnah-Viceroy correspondence is out.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it is full of impossible demands. The Viceroy has answered to them, "Yes, I note them. We will consider them," etc. He must be all the time thinking what a fool Jinnah must be that he doesn't understand what impossible demands he is making.

P: Gandhi speaks of freedom of speech. But even during the Congress regime that was not given to the Socialist people, even by C. R.

SRI AUROBINDO: M. N. Roy is cogent. He also said, "You talk of freedom of speech, but don't tolerate anybody criticising you."

S: But he belongs to an organisation which is fighting.

SRI AUROBINDO: So is England. Besides, Roy is not in the Executive of the Congress so that he can't criticise. He is a member. Congress has two contradictions. If it is an army then it's all right not to allow any freedom, but if it is a democratic organisation how can freedom of speech be disallowed?....

S: There is no review of the second volume of *The Life Divine* yet.

SRI AUROBINDO: No; they will take six months to finish it and, after finishing, they won't know what to say.

October 2, 1940

*(Somebody had sent a reply-paid wire to Sri Aurobindo asking for some message for Pratap Mazumdar's centenary they were holding. Naturally Sri Aurobindo didn't agree.)*

S: They have wasted Rs. 2. *(Laughter)*

SRI AUROBINDO: I may send a message one day late. *(Laughter)*

P: Even then they may publish it.

SRI AUROBINDO: If I say that he was an insignificant person? *(Laughter)*

P: That will be a nice idea.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't see why they are making a fuss about him. He was a second-class personality. All I know about him is that he was Keshav Sen's disciple and went to America.

P: He was a good speaker.

SRI AUROBINDO: Plenty of people are good speakers!...

P: You have seen the Egyptian government's queer resolution? They think 60-miles' entry into their territory is not of much concern.

SRI AUROBINDO: No! it is only desert! It is like walking on the garden-path of a compound. When they actually come to the verandah, then it is of some concern and something needs to be done!

October 3, 1940

N: Sikandar Hayat Khan has strongly attacked Gandhi.

SRI AUROBINDO *(smiling)*: Yes.

N: He says Gandhi's non-participation in the war is stabbing the British in the back.

SRI AUROBINDO: Non-violently!

S: Violent or non-violent, the result is the same.

N: Sikandar says he can't understand Gandhi's logic. The logic of Mahatmas is different from that of ordinary mortals like him. Otherwise what could be meant by non-embarrassing the British government and at the same time preaching India's non-participation?

S: I would like to know what Kripalani says about this statement of Gandhi. He has a keen intellect.

P: The Sikhs also don't understand; they say, "These are intellectual quibbles." Neither can they conceive how the defence of India can be done non-violently.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is a thing I can't swallow myself.

S: Gandhi himself can't carry Congress with him. But that question has been shelved for the present—I hope buried like Aurangzeb's music. *(Aurangzeb forbade all music. In spite of that some took out a musical procession in front of the palace. He ordered all the musicians to be buried alive.)*

SRI AUROBINDO: Is music forbidden by the Koran?

S: I don't know.

P: There is no injunction about it in the Koran, as in the case of art.

SRI AUROBINDO: Art is different; it is idolatry. But there are so many things without any injunction in the Koran. Is there an injunction about killing brothers?

P: No; but if anybody is a drunkard he can get killed. That is how they killed Murad. They themselves made him drunk and on that pretext killed him.

SRI AUROBINDO: What about Dara then?

P: He was a Kafir.

SRI AUROBINDO: Are Kafirs to be killed according to the Koran?

P: Don't know. They find so many things in the Koran. Even the idea of non-cooperation, they say, is found in it. That was during the Khilafat agitation. They say that Mohammed was threatened with his life and he fled and that was non-cooperation.

SRI AUROBINDO: Many people have fled in such circumstances! Then I myself was a non-cooperator since I also fled from Bengal! (*Laughter*)

*(To be continued)*

NIRODBARAN

---

## THE RICKSHAW

THE hooded cobra  
 on wheels  
 swaying and gliding  
 to the tune  
 of the harnessed slave  
 gulps down  
 the aged and the tiny tots,  
 the tired and the untired  
 in its transparent stomach  
 only to disgorge them  
 after a nominal ransom.

P. RAJA

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

The Mother's Message

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



Volume Two: 1958

I

So many years flew on rapid wings, and now it was 1958 in front of me. I was unaware of my future: it was vague and uncertain.

The New Year Message was humming all around:

“O Nature, Material Mother, thou hast said that thou wilt collaborate and there is no limit to the splendour of this collaboration.”

I was indeed fortunate to be with the Mother in the evening when she got the inspiration for the New Year Message. She has described in her *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 247-48, how the Message came to her:

“In the course of one of our classes I spoke of the limitless abundance of Nature, the inexhaustible creatrix who takes the multitude of forms and mixes them together, separates them again and remoulds them, unmakes and destroys them, to move on to ever new combinations....

“The evening I told you about these things, I identified myself totally with Nature, I joined in her game. And this movement of identification provoked a response, a sort of new intimacy between Nature and myself, a long movement of a growing closeness which culminated in an experience which came on the eighth November.

“Suddenly Nature understood. She understood that this new Consciousness which has just been born does not seek to reject her but wants to embrace her entirely, she understood that this new spirituality does not turn away from life, does not recoil in fear before the formidable amplitude of her movement, but wants on the contrary to integrate all its facets. She understood that the supramental consciousness is here not to diminish but to complete her.

Then from the supreme Reality came this order, ‘Awake, O Nature, to the joy of collaboration.’ And the whole of Nature suddenly rushed forward in a great surge of joy, saying, ‘I accept, I shall collaborate.’

And at the same time, there came a calm, an absolute tranquillity so that the bodily vessel could receive and contain, without breaking, without losing anything, the mighty flood of this Joy of Nature which rushed forward as in a movement of gratitude. She accepted, she saw with all eternity before her that this supramental consciousness was going to fulfil her more perfectly, give a still greater strength to her movement, a greater amplitude, more possibilities to her play.

“And suddenly I heard, as if they came from all the corners of the earth, those great notes one sometimes hears in the subtle physical, a little like those of Beethoven’s Concerto in D-major, which come in moments of great progress, as though fifty orchestras had burst forth all in unison, without a single false note, to express the joy of this new communion between Nature and Spirit, the meeting of old friends who come together again after having been separated for so long.

“Then these words came, ‘O Nature, Material Mother, thou hast said that thou wilt collaborate and there is no limit to the splendour of this collaboration.’

“And the radiant felicity of this splendour was sensed in perfect peace.

“This is how the message for the new year was born.”

On the morning of the 1st the Mother sent a card showing the reproduction of Auguste Renoir's "Woman reading." She had written on the card:

"Bonne Année  
à ma chère enfant Huta  
à tout à l'heure."

I went upstairs and sat in the corridor leading to Pavitra's room where the Mother was playing the organ. There were some other people present.

The music was soothing, I got lost in the tune. When I opened my eyes I saw the Mother passing through the corridor and looking at us. She gave a brief smile and headed for her rooms leaving her warmth and perfume behind.

In the afternoon she distributed calendars and flowers in the Prosperity Room.

After the tennis she went to the Library to open an exhibition of pictures and transparencies of stained glass-work.

The Mother received me in her room at the Playground. The first question she asked was:

"Have you seen today's card? There is the signature of Renoir himself."

Her pleasure was shown in her enchanting smile. She and I meditated in a very comfortable atmosphere which she had created by her balmy vibrations.

The following morning a card came from her. The picture on it was of the great bronze Amida Nyorai (Amitabha) of Kamakura, Japan, cast in 1252 A.D. It is 49 ft. high including the dais. The Buddha is displayed in the attitude of Meditation (Dhyana Mudra).

She had written on the card:

"To my dear little child Huta  
With all my love and sweet compassion."

In the evening before the French Translation Class I met the Mother. She inquired whether I liked the card. She also added:

"When I was in Japan I went to Kamakura and saw the Buddha. He is very beautiful."

Her affinity to both Buddha and Japan was amazing.

She now translated *The Synthesis of Yoga* which I could not understand. I got really bored and tired.



Days rolled on. Each day the Mother, unfailingly, sent wonderful cards and lovely white roses with her perpetual love, compassion and sweetness.

It was inevitable that all the things which I tried to push to the back of my mind should come crowding once more upon me. I could not find any solution of my dilemma. Negative thoughts possessed me.

My head ached, my spirit drooped and my appetite for meals was non-existent.

It was 10th January. I received from the Mother a card depicting a lighted candle and these bright words followed:

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

I went through all the usual routine trying to keep my mind blank. That morning after a long span of time I began once again drawing on tinted papers.

As always I went to the Mother in the evening. The weather was not too bad as a slight spell of coolness still lingered.

After scrutinising the picture with a magnifying glass she concentrated for a few seconds. Then she wrote on a piece of paper:

“Beatitude  
La douceur des rêves bénis que l’on a en silence de Toi.”  
(Beatitude—The sweetness of the blissful dreams which one has in Your Silence.)

Each day I drew one or two or more sketches. The Mother, after looking at them, went into a trance and by entering their consciousness brought out their significances.

I kept a note-book in which, on a page opposite the pictures, I used to stick the pieces of paper on which the Mother had noted their meanings.

Many a time she narrated to me the visions she had seen during our meditations, and asked me to draw them.

I found this work elevating and refreshing. But I wondered how long it would last.

\*

One card among the many attractive cards the Mother sent me was a painting of “Group of Musician Angels” on satin cloth, which gave an impression of vivid coloured stained glasses such as we see in big churches. And yet more attractive were her words on the card:

“To my dear little child Huta  
With love and pure harmony.”

Harmony in the whole being was essential because the conflict in the outer and the inner being I was going through during that period was unbearably painful—killing.

I received another Japanese card from the Mother. She commented on it when she saw me in the evening of 12th January:

“In Japanese painting, the art is to draw with a few strokes and keep an empty space to give them their proper suggestion. It is a very beautiful and refined art.”

I learnt from her quite a lot in that manner.

Then with a smile the Mother drew a sketch of Buddha which was not only exquisite but expressive. She regarded it and said:

“It is very interesting to draw with light and shadow, because they are very important factors in drawing as well as in painting.”

It was bliss to spend every available moment studying the craft under the eyes of an undisputed Master like the Mother.

After long silent moments in her luminous presence I took my leave.

The succeeding morning a photograph of a white rose, which was attached to a card, came from the Mother. After the usual personal note of affection she had written:

“One rose of our garden.”

She adored roses,

My work in the Mother’s private Stores still continued and so did my stitching.

In the evening I showed to the Mother my drawing of the design of the gown which I intended to embroider for her. She approved. Then suddenly she took up a pencil and drew a sketch of herself on my paper thus: [*See opposite page.*]

She asked me demurely:

“Isn’t it nice?”

Her blue-grey eyes grew warm and glistened with enthusiasm as she looked at me humourously and laughed.

\*

It was Friday, 17th January. The Mother saw the sketch of a face I had drawn



on a black paper with a white crayon. She looked at it intently and closed her eyes for a few minutes. Then on opening them she asked for a white crayon which I gave from my box.

She portrayed three eyes—one in the Inconscient with a flame going up, another on the forehead of the face with an up-going light and the third above the head—an upturned eye with a tall white flame below it and three rays coming out of it.

Her eyes looked deep into mine when she said solemnly:

“Do not show this picture to anybody. It is too occult.”

I understood nothing. But I said: “Yes, Mother.”

Then once more she withdrew into herself. Gradually she came back, took a piece of paper and a pen from the nearby tray and wrote first in French:

“Va tout au fond de ton obscurité et tu trouveras *la Lumière*.”

Then in English:

“Even in the Inconscient, the Divine is there.”

Much later, on my request Nolinida translated the Mother's mysterious line which was in French.

"Go to the very bottom of your darkness and you will find *the Light*." This picture reminds me of the last stanza in Sri Aurobindo's poem "Who":

"It is He in the sun who is ageless and deathless,  
And into the midnight His shadow is thrown;  
When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,  
He was seated within it immense and alone."

A card sent by the Mother illustrated Lord Krishna with a flute, his comrades and cows. It was a reproduction of an ancient painting. She had written on it in black ink:

"And we recognise in ourselves with open eyes the method of God in the world,  
His purpose of light in the obscure, of might in the weak and fallen, of delight  
in what is grievous and miserable."

—SRI AUROBINDO

On the same card she had inscribed in red ink:

"With all my love and sweetest compassion."

\*

Day by day my health was getting worse and worse. I loathed the sight of food. I lost considerable weight. Now I was only 89 pounds. My ivory skin became darker and darker. My long silky hair started falling. As a matter of fact, I lost both inner and outer charm. My agony was inexpressible.

Although my brother Vasantbhai and two sons of Laljibhai were still here, I could not confide anything even to them.

I did not stop my work. But often I got exhausted. I felt my life burdensome. My nerves were all pulled taut.

My situation was exactly what the Mother has stated in her *Conversations* pp. 95-6:

"The body, on the other hand, is ordinarily dense, inert and apathetic. And if you have in this part something that is not responsive, if there is a resistance here, the reason is that the body is incapable of moving as quickly as the rest of the being. It must take time, it must walk at its own pace as it does in ordinary life. What happens is as when grown-up people walk too fast for children who are in their company; they have to stop at times and wait till the child who is lagging behind comes up and overtakes them. This divergence between the

progress in the inner being and the inertia of the body often creates a dislocation in the system, and that manifests itself as an illness. This is why people who take up Yoga frequently begin by suffering from physical discomfort or disorder."

In addition the hostile forces often put a spoke in my wheel. Truly they had bruised something deep within my soul. My patience was rapidly running out.

\*

On the 20th I drew three sketches. The Mother saw them and conveyed to me their meaning. About one of them she wrote:

"Even when you are unaware the Grace showers its Light upon you."

I skipped the Translation Class, because I could not sit for long.

The next morning the Mother wrote on a card which showed a bouquet of flowers:

"To my dear little child Huta  
With eternal love and compassion."

How much, but how much the Mother loved me. She had not missed my faults, nor underrated them, but her eternal love encompassed both vices and virtues, was impregnable and lasting. That is why she was and is the Divine.

*(To be continued)*

*Copyright © Huta D. Hindocha*

# THE INSPIRATION OF *PARADISE LOST*

(Continued from the issue of May 1985)

## 11

### The Complex Theme of *Paradise Lost*

AT the very outset the problem of the theme of *Paradise Lost* is bedevilled by the figure of Satan. So mightily alive—indeed the sole living character in the poem—is the Arch-demon that all other concerns than his are from the dramatic viewpoint dwarfed. And, if by the theme is meant whatever grips us most out of a work, *Paradise Lost* has its burning centre in the fortunes of Satan. Whether Milton intended it or no, the Fall of Satan, his fight against God and Man, his heroism or villainy, his success or failure are the main interest of the epic. But Satan's doings have evidently to be seen with chief reference to the Fall of Man which he brings about: the title of the poem requires attention to be focussed on this Fall and its consequences. And the formal as distinguished from the informal theme is indeed the one which Milton states in his opening lines:

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the World, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing, Heavenly Muse...

And supplementing this formal theme is the purpose expressed at the close of the second invocation in the same paragraph, the call to God's creative Spirit to illumine and purify the poet,

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

Milton officially devotes himself to the setting forth of God's justice in regard to Man's Fall which was caused—as in answer to the question in the next passage he tells us—by Satan in the guise of a serpent. But, with this answer, he launches on his fundamental though unofficial theme and briefly pricks out the figure of his villain-hero and the tale of his great yet sacrilegious and reprehensible no less than doomed enterprise:

The infernal Serpent; he it was whose guile,  
Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived

The Mother of mankind, what time his pride  
 Had cast him out from Heaven, with all his host  
 Of rebel Angels, by whose aid, aspiring  
 To set himself in glory above his peers,  
 He trusted to have equalled the Most High  
 If he opposed, and, with ambitious aim,  
 Against the throne and monarchy of God,  
 Raised impious war in Heaven and battle proud,  
 With vain attempt.<sup>1</sup>

It is necessary to see *Paradise Lost* in a complex rather than in a simple manner if we are to cope with its full development. The poem is multi-mooded and we shall show scarce appreciation of its genius by overstressing either Satan or else Adam and Eve. The spotlight of intention is on the Fall of Man, but the broad revealing sweep of the execution makes the Fall of Satan the epic subject and, in effect, the poet's assertion of Eternal Providence is in relation to both Satan and Man. God Himself juxtaposes them in general apropos of His mention of the freewill gifted to Man:

I made him just and right,  
 Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.  
 Such I created all the Ethereal Powers  
 And Spirits, both them who stood and them who failed;  
 Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.<sup>2</sup>

In particular too God juxtaposes Man and Satan when He speaks of the future of the rebel Angels on the one hand and on the other the future of human beings:

The first sort by their own suggestion fell,  
 Self-tempted, self-depraved; Man falls, deceived  
 By the other first: Man, therefore, shall find grace;  
 The other, none.<sup>3</sup>

With this word of warning against simplification of the Miltonic theme we may leave Satan aside except for a few remarks, for he has been sufficiently commented on by critics. Sri Aurobindo, touching on Milton's high "aim" and lofty "subject", writes: "there is nowhere any more magnificently successful opening than the conception and execution of his Satan and Hell, the living spirit of egoistic revolt fallen to its natural element of darkness and pain, yet preserving still the greatness of the divine principle from which he was born."<sup>4</sup> Sri Aurobindo here catches Milton's

<sup>1</sup> BK. I. 34-44

<sup>2</sup> BK III, 98-102.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-32.

<sup>4</sup> *The Future Poetry and Letters on Poetry, Literature and Art* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1972), p. 84

supreme insight in a nutshell. But Milton does not conceive and execute Satan always from a deep-seeing height. Instead of making both his bravery and his baseness natural, as it were, to his fallen supernature on every occasion, a fear in Milton lest the Arch-Rebel should completely run away with the poem works in places, charging the poetry with a self-baulking motive. It is not only in the later parts of the epic that Satan ceases to be heroic under Milton's hand: even in the earlier half we have small "asides", countering the remnant of the original divine principle's greatness. Thus, after one of the bravest outbursts at almost the beginning,<sup>1</sup> we get the depreciating "aside" on "the Apostate Angel":

Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despair...<sup>2</sup>

Again, in Book I itself we are told of his

high words that bore  
Semblance of worth, not substance...<sup>3</sup>

In Book IV we overhear him soliloquising on his boast to his fellows that he could subdue "The Omnipotent":

Ay me, they little know  
How dearly I abide that boast so vain,  
Under what torments inwardly I groan,  
While they adore me on the throne of Hell.<sup>4</sup>

Now we may pass on to Man. We shall dwell on Man's fate as summarised in the divine judgment that he shall find grace. But to find grace must not be understood to mean that Man would be totally and immediately forgiven: payment must be made for transgressing God's law. Only, the payment will not be the final act nor will it be equal to the results of grace. The very next sentence in God's mouth to the one quoted runs:

In mercy and justice both,  
Through Heaven and Earth, so shall my glory excel;  
But mercy, first and last, shall brightest shine.<sup>5</sup>

Here we have a statement about God's ways, the work of Eternal Providence.

It is often thought that in regard to Man *Paradise Lost* is concerned merely with his Fall and God's punishment of him—punishment which, though harsh enough

<sup>1</sup> BK. I, 94-124.

<sup>2</sup> 126.

<sup>3</sup> 531-2.

<sup>4</sup> BK., IV. 86-9.

<sup>5</sup> 132-4.



in principle, is tempered with some kindness in practice. Indeed, the actual event poetised of Man's history is this Fall and that punishment: hence the title of the poem. But just as the events in Heaven and elsewhere preceding the drama in the Garden of Paradise are an important part of the epic, so also Man's fate subsequent to that drama are a significant portion of it. Unlike what precedes the drama in Paradise, it is not narrated as fact; but it is rendered vividly present by prophecy and promise and preachment. The epic, in its vision and message, is as much concerned with it as with the narrated fact. And Milton takes care in his opening passage itself to bring it in; for, he speaks there of one greater Man coming and restoring fallen humanity and regaining the blissful seat. All these things and not exclusively Man's first disobedience and its consequences, the advent of death and all our woe, are implied as thematic in Milton's opening passage. Eternal Providence, therefore, must connote more than the justice meted out to Man for his disobedience. And what it does connote becomes fairly explicit in phrases pretty early in the same Book that states the theme. Thus a speech of Satan's about God has the words:

...if then his providence  
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good...<sup>1</sup>

And soon after these words on the beneficent office of Providence we have lines where Milton formulates God's ways with both Satan and Man apropos of Satan's being left at large,

That with reiterated crimes he might  
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought  
Evil to others, and enraged might see  
How all his malice served but to bring forth  
Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy, shown  
On Man by him seduced, but on himself  
Treble confusion, death, and vengeance poured.<sup>2</sup>

Surely, if infinite goodness, mercy and grace are shown on Man, we have to go far beyond the context of death and woe inflicted on him as penalty for his sin and, if they are shown in answer to *all* of Satan's malice, we have to view that very death and woe as an expression of them; for the results, which Satan's malice has meant to be death and woe and which apparently are what it has meant them to be, serve as starting-points for the manifestation of infinite goodness, mercy and grace—manifestation which could never have happened without those results. It is thus possible to say paradoxically, "Those results themselves are a blessing to Man and they enable him to get gifts from God which he in an unfallen state could never have received." It is this paradox that is not only implied in the passage we have

<sup>1</sup> 162-3.

<sup>2</sup> BK., I, 214-20.

quoted but also hinted at in the later phrase we have already cited:

But mercy, first and last, shall brightest shine.

What is the force of the word "first"? We can understand how mercy could last shine brightest: the end would be glorious. But first to shine brightest the mercy would have to be present in the very situation that sets off the mechanism of justice: in other words, the temptation of Man, his Fall and the punishment it involves must all be intensely visible in the total story of God's ways with humanity as a supreme mercy under temporary disguise.

Such a transfiguring retrospect is analogous to the one suggested by Milton in reference to world-creation. When the starry universe is created with the race of Man at its centre, the multitudes of Heaven sing the Creator's praise and pitting the new World against the so-called loss of worshippers which Satan's defection has caused to Heaven they declare:

Who seeks  
To lessen them, against his purpose, serves  
To manifest the more thy might; his evil  
Thou usest, and from thence creat'st more good.<sup>1</sup>

But we should note in the same context that the race of men at the core of the "more good" which is the starry universe—"another Heaven From Heaven not far"<sup>2</sup>—is called "thrice happy" with a condition hanging to their happiness: soon after being declared blessed they are re-characterised:

thrice happy, if they know  
Their happiness, and persevere upright!<sup>3</sup>

This is all in tune with the emphasis on the great woe emanating from Man's disobedience. Milton keeps the woe-motif running everywhere, but his composition is shot with counterpoint: without diminishing the woe-motif he sets up an opposite current of secret significance which prepares us for a dazzling climax in Book XII where the ways of God stand completely vindicated within Miltonic Christianity. Framing this climax we have the phrases addressed to Adam—

then wilt thou not be loth  
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess  
A Paradise within thee, happier far—<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> BK. VII, 613-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 617-8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 631-2.

<sup>4</sup> BK. XII, 586-8.

and—

the Earth  
 Shall be all Paradise, far happier place  
 Than this of Eden...<sup>1</sup>

The one phrase refers to a subjective condition of right living according to Christian precepts and the indwelling "Spirit of God", the other to an objective condition of terrestrial life at the end of history. And both the states are implied in the climax which is put in Adam's mouth after Raphael has revealed to him how Man's historical travail born of his Fall will terminate—historical travail acquiring an utterly new orientation by the coming of Christ once in the midst of history and again for Final Judgment. Adam exclaims:

O Goodness infinite, Goodness immense,  
 That all this good of evil shall produce,  
 And evil turn to good—more wonderful  
 Than that which by creation first brought forth  
 Light out of darkness! Full of doubt I stand,  
 Whether I should repent me now of sin  
 By me done and occasioned, or rejoice  
 Much more that much more good thereof shall spring—  
 To God more glory, more goodwill to men  
 From God—and over wrath grace shall abound.<sup>2</sup>

Milton-scholars know this passage as the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall. Arthur C. Lovejoy<sup>3</sup> has written on it at some length and traced the general idea of it, through several predecessors of Milton in the poetic field, ultimately to an old hymn of the fourth or fifth century A.D., which says, "*O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere redemptorem!*" ("O happy fault, which has deserved to have so great a redeemer!") and to St. Ambrose of the fourth century who cries out: "*Felix ruina, quae reparatur in melius*" ("Happy is the downfall which is restored for the better"). Lovejoy, however, feels that this idea and Milton's special theme in his epic do not quite interplay. He writes: "...the culmination of the redemptive process in human history was also for Milton the culminating theme in his poem. Yet it undeniably placed the story of the Fall, which was the subject of the poem announced at the outset, in somewhat ambiguous light; when it was borne in mind, man's first disobedience could not seem the deplorable thing which for the purposes of the poet—and of the theologian—it was important to make it appear. The only solution was to keep

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 463-5.

<sup>2</sup> BK. XII, 469-78.

<sup>3</sup> "Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall", *A Journal of English Literary History*, Sept., 1937.

the two themes separate. In the part of the narrative dealing primarily with the Fall the thought that it was after all a *felix culpa* must not be permitted explicitly to intrude; that was to be reserved for the conclusion, where it could heighten the happy final consummation by making the earlier and unhappy episodes in the story appear as instrumental to that consummation, and indeed as its necessary conditions."

Lovejoy is right in telling us that there is no explicit intrusion of the *felix culpa* in the portions of the poem concerned primarily with the Fall. But the implicit presence of it is undoubtedly strong and Milton intended the reader to have a glimmering of it—a glimmering only, of course, since otherwise his climax would be spoiled. It is not true that he keeps the two themes separate. I should opine that the Fall-theme is like the crescent moon which carries in its arms the remainder of the orb in a shadowy fashion and, as this theme gets developed, the orb gets more and more filled out with light though its full form shows itself not before that passage in Book XII. The shadowy fashion is perfectly visible—"darkness visible"—from the very First Book of *Paradise Lost*: the words "O Goodness infinite" and "over wrath grace shall abound" are anticipated there by "Infinite goodness, grace and mercy" and similarly the final

That all this good of evil shall produce

is already there in

Out of our evil seek to bring forth good.

The sole new nuance in Book XII, which introduces the setting out of the fortunate character of the Fall with absolute explicitness, is the phrase: "And evil turn to good."

Book II, in passing, carries on the thread of the theme. After Beëlzebub has suggested that the fallen Angels should avenge themselves on God by perverting God's new favourite, Man, about whom rumour has reached them, Milton attributes this "devilish counsel" in origin to Satan himself:

for whence  
But from the Author of all ill could spring  
So deep a malice, to confound the race  
Of mankind in one root, and Earth with Hell  
To mingle and involve, done all to spite  
The great Creator?<sup>1</sup>

Then Milton adds:

but their spite still serves  
His glory to augment.

<sup>1</sup> 380-5.

Here also is an anticipation of Man's good coming out of evil, though the terms are general, summed up in God's "glory".

The theme is kept ringing in our ears by a couple of indirect variations on it in the same Book. What the fallen Angels fear of God's subtle design they try in their own way to imitate for their own furtherance. Satan declares from the pit of Hell:

I give not Heaven for lost. From this descent  
 Celestial Virtues rising will appear  
 More glorious and more dread than from no fall.<sup>1</sup>

One of Satan's colleagues, Mammon, plays on the same point:

Our greatness will appear  
 Then most conspicuous when great things of small,  
 Useful of hurtful, prosperous of adverse,  
 We can create, and in what place so e'er  
 Thrive under evil, and work ease out of pain  
 Through labour and endurance.<sup>2</sup>

The expression, no doubt, is perverse, but it serves in a negative fashion to sow more seeds of the theme's later flowering.

Book III develops the suggestions of Books I and II in a manner that almost forestalls Book XII. Even apart from the phrase about mercy, first and last, shining brightest, we have a whole passage foreshadowing the long description of Christ's work and of the world's end in Book XII. Let us look at some of the highlights of this description. Raphael says to Adam:

thy punishment  
 He shall endure, by coming in the flesh  
 To a reproachful life and cursèd death,  
 Proclaiming life to all who shall believe  
 In his redemption, and that his obedience  
 Imputed becomes theirs by faith—his merits  
 To save them, not their own, though legal, works...<sup>3</sup>  
 ...So he dies

But soon revives; Death over him no power  
 Shall long usurp. Ere the third dawning light  
 Return, the stars of morn shall see him rise  
 Out of his grave, fresh as the dawning light,

<sup>1</sup> 14-6.

<sup>2</sup> 257-62

<sup>3</sup> 404-10.

Thy ransom paid, which Man from Death redeems...<sup>1</sup>  
 ...This godlike act  
 Annuls thy doom, the death thou shouldst have died...<sup>2</sup>  
 Then to the Heaven of Heavens he shall ascend  
 With victory triumphing through the air  
 Over his foes and thine; there shall surprise  
 The Serpent, Prince of Air, and draw in chains  
 Through all his realm, and there confounded leave;  
 Then enter into glory and resume  
 His seat at God's right hand, exalted high,  
 Above all names in Heaven; and thence shall come,  
 When this World's dissolution shall be ripe,  
 With glory and power, to judge both quick and dead—  
 To judge the unfaithful dead, but to reward  
 His faithful, and receive them into bliss,  
 Whether in Heaven or Earth; for then the Earth  
 Shall be all Paradise, far happier place  
 Than this of Eden, and far happier days.<sup>3</sup>

Less than a hundred lines later Raphael reverts to the subject of the World's end after speaking of the decline of Truth and works of Faith:

So shall the World go on,  
 To good malignant, to bad men benign,  
 Under its own weight groaning, till the day  
 Appear of respiration to the just  
 And vengeance to the wicked, at return  
 Of Him so lately promised to thy aid...<sup>4</sup>  
 Last in the clouds from Heaven to be revealed  
 In glory of the Father, to dissolve  
 Satan with his perverted World; then raise  
 From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined,  
 New Heavens, new Earth, Ages of endless date  
 Founded in righteousness and peace and love,  
 To bring forth fruits, joy, and eternal bliss.<sup>5</sup>

Now let us go back to Book III. At first, after God's promise of grace and His

<sup>1</sup> 419-24.

<sup>2</sup> 437-8.

<sup>3</sup> 451-65.

<sup>4</sup> 337-42.

<sup>5</sup> 545-51.

demand for a sacrifice to appease justice, Christ is speaking:

Behold *me*, then: me for him, life for life,  
 I offer; on me let thine anger fall;  
 Account me Man: I for his sake will leave  
 Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee  
 Freely put off, and for him lastly die  
 Well pleased; on me let Death wreak all his rage...<sup>1</sup>  
 But I shall rise victorious, and subdue  
 My vanquisher, spoiled of his vaunted spoil  
 Death his death's wound shall then receive, and stoop  
 Inglorious, of his mortal sting disarmed;  
 I through the ample air in triumph high  
 Shall lead Hell captive maugre Hell, and show  
 The powers of Darkness bound. Thou, at the sight  
 Pleased, out of Heaven, shalt look down and smile,  
 While, by thee raised, I ruin all thy foes...<sup>2</sup>  
 Then, with the multitude of my redeemed,  
 Shall enter Heaven, long absent, and return,  
 Father, to see thy face, wherein no cloud  
 Of anger shall remain, but peace assured  
 And reconcilment: wrath shall be no more...<sup>3</sup>

God speaks next. Towards the end of His speech we read of Christ's reward on his return and of the Final Judgment:

All knees to thee shall bow of them that bide  
 In Heaven, or Earth, or, under Earth, in Hell.  
 When thou, attended gloriously from Heaven,  
 Shalt in the sky appear, and from thee send  
 The summoning Archangels to proclaim  
 Thy dread tribunal, forthwith from all winds  
 The living, and forthwith the cited dead  
 Of all past ages, to the general doom  
 Shall hasten; such a peal shall rouse their sleep.  
 Then, all thy Saints assembled, thou shalt judge  
 Bad men and Angels; they arraigned shall sink  
 Beneath thy sentence; Hell, her numbers full,  
 Thenceforth shall be for ever shut. Meanwhile

<sup>1</sup> 236-41.

<sup>2</sup> 236-58.

<sup>3</sup> 260-4.

The World shall burn, and from her ashes spring  
 New Heaven and Earth, wherein the just shall dwell,  
 And, after all their tribulations long,  
 See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds,  
 With Joy and Love triumphing, and fair Truth...<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that almost the whole context within which the paradox of the *felix culpa* can burst upon us is already present pretty early in *Paradise Lost*. So a reader with a good memory will hardly feel that Milton has gone back on his tracks. The *felix culpa* is the logical concept arising from those early passages if one realises intensely the drama of redemption—God becoming Man, revealing depths of mercy in divinity that would else have never come forth, and establishing at last a divine kingdom on earth which would compensate for all the tribulations endured. But Milton, master artist that he is, keeps back the one phrase which would throw into sharp relief the fortunateness of the Fall much before Book XII. Nowhere in Book III do we have anything corresponding openly to turns like “far happier place” and “far happier days.” Only the somewhat cryptic “mercy, first and last” is allowed to glimmer out. And in Book VII a suggestion is indirectly made when apropos of World-creation we read of Satan’s evil being used by God to create “more good”. Thus Milton works most skilfully towards his climax, so that it is a surprise at the same time that on a back-look it appears inevitable, perfectly prepared. Lovejoy is mistaken in saying that the two themes are held separate: they are really held together but in a subtle manner playing with their congruence without fully catching our attention.

The thematic structure of *Paradise Lost* is metaphysical in the modern sense, based on the so-called Metaphysical Poets of the seventeenth century, that there is a tug of opposites, a fusion of contraries, an intriguing uncertainty between a human tragedy and a divine comedy. From the start itself the metaphysical tension is introduced by the subsidiary clause—“till one greater Man...”—in the opening phrase about Man’s first disobedience. In Book III the tension reaches a clear form, for there the redemptive process is expounded.

And there, with the treatment of the redemption, a momentous question becomes pertinent which carries us straight into the metaphysical not in the sense of a tug of contraries but in that of ultimate world-philosophy. Linked with this question are several others arising from the doctrinal passages of *Paradise Lost*. And some of them have such unexpected implications that no survey of Milton’s poem would be true to Miltonism without an appraisal of his metaphysics.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

<sup>1</sup> 321-38.



# FURTHER STUDIES IN INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY

*(Continued from the issue of May 1985)*

## CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS CRISIS

PSYCHOLOGY is today a most active science. In recent times it has been talked about a great deal and a vast literature has actually been produced during a relatively short period. Since the rise of modern natural science in the 16th century, man had principally occupied himself in investigating the physical universe and later in the 19th century the biological phenomenon. His attitude was objective. But of late his attention has turned upon himself and he has wanted to study his own mind and nature. He has changed over to the subjective attitude. This withdrawal of man from objective nature to himself is in itself an important cultural event in the evolution of human interest in the West.

Psychology originally and etymologically meant the science of the soul, which was understood as a metaphysical reality, the various activities of mind being its manifestations. But natural science as a discipline of knowledge rules out metaphysical realities and confines itself to the investigation of phenomena. Psychology, therefore, when it came to be regarded as a natural science, had to modify its standpoint. Soul was no longer permissible. It, therefore, simply posited that mind and its activities as such existed and that it was no concern of the natural science of psychology to inquire or consider whether an ultimate substratum to mind was necessary.

'A Psychology without a soul' was thus conceived and born and the scientist now felt free to apply his method of inductive investigation to the varied phenomena of mind. The scientist has since then been empirically investigating, collecting instances and making generalisations regarding the various modes or activities of consciousness like perceiving, remembering, imagining, thinking, etc., as also the personality as a whole. Modern man has thus, through the new way of inductive science, returned to the old seeking of knowing oneself. This is, perhaps, the cultural significance of the rise of psychology in the West in the recent past.

But psychology today is in fact no single science concerned with the investigation of a definite field of subject-matter. It presents such a diversity of points of view regarding the nature of the subject-matter as also the method and aim of investigation that it is much more correct to consider it as a group of sciences aiming at the study of man from relatively different angles. The standpoint of natural science, which is stated above and which is shared by physics, chemistry, botany, zoology, etc., is considered inappropriate for psychology by thinkers like Dilthey and Spranger. William James and Titchner, who can be taken as the best representatives of the natural science ideal for psychology, insist that mental phenomena must be seen as co-ordinate with the phenomena of external nature. All valuations and judgments of human utility and purpose must be taken away and mind should be investigated

structurally with a view to discovering the qualities of existence possessed by it and the laws regulating its behaviour, just as physics, irrespective of the practical usefulness or otherwise, studies the various kinds of material phenomenon as pure existence, and seeks to determine the laws of its behaviour.

For Dilthey and Spranger this standpoint is altogether unreal. Mental phenomena, they urge, are not at all co-ordinate with the material. A mental activity has always a personal reference, it is always somebody's. A table, a chair, a plant, a stone, do not necessarily possess that reference. Mind and mental phenomenon belong, they say, to the cultural world, to which mutual interaction of human subjects (individuals) is essential. Psychology is, therefore, rather a cultural or a social science. The nature of mind is here differently conceived and the method of investigation also has, therefore, to be different from that employed by natural science generally.

But even where people are agreed that psychology must adopt the model of natural science they disagree as to the nature of the subject-matter and the aim and the method of psychological study. Titchner, for example, takes consciousness as the subject-matter and introspection as the method, and these are for him the first necessary concepts of the science. He represents the so-called introspectionist school in psychology.

Directly opposed to it stands Watson, the leader of Behaviourism, who affirms that consciousness does not exist, introspection is superfluous, and that psychology is really concerned with the behaviour of the human individual. Physics is his ideal for psychology and he aims at making psychology an experimental objective science. Thinking is to him simply sub-vocal speech and so are memory and other mental processes certain forms of bodily behaviour. But both he and Titchner want psychology to be a perfect natural science.

And one might easily observe that though their standpoints are sharply opposed to each other they still seem to possess a complementary character, since the positive elements of the two standpoints can be harmonised into a science of psychology aiming at an empirical study of the human individual in the twofold expression of its activities, mental and bodily. A constructive synthesis of the conflicting standpoints of present-day psychology is perhaps not impossible; but contemporary psychology, however, presents the conflicts without the much wished-for synthesis.

There are yet other standpoints. Gestaltism is a school of psychology, which has made a strong impression. Its one idea is that the 'whole' is not the mere sum of its parts, that there exists a thing like the Gestalt quality, the quality of the 'whole', as a distinct feature by itself. Unities and wholes, therefore, become to it concrete realities. The method of analysis, much honoured in empirical science, is found to be utterly defective as it tends to make the parts substantive realities.

A method competent to apprehend the complex whole as such will alone be the adequate scientific method. Analysis may, however, continue to be used as a supplementary technique. Psychology to this school is the study of the psycho-physical

organism of the human individual. Mind-Body is one operative whole and a sundering of them is unscientific.

A striking contribution of the school is the explanation of the perception of movement. Movement, it affirms, is not constructed out of fixed positions given in successive moments of time, but is a direct perception by sense. In other words, it is not inferred as held hithertofore, but directly apprehended.

Introspectionism, Behaviourism and Gestaltism, all are points of view falling within the purview of the general stand of natural-science psychology. But another one, which makes purposiveness of mind its pivot, the Hormism of McDougall, also belongs to the same group. Working according to some end, conscious or unconscious, as contrasted with the mechanical operation of physical nature, is regarded as the essential characteristic of mind.

The last to mention and in a way the most important of all the schools of psychology is psycho-analysis. Freud, the author of the school, was a neurologist by profession and used to treat nervous or mental disorders by the method of hypnotism. However, in the course of his practice he made the happy discovery that if a patient was allowed simply to relate and, as it were, mentally relive his past experiences, he felt greatly relieved in his trouble. He called it the talking-out method and started using it in place of hypnotism.

The use of the talking-out method soon revealed to him that the experiences of past conflicts and frustrations continue to persist. Therefore the subconscious is a fact; otherwise how could we suppose the past experiences as persisting? And he was soon led to think that the subconscious is relatively the larger part of our personality; in fact, as he later chose to put it, nine-tenths of personality.

But in the employment of the talking-out method he discovered that the past experience did not always easily come up. In fact more often many of them were held back. That observation revealed the great psycho-analytical fact of repression. But how does repression take place and what is the mode of its operation? The investigation of the mechanism of repression constitutes indeed the main line of work for psycho-analysis; that is its chief contribution to science as well. The symptoms of the mental disease are meaningful facts. They are willed by the patient in the sense that they afford a partial satisfaction to repressed wishes.

The normal behaviour of the individual too is in many ways influenced by his repressions. The slips of the tongue and other small errors of behaviour like forgetting, mislaying, etc., are also subconsciously determined by our repressed wishes. By his experience of the mental patients, he was led on to consider these repressed wishes as sexual in character. He felt that repression consists in the forcible suppression of sexual wish by the social and moral sense of the individual. But it is necessary in this connection to say that sex is to Freud co-extensive with the whole of the pleasure-seeking propensity of man. And he, therefore, traces the development of sex from birth to adolescence.

The development of the sex-instinct which thus becomes to him the most funda-

mental instinct is something characteristic of psycho-analysis. Every activity, even religious, moral or artistic, is simply a modification of the original sex propensity.

Interpretation of dreams is another important contribution which psycho-analysis has made. Dreams probably betray the subconscious as nothing else and it goes to the credit of Freud to have affirmed that dreams are not a fantastic and meaningless play of imagery. In his ultimate scientific formulation he maintains that all dreams are wish-fulfilments. The repression in disguise or otherwise seeks gratification in the dreams. The hungry man of the day sees himself in the dream-imagery of the night sitting at a grand feast.

This is very briefly the psycho-analytical doctrine and with it we have given a short resumé of the contemporary major psychological thought-currents. Of late, some modifications of them have naturally appeared.

To these must be added Experimental Psychology which has lately become the most popular, in its form of normal scientific pursuit as also in its applications to industry and other spheres of life. The attempt here is to determine in quantitative terms under controlled conditions correlations of psychological facts. It is a study of reactions of personality in precise terms. The utility of this approach has been demonstrated well enough. But it is a matter of reactions and behaviour, of personality itself we do not get an insight.

The above picture of contemporary psychology is quite a puzzle. The different schools and standpoints are so divergent that it is impossible to discover any scheme or system in the facts and theories of contemporary psychology. We do know of differences of opinion regarding facts as well as theories in every science. But nowhere do we see a doubt entertained as to what a science aims at and what its subject-matter is.

In psychology the trouble is that the nature and character of the subject-matter itself is thrown into dispute. In behaviourism consciousness is inadmissible, for introspectionism behaviour is hardly of much account and for psycho-analysis the subconscious is the principal fact of subject-matter. And then there are a number of distinctive approaches which further complicate these differences. Is the psychological data essentially characterised by a quality of "Wholeness" or that of "purposiveness" or any other? Or is the subject-matter of psychology fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences, since it involves a knowing, feeling and willing subject, which necessarily qualifies its facts of perceptions, images, emotions, thoughts and sentiments?

This situation constitutes what is known as the crisis in psychology.

A number of attempts have been made to elucidate the situation and reconcile the conflicting standpoints of the different schools. But the best of such attempts says no more than that each school in its own way is contributing to the growth of psychological knowledge and that in course of time a consolidated science of psychology is bound to emerge.

That merely expresses a faith, yet as such it is excellent. It, however, throws

no light on the possible inner connections among the conflicting schools and does not show a way out of the crisis.

But a way seems to be suggested by the yogic approach to human life and experience. Our ordinary psychological approach to experience consists in observing the facts of experience and then systematising and trying to explain them. The yogic approach is normative and practical. It seeks to take forward our experience to progressively higher and higher forms of synthesis and integration. In its attempt to do so it discovers a plane and a form of consciousness characteristically different from our general mental consciousness. This new consciousness is found to be marked among others by the qualities of depth, spontaneity and wholeness, whereas our general consciousness operates through the mechanisms of a number of polarities.

Now in the absence of a knowledge of this new consciousness discovered by the yogic approach our ordinary polarities of sex and morality, the conscious and the unconscious and the oppositions of our likes and dislikes become insoluble. The fact is that their true reconciliation exists in a principle higher than themselves and that being not known the data collected by the different schools look so disjointed.

The Self-poised Consciousness of the Gita too virtually presents a state of consciousness higher than the mental and a full appreciation of the character of this consciousness can give a perspective which will enable us to see the vast and the varied data of contemporary psychology in a new light.

Indian yogic psychology has received at the hands of Sri Aurobindo a detailed and elaborate treatment and the body of psychological principles thus evolved shows clearly enough that the present-day difficulties of psychology are by no means insurmountable. Once we are able to ascertain the larger evolutionary setting and purpose of human nature we will begin to recognise that what we today affirm as ultimate is in fact only a stage and a phase. Instinct was a stage for man and his reason and morality too may be a stage for something higher.

Without that higher state we are surely handicapped in our understanding of reason and morality and our present mentality as a whole. No wonder that in such a state of knowledge we should regard sex as final, mechanism as final, purpose as final, interaction of the individual and the environment as final and a number of such other terms in the same way.

INDRA SEN

*(To be continued)*

## THE MOTHER'S CALL TO "THE GREAT ADVENTURE", AND HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN IT ?\*

THE subject of this Seminar is taken from a call given by the Mother in one of her talks in which she said: "There are people who love adventure. It is these I call, and I tell them this: 'I invite you to the great adventure'." <sup>1</sup> The question for the Seminar is: "What is the great adventure to which the Mother invites us? and how to participate in it?" Well, the great adventure that is referred to here reverberates in the boundless corridors of time. In fact it refers to the whole span of the evolution of consciousness on earth; and to have a proper comprehension of it, it is necessary to trace the whole cycle of earthly evolution. And I may add that both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had a central role to play in the entire course of this evolution right from its beginning. As the Mother herself once said, "Since the beginning of the earth, wherever and whenever there was the possibility of manifesting a ray of consciousness, I was there."<sup>2</sup> And as regards Sri Aurobindo's participation in earth history, the Mother says, "Since the beginning of earth history, Sri Aurobindo has always presided over the great earthly transformations, under one form or another, one name or another."<sup>3</sup> From these two declarations of the Mother we can be sure that she and Sri Aurobindo have been the backbone of evolutionary development on earth. Once to a sadhak, who asked Sri Aurobindo what he and the Mother had been doing in their past lives, he answered briefly, "Carrying on the evolution." When further asked to elucidate this statement, Sri Aurobindo replied, "That would mean writing the whole of human history."<sup>4</sup>

Since human history is essentially a history of the evolution of consciousness, it will be significant to glance at its development so that we can have a proper understanding of the great adventure which the Mother speaks of.

Evolution is a cyclic movement of gradual progression from the inconscience of matter to the superconscient spirit. It is like climbing a ladder step by step. In this process there have been radical transitions that can be termed new ages in comparison to the preceding ones.

The evolutionary process is normally worked out by the universal Nature secretly supported by the Divine from behind the veil. But during the periods of radical transition, when a new consciousness has to be manifested, the Divine himself incarnates as an Avatar upon earth in a human body to carry out successfully the evolutionary transition. As Sri Krishna declares in the Gita, "Whensoever there is the fading of the Dharma and the uprising of unrighteousness, then I loose myself forth into birth."<sup>5</sup> Avatarhood is intended to carry the evolution from one stage to a

\* A speech delivered at the 56th Seminar of the New Age Association held on 22 April 1984.

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 9, pp.150-51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 13, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *On Himself* (Centenary Edition, Vol. 26), p. 445.

<sup>5</sup> *Gita*, IV, 7. Translation from A.B. Roy, *The Message of the Gita* (1977), p. 68.

higher stage of consciousness. As Sri Aurobindo says, "Avatarhood would have little meaning if it were not connected with the evolution."<sup>1</sup> For this reason the Hindu procession of ten Avatars is called by Sri Aurobindo "a parable of evolution", and he adds that "the progression is striking and unmistakable".<sup>2</sup>

Now Sri Aurobindo has come to lead the evolution from the twilit mind into the splendours of the supramental consciousness and to establish the divine life upon earth. And yet people worship the Avatars of the past. Since Avatarhood is connected with the evolutionary progress, why should we not leave behind the past Avatars and follow in the footsteps of the new Avatar? Still there are people who refuse to accept Sri Aurobindo as the greatest Avatar. Let me quote the prophetic words of the Mother:

"In the eternity of becoming, each Avatar is only the announcer, the forerunner of a more perfect realisation.

"And yet men have always the tendency to deify the Avatar of the past in opposition to the Avatar of the future.

"Now again Sri Aurobindo has come announcing to the world the realisation of tomorrow; and again his message meets with the same opposition as of all those who preceded him.

"But tomorrow will prove the truth of what he revealed and his work will be done."<sup>3</sup>

\*

At present gigantic developments in the fields of science, technology, industrial production and nuclear power have made man proud of his outward achievements. He boasts himself to be the greatest being and the plenary ultimate in terrestrial evolution. But little does he know that he is only a transitional being in it and not its final product.

According to Sri Aurobindo, "At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny."<sup>4</sup> Since we have arrived at this most crucial turning-point of evolutionary history, we have either to resolve it rightly by participating in the advent of the new consciousness and create a new age or, failing to do so, suffer annihilation. Sri Aurobindo cautions us about this crucial issue: "Unhappy is the man or the nation which, when the divine moment arrives, is found sleeping or unprepared to use it, because the lamp has not been kept trimmed for the welcome and the ears are sealed to the call. But thrice woe to them who are strong and ready, yet waste the force or misuse the moment; for them is irreparable loss or a great destruction."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed., Vol. 22), pp. 401-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 402.

<sup>3</sup> *Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 13, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> *The Life Divine* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 19), p. 1053.

<sup>5</sup> *The Hour of God* (1982), p. 3.

If man is not the last stage in the evolution, then what is Nature trying to do with him? What is the new being that is yet to arrive? In the words of the Mother, "Just as Nature has already created upon earth a mental being, man, so too there is now a concentrated activity in this mentality to bring forth a supramental consciousness and individuality."<sup>1</sup>

All the seers of the past have tried to solve the persistent problems of human existence but they have either failed or only partially succeeded in giving temporary relief or else found an easy escape into the timeless free spirit. But the fundamental problems of life still bewilder man. In the Mother's words these problems are:

"Why is one born if it is only to die?

Why does one live if only to suffer?

Why does one love if only to be separated?

Why does one think if only to err?

Why does one act if only to make mistakes?"<sup>2</sup>

To answer these questions one has to fathom the mysteries of life. But for this one has to embark upon the adventure of consciousness. We know of man's physical adventures like mountaineering, exploring oceans and unknown lands, voyaging into space, or landing on the moon and still more distant planets. But have they brought any true progress in the life of mankind? Man is still not immune from death, disease, weakness, ignorance, selfishness, insincerity, hypocrisy, etc. Buddha attaining to the peace of Nirvana by self-extinction did not solve the problem. Shankara saw the world as Maya and taught the liberation in the Brahman as the sole reality. Chaitanya lost himself into the flood of divine love. Swami Vivekananda went so far as to say that human nature is like a dog's tail and it is impossible to straighten it. But Sri Aurobindo firmly refuses to accept these denials and says, "Our Yoga can succeed only if the external man too changes, but that is the most difficult of all things. It is only by a change of the physical nature that it can be done, by a descent of the highest light into this lowest part of Nature. It is here that the struggle is going on."<sup>3</sup>

\*

To bring down and establish in Matter this highest light, the Supramental Truth-Light, was Sri Aurobindo's life-mission. Little do we know what ordeals he had to undergo to carry out this mission. It can be best expressed in his own heroic words:

"It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the Supermind. I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense. I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace into the earth-consciousness; I see it above and know what it is—I feel it ever gleaming down on my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 12, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> *On Himself* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 26), p. 140.



its own native power, instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half-light, half-darkness. I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of earth evolution. If greater men than myself have not had this vision and this ideal before them, that is no reason why I should not follow my Truth-sense and Truth-vision. If human reason regards me as a fool for trying to do what Krishna did not try, I do not in the least care. There is no question of X or Y or anybody else in that. It is a question between the Divine and myself—whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way for its descent or at least make it more possible or not. Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall upon me if it will for my presumption,—I go on till I conquer or perish. This is the spirit in which I seek the Supermind, no hunting for greatness for myself or others.”<sup>1</sup>

In another context he says: “If I am seeking after supramentalisation, it is because it is a thing that has to be done for the earth-consciousness and if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others.”<sup>2</sup>

After so many years of herculean toil by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother the Supermind finally manifested in the subtle atmosphere of the earth on February 29, 1956, a most significant day in the annals of world history. Since then the Supermind is constantly working in the earth-consciousness. A time will come when man will see it much more concretely than what his outer senses can perceive. One day the Supramental Truth will govern our lives and a total transformation of man's being from mind to the very cells of his body become possible.

This is the first time in evolutionary history that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have declared that a complete transformation of human nature down to the very physical substance can be realised. Therefore it is an adventure. In Sri Aurobindo's own words, “Our Yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.”<sup>3</sup> In one of the New Age Association Seminars the topic chosen by the Mother was: “In what sense is our Yoga an adventure?” To this she answered, “It can be called an adventure because it is the first time that a Yoga aims at transformation and divinisation of physical life instead of escape from it.”<sup>4</sup> In another context she says, “It is an absolutely unexpected and unpredictable adventure.”<sup>5</sup> And further she gives a call to the aspirants of a new world, which I have already mentioned at the beginning of my speech. I now quote it in full:

“There are people who love adventure. It is these I call, and I tell them this: ‘I invite you to the great adventure.’”

“It is not a question of repeating spiritually what others have done before us, for our adventure begins from beyond that. It is a question of a new creation, entirely

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 143-44.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144-45.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> *The New Age* (1977), p. 345.

<sup>5</sup> *Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 9, p. 150.

new, with all the unforeseen events, the risks, the hazards it entails—a *real adventure*, whose goal is certain victory, but the road to which is unknown and must be traced out step by step in the unexplored. Something that has never been in the present universe and that will *never* be again in the same way. If that interests you... well, let us embark. What will happen to you tomorrow—I have no idea.

“One must put aside all that has been foreseen, all that has been devised, all that has been constructed and then... set off walking into the unknown. And—come what may! There.”<sup>1</sup>

It is in this spirit that we shall have to undertake the great adventure. Whatever is the cause of the present world-tension it is certainly not due to any external, political, economical, military, racial or religious reasons as usually people tend to think. These are only symptoms which have not been properly diagnosed. The real cause is that humanity has arrived at an evolutionary crisis of consciousness. This crisis is of paramount importance because in it lies the fate of humanity. The choice given to man is either to solve it by rising to the higher supramental consciousness or sink in the abyss of falsehood and suffer catastrophic destruction.

Man is undoubtedly the highest species at present in the evolutionary ladder. But now the demand of the Master of Evolution on him is to rise to a still higher level of consciousness which Sri Aurobindo has called the Supermind. It is because the demand is becoming more and more urgent and imperative that the Mother has given repeated calls to participate or collaborate in this new evolutionary adventure and respond to the demand. But if man fails to respond or refuses to do so, he may be destroyed by the tremendous pressure of the Time-Spirit or may remain only an intermediary link between the animal and some new being that may emerge out of him in evolution to carry it forward. This work is finally in the hands of the Divine who is the Master of Evolution. As Sri Aurobindo says, “Either man must fulfil himself by satisfying the Divine within him or he must produce out of himself a new and greater being who will be more capable of satisfying it. He must either himself become a divine humanity or give place to Superman.”<sup>2</sup>

\*

Who will dare to embark upon this unknown adventure? Where are the lion-hearted heroic souls who are ready to walk even on the razor’s edge? Certainly the majority of men are quite incapable of answering the Mother’s call to undertake this adventure. It is only a few exceptional souls who can do it. It is for this reason that Sri Aurobindo has said, “The answer might, indeed, be only individual.”<sup>3</sup> Further Sri Aurobindo elaborates, “The individual is indeed the key of the evolutionary movement; for it is the individual who finds himself, who becomes conscious of the Reality.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 150-51.

<sup>2</sup> *The Life Divine* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 18), p. 209

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, (Vol. 19), p. 1060.

The movement of the collectivity is a largely subconscious mass-movement; it has to formulate and express itself through the individuals to become conscious: its general mass-consciousness is always less evolved than the consciousness of its most developed individuals, and it progresses in so far as it accepts their impress or develops what they develop."<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is only the few, the true élite, who will usher the advent of a new world. But where are such exceptional men? Can we recognise them? Greatness or fame, as it is easily understood, is certainly not the criterion of true fitness, for as Sri Aurobindo says, "One man who earnestly pursues the yoga is of more value than a thousand well-known men."<sup>2</sup>

So it is all left to us who claim to be the Mother's true children to collaborate in her utterly new adventure. Do you want to be the pioneers of the New Age? It is not an ordinary adventure, and it requires readiness to face all risks, insurmountable-seeming difficulties and the attacks of the adverse forces. So what? Even in ordinary life risks are unavoidable. But the adventure of a new world, of a total transformation of human nature and of a divine life upon earth is the supreme challenge of all challenges. We should not remain content with our little spiritual experiences. Let us march forward, always forward, without turning back to look at what we have left behind us.

In her New Year Message for 1948 the Mother says, "Forward, forever forward!<sup>3</sup> At the end of the tunnel is the light... At the end of the fight is the victory!" We the children of the Mother, "the hero warriors of the future", should march fearlessly in the footsteps of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as our Supreme Leaders.

ARVIND AKKI

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1050.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 23), p. 855.

<sup>3</sup> *Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 15, p. 182.

## WONDERS

### A CHORUS FROM SOPHOCLES' *ANTIGONE*

WONDERS are many on Earth  
And the greatest of these  
Is man, who rides the ocean and takes his way  
Through the deeps, through wind-swept valleys  
Of perilous seas  
That surge and sway.  
He is master of ageless Earth, to his own will bending  
The immortal mother of gods by the sweat of his brow,  
As year succeeds to year, with toil unending  
Of mule and plough.  
He is lord of all things living; birds of the air,  
Beasts of the field, all creatures of sea and land  
He takes, cunning to capture and ensnare  
With sleight of hand;  
Hunting the savage beast from the upland rocks,  
Taming the mountain monarch in his lair,  
Teaching the wild horse and the roaming ox  
His yoke to bear.  
The use of language, the wind-swift motion of brain  
He learnt; found out the laws of living together  
In cities, building him shelter against the rain  
And wintry weather.  
There is nothing beyond his power. His subtlety  
Meets all chance, all danger conquers.  
For every ill he has found its remedy,  
Save only death.  
O wondrous subtlety of man, that draws  
To good or evil ways! Great honor is given  
And power to him who upholds his country's laws  
And the justice of heaven.  
But he that too rashly daring, walks in sin  
In solitary pride to his life's end,  
At door of mine shall never enter in  
To call me friend.

## TWO POEMS

### SHE IS SAVITRI

INCARNATE in the beauty and joy of the Rose,  
Fulfilling the Infinite in the perfect form,  
Bringing to the heart of Time the Eternal,  
Like a dawn borne by the chariot of the sun  
To our day giving the vast of the Truth-Light,  
She has come in the mystery of her love.  
Goldening the tassel, purpling the fringe,  
She is the honey-brightness of the flower,  
And awakes the sleep and ennobles the vilest things;  
She has cut the knot of the mountains with her sword,  
And with the gaze of her eyes kindled the bagatelle,  
And from the sky of her being poured delight.  
Her flame is the will of the High burning in the Dark,  
And her name is seventy-million hymns:  
She is Savitri, the daughter of the Unborn,  
And in her coming is the advent of God's hour.

### SHE AWAITS THE WORD

Her breath withdrew in the wide ether's calm,  
Her sleep has suddenly become our dream,  
Her body of jewel-fire burns with an occult glow.  
She lent her lotus-heart to the mortal flame,  
And made of infinity the night's fragrance.  
The tireless love now retires for a mightier work,  
A golden hush in the clasp of a golden sun.  
She offers in a quick passage to the Eternal  
All earth gathered in a quintessence of light,  
A rose of God to the glory of earth's dawn.  
Even when the dark impossibilities  
Dogged her on the way she marched triumphant;  
Of the will of the High she made her sword.  
Thus she stood on the bare ridge of creation  
Challenging with her gaze the enormous Blank;  
The Great Word she awaits with transformation's speed.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

## IMMORTAL HAPPENINGS

SOME happenings are immortal  
But one does not always know  
Until the mind tries to recall  
And fails to find a single sign  
Of its presence in vaults of the past  
Neither is its signature seen  
in memory's register  
Nor a trace found in that store  
Where are scattered and cluttered  
Pre-cognitions and would-have-beens.

One can recall from past  
With fair ease,  
One can mix and dub and play as if true  
A would-have-been tune,  
One can even see and hear a piece from future  
Though with much more bother  
But that which has no tense but present  
Can't be recalled.

It is that which once born never dies  
And having never died only feigns a birth-rise.

And suddenly he is on a little summit,  
Virgin vistas and new horizons are all around,  
Air is the same though it is fresher,  
Birds the same though their songs sweeter.

All past thirsts and hungers drop behind—  
He is a little boy again who has passed his grade—  
All thoughts are of new books and new shoes  
And new teachers in the new school.

But now is the time to dream anew  
An interim vacation of song and joy  
As he stays within even when without  
Such a happening.  
Its flesh and blood is made of earth's passion,  
Its breath is warmed by man's aspiration,  
It is born from earth but its skeleton

Is too pliant and plastic to be drawn from matter.

Its soul is a heavenly messenger of the Immortals  
To guide and light passages beyond passes  
And valleys that man traverses  
In his search for the ever-existent.

As it descends with earthward breeze  
It brings down some drops from seven rivers,  
Which coalesce with others from inner streams  
And expand to express a new facet  
Of delight that forms the core of the happening  
And manifests in human terms  
Another aspect of eternal truth.

DINKAR PALANDE

---

## MY MUSIC TO BE

LET my music break the bonds of fixed notes  
And still be with them as a reveller in ecstasy.  
The snowwhite swan of a song for infinity bound,  
Fleeting flotsam of fantasy which yet one can touch,  
A many-hued flower fragrant with mystery.  
Just one blossoming aroma—can that be the end?  
Pray, no! the wings once unfurled  
May never rest till they reach the goal—  
A solitary soul awake awaiting in space  
To receive my soaring symphony  
Of scintillating vibrations calmed in Super-consciousness.

DEBANSHU

# THE SONG OF THE LORD

## THE GITA WITHOUT COMMENT

### A Short Clarification

It can very reasonably be asked, 'Why yet again *another* version of *The Gita* in English?'. As there may be something around a hundred different English attempts at rendering this remarkable document, it is probably important to attempt an answer.

Firstly and very simply I have never been satisfied with the literary impact of any of the versions that I have read, but I know *very* little Sanskrit so there seemed nothing to do but wait in the hope that the problem would be solved by someone else. In 1981, however, the problem turned to a pressing personal need and a copy of Swami Chidbhawananda's book *The Bhagavatgita* was purchased. He has done a very meticulous job of breaking up the *sandhi* and giving the basic meanings of each individual word in the text. Thus, with the help of Apté's *Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, (Revised and Enlarged), Maheshwar's *Bhagavatgita in the Light of Sri Aurobindo* and Anilbaran Roy's *The Message of the Gita* (see below) and with occasional references to Juan Mascaro's translation in Penguin Books the work—largely a kind of creative editing job—was begun.

The personal experience of doing this work has been of immense value and some have said that from a literary point of view the effort is perhaps not unsuccessful. But another question will arise. Why should someone associated with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram attempt such a thing when The Master himself has rendered most if not all of the text? For the answer to this we may refer to a short article by Peter Hees, "Sri Aurobindo and the Gita" printed by *Mother India*. In this article it is pointed out that all the English renderings in Anilbaran Roy's book are either from *Essays on the Gita* or are Mr Roy's own adaptations of other translations. In fact, the former were intended by Sri Aurobindo as 'casual renderings' for interpretative purposes only and not as a literary or literal translation and this expression is used in the following answer to a letter of Anilbaran Roy: "The casual renderings in the *Essays* cannot be published as my translations, they were not intended for the purpose."<sup>1</sup> Apparently, Anilbaran Roy's book was later approved of as an interpretation only.

In the conclusion to his article Peter Hees suggests that "the one point worth stressing is that there is no 'Sri Aurobindo's Gita'. What there is is *Essays on the Gita*..."

So perhaps we are justified in assuming that we may attempt one more version of the Gita in English.

I would like to add a further comment on the style used in this version. On studying the text it appeared that the language used is extremely direct and mas-

<sup>1</sup> Also printed in *Mother India*, May 1983.



culine. It seemed that virility and a direct, simple description of events were welded into a mantric power which had been untouched in any English version known to me. The approach has been justified only very recently on reading 'Notes on the Mahabharata' in Volume 3 of the Centenary Edition where Sri Aurobindo says, "Vyasa is the most masculine of writers," and a little later, "In his austere self-restraint and economy of power he is indifferent to ornament for its own sake, to the pleasures of poetry as distinguished from its ardours, to little graces and indulgences of style. The substance counts for everything and the form has to limit itself to its proper work of expressing with precision and power the substance."

We hope that the reader can taste a little of the directness of expression which sustains this fundament of later Indian spirituality. It may be mentioned that this English version was written as much for the ear as for the eye and may be best read aloud.

I would like especially to thank Brajkishor for patiently listening to the whole text and for his many helpful suggestions.

DHRUVA

### Chapter I

1. Dhritarashtra said:  
"On the field of Dharma, at Kurukshetra, gathered together, eager for battle, what did my people do, O Sanjaya?"
2. Sanjaya said:  
"Seeing the Pandava army arrayed for battle, King Duryodhana approached his teacher and spoke these words:
3. 'Behold this mighty army of the sons of Pandu, O Master, marshalled by the son of Drupada, your talented disciple.
4. Here are heroes of the great-bow equal to Bheema and Arjuna in battle: Yuyudhana, Virata and Drupada of the great chariot.
5. Dhrishtaketu and Chekitana, the valiant king of Kashi and Purojit, Kuntibhoja and the son of Saibya, a bull among men,
6. Yudhamanu and strong Uttamauja and the valiant son of Subhadra and the sons of Draupadi, all indeed of the great chariot.
7. O Best of the twice-born, know ours also, those who are distinguished; for your knowledge I speak to you of the leaders of my army.
8. Yourself and Bheeshma, Karna and Kripa victorious in battle, Ashwatthama and Vikarna and even the son of Somadatta.
9. Heroes and many others have renounced their lives for me, armed with weapons and missiles, all well-accomplished in war.
10. Unlimited but inadequate is that army of ours marshalled by Bheeshma. Limited but adequate is this army of theirs marshalled by Bheema.
11. All information, standing firm by division: 'may you all most closely guard Bheeshma!'

12. For Duryodhana's delight (Bheeshma), the eldest Kuru, the grandsire, loudly made a lion's roar, then blew his conch, full of fire.
13. Coaches and kettledrums and tabors, drums, horns instantly blared forth and that sound was tremendous.
14. Then, seated in their glorious chariot harnessed with white horses, Madhava and Pandava blew also their divine conches.
15. The Lord of the Senses (Krishna) blew Panchajanya; the Conqueror of Wealth (Arjuna) Devadatta; Wolf-belly (Bheema) of dreadful deeds, his great conch Paundra;
16. King Yudhishtira, son of Kunti, blew Ananta's Victory; Sahadeva and Nakula Sweet-sound and Jewel-blossom;
17. King of Kashi, the great archer, Sikhandi of the great car, Dhristadyumna and Virata and Satyaki the unconquered,
18. Drupada and the sons of Draupadi, O King of the Earth, and the mighty-armed son of Subhadra—all blew each his own conch.
19. That stupendous tumult tore the hearts of Duryodhana's men, shaking sky and earth.
20. Now seeing Dhritarashtra's marshalled men and the release of weapons about to begin, Pandava of the Ape Emblem, taking up his bow,
21. spoke these words to Hrisheeksha, O Lord of the Earth:  
Arjuna said:  
'Place my chariot between both these armies, O Achyuta,
22. so that I may see these (men) standing together so eager for battle whom I must fight in this struggle of war.
23. I would observe those gathered here for battle  
eager to please the evil-minded son of Dhritarashtra.'
24. Thus addressed by Gudakesha, O Bharata, Hrisheeksha  
placed that best of chariots between both armies
25. facing Bheeshma, Drona and all the Earth's rulers and said:  
'O Partha, behold these Kurus thus gathered together.'
26. Standing there in both armies Partha saw fathers and teachers, maternal uncles,  
brothers, sons, grandsons, comrades and also fathers-in-law, friends.
27. Kaunteya saw all these relatives thus arrayed and overcome by deep pity he  
said sadly:
28. Arjuna said:  
'After seeing these my own people marshalled and eager for war my limbs fail,  
my mouth is parched completely.
29. My body trembling, my hair bristling,  
Gandiva falls from my hand and all my skin is scorched.
30. I cannot stand, my mind reels and I see evil signs, O Keshava.
31. I do not foresee any good in the killing of kinsmen in battle and I do not desire  
victory, kingdom or happiness.

32. What is there for us through kingdom, O Govinda, what through pleasure of life?
33. Those for whom we desire kingdom, pleasure, happiness stand ready for war having renounced life and wealth.
34. Teachers, fathers, sons, and even grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law, other relatives—
35. Though myself slain I do not want to kill them even for the possession of the kingdom of the three worlds, how then for the Earth?
36. After slaying the sons of Dhritarashtra, what pleasure would there be for us, O Janardana. After killing these criminals, evil would only possess us.
37. Therefore, we should not kill our relatives, the sons of Dhritarashtra. How can we be happy when we have killed our own people, O Madhava?
38. Though these people, with a consciousness hurt by avarice, see no evil in the ruin of a race, no crime in treachery to friends,
39. why should not we, seeing clearly, learn to reject this evil, the fall of a family, O Janardana?
40. In the destruction of a family the family law and thus the Eternal Way perish; the Way being destroyed, lawlessness overwhelms the family utterly.
41. From the growth of lawlessness, O Krishna, the family women are corrupted. From corrupted women, the confusion of caste comes.
42. This confusion also leads the family-killers and their families to hell, and their ancestors fall, deprived of their ritual libations.
43. By these crimes of the family-killers creating caste-confusion, the eternal dharmas of family and caste are demolished.
44. And men whose family-dharma is demolished, O Janardana, become dwellers in hell forever—thus we have heard.
45. Alas! We are about to do great evil who by greed for the pleasures of kingdom are ready to kill our own people.
46. If the sons of Dhritarashtra, weapons in hand, should kill me unresisting, unarmed, it would be better for me.
47. Sanjaya said:  
 “Having spoken thus on the battlefield, Arjuna, throwing down bow and arrows, sat on the seat of the chariot, his mind overwhelmed with anguish.”

### OM TATSAT

Here ends the first chapter called ‘The Yoga of Arjuna’s Anguish’ in the Dialogue of Sri Krishna and Arjuna, in the Brahman-Knowledge, the Yoga-Discipline, in the Divine Songs of the Upanishads.

## INDIRA GANDHI — AN UNKNOWN FACET OF HER LIFE

“INDIANS have a genius for self-flagellation.” Thus wrote an eminent westerner. Indira Gandhi herself felt sad at the self-depreciatory character of Indians. She once asked Prem Kapur, “Tell me why do we in India always bemoan that the glass is half empty? Why don’t we say that the glass is half full? How is it that we have not been trained to look at things positively?” Indians have also perfected the cynical habit of berating our leaders—who reflect and represent our greater and higher selves. As if Truth in any place, in any person, embarrasses the media. And by maligning, twisting and even outright libelling they drag it down into the mud.

Once I asked Nolini-da, “The B.B.C. prides itself on its impartiality. Then why does it have such an hostile attitude towards Indira?” He replied in just six words—“Because she stands for some Truth.”

It is as if our world, by maligning, twisting and even outright libelling wants to drag the high and great down into the mud. The newspapers of India waged a relentless war against Indira Gandhi with no holds barred, with all their knives honed—till in anguish once she wrote to somebody, “There is no crime under the sky of which I and my family have not been accused.”

Our media never thought of the lovely girl whose father was in jail throughout her childhood, whose young mother died, maybe heart-broken by the constant separation from her husband, whose childhood was marred by the crushing boots of the police always violating the sanctity of her home or of the family which gave its best, its all, to India. Even when she lost not only her husband but also her son, they didn’t relent, they didn’t rest their barbed pens for a moment. One understands why the Mother once said, “If all journalism goes, it will be no loss for me.”

And to things testifying to Indira’s humanitarianism, deep love of the motherland, generosity to the unfortunate, the journalists hardly gave an inch of space. To stand for Indira became a synonym for short-sightedness, sentimentalism and non-intellectuality. Leaders who could not compare with her in largeness of thought and vision, high statesmanship, self-sacrifice or administrative ability, were built up and held up as the saviours of India.

With the media thus inclined it is no wonder that we never heard of ‘Kanta’, a child whose one arm had been crushed and shattered in an accident. Indira Gandhi took her into her home, into her life and heart and became a loving mother to her.<sup>1</sup>

Once Mrs. Gandhi accompanied Jawaharlal on a trip to Jammu. There one fine morning some children had gathered to catch a glimpse of them. Amongst them was a twelve-year-old girl who had only one arm. Indira, who was always touched by the plight of the disabled, beckoned the girl to come near her and then asked sweetly, “Will you come to live with me? I will get your arm treated.” The girl nodded her

<sup>1</sup> See *Saptahik Hindustan*, Dec. 9, 1984, for the talk of Kanta Manchandanī in Hindi.

head in assent. After some time the girl's family received a letter from Indira and agreed to leave her at Teen Murti Marg. When the girl felt homesick Indira used to console her with loving words. Slowly this girl Kanta became an integral part of the Nehru family, so much so that she quite forgot her own family. She tied *rakhi* [the ceremonial wrist-band] on the wrists of Rajiv and Sanjay and put *tilak* on their foreheads on the Bhaiya Roor festival. In her own words:

"I cannot forget that day—I was fourteen. I didn't remember myself that it was my birthday. I had just come out of bed when a servant brought a new kurta-pyjama suit, *chunni* [scarf] and bangles on a tray and asked me to put them on since it was my birthday. Totally surprised I asked him, 'Who told you of it?' He replied, 'Indiraji.' Putting on the suit given by mummy I celebrated my birthday for the first time. In the evening when Panditji [Jawaharlal Nehru] came and saw the festive atmosphere he demanded, 'What is the occasion?' In the meanwhile mummy had come. She told him, 'It is Kanta's birthday.' Then he also participated in our joy. I never saw mummy as Prime Minister. I always knew her as my mother. It was Rajiv's marriage. Everyone wore new clothes. Mummy gave me also a new sari to put on. Before that I had never worn a sari. Having only one arm I didn't know how to put on a sari. Tears filled my eyes. Mummy at once understood my problem. She herself put the sari upon me and then remarked, 'You know how to do everything. Then why do you weep? Learn to do everything yourself.'"

Slowly Kanta grew up under the loving care of Indira who now started to think of her marriage. Kanta suggested marriage with a boy whom she loved. Indira first satisfied herself fully about the qualities of the boy and then gladly gave her consent. She herself performed the 'Kanyadan' ceremony. Later on she gave names to Kanta's children, who lovingly called her *nani* [granny].

In 1977 Indira lost at the polls. In those days she used to do the work in the house with her own hands. During that period she went to Agra to speak at a public meeting. Kanta accompanied her. During the speech it started to drizzle. In the evening they went to the guest house to rest. Kanta was drenched. The greatness of Indira's love can be gauged by the following incident as narrated by Kanta:

"I had no other sari to change into. I took off my wet sari and tried to squeeze it. Mummy took the sari from me and squeezed and spread it out to dry. There was only one bed in that room. I didn't know where to lie down. Mummy guessed my trepidation. She moved to one side of the bed and asked me to sleep on the same bed. When I hesitated she ordered me to lie down beside her."

A most touching glimpse of the character of Indira we get in the following instance again narrated by Kanta: "The news of Sanjay's death was a great blow to mummy. But even in the most difficult moments she didn't lose her self-control.... Indiraji was sitting. I was standing a little farther. The *pallav* of my sari kept slipping. Every time I lifted it, it slipped again. Mummy was looking. After sometime she stood up and fixed my sari with a pin. Even my own mother could not have done such a thing for me at such a difficult moment."

Indira's love didn't stop at Kanta. Kanta's children had their full share of it. Even when travelling in foreign countries she wrote letters to Kanta's young son. Once Indira went to a function in the same locality in which Kanta lived with her husband and children. Kanta's daughter asked Indira, "Nani, come to our house." She could not deny a child's wish and visited Kanta's place, looked it over and praised it.

On 28th October, 1984 she gave her blessings to Kanta's son on his birthday. To Kanta she had given a Gita which she reads every day.

Such was our Indira.

SHYAM KUMARI

### POSTSCRIPT

Indira's love for children is well known. But how much her heart went out to disabled children and how much in spite of her extremely busy life she tried to do and did for them can be seen from the following incident narrated by Smt. Sheela Kaul.

Once Indira went to Lucknow to attend a marriage. There she saw a charming girl who was limping owing to polio. After some days an eminent American bone-specialist came to Delhi. Indira at once phoned Smt. Sheela Kaul to ask the girl's father to bring his daughter to Delhi.

Indira did not even know the girl. But so genuine was her concern for her that she told Smt. Kaul: "Today being Saturday the banks must have closed by now. Tomorrow is Sunday. The girl's father may find it difficult to arrange for money. Tell him to manage the fare from there. For the return journey all arrangements will be made from here."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Saptahik Hindustan*, 25th Nov. 1984, p. 8.

## FROM A TRAVEL DIARY

### 'The Question' in Tokyo

THE day's journey had been tiring. I hoped that AIR INDIA had not bungled my hotel booking and that I would get a room. I felt diffident about my contact with the Japanese because of the difficulty of communication. But their efficiency, honesty and courtesy were soon evident.

The hotel lounge was glittering with innumerable lights and the reception counter was crowded. Yet in no time I faced the man behind the counter. The moment I mentioned my name, he smiled, "Yes, Sir! your room is reserved. Someone has sent flowers for you and they have been put in your room." A name was mentioned but it did not ring a bell; I looked puzzled but was delighted that somebody cared for me in this vast unknown land.

"And, Sir, there is another message for you from... Your appointment with... is fixed for 11.00 a.m. tomorrow and someone will come to fetch you at 10.00 a.m."

It was 9.30 at night and while going up to my room I tried to place the person who had sent the flowers and I also planned the discussions for the morning's meeting.

Next day at 10.00 a.m. a tall young Japanese met me in the hotel lounge and introduced himself and, soon after, we set off for the appointment. The one-hour-long drive passed quickly, so interesting was our talk about our respective institutions and the thoughts and teachings of our Masters. My companion was born and educated in Hawaii, so the language barrier did not arise.

During the day he took me to publishers, booksellers, translators and acted as my interpreter and guide. Whenever he had a chance, he enquired about Sri Aurobindo's yoga and the Mother. My work in Japan had begun well.

At about 6.00 p.m. we came back to the hotel. I thanked him profusely for his help and he hesitatingly asked me, "Do you mind if I ask you a question? Throughout the day I have been with you and all the time I have felt that you are not alone. Somebody is with you." And he looked at me questioningly.

### He Waited Six Years

As business would have been difficult on a Saturday, on Friday Tan and I tried to meet all the professors and booksellers on my list. Evening brought relief and the satisfaction of having done a full day's work.

Next morning, Tan invited me to join him for a drive as he had to go some distance on a personal errand. We had hardly driven a kilometre, when he suggested a visit to a bookshop in that area; he felt its manager might be interested. A car, moving out, provided parking space—rare in modern cities! Our enquiries led us to the offices of a bank, and we were directed to go up to the first floor.

Rows of well-arranged books greeted us. Opposite the door, at the other end of the room, at a table piled with books sat the young Chinese manager, very much occupied. I walked around the shop. The display of books on Philosophy, Mysticism, Psychology, Sociology, etc. made me feel guilty that I had not visited this place earlier.

Soon Tan called me and a wooden stool was offered to me. The manager gave me an uninterested look suggesting he was eager to pack us off. "I find you have many books on Philosophy, Yoga and similar subjects. Do you have any of Sri Aurobindo's?" I said handing him my visiting card and a catalogue of books.

"No, who is he?" he said toying with the card.

"A famous philosopher and Yogi," I replied.

"Yogi? I have many books on Yoga. I do not need any more. I have X, Y, Z.... No more Yoga for me."

"Well....."

"What do you mean by the Mother?" he interrupted me pointing out the words on my card. "There are so many mothers —Mother Sarada, Mother Teresa, Mother Kalyani, Mother this, Mother that."

"Well, to us the Mother...."

"All right, all right! Who is this Mother, the one on your card?"

"We believe that there is a supreme divine Consciousness, which created the universe and leads it to the Divine, and our Mother is the incarnation of this Divine Consciousness."

"What, you believe in incarnation? I believe in incarnation. I have known the Mother who has created the universe. But I wanted to know if my experience was true, if there is anything like the Mother."

Then followed a lively discussion on the aspects of the Mother, Her Grace, surrender to the Divine, true renunciation, Yoga and the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. A copy of *The Mother* was presented to him. He was delighted. I hinted that I had to leave and suggested if I could help him select a few books for his shop. He said he would rather depend on his intuition and order the books later.

To introduce the wide range of Sri Aurobindo's writings, I showed him one by one the few books Tan and I had with us. Finally a copy of *Savitri* was handed to him. On hearing that it was the longest epic poem in English, a poem in which Sri Aurobindo had described his experiences, he opened the book. Soon he read out aloud:

"An ocean of electric Energy..."

Instantly he exclaimed "What poetry! Please send me ten copies."

"But this is a difficult book. You may order some other books like *Bases of Yoga*...."

"No, I want to begin at the top. Later on I may order other books."

As I was on my way out he continued, "You have come to this city for me. For



six years I have waited to discuss about the Mother with someone who also believed in Her.”

### A Student of Sri Aurobindo in Hongkong

I alighted from the taxi in front of the massive Church and School and looked at a clean block of apartments in the compound. A little figure in a grey suit drew my attention. Yes! he was waiting for me. He saw me coming up the path and greeted me with an anglicised “Kaise ho?”

For forty years he has been living in Honkong, an Indian who came from Shanghai where he had lived for thirty years having migrated from Calcutta in his teens. Nostalgic about his life in India, he enquired about the streets and bazaars of Calcutta. How could I answer him? Calcutta had eluded all my attempts to get familiar with it during my short visits.

His room was clean, airy, comfortable, full of books neatly stacked. Books were his main love these days. After assuring himself that I had brought for him a copy of *Savitri*, he described the discussions on mysticism he used to have with his uncle and father. Mysticism was in his veins. Though a Jew he enjoyed the few books of Sri Aurobindo he had ordered from us. *The Hour of God* was the one he had read last. It had deeply touched him. *Savitri* he had ordered on an impulse.

He was solicitous about my stay and food and he also took me round to various bookshops in Hongkong; they knew him as a young man of 80 years. For the benefit of a young Christian journalist friend of his from Sri Lanka, he invited me to lunch and held a long discussion on Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, thought and works.

*Savitri* naturally featured in these talks. That was the book he would try to read next, if I sent him some other books on it.

That was in September 1984 and in January 1985 he wrote to me as follows:

“Thank you very much for your letter and the booklet *Sweet Mother* which is important for its chapters on *Savitri*. Nevertheless before the book arrived I read 458 pages of one of the greatest spiritual books and the most ravishing poetry expressing very lofty thoughts. As a matter of fact my eyes are sore from weeping at the exquisite way he spells out things. Before I read *Sweet Mother* all my conclusions tallied with her thoughts and I agree with every word she said. *Savitri* tells us that our path to the higher realms cannot fail when we are led by God. I understand most of the implications and doubt not that the thoughts have come from higher realms and are so grandiose that one feels how small he is near this giant of the spirit. My only regret is that the book came late in my life and not ten years ago. I could read and re-read it. My very sincere thanks go out to you for your promptness in sending the book. In fact, I have decided to give away all except a few books to a library in the very near future.

“The problem is that very few people can fathom the thoughts so profound and

all-embracing. It is a book which answers every question and nothing that I have read can compare with it in any way. The poetry is heart-breaking in some places and of unparalleled beauty. It is really a book of books, and works by other sages cannot compare with it in any way.

“All the books I have are good and it seems some great power leads me to them. This book has purified me and made my mind very tranquil. When I read a few lines a peace descends on me for it has a power which is spell-binding...”

“GT”

.

## GLIMPSSES FROM A. A. MACDONELL'S HISTORY OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE

(Continued from the issue of May 1985)

*(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 on 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 number of hymns comprised in the *Rigveda*, in the only recension which has been preserved, that of the Çakala school, is 1017, or if the eleven supplementary hymns (called Valakhilya) which are inserted in the middle of the eighth book are added, 1028. These hymns are grouped in ten books, called *mandalas*, or "cycles," which vary in length, except that the tenth contains the same number of hymns as the first. In bulk the hymns of the *Rigveda* equal, it has been calculated, the surviving poems of Homer. (Pp. 40-41)

Turning to the principle on which the entire books of the *Rigveda* are arranged in relation to one another, we find that Books II-VII, if allowance is made for later additions, form a series of collections which contain a successively increasing number of hymns. This fact, combined with the uniformity of these books in general character and internal arrangement, renders it probable that they formed the nucleus of the *Rigveda*, to which the remaining books were successively added. (p. 41)

...though some of them may date from the time when the tenth book came into existence, there is good reason to suppose that the poetry of the Soma hymns, which has many points in common with the Avesta, and deals with a ritual going back to the Indo-Iranian period, reached its conclusion as a whole in early times among the Vedic singers. (P. 43)

The poets of the older part of the *Rigveda* themselves mention predecessors, in whose wise they sing, whose songs they desire to renew, and speak of ancestral hymns produced in days of yore. As far as linguistic evidence is concerned, it affords little help in discriminating periods within the *Rigveda* except with regard to the tenth book. For throughout the hymns, in spite of the number of authors, essentially the same language prevails. It is quite possible to distinguish differences of thought, style, and poetical ability, but hardly any differences of dialect. Nevertheless, patient and minute linguistic research, combined with the indications derived from arrangement, metre, and subject-matter, is beginning to yield evidence which may lead to the recognition of chronological strata in the older books of the *Rigveda*. (Pp. 45-46)

The nature of the Vedic accent was musical, depending on the pitch of the voice,

like that of the ancient Greeks. This remained the character of the Sanskrit accent till later than the time of Panini. But just as the old Greek musical accent, after the beginning of our era, was transformed into a stress accent, so by the seventh century A.D. (and probably long before) the Sanskrit accent had undergone a similar change. While, however, in modern Greek the stress accent has remained, owing to the high pitch of the old acute, on the same syllable as bore the musical accent in the ancient language, the modern pronunciation of Sanskrit has no connection with the Vedic accent, but is dependent on the quantity of the last two or three syllables, much the same as in Latin. Thus the penultimate, if long, is accented, e.g. *Kālidāsa*, or the antepenultimate, if long and followed by a short syllable, e.g. *brāhmaṇa* or *humālaya* ("abode of snow"). This change of accent in Sanskrit was brought by the influence of Prakrit, in which, as there is evidence to show, the stress accent is very old, going back several centuries before the beginning of our era. (Pp. 53-54)

[In the Rigveda] we already find the beginnings of that fondness for subtlety and difficult modes of expression which is so prevalent in the later literature, and which is betrayed even in the earlier period by the saying in one of the Brahmanas that the gods love the recondite. (Pp. 65-66)

The poet usually compares his work to a car wrought and put together by a deft craftsman. One Rishi also likens his prayers to fair and well-woven garments; another speaks of having adorned his song of praise like a bride for her lover. (P. 66)

When we consider that nearly five hundred hymns of the *Rigveda* are addressed to two deities alone, it is surprising that so many variations of the same theme should be possible. (P. 67)

The unvarying regularity of sun and moon, and the unfailing recurrence of the dawn, however, suggested to these ancient singers the idea of the unchanging order that prevails in Nature. The notion of this general law, recognised under the name *ṛita* (properly the "course" of things), we find in the *Rigveda* extended first to the fixed rules of the sacrifice (rite), and then to those of morality (right). (P. 67)

The parallels of the *Avesta* show that several of the Vedic deities go back to the time when the ancestors of Persians and Indians were still one people. Among these may be mentioned Yama, god of the dead, identical with Yima, ruler of paradise, and especially Mitra, the cult of whose Persian counterpart, Mithra, obtained from 200-400 A.D. a world-wide diffusion in the Roman Empire, and came nearer to monotheism than the cult of any other god in paganism. (Pp. 67-68)

...gods belonging to different departments of nature, but having striking features in common, are apt to grow more like each other. Assimilation of this kind is encouraged by a peculiar practice of the Vedic poets—the invocation of deities in pairs. Such combinations result in attributes peculiar to the one god attaching themselves to the other, even when the latter appears alone. Thus when the Fire-god, invoked by himself, is called a slayer of the demon Vritra, he receives an attribute distinctive of the thunder-god Indra, with whom he is often coupled. The possibilities of assigning nearly every power to every god rendered the identification of one deity with

another an easy matter. Such identifications are frequent enough in the *Rigveda*. For example, a poet addressing the fire-god exclaims: "Thou at thy birth, O Agni, art Varuna; when kindled thou becomest Mitra; in thee, O Son of Night, all gods are centred; thou art Indra to the worshipper" (v. 3, 1). (Pp. 69-70)

...mystical speculations on the nature of Agni, so important a god in the eyes of a priesthood devoted to a fire-cult, on his many manifestations as individual fires on earth, and on his other aspects as atmospheric fire in lightning and as celestial fire in the sun—aspects which the Vedic poets are fond of alluding to in riddles—would suggest the idea that various deities are but different forms of a single divine being. This idea is found in more than one passage of the later hymns of the *Rigveda*. Thus the composer of a recent hymn (164) of the first book says: "The one being priests speak of in many ways; they call it Agni, Yama, Matariçvan." Similarly, a seer of the last book (x. 114) remarks: "Priests and poets with words make into many the bird (i.e. the sun) which is but one." Utterances like these show that by the end of the *Rigveda* period the polytheism of the Rishis had received a monotheistic tinge. (P. 70)

The practice of the poets, even in the older parts of the *Rigveda*, of invoking different gods as if each of them were paramount, gave rise to Professor Max Müller's theory of Henotheism or Kathenotheism, according to which the seers held "the belief in individual gods alternately regarded as the highest," and for the moment treated the god addressed as if he were an absolutely independent and supreme deity, alone present to the mind. In reality, however, the practice of the poets of the *Rigveda* hardly amounts to more than the exaggeration—to be found in the Homeric hymns also—with which a singer would naturally magnify the particular god whom he is invoking. For the Rishis well knew the exact position of each god in the Soma ritual, in which nearly every member of the pantheon found a place. (P. 71)

Since the outward shape of the gods was... vaguely conceived, while their connection with natural phenomena was in many instances still evident, it is easy to understand why no mention is made in the *Rigveda* of images of the gods, still less of temples, which imply the existence of images. Idols first begin to be referred to in the *Sutras*. (P. 72)

The character of the Vedic gods is also moral. They are "true" and "not deceitful", being throughout the friends and guardians of honesty and virtue. But the divine morality only reflects the ethical standard of an early civilisation. Thus even the alliance of Varuna, the most moral of the gods, with righteousness is not such as to prevent him from employing craft against the hostile and the deceitful man. Moral elevation is, on the whole, a less prominent characteristic of the gods than greatness and power. (p. 73)

...The idea is also often expressed that the might and valour of the gods is produced by hymns, sacrifices, and especially offerings of soma. Here we find the germs of sacerdotal pretensions which gradually increased during the Vedic age. Thus the statement occurs in the *White Yajurveda* that the Brahman who possesses

correct knowledge has the gods in his power. The Brahmanas go a step farther in saying that there are two kinds of gods, the Devas and the Brahmanas, the latter of whom are to be held as deities among men. In the Brahmanas, too, the sacrifice is represented as all-powerful, controlling not only the gods, but the very processes of nature. (P. 73)

...It is somewhat remarkable that the two great deities of modern Hinduism, Vishnu and Çiva, who are equal in importance, should have been on the same level, though far below the leading deities... as Vishnu and Rudra (the earlier form of Çiva) in the *Rigveda*. Even then they show the same general characteristics as now, Vishnu being specially benevolent and Rudra terrible. (P. 74)

...In a few passages Dyaus is called a bull, ruddy and bellowing downwards, with reference to the fertilising power of rain no less than to the lightning and thundering heavens. He is also once compared with a black steed decked with pearls, in obvious allusion to the nocturnal star-spangled sky. One poet describes this god as furnished with a bolt, while another speaks of him as "Dyaus smiling through the clouds," meaning the lightening sky. In several other passages of the *Rigveda* the verb 'to smile' (*smi*) alludes to lightning, just as in classical Sanskrit a smile is constantly compared with objects of dazzling whiteness. (Pp. 74-75)

To this god [Savitri] is addressed the most famous stanza of the *Rigveda*, with which as the Stimulator, he was in ancient times invoked at the beginning of Vedic study, and which is still repeated by every orthodox Hindu in his morning prayers. From the name of the deity it is called the *Savitri*, but it is also often referred to as "the *Gayatri*," from the metre in which it is composed:

*May we attain that excellent  
Glory of Savitri the god,  
That he may stimulate our thoughts* (III. 62, 10).

A peculiarity of the hymns to Savitri is the perpetual play on his name with forms of the root *su*, "to stimulate," from which it is derived. (P. 79)

(To be continued)

## NEPAL

As a background to the events I recounted in my previous sketch let me present a number of facts and impressions.

I have lived on eight hill-stations. But Nepal is unlike any other I have seen, I have travelled also through Switzerland. It can be compared with the Happy Valley of Kashmir where lakes are numerous. Nepal has a less number of lakes but its mountains are endless. The more you trek the more peaks appear, one behind another, the higher you go the more ranges dazzle you. In Kashmir, as soon as you reach Sonamargh or Pahlgam, you see no higher ranges of eternal snow. Nepal has the unique honour of having within its borders eight of the highest peaks in the world. Then there is the famous Boltoro glacier, an amphitheatre of the greatest mountains on the planet within a space of fifteen miles. Boltoro holds in its icy embrace ten of the world's thirty highest peaks. It is described as the "golden throne". It is 500 feet deep and 30 miles long. Again, there is the glacier Chogolungma, a quarter of a mile wide. The Rongbuk glacier (about the size of Switzerland) is more famous, because many of the climbers took this path on their way to Mount Everest.

Looking at some of the Himalayan peaks Lord Cruzon once wrote, "In the remote empyrean we visualise an age beyond the boundaries of human thought, a silence as from the dawn of time." One may criticise Curzon for his many oddities but it must be granted that he had a sense of the great and beautiful. We should be grateful to him for his untiring work for the preservation of our ancient monuments. No doubt his pomposity deserves this doggerel:

My name is George Nathaniel Curzon  
I am a very important person,  
My cheeks are pink and my hair is sleek,  
I dine at Blenheim once a week.

No European poets have written anything about Nepal, it was so remote no one went there. Nepal has no romance of Lalla Rookh or phrases like "balmy scented breeze" or "nursling of the bowers" to celebrate it. In higher classes very beautiful women could be found in Nepal but in Kashmir I dare say even street urchins are beautiful.

He took the way to the mountains,  
He ran through the Vale of Kashmir,  
He ran through the rhododendrons  
Till he came to the land of Pamir  
And there in a precipice valley  
A girl of his age he met

Took him home to her bower,  
Or he might be running yet.

This could be said of Nepal too. And the following also:

Who has not heard of the Vale of Cashmere  
With its roses the brightest that earth ever gave,  
Its temples and grottoes and fountains as clear  
As the love-lighted eyes that hang o'er their wave?

But in Nepal we don't look down, we always have to look up, look up to where the gods live. In the unsurveyed depths of Asia, the Himalayas for very long refused to succumb to the crampon and ice-axe. They were too remote and too high for the European climbers until they had exhausted Switzerland. Then they turned their eyes to the Himalayan summits. Simultaneously some 70,000 square miles were surveyed with all their peaks and glaciers and valleys with camps at 15,000 ft. Wrote Tilman after successive unsuccessful attempts to conquer the highest peak: "It seemed that the goddess mother of the world would yield neither to the massed cohorts nor to the dedicated individual."

Howard Bury reached 23,000 ft., Bruce in 1922 reached 26,000 ft., Mallory raced for the summit but fell and died. Some are of the opinion that Mallory did reach the top of the world. His body was found some years later preserved in the ice like the Tollund Man of Denmark who was preserved in the peat-bogs. Mallory has the unique honour of having a grave at a higher altitude than any other man. He wrote in 1924: "Have we vanquished an enemy? None but ourselves. Have we gained success? The word means nothing here. To struggle and to understand, never this last without the other, such is the law, we expect no mercy from Everest."

One has to travel East from Kathmandu, for there on the eastern side of the valley are places from where Everest can be seen: Oriental land's-end. A corner of the earth most remote and most demanding is here. But don't think you can reach a vantage point and see the elusive peak. Perhaps your guide will whisper in your ears, "Look, Sir, look straight through those two dazzling peaks (Nuptse and Lhotse)—far away, looking grey and tiny: that is Everest." We stare and stare at this mystical presence and it looks at you through a veil. Aeons may pass yet they are nothing to it, man's doings or thoughts are a child's play. The world's third pole, yet we find no Nietzschean atmosphere, there it is lovely and gentle as a rose, a thing you can take home and cherish all your life. Well, even if you cannot take materially you can retain the view on your retina and shut your eyes and see it again and again as long as you live. Eagles fly very near, yet it looks as if they are hovering on Everest. Byron has lines to speak for you:



But in man's dwellings he became a thing  
 Restless and worn, and stern and wearisome,  
 Droop't as a wild-born falcon with clipt wing,  
 To whom the boundless air alone were home.

(*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto iii)

Kanchenjunga on the Nepal Sikkim border directly north of Darjeeling cannot be seen from that point at least. Perhaps trained mountaineers only can reach a height from where it can be viewed. Hooker who, it seems, first among Europeans saw Kanchenjunga in 1848 wrote: "No continuous snowy chain, indeed the Himalayas seemed suddenly to decline into black and ragged peaks till in the north-east they rose again in a whole mountain mass of stupendous elevation." Sir George Everest by his survey brought the Himalayas to international significance. But at the beginning both Nepal and Tibet were adamant in not allowing outsiders inside their territory. In 1904 Sir Francis Younghusband led his troops over the hill to get concessions from the Dalai-Lama in Lhasa. Fortunately the Potala Palace yielded and a series of reconnoitering expeditions were sent out, more and more expeditions went on through the century. Finally success came, as we all know, in 1953, the day before Queen Elizabeth II was crowned. Having all the goodwill for Hunt we still regret the sudden call and brusque rejection of Eric Shipton, a veteran climber for the 1953 expedition.

No other mountain system arouses such intense interest in the world. The Great Himalayas, the Abode of Snow, make us feel proud to be an Indian. Invincible, the Eastern Himalayas allow no passes as does the Western side. Some more beautiful peaks were near here, Mansalu and Ama Dablam and others. Lake Manasarowar, a favourite haunt of the pilgrims and situated far to the north-west of Kathmandu valley is half in India and half in Tibet.

There was a time when Nepal extended from the Sikkim border to the border of Kashmir, that is to say, Kulu Mamali and Sutlej line. But, coveted by all were Kayarda Doon and Dehra Doon, two of the most fertile valleys of India. They belonged to Nepal. Naturally the kingdom was divided into sections and each section was ruled by a raja who had to pay homage to the king in Kathmandu and his advisory body. Garhwal, Kumaon, all territories had rajas under the capital. The Nepalese we see today did not all come from the same stock. Outsiders may not know anything but to a native a surname would reveal at once the stock from which a person has come. The Kiratas, the Newars, the Lichchhavis, the Rajputs, the Gurkhas, the Magars and Khasas all mingled to form the nation.

Huge and powerful and rich as the Nepalese kingdom was in those days the East India Company at first took no notice of it, for it was a convenient buffer to the Chinese-infested Tibet. But one must remember it was the time also of the break-up of the Moghul Empire. The Peshwas wielded unlimited power in Central and West India through their governors, the Holkar of Indore, the Gaekwar of Baroda,

the Scindia of Gwalior, and the Bhonsle of Nagpur. On the North-West Ranjit Singh had captured the whole of the Punjab and Kashmir and Leh Ladakh. What if these powerful opponents joined hands with Nepal? Overnight the Company changed its attitude and favoured Ochterlony's forward policy. In the fray that followed Nepal was reduced to half of its original territory.

CHAUNDONA S. BANERJI

# STORIES FROM TAMIL LITERATURE

*(Continued from the issue of May 1985)*

## 15. THE RELEASE OF ILLANTHATHAN

ONCE the Chola kingdom was divided and ruled by two princes of the same dynasty. Since either one considered himself the rightful heir and the other a pretender, there was strong enmity between them. Each kept watching the moves of the other with suspicion.

Prince Nalankilli had his capital at Urayyur while Nedunkilli ruled from Puhar.

Illanthathan was a poet living in Puhar. He was a man of worthy character. But he was young and inexperienced in the ways of kings.

So not taking into consideration the enmity between the two Chola princes, he travelled from Puhar and reached Urayyur. For him it was just another Chola kingdom. But the king's guards took him for a spy, arrested him and set him before the king. Hatred for his rival made the king blind. He supposed that the poet had been sent there on purpose to spy on him. The poet explained his innocent intentions but the king would not believe him. He ordered the poet to be put to death.

The news reached Kovur Kilar, a senior poet and savant of Urayyur. He was a person greatly revered by kings. Kovur Kilar did not personally know Illanthathan, but felt that he was innocent. He knew that no genuine poet would involve himself in such politics of royal rivalry or agree to act as a spy. So he decided to save Illanthathan from death at any cost. He went and saw the king. As was wont in those days he spoke in poetry. He put all that he had to say in a poem and recited it before the king. The poem ran like this:

“O king, don't you know the nature of poets? Just as the birds of heaven go in search of orchards, the poets go in search of patrons. No way is weary to them; no wilderness deters their will. Their tongues utter no unctuous words and in their songs they give their best. They are content with whatever they receive as gifts, which, too, they don't keep for themselves.

Without a care for tomorrow they eat and drink, and without flinching they give. Such is a poet's harmless existence. And it is as dignified as the life of kings like you who are proud of conquest, power and sway.”

The king listened to the poem and knew on what mission the poet had called on him. He had such respect for Kovur Kilar and such faith in his words that he ordered immediately the release of Illanthathan.

## 16. THE SIEGE OF AAVUR

We saw in the previous story how Kovur Kilar, for a noble cause, confronted the Chola king without fear. Many were the occasions on which the poet was involved in such humanitarian causes.

King Nedunkilli who tried to kill poet Ilanthathan was not a very valiant king. He had ambitions for power and sovereignty over the whole of the Chola kingdom, but his valour often failed him. On one occasion he was occupying the fortress of Aavur, and prince Navalathan, brother of his rival Nalankilli, laid siege to the fortress. Nedunkilli did not have enough troops with him nor the courage to meet his enemy in battle. So he simply closed all the gates of the fortress and remained idle within.

Days passed. People inside the fortress began to suffer. All goods and supplies for them had to come from outside. Since the siege began, all contact with the outside world had stopped. For a time people managed but by and by the situation became unendurable. Hunger began to gnaw at them. Babies had no milk, for their mothers had been starving. Even in rich houses starvation began to set in. The king's battle-elephants went without food. There was great wailing all over the city. But king Nedunkilli did nothing. He was neither prepared to fight nor willing to surrender.

Kovur Kilar came to know of the situation at Aavur. He was very sorry for the plight of the innocent people residing inside the fortress. So he decided to speak to the king on their behalf. Since poets were held in great reverence by all, the besieging forces allowed Kovur Kilar to pass and he reached the fortress gates. He sent word to the king and was taken before him.

The poet spoke with great frankness and courage. His words came in the form of a poem. He reminded the king of the hunger and misery of people shut up inside the fort. Then he reminded the king that he had no rightful claim to the fortress. He must either surrender the fortress to the besieging prince or, if he was valiant, fight it out with his rival.

"Either be a man of right or be a man of might," said the poet. "Being neither amounts to cowardice. And it is shameful on your part to keep hiding like this while people suffer."

We do not know what actually happened after this. Most probably the king saw reason, renounced his claim to the castle and sought peace with the besieger.

## 17. THE RELEASE OF MALAYAMAN'S CHILDREN

Cholan Killivalavan had reason to be angry with Malayaman, the chieftain of Tirukovilur. He routed Malayaman's army and killed him in the battle. Malayaman's two children were captured alive and brought before the king. Killivalavan was so spiteful with anger that he ordered the two children to be trampled under the feet of an elephant.

Kovur Kilar came to hear of this. He at once hurried to the court of the king. The king was not there. He had already left for the place of slaughter in order to witness the execution of his enemy's children. Kovur Kilar hurried to the place. He saw the unfortunate children standing there with a frightened look and tears in their eyes. A bad-tempered elephant was being prepared to do the killing. The king sat in a corner revengeful and waiting. The poet rushed before the king and entreated him with great feeling to stop the killing. The words spoken came in the form of a poem:

O great king, you descend from an illustrious dynasty of kings noted for their magnanimity. One of your ancestors was known to have sacrificed himself for the sake of a tiny pigeon. And he had on many other occasions relieved people of their sufferings.

As for these children, humble as they are, they too come from a family which was very sensitive to the needs of poets, always ready to share potluck with them.

Kindly look at these guileless children—their innocent faces are so sweet. Though they were scared at first, looking at the elephant they have stopped crying and stand watching it with great curiosity. How innocent are they, quite ignorant of the cruel fate that is waiting for them! But presently the crowd is surging around them, getting closer and closer, gaping curiously at the children. This has made the children scared again. It looks as though they are going to cry.

This is all I have to tell. If you listen to me and act accordingly, it will be well; otherwise, do what you like.

The poet uttered these words with great vehemence and stepped away. The king took in everything and sat like a statue. He could not very easily bring himself to change his mind. But he had to respect the wishes of a savant like Kovur Kilar. He would not be doing himself any good disregarding the poet's request and going on with the execution. That might estrange him from the whole lot of poets and learned men in future. And people would certainly begin to talk ill of him. Weighing all these things in his mind he relented at last and, though with hesitation, ordered the release of the children.

M. L. THANGAPPA