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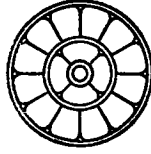
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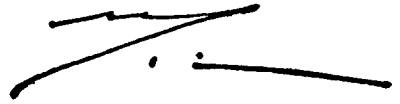


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXIX

No. 1

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

CONTENTS

		<i>Page</i>
THE PRESENT HOUR	<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	... 5
FRAGMENT OF A POEM IN FRENCH BY SRI AUROBINDO		... 6
VERSE-TRANSLATION	<i>Peter Heehs</i>	... 7
LALITA	<i>A.</i>	... 8
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Nirodbaran</i>	... 10
A TALK BY THE MOTHER: TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON JANUARY 5, 1955		... 14
A VISION OF THE FUTURE (Poem)	<i>Sailen Roy</i>	... 18
THE STORY OF A SOUL	<i>Huta</i>	... 19
LETTERS TO A RARE SOUL	<i>Amal Kiran</i>	... 27
BY YOUR SIDE (Two Poems)	<i>Dinkar Palande</i>	... 32
THAT FACE, THOSE EYES	<i>C. V. Devan Nair</i>	... 33
COMMENTARY ON THE ISHA UPANISHAD, SHANKARA AND SRI AUROBINDO	<i>N. Jayashanmukham</i>	... 37
THE SONG OF THE LORD: THE GITA WITHOUT COMMENT	<i>Dhruva</i>	... 41
FURTHER STUDIES IN INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY: FREUD AND PERSONAL INTEGRATION OR DEVELOPMENT—LIMITATIONS OF HIS APPROACH—WHAT INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY CAN CONTRIBUTE	<i>Indra Sen</i>	... 44
DEFEAT AND SURRENDER (Poem)	<i>Debanshu</i>	... 48
AT LAST (Poem)	<i>Shyam Kumari</i>	... 49
THE NATAL MORN	<i>Chaundona S. Banerji</i>	... 50

CONTENTS

THE SHORT STORIES OF ANITA DESAI: A THEMATIC STUDY	<i>R. Sundaram</i>	... 53
GLIMPSES FROM A. A. MACDONELL'S <i>History of Sanskrit Literature</i>		... 56
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE: TALES OF PRISON LIFE BY SRI AUROBINDO: Translated from the Bengali by Sisirkumar Ghose	<i>Review by Shradhdhavan</i>	... 60
SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL-1985	<i>Review by P. Raja</i>	... 62

THE PRESENT HOUR

THIS is an hour in which, for India as for all the world, its future destiny and the turn of its steps for a century are being powerfully decided, and for no ordinary century, but one which is itself a great turning-point, an immense turn-over in the inner and outer history of mankind. As we act now, so shall the reward of our Karma be meted out to us, and each call of this kind at such an hour is at once an opportunity, a choice, and a test offered to the spirit of our people. Let it be said that it rose in each to the full height of its being and deserved the visible intervention of the Master of Destiny in its favour.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 27, pp. 506-07)

FRAGMENT OF A POEM IN FRENCH BY SRI AUROBINDO

This poetic fragment was written by Sri Aurobindo around 1927. He used alexandrine couplets, the form favoured by classical French writers, but did not observe the convention of alternating masculine and feminine rhymes. The alternative to the beginning of the fourth line was written later than the textual version. A blank in the last line was left unfilled. The two lines printed here after the asterisk were written on the page of the manuscript facing the page used for the text.

SUR les grands sommets blancs, astre éteint et brisé,
Seul dans l'immense nuit de son cœur désolé,
L'érémite Amita, l'homme élu par les dieux,
Leva son vaste front¹ comme un ciel vers les cieux,
Et austère il parla, triste, grave, immuable,
L'homme divin vaincu au Peuple impérissable:
"O vous que vos soleils brillants, purs et lointains
Cachent dans les splendeurs, immortels et hautains,
O fils de l'Infini, rois de la Lumière!
Guerriers resplendissants de la lutte altière!
Nation à la mort divinement rebelle,
Vous qui brisez la loi de la nuit éternelle!
O vous qui appelez à vos sommets ardu
Les pantins de la terre, []² tribus!

La vaste Nuit parla aux infinis cachés,
L'amante à ses amants terribles et voilés.

¹ Ou: "Leur leva son front pur".

² Le vers est incomplet.

Verse Translation

Upon the great white peaks, a star extinct and broken,
Alone in the heart's vast night where no word is spoken,
Amit, the eremite, the Chosen, raised his eyes
And with them his vast brow, a sky unto the skies.
Austerely then in tones immutable he spoke,
The vanquished human god to the undying Folk:
"O ye concealed within the glory of your suns
That stainless shine from far proud gods, immortal ones!
O sons of the Infinite, monarchs of the Light,
Resplendent warriors in heaven's lofty fight,
O nation that revolts divinely against death's might,
Who shatter the iron law of the eternal night,
O ye who summon to your giant arduous peaks
The puppets of the earth, the tribes..."¹

Night spoke to the infinities that her vast shade obscures,
A lover to her veiled tremendous paramours.

PETER HEEHS

¹ The line is incomplete.

LALITA

LALITA, born on January 3, 1906, breathed her last at 4.25 p.m. on December 3, 1985 at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Nursing Home where she had been removed nearly a month earlier after a severe attack of cardiac asthma. She was brought to her own room soon after she had passed away, and taken 24 hours later for burial in the Ashram garden "Casanove".

On December 4, as she lay in her bed, all who came for a last look at her were struck with the expression on her face. Peace we expect in death, but here was an extraordinary beauty added to it, as if a subtle depth of unearthly happiness were softly radiating out to shape every line and curve to a rare delicacy. "I have reached home the Divine Mother's arms are around me": this was the mute message which seemed to be conveyed. The atmosphere about her could be felt vibrant with the presence of the inmost soul, through which the large photograph of the Mother on the piano behind the bed became a living Power granting the boon of a new spiritual life to whoever could respond to the mystic moments that were passing.

At the age of 21, Lalita, *née* Daulat R. Mistry, a fair, dark-haired, doll-like figure, came to the Ashram on December 16, 1927 with her husband at the time, K.D. Sethna (afterwards named Amal Kiran by Sri Aurobindo). They were the first Parsis to enter the life of the Integral Yoga. From the beginning Sri Aurobindo and the Mother saw intense spiritual possibilities in young Daulat. A few days after her arrival she offered all her rich saris and every piece of her jewellery to the Mother. Her self-dedication to the Divine was immediate and whole-hearted.

Very soon the Mother took her up for personal work and attendance. Sri Aurobindo gave her the name "Lalita", explaining: "Beauty of refinement and harmony—this is the idea underlying this word. It is a name also of one of the companions of Radha." Daulat became indeed a companion of the Mother whom all members of the Ashram took to be inwardly to Sri Aurobindo what Radha had been to Sri Krishna.

A pioneer sadhak, Amrita, in close contact with the Mother, once remarked to Amal Kiran: "Lalita is a part of the Mother." The Mother herself told Amal on one occasion: "Lalita has the nature of the saints." This, of course, does not certify an utter transcendence of the common human stuff—and Lalita repeatedly spoke to Amal of her own weaknesses and shortcomings and aspired for her Gurus' Grace to overcome them. What the Mother's comment assures is the never-obscured and ultimately triumphant "psychic being" in the midst of all defects, difficulties, setbacks. And that is what we saw in Lalita not only in her young days but also in her old age when, after a protracted absence, she returned to the Ashram on the death of her husband M.B. Panday. The Ashram gave her a warm welcome, knowing how generous she had been in her relation with it throughout the years. In her turn she never ceased to appreciate its generosity to her. However, her later period was no smooth run. Various infirmities were her lot and many a trying circumstance

had to be met. But she passed through everything with quiet patience and never faltered in her faith in the Mother and in Sri Aurobindo whom she always called "my sweet Lord".

In her early days she was skilful at embroidery and at making artistic boxes for the Mother. Up to the last she remained a gifted musician and a keen admirer of painting and literature as well as an adroit story-writer and an eager pursuer of knowledge in several fields. A distinguishing trait in her nature was a deep love for animals. But, above all, she had the heart of a child of the Divine, with no pretensions, no personal ambitions, no rancours against anybody. What she prized most was the inner touch of the Supreme on her life and the vision she had time and again of spiritual and occult realities. A source of great satisfaction to her was the memory not only of the physical intimacy she had long enjoyed with the Mother in the past but also of the numerous occasions when, during her work in the Mother's apartment near Sri Aurobindo's room, Sri Aurobindo used to come out and talk with the Mother and often look intently at the young assistant who would stand in rapt amazement at the Master's majesty and compassion.

It is worth noting that in her last piece of writing (*Mother India*, December 1985, p. 824), she recorded a vivid dream-vision of Sri Aurobindo and at the same time a symbolic experience of her inmost being as a shining entity quite separate from her body.

Lalita will be missed very much by the circle of friends who had cherished her and in whom she had full confidence. Many others will also remember seeing her in her wheel-chair opposite the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the Ashram courtyard every afternoon as she sat next to Amal Kiran with a contented face, slightly smiling and ever contemplating in all humility the sacred shrine before her.

A.

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of December 1985)

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

October 18, 1940

(There was a miscellaneous talk about this and that. It started by the news of Vinoba's arrest. We said that P must be very glad of the news. Then X's topic came up. The talk was about the business capacity of persons. There was some hitch between Vinoba and his co-worker Harkar in the Gandhi Ashram. Vinoba seems to have remarked that Harkar would not be able to earn even Rs. 5/- outside. This insult was only an additional reason to the many others for which Harkar left the Ashram with the resolve to show whether he could earn his living or not. He joined some business with our Kashibhai. S remarked he was a good man but had no business capacity. This led to the subject of X's capacity in business. P said that he had been on the point of being dismissed from the Navajeevan Office. He also had a tailoring shop which failed.)

SRI AUROBINDO: Anything he touches will be a loss. He has a genius for that. He can work under somebody who will oblige him to work. Has he produced any more children?

P: I don't know.

SRI AUROBINDO: He had already three. The way he was industriously working, he must have five or six now.

P: T was complaining of the ill-health of the children.

SRI AUROBINDO: Both the parents suffer from ill-health, so their children must be like that. But such people live long.

C: G also started some insurance business with motor cars, etc. It failed.

P: He was also with Gandhi.

SRI AUROBINDO: What was he doing there?

P: Harijan work.

SRI AUROBINDO: Means only talking! He is suited for that.

Evening

SRI AUROBINDO (*referring to Vinoba's arrest*): Government said that it would watch how the movement developed. But it didn't wait very long.

P: Have you seen Vinoba's picture in *The Hindu* !

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. The only notable feature is his forehead—it is like that of a scholar. He has close-cropped hair ready for jail.

S: From his appearance one can make out an ascetic type.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, ascetic and puritan, but a mental puritan. Not vital, because his lips indicate otherwise. Only his chin has not the necessary strength for vital indulgence.

P: In spite of all his rigorous practical and routine life, his health is not strong.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, he is badly born, as we call it.

October 19, 1940

(*News of Vinoba's arrest has been contradicted on today's radio.*)

SRI AUROBINDO (*to P*): Has it been a great disappointment to you? (*Laughter*).

(*A number of visitors came from Gujerat by special train—on a pilgrimage. Some were known or related to Satyendra. Sri Aurobindo inquired who they were. P answered that some were S's relatives.*)

S: They recognised me at once by my nose. Our family has this characteristic nose. (*Laughter*)

P: He says that in the delineation of the gods he finds such noses!

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but Nandalal is making them short and crooked now.

(*Gurusaday Dutt is on a tour of South India regarding his Vratachāri movement and is expected here as Anilbaran's guest.*)

P: Anilbaran wants to know your opinion about Dutt's movement.

SRI AUROBINDO: I have no opinion—(*laughter*)—as I don't know what it is.

P: He asks whether you consider the movement good.

SRI AUROBINDO: Any movement could be good.

P: His books have been sent to you, it seems. Have you seen them?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, I have seen but not read them.

P: It seems he wants to do social service, village uplift work through his *Vratachāri*, folk dances. According to him it is the lower castes in India, that have preserved the real Indian civilisation. Even the Harijans—

S: Not even! It is the Harijans who are the real custodians of Indian culture.

SRI AUROBINDO: All I can say is that the Pondicherry Harijans are cleaner than caste people. (*Laughter*)But is he also of the opinion that whatever is primitive

and ancient is real culture and so must be revived?

P: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then I can't agree with him.

N: He claims also a spiritual value in his movement. He says it will help towards spiritual uplift too, which Anilbaran can't swallow. There are five ideals he has set forth: Knowledge, labour, unity—

SRI AUROBINDO: Knowledge very good, unity—better, and then?

N: Truth and joy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Joy also? *Anandam, Satyam*—

N: Anyone who follows these in his life will have spiritual development.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): Obviously! I suppose it is through the rhythm of the folk dance that all these will be achieved?

P: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO: He himself took part in a dance and his I.C.S. people thought he had gone mad! But I thought it was also a scout movement, not only folk dance.

P: Yes, that is also part of it.

N: Anilbaran says there is this difference from the Gandhi movement—that it includes joy and beauty.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why? Gandhi finds joy and beauty in suffering!

N: Dutt is very devoted to his wife's memory, it seems. He always keeps one vacant seat by his side during his meal time. Written a book too on her. It seems Dutt got inspiration from his wife in all these movements.

S: Many people are devoted like that. Dr. Chandulal, for instance. He lost his wife when young and did not marry again. Wrote a poem on her.

SRI AUROBINDO: He can marry again and write another poem! (*Laughter*)

S: Sometimes in their devotion, external beauty of form doesn't count. In the Leila-Majnun story, somebody asked Majnun what made him love Leila so much, Leila had no beauty. He answered that one must have Majnun's eyes to see that. But I am afraid Majnun could not have done these *Vratachāri*.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not even if Leila started it? (*Laughter*) A modernised Leila? You must make some allowance for modernism!

P: One of the visitors is a retired D.S.P. It seems he was your student.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see!

P: He says that after the war is over there will be a great economic strain all over the world. Whoever wins won't make much difference to the other economically because both sides will be utterly exhausted. He also thinks that some other social order will come in.

SRI AUROBINDO: A tremendous necessity of that sort will compel them to a new arrangement of society. It is Nature's push that they have not taken any account of so far. They can't go back to the old forms of government and state and society. If they do, there will be upheavals again. What they are calling a new order will be forced on them by such a necessity. Hitler looks at it from upside down. He wanted

to make Germany self-sufficient and saw that it was not possible without making the world subservient to Germany. That means that self-sufficiency is not enough nowadays. Nobody can preserve himself by self-sufficiency alone. Unification becomes necessary. You see what Hitler's unification is?

P: By compulsion!

SRI AUROBINDO: Not only compulsion! but subservience to Germany.

P: Italy and Germany are holding out threats to Greece, it is said Germany wants to march to Greece, after Rumania!

SRI AUROBINDO: But how? Through Yugoslavia? Is that why the Yugoslavian Prime Minister has gone to Turkey? They can march through Rumania too but it is difficult. Perhaps for a joint action Italy has held up her operations in Egypt.

Evening

(The newspaper said that Vinoba had given 3-4 speeches and had made up a programme of addressing other meetings.)

SRI AUROBINDO: Vinoba is having the time of his life! His speeches are so inoffensive and colourless that I don't see how anybody can arrest him. He can't change his phrases for fear of falling into violence!

P: The evening papers have put in a placard like Gandhi's new movement! Don't know what is that new movement!

SRI AUROBINDO: Because Vinoba is not arrested? Perhaps he thinks it is a crime on government's part not to arrest him?

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON JANUARY 5, 1955

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's
Bases of Yoga, Chapter 3, "In Difficulty".

Sweet Mother, how can we create "the attunement of the nature with the working of the Divine Light and Power"?

How can you do it? By trying.

First you must be conscious of the kind of attunement you want to realise. You must become aware of the points where this harmony does not exist; you must feel them and understand the contradiction between the inner consciousness and certain outer movements. You must become conscious of this first, and once you are conscious of it, you try to adapt the outer action, outer movements to the inner ideal. But first of all you must become aware of the disharmony. For there are many people who think that everything is going well; and if they are told, "No, your outer nature is in contradiction with your inner aspiration," they protest. They are not aware. Therefore, the first step is to become aware, to become conscious of what is not in tune.

To begin with, most people will say, "What is this inner consciousness you are telling me about? I don't know it!" So, obviously, they cannot establish any harmony if they are not even conscious of something within which is higher than their ordinary consciousness. This means that many preparatory stages are needed, preparatory states of awareness, before being ready for this harmonisation.

You must first of all know what the inner aim of the being is, the aspiration, the descending force, what receives it—everything must become conscious. And then afterwards, you must look at the outer movements in the light of this inner consciousness and see what is in tune and what is not. And then, when you have seen what does not harmonise, you must gather the will and aspiration to change it and begin with the easiest part. You should not begin with the most difficult thing, you should begin with the easiest, the one you understand best, most easily, the disharmony which seems most evident to you. Then from there, gradually, you will go to the more difficult and more central things... Why do you happen to twist your ankle?

(Silence)

Mother, last time you said that the hostile forces are going to strike a last blow this year. If the earth is not capable of winning the victory...

The earth? Did I say the earth?

The earth, India and individuals.

Yes, it is possible, it is a way of speaking. And so, if we are not able to win the victory...?

Does this mean that the possibility of transformation will be delayed?

Delayed perhaps by several centuries. This is precisely what the adverse forces are trying to bring about, and so far they have always succeeded—in putting off the thing. Always they have succeeded. “This will be for another time”, and the other time... perhaps after hundreds or thousands of years. And this is what they want to try to do once again. Perhaps all this is decreed somewhere. It is possible. But it is also possible that though it is decided, in order that the thing may take place as it ought to, it is not good to reveal what is decided. There are many things like that, because people are neither conscious enough nor pure enough to do what they should do, exactly as they should do it, with full knowledge of the result; for the result, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, is not what they desire—or if it is what they desire, it is modified, it is mixed, diluted, there are differences, differences enough not to be fully satisfactory. So if one knew ahead exactly what was going to happen, one would remain seated, quietly, and would do nothing any longer. One would say, “Good, if this must happen, it is good, I have nothing more to do.” That is why one doesn’t know. But he who can act in all circumstances in full knowledge of the cause, knowing what the result of his action will be, and at the same time can do a certain thing which is sometimes even in contradiction with this result, that person indeed can know. But I don’t think there are many like that. In ordinary life people say that for someone to realise something, he ought always to aim much farther than the goal he has to attain; that all who have realised something in life, all the great men who have created, realised something, their aim, their ambition, their plan was always much greater, vaster, more complete, more total than what they did. They always fell short of their expectation and hope. It is a weakness, but it comes from what I said, that unless one has a very great ideal before him and the hope of realising it, one doesn’t put out all the energies of the being and therefore doesn’t do what is necessary to attain even the nearest goal, except, as I said, when one can act with the clear vision that “this is what ought to be done” and without the slightest worry about the consequences and the result of what one does; but this is difficult.

Sweet Mother, what does “a Couéistic optimism” mean?

Ah! Coué. You don’t know the story of Coué? Coué was a doctor. He used to treat by psychological treatment, auto-suggestion, and he called this the true working of the imagination; and what he defined as imagination was faith. And so he treated

all his patients in this way: they had to make a kind of imaginative formation which consisted in thinking themselves cured or in any case on the way to being cured, and in repeating this formation to themselves with sufficient persistence for it to have its effect. He had very remarkable results. He cured lots of people; only, he failed also, and perhaps these were not very lasting cures, I don't know this. But in any case, this made many people reflect on something that's quite true and of capital importance: that the mind is a formative instrument and that if one knows how to use it in the right way, one gets a good result. He observed—and I think it is true, my observation agrees with his—that people spend their time thinking wrongly. Their mental activity is almost always half pessimistic, and even half destructive. They are all the time thinking of and foreseeing bad things which may happen, troublesome consequences of what they have done, and they construct all kinds of catastrophes with an exuberant imagination which, if it were utilised in the other way, would naturally have opposite and more satisfying results.

If you observe yourself, if you...how to put it?...if you catch yourself thinking—well, if you do it suddenly, if you look at yourself thinking all of a sudden, spontaneously, unexpectedly, you will notice that nine times out of ten you are thinking something troublesome. It is very rarely that you are thinking about harmonious, beautiful, constructive, happy things, full of hope, light and joy; you will see, try the experiment. Suddenly stop and look at yourself thinking, just like that: put a screen in front of your thought and look at yourself thinking, off-hand, you will see this at least nine times out of ten, and perhaps more. (It is very rarely, very rarely that one has in the whole day, suddenly, a dazzling thought about what is going to happen or the state one is in or the things one wants to do or the course of his life or world circumstances—it depends, you see, on your preoccupation.) Well, you will see, it is almost always foreseeing a bigger or smaller, more or less vast catastrophe.

Say you have the slightest thing that is not getting on quite well; if you think of your body, it is always that something unpleasant is going to happen to it—because when everything goes well, you don't think about it! You will notice this: that you act, you do all that you have to do, without having a single thought about your body, and when all of a sudden you wonder whether there isn't anything that's going wrong, whether there is some uneasiness or a difficulty, something, then you begin to think of your body and you think about it with anxiety and begin to make your disastrous constructions.

Whereas Coué recommended... It was in this way that he cured his patients; he was a doctor, he told them, "You are going to repeat to yourself: 'I am being cured, gradually I am getting cured' and again you see, 'I am strong, I am quite healthy and I can do this, I can do that.'"

I knew someone who was losing her hair disastrously, by handfuls. She was made to try this method. When combing her hair she made herself think, "My hair will not fall out." The first and second time it did not work, but she continued and

each time before combing the hair she used to repeat with insistence, "I am going to comb my hair but it won't fall out." And within a month her hair stopped falling. Later she again continued thinking, "Now my hair will grow." And she succeeded so well that I saw her with a magnificent head of hair, and it was she herself who told me this, that this was what she had done after being on the point of becoming bald. It is very, very effective. Only, while one is making the formation, another part of the mind must not say, "Oh, I am making a formation and it is not going to be successful", because in this way you undo your own work.

Coué—it was at the beginning of the century, I think... (*Mother turns to Pavitra.*)

(Pavitra) *I saw him in 1917 or 1918 in Paris.*

Yes, that's right, the beginning of the century, the first quarter of the century. You knew him?

(Pavitra) *In Paris, yes.*

Ah, ah! tell us about it.

(Pavitra) *I heard one or two of his lectures. The method he gave to the sick was to repeat, first every morning and several times a day, "I am becoming better and better, every day I am better and better, each day I am healthier", every morning, every evening, several times a day, with conviction, clasping the hands like this....*

Oh! if one lost one's temper: "I am becoming better and better, I don't lose my temper now." (*Laughter*)

(Pavitra) *Every day I am becoming more and more intelligent.*

That's really good. Why, and if you repeat to a child, if you make him repeat, "I am good, day by day more and more."

"I am better and better, I am more and more obedient." Oh, but this is very fine. (*To a child*) The other day you wanted to know what to do for children who are difficult to bring up. Here you are, you can try this. "I am more and more regular at school."

And then again, "I don't tell lies any more. I shall never lie again."

(Pavitra) *At first it was to be said in the future and afterwards one drew closer to the future and so finished in the present.*

Oh, one finishes in the present. And how long did it take?

(Pavitra) *It depended on the person.*

It depends on the case. "I shall not tell lies again, it is my last lie." (*Laughter*)
So, we stop.

(*Questions and Answers 1955, pp. 1—7*)

A VISION OF THE FUTURE

A GLIMPSE of Eden has come anon
Adorned with a crimson light,
A splendid world on earth is born
New suns are shining bright.

It is as though with a single stride
We crossed all doleful days
And entered into a vista wide
In sudden magic ways.

Despondency fades as a dream,
A celestial realm advents,
God's plans are worked by Nature's scheme,
His Angels to earth He sends.

Forgotten is our mournful past,
All malevolence is gone,
New Paradise is here at last
And men divinely grown.

SAILEN ROY

(Note: We regret to announce that the poet suddenly passed away
on October 31, 1985.)

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of December 1985)

The Mother's Message

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



Volume Two: 1958

8

A STREAM of cards kept coming from the Mother. And one more card came on 18th April 1958 depicting a statue of Sarnath Avalokiteswara Padmapani 6th Century A. D. She had written on the card:

“To my dear little child Huta
Sincerity is our safeguard.
With love.”

True. But how would it be possible—to be absolutely sincere? I suddenly felt unutterably weary. The feelings of resentment at my weakness increased. I was disgusted with myself. I avoided going to the Mother. What was the use of wasting her time?

Many a night I had an uneasy slumber ending in frightful dreams of my struggle and woke in harrowing distress crying out my fear of sinking deeper and deeper into unconsciousness.

My nephews had already left for East Africa. I felt terribly alone in the big house.

*

A bouquet of white roses and a card were sent by the Mother. I read the card:

‘I am the mother of pure love and of science and of sacred hope.’
(Ecclesiasticus)

NO, NO, NO,—I could not possibly believe anything. There was no Divine Mother, no love, no hope—nothing, nothing.

I wailed to myself and wept my heart out. I saw a yawning chasm ever widening between the Mother and me. It horrified me. A sick fear, an indefinable terror possessed me. I wanted to rush away, away—anywhere.

Although there was in the recess of my heart a scanty glimmer of love for the Mother, I loved her as a most wonderful person but not as the Divine Mother. Many lapses, setbacks, falls, but I knew too well that I would not be far from the person whom I loved.

*

My health became worse than ever. It was the nagging anxiety and persistent emotion that had sapped my strength. Now I could not eat at all. My body failed even to stand liquid food. I drank water one glass after another. I also took lots of coffee. I could not exert myself. So I stopped my work.

The Mother wrote an urgent letter saying:

“My dear little child,
I have something to tell you. And will see you this evening at the playground—come at 6.20—I shall wait for you.

“My love and blessings.”

The Mother's Force had always been active to fend the dark forces off. But the temporary relief was no solution to my problems.

I went to her. She gathered me tenderly into her arms and soothed me for quite a long time with compassionate words. She said:

“Child, your health will improve and you will be all right if you will go to Africa for a few months for a change. You know, I will always be with you. You must become absolutely well and I know that you will.”

This was just one more thing to face, and I had faced plenty in those last few months. I returned no answer. My brain was spinning round and round with assorted questions. I could hear the slow beating of my heart coming in dull heavy strokes. Then I shook my head—as if to clear the fuzziness of my brain.

The Mother said several things which I do not recollect. I had lost much of my memory at that time. Besides I was too dull to keep a record. Moreover, it was difficult for me to remember exactly what I had said or done in that first moment of shock. Only at the back of my mind was the knowledge of something foreboding.

She was sending out to me waves of her tender and sympathetic vibrations when she looked at me. She knew that inside me I was shrinking—I was sad, very sad.

She kissed my forehead affectionately after giving me flowers.

At night pacing restlessly from room to room, I tried to find a measure of self-possession, but it would not come. The sense of weakness had not left me. My mind was too agitated to allow me to rest. I lay awake for hours, frightened and confused—my head was a mass of jangled thoughts and my whole body ached with nervous tension. I had to admit defeat, because the Mother asked me to go to Africa for a while. I could not continue my sadhana. I had failed my soul. At last I fell into a fitful sleep of emotional exhaustion.

The succeeding morning I received from the Mother a card illustrating deep pink roses and these words followed:

“To my dear little child Huta,
Wherever is our body, if we concentrate in our heart
on the Lord, then He is with us.
“With love.”

I remembered the Mother's compassionate blue-grey eyes looking down into mine, her sweet smile, her kiss on my forehead, her warm embrace. I knew in that moment that I had really nothing to offer to her except trouble, complaint—a trail of words which were meaningless. Oh, her understanding, her many kindnesses towards me! I was a difficult person. I tended to contemplate on my little self. She

had met me with patience, gentleness, with wisdom and love.

*

When I saw other people around the Mother I imagined how happy they must be. I was shattered by intense feelings of jealousy and despair running riot inside me. Unhappiness engulfed me like a choking cloud, drying my throat and blurring my vision. I lost all interest in life.

That night too sleep was a long time in coming. I tossed and turned for hours, plagued by feelings of guilt and self-accusation, aware that staying any longer here was rapidly making me a skeleton and insane. During the day, I could fool myself into thinking that I could handle the situation, but lying in the darkness I could no longer deny the unpleasant and frightful thoughts which brought a return of my black situation.

Still I could not decide whether or not I should go to Africa. I asked myself: "What will my people say or believe, and what conclusion will they draw?" Above all, it was not easy to leave the Mother even for a short space. But while considering the poor state of my health, I felt that it was not going to improve here: all depended on the body, for the mind could be strong only if the body was strong. I wished to recover my health.

The Mother sent me a nice card on which she had written:

"The Lord who is established in the secret place
of every soul, pervades the whole universe."

(Shwetashwatara Upanishad)

This reminds me of some lines from the Taittiriya Upanishad:

"I am He that moves the Tree of the Universe and my glory is like the shoulders of a high mountain. I am lofty and pure like sweet nectar in the strong, I am the shining riches of the world, I am the deep thinker, the deathless One who decays not from the beginning."

*

My brother Maganbhai who had gone to London came here for a short visit. The Mother gave him an interview and told him about my going with him to Africa. He was glad and said to her that since he had some work in Bombay I could join him there, then we would fly to Africa. So this was arranged.

On 21st April 1958 the Mother wrote a letter to Laljibhai:

"To Laljibhai with blessings.

As you must know, Huta is going to Africa with Maganbhai. I am writing to tell you that I have not only allowed but approved of this travel. Her body

needs a change of climate and I am sure that it will do her a lot of good to pass some time in Africa. I have told her to come back here as soon as she feels strong and fit.

“Hoping that all is well with you and your family.

”Love and blessings for all.”

*

The series of cards continued. The first said:

“Wherever is your body, you are close to what you love.

“With love.”

It was beyond conception what severe ordeals, hardships, depressions, sufferings, agonies and miseries I had been going through.

Now I admire the Mother’s words in her *Collected Works*:

“Lord, thou hast told us, do not give way, hold tight. It is when everything seems lost that all is saved.”

A card showing a vase with four red and pink roses came from the Mother. These words were on it:

“The greater his aspiration and concentration, the more he finds the Eternal.”

(Ramakrishna)

She added:

“With blessings.”

Truthfully, it was very stupid of me to think: “Why has the Mother not written ‘With love’ and only ‘With blessings’? Am I not loved by her any more?”

Now my nerves had become so raw that the slightest incident upset me.

In answer to the Mother’s letter to Laljibhai, my family sent a telegram to the Mother:

“Pranam. Received letter 21st We all approve of Huta’s travel with Maganbhai to Africa for change as approved by Mother”

*

On 24th April—Darshan Day—I did not join the group to go around the Samadhi.

Maganbhai and I went upstairs to the Meditation Hall to get the Message from the Mother. It was:

“There are two complementary aspects of the liberating action of the Divine Grace upon earth among men. These two aspects are equally indispensable, but are not equally appreciated.

“The sovereign immutable peace that liberates from anxiety, tension and suffering.

“The dynamic all-powerful progress that liberates from fetters, bondages and inertia.

“The peace is universally appreciated and recognised as divine, but the progress is welcomed by those whose aspiration is intense and courageous.”

The Mother

At that time I did not pay any attention to this beautiful Message. Maganbhai left for Bombay leaving all the instructions for me to follow him.

In the evening I did not share in the march-past in front of the Mother, I was fagged out. It was painful even to stand for long. I liked to remain in my apartment and lie down on my bed. I had bottled up my grief for so long it was beginning to poison me.

I was heartily ashamed of the forlorn tears which often dripped down my cheeks. I wiped them away fiercely, telling myself that I was becoming a regular cry-baby.

*

The Mother had written on a pretty card:

“A prayer,

‘Lord, eternal Master, my thought lies mute and powerless before Thee but my heart calls Thee.’

“With love.”

That day was a Friday, 25th April—the Mother invited me to watch with her the mixed final swimming competition which took place in the Sportsground. Udar Pinto and an American diplomat Michael Lunin asked me to go with them to the Sportsground. I refused. Michael said if I would not come they would simply carry me off. I went and sat near the Mother’s chair. Some people already clustered round the chair.

The Mother tried to please me in many ways but to no avail.

I felt so bad that I was not allowed to swim, because of my left ear which had been slightly damaged in 1956 when I used to go swimming in the sea.

Nevertheless, the competition was very interesting—full of vigour and excitement. All this added more and more to my inferiority complex, because I could do nothing.

I was impressed to observe how carefully, faultlessly the Mother kept the record of the swimmers and winners.

For five days successively she went to the Sportsground and watched the final competition.

Actually the mixed competition started on 19th April 1958.

*

Maniben used to come to my apartment time and again to see whether everything was all right. Mona Pinto unfailingly dropped in to instruct my maid to work accurately, so that I might not have any inconvenience. My servant after several years confided in me that Mona had told her categorically to look after me. For I had been brought up in luxury. It was not easy for me to cope with odd jobs.

Now I laugh to myself. Not only do I manage the big work the Mother has entrusted to me but I do a lot of odd jobs which take up considerable time!

I will never forget the good turn Mona and Maniben did to me.

Maniben and I prepared several envelopes for the Mother so that she might write to me when I would be in Africa. I recollect Maniben saying to me that the Mother was very, very particular how one stuck the stamps on envelopes. They should be on a level with one another and securely pasted. The Mother insisted on one's being perfect even in trivialities.

So much to learn, so much to grasp, so much to absorb, so much to assimilate from her teaching.

*

On another card the Mother had written with her love:

“Whoever applies himself intelligently to profound meditation, soon finds joy in what is good.”
(Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King)

And the next card was:

“To my dear little child Huta

“The Force is there. Rejoice, you who wait and hope, the manifestation is sure.

“With love.”

On the 29th she sent me a card with her love, showing red and yellow roses accompanied by a quotation:

“How can he be long in peace who troubles himself with foreign cares, who seeks to diffuse himself into the outward and withdraws little or rarely into himself?”
(Imitation of Christ)

Now it was the last day of April. A card came from the Mother, illustrating Zinnias and this quotation with her love:

“Without contemplation there is no tranquillity and without tranquillity how shall there be happiness?”

(To be continued)

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LETTERS TO A RARE SOUL

After publishing "Glimpses of a Rare Soul" in the last issue, some older letters addressed in most part directly to the person concerned came to hand. We are publishing them for both their particular and their general interest from the spiritual point of view.

To Shashi

14.11.1983

YOUR letter was sheer you—and, being so, it was at the same time lovely, profound, personal, intimate. It brought your presence most vividly to me and even slid it into me. I not only felt as if I were going through your experiences, but also had the strange sense that I was sitting next to you physically and holding your hand and looking into your eyes.

It is a strong hand and therefore—paradoxically—takes hold on life lightly. Only the weaklings grab life and cling to it as if something outside them were their support and gave them strength. The really strong accept life as a grand gift which, being an act of Grace, has to be received without a sense of personal right: hence there is no clutch, no attachment, no claim. There is gratitude for the opportunity to do something with the material world as well as to receive something from it, but one is not caught by its changing play, however dear its actors may be, nor is one gripped by the drama going on in one's own body. One stands calm and poised in one's inmost self which is in touch with the Timeless and filled with the strength of the Changeless—warm with the Love that knows how to give and give, asking for nothing except the happiness and illumination of the beloved. There is no aloofness here nor any attitude of superiority: one is most human, yet inwardly free and, behind all the suffering that the human condition is bound to bring in some form or other, one is aware of a smile which is smiled through one by an ever-luminous Being.

So much for the feel of your hand. As for your eyes, they no longer merely look at people and things but gaze across them at the Eternal acting through moment and fleeting moment. Not that things and people don't matter to you or are of no importance in themselves. What is happening is that your soul is peeping through your eyes and coming into contact with the truth within objects and persons, the truth which is also the *rasa* of them, the inner delight of the Divine in the various shapes He assumes. This faculty of yours, though appreciative of what is around, is independent of everything and can enjoy solitude just as well as company. In fact, they are not opposites but shade off into each other; for, the delight you have relished through objects and persons stays with you, bearing something of their essential presence in the midst of your alone-ness. And you are alone even when they are there. Their proximity is pleasant and you make them feel your pleasure in them; still here too their faces transmit a Smile beyond their own and in your heart

of hearts you are with that Smile even more than with their faces.

I have tried to put in terms of spiritual psychology what you have expressed very simply, very practically, in day-to-day imagery. You know what you are and what you are doing: my effort has been to lead you to vision your own knowledge, watch the psychic goings-on as if you were another person. This way perhaps the fine and deep movements may become more steady and regular and continuous so that there may be less of a gap into which the pain and the discomfort push themselves. When they do intrude in any case, you can't do better than follow Dinkar's advice. What he has said penetrates to the core of the spiritual process in our relationship with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Let me repeat his highly inspired words: "Offer the pain to Them. In offering the first stage is the aspiration, next is separation of the thing offered from your self. When this separation occurs the pain will be felt as separate. If that does not occur, offer your whole self together with the pain asking Them to do whatever They like with it, burn or annihilate, destroy it. The main thing is to lay your whole self at Their feet."

Dinkar is indeed, as you say, "an instrument of the Divine" to help you. I would, however, add that he has grown into such a good instrument because you have been a better one. His sadhana has blossomed because a special grace has come to the shining seed sown by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and to its own upward urge: you have contributed an extra coolness to the nourishing water life has given, an extra warmth to the sunlight life has shed under the auspicious overseeing by his Gurus. The association of you two with each other has been a wonderful blessing—not only to both of you but also to your children and—unbelievable as it may seem in your eyes—to Amal Kiran. He has been proud and happy to be called by both of you: "Our very dear Amal." What may appear even more unbelievable, the very illness that has struck at you has made the Aurobindonian Yoga penetrate deeper into either of you. It is never good to invite hardship and court difficulty, but if, when they come, one knows the art of extracting the Divine concentrated in them, one takes a great leap inward and upward and realises better what Sri Aurobindo has packed into the symbol of "Earth" as counterpoised to that of "Heaven":

I, Earth, have a deeper power than Heaven;
 My lonely sorrow surpasses its rose-joys,
 A red and bitter seed of the raptures seven;—
 My dumbness fills with echoes of a far Voice.

To Shashi

22.12.1983

I was very glad to hear from you, as well as from Dinkar. What you have written strikes the right soul-note. You begin by saying that you are not unwilling to leave the body: all you pray for is the cessation or at least a considerable diminution of

pain. But you end by leaving even the pain in the Mother's hands. If she for some reason wants the pain to continue, you are prepared to accept it and pray that you may somehow draw nearer to her through the fiery passage. This, of course, does not mean that we must not try to lessen or even demolish the pain. The Mother's general method is not suffering, but if suffering is found unavoidable there will still be her grace acting through it and bringing illumination provided the being longs for it, knowing that through everything and anything it can touch the feet of the Mystery, the Marvel, the Mercy.

You say that you keep seeing my face and my eyes and that you see me together with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother whenever you think of them. There is no greater compliment to me possible—nor greater help to myself. If always a flowered soul like you puts me in the presence of our Gurus a call is sent forth to them that I may share their light and love more and more. Thanks for this help to grow into something like you—a richer rose under their Sun of Truth, a finer lily under their Moon of Bliss.

I have never had the audacity to bless anybody in my own right. Nor am I going to assume the posture of a Master now. But there is a state of consciousness when the soul is in the forefront and its radiation runs through one's whole being, including the very body. Then whatever one touches, inwardly or outwardly, is automatically blessed—not by oneself as such but by That which has suffused one. At the moment I feel the depth of me awake on the surface and from it a tender movement goes towards you as if Sri Aurobindo were touching your head and the Mother your heart. May His palm crown you with peace and Her fingers sustain and uplift you.

To Shashi and Dinkar

19. I. 1984

Please forgive me for not replying earlier with the thoughts that are constantly in my mind—thoughts to help in some way the hearts of both of you. Both need courage and endurance, but along with them there must be the insight to which the Divine reveals himself not only in all his glory but also in all his darkness. Strange word, this—"darkness"—and yet no other will convey to the full the mystery in which the Supreme wraps himself to work out the lights that are too far for ordinary conception. Will the innumerable stars ever disclose their distant immensities without the jet black of the night and create in us the possibility that our heart's pulsings may echo the rhythm of those silvery silences

Tingling with rumour of the Infinite?

To have a living sense of God's secret ways no less than of his open approaches is the sign of the true seer. Often those ways make use of what we consider to be difficulties and dangers and even disasters. We must have no doubt, no depression

but always a vision of the deep calm all-knowing eyes that are Sri Aurobindo and the radiant smile, soothing as well as strengthening, that is the Mother.

Dinkar writes of the come-and-go of the feeling that he is tired of living. Why not for a change perceive that every moment of the body carries us towards death and so why not get tired of dying? Something in us is immortal and if we can be in touch with it those moments will be lit up with a haloed happiness which is beyond both life and death, and nothing will matter except that the Beautiful, the Beloved is waiting for us in the future, whatever may be the nature of the journey's end.

Shashi says she has stopped thinking even of the next moment. That is the right thing to do. A Sufi has sung: "Past and future veil Him from thy sight. Burn them in fire." The fire is the purifying ever-upward remembrance of the One for whom there is no yesterday or tomorrow but only an endless present. Perhaps because of that timelessness and not just because of being everywhere that God is called *omni present*?

Both of you, my cherished friends, must be patient and steady with the old Yogic quality of being *dhīra*, the looking at the world with an inner awareness of the Whole. The Whole is always a harmony while the parts often appear jarring: the Cosmic Spirit knows how to adjust the various notes and carry on the evolution onward over every obstacle. Let us be sure of this movement and try to feel it with sweetness and light, for indeed the Cosmic Spirit is a Universal Mother.

Dinkar, you must have got by now the official receipt for your kind donation of Rs. 300 to *Mother India* which is aspiring to convey something of that Universal Mother. I thank you very much—and mostly I thank both Shashi and you for being yourselves.

To Shashi

26. 3. 1984

I can enter into your condition and feel it to be the right one. Looking at the photos of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is meant to be only a road out of our small selves towards the largeness which is their presence already within us but which we cannot easily find. Once that largeness has been found as a permanent part of our own being, the pictures are not of prime importance, though they are always there to remind us that the inner largeness of light and love took outer name and form on earth and that some shadow of this glorious outerness should manifest also in the obscurity of our name and the density of our form.

* Your easy forgetfulness of things is something I can understand these days. It is the result of an intensifying silence in our depths—

Silence that, losing all, grows infinite Self.

But, while forgetting things, you seem to retain a strong memory of what you call "Mother's frail Body". The frailness was itself a seeming, an appearance

confined to the Mother's outermost sheath in extreme old age: even her subtle-physical was enormous and mighty—and now that the most external sheath has been shed it is a mistake to think of her as frail in any sense and to feel that you should not imaginatively put your head in her lap. The moment you forget the superficial impression of frailness connected with her, the help you can get from her will be all the greater and you will deal with your own "weakness" as if it were itself a mere seeming, an erroneous appearance.

Getting tired of "small talk" is an experience that has always been with me, but the fatigue is only in a surface part of the mind. Neither mentally nor physically do I feel it seriously, for while the small talk goes on I am somewhere else. In your present state of being practically bed-ridden and going through aches and pains and discomforts, the small talk is likely to become oppressive after a short time, but don't let it touch you so much. Brush it away whenever you want with a far-off smile rather than with a near-at-hand sigh. Removed like that, it will not tend to linger with an after-shadow in your "half-dreams".

Continue to be the brave girl you've always been!

Here is a P.S. to Dinkar:

The Indian Council of Medical Research has done the right thing to give you the JALMA Trust Fund Oration Award. I missed the announcement in the papers. Your announcement to me 28 days after learning of it yourself shows sufficient humility to entitle you to expect a little congratulation from me. In my joy and pride I suddenly remembered a poem in *The Secret Splendour* which should be dedicated to you for your work at the Sacred Heart Leprosy Centre. It starts:

Our spirit is a paradise blown down,
A sun deflowered, a leprosy of light...

AMAL KIRAN

BY YOUR SIDE

I

WITH only lips to speak and tongue to gesture
Left, apart from those beautiful tired eyes,
Every word is a rare jewel,
Meaningful glance an exotic orchid,
Smile a sudden shower of joy-filled grace.

As I was about to tilt the silver cup
To let warm coffee softly trickle
Into your waiting mouth
You put out your tongue, Oh just a little out,
A gesture to tease and tell how your true self
Loves and flirts with and adores the Lord
Hiding within all mortal things,
And a sweetness immense
Was all existence.

24th July 1985

2

Hands of light inside soft clouds
Of steam and smoke,
That arose as an invocation
From waters that attempted to quench
The fires of your physical remains,
Gently caressed my face
And whispered a laughing farewell:
“Farewell, my love,
And accept your aloneness,
Slowly you shall awake
To the ever-present presence
Of that all-encompassing heart
Of which I too am now a part.”

And the hands of light held all my being
Enclosed within two palms
As the steam and smoke
Became joy and love and all-dissolving Grace.

22nd September 1985

DINKAR PALANDE

THAT FACE, THOSE EYES

AN UNPLANNED MEDITATION ON THE PHOTO OF SRI AUROBINDO, ISSUED ON HIS BIRTH CENTENARY IN 1972

A DEEP depression had settled on my being. It weighted the hours, and would not lift. What was it due to? No answer. I hazarded a few guesses, which seemed to get nearer and nearer the mark. But no bull's-eye hit, and I continued to live and move in a dark cloud. Was it imagination? For somewhere in me was felt a paradox—a perverse pleasure in the wordless gloom. Just a slight, a faint illumination, which vanished as rapidly as it had appeared, and the cloud engulfed me once more. But the slight illumination left behind an uneasy suspicion in the mind of the presence of the drama-loving imp in all of us, which is continually staging plays of passion, tragedy, desolation, of terrible wrongs, and enjoying every one of its productions. But no, this thick pall of gloom could not be the work of the imp. It had settled in the very marrow of my bones, and it was heavy, oh, so heavy! It was as if the whole universe denied me. It was more. It was a racking yearning for what was, and could never be again. One was a crushed spirit in a landscape of unrelieved disaster. And one longed for the total oblivion of death.

Then I caught sight of the photocopy of That Face and Those Eyes. The impression was so compelling that I looked again, and yet again. It seemed the one constant and still point in the surrounding flux of things. What ineffable vision was captured in the shining depths of Those Eyes? No questions perplex them, no longings trouble. Only an unseizably sublime certitude shines there. And the alabaster smoothness of that brow and those cheeks! The calm set of the lips deny the need for words. Neither in Nature, nor in Art, has one ever come across a face like that. Absolute opposites are incredibly married in Those Eyes. They possess a radiance at once adamantine, yet soft and compassionate; a radiance independent of all time, space and circumstance. But yet, unaccountably, they seem also to serenely encompass all time, space and circumstance.

One cannot imagine That Face flinching, or Those Eyes bewildered, at any happening. It is a face beyond both laughter and tears. And the Eyes, Those Eyes! What inconceivable consciousness lies behind them?

When I finally wrenched my eyes from the magic magnet of That Face and Those Eyes, I wondered what it was that I had found so deeply engrossing about myself. My depression seemed less real. It had not disappeared, only the scenario of gloom had become elusive, as though a scene-shifter had been at work. Wait! A scene-shifter? Who *WAS* the scene-shifter? That ancient, drama-addicted imp?

If it is a make-shift stage, with a make-shift scenario, the drama would disappear the moment you shook the imp off. An imp can surely be shaken off! I made the experiment and cast the imp out of my being. Good Lord! It was

possible. He could be shaken off. Waned the dramatist, and waned the drama. No more stage, no more scenario, no more players. There was only silence, and a strange kind of peace, expectant, vibrant.

That Face and Those Eyes swam again into my vision. I tried to find words to express what I felt, and failed. Then with a flash of illumination, one recalled the words of Another, about Him whose photo it was. With Him "you always had the impression of entering into an infinity, and so soft, so soft! Always it was like... something that was 'soft', I don't know. They were vibrations that always widened you, soothed you—you had the feeling of touching something that had no limits." She knew. I only had some dim recollection of what He represented, and continued "straining closed eyes of vanished memory."

But every now and then the incorrigible dramatist imp darted into my consciousness, ready to put up the stage and the props for yet another excruciating drama of anguish and grief. I did not want to be lost in drama again, drama in which trivia put on the guise of overwhelming trenchancy. And one absurdly drowns in the shallows, which the mischievous imp presents as the ocean. So I gazed once more on That Face, Those Eyes, and heard Wisdom's "solitary tread echoing on the margin of immeasurable Oceans."

I told myself, be still, be still. Cease from all thought and word. Be simple, and simply gaze. But, what of the moans and groans, the passions, pains and joys of the turbulent life in and around one? No regrets please, for Those Eyes encompass all contraries like the sky, and cleanse one of all regrets and resentments. Why regret or resent anything? For He who possessed That Face and Those Eyes had written: "Our sins are the misdirected steps of a seeking Power that aims, not at sin, but at perfection, at something that we might call a divine virtue. Often they are the veils of a quality that has to be transformed and delivered out of this ugly disguise: otherwise in the perfect providence of things, they would not have been suffered to exist or to continue. The Master of our works is neither a blunderer nor an indifferent witness nor a dallier with the luxury of unneeded evils. He is wiser than our reason and wiser than our virtue.... If we fail in our immediate aim, it is because he has intended the failure; often our failure or ill-result is the right road to a truer issue than an immediate and complete success would have put in our reach. If we suffer, it is because something in us has to be prepared for a rarer possibility of delight. If we stumble, it is to earn in the end the secret of a more perfect walking."

He makes one welcome rather than regret failures, sufferings and stumbles. These were secret teachers. And one doesn't regret or resent one's teachers.

The imp finally stood unmasked as one's own incorrigible ego. What a fuss and bother it made, what a furious storm did it stir in a tiny tea cup! And there is a multitude of tea cups, nearly as numerous as the number of human beings on our planet, not counting the animals and the plants. It takes a modicum of perseverance and courage, and an answering grace from above, to get out of the tea cups, as it took perseverance and courage for a line of indomitable reptiles to clamber out of suffo-

cating swamps and to aspire for light and air, develop wings and become birds, and fly into light-filled regions above the miasma.

How can I explain, but gazing at That Face and Those Eyes I found myself flowing in an invigorating stream of meditation, which cleansed me of the debilitating sense of sin and failure. How many were those who needlessly killed themselves on what, after all, were merely stepping stones leading to the altar of the All! The only sin, surely, is obstinately to remain imprisoned in the past, to wallow about in the lower ooze of evolution, and to fail to aspire for wings to fly and explore the sky.

Of course I am part animal. Who is not? Therefore I feel pain, and inflict pain. I am also part human, and therefore cry out against God or whoever or whatever it was that made me slip, stumble and break my shins. But The Face and The Eyes of that "tenant from the heights" always remind me that I am, in addition, a candidate for Divinity. How else can I explain the deep fascination of Those Eyes?

I laughed aloud when I realized that the only way to uncover the face of the future is to die continually to the past. One must be like a clean slate every morning, all the drool and drivel of yesterday wiped clean.

That Face and Those Eyes made me discard all concern about my personal destiny. No astrologer would ever again find in me a client. How can one transient ripple explain the ocean? Or, for that matter, even a billion evanescent ripples? Where is the astrologer who knows that the stars bespeak, not individual destinies, but the Great Destiny?

It was an ever-present future which beheld the world through Those Eyes. Ever-present, because He knew it, and lived in it. He was, and he is, and will always be There, which will one day be Here.

There was a supreme hero behind That Face, Those Eyes. The dauntless fore-runner, the leader of the human march, the representative Man of the Age is captured in that incredible photograph. Yet how few knew, and how few know even today, that the world's future had taken birth in human time.

The thousands of volumes on the shelves lining my study, of which I, "a vagrant hunter of misleading dawns", had once been so proud, seem supremely irrelevant in the presence of that unique photograph. For He had written of what Those Eyes had seen and known:

"When darkness deepens strangling the earth's breast
 And man's corporeal mind is the only lamp,
 As a thief's in the night shall be the covert tread
 Of one who steps unseen into his house.
 A voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,
 A power into mind's inner chamber steal,
 A charm and sweetness open life's closed doors
 And beauty conquer the resisting world,
 The truth-light capture Nature by surprise,

A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss
And earth grow unexpectedly divine.
In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,
The days become a happy pilgrim march,
Our will a force of the Eternal's power,
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.
A few shall see what none yet understands;
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;
For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done."

A deep gratitude wells up from the depths of my being, for whenever I look on
That Face and Those Eyes, a voice does speak, the soul obeys, and a peace and power
into the mind's inner chamber steals.

C. V. DEVAN NAIR

COMMENTARY ON THE ISHA UPANISHAD, SHANKARA AND SRI AUROBINDO

Introduction

FROM the point of view of style, substance and versification, the Isha Upanishad is indeed an ancient work but certainly later than the *Chândogya* and *Bṛhadâraṇyaka*.¹ Unlike these two Upanishads, the Isha is simple in form and expression. Its words are plain and easy and its ideas though profound, straightforward. It possesses "a consummate harmony in the rhythm of the thought as well as in the rhythm of the language and the verse".² A short Upanishad of eighteen verses, it has been accorded the first place in the traditional enumeration of the Upanishads. Like other Upanishads, the Isha also has been commented upon by Shankara. And his commentary on it is the earliest that we know of.

When Shankara set to work on the Upanishads, his aim was essentially practical. He wanted to put an end to the Vedic ritualism that dominated the attitude of the people of his age and to establish that the Upanishads were still relevant to the contemporary society. His commentaries had to subserve this practical need by showing that all the Upanishads have but a single philosophy to teach.—Illusionism or Mayavada. In all his commentaries his intention was not explication but a corroboration of his metaphysics. As a result, he had to face various difficulties in textual interpretations; often he had to deal with phrases, verses, and passages which did not support his metaphysical point of view. In such cases he either explained them away by an ingenious interpretation or forced them to yield a sense favourable to his metaphysics. Though his handling of the difficult points in the scripture did not generally create serious problems, it did become a highly controversial issue when he interpreted the Isha in the light of his Mayavada. For, unfortunately, the Isha seeks to reconcile the very terms which Mayavada considers to be fundamentally irreconcilable, and its distinctive rhythm of thought and language constitutes a natural disregard for an orientation favourable to Shankara's metaphysical position.

From the purely exegetical standpoint, a commentary on the scripture must be explicative and never allow itself to become a means to substantiate a preconceived metaphysical view. It is an important precondition to arriving at the true sense of the Upanishads. Shankara disregarded this precondition and, by doing so, set a bad example and gave a wrong direction to the practice of Vedantic exegesis. Sri Aurobindo is highly critical of Shankara's attitude and says,

A commentary on the Upanishad should be a work of exegesis; Shankara's is a work of metaphysical philosophy. He does not really approach the Shruti as an

¹ A Sanskrit word is generally italicised and diacritically marked when it appears for the first time in the main text.

² Sri Aurobindo, *Supplement* (1972), p. 301.

exegete; his intention is not to use the philosophical mind in order to arrive at the right explanation of the old Vedanta but to use explanation of the Vedanta in order to support the right system of philosophy. His main authority is therefore his own preconceived view of Vedantic truth,—a standard external to the text and in so far illegitimate.¹

In order to restore the exegesis to its rightful place Sri Aurobindo has laid down certain rules which the commentator ought to observe. They are: (1) in the presence of the scripture we must be obedient and not subject the text to our ideas; (2) we must follow the plain and simple meaning of the words; (3) we must not disturb the rhythm, metre and balance of the Upanishads in order to get over a philosophical difficulty; (4) we are bound by the thoughts of the Upanishads and must not force upon them any ideas of our own to govern and override their apparent meaning; (5) we must resolve the difficulties in textual interpretations by relying entirely on the lights that are available in the scripture, for always the Shruti is its own authority.² Sri Aurobindo's commentaries on the Isha and Kena are an excellent example which shows how the exegete should interpret the scripture without deviating from his professed aim.

Besides placing the Vedantic exegesis on a proper footing, Sri Aurobindo is particularly concerned with the need to understand the Isha Upanishad in the right perspective, because he finds that Shankara's commentary on it has not only twisted its true sense but put it in an erroneous light. He writes:

The Isha at least does not support the Mayavada as is indeed evident from the struggle and stress of difficulty in Shankara's own commentary which reduces its fine thought and admirable expression to incoherence and slipshod clumsiness. The error, however lofty, must be removed in order that the plain and simple Truth may reveal itself.³

This may be one of the reasons why he chose to write an elaborate commentary on this Upanishad, although it is a fact that he was fascinated by its idea of a divine life in the world, an idea which he worked out in great detail in his metaphysical treatise entitled *The Life Divine*.

Sri Aurobindo's Comment and a Critic's Answer

While concluding his commentary on the Isha Upanishad, Sri Aurobindo refers to Shankara's work on the Upanishad and says,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 302-305.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

It is the sole Upanishad which offered almost insuperable difficulties to the extreme illusionism and anti-pragmatism of Shankaracharya and it was even, for this reason, excised from the list of authoritative Upanishads by one of his greatest followers.¹

This remark is intended to draw our attention to the fact that although Shankara was able to get the necessary support for his metaphysics from other Upanishads, he found it almost an impossible task when he turned to the Isha. But an eminent exponent of Shankara has taken exception to Sri Aurobindo's remark and given a brief reply in defense of Shankara's interpretation.

Before answering the point raised by Sri Aurobindo the critic calls attention to two things. First, Sri Aurobindo's distinction between earlier and later Upanishads; second, his supposedly tacit agreement with Shankara's principle of twofold standpoint, *paramārtha* and *vyavahāra*.

(1) In Sri Aurobindo's opinion the Upanishads came into existence long after the Veda. Their style, substance and versification indicate that they fall into two groups: the earlier ones which kept close to the Vedic roots and presented the "spiritual pragmatism" of the Veda, and "the later ones in which the elements of the later ascetic and anti-pragmatic Vedanta" are discernible. And the Isha belongs to the earlier group.²

The critic points out that this division is not in consonance with the view of the classical commentators. He writes:

At the outset, let us remind ourselves of the conviction of the classical commentators. They do not make distinction among the Upanishads as earlier and later; they believe that all the Upanishads teach the same truth. In fact, according to them, the entire Veda, in the wider sense of the term, bears a perfect harmony: there is no contradiction between any two of its parts.³

The critic is trying to suggest that if the Isha, as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo, is not in harmony with the other Upanishads, especially those which belong to the later group, then his interpretation must be dismissed as unauthentic.

(2) The critic refers to a passage in Sri Aurobindo's commentary and says that the underlying metaphysical view is not basically different from that of Shankara. This is the passage he has quoted:

Brahman exceeding as well as dwelling in the play of His Maya, is *Īś*, lord of it and free. Man dwelling in the play, *anīś*, is not lord, not free, subject to

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads* (1972), p. 134.

² *Ibid.*, p. 134.

³ *Sri Aurobindo: A Centenary Tribute (Sri Aurobindo's Interpretation of the Vedas and the Upanishads* by Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan), 1974, pp. 179-180.

Avidya. But this subjection is itself a play of the Ignorance, unreal in essential fact (*paramārtha*), real only in practical relation (*vyavahāra*) in the working out of the actions of the divine Energy, the Chit-Shakti.¹

The implication seems to be that if Sri Aurobindo's position is not different from Shankara's, then he is obliged to revise his own interpretation of the Upanishad on the lines of Shankara's commentary or at least admit that the underlying view of the passage reduces his whole commentary to a bundle of inconsistencies.

(3) Having raised these fundamental objections, the critic now proceeds to defend Shankara's interpretation of the Isha. He explains that Shankara's interpretation is a logical outcome of the application of the twofold standpoint to the Upanishad. He says,

The basic distinction that is important for understanding Shankara is the one between *paramārthika* (the absolute) and the *vyavahārika* (the empirical, relative). It is in the light of this distinction that Shankara harmonises the apparently discordant teachings of the Upanishads.²

Corresponding to the twofold standpoint, the eligible persons for receiving the teaching have been divided into two groups and the meaning of the verses explained in the light of this twofold classification. The critic writes,

He who is eligible only for the performance of *karma* is not competent to follow the path of *jñāna*. He who is qualified for the latter discipline has no need for *karma*... Of the two types of eligible persons, the first verse of the *Īśāvāsya*, relates to those who are fit for *jñāna*, and the second to those who are eligible for *karma-yoga*. Verses 3-8 have in view those who long to pursue the path of knowledge; and so they expound the nature of the Self and also describe the consequences of realising or not realising the Self. Verses 9-18 are addressed to the other type of eligibles; they recommend the joint-performance of *karma* and *upāsana*, work and worship.³

The critic concludes his defense by saying that Sri Aurobindo's comment on Shankara's interpretation is baseless. He writes,

There is nothing incongruous or absurd in Shankara's interpretation of... the *Īśāvāsya*; and we are unable to agree with Sri Aurobindo in his judgement in this regard.⁴

(To be continued)

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

¹ *The Upanishads*, p. 106.

² Dr. T.P.M. Mahadevan's Article, p. 180.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

THE SONG OF THE LORD

THE GITA WITHOUT COMMENT

(Continued from the issue of October 1985)

Chapter IV

1. The Lord said:
“I taught this imperishable Yoga to Vivasvan. Vivasvan taught it to Manu. Manu told it to Ikshvaku.
2. Thus was it received in succession and the king-sages knew it. But through the long ages this Yoga was lost, O Parantapa.
3. This ancient Yoga has been taught by Me to you today because you are my devotee and friend. This is truly the highest secret.”
4. Arjuna said:
“Your birth was after the earlier birth of Vivasvan. How can I understand this, that you taught in the beginning?”
5. The Lord said:
“Your and My births are many, Arjuna. I know them all; you do not know them, O Parantapa.
6. Unborn, also imperishable, the Lord of Existence, ruling my nature I come into being through my own maya.
7. Whensoever there is a decline of Dharma, whenever unrighteousness rises, then, O Bharata, I beget myself.
8. For the deliverance of the good and the destruction of the wicked, for the firm establishment of Dharma, I am born from age to age.
9. One who knows truly My divine birth and action is not reborn on abandoning the body, O Arjuna. He comes to Me.
10. Beyond passion, fear and anger, filled with Me, taking refuge in Me, purified by the heat of knowledge, many have attained my being.
11. In whatever way they approach Me, in that way I share with them. People follow my path in all ways, O Partha.
12. Longing for success through action in the world, they sacrifice to the Gods. For success comes quickly in the human world.
13. Through the differentiation of qualities and acts the four castes have been created by Me. Know Me as the doer and the immutable non-doer.
14. Actions do not stain Me. The fruits of action are not desired by Me. Who knows Me thus is not bound by action.
15. Thus known, work was done by the ancient seekers for liberation. Do work therefore of the older kind as done by the ancients.
16. ‘What is action; what is inaction’ The Sages were also confused by this. I shall teach you true action, knowing which, you will be free from calamity.

17. Action must be understood, and distorted action, and inaction must also be understood. Like a maze is the way of works.
18. One who sees non-action within action, who sees action within non-action, he is wise among men, he is a yogi, adept in all doing.
19. One who in all activities is free from cupidity and intent, whose actions are burnt in the fire of Knowledge, he is called a Sage by the wise.
20. Letting go of the bond to the fruits of action, ever content, not depending on anything even while involved in action, he does nothing.
21. Expecting nothing, controlling mind and self, renouncing the sense of possession, with simply the body acting, he gains no evil.
22. Content with what comes, beyond duality and envy, equal in success or failure, even while doing he is not bound.
23. One whose bondage is gone, who is free, whose mind is firm in Knowledge, who acts in Sacrifice, his whole karma is dissolved.
24. The Brahman is the oblation, the Brahman is the offered by the Brahman in the Brahman-fire. The Brahman shall be reached only by one who is serenely poised in Brahman-acts.
25. Some yogins perform sacrifice only to the Gods. Others offer the sacrifice by Sacrifice into the Brahman-fire.
26. Some offer hearing and other senses into the fire of restraint. Others offer sound and the sense objects into the sense-fire.
27. Others offer all the activities of sense, all the vital functions in the yoga-fire of self-restraint lit by Knowledge.
28. Yet others offer wealth in sacrifice, or Yoga in sacrifice and ascetics of severe vows their concentration and knowledge in sacrifice.
29. Some offer the exhalation into the inhalation or the inhalation into the exhalation. So others, restraining the movements of breath, are absorbed in the control of the life-force.
30. Others of regulated diet offer their life-energies in the energies of life. All these know Sacrifice and their evil is destroyed thereby.
31. Those who enjoy the eternal nectar left from Sacrifice go to the eternal Brahman. This world here is not for those without Sacrifice, how then that other, O Best of Kurus?
32. Thus the many forms of Sacrifice are spread on the face of Brahman. If you know them all as born of action, you shall be free.
33. The sacrifice of Knowledge is superior to the sacrifice of objects, O Parantapa. All action finds fullness wholly in Knowledge, O Partha.
34. Know That through prostration, through questioning, through service. Those who know, the seers of essential Truth, will instruct you in Knowledge.
35. Knowing this, O Pandava, you will never again be deluded. By this you shall see all things in yourself, and in Me.
36. Even if you are the most evil of all sinners, you shall cross beyond all crookedness

- by the raft of Knowledge alone.
37. As a blazing fire makes ash of its fuel, O Arjuna, so also the fire of Knowledge makes ash of all Karma.
 38. Truly there is nothing in the world as pure as Knowledge. That one finds in oneself, in the Self, perfected in Yoga through time.
 39. The man of faith, devoted, controlling the senses, obtains Knowledge. With Knowledge obtained, he instantly knows the Supreme Peace.
 40. The ignorant, the faithless, the incredulous, are destroyed: neither this world, nor the next, nor happiness for those who disbelieve.
 41. Actions do not bind those who abandon action through Yoga, who destroy doubt through Knowledge, who possess the Self, O Dhananjaya.
 42. Therefore, having sundered with the sword of Knowledge this doubt dwelling in the heart, born of ignorance, be firm in Yoga. Stand up, O Bharata!"

•
OM TAT SAT

Here ends the fourth chapter called 'The Yoga of Knowledge, Works and Renunciation' in the dialogue of Sri Krishna and Arjuna, in Brahman-Knowledge, in Yoga Discipline, in the Divine Songs of the Upanishads.

DHRUVA

FURTHER STUDIES IN INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1985)

FREUD AND PERSONAL INTEGRATION OR DEVELOPMENT LIMITATIONS OF HIS APPROACH WHAT INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY CAN CONTRIBUTE

FREUD'S psycho-analysis is principally a psychiatric discipline and that is why the Psycho-analytical literature is full of cases of mental patients. But its contribution to normal psychology too is valuable. It is interesting to hear from Freud himself in his *New Introductory Lectures* 1933: "I have told you that psycho-analysis began as a therapeutic procedure, but it is not in that light that I wanted to recommend it to your interest, but because of the truth it contains, because of the information it gives, about that which is of the greatest importance for mankind, namely, his own nature." (p. 214). We too are here interested in psycho-analysis just for the understanding of our own nature, particularly to improve it, as it is primarily in that way that our nature is 'of the greatest importance to us.' Now in what respects has psycho-analysis enlarged and deepened our knowledge of human nature?

Undoubtedly the idea of the unconscious was not unknown before but it was left over to psycho-analysis to prove the existence of it on the basis of extensive empirical evidence gathered from clinical practice. What is more, psycho-analysis has unveiled the various mechanisms by means of which it works under the varied circumstances of mental life. Projection, Introjection, Identification, Rationalisation, Displacement and Conversion are a few most important specialised techniques of the operation of the unconscious and each one of them means a definite contribution to our understanding of human personality.

The above techniques are, in fact, different modes of 'defence reactions' on the part of the individual. The idea of a 'defence reaction' is itself a happy discovery and involves a valuable contribution to the science and art of personal development.

A 'defence reaction' is an exaggeration in one's conscious behaviour of an action opposite to that which we may be conscious of having suffered in our inner life. That is how a cynic is a sentimentalist at heart, the bully a coward and the unromantic bachelor very affectionate and tender. Those who suffer from inferiority complex often develop an expression of vanity and conceit. The prudishness of old maids is really an expression of a long-continued suppression of sex desire. Projection is the assignment of the mind or mental content to a location outside the mind. A man who is vain himself sees vanity everywhere and condemns it. Rationalisation is the production by the mind of 'reasons to explain conduct or belief which have no relation to the actual psychical causes of the conduct or belief in question'.

Next to the unconscious, the most important psycho-analytical discovery is the fact of repression. It is important not only for explaining neuroses and its symptoms, but also for the understanding of much of the behaviour of the normal man. The mental operation of repression just consists of forcibly pushing out of the conscious mind some unacceptable feeling or objectionable experience.

The study of repression has been, in fact, the chief undertaking of Psycho-analysis and it is interesting to follow the devious ways in which repressed desires seek expression and gratification. Each one of the defence mechanisms above referred to, represents a manner of expression of a repressed desire. The ordinary slips of the tongue, pen or similar errors of behaviour were formerly considered to be just accidental occurrences. But it is now most interesting to know that they are highly significant facts, as they reveal unconscious motives. The symptoms of neurosis have become significant only in the light of the discovery of the fact of repression.

Dreams have become altogether a new phenomenon. The discovery of the fact of symbolism in dream and in neurosis means the acquisition of a new language, conveying valuable meanings of some of the deeper facts of life. We today definitely recognise that a dream is not altogether a wayward and fantastic aberration of mental life, but an expression and a safety-valve of psychical life. It thus serves as a useful means of discovering the repressions of healthy as well as neurotic persons.

The problem of personal development is progressive integration and for that we have to discover conflicts, seek to remove them and thereby establish harmony in mind. The same is the method of attaining greater efficiency in life. Conflicts inhibit and retard action. It is relatively much easier to deal with conscious conflicts. We know the trouble. It is such conflicts that have generally been recognised by the various practical systems of personal development. But psycho-analysis has made a great advance upon them by showing that the worst conflicts of the mind are always those which are more deeply laid in the unconscious and of which we are not aware at all, and that they can be best detected through an interpretation of dreams. Thus has psycho-analysis revealed, for the aspirant of personal perfection, a new field of psychical existence which harbours conflicts, the true causes of anxiety, worry and frustration, and which he only blindly sought to fight against so far. In the dreams he has now a practical means of detecting the most intractable causes of disharmony in his life.

We have above referred to the repression and dream interpretation as valuable contributions of psycho-analysis to the science and art of personal development. But they actually tell us nothing more than what the realistic picture at a particular stage of our development may be. One would ask, "Has psycho-analysis got anything to offer for improving human nature? For making man happier and more harmonious within himself?" This is a very important question to ask of psycho-analysis.

Obviously self-knowledge is a necessary pre-condition of self-development and inasmuch as psycho-analysis acquaints us with the actual state of ourselves in the larger and more difficult sphere of the unconscious, it meets the indispensable

pre-condition of self-development. To the problem of positive self-development its sensational answer is that a knowledge of the real circumstances of the origin of the conflict itself leads to a resolution of the conflict. Freud explains "that the pathogenic trouble does not exist between conflicting impulses all of which are in the same mental field. It is a battle between two forces of which one has succeeded in coming to the level of preconscious or conscious part of the mind, while the other has been confined to the unconscious level. That is why the conflict can never have a final outcome one way or the other, the two meet each other as little as the whale and the polar bear in the well-known story. An effective decision can be reached only when they confront each other on the same ground. And, in my opinion, to accomplish this is the task of treatment" (*New Introductory Lectures*, p. 362). And that effects the cure. You would ask for proof. And Freud replies that "success in the main justifies our claims" (*ibid*, p. 366).

One might here feel curious to ask: How does the psycho-analytical method compare with the time-honoured methods of Suggestion and Hypnosis to cure diseases? A detailed examination of these methods cannot fall within the purview of this study. But one thing is clear that psychologists cannot agree to suppressing the unconscious. We must rid the unconscious of conflicts, as otherwise a positive integration of personality is not possible. Freud himself characterises the difference between his own method and that of suggestion and hypnosis in these words: "Direct suggestion, is a suggestion delivered against the forms taken by the symptoms, a struggle between your authority and the motives underlying the disease. In this struggle, you do not trouble yourself about these motives, you only require the patient to suppress the manifestation of them..." Hypnosis is not regarded as different from suggestion as "suggestion is the essence of the manifestation of hypnosis". In further clarification of the same he says: "The hypnotic therapy endeavours to cover up and, as it were, to whitewash something going on in the mind, the analytic to lay bare and remove something. The first employs suggestion to indict the symptoms; it reinforces the repressions,... analytic therapy takes hold deeper down the roots of the disease, among the conflicts, from which the symptoms proceed: it employs suggestion to change the outcome of these conflicts" (*ibid.*, p. 377). This gives the main point of difference very clearly according to Freud's own claim and admission, and it may be noted that in one form suggestion is involved in psycho-analytical procedure.

Some take too exclusive a view of the psycho-analytical procedure of treatment. But suggestion is involved in it and it may be that suggestion and hypnosis are entitled to a more respectable and legitimate place in psycho-therapy. In fact, Ferenczi, in his *Active Therapy*, gives them a better place and so have Jung and Adler done. In the *New Introductory Lectures*, too, there are a few interesting sentences bearing upon the subject. "As a psycho-therapeutic method," says Freud, "analysis does not stand in opposition to other methods employed in this branch of medicine; it does not invalidate them nor does it exclude them" (p. 208). "But

compared with psycho-therapeutic procedure," he claims, "psycho-analysis is far and away the most powerful and as a form of therapy, it is one among many, though certainly *primus inter pares*" (p. 218). Therefore, obviously an exclusive psycho-analytical therapy is incorrect.

Our treatment of psycho-analysis has tended to give a moral value to it. But there are many who would say that psycho-analysis has tended to debase and degrade man and to speak of its contribution to the problem of personal development is outrageous. The psycho-analytical habit of talking about sex matters in perfect frankness is also considered to be vulgar. And then since it has so often to show the harmful effects of repression, it is held to be an advocate of 'free living'. Against such charges, psycho-analysis is very widely believed to be indefensible.

We feel that psycho-analysis, by discussing the details of sex life frankly and dispassionately, has rendered a service to man inasmuch as it has promoted self-knowledge, which is so essential for self-development. In considering sex, remarks Freud, "psycho-analysis sees no occasion for concealments or indirect allusions and does not think it necessary to be ashamed of concerning itself with material so important; it is of the opinion that it is right and proper to call everything by its true name, hoping in this way the more easily to avoid disturbing suggestions" (p. 129).

The best service of Freud has obviously been a general encouragement of the spirit of mental analysis and the investigation of varied and complex motives of our actions.

(To be continued)

INDRA SEN

DEFEAT AND SURRENDER

THE whip of unbent will commands.
The mind broken and tamed
Stands beaten at the road-side
With reins on, taut and restraining.
A glow of gratification lights up the heart.
I exult in my hero-image.
But no, a cold shiver quakes
The very base of my unwary self.
Dismayed, I notice a sinister snakey
Hand crawling and stretching
To grab the prize of my crowning glory.
And I know it, know this limb
Of my lurking menace of ego.
Heart-broken and desolate I crumble
Like a heap of worthless waste.
Looking heaven-ward I pray
That the sky would absolve the strangling
Scourge of self-inflicted anguish.
No help there: I close my eyes to drown
In the densest darkness under the lids.
On a sudden, a point of light appears
On the face of the gloomy opacity,
Extending a flimsy streak to my heart.
Ignorance melts by divine alchemy.
I know the time has come: I surrender.

DEBANSHU

AT LAST

I DRANK my fill of vintage wines
Out of the Dionysian cup
Yet soon ebbed that high elation,
And I regained my senses full.
O Epicureans! Woe to me!

I rested in marble arms and was kissed
By the fiery lips of Adonis
Yet soon failed the vernal potions,
And I remained unmoved.
O Eros! Woe to me!

I ruled by might, over mobs
Cringing and cowed.
Yet soon palled the pomp and show,
Power satisfied me no more.
O Titans! Woe to me!

Feeling bereft in every pleasure
I wandered forlorn, tired and lonely
Even in the midst of a crowd.
Pale and spent I sobbed aloud,
“I am lost. Now nothing is left.
To strive for what? To live for whom?
Success and failure are equal doom.”
O my Soul! Woe to me!

Suddenly I heard, enchanted and statued,
The sweetest tune, Lord Krishna's Flute.
And then strayed to my tear-stained hands
A corner of Sri Radhika's sari.
I clutched it tightly,
And will never let go lightly.
O Gods! Bliss to me!

SHYAM KUMARI

THE NATAL MORN

BIRTHDAYS under the Mother's aegis are memorable days. Outside too we have birthday parties. A get-together is arranged and there is a colourful and vivacious enjoyment. The parents do as much as they can to make the child feel it is his day and on that day he has the privilege to do a lot of things that are denied to him at ordinary times. On the other hand he is encouraged on this special day to be specially good, generous and loving. But where do we get even a whiff from some empyrean? Or what means have we to make the child come in touch with his highest self, his Jivatman or his Psychic Being, as we are apt to say in our Ashram with the words used commonly by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? Nor can we give the child any higher meaning of life. We are taught to live up to the expectations of our illustrious forefathers, we are made aware of our family prestige. We must do nothing to undermine the family name. The Mother herself said to us that Her mother often told Her, "You are born to realise the highest ideal." Well, something like that all our human mothers tell us. You are born to embellish the family, bring more lustre to the clan. So we get embedded in a small community of, say, five thousand souls or so. We get no further.

Under the Divine Mother the birthdays take on a special dimension. We are stretched out vertically and horizontally. We are born for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and to do their work and since their work is of a universal dimension we are joined in some invisible and occult way to the whole world. We remember Her words that anything realised here under Her guidance by one person can be realised by others too elsewhere. So if we abide by Her wishes and grow the way she wants us to grow, we become Her instruments and thus help Her in Her work in our small way. Has ever a child been given such a glorious interpretation to its birthday as we are encouraged to believe here—to help the two Avatars come down to help humanity rise to a higher level, to be their chosen instruments, to be their children, to be their future race or at least try to become so?

In the ordinary life we open our eyes with our mother's "Happy birthday, my darling", a very sweet thing no doubt. I'd like to say something about my first birthday here. I saw the sun when it was just out of the sea. There were no buildings high enough then between the sea and my bedroom. I opened my eyes and saw the sun rise and then something happened. I said, "Is that you, Sanat?" but no answer came, yet definitely there was someone there. By that time I was very well versed in Sri Aurobindo's poems. I was reminded of the lyric:

Someone leaping from the rocks
Past me ran with wind-blown locks
Like a startled bright surmise
Visible to mortal eyes,—
Just a cheek of frightened rose

That with sudden beauty glows,
 Just a footstep like the wind
 And a hurried glance behind,
 And then nothing,—as a thought
 Escapes the mind ere it is caught.
 Someone of the heavenly rout
 From behind the veil ran out.

Here flowers are brought in from friends from the early morning. And these are the best in their gardens for they know these will be offered by me to the Mother and from each of these flowers the Divine Mother's face peeps out and laughs to us. So "Bonne Fête" comes to us in whispers and pierces our psychic being even when we have not met the Mother. "Bonne Fête, Bonne Fête" comes from every little flower face. Each flower seems to be Her Ambassador. They greet us as the Munchkin folk did Dorothy: "Follow the yellow brick road, follow the yellow brick road." Yes, follow the golden road, the Psychic Way, to the Divine Mother. The Mother one day gave the gist of the Occasion: Something happens in the occult mathematics of things on the anniversary of our birth that makes for more receptivity and openness to the Mother, and so the possibility of realising Her boons and blessings become greater. To quote from Sri Aurobindo on a cousin's birthday:

The repetition of thy gracious years
 Brings back once more thy natal morn
 Upon the crest of youth thy life appears
 A wave upborne....

Rejoice and fear not for the waves that swell,
 The storms that thunder, winds that sweep;
 Always our Captain holds the rudder well,
 He does not sleep....

Confident of His grace, expect His will.
 Let Him lead; though hidden be the bourne,
 See Him in all that happens; that fulfil
 For which thou wert born.

Meeting the Mother for the first time that day is also a memorable moment. For on that day She takes special pains to make Herself just yours. Divine Mother, but your own Mother, your own sweet dear mother. Special flowers, special kisses, special hand-to-hand communication. You are among the gods, all dwelling in Her being. "I am one of those that come down in a rush when the Avatar comes down on earth to accelerate evolution; I aspire to be near him, to grow in stature and to do his work": this is the thought that day.

The Mother generally came to see us in our homes on birthdays. That was a few moments more of living in Paradise. And one cannot but remember Shah Jahan's lines: *Agar Barue Firdaus Zaminast, Haminast Haminast Haminast*. One may freely translate the couplet: "If anywhere on earth heaven's near, / It is here, it is here, it is here!"

Sanat always formulated some question to ask the Mother on these occasions. On one birthday he told me to prepare a question for Her. I asked the Mother: "What is the difference between Aspiration and Desire?"

Aspiration is a "flamme désintéressée". It is a "don de soi, sans demander rien en échange." It is a spontaneous movement that comes out in silence as an urge (élan) from the heart. It may find expression in the form of words but it leaps out on its own ("jaillit") ready-made from the heart, your central being. The words are not coined by the head, you don't have to seek for them. They express exactly what you mean to express and they cannot be altered. They are like the words spoken by the Vedic Rishis in their hymns. And you feel a sense of fulfilment, "sentiment de plénitude." Not an excitement but a special kind of joy as you aspire.

Desire is never a disinterested movement. It is not a giving but a pulling towards yourself. It always demands and it becomes your master.

CHAUNDONA S. BANERJI

THE SHORT STORIES OF ANITA DESAI

A THEMATIC STUDY

ANITA Desai once commented that in her novels "small objects, passing moods and attitudes acquire a large importance". This is true of her short stories too. Many of them do not have narrative value. They bring out Desai's fascination for the mind rather than men and matters. She is interested in the 'interior landscape.' Writing, for her, 'is an effort to discover and then to underline and finally to convey the true significance of things'.

The characters in Desai's stories have a keen sensibility. It is significant that she deftly portrays children, women and artists. She recognizes a need to be loved and almost all her characters feel it above all else. In her *Games at Twilight and Other Stories*, Desai delves deep into the workings of the human mind and presents a wide spectrum.

In the title story, children play hide and seek, and Ravi, one of the boys hides himself in an unused shed for hours. Ravi's absence has not been noted by the other children who have stopped that game and gone on to several others. He has been forgotten ignominiously. When he says he is the winner, no one takes him seriously. Ravi has only remembered the hiding part of the game and the trying to elude the seekers. He quite forgets to slip out and touch the 'den'! The boy is overcome by a terrible sense of his insignificance. His ego is hurt and bashed up. It is the quest for recognition in the little boy which makes him attempt the impossible. Anita Desai beautifully describes the children's game and their serious quarrels and shows us a glimpse of the workings of a child's mind.

In the story 'Private Tuition by Mr. Bose', she portrays the monotonous existence of a mediocre school master who gives private tuition. He does his job primarily for money. He is distracted and is angry with the students or his wife. Many of us are in the same situation. We merely exist and don't live. We find our wishes and ambitions thwarted by reality. This story, like most others, is filled with feelings, to which each reader's heart returns an echo and with thoughts to which every human mind holds a mirror.

'Sale' is the story of an artist who lives pathetically in the world of his imagination. People come to his house to buy paintings. His dreams and his future depend on the sale of his painting. Visitors appreciate his art and the artist hopefully shows all his pictures. Having kindled his expectations they go away without buying anything. His creative urge is shattered and he finds that he cannot indulge his artistic dreams.

'The Studies in the Park' presents a college-going boy who lives in the suffocating atmosphere of strictness and demand of the adult world. There is no peace at home. His people do not know the meaning of the word 'quiet.' Even the street appears to be quieter. But everyone reminds him of his examinations a few months

later. The father expects 'good results' from him. He sits in a nearby tea-shop and tries to study. But unable to concentrate, he goes to the park which is frequented by a number of boys during their examinations. Life which was meaningless and a mere routine to him, suddenly takes a new turn when he sees an old couple in the park. The love that the anaemic woman and the old man have for each other is selfless and undemanding. It is a revelation for the boy and he learns more from this than all the professional courses he might be able to join. Everything, including the examination, withers and dies. Compared with this vision, his studies, his family and his life become lifeless and purposeless. Only that scene in the park has any meaning for him. Life has taken a different path in the form of a search, not a race as it is for his father and others. The moving sight has set him free. Now he is able to wander about the park as freely as a prince in his palace garden.

The underlying theme in all these stories is Expectations Unfulfilled. When duty and routine become monotonous without the vital spark of love and understanding, life turns into mere existence resulting in the bitter ashes of disillusionment.

In 'A Devoted Son' Anita Desai presents a young doctor, Rakesh, whose life is governed by rules. He fulfils his parents' every dream. He returns from the USA with an M.D. and without a foreign wife! After his mother's death, Rakesh gives his aging father the full benefits of filial duty. When the old man falls ill, Rakesh as a doctor drugs him with powders, pills and mixtures so much that the father's attitude towards his son changes and he wishes to die. What he wants on his death bed is the son and not the doctor. Desai seems to say that duty without love is meaningless.

The role of human affections as the balm for all aches is again stressed in 'Pigeons at Daybreak'. Mr. Basu learns from the newspapers that there will be no power supply that night. Hypochondriac that he is, he dreads the approach of the evening. How can he sleep without a fan? He is carried to the terrace but that does not help him in any way. All through the night he moans and gasps for air. Early in the morning he sees a flock of pigeons hurtling upwards in the sky. This reminds him of his grandson Nikhil, in whose warm company he once saw pigeons years ago. The very thought of his grandson has achieved what all medicines could not. The memory of his grandson's loving touch silences Basu's groans.

'The Farewell Party' on the other hand brings out the hypocrisy of the élite class. The Ramans give a farewell party. Bina, Raman's wife, was so preoccupied with her spastic child during her stay in that place that she had no time for clubs and parties and she thought she had no friends there. But the party is well attended and everyone pretends to be very sad because the Ramans are going away. Everyone drinks and is merry. The brittle socialites leave and it looks as though the Ramans would find themselves alone in that house to pack up when the doctors from the hospital appear. They are not merely the friends of the Ramans but almost a part of their family, the closest to them in sympathy. The doctors and their wives show their love and tenderness to the spastic child and this makes "the parents' throats tighten

with gratitude". They alone fulfil the expectations of the Ramans. It is only now that the farewell party really begins.

Anita Desai lashes out at the adult world in 'Pineapple Cake'. All children are innocent. It is only the selfish and heartless adult world that makes them callous. Mrs. Fernandez has emotionally blackmailed her little son with the promise of a pineapple cake if he behaves well at a wedding. When the wedding is over, she rushes out of the church, finds a taxi and reaches the hotel where the marriage reception is to be held. Just as the party starts, there is a sudden commotion in the hall. An old man has collapsed, obviously dead, and is carried away. People shout for a doctor. Mrs. Fernandez is unperturbed and callously asks her son to sit and eat the pineapple cake in front of him. The boy is confused and looks at the cake as if it were the corpse of the old man. Ironically the boy is sensitive to the atmosphere of gloom while the mother grabs the cake, gulps it and prepares to leave.

Desai seems to say that the adult world should be placed in the witness box as it is the adults who are responsible for creating an equally selfish new generation. All the children portrayed in her stories are innocent and good. They feel insecure and are like circus animals at the mercy of the ring-master. Their parents want to make them successful in life by strict discipline, good education, material comforts and so on. But they forget to be human and loving towards the young ones. Demanding, selfish expectations are piled up on the young shoulders.

Anita Desai shows remarkable perceptiveness in analysing the minds of the three generations. She dissects the mind of the children, the adults and the aged.

All incidents seem very ordinary and at first glance uneventful. It is only on a deeper analysis that we realize that Desai's technique is to turn inward and dissect the workings of the human mind. It is little wonder that she is compared to Virginia Woolf, as they both skilfully handle the stream-of-consciousness technique.

R. SUNDARAM

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

(Continued from the issue of June 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.)

AMONG the deities of celestial light, those most frequently invoked are the twin gods of morning named Aṅvins. They are the sons of Heaven, eternally young and handsome. They ride on a car, on which they are accompanied by the sun-maiden Surya. This car is bright and sunlike, and all its parts are golden. The time when these gods appear is the early dawn, when "darkness still stands among the ruddy cows." At the yoking of their car Ushas is born. (P. 84)

...The clouds are designated by various names, such as cow, udder, spring, cask, or pail. They are also rocks (*adri*), which encompass the cows set free by Indra. They are further mountains from which Indra casts down the demons dwelling upon them. They thus often become fortresses (*pur*) of the demons, which are ninety-nine, or a hundred in number, and are variously described as "moving," "autumnal," "made of iron or stone." One stanza (x. 89,7) thus brings together the various features of the myth: "Indra slew Vritra, broke the castles, made a channel for the rivers, pierced the mountain, and delivered over the cows to his friends." (P. 85)

Soma when imbibed stimulates the voice, which it impels as the rower his boat. Soma also awakens eager thought, and the worshippers of the god exclaim, "We have drunk soma, we have become immortal, we have entered into light, we have known the gods." (P. 99)

A comparison of the *Avesta* with the *Rigveda* shows clearly that Soma was already an important feature in the mythology and cult of the Indo-Iranian age. In both it is described as growing on the mountains, whence it is brought by birds; in both it is the king of plants; in both a medicine bestowing long life and removing death. In both the sap was pressed and mixed with milk; in both its mythical home is heaven, whence it comes down to earth; in both the draught has become a mighty god; in both the celestial Soma is distinguished from the terrestrial, the god from the beverage. The similarity goes so far that Soma and Haoma have even some individual epithets in common. (P. 100)

...Thus Kama, "Desire," first appears in the *Atharva-veda*, where the arrows

with which he pierces hearts are already referred to; he is the forerunner of the flower-arrowed god of love, familiar in classical literature....

A hymn of the tenth book furnishes an interesting illustration of the curious way in which such abstractions sometimes come into being. Here is one of the stanzas:

By whom the mighty sky, the earth so steadfast,
The realm of light, heaven's vault, has been established,
Who in the air the boundless space traverses:
What god should we with sacrifices worship?

The fourth line here is the refrain of nine successive stanzas, in which the creator is referred to as unknown, with the interrogative pronoun *ka*, "what?" This *ka* in the later Vedic literature came to be employed not only as an epithet of the creator Prajapati, but even as an independent name of the supreme god.... (Pp. 101-02)

Another abstraction, and one of a very peculiar kind, is the goddess Aditi. Though not the subject of any separate hymn, she is often incidentally celebrated. She has two, and only two prominent characteristics. She is, in the first place, the mother of the small group of gods called Adityas, of whom Varuna is the chief. Secondly, she has, like her son Varuna, the power of releasing from the bonds of physical suffering and moral guilt. With the latter trait her name, which means "unbinding", "freedom," is clearly connected. The unpersonified sense seems to survive in a few passages of the *Rigveda*. Thus a poet prays for the "secure and unlimited gift of *aditi*." The origin of the abstraction is probably to be explained as follows. The expression "sons of Aditi," which is several times applied to the Adityas, when first used in all likelihood meant "sons of liberation," to emphasise a salient trait of their character, according to a turn of language common in the *Rigveda*. The feminine word "liberation" (*aditi*) used in this connection would then have become personified by a process which has more than one parallel in Sanskrit. Thus Aditi, a goddess of Indian origin, is historically younger than some at least of her sons, who can be traced back to a pre-Indian age. (Pp. 102-3)

...Asura is the ordinary name of the aerial foes of the gods. This word has a remarkable history. In the *Rigveda* it is predominantly a designation of the gods, and in the *Avesta* it denotes, in the form of Ahura, the highest god of Zoroastrianism. In the later parts of the *Rigveda*, however, *asura*, when used by itself, also signifies "demon", and this is its only sense in the *Atharvaveda*. A somewhat unsuccessful attempt has been made to explain how a word signifying "god" came to mean "devil," as the result of national conflicts, the Asuras or gods of extra-Vedic tribes becoming demons to the Vedic Indian, just as the *devas* or gods of the Veda are demons in the *Avesta*. There is no traditional evidence in support of this view, and it is opposed by the fact that to the Rigvedic Indian *asura* not only in general meant a divine being but was especially appropriate to Varuna, the most exalted of the gods. The word must therefore have changed its meaning in course of time within the Veda itself. Here it

seems from the beginning to have had the sense of "possessor of occult power," and hence to have been potentially applicable to a hostile being. Thus in one hymn of the *Rigveda* (x. 124) both senses seem to occur. Towards the end of the Rigvedic period the application of the word to the gods began to fall into abeyance. This tendency was in all likelihood accelerated by the need of a word denoting the hostile demoniac powers generally, as well as by an incipient popular etymology, which saw a negative (*a-sura*) in the word and led to the invention of *sura*, "god," a term first found in the *Upanishads*.

...The term *dāsa* or *dasyu*, properly the designation of the dark aborigines of India contrasted with their fair Aryan conquerors, is frequently used in the sense of demons or fiends. (Pp. 112-13)

...One passage of the *Rigveda*, ...in which the soul is spoken of as departing to the waters or the plants, may contain the germs of the theory [of Transmigration]. (P. 115)

With regard to a late hymn (vii. 103), which is entirely secular in style, there is some doubt as to its original purpose. The awakening of the frogs at the beginning of the rainy season is here described with a graphic power which will doubtless be appreciated best by those who have lived in India. The poet compares the din of their croaking with the chants of priests exhilarated by Soma, and with the clamour of pupils at school repeating the words of the teacher... P. 121

...The most notable poem of this kind is the long wedding-hymn (x. 85) of forty-seven stanzas. Lacking in poetic unity, it consists of groups of verses relating to the marriage ceremonial loosely strung together. The opening stanzas (1-5), in which the identity of the celestial Soma and of the moon is expressed in veiled terms, are followed by others (6-17) relating the myth of the wedding of Soma the moon with the sun-maiden Surya. The *Açvins*, elsewhere her spouses, here appear in the inferior capacity of groomsmen, who, on behalf of Soma, sue for the hand of Surya from her father, the sun-god. Savitri consents, and sends his daughter, a willing bride, to her husband's house on a two-wheeled car made of the wood of the *çalmīni* or silk-cotton tree, decked with red *kiñçuka* flowers, and drawn by two white bulls. (I. 123)

There are five hymns, all in the last book (x. 14-18), which are more or less concerned with funeral rites. (P. 124)

From this group of hymns it appears that burial was practised as well as cremation by the Vedic Indians. The composer of a hymn addressed to Varuna in Book VII, also mentions "the house of clay" in connection with death. Cremation was, however, the usual manner of disposing of the dead, and the later Vedic ritual practically knew this method alone, sanctioning only the burial of ascetics and children under two years of age. (P. 125)

The fact that in the funeral obsequies of the *Rigveda* the widow lies down beside the body of her deceased husband and his bow is removed from the dead man's hand, shows that both were in earlier times burnt with his body to accompany him

to the next world, and a verse of the *Atharva-veda* calls the dying of the widow with her husband an old custom. The evidence of anthropology shows that this was a very primitive practice widely prevailing at the funerals of military chiefs, and it can be proved to go back to the Indo-European age. (P. 126)

...Thus one poet exclaims: "How many a maiden is an object of affection to her wooer for the sake of her admirable wealth!" (x.27, 12); while another addresses the kine he desires with the words: "Ye cows make even the lean man fat, even the ugly man ye make of goodly countenance" (vi. 28, 6). A third observes: "Indra himself said this, 'The mind of woman is hard to instruct, and her intelligence is small' " (viii. 33, 17); and a fourth complains: "There are no friendships with women; their hearts are those of hyenas" (x. 95, 15). One, however, admits that many a woman is better than the godless and niggardly man" (v. 61, 6). (Pp. 129-30)

...Another sign of the lateness of the hymn [x. 90] is its pantheistic colouring; for it is here said that "Purusha is all this world, what has been and shall be," and "one-fourth of him is all creatures, and three-fourths are the world of the immortals in heaven." In the Brahmanas, Purusha is the same as the creator, Prajapati, and in the Upanishads he is identified with the universe. Still later, in the dualistic Sankhya philosophy, Purusha becomes the name of "soul" as opposed to "matter." In the Hymn of Man a being called Viraj is mentioned as produced from Purusha. This in the later Vedanta philosophy is a name of the personal creator as contrasted with Brahma, the universal soul. The Purusha hymn, then, may be regarded as the oldest product of the pantheistic literature of India. It is at the same time one of the very latest poems of the Rigvedic age; for it presupposes a knowledge of the three oldest Vedas, to which it refers together by name. It also for the first and only time in the *Rigveda* mentions the four castes; for it is here said that Purusha's mouth became the Brahman, his arms the Rajanya (warrior), his thighs the Vaiçya (agriculturist), and his feet the Çudra (serf). (P. 123)

(To be continued)

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Tales of Prison Life, by Sri Aurobindo. Translated from the Bengali by Sisirkumar Ghose, Calcutta, Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, 3rd. ed. 1985.

THIS attractive small paperback is a welcome re-issue in book form of the translation of Sri Aurobindo's *Karakahini* which originally appeared in the *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual* of August 15, 1968. It is an account, written shortly after his release, of some of his experiences during his twelve months' imprisonment from May 1908 to May 1909. Sri Aurobindo was apparently writing for publication in the Bengali nationalist press, and does not delve deeply into the inner experiences which were so significant for him during this period, and to which he has referred in the Uttarpara speech and elsewhere. Nevertheless he does refer to some of them here: to those facets of them which would be most seizable and helpful to his countrymen, and to the central fact that it was in the seclusion of the British jail that he could realise the fundamental truths of Hinduism and find God.

He concentrates rather on those aspects of his life as an 'undertrial' or remand prisoner which would be of relevance to the nationalists of his day. With a light and humorous tone, Sri Aurobindo ruthlessly exposes the barbarism and ineffectiveness of the penal system of his day. One is prompted to wonder how much has changed since that time. Have there been real improvements in prison conditions? And are the mechanisms of legal enquiry and enforcement any more fair, just and effective today than they were in 1908? The fact that these mechanisms are now in the hands of Indians rather than of an alien power is of course a capital gain; but it is surely not sufficient if that is the only change. Indeed Sri Aurobindo mentions that part of his purpose in writing these articles was "to argue in favour of prison reform" so that these hellish remnants of an alien order were not perpetuated in a self-determining India. Has his purpose been achieved?

While making his cutting exposure of the prison system of his day, Sri Aurobindo took care to give full measure of appreciation to those individual officers, both European and Indian, who did their best to mitigate its harshness by just and even generous acquittance of their duties. But the Government Prosecutor Norton, the complaisant magistrate Birley, and to a lesser extent the police, come in for slashing satire for their partiality and irresponsibility. To his fellow-prisoners Sri Aurobindo has given heart-warming tribute; he quotes the words of the European medical superintendent, who told him, "The more I see and hear of Indian gentlemen of the poor folk, men who are distinguished in society or the convicts in a prison, I am convinced that in quality and character you are much superior to us. Looking at these lads has farther confirmed me in my judgement. Who can judge from their behaviour, character and other high qualities that they are anarchists or assassins? Instead of finding in them cruelty, wildness, restlessness or impropriety, I find the opposite virtues." In these young nationalists arrested with him, Sri Aurobindo himself perceived the children of a new age, and contrasting them with the ordinary Bengali youths of their day felt "as if the liberal, daring, puissant men of an earlier age, with

a different training, had come back to India". And among the ordinary convicts too he found much to praise: "If there is any place," he says, "where the Indian character may be looked upon with eyes of contempt, if it is possible to see it at its worst, lowest and most hateful state, then Alipore Jail is that place, imprisonment at Alipore is that inferior and degenerate state. In such a place I spent twelve months like this. Thanks to my experience of these twelve months I have been able to return to the world of action with tenfold hope, with a fixed notion about Indian superiority, with redoubled respect for human character, the future progress and well-being of the motherland and the human race."

The easy readability and the anecdotal interest of these essays make this little book a very likely choice as a supplementary reader or prescribed text in the upper classes of secondary schools or in colleges, not only in schools specially associated with the names of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, but wherever the contribution of such a highly realised Being to the struggle for national independence and to defining the true sense of his country's mission and greatness is valued and felt worth passing on to the young. Surely no sensitive young person, coming into contact with these thoughts, can remain unfired. With this consideration in mind, I feel justified in pointing out one shortcoming in the translation. Being unable to read Bengali, I have no way of assessing how accurately Professor Ghose has transmitted the niceties of Sri Aurobindo's style in the original; but the tone and expressions correspond with those familiar to us from the Master's other early writings, from many of his letters, and from conversations recorded by his disciples; the translator seems to have caught the familiar accents of the Master's voice. But Professor Ghose, whose own style in English is normally unexceptionable, in translating from Bengali seems to have carried over some characteristic turns of the original that prove a stumbling-block to the native English reader—and therefore untypical of Sri Aurobindo, who only in informal moments made use of Indianisms. An extreme example is the mysterious sentence on p. 117: "But the average Westerner, who is not purified by religious emotions and not of a godly nature, how these people fare in such tests, those who live in the western countries or are familiar with their literature expressive of western mentality and character can easily infer". It took me several re-readings to work out that what is meant is 'But *how* the average Westerner... fares in such tests...'. There are several such examples, almost all involving the same construction; an especially bewildering one appears on p. 35. The sense is of course clear enough upon reflection, and may be crystal clear at first sight to an Indian reader familiar with the native turns of phrase. I only feel it worth mentioning in light of the fact that this book is likely to be used by students as an English text: they should not be encouraged to imitate such models as elegant style, or to ascribe them to the Master. We hope that for future reissues of this little book—which deserves to be reprinted over and over again and to be read and re-read all over India and abroad—it will be found worthwhile to revise these points.

One addition would also increase the interest of the book: some explanatory notes.

Sri Aurobindo wrote these articles for a contemporary readership who could be expected to be familiar with the main features of the case, its background, and its personages. Many readers today must lack this familiarity, as I do; and a few explanatory notes, which the Sri Aurobindo Archives could no doubt ably supply, would clarify several points which arouse but do not satisfy our curiosity. For example, on p. 8, one would like to know why Sri Aurobindo refers so cuttingly to 'the charming and delightful visage of familiar Sriman Benod Kumar Gupta'. The scene described loses none of its liveliness by our ignorance, but still one wishes to enjoy the full piquancy of the point the author was making to an audience that could appreciate it. This feeling becomes more intense when we read of the approver Narendranath Gosain, whose motives and character Sri Aurobindo discusses in some detail without mentioning exactly what the man did, or how and by whom he was killed, as he apparently was, while still in custody. What was the incident in the hospital, which led to the removal of the conscientious head-warder only a few months before his full period of service? These things must have been common knowledge to the newspaper-readers of the day—a present-day reader is left with many unanswered questions. These are not essentials, but still we would like to know more.

The true interest and value of this book, of course, lie far deeper, and are not affected by such superficial details. For making these unique reflections of the Master available to a non-Bengali readership, we must express deep gratitude to Professor Ghose and to the Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir.

SHRADDHAVAN

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TWENTY photographs of the Mother and four photographs of Sri Aurobindo delight our eyes as we open the Annual. We do not know how time, the subtle thief, escapes as we go through the pictures, some in black and white, and some in admirable colours.

Following this series come the selected writings of the great architect of Karmayoga. "To live and act no longer in the human ignorance, but in divine knowledge, conscient of individual nature and universal forces and responsive to a transcendent governance, this is Karmayoga," writes Sri Aurobindo. The first article 'Words of the Master' explicates the various aspects of Karmayoga, while the second and the third speak of the four constituent elements of yoga and the science of Rajayoga respectively.

"The attitude of mankind towards originality of opinion is marked by a natural hesitation and inconsistency. Admired for its rarity, brilliancy and potency, yet in practice and for the same qualities it is more generally dreaded, ridiculed or feared. There is no doubt that it tends to disturb what is established," says Sri Aurobindo in his piece 'On the Importance of Original Thinking', wherein he advises the Youth of

India "to learn to think,—to think on all subjects, to think independently, fruitfully, going to the heart of things..." if India is to survive and do her appointed work in the world. This is indeed an enlightening piece, for it not only stresses the importance of original thinking but also cautions us to be on the look-out when we turn our thinking into action.

In 'The Bourgeois and the Samurai' Sri Aurobindo takes into consideration the two oriental nations—India and Japan—that have come powerfully under the influence of Western ideas and felt the impact of European civilization during the 19th century, and discusses in detail why Japan has so admirably transformed herself while such an attempt in India has proved a fiasco. This thought-provoking long piece deserves to be read by every Indian.

The last but one article speaks of the achievement of Bankim Chandra as a writer and a patriot while the last piece deals with the significance of the name 'Arya', a philosophical monthly edited by Sri Aurobindo from 1914 to 1921.

We now pass on to the selected writings of the Mother. Once She was asked by a disciple how one could become wise. She answered: "Read Sri Aurobindo." But to read what Sri Aurobindo wrote is not so easy, and this rakes up the question 'How to read Sri Aurobindo?' The answers given by the Mother on reading Sri Aurobindo's works are recorded in the first piece. 'Some Notes on the Way' contain her message on a New Year's Eve and extracts from a conversation with some disciples.

The Mother's short piece titled 'Stepping Back' is really a panacea for every disturbed soul. She advises us: "You must always step back into yourself—learn to go deep within—step back and you will be safe." She considers 'suffering' an art and throws light on 'To know how to suffer'. "Suffering is not something inevitable or even desirable, but when it comes to us, how helpful it can be."

What is the relation of art to Yoga? Can an artist be a Yogi? Does the work of an artist improve if he does Yoga? Why are artists generally irregular in their conduct and loose in character? Have Yogis done greater dramas than Shakespeare? The Mother answers several such questions with the intuition of an artist and a Yogi.

She is very frank in her opinions on the feminist movement, wealth, economics and politics. 'A Leader' can very well pass for a fine short story in which a 'mysterious visitor' features.

We now move to the comparatively smaller section which contains the selected writings of Nolini Kanta Gupta. All his four essays included here are on Sri Aurobindo's great epic *Savitri*. One essay discusses Narad's visit to King Aswapaty, another analyzes the opening scene of the epic while the rest explicate the role of Divine Grace in the epic.

It is needless to say that this Annual is of great value to all lovers of Aurobindonian literature and to students of Indian writing in English. Something needs to be said about the final section which is slightly bigger than all the sections reviewed so far put together. Well! It is only the Advertisement section.