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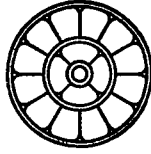
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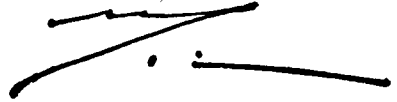


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
A LETTER BY SRI AUROBINDO TO SHRI MORARJI DESAI	... 727
COSMIC CALENDAR	... 728
THE MOTHER'S COMMENTARIES ON SRI AUROBINDO'S <i>Thoughts and Glimpses</i> (Compiled from Her Talks to the Ashram Children, 1956-1957, in a New Translation by Shraddhavan)	... 730
INVISIBLE PRESENCE (Poem) <i>Shyam Kumari</i>	... 736
A TALK BY THE MOTHER TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON DECEMBER 14, 1955	... 737
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO <i>Nirodbaran</i>	... 742
THAT OLD MAN (Poem) <i>P. Raja</i>	... 746
THE STORY OF A SOUL <i>Huta</i>	... 747
A BACK-LOOK AT <i>Macbeth</i> : A TALK BY AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA) TO NIRODBARAN'S STUDENTS	... 753
SPIRITUALITY IN THE EARLY POETRY OF SRI AUROBINDO <i>Shyam Kumari</i>	... 765
JUNG'S RELEVANCE TO INDIA: PSYCHO-THERAPY OR MENTAL HEALING AS A NEW RELIGION IN THE WORLD AND THE TURN TO YOGA AND SPIRITUAL LIFE <i>Indra Sen</i>	... 773

CONTENTS

		<i>page</i>
A PAINFUL PARTING (Poem)	<i>Debanshu</i>	... 776
SURENDRA NATH JAUHAR PASSES AWAY: 1903-1986	<i>Indra Sen</i>	... 777
TO KAILASH AND MANAS-SAROVAR	<i>Arvind Habbu</i>	... 779
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE:		
SPRING FIRE: AN ANTHOLOGY OF BENDRE'S POETRY		... 780
SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL—No. 45 (1986)		
	<i>Reviews by P. Raja</i>	... 781

A LETTER BY SRI AUROBINDO

TO SHRI MORARJI DESAI

(The following letter by Sri Aurobindo is not likely to be widely known. It occurs in Shri Morarji Desai's autobiography, The Story of My Life, Vol. I, pp. 126-27. In August 1935 Shri Desai paid a short visit to the Ashram. Before he left he wrote Sri Aurobindo a letter requesting advice on the path to be followed for realising God. He tells us of the terms in which the advice was sought. Then the full text of Sri Aurobindo's reply is given, as reproduced by us below with acknowledgements to Shri Desai.)*

Shri Morarji Desai,

I do not know that it is possible for me to give you any guidance on the path you have chosen—it is at any rate difficult for me to say anything definite without more precise data than those contained in your letter.

There is no need for you to change the line of life and work you have chosen so long as you feel that to be the way of your nature (*svabhāva*) or dictated to you by your inner being, or, for some reason, it is seen to be your proper *dharma*. These are the three tests and apart from that I do not think there is any fixed line of conduct or way of work or life that can be laid down for the Yoga of the Gita. It is the spirit or consciousness in which the work is done that matters most; the outer form can vary greatly for different natures. Thus, so long as one does not get the settled experience of the Divine Power taking up one's work and doing it, one acts according to one's nature; afterwards it is that Power which determines what is to be done or not done.

The overcoming of all attachments must necessarily be difficult and cannot come except as the fruit of a long *sādhana*, unless there is a rapid general growth in the inner spiritual experience which is the substance of the Gita's teaching. The cessation of desire of the fruit or attachment to the work itself, the growth of equality to all beings, to all happenings, to good repute or ill repute, the dropping of the ego, which are necessary for the loss of all attachments, can come completely only when all work becomes a spontaneous sacrifice to the Divine, the heart is offered up to Him and one has the settled experience of the Divine in all things and all beings. This consciousness or experience must come in all parts and movements of the being (*sarvabhāvena*), not only in the mind and idea; then the falling away of all attachments becomes easy. I speak of the Gita's way of Yoga; for in the ascetic life one obtains the same objects differently by cutting away from all the objects of attachment and the consequent atrophy of the attachment itself through rejection and disuse.

SRI AUROBINDO

* Published by S. Chand & Co. Ltd., New Delhi, First Paperback Ed. 1978.

COSMIC CALENDAR

PRE-DECEMBER DATES

Big Bang	January 1
Origin of the Milky Way Galaxy	May 1
Origin of the solar system	September 9
Formation of the Earth	September 14
Origin of Life on Earth	September 25
Formation of the oldest rocks known on Earth	October 2
Date of oldest fossils (bacteria and blue-green algae)	October 9
Invention of sex (by micro-organisms)	November 1
Oldest fossil photosynthetic plants	November 12
Bukaryotes (first cells with nuclei) flourish	November 15

—approximately

D E C E M B E R

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Significant oxygen atmosphere begins to develop on Earth.	2	3	4	5 Extensive vulcanism and channel formation on Mars.	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 First worms.	17 Precambrian ends. Paleozoic Era and Cambrian Period begin. Invertebrates flourish.	18 First oceanic plankton. Trilobites flourish	19 Ordovician Period. First fish first vertebrates	20 Silurian Period. First vascular plants. Plants begin colonization of land
21 Devonian Period begins. First insects. Animals begin colonization of land.	22 First amphibians. First winged insects	23 Carboniferous Period. First trees. First reptiles.	24 Permian Period begins. First dinosaurs.	25 Paleozoic Era ends. Mesozoic Era begins.	26 Triassic Period. First mammals	27 Jurassic Period. First birds
28 Cretaceous Period. First flowers. Dinosaurs become extinct.	29 Mesozoic Era ends. Cenozoic Era and Tertiary Period begin. First cetaceans. First primates	30 Early evolution of frontal lobes in the brains of primates. First hominids. Giant mammals flourish.	31 End of the Pliocene Period. Quaternary (Pleistocene and Holocene) Period. First humans.			

DECEMBER 31

Origin of <i>Proconsul</i> and <i>Ramapithecus</i> , probable ancestors of apes and men	1-30 p.m.
First humans	10-30 p.m.
Widespread use of stone tools	11-00 p.m.
Domestication of fire by Peking man	11-46 p.m.
Beginning of most recent glacial period	11-56 p.m.
Seafarers settle Australia	11-58 p.m.
Extensive cave painting in Europe	11-59 p.m.
Invention of agriculture	11-59-20 p.m.
Neolithic civilization; first cities	11-59-35 p.m.
First dynasties in Sumer, Ebla and Egypt; development of astronomy	11-59-50 p.m.
Invention of the alphabet; Akkadian Empire; Indus Valley Civilization	11-59-51 p.m.
Hammurabic legal codes in Babylon; Middle Kingdom in Egypt	11-59-52 p.m.
Bronze metallurgy; New Kingdom in Egypt; birth of Moses (?); Mycenaean culture; Trojan War; Olmec culture: invention of the compass	11-59-53 p.m.
Iron metallurgy; First Assyrian Empire; Kingdom of Israel; founding of Carthage by Phoenicia	11-59-54 p.m.
Periclean Athens; birth of Buddha; Asokan India; Ch'in Dynasty China	11-59-55 p.m.
Euclidean geometry; Archimedean physics; Ptolemaic astronomy; Roman Empire; birth of Christ	11-59-56 p.m.
Zero and decimals invented in Indian arithmetic; Rome falls; birth of Mohammed; Moslem conquests	11-59-57 p.m.
Mayan civilization; Sung Dynasty China; Byzantine empire; Mongol invasion; Crusades	11-59-58 p.m.
Renaissance in Europe; voyages of discovery from Europe and from Ming Dynasty China; emergence of the experimental method in science	11-59-59 p.m.
Widespread development of science and technology; birth of Sri Aurobindo; birth of Einstein; emergence of a global culture; acquisition of the means for self-destruction of the human species; first steps in spacecraft planetary exploration and the search for extraterrestrial intelligence; the ideal of integral spirituality	Now: The first second of New Year's Day

THE MOTHER'S COMMENTARIES ON SRI AUROBINDO'S *THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES*

COMPILED FROM HER TALKS TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN,
1956-1957, IN A NEW TRANSLATION BY SHRADDHAVAN

Compiler's Note

From November 21st 1956 to April 3rd, 1957, the Mother was reading her French translation of Sri Aurobindo's Thoughts and Glimpses at an evening class in the playground once a week with a group of young students. She answered their questions on the text and gave her own comments and explanations. These questions and answers appear in the midst of other material in Volumes 8 and 9 of the Birth Centenary Edition of the Mother's collected works.

Here, the answers and explanations relating to Sri Aurobindo's aphorisms have been extracted from the complete text of the conversations, rearranged when necessary to follow the order of the aphorisms, and newly translated from the French, following the latest available edition. In a few places the wording of the questions has been simplified. The date appearing at the end of each extract indicates the talk from which it has been taken.

Chapter I: THE GOAL, Part One: Reason

When we have passed beyond knowings, then we shall have Knowledge. Reason was the helper; Reason is the bar.

When we have passed beyond willings, then we shall have Power. Effort was the helper; Effort is the bar.

When we have passed beyond enjoyings, then we shall have Bliss. Desire was the helper; Desire is the bar.

When we have passed beyond individualising, then we shall be real Persons. Ego was the helper; Ego is the bar.

When we have passed beyond humanity, then we shall be the Man. The animal was the helper; the Animal is the bar.

FIVE paragraphs, which refer to five modes or states of being; and the same thing is repeated on each of the different levels.

"When we have passed beyond knowings, then we shall have Knowledge. Reason was the helper; Reason is the bar."

This refers to man's mental being, his mental activities; and Sri Aurobindo contrasts 'knowings' with 'Knowledge'.

Actually, I ought to ask *you* whether you know what Sri Aurobindo means by 'knowings', and why he makes a contrast between knowings and Knowledge. For if I explain all this to you and you don't have to make any effort at all, it is like serving you a ready-made meal, which you haven't had the trouble of cooking! The result will be that, sooner or later, after half-an-hour or a day, you will have totally forgotten everything I have told you and it won't have any effect on you at all.

So I would like one of you to tell me what you think is meant by 'knowings'. (*To a child:*) You tell me.

Knowledge we can get by external study.

Of course, that is it: everything that can be learned by studying external things, in every field of mental activity; everything you can learn by material observation and by technical research in all the different domains: scientific, artistic, philosophic, literary; in fact, all that the human mind has ever produced by its external study of life and things: everything you can find in books, everything you can discover by studying Nature directly, and everything you can find out by reasoning, by deduction and analysis and all the speculative activities of the human mind.

And Sri Aurobindo sets Reason at the summit of the human mind. He tells us that, in the development of the mind, Reason is the surest guide, the Master, as it were, who prevents you from going astray, from taking any wrong turn, from getting lost and losing your common sense. He makes Reason the arbiter of human mental activity, the part that guides and controls; and as long as we are dealing with mental activities, even of the most speculative kind, Reason should be our guide and prevent us from straying off the right track into more or less unhealthy and fantastic imaginations.

But if you want to attain real Knowledge—spiritual Knowledge, which comes only by identity—then you must go beyond Reason and enter a domain that is higher than the mind, where you are in contact with the Light of the Overmind or of the Supermind.

And Sri Aurobindo says that as long as you are in the realm of the mind, Reason helps you; it is your helper, your guide. But if you want to have real Knowledge by identity, Reason becomes a limitation and a bar.

This doesn't mean that you must lose your reason! But your reason must be subordinated to your movement of ascent. Sri Aurobindo does *not* tell you to become irrational. He says that you must pass beyond Reason to a higher Truth and Light.

21.11.1956

Mother, in order to get Knowledge, what is the first step to take?

The first step? To rid yourself of the illusion that 'knowings'—human knowledge and mental activity—have any absolute value. First of all you must shake

off the illusion that these things really have any concrete and absolute value.

And you will see that this may be the most difficult thing. It is the most difficult step because...

When you study general subjects, such as Science, the various branches of Science, or Philosophy, or any such discipline, if you study at all seriously and in depth, you quite easily get a sense of how relative that knowledge is; but when you come one step lower down, just one step lower in the levels of mental activity, and consider the various problems of life... for example, what to do in a particular situation, the conditions for achieving some aim, a profession you want to learn, say, or even the various necessities of life, the conditions for living and remaining healthy... you will notice that a rational being, or one who is becoming rational, normally forms a set of ideas for himself, which are really 'knowings': "This thing will produce this effect"; or, "To get this thing we must do that", etc. Within you there is a whole mental construction that is built up from observations, discoveries, experiences like these. And as you grow older, these experiences and results of research and observation become more numerous. You build up a kind of mental construction for yourself to live in. And unless you are extremely intelligent and have an opening to higher worlds, you will have an innate, spontaneous, unshakable conviction about the absolute value of these observations of yours. And this construction has its effect in you automatically, so that you need never give it a thought: by a kind of habit, one particular thing will necessarily lead to one particular result. So when the thing has happened often enough, of course the habit of associating the two movements gives you the sense that your ideas or your knowings about yourself and your life have an absolute value. And there it becomes *infinitely* more difficult to realise how very relative, how dubious and even illusory your knowing is.

You will see it only if you have an urge towards spiritual discipline and progress... if you look at these things in a very critical spirit and see the kind of bondage you have got yourself into, and how it acts automatically without any need for your intervention, supported by the subconscious and by a kind of automatic reflex action which makes sure that causes and effects follow each other in their usual order, while you are not aware of it in the slightest.

So, if you want to achieve Knowledge, the first thing, the first indispensable step, is to stop believing in the validity of these things. And if you observe yourselves, you will realise that your belief in the validity of these observations and inferences is almost absolute. It expresses itself in all sorts of concepts which seem self-evident to your reason, but which are in fact the very limitations that prevent you from attaining Knowledge by identity.

For example: that someone who throws himself into water without knowing how to swim will be drowned; that if the wind is strong enough it blows things over; that when it rains you get wet; etc. You see... there are so many! It is like that at every second. And all this seems so obvious that if someone tells you, "Well, no—

that's a relative knowledge. It is like that, but it can be different", you think that anyone who can say such a thing must be half-insane. You reply, "But these are concrete things! These are things we can see, things we can touch and feel, evidence our senses give us at every moment. Unless we rely on these things we are sure to go astray and stumble into unreason."

So, if you remember what Sri Aurobindo has said, you will understand that the first condition for achieving Knowledge is to go beyond Reason. That is why he has said, "Reason was the helper." Yes, throughout the whole childhood of humanity and throughout the whole development of the individual being. But if you want to go beyond the human being, beyond the ordinary human state, then you must go beyond Reason. And when you can understand and feel within yourselves that these things, which seem *so* obvious that they are indisputable, are really *absolutely* relative, and that these things that seem to be exactly the same and identical in everyone's experience, when seen from a higher consciousness, become absolutely subjective and relative and are nothing but individual formations serving individual needs and consciousnesses... far from having any absolute reality they have only a very relative value which disappears completely as soon as you rise to a higher level.

So now, if you examine your own state of mind in this light, you will see that it is not so easy to take even this first step.

I could give some examples, but they are very fragmentary and superficial ones, and of only very relative value themselves; for example, what I have often told you about medical knowledge in the world:

If you have been observant enough, or lived long enough, you notice that at one time certain things are... not just considered harmful, but are supposed, on the basis of an absolute knowledge, an irrefutable observation, to have a particular effect; and at another time, with the same authority, the same certitude, the same conviction, these same irrefutable observations lead to diametrically opposite conclusions. I often give an example I had the opportunity to observe, about the value of certain foods and their effects on the body—certain fruits or vegetables for instance. At one time in the history of medicine—not so long ago, fifty or sixty years ago—when you had a certain disease the doctor would give you a list of things and warn you with absolute seriousness not to touch them because you would get even worse. (I could give you the list, but it is not interesting.) Well, fifty or sixty years later, perhaps not the same doctor, but anyway another doctor will tell you with the same seriousness, the same certainty, the same indisputable authority, that these very same things are just the ones you should eat if you want to get better!

So then, if you have been observant enough and if your mind has a critical turn, you may say, "Oh... it must depend on the individual—or perhaps on the period." And I will say the same thing as a doctor-friend I used to know in France forty or fifty years ago, who used to tell all his patients, "Take a remedy while it is in fashion, for then it will cure you."

Well, there is a state, a rather subtle state, where you understand this extraordinary relativity of things; a state where it becomes so acute that to assert anything, to say "It is like that" or "This thing has that result" spontaneously feels nonsensical to you. But before reaching this point you can reflect a little and remind yourself, "After all, we shall believe all this as long as it is in fashion."

21.11.1956

But then, Mother, what is the use of our studies?

I have always said that studies affect the brain in the same way as gymnastics affect the muscles. For example, mental gymnastics are absolutely necessary to make the action of your mind more supple, stronger and richer, and to give it a refinement of understanding it would lack if you didn't do them.

For instance, I have noticed recently—quite some time ago, in fact—that if I unfortunately happen to read you some passage containing philosophical terms, or to speak to you from a rather philosophical standpoint, you are unable to follow. This is simply because you have never practised any philosophical gymnastics. It is not because you are not intelligent, it is not because you lack the capacity to understand—it is because you have not practised the appropriate gymnastics.

I could put it in another way: you have not learned the language—only in this case we use the same words, but in slightly different relationships, using different expressions, with a different mental attitude. Well, you cannot grasp this new attitude unless you have practised the corresponding gymnastics.

This is a very easy example for you to understand, because you all know very well that you could never do your athletic exercises unless you had trained for them. Even if you have special capacities, even if you are gifted, unless you practise, unless you are in training, you can't do them. If you were asked to do all your agility exercises straight away on the first day, you wouldn't be able to, it would be completely impossible, as you know very well.

If someone said to you on the spur of the moment, "Ah, now do that"—a flying somersault, say—you would think "He is really being unreasonable, it's impossible!" Well, this is the same thing: if I take certain books and read them to you, you cannot follow because in your case these philosophical mental gymnastics have been completely neglected. It's exactly the same thing as asking someone who has never studied mathematics to follow a mathematical reasoning—he won't be able to do it.

All this means that if you want to express the deeper reality of your being fully and totally, you will be able to express it in a much richer, more varied and more productive way if all the parts of your being have been fully developed by the appropriate gymnastics.

I think I have already explained this to you once. If it were a matter of leading what was until recently regarded as the true spiritual life—that is, to give up entirely all physical activities in order to unite with the supreme divine Reality and to remain

in that union, to abandon life and all outer forms of expression and go away into some sort of Nirvana: an identification that would not merely cease to express itself in the world, but would make you leave the world altogether—then obviously, all these gymnastics, whether physical, vital, sensory or mental would be absolutely unnecessary; and so those people considered that they were just a futile waste of time.

But *for us*, who want to realise almost the very opposite, who want, after we have become one with the supreme Reality, to bring it down into life to transform the world—if we can offer to that Reality instruments that are refined, rich, well-developed, fully conscious, the work of transformation will be more effective.

That is why, instead of telling you when you are still knee-high (*laughing*) to do as those little children do—to sit and go, or pretend to go, into meditation; instead of telling you that you should be in a constant state of contemplation, and that all the things of this world should be of no interest to you, and that you should have only one thought: to prepare yourselves to receive the divine Grace—instead of that we tell you, “No, try to become developed conscious beings, who know many things, who have healthy bodies that are strong and agile and capable of exceptional achievements, with wills that are strong and minds that are rich and supple and agile.... These are qualities that will be useful for the future realisation.” 21.11.1956

Mother, when someone wants to go beyond the mind, if he stops the mind from working, if he stops reasoning, if something new from above doesn't come immediately, then during that time sometimes...

... He behaves like a madman! (*Laughter*) So it is better not to stop your reason before you have gone beyond that state!

I mean, in the present conditions of life, is it possible to be...

... To be irrational? Unfortunately it happens very often! Is it possible to avoid relying on Reason? It is only possible when you have gone beyond the workings of the mind. It is only possible when you have made a surrender, a total self-giving. It is only possible when you have no more desires. As long as you have desires, as long as you have an ego and a will of your own, you cannot let Reason go, because you will become completely unbalanced and perhaps mad. Reason should be your ruler until you have gone beyond the state where it is necessary. And, I repeat, as long as there is an ego, as long as there are desires, as long as there are impulses and passions and preferences, as long as there are likes and dislikes and so on, as long as all those things are there, Reason is *absolutely* necessary.

I will add one more condition that is absolutely indispensable before you can stop relying on Reason: no door at all, not a single element, should be open to suggestions from the hostile world. Because unless you have become completely free from the habit of responding to adverse suggestions, if you let go of your reason,

you will also let go of Reason—that is, of common sense: you will begin to behave in a chaotic way that may end by becoming completely unbalanced. And in order to be free from hostile influences and suggestions, you must be exclusively under the influence of the Divine.

So now you see the problem; it is a little difficult. Which means that, unless one is dealing with a completely illumined and transformed being, it is always better to advise people to act according to their reason. It may be a limitation—in fact it is a great limitation—but it is also a check and prevents you from becoming one of those half-mad people who are all too common in the world.

Reason is a very respectable person. Like all respectable people she has her limitations and her prejudices, but that does not prevent her from being very useful. And it prevents *you* from falling into foolishness. If it weren't for your reason, you would do lots of things which would lead you straight to your downfall and which could have extremely unfortunate consequences. For until you have reached the higher regions, your best instrument of discernment is Reason. When you stop listening to Reason, you can get led into all sorts of nonsense.

Of course it is neither the ideal nor the summit, it is only a sort of check and a guide to how to behave in life, which restrains you from extravagances, excesses, reckless passions, and above all from those impulsive actions which can lead you straight to the abyss.

One has to be very sure of oneself, very free from ego and perfectly surrendered to the divine Will before one can safely dispense with Reason.

28.11.1956

INVISIBLE PRESENCE

THOUGH I may not see Thy Face
 In this hush vibrant with love,
 Let me hold Thy hand.
 The moon hides itself when most
 I beg for its silver on my ways.
 O invisible love, Thou must have been close
 Or my courage would have lost by now
 To lurking despairs and shadowy languors.
 Some intangible presence whispers to me of Thee,
 The impulse of some sacred sweetness
 Carries forward always my tired feet.

SHYAM KUMARI

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON DECEMBER 14, 1955

Mother reads from *The Synthesis of Yoga*,
"Self-Consecration".

Sweet Mother, I haven't understood this paragraph very well.

WHICH paragraph?

"The powers of this world and their actual activities, it is felt, either do not belong to God at all or are for some obscure and puzzling cause, Maya or another, a dark contradiction of the divine Truth."

It is a certain attitude which produces this. He says it earlier, doesn't he? He explains it. There is an attitude in which all material things appear to be not only not the expression of the Divine but incapable of becoming that and essentially opposed to the spiritual life. And so there is only one solution—it was that of the old Yogas, you know—the total rejection of life as not being able to participate in the spiritual life at all, the rejection of material life. This is what he explains. He says that with this attitude, that's how one looks at life. He does not say that it is like that; he says that one looks at it, considers it like that; that it is the attitude of those who have completely separated life from the spirit, and who say that life is an illusion, a falsification, and that it is incapable of expressing the Divine.

That's all?

Sweet Mother, "... we can... enrich our realisation with the booty torn from the powers that oppose us."

Yes.

What is this booty?

All the adverse forces at work in the world.

The world as it is today is in its greater part under the influence of the adverse forces. We call them adverse because they do not want the divine life; they oppose the divine life. They want things to remain as they are, because it is their field and their power in the world. They know very well that they will lose all power and all influence the moment the Divine manifests. So they are fighting openly and completely against the Divine, and we have to tear away from them bit by bit, little by little, all the things they have conquered in the outer life. And so when it is torn away from them, it is so much gained.

On the other hand, if, as was done formerly, we try what is called clearing the ground, that is, if we let go all the things we consider as not capable of being transformed, then it is so much lost for the divine realisation.

All the realisations of Nature in the outer life, all that it has created—for example upon earth all this vegetable and animal kingdom, you see, and this ordinary human world which it has created—if you give up all this as an illusion incapable of expressing the Divine, then this is so much left in the hands of the adverse forces which try to keep it, no doubt, for their own ends. Whereas if we consider that all this may be at present deformed but that in its essence and origin not only does it belong to the Divine but is the Divine Himself, then we can work consciously, deliberately at the transformation and wrest all these things from the hostile influence which now governs them.

That's all?... Still...?

Sweet Mother, what is our universal being?

Our universal being?... What it is?... I don't understand your question very well.

What is it? "For our entire nature and its environment, all our personal and all our universal self, are full of habits and of influences that are opposed to our spiritual rebirth..."

Our universal self is our relation with all others and all the movements of Nature.

And I have often told you, haven't I?, that the first state of your being is a state of an almost total mixture with all things from outside, and that there is almost no individualisation, that is, specialisation which makes you a different being. You are moved—a kind of form which is your physical being is moved—by all the common universal forces, vital forces or mental forces, which go through your form and put it in motion.

So that is the universal being.

And all that you have wrested from this general semi-consciousness, and have crystallised into a more or less independent being, conscious of itself and having its own qualities, all this is your individual being. And this individual being is full of all the movements of obscurity, unconsciousness, and of the limitations of ordinary life, and that's... and that's what you must gradually open to the divine influence and bring to the consciousness and understanding of things. That's what Sri Aurobindo says.

In fact, the first victory is to create an individuality. And then later, the second victory is to give this individuality to the Divine. And the third victory is that the Divine changes your individuality into a divine being.

There are three stages: the first is to become an individual; the second is to consecrate the individual, that he may surrender entirely to the Divine and be identi-

fied with Him; and the third is that the Divine takes possession of this individual and changes him into a being in His own image, that is, he too becomes divine.

Generally, all the yogas stopped at the second. When one had succeeded in surrendering the individual and giving him without reserve to the Divine to be identified with Him, one considered that his work was finished, that all was accomplished.

But *we* begin there, and we say, "No, this is only a beginning. We want this Divine with whom we are identified to enter our individuality and make it into a divine personality acting in a divine world. And this is what we call transformation. But the other precedes it, must precede it. If that is not done, there is no possibility of doing the third. One can't go from the first to the third; one must pass through the second.

Mother, the third depends entirely on the Divine, whether He wills to take possession or not.

In fact everything depends entirely on the Divine. It is only the consciousness you have of it which is different. So in the third stage, obviously, one becomes conscious that it is the Divine who does everything; so it depends entirely on the Divine.

When you say this, the part of your consciousness which is still convinced of its separation and its own existence is looking at the other and saying, "Ah, good! Now I shall no longer have to do anything." But if it no longer exists, if it becomes conscious that it is the Divine, then it can't have this impression. It does the work, continues to do it, but with the true consciousness, instead of having the distorted consciousness.

(Silence)

That's all?

Sweet Mother, how can one feel the divine Presence constantly?

Why not?

But how can one do it?

But I am asking why one should not feel it. Instead of asking the question how to feel it, I ask the question: "What do you do that you don't feel it?" There is no reason not to feel the divine Presence. Once you have felt it even once, you should be capable of feeling it always, for it is there. It is a fact. It is only our ignorance which makes us unaware of it. But if we become conscious, why should we not always be conscious? Why forget something one has learnt? When one has had the experience, why forget it? It is simply a bad habit, that's all.

You see, there is something which is a fact, that's to say, it *is*. But we are un-

aware of it and do not know it. But after we become conscious and know it, why should we still forget it? Does it make sense? It's quite simply because we are not convinced that once one has met the Divine one can't forget Him any more. We are, on the contrary, full of stupid ideas which say, "Oh! Yes, it's very well once like that, but the rest of the time it will be as usual." So there is no reason why it may not begin again.

But if you know that... we did not know something, we were ignorant, then the moment we have the knowledge... I am sincerely asking how one can manage to forget. One might not know something, that is a fact; there are countless things one doesn't know. But the moment one knows them, the minute one has the experience, how can one manage to forget? Within yourself you have the divine Presence, you know nothing about it—for all kinds of reasons, but still the chief reason is that you are in a state of ignorance. Yet suddenly, by a clicking of circumstances, you become conscious of this divine Presence, that is, you are before a fact—it is not imagination, it is a fact, it's something which exists. Then how do you manage to forget it once you have known it?

But still this state of ignorance is in us.

Ah! and why? Because you are convinced that it is a normal state and that one can't do otherwise.

But the moment you know that it is an absolutely abnormal state, contrary to the Truth, how does it happen that it can be repeated? It is simply because you are not convinced. It's because when you have the experience of the divine Presence it seems to you something fabulous, miraculous and extraordinary, and almost abnormal. And so... "This sublime state—how can I keep it? It is absolutely contrary to my own existence." But this indeed is the stupidity. For this sublime state is the natural state, and it's what you constantly are that is not natural but a falsification, a deformation—you see, a state... which is not normal.

But to have the knowledge and live in the Truth—this indeed is the normal state. Then, how does it happen that once you have had it... it is over, the abnormal state disappears, you become normal and live in the Truth. Once one is in the Truth, how does one manage to come out of it again?

Quite simply it's that you have not entered totally into the Truth, and only one part of yourself has had the experience and the others don't yet have it; and then you don't remain in this part of yourself which had the experience and begin to live in other parts which do not have it yet; and all these parts must have this experience one after another.

This is the reply to my question, this is what you should have told me: why, it is because we are not made of a single piece and the piece which had the experience is not the only one in us and is not always there, it is replaced by all kinds of other pieces which have not yet had the experience and must have it. That's why.

But truly speaking, it is not inevitable. Because even if the part which had the experience and knows is no longer right in front and master of the consciousness, if it is replaced by another part which is still in the ignorance, that's no reason for forgetting the other, for that other part is also yourself, and remains yourself, and is there. Why forget it? Why, when the obscure, unconscious and ignorant part comes up, why not put it immediately face to face with the other—like this—so that the other may show it that it is in the ignorance? This everybody can do. It's only a question of wanting it. We are not obliged to fall back into error, we are not obliged to fall back into obscurity, ignorance and stupidity.

It is because something in us, through cowardice or defeatism, accepts this. If one did not accept it, it wouldn't happen.

Even when everything seems to be suddenly darkened, the flame and the Light are always there. And if one doesn't forget them, one has only to put in front of them the part which is dark; there will perhaps be a battle, there will perhaps be a little difficulty, but it will be something quite transitory; never will you lose your footing.

That is why it is said—and it is something true—that to sin through ignorance may have fatal consequences, because when one makes mistakes, well, these mistakes have results, that's obvious, and usually external and material results; but that's no great harm, I have already told you this several times. But when one knows what is true, when one has seen and had the experience of the Truth, to accept the sin again, that is, fall back again into ignorance and obscurity—this is indeed an infinitely more serious mistake. It begins to belong to the domain of ill-will. In any case, it is a sign of slackness and weakness. It means that the will is weak.

So your question is put the other way round. Instead of asking yourself how to keep it, you must ask yourself: How does one not keep it? Not having it, is a state which everybody is in before the moment of knowing; not knowing—one is in that state before knowing. But once one knows one cannot forget. And if one forgets, it means that there is something which consents to the forgetting, it means there is an assent somewhere; otherwise one would not forget.

(Silence)

That's all?...

That's all, nothing more?

No more questions anywhere?

You want to meditate? Yes?

(Meditation)

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1986)

(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, Puram, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshanker. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests 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.)

December 25, 1940

Evening

(Dr. Manilal had a warm cloth wrapped around his head and was sitting leaning against the small book case. When Sri Aurobindo sat up at the edge of the bed, he looked at him.)

SRI AUROBINDO: You are looking like one of the pictures of Ajanta, thinking the world to be a burden and being cold and miserable. *(Laughter)*

N: Today he has increased one more vest.

M: That can be easily taken off. I was not feeling cold but to prevent any draught I put it on.

SRI AUROBINDO: I was speaking of your expression; you were looking like an incarnation of suffering.

M: But I am supposed to be very jolly, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: But at that moment you were not! *(Laughter)*

(Some time later the Mother came and, soon after Sri Aurobindo's daily walk, Manilal left.)

P: Indra Sen wants to know if the cosmic descent could correspond to the yogic descent in any way.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, the yogic descent is a process of unveiling while the cosmic descent is involutory, a process of veiling.

P: Yes, I also said something like that.

December 16, 1940

(We heard from Usha that Sachin's daughter had improved after receiving the Mother's flower. She has been brought to Calcutta.)

SRI AUROBINDO: Have the doctors diagnosed her condition? I haven't heard anything.

M: Regarding diagnosis the doctors are at sea—

SRI AUROBINDO: They generally are. (*Laughter*) If only one doctor is concerned it is not so bad a situation.

M: Can you not help us with your knowledge?

SRI AUROBINDO: That would be too much work for me.

M: I don't mean in every case; only in difficult cases.

SRI AUROBINDO: It would establish a precedent. (*Laughter*)

M: But you can know the right diagnosis and suitable treatment in a case.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is a medical question.

P: Sri Aurobindo and the Mother can as well cure a case straight away instead of bothering about all that.

Evening

M: If Joan of Arc was a saint, how could she be burned alive, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: She was declared a saint only some years ago! And what did you have in mind? Many saints have been killed, burnt, riddled with arrows.

N: Christ was crucified.

M: Some say it is not true. (*Laughter*)

P: How? It is written in the books! (*Laughter*)

M: They hold a procession now in memory of Joan of Arc.

SRI AUROBINDO: Now?

M: Yes, Sir, when I was in Paris ten years ago I saw it.

SRI AUROBINDO: "Now" is not ten years ago. When you said "now", I was astonished—how could Germany allow it? It is a French national festival.

M: It is said that Joan of Arc used to have some power or some power used to descend in her by which she defeated the English.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, what about it?

M: If so, how were they able to catch and burn her? The power couldn't protect her?

SRI AUROBINDO: She had no power at that time, she herself said that she was given that power only for a short time—two years or so—and after her work was finished she wanted to go away, but it is the king who kept her back.

M: Wasn't it a sin to burn her? (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: They didn't care a damn whether it was a sin, not having studied Jainism like Manilal. (*Laughter*)

M: Tolstoy had some realisation, Sir, didn't he?

SRI AUROBINDO: How?

M: Otherwise how could he write about angels etc.? (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose you know a writer has imagination.

M: But he led a moral life.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh! Did he? He never succeeded in living a moral life—as far as I know. He became a mystic, at least tried to but never led a moral life. Are you interested in Tolstoy?

M: In some principles of his.

SRI AUROBINDO: What are they?

M: I have forgotten, Sir. (*Laughter*) It was long ago I read him.

SRI AUROBINDO: Principles like those of Gandhi?

M: Yes, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: Interested in Gandhi's principles?

M: Yes, Sir, in some of them when they are put into action.

SRI AUROBINDO: Which?

M: Ahimsa for instance. Of course not ahimsa as he preaches it. There is also truthfulness.

SRI AUROBINDO: Nothing new. Ahimsa is more than 2500 years old and truthfulness very ancient too, more than 6000 years.

M: Millions and millions of years, Sir, according to Jainism. (*M mentioned a book.*)

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not interested in Jain history.

P: Where is the history? It is more a story like the Puranas.

(The topic changed. What exactly Sri Aurobindo refers to in the following is not remembered.)

SRI AUROBINDO: I have sent both the synopsis and the summary down to Nolini. I don't know how many pages they will be in type. I think there will be about 200 pages altogether. Manilal might find them easy. (*Laughter*)

M: Yes, Sir. (*Laughter*)

N: It may be more difficult to understand than the text, because the argument will be more compact.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not necessarily. One may get only the salient points.

N: I haven't yet got a clear idea of the Absolute. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): How could you have got a clear idea? If you had done so, all your troubles and difficulties would have been over.

N: I mean mentally.

SRI AUROBINDO: Even mentally one can't get a clear idea.

N: What I mean is whether the Absolute stands for Sachchidananda, the Supreme, the Transcendent and also beyond all these.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course the Absolute is beyond all these. But that doesn't mean the Absolute has no Sachchidananda aspect. But it is beyond all expression.

N: Sachchidananda also is beyond expression.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

M: You can't have any idea or experience of the Absolute.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, you can have an idea, even experience it, but can't express it. When you try to express it, you limit it because expression is of the mind and of mental ideas and thoughts.

M: It is like sweetness, Sir. There are so many kinds of sweetness, but we can't define it.

SRI AUROBINDO: One can define it to a certain extent.

M: How will you express the sweetness of a pomegranate, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is a question of style; but I am not going to do it, I have something more worthwhile. (*Laughter*)

P: Some define the taste by colour.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the modern craze!

P: They will say the sweetness of an orange is yellow.

SRI AUROBINDO: Pomegranate pink and shades of pink as pink I, pink II.

M: But one can get the proof and knowledge by eating.

P: That is experience.

M: It is knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a knowledge of the taste, not a metaphysical knowledge. (*Laughter*)

N: Nolini Sen says they are feeling a more and more intense force, peace etc. at Calcutta in their meditation. So intense that some people wonder if it isn't the supramental force that is descending.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): No! It is the spiritual force.

N: Even the children feel it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then it must be supramental. (*Laughter*) The supramental is independent of conditions and circumstances.

N: It is curious that we don't feel anything.

SRI AUROBINDO: The supramental must have descended at Calcutta alone. (*Laughter*)

N: In the circumference to start with.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after a pause*): These experiences of force, peace etc. come easily to those who begin the Yoga in the mind or vital. Those who begin in the physical mind have a tremendous tussle. Experiences don't take place in them so easily and they come after a long time.

N: Then I must be in the physical mind. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: But those who open their mind or vital first are not very safe. I have seen many yogis, not great ones, I mean those who have got some experiences and power in the vital and they are satisfied with that. They think that that is all and there is nothing beyond it. X by his sadhana has got some inert peace in the physical which he thinks to be real peace....

P: Prof. Indra Sen was asking me about the theory of cause and effect. I told him I had not read the new volume of *The Life Divine* but, as far as I could remember, there is a sort of a continuous process of things and events going on. You cut off

from that continuity any part and say that that must be the cause of this—I don't know if I am right.

SRI AUROBINDO: What I have said in *The Life Divine* is—Antecedent and Subsequent. What we know as the cause of a particular effect may not be the immediate cause. For that effect to be produced so many forces have come into play, even the opposing forces are necessary. The human mind sees only one factor and thinks that is the cause. But as a matter of fact without the combination and opposition of other forces, the result would not have been possible.

The human mind can't look at anything as a whole, it sees only by parts. It is like switching on the light and thinking that the switching must be the cause of the light. But one who arranges the whole electric system has to consider so many factors before the light can be produced.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

THAT OLD MAN

THAT old man
on that creaky sinking cot
sits like an owl
brooding over its shattered nest.

Shorn of his toothless beloved
—gone to Heaven to reserve his seat—
and sons lacking in affection
—an influence of curtain lecture—
that old man sits craving
for the undesired friend—Death.

Death, to him, was once an obsession,
but now a welcome guest.
But the poor man forgot
that the guest comes
unwanted, unasked, uninvited,
and above all unheralded
only to shock the victims
and stop their hearts
by his very silence.

P. RAJA

THE STORY OF A SOUL

(Continued from the issue of October 1986)

BY HUTA

The Mother's Message

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



Volume Three: 1959

2

I SUMMONED all my courage after receiving the Mother's letter and tried to concentrate on my studies.

Along with Sudha I went in a bus to attend our lessons in the Denson Secretarial College. There wherever we moved we smelt apple-pie all the time. The college-

cum-hostel was in one building. Unfortunately we could not get accommodation there.

Our principals were Mr and Mrs Denson. The madam was a short plump person with glasses and was always clad in a black dress. She was older than Mr Denson. They had a separate lift for themselves. Nobody knew in which apartment they lived.

The college was of a cosmopolitan type. Girls of all nations were there. A few spoke good English with a faint foreign inflexion. Some of them let the streams of their languages continue unabated in the cloak-room.

Underneath their heavy coats they wore fashionable frocks, mini skirts, blouses, slacks and clinging jerseys. The invariable nylon stockings were part of the attires. Their hair was coiffed in different styles. Their long nails were perfectly manicured and painted with different hues of red or pink. But I wondered if they took a bath even once a week! For, indeed, it was exceedingly cold. A chill wind blew incessantly and there were inevitable drizzles. A few days earlier the steps of our collège were covered with a thin layer of snow.

An Iranian girl, somewhat "gaga", was very beautiful—many girls complimented her. Her ego spread out like a peacock's feathers. Usually from her slender neck fell cascades of coloured beads or pearls.

In the college the lady professors expedited all the subjects at jet-speed, because the course was to be completed in a year's time. We had to study economics, book-keeping, typing, shorthand, filing-system and English, finally do some practical work in certain offices in London to gain confidence. The project was flattering. But it was too much for me, because I never liked book-keeping and shorthand. If I omitted any of these subjects they would omit me altogether from the college. So I carried on with some doubt about continuing.

*

In answer to a letter of mine, the Mother wrote on a fine card:

I have just received your nice letter of 10th instant.

I am glad that all is going on all right for you.

I am almost cured now.

My love and blessings are always with you.

I also received from her the message of the Saraswati Puja on 12th February 1959 with all her love and blessings:

Even if there is much darkness—and this world is full of it and the physical nature of man also—yet a ray of the true Light can prevail eventually against a tenfold darkness. Believe that and cleave to it always.

These elevating words were written by Sri Aurobindo. I found them absolutely apt and heartening in my dim days.

But life in London was not rosy.

Our English teacher was a French lady who seemed to teach us nothing. Often she asked us to refer to the Dictionary. When we put any question, she would simply say she would think it over and answer later on. The answers never came. In fact, she could not make us understand higher English.

The fees at the college were enormous.

The atmosphere there was very grave. There was some racialism also, which was disgusting.

Miss Baker, our typing teacher, was a peculiar kind of a person. She ordered us: "Pack up, girls."—fifteen minutes earlier than the scheduled time. When she opened her hand-bag and fished out her powder-compact, we started winding up our jobs.

The girls then tramped down the stairs, giggling and chatting loudly.

In the cloak-room when we picked up our coats, there were some girls who were engrossed in talking about nylons, lace, clothes, jewellery, movies, shows and the best restaurants. Especially their main topics were their figures and boy friends. It was tedious to hear even in snatches all that romantic gibberish. I was unsocial. So they must have found me a big bore.

Almost all the girls smoked. One among them flicked open her gilded silver cigarette case in front of Sudha and me. We refused. She shrugged philosophically, laughed and lit another cigarette. She smoked smartly. A gold charm-bracelet jangled on her right wrist as she blew a cloud of smoke.

We peeped in the cloak-room mirror—our make-up needed replenishing. This was done and out we went for our lunch.

Most of the restaurants were very far from the college. Eventually we found one somewhat close. There we ate soup in which floated small crispy, crunchy, fried cubes of bread which we relished. We generally fancied sandwiches, tea or milk laced with coffee. Our lunches were always sketchy.

One day we entered the restaurant and settled at one of the tables after whipping off our gloves. To our surprise there was a new waitress who stood before us to take orders. We asked her to bring some soup. She said: "Madame, here we serve a variety of delicious meat soups. Which one would you like me to bring?" We exclaimed: "Why, but here we were served vegetable soup. What is the idea?"

She answered with a Gallic shrug: "It is a mistake—no vegetable soup, I am sorry." Morosely grim glances were exchanged between Sudha and me. We accepted the fact and resolved not to ask for "delicious" soups ever again.

Now we had a feeling of nausea and imagined scores of things about chickens, lambs, fishes and the flesh of other animals.

I had a strong aversion to meat. But then what had I done?

The problems of food and proper accommodation were a real headache.

The room which Mrs Bee had given me was good but expensive—£7 per week—and the neighbouring rooms were noisy. A black-and-white TV was going on at full blast.

Mrs Bee gave me only breakfast. She was kind enough to wash some of my heavy clothes which I could not do. I used to wear sari. Sudha sometimes wore sari or sometimes skirt and blouse. We both wore nylon stockings.

It was impossible to take a bath every day due to shuddering cold. So I took it every alternate day at night. Though the room had central heating I had to keep the electric heater going also—which had been provided by the landlady.

I was not satisfied with my studies. Distress, despondency and desolation nagged me day and night. It was not easy to put up with anything. There was a pain woven with doubts about my future. My dolorous mood matched the depressing weather.

Many a night I could not sleep for the bitter chill—neither did I dare to get out of my bed. So I huddled under the warm blankets. Then finally a restless slumber took over and the next morning I woke up exhausted. I dragged myself out of bed, shivering. My teeth chattered.

Within my heart I knew that there was always the Mother and hope. I wrote a letter to her. She answered on 19th February:

I have just received your letter in which you are asking my advice about your studies. Of course, you must follow your inspiration and do full-heartedly the work which you feel you must do. It goes without saying that whatever you choose you must do it steadily and persistently if you want to obtain a result.

In any case you can be sure that the Force will be with you to help and assist you.

With my love and blessings.

She also sent the message which she would distribute to people on her birthday—21st February:

In the mind which is a creator of differential contradictions there is supposed to be a perpetual incompatibility between the transcendent and the cosmic states of the Divine—as also between the Personal and the Impersonal, the One and the Many. The supramental consciousness, on the other hand, does not raise these problems, for there the way of experience of the mental Ignorance is abolished and the basis of all things is an indefeasible unity—whatever expression is there cannot diminish or contradict this unity (which is essential and not numerical) but lives in it and by it, never losing the hold on the supracosmic Reality which it expresses. This difference between Supermind and mind is difficult to explain fully to the mind, for it contradicts the logic of the mind and substitutes a way of knowing which is SWAYAMPRAKASHA (self-revealing)

and rooted in a knowledge by identity of which the mind at its best can only grasp a thin reflection or a shadow. But it makes an immense difference in the possibilities of consciousness, a difference which one can only realise, not by thought, but by experience.

It was amazing to get letters from India within four days!

*

I decided to change my college as well as the residence. Meanwhile I remembered to write to Miss Doris Tomlinson who was a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. She ran the Sri Aurobindo Study Circle in London at her place—42 Clarendon Road W.11.

Promptly she telephoned me and came down to see me at Marble Arch. We were very happy to meet each other. Her voice was cultured, deep and pleasant.

She invited me to be at the meeting on the 21st.

I went. There were readings from Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's books. Doris asked me to read from *Prayers and Meditations* this prayer:

O Divine Master, grant that this day may be for us an opening to a completer consecration to Thy law, a more integral self-giving to Thy work, grant that in a communion with Thee ever deeper and more constant, we may unite always more, so that we may be Thy worthy servitors. Remove from us all egoism and mean pride, all covetousness and obscurity, so that all aflame with Thy divine love, we may be Thy torches in this world.

O Lord, eternal Master, enlighten us, guide our steps, show us the way towards the realisation of Thy law, towards the accomplishment of Thy work.

O Lord, become the sovereign Master of our lives and dispel all the darkness which can still prevent us from seeing and constantly communing with Thee.

Liberate us from all ignorance, liberate us from ourselves that we may open wide the doors of Thy glorious manifestation.

While I was reading, my soul stirred and my eyes filled with tears.

They admired my reading. But I knew that it would take me years to read and speak like English people.

There was a spiritual discussion followed by meditation. The meeting ended with tea, cakes, biscuits and sandwiches.

Miss Partridge—a close friend of Doris—would speak about tea: "We English, where will we be without our tea?"

Every fortnight there was a meeting which I attended without fail, because I met some very interesting people and enjoyed exchanging views about ideals and spirituality. Moreover I got peace. Sudha never came. I did not know why.

After a few meetings, Doris arranged my reading and conversation with Miss

Partridge so that I might improve my English and its accent.

I went to her house for quite some time.

*

Day by day it was getting terribly cold. Everything was frozen. I then remembered the heat of Pondicherry. The days became short and the nights long. At 3 p.m. it looked as if it was 7 p.m.

It was very difficult to walk. But our search for a proper place never ceased. Sudha and I, after college, went from one place to another in sharp severe cold—securing our silk scarves, with which we covered our heads, by tying them under our chins. Cold blasts of air hit our cheeks again and again. But we moved on, crossing rows of dark sombre house after house.

We dug our gloved hands into our pockets and walked God alone knew how many miles. The steam of our breath fanned out white in this ruthless winter air.

The English weather was moody—unpredictable. We had to keep our parasols all the time with us. A little shower and we unfurled them. Then suddenly it stopped. I had yet to learn much about the shifting scenes of this city's climate.

We also approached the London Accommodation Bureau in Piccadilly Circus. Several addresses were given to us. But the result came to nought. Piccadilly Circus is the busiest place in London. One could not but admire the area when it was illuminated with thousands of lights.

I was cold, tired and freezing to death. Owing to much strain, stress and struggle, I collapsed with a bout of flu. I ran a high temperature. Mrs Bee was sympathetic. She gave me some aspirin and hot soup. I felt ghastly, hollow-eyed and thin. But I was soon on the mend.

Sudha came to see me practically every day and gave me reports of the college which were not enthusing. She was not happy over there either. Later she too fell ill.

Doris came frequently with fruit, cheese, biscuits and lots of good will.

One day I told her about my situation and expressed my wish to change the college after the end of the term which was to be in the beginning of April. I added that I should make some definite plan instead of waffling like an idiot. She laughed, and promised me to look for a good college and a nearby habitation. She suggested I should consult a doctor. So Mrs Bee showed me the place where I should go. I met Dr. Bernard Hatchick who was connected with the National Health Service. I had to pay nominal charges.

Once or twice I must have gone there. He was kind and treated me well.

Later I told Doris that I felt much better and that the Doctor's surname sounded like Hitchcock. Her laughter rang out. She remarked that I had a sense of humour which I thought was essential and was a great help in dilemmas.

(To be continued)

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A BACK-LOOK AT *MACBETH*

A TALK BY AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA) TO NIRODBARAN'S STUDENTS

I HAVE not been given a theme in advance. Nirod has just now said, "Talk about *Macbeth*—or, if you like, about the *Sonnets*. After all, it doesn't matter because it's the same genius who wrote the play and those poems." Perhaps he should have added, "It's the same non-genius who is going to talk." Well, as he has mentioned *Macbeth* first, I take it that his preference is for the play. The only trouble is that all of you have studied it very lately whereas my memory of it goes back by several decades. So, naturally, it's a little hazy. Still, it is not difficult to say a few things by way of introduction.

There has been a controversy as to what can be called Shakespeare's masterpiece. Most people plump for *Hamlet*. Some are devotees of *Lear* and some favour *Othello*. My grandfather was all for *Hamlet* and my father swore by *Othello*. And I believe Sri Aurobindo chose *Lear* on the whole. My leaning is towards *Macbeth* as Shakespeare's top reach in dramatic art. I use the word "art" advisedly because I cannot really say that Shakespeare has written greater poetry in *Macbeth* than in those three other plays or several others which have not run in any competition to be his chief work—though just now I remember that Frank Harris took *Antony and Cleopatra* to be Shakespeare's richest creation. Although *Macbeth's* poetry is not any greater than that in the rest of Shakespeare's mature works, the Mount Everests here come very close together. The gaps between them are not so wide as those in the other dramas. This is a very compact and concentrated product of Shakespeare's dramatic poetry and that is why from the point of view of art I regard it as his *magnum opus*.

It may be that the Everests come so close together because *Macbeth*, with perhaps the exception of *Julius Caesar*, is the shortest play Shakespeare ever wrote. But that does not quite explain the recurrence of his poetic heights at such close quarters, since even if a play is short the usual range of his best and his second best and his average can continue. Why should he be in such a hurry to pack his heights together? So I conclude that it must be that he wrote *Macbeth* at a sort of fever pitch or concert pitch of poetic utterance. His genius reached its fullest and most abundant maturity in this drama. That is by way of introduction and by way of personal estimate of the play.

Now there is the topic of Shakespeare expressing the various parts of himself. You know that he has been called myriad-minded. And it is his myriad-mindedness that has really posed what is called the Shakespeare Question. How could a man who was so poorly educated, "with small Latin and less Greek" as Ben Jonson put it, write plays which show so much knowledge and such precise familiarity with diverse stations of life? On the evidence of the plays one can say Shakespeare was

a politician, a statesman, a king, an expert lawyer, a trained doctor, a widely experienced traveller, a mind deeply and variedly versed in European history, a psychologist of considerable acumen, a man who had seen life in all its multiple colours. I say a man but he shows such understanding of the other sex that some people have conjectured he must have been a woman or at least half a woman and half a man, otherwise he wouldn't know the feminine heart no less than the masculine so intimately. To be sure, somebody else—it is argued—than the villager from Stratford who was at best a petty schoolmaster must have authored those dramas.

Among the several substitutes suggested, Francis Bacon is the prime one. But here we have to face Sri Aurobindo's acute observation that no alleged cryptogram or coded message in any play can impress him when he sees more thought-power in a single essay of Bacon's than in a whole drama of Shakespeare's and when he marks in Bacon's one attempt to write poetry how hampered it is by the born philosophical thinker's characteristic way of expression. Two points are made by Sri Aurobindo. First, Bacon was predominantly a philosopher and thereby prevented from being a successful poet. Second, Shakespeare was no great shakes as a thinker: his power was an abundant vision expressing itself in a poetic form.

We won't bother about Bacon the failed poet. More relevantly our concern is with the query: "Was Shakespeare a philosopher in any recognisable sense?" Confronting with this query the sponsors of Bacon we have to quote Hamlet's phrase: "Ay, there's the rub." The one person who, on the strength of all the variety of knowledge shown in the plays, might be taken as the master pen behind them proves to be *par excellence* what Shakespeare was not. So we may well join those who speak of the Great Baconian Heresy. Where in Shakespeare is the typical stamp of the philosopher—the capacity for a unified intellectual view of the world? Even Hamlet, the character who is Shakespeare's nearest approach to the pure intellect, talks really from an intellectualised life-force. All the utterances are rather outbursts of emotion or an instinctive reponse of the guts, as it were, converted into some kind of mental value. His very language is tense with sensation and passion. For instance, the lines,

Oh that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,

are hardly the pure intellect soliloquising.

It is worth adding that, apart from the philosopher, there is one more *lacuna*, a further gap in Shakespeare's myriad-mindedness and that is the mystic: Shakespeare scarcely comes out in the *persona* of a man who has some sort of insight into what is beyond appearance. Even his psychology of the life-force, which is his main psychology, does not go very deep into the region of the life-force: it is, you might say, a foot or two just behind the surface. But whatever penetration he has achieved he has done with unrivalled mastery. Nobody has known so well whatever depth of the life-force Shakespeare has reached. And certainly nobody has articulated

it as he has. Yet a foot or two behind the life-force's surface does not make you a mystic even on the life-plane. Mysticism, as you know, is an exploring of depths on any plane and touching a region where the presence of the spirit is found operating. The spirit operates on every level and when you go to the inner vital you can have a mystical experience just as you can have it on the inner mental and whatever other plane you are able to explore. Shakespeare has only a line or two which can be regarded as mystic—and these lines seem quite accidental. In a sonnet he has the phrase:

... the prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come.

This phrase has a certain vibrancy which to an ear attuned to the subtle music of poetry sounds almost "Overmindish". It is as if something from the Overmind plunging into the throbbing universe of the life-force had emerged successfully. But this is a rare thing in Shakespeare. That phrase is my discovery; I quoted it to Sri Aurobindo and he gave his comment. Sri Aurobindo himself discovered another phrase which occurs in *The Tempest*:

In the dark backward and abysm of time.

He says that it is a line from the Overmind. I would elaborate by saying: "It catches something almost intangible and gives it a figurative drive and a rhythmic thrill which goes beyond the life-force and sets moving some deep area in our selves, so that we have the sense of a profound spiritual vision of the past, a sort of infinite past mingling with the usual sense our memory has of things gone and engulfing it in some unexplorable secrecy." But such snatches of mystical perception are quite untypical of Shakespeare and on the strength of them we can hardly say that Shakespeare had a mystical aspect.

I tried to make him out to be a kind of mystic by quoting a long passage from *The Tempest* to Sri Aurobindo: Prospero's famous speech which begins,

Our revels now are ended...

and finishes with the words:

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

In this speech we are told that everything will vanish and "leave not a wrack behind." Sri Aurobindo says there is no mysticism of outlook here at all in the sense that Shakespeare does not have any expression of something surviving the universal dissolution. It is wrong to believe that he imagines there is a universal sleeper or

dreamer behind the sleep or the dream. Such a notion is not really couched in his lines. What is shown is simply the dream-like quality of things which strikes one at times and the only conclusion is that everything is ephemeral, everything is transitory, there is no substantial reality remaining behind the appearance and disappearance of phenomena. This was what Sri Aurobindo tried to make me realise, that you cannot read such things into a poet. You can say, if you like, that behind the poet there was some inspiration which tried to make him a medium and failed so far as the mysticism was concerned, though it succeeded so far as the poetic expression of something or other was concerned.

Now, as regards the perception of things unseen, what Wordsworth calls "unknown modes of being", there are two compartments: one is the pure mystical, and the other is the sheer occult. Can we say that Shakespeare, even if he may not be a mystic properly speaking, has some familiarity with or understanding of the sheer occult?

In the Middle Ages the presence of devils and angels was an accepted fact. People even claimed to meet angels and devils. Martin Luther records his own experience. Once at midnight when he had fallen asleep over his writing-table, a slight noise disturbed him. Waking up, he saw the devil standing in one corner of his room. Luther picked up his ink-pot and threw it at the devil, and the devil vanished. I suppose the devil didn't want to be painted blacker than he was!

So you see, all these things were taken to be there and the medieval philosophers speculated on how many thousands of angels by means of their subtlety and their insubstantiality could dance on the point of a needle. The tradition of presences behind the physical scene persisted down to Shakespeare's day although by that day the great movement which swept the Middle Ages off had already come to pass, the Renaissance. The Renaissance had a great vital gusto and a sense of things of the earth and also a humanist enthusiasm which refused to take interest in religious things or in things which could not be seen and touched. Naturally, devils and angels were not very popular with the typical Renaissance thinkers. But the artists carried on the religious tradition and we have angels still in Raphael and Michelangelo though Michelangelo gave them such a statuesque and sculptured quality that even God himself seems to be a very muscular man instead of a God: even his beard seems to be full of muscles the way it flies like a torn banner!

In Shakespeare's day England was unusually uneducated as compared to the Continent. Spain was considered a civilised country and so was Portugal. Many consider them backwaters at present, but in those days they were in the front rank of civilisation and Elizabethan England was pretty barbarous in the matter of education, in the matter of manners, and the English were a rough people and even the amenities of life were not so abundant. They were not abundant anywhere in fact but in Elizabethan England they were even less so. You can imagine the condition of amenities when you know that even at the time of Louis XIV, a little after the Elizabethan Age, the Great Palace of the *Roi Soleil* the Sun-King,

had not a single bathroom anywhere. And all the people, the cavaliers, the musketeers, the foreign emissaries, the people's representatives, who came to wait in the beautiful hall hung with tapestries and paintings, did not know what to do when they had to answer nature's call. They answered the minor part of it, there and then, in corners of the huge apartment. Not much later in time, Frederick the Great of Germany had to send for a bucket of water from a well half a mile away whenever he felt like having a bath, which was not very frequent. Louis XIV never had a bath except once when he was born and once when he was dead. On both occasions others washed him. He used to pour Eau de Cologne every time he felt himself not quite royally odoriferous.

Coming back to Shakespeare and the dirt and crudity of his day, we may say the superstitions of Medieval Europe lasted a little longer in Elizabethan England than they did elsewhere. So thoughts of angels, devils, gnomes, witches persisted very much. A lot of witches were burnt in England even after the time of Elizabeth. In France I think Joan of Arc was the last witch burnt. They burnt her as a witch, you must realise. So we may expect Shakespeare to have catered to the popular taste for so-called occult phenomena. Shakespeare was a great one for catering to fads and fancies and tickling the ears of the groundlings. The groundlings were the people who squatted on the stage itself while the drama was going on. They ate oranges and threw orange peels about and made all sorts of *ex tempore* remarks in the middle of the play's speeches. It could be that some most unShakespearean patches in the dramas have come because of these remarks which afterwards got incorporated along with the replies the actors gave to the groundlings. We shall be justified in expecting a smear, a superficial scatter, of occult elements in the Shakespearean drama and we do hear talk of agencies behind the scenes doing things. But in the plays themselves the occult activity is very seldom shown.

Othello was accused of using witchcraft in winning Desdemona. The Venetian Senate couldn't imagine how a Moor, a dark man, who said

Mislike me not for my complexion,
The dusky livery of the burnished sun,

could fascinate a girl, a beauty besides, who was snow-white both in complexion and in morals. How could she ever fall for a savage like Othello? Hence they thought he must have mixed some magic potions and made her drink them. But actually it was she who used to bring him drinks because he was a guest at her father's house. He had no chance to give her anything like a drug to set her imagination ablaze with Othello-dreams. So he defended himself when he was impeached for witchcraft, saying that he only told the thrilling story of his life to Desdemona and she sighed and she moaned and she said in effect, "Well, if ever I were to marry somebody, I think that somebody would be a soldier like you." It was almost an indirect proposal, of which Othello with his military strategic mind took due advantage.

There are, as I have said, references to subtle and occult agencies at work in the dramas of Shakespeare. Whether Shakespeare himself had any belief in them it is difficult to say. In one passage somewhere somebody says,

I shall call spirits from the vasty deep.

Another fellow retorts, "Yes, you may call but will they answer you?" It seems to reflect Shakespeare's own scepticism. But it is very difficult to know whether Shakespeare believes in any blessed thing, because he seems to be just a vehicle, a mouth-piece, of poetic inspiration and it didn't matter one jot what he believed and what he himself thought and what he did—and he hardly seems to have done anything worth recording. Just to steal a deer in the countryside or to come to London to hold the heads of horses outside theatres or even become an actor and then, as Sri Aurobindo reminds us, be a money-lender and buy the best house in Stratford-upon-Avon are hardly incidents to give you any keys to Shakespeare as a man, much less to his mind. There are no incidents in his life that we can really fasten on. Only his Sonnets seem to be some sort of key, but even they are debated. Some people say they are just like his dramas. And the three famous unknown quantities—the "Fair Youth", "the Dark Lady" and "the Rival Poet"—are *dramatis personae* like any others, however vivid and particularised they may seem, as if they were reflections of real characters. All the dramas of Shakespeare are full of living characters and he doesn't seem to have lived his life at all unless we regard his Sonnets as some sort of autobiography. So whether Shakespeare believed in Occultism or not we do not know and it is a question which is practically irrelevant, because actually he was not concerned with what he wrote! That is why he took no interest even in his own plays, he never revised them, he never brought out any of them in book-form, much less did he collect them, he just made his pile and retired to Stratford and lived there as the richest man in the county. That was all his ambition, apparently.

However, in two or three of his dramas we do find a marked stamp of occult action and the two most outstanding of these dramas are *Macbeth* and *Lear*. In *Lear* it seems the gigantic powers, which move human beings and make them their puppets, come out in a most notable, conspicuous, gross and colossal form. Goneril and Regan, two daughters of Lear, are real devils incarnate, Cordelia the youngest is just the opposite, an angel incarnate, you might say. But those two are awful creatures. And Lear makes himself a prey to their machinations, he opens himself to them and he was a little off his chump already in giving all his kingdom to both of them and giving nothing to Cordelia and calling her ungrateful. His words were a favourite of my grandfather: "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!" Just because she said she couldn't love him best, as she would love her husband best, the old man got highly excited and said, "You are a rotter and I'll disinherit you." The two other women were already married and Cordelia was not even engaged at that time, so she was just honest and the older pair who had

left Lear for their husbands said, "We adore you. Our husbands are all in the background." Lear gave away his whole kingdom to them and made himself so helpless that they took advantage of their position and completely neglected him. Naturally through that crack in his brain which he already had, he admitted all kinds of perverse powers and became really a lunatic. And there in the midst of his lunacy you have the great storm on the heath and that great storm makes also Lear explode in storms of language—a manifestation of the gigantic evil force that was at work in the entire drama. It tries to find expression in dramatic situation and dramatic interplay of character and you have the real sense of agencies from behind the scene taking charge of the world-stage and naturally the Elizabethan stage too. That may be why Sri Aurobindo, being so sensitive to and so aware of all these forces, ranked *Lear* as the greatest of Shakespeare's creations.

Now these occult agencies are also at play in *Macbeth* and from the first you have the keynote set with the witches and their mumble-jumble and abracadabra, their "Fair is foul and foul is fair." Macbeth is shown to be in subtle tune with these witches: he has an urge to rise in life, an unexpressed ambition at the back of his mind and the witches have an intuition of what he is thinking. Because the witches and he are in tune somewhere in their psychologies, they come along in the same direction and cross each other. That, you might say, is Shakespeare's preparation of the action of the occult powers, and Macbeth is greatly stimulated by what the witches say. He has a faith in them, and they know how to create faith by telling him what he did not know but what had already occurred—an event which they could find out, namely, that he had been made the "Thane of Cawdor". The witches are naturally aware of this, I mean they should be aware of such things—otherwise what's the fun in being a witch?—and poor Macbeth didn't know until later. So he was very much struck and quite convinced that they had the power of prophecy, the gift of foretelling truly the things to come. But they made a *faux pas* by foretelling the future of Macbeth's comrade-in-arms, Banquo. They said Banquo would be "father to a line of kings." Macbeth was so convinced of their truthfulness that somehow he couldn't get it out of his mind that his own children would not be kings and thus his own dynasty, if ever he wore a crown, would come to an end. This complicated the whole situation terribly. Perhaps if he had not known the future of Banquo as predicted by the witches, he would not have muddled up his life so much by trying to have Banquo murdered too, and thus given Banquo's ghost a chance to appear at the table and expose Macbeth's conscience and frighten him almost out of his wits. Anyway, we have there the occult power set at work and we have more than once again the manifestation of the same agency.

An instance is when Macbeth hears a voice after he has killed the sleeping king Duncan: "Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep," and he tells of the lovely nature of "innocent sleep" at some length. When Lady Macbeth asks him what he meant he answers:

Still, it cried, "Sleep no more!" to all the house:
 "Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cowdor
 Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more!"

But here we have, we might say, the opposite of the power which works for evil, because there is a retribution at work on the occult plane, be it vital or any other. You don't have powers working only for evil. Some work also for good and avenge evil doings. Just as they try to confuse the results of good deeds, so also they strike at excesses of evil-doing. Through the extreme action which Macbeth precipitated by becoming, along with his wife, the murderer of Duncan and taking the movement of things into his own hands and forcing results, he oversteps the mark, you might say. When we say "oversteps the mark" we have to think of two things. There may be certain ideals we may set up for a human being. That is what the Greeks believed. They held that man should not go beyond a certain limit. There should not be *hubris*, overweening pride or ambition. And man must observe his own human measure. That by the way is the interpretation some Hellenists give of the two great aphorisms that have come to us from Greek times: "Know thyself" and "Nothing too much." These Hellenists say you must act moderately, not cross the limits and "Know thyself" means to them that you must understand what you are, you are human and that is why you must not cross limits but do everything in moderation.

We Aurobindonians don't agree with these interpreters. We think "Know thyself" means what Socrates had in mind: you must know your true being which is more than human, your soul which is divine. Ours is exactly the opposite of the other interpretation. Of course with our interpretation we would not be able to synthesise the two aphorisms. If you know that you are divine, why should you observe the other rule of "Nothing too much", unless we take the words to mean "Don't do too much evil." But then it might mean we can do small evil! So there is an inconsistency there. But we can keep the two sayings quite apart and take it that in one of them some sort of moderation in life in general is advised, not because man is man and has limitations but because moderation is itself a virtue. We can interpret the adage in the light of Greek Art. There also you have a fine restraint, you don't have abundance as you have in Oriental Art. You have a chiselling of lines and everywhere a kind of divine perfection limited or moderated in human terms. You can consider the meaning of "Nothing too much" to be: however divine you may be, you should still remain a humanist and not forget the human life that you have to lead in the world. That would be something almost Aurobindonian. Here we have to think of human limits as such. The human temperament, the human sensorium is so balanced that it can stand so much pressure and no more from occult forces. Even spiritual forces send people crazy. In the Ashram itself I have known some people becoming quite irrational, to say the least. Not so much of late but in the early days when the Yogic pressure seems to have been much more, people used to lose their heads quite often either temporarily or permanently, until they were

packed off from here and then they regained their heads. Here they were asked to keep their minds aside, so they did it very literally and lost it actually. If even spiritual powers, which have some concern, or some conscience you might say, for the human organism, can drive people crazy, how much craziness we can expect from sheerly occult forces! They don't care a fiddlestick whether a man goes mad or stays sane or does good or does evil; but a certain pitch of power from behind the scenes can steal away a man's wits or bring about calamities in his life and upset his life altogether if he oversteps the purely human boundary.

There is also another consideration. Every man has got his own little limit. If you are a person of a certain type with a certain cast of mind, with a certain type of nervous system, you can't stand the pressure of forces beyond a certain pitch. Macbeth is considered to be a man of very sensitive feelings, he had even an artistic side, it seems, and he was full of the milk of human kindness. If left to himself, he would not do anything to hurt anybody. That was one part of him; another part of him was ambitious. And when that ambition took charge, all the lactic litres of benevolence would not have much weight and, in case of a conflict, we don't know which part would come out on top. Perhaps it would depend on Lady Macbeth being present or not, because she was a very powerful personality who could influence him with her iron will. He was always irresolute, but she knew her mind, whatever she wanted to do she went straight to the mark. Yet her, too, we cannot consider absolutely an incarnation of evil because she too talks of some aspect of herself which is quite human, she talks of her having given "suck" and known how tender it is to love the babe that milks one. She also feels a restraint when she goes to kill Duncan in his sleep but finds him looking like her father. In her state of somnambulism she remarks: "Who could have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" There are some sensitive reactions in her and actually if there had not been this element she would not have become half crazed towards the end. And in the somnambulist scene she would not have been rubbing her hands and trying to wash them. Nor, if she had been a born murderess, would she have exclaimed that all the perfumes of Arabia would not sweeten the little hand that had once the smell of blood on it—that is, when she had gone into Duncan's chamber to smear with his blood the faces and clothes of the grooms sleeping there so that they might be suspected of murdering the king in their drunken state.

So both of these characters have something in them which is open to good influences, Macbeth much more than Lady Macbeth; that is why Lady Macbeth who goes to the limit of wickedness with hardly a care in the world is the greater sufferer because we must remember how the forces which are occult are also retributive forces; they can avenge an evil action which has been caused by an intervention of evil occult forces, and it is they who rob Macbeth of his sleep and it is they who make Lady Macbeth a sleep-walker, the very opposite of Macbeth. Macbeth, poor fellow, had to pace up and down because he couldn't sleep: he was very restless. She had to pace up and down because she couldn't wake up and rest! So these are sort of balan-

ces and the retribution is according to the amount of evil resolution in either. So we find on more than one occasion these occult forces at work and it is they that give the play a weird glow, that strange intensity which is sustained and comes out even in the poetic quality because here you might say that some occult force is behind Shakespeare, goading him on, intensifying even his capabilities so that he is all the more Shakespeare than he usually is. Hence the constant occurrence of his *ne plus ultra* of poetic effect in *Macbeth*, and many of the passages which reach the height of Shakespeare's poetic bent are precisely passages which have to deal with these occult forces.

Now that passage about a voice crying that Macbeth has murdered sleep—Sri Aurobindo considered it to be an expression which belonged to the highest range of poetry. When here we talk of the highest range we don't mean the Overmind as such, which is the home of the Mantra. Sri Aurobindo is here talking of the various styles of poetry, and the perfection possible in them. They differ one from another in a certain intensity of speech. You have the adequate style in which something is said in a happy manner which just suits the occasion. There is no particular flight of imagination, there is no particular movement of rhetoric, there is no particular inwardness of expression. But something is said smoothly, beautifully, with some kind of general light in it. The blithe sunshiny style of Chaucer, for instance. That is the adequate style. Then you have the effective style when something is said with force, a passion comes in and becomes quite prominent, rhetorical effects are there—not necessarily false effects; they are very genuine effects, you have figures of speech and you have a compact, concentrated, quick expression such as we find mostly in Shakespeare. Shakespeare's style is very often effective in the true sense of the word but Shakespeare has also another side in which he is full of similes and metaphors and lights and glimmers and picturesque phrases. That is what you may call the illumined style in a semi-decorative form; the illumined style as such in its proper functioning is something which is beyond both the vital being and the mental being. You have some inward glow of things by which you feel the hidden significance of objects and of persons and of occasions. You have the illumined style wherever imagery is at play but the true illumined imagery is revelatory. It doesn't merely paint pictures and spread colours, however beautifully. Beyond the illumined style you have what Sri Aurobindo calls the inspired style, and there you have a kind of rapt attitude in the utterance, the man is as if in a trance and he speaks from a depth or a height which is beyond himself. In each of the styles at its top you have that inevitable pitch where there is poetic perfection past which you cannot go, on a certain level, so that, poetically speaking, you have the utmost. But there is a fifth style which goes completely out of this fourfold classification. To this you cannot give any exact name at all. Sri Aurobindo designates it the "sheer inevitable" or "the inevitable inevitability". Inevitability you can have in all the styles but here is inevitability in itself—the pure poetical style, if you like. The archetypal poet would always talk in that style and of this style you get very few examples. Few com-

paratively, of course, because even Shakespeare has quite a number, but as compared to the number of his examples in the effective, illumined and inspired styles, these are few. Sri Aurobindo has given some other examples than the sleep-murder lines—examples from Latin and from Greek as well as from English. Three English instances are:

Those thoughts that wander through eternity

from Milton, while

The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep

and

Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone

are from Wordsworth. These three verses are at the same time Overmind lines. But nowhere has Sri Aurobindo clearly indicated whether the levels of style correspond to the levels of inspiration in the sense of planes. He touches on the idea that the adequate style might be said to be the mental style, the effective the style of the Higher Mind, the illumined the style of the Illumined Mind, the inspired the style of the Intuition, and the sheer inevitable the style of the Overmind. But he adds that it is not always possible to affirm this, because on each level there could be the sheer inevitable and not only the inevitable proper to it. For instance, in Shakespeare, King Henry's question to sleep—

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

is, according to Sri Aurobindo, from the Illumined Mind and yet it belongs to the inevitable inevitability. Thus some research in aesthetics remains to be done in order to arrive at a conclusion in the balancing or coinciding of the planes of inspiration and the levels of style-perfection.

Just as what I regard as one of the top peaks of dramatic poetry in *Macbeth* comes with the expression of the retributive occult forces, so too the whole invocation by Lady Macbeth to occult evil is Shakespeare at his most wonderful. There are those terrific unforgettable phrases—

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts! unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top full
Of direst cruelty—

and the culminating appeal, a veritable spell of devilry:

You murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry, "Hold, hold!"

This, to my ear, is a sustained piece of the sheer inevitable style. It is created not only with a burst of mighty language but also with a rhythm that conjures up by a brief yet tremendous alliteration the sinister invisible presences, and renders by foot-variations as well as metrical movement and retardation the future event a vivid overwhelming imaginative present.

To match all this dumbfounding hubbub of inspiration with what I may term a quiet soul-piercing exquisiteness reaching an equal supremacy of poetic speech, a level of pure inevitability, I would choose that single line about Duncan being in his grave:

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.

Simplicity of expression and subtlety of suggestion could not go further—art and insight attain here their climax within Shakespeare's psychological dimension. By means of apt sound and image a vision of the trouble and uncertainty of life is coupled with a profound sense of release and salvation.

We may take leave of *Macbeth* now, remembering its most powerful moment and its moment of deepest peace.

SPIRITUALITY IN THE EARLY POETRY OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1986)

With a god's labour and arduous 'tapasya' Sri Aurobindo battled for half a century with the ancient adversary—Death or Ananke—and won the possibility of immortality. Ultimately he sacrificed his life for this cause. Of this issue he was, without doubt, very much conscious even in his early poems—

Ocean is there and evening; the slow moan
Of the blue waves that like a shaken robe
Two heard together once, one hears alone.

Now gliding white and hushed towards our globe
Keen January with cold eyes and clear
And snowdrops pendent in each frosty lobe

Ushers the first born of the radiant year—
Haply his feet that grind the breaking mould,
May brush the dead grass on thy secret bier,

Haply his joyless fingers wan and cold
Caress the ruined masses of thy hair,
Pale child of winter, dead ere youth was old.

Art thou so desolate in that bitter air
That even his breath feels warm upon thy face?
Ah, till the daffodil is born, forbear,

And I will meet thee in that lonely place.
Then the gray dawn shall end my hateful days
And death admit me to the silent ways.¹

This time that ancient adversary hidden yet ever present was discovered very early by the Avatar-poet. He had done the first in-depth study, a vast survey of the total reach and strength of this reality of Death. His spirituality with its very first steps breaks out of the bonds of the individual consciousness to live in the vasts of eternity, in the impersonality of infinity. In *Songs to Myrtilla* this phenomenon is self-evident. The sense of mortality yet continuity, of universality now imprisoned

¹ *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 5, p. 24.

in the cage of individuality is evident even in a lovely poem, "Night by the Sea"—

"Not we first nor we alone
 Heard the mighty Ocean moan
 By this treasure-house of flowers
 In the sweet ambiguous hours."¹

Here is a consciousness of the eternal love-drama which has been played passionately by numerous others who wooed on those shores, in those groves and yet were no more. And then the poet sums up the transience of human beings in these lines superb in their sad cadence—

"Are we more than summer flowers?
 Shall a longer date be ours,
 Rose and springtime, youth and we
 By the everlasting sea?"²

At each moment the poet was conscious of the cruel jester death that always waits. He could not drink love's nectar without the taste of bitter fate mocking the vernal gifts of ruby-red lips of youth which will wither with the onslaught of time:

"Beauty pays her boon of breath
 To thy narrow credit, Death."³

The gifts deemed priceless by ordinary human beings cannot beguile this youth whose eyes are always pulled upward by the magnet of the Beyond. And in a startling line interwoven in an innocent-seeming poem he declares the vastness of his inner divinity and the perception of a Divine Presence in the universe—

"My spirit is a heaven of thousand stars,
 And all these lights are thine and open doors on thee."⁴

In its outer form this poem is addressed to some mortal love but in true mystic tradition it is a call of the soul, to whom already the universe was the body of the Lord and who saw even in a reed the conscious touch of gods. We feel the vibration and luminosity of some great 'mantra' which is incubating in the hidden depths of the poet and of which he may not be fully conscious yet and may await, in the words

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

of K. D. Sethna, “for ripening experience to deliver it in its native speech of spirit instead of in the accent of ordinary psychological motives.”¹ Such for instance to this critic is the following—

“O Plaintive, murmuring reed, breathe yet thy strain.
 Ye glades, your bliss I grudge you not,
 Nor would I that my grief profane
 Your sacred summer with intruding thought.
 Yet since I will no more behold
 Your glorious beauty stained with gold
 From shadows of her hair, nor by some well
 Made naked of their sylvan dress
 The breasts, the limbs I never shall possess,
 Therefore, O mother Arethuse, farewell.”²

To quote Sethna again, “There is here.... a trembling of the heart’s rhythm on the verge of a sort of incantation which gives us vague mystic hints.”³

In another significant poem “Hic Jacet” the poet looks into and describes what lies behind the outer and behind the so-called victory and defeat. The seer poet sees the subtle causes and movements activating the outer occurrences and movements. In the whole of this poem young Aurobindo describes the nation-soul or the goddess ruling the destiny of a new-rising nation—

“And now behold her! Terrible and fair
 With the eternal ivy in her hair,
 Armed with the clamorous thunder, how she stands
 Like Pallas’ self, the Gorgon in her hands.
 True that her puissance will be easily past,
 The vision ended, she herself has cast
 Her fate behind her: yet the work not vain
 Since that which once has been may be again,
 And she this image yet recover, fired
 With godlike workings, brain and hands inspired,
 So stand, the blush of battle on her cheek,
 Voice made armipotent, deeds that loudly speak,
 Like some dread Sphinx, half patent to the eye,
 Half veiled in formidable secrecy.”⁴

The poet brings us here face to face with the awakened nation soul of a country

¹ *Sri Aurobindo—the Poet*, p. 4.

² *S.A.B.C.L.*, Vol. 5, p. 21.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 5. ⁴ *S.A.B.C.L.*, Vol. 5, p. 11.

—a battle-flushed Durga or Pallas Athene. Surely he has sensed and seen with his inner vision some golden entity dreadful to the enemies of an enslaved nation. This goddess image becomes more luminous in “Lines on Ireland.”

“...her weak estate
 Could not conceal the goddess in her gait;
 Goddess her mood. Therefore that light was she
 In whom races of weaker destiny
 Their beauteous image of rebellion saw;
 Treason could not unnerve, violence o’erawe—
 A mirror to enslaved nations, never
 O’ercome, though in the field defeated ever.”¹

Here the image that almost materializes before our eyes is of an awakening god-head, a new energy rejuvenating the exhausted spirit of some race. Sri Aurobindo never forgets the “power within” which is the source and cause of all the strengths and without whose aid nothing can be accomplished.

“... a power within
 Directed, like effective spirit unseen
 Behind the mask of trivial forms, a source
 And fund of tranquil and collected force.
 This was the sense that made thee royal, blessed
 With sanction from on high and that impressed
 Which could thyself transfigure and infuse
 Thine action with such pride as kings do use.”²

Such numerous references to higher powers and gods and goddesses point towards the truth that the poet is wandering on higher paths and is in relation with higher beings and forces than met with the naked eyes. His eyes have pierced the outermost crust of phenomena and of the blue above, to touch the heights where superhuman beings dwell. He knows that men are but puppets in the hands of gods, howsoever proud they may be of their achievements—

“.. fools! whose pride
 Absurd the gods permit a little space
 To please their souls with laughter, then replace
 In the loud limbo of futilities.”³

¹ *Ibid.* p. 12.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 15.

To him the divine hand is manifest everywhere, the warp and woof of the course of events which men enact only seemingly. Perchance if they stray too far from the decreed purpose of the gods, the heavens reject and withdraw their power vested in the human instrument for the right purpose—

“Ignoble hearts, courageous to effect
Their country’s ruin; such the heavens reject
For their high agencies and leave exempt
Of force, mere mouths and vessels of contempt.”¹

These gods, who are intolerant and make short work of the shams and fools, reward the just who, notwithstanding the so-called defeat, triumph truly—in the real sense—

“Yet not unbidden of heaven the men renowned
Have laboured, though no fruit apparent crowned
Nor praise contemporary touched with leaf
Of civic favour, who for joy or grief
To throned injustice never bowed the head.”²

In the whole of this poem the poet has a sweeping hold of Time past, present and future. In the concluding six lines—

“Its natural children, then, by high disdain
And brave example pushed to meet their pain,
The pupils of thy greatness shall appear,
Souls regal to the mould divine most near,
And reign, or rise on throne-intending wings,
Making thee father to a line of kings.”³

It is as if the poet’s gaze is fixed far upon the 20th century and the heroes of the national liberation movements of Asia and Africa swim into his ken. His vision is not circumscribed by the veil of the present. In him the future constantly walks with the present, linked with the past.

In another small poem, “Saraswati with the Lotus”, written in anguish at the passing of the great genius and Rishi Bankim Chandra, the poet surmises the goddess Saraswati herself shedding tears at the withdrawal of her great son. The atmosphere and the words of this sad poem strangely mirror an atmosphere of golden light, heavenly fragrance and honied tears. This seemingly is the tint that grief takes on in the Beings of the Empyrean.

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Strange is the phenomenon that even though Sri Aurobindo had the flowering of the experience of "Self" as soon as he stepped on the hallowed soil of Mother India, in the first poems written in India his pen does not lead him towards only the pure heights, the deep silences and the illusoriness of the world's appearances; his poetic fancy, his heart's reverie are equally enamoured of the Immanent Godhead Sri Krishna. And he imitates in his inimitable way the sweet cadences of Chandidas while delving in the depths of Radha's love and adds new dimensions to it. His Radha shuns the language of mortals because no mortal speech can bear the weight of her immortal love—

"O love, what more shall I, shall Radha speak,
Since mortal words are weak?"¹

Even the poems on human love young Aurobindo suffuses with divinity—when the subject herself is the Divine there is a constant straying into other spheres of other substance—

"Laughingly I called from heavenly spheres
The sweet love close; he came with flying feet
And turned my life to tears."²

And through Radha his diamond gaze pierced the boundaries of the visible and his feet transported him into the invisible realms of the immortals.

"I, Radha, thought; through the three worlds my gaze
I sent in wild amaze."³

As pointed out before, almost always in most of the poems the ever-recurring reference and insistence is on the beings of the other worlds—gods and goddesses and nature spirits. The poem on Madhu Sudan Dutt is no exception. In this poem one is astonished by the intimacy with the Hindu "Swerga" and its denizens. This youth who was cut off from his early moorings and Indian culture makes in one or two years a surprising acquaintance with all things Indian—mythology, history, politics and literature. With his feet planted firmly on the Indian soil his head touches the golden heights of the Empyrean. As if watching the ways of both men and gods, he sees the gods' shaping and forming touches in earthly events, in human beings, their emotions and loves and hates. He who one day will bring down Godhead into man observes keenly the play of the higher beings through human instruments.

The lines quoted below, where there are six or seven references to gods and

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 302.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 304.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

their ways, also give a hint that Aurobindo at that early age had access to the heights and was cognisant of their secrets, as when he writes of “our Divine Bengali speech”—

“Divine, but rather with delightful moan
 Spring’s golden mother makes when twin-alone
 She lies with golden love and heaven’s birds
 Call hymeneal with enchanting words
 Over their passionate faces, rather these
 Than with the calm and grandiose melodies
 (Such calm as consciousness of godhead owns)
 The high gods speak upon their ivory thrones
 Sitting in council high,—till taught by thee
 Fragrance and noise of the world-shaking sea.
 Thus do they praise thee who amazed espy
 Thy winged epic and hear the arrows cry
 And journeyings of alarmèd gods; and due
 The praise, since with great verse and numbers new
 Thou mad’st her godlike who was only fair.”¹

Our poet was surely so intimate with the gods because for him men and gods were equally instruments and comrades of an eternal ‘Lila’. And he could discern where the moulding touch of the divine flute-player was most effective—

“No human hands such notes ambrosial moved;
 These accents are not of the imperfect earth;
 Rather the god was voiceful in their birth,
 The god himself of the enchanting flute,
 The god himself took up thy pen and wrote.”²

All the sweetness of our life, love, literature and art are but the faint echo of the entrancing Ananda of the Divine Flute.

To sum up in Sethna’s beautiful words—

“It is, however, in the touching *Envoi* which Sri Aurobindo appended in 1895 to his juvenilia that we are given distinctly to know that a spiritual hunger was always present in him. On the surface, this hunger was an artistic desire to endow his poetic expression with a certain potent ease—not by any means facility, but inspired fluency, subtle, limpid or sweetly solemn as the occasion required. This he achieved very well, spontaneity and finish being stamped almost always everywhere in *Songs to Myrtilla*. But he was not satisfied, since it was not only art but also life that he

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 27.

² *Ibid.*

wanted to make glorious in a supreme unflickering fire of beauty. His Muse was no mere goddess of poetry, but a secret cosmic Spontaneity of beautiful creation, a Plenitude of Power whose words are worlds. He aspired to live poetry as well as write it; and his failure to discover in the hopes and loves and labours of ordinary life anything final to rest upon, cast a painful shadow over his art, gave his sweetest songs a lingering note of sad hopelessness, making him feel that the highest in him stood unliberated and inarticulate. That seems the true significance of the magnificent stanzas with which the *Envoi* opens:

Pale poems, weak and few, who vainly use
Your wings towards the unattainable spheres,
Offspring of the divine Hellenic Muse,
Poor maimed children born of six disastrous years!

'Not as your mother's is your wounded grace,
Since not to me with equal love returned
The hope which drew me to that serene face
Wherein no unrepentful light of effort burned.'¹

In the *Envoi* it becomes clear that nothing short of the greatest spiritual fulfilment was aimed at by Sri Aurobindo. Though he had felt and lived deeply in the soul even at that early age these early limited reaches did not satisfy him. He was attracted by that which only India could give. He had heard a call from 'Saraswati'—according to the Mother the presiding deity of the present creation—

"Me from her lotus heaven Saraswati
Has called to regions of eternal snow
And Ganges pacing to the southern sea,
Ganges upon whose shores the flowers of Eden blow."²

A supreme call from the highest heights is heard in the inner solitude's awaiting expectancy of the young poet who rises to meet his glorious destiny and gives up the gifts of the Greek muses—all the riches of the intermediate zones—and shoots straight like an arrow to pierce into the sacred regions from where flows the heavenly Ganges and which is vibrant with the divine and mellifluous notes of goddess Saraswati—a call irresistible, a step irreversible.

(Concluded)

SHYAM KUMARI

¹ *Sri Aurobindo—the Poet*, pp. 6-7.

² *S.A.B.C.L.*, Vol. 5, p. 28.

JUNG'S RELEVANCE TO INDIA

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1986)

PSYCHO-THERAPY OR MENTAL HEALING AS A NEW RELIGION IN THE WORLD AND THE TURN TO YOGA AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

THE widest and the most appreciated service of psychology to man comes from psycho-therapy, practised in clinics to which men turn for relief from mental conflict, anxiety, frustration, maladjustment and other inner difficulties. These clinics have spread rapidly in recent times in a large part of the world.

Previously such solace and comfort one sought from religion through prayer, submission to the Divine and reference to the priest or the religious teacher. Now one repairs, at least in the West, preferentially to the psychiatrist or the psycho-therapist. It is a wide cultural change and needs to be taken note of. Is the psychologist not assuming the role of the religious teacher in advising on all matters of inner conflict and difficulty? And people narrate to him in confidence all their problems.

Many are the therapies in vogue around the world. And they are all rendering useful service, each in its own way. There are the orthodox Freudian clinics, seeking through Free Association and Dream Interpretation to go back to childhood memories and unearth the repressed feelings and impulses. These latter are thus raised to consciousness and that brings about release from repression and relief to the patient from his complaint of persistent anxiety or any other.

There are then the strict Jungian clinics, which follow the principles of Analytical Psychology of Jung and bring relief to the patient. These employ Word Association Tests and seek therapy to discover the cause of conflict. Then a true orientation regarding the situation is sought to be imparted to the patient. As this orientation takes form, symptoms tend to fade out. Jungian clinics do not seek to go to childhood memories and the treatment is quicker. Dreams are availed of, but interpreted differently.

There are also clinics following Alfred Adler's line of treatment. Freud and Jung rely primarily on the unconscious, though differently. Adler cared primarily for the situation of the family and the patient's place in it and the inferiority or superiority it engendered in him and the style of life he developed in consequence. A reorientation of the situation is then sought to be given. And that brings about relief. This is the simplest of the therapies.

However, most of the clinics are of the eclectic type. Each therapist develops his own synthesis on the basis of his experience and then follows it with his patients. He combines with it ordinary psychiatric techniques as well as yogic meditation and physico-therapy also as needed in view of the satisfaction of his public and patients and his own inclinations.

Psycho-therapy or mental healing is a rising new movement, truly universal in its character, possessing a universal appeal. The personality of the therapist is crucial here. He should be a model of mental health and be able to inspire confidence. These qualities are difficult to acquire and to maintain. But on them would depend the further progress of this movement.

All these clinics promote self-examination and self-reintegration which imply the ideal of self-perfection. However, Jungian Analysts directly aim at promoting self-experience, and encourage, after the elimination of the complaint, a further integration of personality and a fuller experience of the Self. All this is contributory to the growth of spiritual seeking in life.

However, there is a direct turning to spiritual life also noticeable in the world. The turning to yoga, to meditation and to oriental mystic practices is a pretty wide phenomenon in Europe and America, which is also awakening the traditional religious faith to fresh activity.

Psycho-therapy, Yoga, meditation and fresh activity in the traditional faith all show interest in man and in his inner peace, harmony and progress. Jung has interesting things to say, in particular, about psycho-therapy. He regarded himself primarily as a psychiatrist, a doctor of the soul. The abiding interest of his life was the human psyche, his profession was to bring healing to his patient and this he did with love and joy. His own words on the subject may now be considered. He says:

“The spirit of mankind has been concerned with the suffering soul for thousands of years, perhaps even earlier than with the suffering body. The ‘salvation’ of the soul, the ‘propitiation of the gods’, and the perils of the soul are by no means recent problems.”

*

“Psychotherapy is in reality a dialectic relationship between doctor and patient, a discussion between two psychic entities in which all knowledge is a mere tool. The aim is a transformation which is not predetermined, but much more an indeterminable change, of which the only criterion is the disappearance of the rule of the ego.”

*

“It has been believed for too long that psychotherapy can be used ‘technically’ like a recipe or an operational method or a dyeing process. The general practitioner can use all sorts of techniques without hesitation, whether or not he has this or that personal opinion about his patient, or this or that psychological theory or philosophical or religious conviction. But psychotherapy cannot be used in such a way.... Indeed it is to a great extent immaterial which technique he uses, for it does not depend on ‘technique’ but primarily on the personality who uses this method. The object of the method is neither a dead anatomical preparation, nor an abscess, nor a chemical body, but the whole of a suffering personality.”

*

"... the higher psychotherapy is a most exacting business, and sometimes it sets tasks which challenge not only our understanding or our sympathy, but the whole man. The doctor is inclined to demand this total effort from his patients, yet he must realize that this same demand only works if he is aware that it also applies to himself."

*

"...the art of psychotherapy requires that the therapist should be in possession of an ultimate conviction which can be stated, which is credible and defensible, and which has proved its validity by the fact that it either has resolved any neurotic dissociations of his own or has never let them develop. A therapist who has a neurosis does not deserve the name, for it is not possible to bring the patient to a more advanced stage than one has reached oneself."

*

"What do people want nowadays? In any case they do not want moralizing lectures, for all that can be said in that direction most of them have known long ago. Therefore they go to the doctor, hoping to find a little understanding and knowledge of life. This is comprehensible, for they hope to be understood at least to the extent that they are justified in holding that there is really something the matter, something which cannot be moralized away."

*

"The psyche cannot be treated without taking into account man as a whole, including the ultimate and deepest aspects, any more than the sick body can be treated without taking into account the totality of its functions or rather—as a few representatives of modern medicine have maintained—the totality of the sick man himself. The more 'psychic' a condition is, the greater is its complexity, and the more closely is it related to the whole of man's being."

*

"...modern man has heard enough about guilt and sin. He is sorely enough beset by his own bad conscience, and wants rather to learn how he is to reconcile himself with his own nature..."

*

We have often erred in religion as well as education in making the individual feel sinful and guilty and insisted on his confessing the same. Confession when sincere and honest and full of the intention of not doing the wrong thing again brings

peace to the suffering soul. It works out self-detachment from sin and guilt and that brings peace. But the real problem is a reconciliation with the offending part in us. Its conversion to better ways of life is the thing needed.

The emphasis should be on conversion and reconciliation. Besides, intensification of sense of sin and guilt deepens division in personality. It does not directly promote harmonisation.

Psychotherapy has to discharge the functions previously done by religion, but in a sounder psychological way. Religions too may now avail themselves of psychology and make their older methods sounder as necessary.

The psychotherapist, according to Jung, is a high personality and so has psychotherapy in the present time a high purpose to serve. It must pave the way for more and more experience of the Self.

Otto Rank, who was, like Jung, a Freudian and later an independent thinker, looks upon present psycho-therapy as a transitional phase. It must lead on to a true spiritual healing. But that is evidently a thing of the future.

(To be continued)

INDRA SEN

A PAINFUL PARTING

I PUT the final full-stop like a tender parting kiss
 And send my poetry on its journey to the light of day.
 One glistening piece from my heart's treasure trove
 I expose to other eyes, share my intimate delight.
 Though mine I no longer claim it my very own.
 Stay awhile, my angel muse, before you take wing.
 Let me have a last look at you and a caress.
 Hatched and nurtured in my soul's cosy recess
 What heights of ecstasy you sent through my blood stream!
 Have you retained some of it in your fibres?
 Or the fragrance to sweeten other hearts
 As you did mine while nestled in my thoughts and dreams?
 I doubt. A flower plucked and vased
 Is but a corpse decked in silk and pearls.

DEBANSHU

SURENDRA NATH JAUHAR PASSES AWAY: 1903-1986

SURENDRA Nathji, an old devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, who built up Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch and the Mother's International School there, left his body at 8 p.m. on 2nd September, 1986 at Delhi.

He was a man of energy, dedication and determination and he built up the Delhi Branch and the International School from scratch to their present magnificent forms through long self-consecration. He stood alone and worked alone and achieved alone by himself and by his inner resources and contacts. His inner strength and confidence were really remarkable.

He leaves the big estate of the Ashram Branch and the school in the hands of his daughter, Tara Jauhar, to carry forward this work in New Delhi, the capital of India, a centre of international life. She is assisted in this large work by her brother, Anil Jauhar, and a band of other workers.

The Mother gave a message when the Delhi Branch was founded in 1956. It was:

“Let this place be worthy of its name and manifest the true spirit of Sri Aurobindo's teaching and message to the world.”

Now when the original worker has withdrawn one would wish with all one's heart:

“May the Delhi Ashram Branch ever manifest the true spirit of Sri Aurobindo's teaching and message to the world.”

The day Surendra Nathji and I came to Pondicherry, the first time comes to my mind with special vividness and force today when physically he is no more. It was in the last week of December in the year 1939 that we arrived here and spent a few days together and addressed our silent prayers to Sri Aurobindo. Those few days stand out so vividly in my consciousness as though they were so full of life's content, its past and its future. Surendra Nathji was conscious of a turning-point and new possibilities of life then too.

However, the visit passed off and we returned to Delhi and resumed our respective roles there. But our silent prayers had evidently been heard and we began to turn more and more Pondicherry-wards. I came and Surendra Nathji's children came for education and the Delhi Ashram Branch got its initial start and we became Pondicherry-centred and life received a clear positive orientation. We became conscious of the goal and conscious of the way to the goal. That was a long time back. Since then we have walked on the path, now in a march, now haltingly, but always sure of the goal and the way.

Such has been the wonderful consequences of that visit of ours in the last week of December in 1939.

Surendra Nathji's Delhi Ashram Branch and the Mother's International School was his self-chosen assignment of life and to this he dedicated whole-heartedly his energies. And, indeed, great has been the achievement and continuous, long and steady his self-consecration. Many were the hurdles, big and small, overt and occult, which came in his way. One could recall them and laugh at them today when they are no more. But when they came they were really unnerving. But Surendra Nathji faced them and overcame them. He was truly heroic. He was heroic as a nationalist fighter too. Equally heroic in building up an independent flourishing business life in the old Delhi of the 1930s. But the heroism which was demanded of him to build up the Delhi Branch against subtler forces of life was much greater and he rose to the full height of the situation.

He was a businessman but he became a writer and a speaker. His book of reminiscences of the Mother, *My Mother*, is a wonderful piece of writing, so frank, so true, so engrossing. It has a quality of its own. Is that not the impact of the yogic consciousness on his subtle centre of expression—a busy man blossoming out into such beautiful expressiveness?

His correspondence with the Mother was profuse and extended over a long period of time. Every hurdle he came across he referred to the Mother. That gave him the confidence that he would overcome it and he did overcome it.

But the outside work, a work done in the world, has its own circumstances. The world looks at things externally. Its values are external. The worker is all the time exposed to them and can easily accept them and that can do harm. To guard against this harm is extremely difficult, but it has to be done.

Surendra Nathji was a devoted Sadhak. He leaves behind a rich legacy, a legacy of a large institution, a legacy of long self-consecration.

We admire his consecration. We honour his achievement. We wish him the full fruit of this consecration. May his soul ever go forth on its path of divine fulfilment.

INDRA SEN

NOTICE

Now the Video-tape of the *Savitri* paintings by Huta under the Mother's guidance, Cantos 1, 2 & 3 combined, is available at SABDA. The price is Rs. 400/-. The highlight of it is the Mother's recitation of *Savitri* and her own organ-music.

AVAILABLE AT SABDA—Pondicherry - 605 002

TO KAILASH AND MANAS-SAROVAR

The author of the poem on a visit to Manas-Sarovar in last month's Mother India has sent this expansion of his short note to the poem. As his trek was an important adventure we are glad to publish the longer account.

IT WAS indeed a soul-fulfilling pilgrimage across and beyond the Himalayas to Mount Kailash and lake Manas-Sarovar in Tibet (China).

The Second Batch to which I belonged had trekked into Tibet, and was split into two groups. Thus, one performed the *parikrama* (circumambulation) around Mt. Kailash first (52 kms), while the other did the same around the lake (75 kms).

My group had first gone around the Mountain, and now began our *parikrama* around the lake on 15 July 1985.

The day was sunny to begin with, but soon after we had bathed in the Lake at about noon and had lunch, the weather began to alter steadily. By three o'clock, it was raining. This soon changed to a heavy hailstorm which caught us completely in the open, with no hope of gaining any shelter anywhere in the wide-open mountain-scape along the shores of Manas-Sarovar. All of us were thoroughly drenched and bitterly cold. To add to the merriment, our pack-horses panicked in the terrible hailstorm followed by a thunderous electrical storm which spared us none of its pyrotechnics in the heavens. It was a dangerous time, and our next camp was at least 20 kms away. We responded with heroism to this challenge, each in his own measure, and took turns leading the horses and comforting the most vulnerable amongst us.

Around 9:30 p.m. Chinese time (7 p.m. IST), as I brought up the rear with a pilgrim too distraught to continue on her own, I looked north to see that the clouds had completely cleared around the holy peak, lit now by a delicate rosy light of the setting sun. "One consenting thought moved every breast": the Lord was smiling at us. To further compound the evidence, we saw a plume widening at the top and curving to the right from its narrow base which was touching the summit of the peak: much like the Ganges rising out of the Lord's matted locks. This was no freak cloud-formation, for it had nothing woolly about it that required any exercise of imagination. Its delineation was clear and sharp, its colour an opaque smoky dark grey. The Lord had seen us through the storm.

It was upon returning to New Delhi that the parents of two pilgrims informed us that we had adventured during the month of Shrāwana, which the Hindu lunar calendar dedicates to Lord Shiva. They further informed us that the Purushottama-māsa (the additional month added every three years to our lunar computation) had this time coincided with Shrāwana-māsa as well. Such a Shrāwana-Purushottama coincidence occurs every 36 years.

A little more research revealed that 15 July 1985 was a Monday or Somwār (Lord Shiva's day of the week), and the same night (i.e. 15-16/7/85) had been a new moon night (when the Lord is said to descend to bathe in the Lake from his abode atop Kailāsh). We had indeed seen the Lord Himself.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Spring Fire: An Anthology of Bendre's Poetry. Edited and Translated by Dr. K. Raghavendra Rao with assistance from Dr. Vaman Bendre and Prof. K. S. Sharma. Published by Ambikatanayadatta Vedike, 13 Sree Mata, Sadhanakeri, Dharwad - 580 008 and Purogami Sahitya Prakashana, 121-A, Vijayanagar, Hubli - 580 032, Karnataka State, India. Pages: xii+44. Price Rs. 75.00.

To the world of Kannada literature, Dr Bendre is something more than a great name. As a prolific writer he has thirty-one volumes of poetry, sixteen dramas and hundreds of essays and critical writings. Name any coveted award given to litterateurs by the Government of India and Dr Bendre has received it. The awards followed him as "light follows day".

Spring Fire, a posthumous publication, is an attempt to introduce this great man of Kannada letters to non-Kannada readers. The very get-up of the book and the price give the impression that the publishers are actually aiming at foreign readers. It is beautifully produced—but unfortunately with plenty of printing errors.

Coming to the content of the book the first section contains fifty-two poems selected from thirty-one books of the poet and transcreated into English. Bendre has a mature sense of aesthetics and his poems are reflections on nature. He is one with nature and the power of God's plenty—beauty—haunts his poetry. To Bendre "Joy is birth. Sorrow is death. But this harmony is life." His images too are aptly culled from the great book of Nature which the poet has immensely studied.

"You laughed like a pregnant flower—
As the lover fondles the cheek,
The flesh trembles as if pricked by the thorns of bliss"

and again:

"The life-fruit gifted to my belly
Tastes like milk and honey on my lips."

This section contains very serious songs like 'A Prayer to the Mother', and also light ones like 'A Street Bitch Radha'. With mouths agape we listen to his song of seasons and we join him in dancing when he invites us to do so in his poem 'A Song for Dance'.

The translators have done a commendable job by admirably rendering Bendre's poems into readable English. The poems do not read like translated ones. And there lies the success of the translators.

The second section contains ten poems originally written in English by the poet from time to time, but printed for the first time here. A reading of these poems shows that Dr Bendre can wield his pen in English too and had he desired he would

have become a well-known Indo-Anglian poet. The subject matter he handles is once again from *Life, the Great Book of Nature*. But here he likes to play with words:

“Kiss it Miss.
Don't miss it.
Please
Kindly
Give it Bliss.”

“It is ardently hoped,” says the blurb, “that this *spring* of his poetry with the *Fire* in it would put him on the world map of Poetry.” “World map” may be too high a hope, but certainly Bendre's poetry is of wide interest.

P. RAJA

Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual—No. 45 (1986) Published by *Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir*, Calcutta. Pp: 108+118. Price: Rs.15.00.

Sandwiched between a bunch of photographs of Sri Aurobindo as well as of the Mother and an advertisement section that runs to 118 pages are the selected pieces from the writings of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, Nolini Kanta Gupta, plus a long article by Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar.

The first section is devoted to the many messages given by Sri Aurobindo on various occasions. The various occasions being the death of Mahatma Gandhi; 15th August 1947; the presentation of the Sir Cattamanchi Ramalinga Reddy National Prize given to him at the convocation held at the Andhra University; his birth anniversary celebrations in New York, etc. His valid opinions on India, his discussion of the present crisis and the two versions of the message given at the request of the All India Radio, Trichinopoly, for the 15th August 1947 are some of the highlights here.

The Mother's views on India, the Atomic Bomb, Peace, the World Today, and the Present Condition and Future Possibilities of Humanity form the bulk of the second section while the third consists of writings from Nolini Kanta Gupta. Out of his five essays included here, the last one titled 'Sri Aurobindo' is a highly thought-provoking piece. He opines that India is one and indivisible and discusses the basic unity—the geographical, the physical.

With the long essay 'Sri Aurobindo and Gandhian Non-Violence' by Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar the reading portion of the annual comes to an end. It compares the two contemporaries right from their births to their deaths. Their education in England, their family background, their political roles are all admirably introduced. “Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo,” writes Dr. Iyengar, “never met, but a divinity doubtless shaped their ends while also moulding India's destiny.” Since they both fought for a Free India, the later part of the essay is devoted to bringing

out the difference in their approach and effective action. It is a highly readable and heavily informative essay on the "twin prophets of human unity and perfectibility, twin harbingers of a future world which the one called 'Ramrajya' and the other 'the Life Divine'.

P. RAJA

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