

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE
21 FEBRUARY 1986 : THE ANNIVERSARY OF
THE MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

Price: Rs. 3.75

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

INLAND

Annual: Rs. 36.00

Life Membership: Rs. 504.00

OVERSEAS

Sea Mail:

Annual: \$13.00 or £8.00

Life Membership: \$182.00 or £112.00

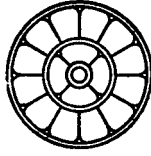
Air Mail:

Annual: \$36.00 for American & Pacific countries

£20.00 for all other countries

Life Membership: \$504.00 for American & Pacific countries

£280.00 for all other countries

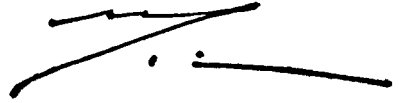


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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

All correspondence to be addressed to:

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

Editor's Phone: 4782

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Published by: P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY - 605 002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry - 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

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

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXIX

No. 2

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
HYMN TO THE MOTHER: TRANSLATED BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA FROM THE BENGALI ORIGINAL OF SAHANA	... 69
THE MOTHER'S HOUR OF BIRTH: IN A NUMEROLOGICAL CONTEXT	<i>K. D. Sethna</i> ... 70
THE MOTHER ON HERSELF AND HER WORK	<i>Compiled by Nilima</i> ... 71
A TALK BY THE MOTHER: TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON FEBRUARY 16, 1955	... 74
A REMINISCENCE OF NOLINI	<i>Shyam Kumari</i> ... 79
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Nirodbaran</i> ... 80
SHE (Poem)	<i>Shyam Kumari</i> ... 83
THE STORY OF A SOUL	<i>Huta</i> ... 84
NOLINIDA:	
1. HIS LAST WISH ABOUT THE ASHRAM	... 89
2. HIS LIFE'S ESSENTIAL THEME	<i>Indra Sen</i> ... 89
ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE'S VISIT TO THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM:	
1. INTERVIEW BY VIMALA THAKAR DATED 17. 8. 1959	... 91
2. MEETING WITH THE MOTHER	... 93
TRANSLATED FROM THE GUJARATI	<i>by N. M. Bhatt</i>
MEMORIES OF A TURNING-POINT: SOME ENTRIES FROM A PERSONAL DIARY	<i>A. K.</i> ... 95
PUJALAL	<i>Amal Kiran</i> ... 97
LALITA AND THE LORD'S GRACE	<i>Shyam Kumari</i> ... 98

CONTENTS

TWO LETTERS	<i>Amal Kiran</i>	... 99
COMMENTARY ON THE ISHA UPANISHAD: SHANKARA AND SRI AUROBINDO	<i>N. Jayashanmukham</i>	... 105
FURTHER STUDIES IN INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY: FREUD AND PERSONAL INTEGRATION OR DEVELOPMENT—LIMITATIONS OF HIS APPROACH—WHAT INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY CAN CONTRIBUTE	<i>Indra Sen</i>	... 109
THE 'IDEAL CHILD' AND OURSELVES: COMPILED AND TRANSLATED FROM SUNDARAM'S GUJARATI	<i>Ranadhir Upadyaya</i>	... 115
EUROPE 1974: A TRAVELOGUE	<i>Chaundona S. Banerji</i>	... 117
THE CLEVER YARN-SPINNER: A FOLKTALE	<i>P. Raja</i>	... 120
STORIES FROM TAMIL LITERATURE: 22. WAR OVER A POET		... 123
23. HONOUR OF THE FAMILY	<i>M. L. Thangappa</i>	... 124
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE: THE ROAD BEHIND WHITENS IN THE SUN— POEMS OF INDIA BY GORDON KORSTANGE	<i>Review by Shraddhavan</i>	... 126

HYMN TO THE MOTHER

(Translated by Nolini Kanta Gupta from the Bengali Original of Sahana)

GODDESS Supreme, Mira; Creator of the worlds,
Nourisher of the worlds, Benefactor of the worlds, Mother!
Goddess Supreme, Mira! The infinite Mother of the gods, the universal
Goddess!

The Home of the worlds Thy gracious Feet!
Rays of Thy immeasurable light, descending from the divine family of
the gods,

We shall take birth as the new race, spreading wide Thy force of
light by our valour.

A new humanity, a new race of beauty bear in their eyes the
tranquillity of Thy eyes.

Train all Thy children, Mother, under Thy training give them
Thy own initiation.

We shall pin Thy words upon our flag and march on from peak to peak,
firm in heart, towards Thy goal.

Ever shall we hold in front our ideal.

We are seekers who seek to lay themselves at Thy Feet, ever shall
we seek refuge in Thee.

Sun Goddess, O Mother Mira! Origin that has no origin and no end!
On Thy forehead shines the glorious heaven, at Thy feet lies
the Path freed of darkness!

New lights shine in Thy limbs, new lightnings flash in Thy glances,
Thy steps measure out the rhythm eternal, Thy smile bewitches our
prone hearts to surrender.

Thy touch pours abroad Thy supreme blessing, Thy face irradiates
Thy overflowing grace.

O Thy feet, the wide-open eternal refuge for all!

Goddess Mira, Mother of the worlds, without Thy upholding strength,
the universe is a helpless orphan.

With Thy presence upon earth, dispel all evil, all untruth.

Victory, victory to the giver of victory!

We bow down to the Supreme Ruler of the worlds, the Mother!

THE MOTHER'S HOUR OF BIRTH

IN A NUMEROLOGICAL CONTEXT

THE hour at which the Mother was born remained unknown for a long time. It came to light only a few years back, thanks to her son André.

The comparison, between the various time-details we have so far had of the Mother's birth and those available of Sri Aurobindo's, has proved a very fascinating one. Sri Aurobindo was born in 1872, the Mother in 1878. The numerical difference is 6. His month of birth is the eighth in the year, August; hers is February, the second month. The same difference of 6 is there again. His birthday falls on the 15th, hers on the 21st. Once more the number 6 is at play. The question arose: would the same number appear where the birth-hour was concerned? We have been told that the time was 5 a.m. for Sri Aurobindo. The conjecture could be made that for the Mother it might be—or should be—6 hours before or after: that is, either 11 p.m. or 11 a.m.

The information from France is that there is no record of the exact moment for the Mother but that it was approximately 11 a.m.!

A curious fact relevant to this news is a statement by Sri Aurobindo on himself in an article entitled "About Astrology": "In my own case accuracy was hampered by the inability to fix the precise moment of my birth." So his birth-hour too was approximately 5 a.m.

The fourfold occurrence of 6 in a perfect way is amazing. What could be the occult significance of this rare numerological consistency? The Mother has said in one place that the number 6 symbolises "Creation"; in another she has made it stand for "New Creation". It is indeed true that between them Sri Aurobindo and the Mother carried on a life-time's creative work of giving birth to a new world embodying the descent and manifestation of the hitherto-hidden Supermind upon earth. The sense of this work seems to have been driven home to us by a remarkable phenomenon of numerology.

K. D. SETHNA

THE MOTHER ON HERSELF AND HER WORK

FROM the age of five I was conscious that I did not belong to this world, that I did not have a human consciousness. My sadhana began at that age.¹

Between eleven and thirteen a series of psychic and spiritual experiences revealed to me not only the existence of God but man's possibility of uniting with Him, of realising Him, integrally in consciousness and action, of manifesting Him upon earth in a life divine. This, along with a practical discipline for its fulfilment, was given to me during my body's sleep by several teachers some of whom I met afterwards on the physical plane.

Later on, as the interior and exterior development proceeded, the spiritual and psychic relation with one of these beings became more and more clear and frequent; and although I knew little of the Indian philosophies and religions at that time, I was led to call him Krishna, and henceforth I was aware that it was with him (whom I knew I should meet on earth one day) that the divine work was to be done.²

I had a series of visions, and in several of these visions...I saw Sri Aurobindo as He was physically, but glorified; I mean, the same man, as I was to see Him later the first time, almost thin, with this golden-bronzed colour and this slightly sharp profile, this untamed beard, this long hair, dressed in a dhoti, with an end of the dhoti brought up over the shoulder, bare arms and a part of the body bare, with bare feet. At that time, I thought it was a "vision costume"! I tell you, I didn't know anything, I had never seen Indians dressed in the Indian way...And in these visions I did something that physically I had never done: I prostrated myself, and in the Hindu manner.³

I was perhaps twenty-one then, I met a man who was Indian, and he spoke to me about the Gita... He said, "Read the Gita, and take Krishna as the symbol of the Immanent God, the inner Godhead." This was all that he told me. "Read it with that—the knowledge that Krishna represents the Immanent God, in the Gita, the God who is within you." But in one month the whole work was done!⁴

There was a Frenchman who came back from the Himalayas, who had stayed there some time and he gave a lecture, and I listened to the lecture and in the lecture he said that when he was deep in the Himalayas, a Sannyasin whom he didn't know came to see him and told him only this O...M and that he was completely changed. And then, when he said O...M, I felt the same change in me, ...as if the Divine was coming in O...M.

Remember this: O...M; O...M. That's all. O...M. It must be manifested. If anything goes wrong, repeat OM, all will go well... OM is the signature of the Lord...with the help of OM one can realise the Divine. OM has a transforming power. OM represents the Divine.⁵

It was in 1914 that the identification with the Universal Mother took place, the identification of the physical consciousness with her. Of course, I knew before that I was The Mother, but the complete identification took place only in 1914.⁶

Sri Aurobindo had given me charge of the outer work because he wanted to withdraw into concentration in order to hasten the manifestation of the supramental consciousness and he had announced to the few people who were there that he was entrusting me with helping and guiding them.⁷

My aim is to create a big family in which it will be possible for everyone to fully develop his capacities and express them.⁸

The time had come to take up the work of the new creation.⁹

I do not give positions to the Sadhaks—I give them work—and to all I give an equal opportunity. It is those who prove to be most capable and most sincere, honest and faithful who will have a bigger amount of work and the greatest responsibility.¹⁰

In the whole of creation the earth has a place of distinction, because, unlike any other planet, it is evolutionary with a psychic entity at its centre. In it, India, in particular, is a divinely chosen country.¹¹

On the Map of Undivided India in the Playground

It is the map of the true India in spite of all passing appearances—and this will always remain the map of the true India, no matter what people may think.¹²

The aim of education is not to prepare a man to succeed in life and society, but to increase his perfectibility to its utmost.¹³

To develop the spirit of service is part of the training here and it completes the other studies.¹⁴

Let the Truth be your master and your guide.

We aspire for the Truth and its triumph in our being and our qualities.

The future is full of promise. Prepare yourself for it. It is not a number that we want, it is a selection; it is not brilliant students that we want, it is living souls.¹⁵

Physical culture is the best way of developing the consciousness of the body, and the more the body is conscious, the more it is capable of receiving the divine forces that are at work to transform it and give birth to the new race.¹⁶

The basic programme will be to build a body, beautiful in form, harmonious in posture, supple and agile in its movements, powerful in its activities and resistant in its health and organic function.¹⁷

I am not eager to be the Guru of anyone. It is more spontaneously natural for me to be universal and to act in silence through love.¹⁸

Living in the heart of each atom I kindle in it the fire that purifies and transfigures, the fire that is never extinguished...

This being is no longer anything else than an embrace of peace enveloping the whole earth, an ocean of joy overflowing all.¹⁹

I am here because my body has been given for the first attempt at transformation. Sri Aurobindo told me so. Well, I am doing it. I do not wish anyone to do it for me because...because, it is not very pleasant, but I do it willingly because of the results; everybody will be able to benefit from it...²⁰

I have never left the earth since its formation. If ever I leave my body, my consciousness will remain with you.²¹

Compiled by NILIMA

REFERENCES

1. *Glimpses of The Mother's Life*, Vol. 1, p. 141.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 24.
3. *The Divine Materialism* by Satprem, Part 1, p. 138.
4. *Glimpses of The Mother's Life*, Vol. 1, p. 54.
5. *Harmomes of Light*, by Mona Sarkar, p. 3.
6. *Glimpses of The Mother's Life*, Vol. 1, p. 154.
7. *The Mother on Herself*, p. 67.
8. *Glimpses of The Mother's Life*, Vol. 2, p. 47.
9. *Questions and Answers: On Education*, Vol. 12, p. 285.
10. *Glimpses of The Mother's Life*, Vol. 2, p. 109.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
13. *Questions and Answers, On Education*, Vol. 12, p. 120.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 115.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 285.
17. *On The Mother* by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Vol. 2, p. 535.
18. *Glimpses of The Mother's Life*, Vol. 2, p. 113.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
20. *Mother India*, 1978, Feb., p. 93.
21. *Ibid.*

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON FEBRUARY 16, 1955

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 4, "Desire—Food—Sex"

Sweet Mother, here it is said that one should have no attachment for material things; then, when you give us something, if we lose it and feel sad, it can be called attachment?

It is better not to lose it. (*Laughter*) But in fact the thing ought to be only... It is not the thing itself to which one must be attached. It is to open oneself to what is within, what I put into the thing I give, this indeed is much more important. And, of course, there can always be an accident but it is certain that if one gives to a thing its inner symbolical or spiritual value, there is much less chance of losing it; it creates a kind of relation because of which there is not much chance of losing it. It remains close to you.

I have the feeling, when someone loses something I have given him, that he was just in contact with the outer form, the shell, and not with what I had put inside, otherwise he would not have lost it; I have the feeling that there is a lack of deeper perception. Perhaps one was very attached to the outer form, but not very open to what was behind.

Mother, here it is said that specially for an athlete certain foods are necessary, so that there may be certain vitamins which are necessary, and all this...

That's modern science. Yes... well, if you wait some fifty years, they will have found something else, and it will change, and vitamins will be forgotten.... But now, what did you want to ask?

You have given the answer. (Laughter)
How should we use things?

Ah, this is... First, to use things with an understanding of their true utility, the knowledge of their real use, with the utmost care so that they do not get spoilt and with the least confusion.

I am going to give you an example: you have a pair of scissors. There are scissors of all kinds, there are scissors for cutting paper, and there are scissors for cutting thread... Now if you have the pair of scissors which you need, use it for the thing it is made for. But I know people who, when they have a pair of scissors, use it without any discernment to cut anything at all, to cut small silk threads, and they

try to cut a wire also with it or else they use it as a tool to open tins, you see; for anything whatever, where they need an instrument they get hold of their scissors and use them. So naturally, after quite a short while they come to me again and say, "Oh, my pair of scissors is spoilt, I would like to have another." And they are very much surprised when I tell them, "No, you won't have another, because you have spoilt this one, because you have used it badly." This is just one example. I could give many others.

People use something which gets dirty and is spoilt in becoming dirty, or they forget to clean it or neglect it, because all this takes time.

There is a kind of respect for the object one has, which must make one treat it with much consideration and try to preserve it as long as possible, not because one is attached to it and desires it, but because an object is something respectable which has sometimes cost a lot of effort and labour in the producing and so must as a result be considered with the respect due to the work and effort put into it.

There are people who have nothing, who don't even have the things which are absolutely indispensable, and who are compelled to make them in some way for their personal use. I have seen people of this kind who, with much effort and ingenuity, had managed to make for themselves certain things which are more or less indispensable from the practical point of view. But the way they treated them, because they were aware of the effort they had put in to make them, was remarkable—the care, that kind of respect for the object they had produced, because they knew how much labour it had cost them. But people who have plenty of money in their pockets, and when they need something turn the knob of a shop-door, enter and put down the money and take the thing, they treat it like that. They harm themselves and give a very bad example.

Many a time I say, "No, use what you have. Try to make the best possible use of it. Don't throw away things uselessly, don't ask uselessly. Try to do with what you have, putting into it all the care, all the order, all the necessary method, and avoiding confusion."

Here, you know, we have a small chit-pad,¹ and people write every month what they want; and then it happens that we were compelled to ration things because otherwise it was becoming something excessive. But this rationing often turned against its purpose.

I remember visiting a sadhak in his room, it is now some twenty-five years ago or so. It is an old story. I remember it still. There was a rack hanging from the wall, a rack with five shelves; the rack was as big as this, and there were five shelves one above another and they were all... all these shelves were full, over-full of tiny soap pieces. So I asked him, "But for heaven's sake, what are you doing with all these pieces of soap? Why do you have all these pieces of soap there? Why don't you

1. The Ashramites take from what Mother called "Prosperity" their clothes, toilet articles, and other requirements. They write out their needs on a page of their Prosperity Book and give in the list a few days before the distribution, which takes place on the first of each month.

use them?" He said to me, "Ah, we have the right to one cake of soap per month, so every month I ask for soap. It happens that I don't finish it in that month, I keep the pieces."

And he continued to take it?

It was like that, he made a collection; because he had the right to a cake of soap, he wanted to take the soap, and to take the soap he put the former piece aside. It is an authentic story. I am not inventing it.

Many people here are like that. I won't tell you their names but I know them well. There are many like that. They have a right to something, they will ask for it even if they don't need it, because they have the right. This indeed is... well, in fact it is... an attitude... we won't qualify it.

There is also the miser who fills his chest with pieces of gold and never uses them. Gold does not rot, otherwise truly it rots morally, because something that does not circulate becomes very ill. Now, no conclusions!

Sweet Mother, which things are truly indispensable for our life?

I don't think they are the same for everyone. It depends on the country, it depends on the habits, and to tell you the truth, if one analyses very closely, I don't think there are many. You see, if you travel round the world, in every country people have different habits of sleeping, habits of eating, habits of dressing, habits for making their toilet. And quite naturally, they will tell you that the things they use are indispensable. But if you change countries you will realise that all these things are of no use for those people, because they make use of other things which are just as useful for them and seem to them indispensable. Then once again you change the country, and yet again it is other things. So finally, if anyone has travelled a little over the world, he says, "But what is really useful?" I consider a toothbrush as something indispensable. My neighbour will look at me and tell me, "What's that, your toothbrush? I use my fingers and it is absolutely all right." And everything's like that, isn't it?

Food—it seems to you that a certain amount of things is indispensable in order to give you the necessary strength and that they are such and such things because you are accustomed to them, but in another country it is altogether different.

So one can't make a rule; and if one wants to be absolutely strict, I think it is a purely personal question, that it depends on each one's body; because as soon as you grow wide in your consciousness, you realise that the things which seem indispensable to you are not at all so, that you can very well do without them, carry on very well, work very well, have a lot of energy without having any of the things which seem to you indispensable. Are there any things in the whole world which are indispensable, I mean material things? Yes, one can say a small amount

of food—and one can't make a general rule, it depends on the climate.

Nature is foreseeing enough, she produces in each climate the right thing for it. Of course, one should not put man at the centre and say that Nature has made this for the good of man, I don't think it is like that, because she had invented all this long before man appeared on the earth. But it is a kind of harmony which develops between the climatic conditions of a country and its produce, as we know that there is a harmony between the size of animals and the largeness of the country they live in. For example, the elephants of India are much smaller than those of Africa. And it is said that this is because in Africa the spaces are immense, so the animals are very big.

It is a kind of harmony established in the creation and as the countries become smaller, as the zones in which these animals live grow smaller, well, the animal becomes smaller until it disappears completely when there is no proper relation left between the free space and its own size. If you construct many houses, well, there will no longer be any bears, any wolves; naturally, first the lions and tigers disappear, but in this I believe men have done something... Fear makes them very destructive. But the greater the masses of human beings and the lesser the free spaces, the more do the animal species grow smaller. So how can we make rules?

The more money we have, the more we need...

The more money one has the more one is in a state of calamity, my child. Yes, it is a calamity.

It is a catastrophe to have money. It makes you stupid, it makes you miserly, it makes you wicked. It is one of the greatest calamities in the world. Money is something one ought not to have until one no longer has desires. When one no longer has any desires, any attachments, when one has a consciousness vast as the earth, then one may have as much money as there is on the earth; it would be very good for everyone. But if one is not like that, all the money one has is like a curse upon him. This I could tell anyone at all to his face, even to the man who thinks that it is a merit to have become rich. It is a calamity and perhaps it is a disgrace, that is, it is an expression of a divine displeasure.

It is infinitely more difficult to be good, to be wise, to be intelligent and generous, to be more generous, you follow me, when one is rich than when one is poor. I have known many people in many countries, and the most generous people I have ever met in all the countries, were the poorest. And as soon as the pockets are full, one is caught by a kind of illness, which is a sordid attachment to money. I assure you it is a curse.

So the first thing to do when one has money is to give it. But as it is said that it should not be given without discernment, don't go and give it like those who practise philanthropy, because that fills them with a sense of their own goodness, their generosity and their own importance. You must act in a sattwic way, that is,

make the best possible use of it. And so, each one must find in his highest consciousness what the best possible use of the money he has can be. And truly money has no value unless it circulates. For each and every one, money is valuable only when one has spent it. If one doesn't spend it... I tell you, men take care to choose things which do not deteriorate, that is, gold—which does not decompose. Otherwise, from the moral point of view it rots. And now that gold has been replaced by papers, if you keep papers for a long time without taking care of them, you will see when you open your drawer that there are small silver-fish which have regaled themselves on your paper-rupees. So they will have left a lace-work which the bank will refuse.

There are countries and religions which always say that God makes those whom He loves poor. I don't know if that is true; but there is one thing which is true, that surely when someone is born rich or has become very rich, in any case when he possesses much from the point of view of material riches, it is certainly not a sign that the Divine has chosen him for His divine Grace, and he must make honourable amends if he wants to walk on the path, the true path, to the Divine.

Wealth is a force—I have already told you this once—a force of Nature; and it should be a means of circulation, a power in movement, as flowing water is a power in movement. It is something which can serve to produce, to organise. It is a convenient means, because in fact it is only a means of making things circulate fully and freely.

This force should be in the hands of those who know how to make the best possible use of it, that is, as I said at the beginning, people who have abolished in themselves or in some way or other got rid of every personal desire and every attachment. To this should be added a vision vast enough to understand the needs of the earth, a knowledge complete enough to know how to organise all these needs and use this force by these means.

If, besides this, these beings have a higher spiritual knowledge, then they can utilise this force to construct gradually upon the earth what will be capable of manifesting the divine Power, Force and Grace. And then this power of money, wealth, this financial force, of which I just said that it was like a curse, would become a supreme blessing for the good of all.

For I think that it is the best things which become the worst. Perhaps the worst also can become the best. Some people also say that it is the worst men who become the best. I hope the best don't become the worst, for that indeed would be sad.

But still, certainly, the greatest power, if badly used, can be a very great calamity; whereas this same very great power if well utilised can be a blessing. All depends on the use that's made of things. Each thing in the world has its place, its work, a real use; and if used for something else it creates a disorder, confusion, chaos. And that's because in the world as it is, very few things are utilised for their true work, very few things are really in their place, and it is because the world is in a frightful chaos that there is all this misery and suffering. If each thing was in its place, in a harmonious balance, the whole world could progress without needing to be in the state

of misery and suffering in which it is. There!

So there is nothing that's bad in itself, but there are many things—almost all—which are not in their place.

Perhaps in the body also it is like that. There is nothing that's bad in itself; but many things are not in their place, and that is why one becomes ill. There is created an inner disharmony. So the result is that one is ill. And people always think that it is not their fault that they are ill, and it is always their fault, and they are very angry when they are told this: "You have no pity." And yet it is true.

There we are. That's enough, isn't it?

That's all. Then we stop. The dose is complete.

(Questions and Answers 1955, pp. 49-56)

A REMINISCENCE OF NOLINI

ONE night in a dream-experience I went to Sri Aurobindo's house. There, just inside, near the door, I found two beds placed end to end. Nolini-da was lying on one of them and on the other were many tiny silver vessels holding milk, etc. for him.

From head to foot his whole body was luminous burnished gold and he was looking extremely beautiful. Surprised to see him reclining in Sri Aurobindo's room I joyously exclaimed, "You here?"

The next day, in my presence Anima related to him my vision. He heard the account without any comment. One day I asked him, "What is the significance of that vision?"

He replied, "Nothing. You just saw my golden body."

SHYAM KUMARI

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of January 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, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshankar. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.)

October 20, 1940

P: Gandhi has declared his programme: he will start Civil Disobedience with 20 people of the Ashram—not any outsider—including two ladies, and he has asked even the Congress Working Committee members not to attend the meetings.

SRI AUROBINDO: And if government does not arrest them?

S: He may go on through the whole of India and he will establish the right of free speech.

SRI AUROBINDO: But only Gandhi's followers may not be arrested. Others won't be free. He is fighting for freedom for everybody. This is the new move? Nothing new there!

P: It seems Azad differed from Gandhi and was on the point of resigning!

SRI AUROBINDO: So much as that?

P: Yes, he doesn't believe in ethical movements. He wants non-violence as a political weapon like others. But he was persuaded to stay on.

SRI AUROBINDO: But if these people are not arrested, what will be the next move?

P: Gandhi doesn't say. Perhaps he will wait for inspiration.

S: But Pattabhi knows.

SRI AUROBINDO: How?

S: Yes, he seems to know all about Gandhiji's scheme and writes in the papers.

SRI AUROBINDO: What did he write? *

S: I don't remember. The *Indian Express* cut a joke at his cost.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is as somebody said, "Only God and Hitler know what Hitler will do next," so God and Pattabhi know what Gandhi will do? (*Laughter*)

N: Like Dinabandhu Mitra's writing an epilogue to Bankim's novels?

SRI AUROBINDO: How is that?

N: As soon as Bankim had finished a novel, Mitra used to come out with a conclusion imitating Bankim's manner, style etc. Bankim said that he wouldn't be able to write any more because of this man.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see! He married off Ayesha to Jagat Singh?

N: Something like that.

P: There seems to be some truth about 60,000 German soldiers being killed on September 15 when Hitler planned to invade England. It was reported at that time.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh, it was reported? That staved off the invasion then? If only in embarkation 60,000 are killed, then in crossing and landing how many more? Everybody who wanted to invade England stumbled against England's sea power. Now I don't think there is any chance of an invasion, because all of Hitler's plans will be exposed and seen.

P: Yes, the British R.A.F. will be able to know all their moves and preparations. Hitler now admits Britain's naval power.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh! it won't be long before he admits air power too.

S: Russia says both Germany and England are equal in air.

SRI AUROBINDO: Equal in force, not number.

P: If they can start invading Germany—

SRI AUROBINDO: That will take about a year more. A standing army of one-and-a-half million is not enough for that.

S: Each side is now at a stalemate.

P: Unless some unknown factor supervenes, one doesn't know how long it will go on.

SRI AUROBINDO: The only unknown factor is Russia or America coming in. America seems to have come to an understanding with Russia. That may be the reason for their sending war materials etc. But for America to enter the war will take still 1 or 2 years with the complete equipment of her mechanised army.

In reply to Russia's note, Germany seems to have said that her step in Rumania is against any aggression—nothing more. If any other power threatens, Germany will fight, which means that she is quite ready to fight Russia if Russia attacks Rumania.

P: If Turkey is attacked by Germany what will Russia do, I wonder.

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't know.

N: Russia is interested in Bulgaria also.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was Russia under the Czar that liberated the Balkans and, if the Czar were there, they would have inclined towards Russia. Now they are afraid of both Russia and Germany.

P: There was a short engagement with the Italian navy in the Mediterranean in which the British destroyed 2 or 3 Italian cruisers.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, only a short engagement is possible with Italy.

Evening

(The evening radio says that Yugoslavia has signed a protocol with Germany as regards economic and political matters.)

SRI AUROBINDO (to P): Have you seen Yugoslavia's agreement with Germany?

P: Yes, they are coming to an understanding.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, not only understanding; they have signed a protocol by which Yugoslavia is dependent on Germany economically and politically which means everything. If the news is true, that is the beginning of the end of the Balkans, because Bulgaria won't resist. Greece will be at its wit's end without Turkey's help and what can Turkey do all alone? So Hitler comes to Asia Minor and that means India. This is what, I thought long before, Hitler might do in the Balkans. The Asura is at his trick again. Now Hitler's move is quite clear. He will try to move towards the Mediterranean, taking possession of the Suez and then Egypt with a simultaneous movement in Spain for Gibraltar with the help of Franco if willing or, if unwilling, without his help and replacing him by Sumer. That is why he has probably asked Sumer to wait. After Egypt, he will try to take North Africa with Petain's consent. If Petain refuses, he may place Laval at the head. And if both refuse, then he will occupy the whole of France and the Mediterranean ports. Then through Spain he can move to Africa. All this will be most dangerous to England and the blockade won't be effective any more. In fact I felt this danger from the very beginning of the war.

N: But Russia will remain quiet all through?

SRI AUROBINDO: It seems to be like that till now. Except for a short inquiry about Rumanian affairs she has done nothing. Don't know what has happened to Stalin's brain.

P: Even if she comes in, it will be too late afterwards. She should come now.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so. It is because of the lack of her support that these powers are breaking down. They know that England can't do anything in their favour because England can't help them with land forces. Even Italy by herself outnumbered England.

N: Turkey is hinging too much on Russia. As nobody knows what Russia's motive is, it can't be safe for Turkey. If Russia betrays her?

SRI AUROBINDO: Exactly. You remember what that Turkish lady—Dilip's friend—said? She said that England is a decadent nation. Turkey won't profit by joining with her. And when she was asked what Turkey's fate would be if England went down, she said, "Why? We will join Russia!"

N: I wonder if Stalin has made a secret pact with Hitler.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is what all suspect. But what will be the value of any such pact if England is defeated? Then Italy, Germany and Japan will all turn on Russia.

N: How if Greece and Turkey together put up resistance to Hitler?

SRI AUROBINDO: That would be an effective check. England could come in with her air and navy.

P: Yes, and Italy could have a little fun from the R.A.F.

SRI AUROBINDO: But the world is under a double curse of stupidity and cowardice. This Hitler is very supple. He takes one step at a time, not the whole movement. When he saw that he had been baulked on one side, he turned to this other

side, which danger I had anticipated from the very start.

N: Now England has only America to rely on.

P: But America is not prepared. She has only a 70,000-strong army which she must keep for her own defence because she herself runs some danger.

SRI AUROBINDO: She has no immediate danger unless Hitler establishes himself in South America. That is not possible as long as there is the British fleet.

N: They could get help from India if they started munition-factories.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, they are going at a snail's pace. Starting now an aeroplane factory at Bangalore!

NIRODBARAN

SHE

HER beauty is the mystic core of creation.
 Behind a veil of light stands the Supreme Mother of all.
 A luminous midnight's sphinxlike hush
 Hides from us the visage of the Supernal.
 Happily, nothing is ever lost in the world,
 All is held back in the silence of Her void.
 Like a mantric music's soul-stirring strain
 Throbs of the occult Heart pulsate through all existence.
 We who are engrossed in the littleness of our lives,
 How can we attain the vasts of the Eternal?
 Unto ourselves we must totally die,
 To be reborn in the golden depths of Her perfect creation.

SHYAM KUMARI

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of January 1986)

The Mother's Message

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



Volume Two: 1958

9

MAY came—overpoweringly hot. I stood at my window to get a fresh cool breath of air and tried to sort out my indiscriminate thoughts into a clear pattern. I drew a deep breath in an effort to calm myself. I was aware of a sense of weariness brought on by the disturbing events of the last few hours. The time was approaching for me to leave.

My emotions, thoroughly ravaged, had become so numbed that life was now being lived in a vacuum of day-to-day monotony, a cocoon within which I felt able to exist without having to endure the pain of actual living. All my world seemed out of joint.

Four bleak days passed slowly and painfully.

The cards came from the Mother each bearing brilliant words which I was unable to grasp due to the blindness of my consciousness. She had written on them:

“Thy love will establish in all that unchanging Bliss which is the supreme Good.”
(A Prayer to the Lord)

“Let him (the aspirant) destroy by deep meditation the qualities that are opposed to the divine Nature.”
(Laws of Manu)

“As in a house with a sound roof the rain cannot penetrate, so in a mind where meditation dwells passion cannot enter.”
(Dhammapada)

I read all these cards with tears in my eyes. Suddenly the impossibility of doing anything worth-while bit into me and the sense of despondency became unbearable. I flung myself on my bed and burst into tears. I exclaimed: “Oh! how, but how could I attain the truths the Mother has stated? My God, give me a chance—help me.”

On 5th May 1958 I received from the Mother a card picturing pretty flowers and these words with her invariable love:

“To my dear little child Huta
Awaken all my being that it may wholly be for
Thee the necessary instrument, the perfect servitor.”
(A Prayer to the Lord)

The Mother saw me in the evening. As always I sat at her feet. Her gaze held mine for a second or two. There was an eloquent silence before she spoke with concern:

“Child, I have been praying to the Lord to make you perfectly well.”
“Come tomorrow morning before you leave for Bombay.”

I thought, “If only I had the Mother’s poise and confidence!” Tears ran slowly from my eyes. She wiped them with her soft and gentle fingers. No words could express my feeling. I stared down at my hands away from the powerful eyes opposite,

which seemed to guess so much without being told. She caressed my head and gave me flowers. Then she went to her French translation class and I to my apartment.

My few things were packed in a small case. At night I closed my eyes and reflected over my life—my travels, my meeting with numerous different kinds of people and so many other jumbles which beat the counting of sheep, and within a short time I drifted off into sleep.

The next morning I went to the Meditation Hall upstairs where the Mother met me. She sat in her high-backed chair. I knelt in front of her. She gave me a variety of flowers in a small yellow-gold satin bag. I accepted it and looked at her piteously, not able to speak. Silence stretched into minutes. Then she took from a small stool near by a Kashmiri orange-coloured silken shawl and, while handing it to me, said with a smile:

“Tiens, mon petit, press it close to your heart when you go to sleep and you will feel my Presence.”

After that she went into a trance for a short while. On waking she affirmed:

“Everything will be all right.”

I got to my feet. Then with slow footsteps the Mother came near me and put her arm on my right shoulder and looked intently into my eyes. The anguish in my heart tore at me, broke through in a great rush that swept me beyond all control. I said: “Mother.” Everything within me went into that single word. It was a cry from my inmost being and it found an echo in her. She enfolded me more closely and kissed my forehead. The tender strength of her fingers warmly clasped mine. The parting was unutterably painful.

*

Interested people thought that I had wanted to get married—I had many distractions—I had gone nuts—I had a loose character—so the Mother was sending me away. Some even thought that I had been totally possessed by the devil and fallen out of the Mother’s Grace for ever. Their tongues kept wagging about me.

I was also accused of moodiness—a peculiar nature. Every little incident was turned to my disadvantage, as people would do when they appeared to be consumed by an all-absorbing hate.

I was going through a bad patch. I needed help—good will—not criticism. None tried to understand me.

The Mother has stated correctly in *Questions and Answers* 1950-51 pp. 134-5:

“There is a state in which a simple conversation which obliges you to remain on the level of ordinary life, gives you a headache, turns your stomach and,

if it continues, may give you fever. I am speaking of course about the gossip-type of conversations. I believe that apart from a few exceptions, everybody indulges in this exercise and talks of things about which he should keep silent or chatters about other things. It becomes so natural that you are not troubled by it. But if you continue in this way, you hinder your consciousness completely from rising up; you bind yourself with iron chains to the ordinary consciousness and the work in the subconscious is not done or has not even begun. Those who want to rise up have already enough difficulties without looking for encouragements outside.

“Naturally, the effort to keep the consciousness at a high level is tiring in the beginning, like the exercise you do to develop your muscles. But you do not give up gymnastics because of that! So mentally also you must do the same thing. You must not allow your mind to stoop low: ‘gossiping’ degrades you and, if you want to do yoga, you must abstain from it. That’s all.”

Sri Aurobindo has written in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 23, p. 827:

“It is not a question of ordinary life. In ordinary life people always judge wrongly because they judge by mental standards and generally by conventional standards. The human mind is an instrument not of truth but of ignorance and error.”

*

I was unaware till the last that Udar Pinto was accompanying me to Bombay. In a way it was good, because Maganbhai did not meet us at the airport when we reached Bombay in the evening of 6th May 1958. Michael Lunin received us. I was taken to my hotel. Udar went with him.

Maganbhai met me in his room at the hotel. He sensed my sadness—so he tried to amuse me with hilarious funny jokes. That night we had dinner with an Air India Captain friend and his wife in our hotel. I remember to have worn a perfume of Christian Dior—Paris, which fascinated the Captain’s wife. She asked me its name. I informed her. Then I went to my room, fetched the bottle and gave it to her. She was pleased and grateful. We bade good night to them and turned to our rooms to retire.

It was past midnight. Oh, I found myself shivering with cold. I then realised that the air-conditioner in my room was on full speed. I tried to slow it down—I even tried to put it off. But neither could be done. After the enervating heat of Pondicherry I felt it was impossible to sleep in this chilled room. I drew more close the shawl the Mother had given me. I lay a few hours with galloping thoughts jostling in my head, I lit the little lamp beside my bed, put on my dressing gown, and sat in my bed hugging my knees and thinking whether to request my brother to come to my rescue. I was at the end of my tether. Only a country bumpkin would

have been unable to cope with such a situation. Then at last I gathered courage and tiptoed out of my room. I turned right and tapped at my brother's door. He opened it and asked alarmedly what the matter was. I told him the reason. He broke into a big grin and said: "It is amazing you feel cold in the Bombay heat." Nevertheless, he came to my room and switched off the air-conditioner. I said apologetically: "I am really sorry to have disturbed your sleep—but I was helpless." He assured me that it was O.K.

I could sleep in snatches. Everything seemed so strange, so out of place. All the events leaped back to me. My marriage in Bombay, my abandoning the ordinary world, my accepting the spiritual life, my close relationship with the Mother. And now I had landed in an icy confining room.

In the morning I made a masterly effort to achieve composure. Maganbhai and I had breakfast. I ate a thin slice of bread and drank a cup of tea. Maganbhai teased me about my feeling cold the previous night. He said that he never felt cold even in cold countries.

Navajata Poddar was in Bombay at that time. He came to meet us. We went out shopping. Maganbhai wanted certain things which were not available in Africa. He presented Navajata with a nice suitcase for which he was thankful.

In the evening we saw the American movie "The Ten Commandments". After that, Navajata took us for dinner to a Marwari friend of his. There were many items. But I ate nothing except some fruit. I must say Marwaris eat sumptuous food—soaked in ghee and spices. The last thing they eat is Papadam which surprises me a lot. We thanked them and took our leave.

That night I checked that the air-conditioner was not functioning. After reading a page or two from *Prayers and Meditations* I put out the lamp. Then suddenly I felt the powerful gaze of the Mother's eyes—her sweet smile haunted me until my eyes closed in slumber.

According to my habit I got up early in the morning, had a leisurely bath and dressed in a white sari, combed my hair and wore it in two plaits. I was ready to have breakfast with my brother and then go out with him. It was a Thursday. At night, before we left for the airport, Udar and Michael came to say goodbye to us.

We boarded the Air India plane at a late hour after all the Customs formalities. It was very comfortable in first class. When the plane took off, I watched the countless tiny lights of big Bombay city sliding away under the wings. I leaned my hot forehead against the cool pane. Tears seeped slowly into my eyes. I remembered the Mother.

(To be continued)

Copyright © Huta D. Hindocha

NOLINIDA

I. HIS LAST WISH ABOUT THE ASHRAM

NOLINIDA terminated his pilgrimage of this incarnation on the Mahasaraswati day, the Vasant Panchami, the 7th February, 1984, and he is now physically no more with us. But his last wish is a wonderful testimony to his love of the Ashram and his deep concern for its continued existence and working. Quite a time in advance of his departure, he dictated in the month of August '83, a letter, signed it and entrusted it to an important disciple for action when he had left his body. The disciple acted accordingly. We came to know of it after Nolinida's passing. In that letter he says, "I would like to convey to you all my last wish about the ashram....We are all old and none is immortal. Before we leave one by one, the next generation should be trained to take over the charge of the ashram and only those among the younger generation should be chosen for this responsibility who are not only wise and efficient but also—and most of all—are honest and truly dedicated to the Mother. My last request to you all is to collaborate in this preparation for the sake of the ashram."

What a deep feeling these words carry and how deeply they touch us. They evoke in us an echo of his own dedication and consecration. It seems as though his whole life of sadhana and service, of love for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and of genuine concern for the Ashram found their pointed expression in this last wish.

This last wish of Nolinida recalls the occasion when our Gracious Mother, shortly before She left Her body, said to a few young people of the Ashram what looked like Her essential message to them. She said:

"You must rise to the height of the task, you must strive, you must conquer all weaknesses and limitations; above all you must tell your ego: your hour is gone. We want a race that has no ego, that has in the place of the ego the Divine Consciousness."

Nolinida's last wish and the Mother's message to the young people are surely comparable. They are bound to stand out prominently in our minds when we think of them. Reminiscences of either of them are innumerable because we have had abundant dealings with them over a long period. And when we think of a person out of love and joy all that comes to us strikes us as happy; even what was unpleasant at the moment that it occurred is now felt as a nice occasion. It is a pleasure to remember. 'Oh, the Mother chided me a good deal over that.'

2. HIS LIFE'S ESSENTIAL THEME

When I turn to Nolinida and think of him as a whole what comes up as the essential theme of his entire life is what the Mother used to say to him almost on every birthday of his in one form or another.

In an old Diary of mine stands the following entry:

12. I. 70.

Nolinida: (afternoon, while coming from the Mother)

The Mother said (giving a special blessing flower packet to him):

This is 'The power to bear the burden of all the greetings that will be poured on you tomorrow. Do you remember, Nolini, the occasion when I first saw you in 1914? I could not then pronounce your name. I then said to Sri Aurobindo, 'This is the boy who can have the supramental realisation.'

Another entry stands under 13. I. 70, his birthday, which is as follows:

13. I. 70.

Bonne Fête à Nolini

Avec mes bénédictions et toute ma tendresse dans la lumière, conscience et joie.
[With my blessings and all my affection in light, consciousness and joy.]

In another Diary there is the following note on the same subject: *Mother to Nolini on 13. I. 71:*

"Do you remember what I told Sri Aurobindo about you when I first saw you in 1914?"

"This is the boy who will realize the supermind.

I am ten years older than you and so you have 10 years additional to make a lot of progress."

Does this not represent the essential theme of Nolinida's life? This is what the Mother observed in him in 1914, when She first saw him and was finding it difficult to pronounce his name. And She repeated the same more or less year after year, to remind him of the true and great promise of his life. And it is evident Nolinida sincerely and faithfully followed this inherent aspiration of his life and in 1983 he was really at the portals of the Great Supramental Sun. He admitted it clearly enough. The writer had wished to offer to him felicitations on his next birthday, i.e. of 13. I. 84. He had prepared a short write-up in October '83 and presented it to him for his permission and approval before giving it for publication. It contained the following:

'Where do you stay these days, Nolinida?' Someone asked him. And he privately told him, 'In the overmind, and sometimes above and act from there.'

The entire write-up was passed by him, and when Nolinida personally confirmed his station as being that of overmind and sometimes above it and acting from there the writer felt assured of the truth of the matter. Thus Mother's perception of 1914 stands so well borne out by Nolinida's own admission of the status achieved and further pursued.

INDRA SEN

ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE'S VISIT TO THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM*

1. Interview By Vimala Thakar Dated 17. 8. 1959

VINOBAJI had gone to Pondicherry and visited the Sri Aurobindo Ashram on the 8th and 9th of July 1956. I had not the good fortune to go with him because I was in Kashi. But afterwards when I went to Vinobaji I asked him, "I have a great desire to know about your experience at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram when you went to Pondicherry."

Vinobaji replied, "The life I saw there was exactly like the one I had imagined it would be in the Ashram. I already knew that I would get to see there a life quite different from the life and style I am living and experiencing. I had the idea that a mystical psychological process was going on there and I actually saw such a process going on."

I said, "The Ashram people say that there is an experiment going on to establish unity with the Supramental cosmic consciousness."

Vinobaji replied, "I have used the word 'psychological' in a wider, rather all-pervading sense. By this I mean that the Sadhana is done on the mental level. It has three ways. Just as one can commit suicide with the body, so one can kill his own mind also. The second way is to quieten the mind i.e. to stop the acts of desiring and doubting. And the third way is to go beyond the mind."

Vinobaji stopped here for a few minutes and then proceeded to say, "After reaching the Ashram, I was told to meet the Mother. If I had wished I would have got even an hour or two to talk to her. But I told the gentleman, 'Our Indian speciality is Love of Darshan. I am also a Lover of Darshan. Therefore, the meeting between the two of us will not be for more than four or five minutes.'

"Immediately on meeting the Mother, I asked her, 'What is your age?' The Mother replied, 'Seventy-eight', and I said, 'Then you will have to live at least twenty-two years more.' And the Mother immediately replied, 'Oh! yes, of course.' Looking at the vigour, activeness and alertness she has at her age of seventy-eight, we definitely feel that She can easily live for another twenty-two years; but we will also not have any conflicting feeling if it doesn't happen like that because the Mother's desire is not the only thing, only that happens which the Lord wants to be. Still, the self-confidence that I saw in her reply was no ordinary thing. From the spontaneous faith with which she had replied, it seemed that she had already gained victory over death. I was very much impressed. After that we went to Sri Aurobindo's room and when I returned the Mother gave some flowers into our hands."

* Translated by N. M. Bhatt from the original published in the Gujarati journal *Bhumi Putra's* special issue on Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary: 15-8-1972.

I said, "I have heard that the Mother has written one or two books about the importance of flowers in the sadhak's life."

Vinobaji replied, "There is already a science of chromotherapy, we call it colour-therapy." Then Vinobaji went on to say, "There I was also given Sri Aurobindo's book *Savitri*."

"Many years before, Sri Aurobindo's book *The Life Divine* was sent to Bapuji. Then Bapu remarked, 'I have no time to read this kind of book,' and he sent it to me, and said, 'Read this.' It was a book by Sri Aurobindo and in addition it was sent by Bapu. So I with honest feelings took the trouble to read it through. When I say that I read it through, it should be understood to mean that I crossed an ocean. In the same way I had faithfully read Marx's *Das Capital*. This book *Savitri* is Sri Aurobindo's last writing and it is said that he has presented many mysterious things there. It is a book of 500 pages. Looking at the way my life moves, nobody hopes nor do I hope that I will be able to read it. I don't know whether I will be able to read it during this life. But I can well imagine what Sri Aurobindo must have written in it. I imagine that in *Savitri* there is a description of the experiences one has on facing the Law of Death (Yama-Dharma) or after the vision of death. It is worth understanding what could be the meaning of the vision (Darshan) of the God of Death, when one is still alive. The meaning of the Law of Death (Yama-Dharma) is the reputation and honour of death i.e. art and science of holding the vital energy (Prana). He who gains this mastery, experiences samadhi, the liberation is obtained. Sri Aurobindo says that after his liberation time, his sadhana began."

I said, "This thought is very similar to the thoughts of Krishnamurty. Krishnamurty says, "Freedom first." Vinobaji said, "Krishnamurty does not believe at all in sadhana. He says that we are free even at this present instant. Sri Aurobindo says something very different. He talks of Descent of Consciousness only after liberation. Up to liberation, man is busy with his own emancipation. He carries on the sadhana for liberation. Only after this liberation, the Descent of Consciousness can start. For this Descent, it is not necessary to abandon the body. This body can be made so divine that it becomes eternal. But much importance should not be given to the body even. If one does not find the body useful, the body can be abandoned. A yogi's body does not die, he can leave the body according to his desire. Works done in such a state are the true works. Man becomes the real doer in the true sense at that time. He who does works, not under the control of the senses and not controlled by other common things, he really works. The beginning such of works occurs after one is liberated."

I said, "These thoughts come in the teachings of other saints also."

Vinobaji said, "Yes. They do come, but not in this form. Saint Tukaram had asked 'Who can take away my status of an All (Self) Soul Person (*Sarvatmak Pan*).' There are many such words. But in what Sri Aurobindo talks about the Descent of Consciousness and Supramental things in man we see many new elements

and a freshness. It can be said that in the matter of mind this is Sri Aurobindo's uncommon contribution."

I said, "You remain in *Sahaja Avastha*—the natural state of realisation. Have you had any realisation when in the Ashram about the Sadhana of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother?"

Vinobaji said, "If any person, saying that his life is only for liberation, leaves all thoughts and matters and takes up Sadhana, the effect of this action on our heart is considerably strong. To have such impatience for liberation is not any ordinary thing. In that Ashram, there are so many who are doing Sadhana and when I saw this I was happy. There I met several old familiar friends and met many good people. You well know that I have a habit not to go to a place with a critical look."

I said, "Yes, if a man goes to a place with a critical look, he has no capacity to absorb the good things of the place."

Vinobaji: "The Mother told me, 'The work you are doing is good work. You are doing that which is really worth doing.' I have also heard that the Mother was telling some Ashramites that Vinobaji and Sri Aurobindo were already collaborating with each other in the subtle but this collaboration should be conscious collaboration."

I said, "Does it mean that this effort at conscious collaboration should be done by you?"

Vinobaji: "By both. The Mother has said that some sadhaks from the Samanvaya Ashram should go to Pondicherry and some sadhaks from Pondicherry should go to the Samanvaya Ashram."

Then smiling he added, "I said to her what I had to say."

I said, "You have mentioned that the experiment being tried at Pondicherry should be tried in an Ashram built in a remote village. According to my understanding their sadhana can't be done together with the contact and service of the people."

Vinobaji: "There is no prohibition of the contact and service of the people. As I understand Sri Aurobindo, he does not see the need of this but he has not prohibited it."

2. Meeting with The Mother

For some time, the Mother looked with a fixed gaze on the face of Vinobaji as if she was trying to read beyond it with great concentration!

Vinobaji made the beginning with the question, "How old are you?" The Mother's hands were up to now folded, they came now on to the arms of the chair and she replied in an extremely pleasant way, "Seventy-eight." Vinobaji: "Then you must live at least twenty-two years more." She said, "Oh! Yes, of course."

These introductory talks had hardly been completed when Vinobaji expressed his desire to hear some words of advice from the Mother. So the Mother said: "Oh! You don't require any advice! You know what you want to do and you are

doing it perfectly.” Vinobaji insisted with the words, “But even so some good words from you will be useful.” In the meantime, the Mother had started to speak on her own, “For us here there is only one thing that counts: we aspire for the Divine, live for the Divine, act for the Divine.”

After that Vinobaji did not think it fit to take more of her time. Afterwards, in a lighter vein, he told us all, “Others get hardly one minute. I took a lot of her time.”

(1st-person Report in the original by Damodar Das Mundra)

MEMORIES OF A TURNING-POINT

SOME ENTRIES FROM A PERSONAL DIARY

Bombay, February 12, 1953

I HAVE made the crucial decision. May Sri Aurobindo and the Mother help me!

As I was resting in my bed in the afternoon there came all of a sudden—as if things preparing behind a veil had accumulated and unexpectedly broken through—a Command from above the head. With a start I jumped out of bed and stood like a statue.

Along with the movement from above, I felt a movement at the back of the spinal cord, in a line with the centre of the chest. The two movements ruled my bodily being from outside it; this being itself was like an emptiness. I have drawn a rough sketch of the strange situation and put down the poem that arose to express the experience.

My crucial decision is that I shall return to the Ashram life soon. There is no uncertainty now about the Integral Yoga as my ultimate; for, though I can say nothing at the moment about the manner in which the future will be worked out, a sort of solar will overhead (Jivatman?) has taken action and it can't be denied its way.



Above my head I am one with God's huge gold,
Behind my heart God's white-fire depth am I;
But both these freedoms like far dreams I hold,
Wonderful futures caught in a cryptic eye—
A light without lids—suspended timelessly
'Twixt flickering glimpses of mortality.
I am they and yet no part of body or mind
Shares in their splendour; a nameless strength alone
Possesses every limb; a block of stone
Dead to all hungers, void of smile or sigh,
The outer self endures the strokes of time
And feels each stroke flash from beyond-behind
The world of man, a smite of the God on high
And the God at my back to rouse from the rapt peace
Of my stone-mass a shapeliness sublime
That shall be God to the very finger-tips
By the falling of brute superfluities.
Treasuring that sculpture yet unborn, I wait
For the luminous outflowing of my fate—
Blindness that is a locked apocalypse!

Pondicherry, February 20, 1953

I am in the Ashram again for the Mother's birthday, though on a visit just yet. I told the Mother in the morning that what I had asked for had happened. I said: "You must have done it." She smiled.

I am going about in a state where there is no feeling of anything. Not even aspiration is there. But it seems that my state needs no aspiration. Something radical has come to stay and until it is assimilated no further activity of deliberate sadhana can take place. The emptiness which is present keeps me calm and happy and confident. A perfect control which is not my own serves as a guide.

March 3, 1953

The bodily being which had been stilled for days has been awake again and faces the problem of the lower nature. No possible going back on the Great Decision, but the labour of changing the various parts for good has started once more. The only difference is that in spite of many outer fluctuations the inner Path holds firm and a watcher within is a-thrill with a sense of radical solutions coming.

All these days the Mother has handled me with a powerful yet tenderly sensitive insight.

A. K.

PUJALAL

THE first resident of the Ashram, the first sadhak of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga I set my eyes on was Pujalal. For he had been waiting at the Pondicherry railway station to receive Lalita and me. As we stepped out of the metre-gauge train that had brought us from Madras, a young soft-eyed bearded man introduced himself as "Pujalal" and said he had been sent from the Ashram. We got into a quaint vehicle called "push-push" and he walked beside us answering in a few easy words our questions about the Yogic path we had come from Bombay to pursue.

From that far-off day—December 16, 1927—Pujalal continued to be my friend. Over years he was a neighbour to me, living as he did next to the room which once Sri Aurobindo had occupied and then Purani and lastly myself. I knew him as a most kind-hearted and helpful person, humble and never pushing, yet full of energy, courage and endurance. Was he not one of the trusted lieutenants of the heroic Purani? On a deeper level, was he not a follower of the divine Sri Aurobindo and a child of the radiant Mother who was the Master's equal and co-worker? The qualities they expected from the Integral Yogi who lived in an inner light always playing upon the outer life were eminently Pujalal's.

Day after day I have watched him on the first floor of the Mother's house. He was in charge of her bathroom which he scrupulously kept clean and orderly. In spite of growing physical troubles he was at his job in an unobtrusive way, never claiming any special privileges. Because of those troubles he was later given a room nearby—opposite the Samadhi in the courtyard of the Ashram's main building. There he stayed till the end at 8.34 p.m. on December 27, 1985, himself a little over 84 years old.

A very gifted poet in Gujarati and a talented writer of English verse on occasion, he was mostly seen at his writing-table after he had to give up his old work owing to bodily ailments. But his room was no cloister. Friends came in and out and often there was the joyous ring of children's laughter. Childlike himself, he loved and welcomed the little ones and was always eager to teach them. A subject he excelled in was Sanskrit. He was one of the two sadhaks the Mother had asked to prepare a system of simplified Sanskrit so that India might have ready to hand for intercommunication from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin a feasible national language with country-wide historical associations.

Pujalal had the luck to have been among the twelve disciples present on the evening of November 24, 1926, which has come to be known as "The Victory Day". That occasion marked the starting-point of the Ashram with Sri Aurobindo withdrawing from outer contacts for concentrated spiritual work and with his followers being put by him in the hands of the Mother who forthwith began to organise a many-sided creative institution for a collective spiritual life.

Pujalal died as he had lived—in gentle peacefulness, with no sign to alarm anybody. After replying, "I am quite all right", to a question from Dr. Datta and later

to inquires by his long-standing devoted attendant Sarala and his recent ever-willing helper Lallubhai, he just slipped away from life while he was being eased from a sitting position in his bed to a reclining one. What is particularly significant and worthy of note is that a little before the doctor had come on his routine visit, Pujalal had said to two young visitors who were solicitous about his health: "It is always well with me. I have never felt anything else. I have left everything to the Divine and become free from all anxiety. You also—leave everything to the Divine and feel secure."

AMAL KIRAN

LALITA AND THE LORD'S GRACE

AFTER settling in the Ashram, each year Lalita used to get a number of beautiful saris for the Mother from Bombay through her affectionate father. On one occasion amongst those saris there was one of white satin. Next day when Lalita went to the Mother, the Mother gave her that white satin sari along with a pearl necklace and asked her to put them on for the August Darshan which was near. Taken aback, Lalita protested, saying, "Mother, these things are for you."

The Mother replied, "Sri Aurobindo wants you to put them on and come for the Darshan."

Such was the sweet Grace of the Lord for our Lalita.

SHYAM KUMARI

TWO LETTERS

30. 9. 1969

My dear Chimanbhai,

I tried to picture myself “bristling with rage and resentment-*cum*-indignation” as well as “fretting and fuming” and indulging in “froth and fury”. It is almost a human edition of Shakespeare’s “fretful porpentine” doubled with a spitting cat. Could I really have written in a vein conjuring up such presences? “A sport bucking up” seems more to the point. And what my own point was may be summed up by saying: “One is surely allowed to be narrow if one cannot help it, but—if I may mix my metaphors—to be peacocky over it gets my goat.” I am all at a loss in higher maths. But I do not come out to say that the higher here is the lowest possible. It is one of my perennial regrets that I cannot follow technically the steps by which Einstein worked out his relativity theory. You are a veritable Ramanujan compared to a cipher like me in this field, but I turn aspiring eyes towards your theme of Circles and Squares, and I do not cry “Fiddlesticks” to every Circle that is not St. Augustine’s sacred symbol with centre everywhere and circumference nowhere, nor do I cock a snook at what is not Whitman’s “Square Deific” of multiple and even baffling co-existent aspects.

As for the culinary art, you may be tops there but I can boast of “one fierce hour and sweet” like the Donkey’s triumph, as Chesterton sees it, when Jesus rode on it into Jerusalem. Once Sehra and her sister Mina and our Goan cook were making rice chaupatis and they mocked me for my incompetence in common life. Immediately I asked for some flour and, on getting it, started my chaupati. I was sitting at my working table which, in our old house, was a big round one that used to be our dining table too and held in addition an assortment of things. I flattened out my chaupati and sprinkled it with whatever stood in liquid form to my right or left. I poured drops of Phosfomin (a tonic) and some Eau de Cologne and a very tiny splash of ink from my fountain-pen and a small blob of gum as well as a touch of machine-oil. You can’t imagine what an indescribably delicious dish I produced. It tasted like nothing on earth, which meant in this case sheer ambrosia. Even my Goan cook couldn’t help admitting that I had beaten everybody hollow. Recently I have mastered making half-boiled eggs and will soon progress to other masterpieces. By the time you are next here I may not be quite a dud even by Lucullan standards.

I was glad to read the excerpts from Longfellow, who is a favourite of yours. How nostalgically my mind flies back to the past. Most affectionately did I thumb my Longfellow when I was a schoolboy of 12 or 13. Byron I read surreptitiously because grandpa and papa had forbidden me to luxuriate in *Beppo* and *Don Juan*, and these were the pieces I consequently most wanted to peruse. Longfellow was open-air, everybody’s companion. I read and reread him. But now it is more than six decades since I thanked my stars to have come across the magic of lines like

O holy Night! from thee I learn to bear
 What man has borne before!
 Thou layst the finger on the lips of Care,
 And they complain no more.
 Peace! Peace! Orestes-like I breathe this prayer!
 Descend with broad-winged flight,
 The welcome, the thrice-prayed-for, the most fair,
 The best-beloved Night!

What does it matter if this is not the supreme accent of poetry? It goes to the human heart of us, the all-too-human heart, and gives gracefulness to our mediocrity. Of course, the veritable *crème de la crème* in this category is "The Day is Done". But occasionally Longfellow turns out bits of the grand style too. An example is the third and fourth lines of stanza 4 in the poem you have transcribed, "The Singers":

A gray, old man, the third and last,
 Sang in cathedrals dim and vast,
 While the majestic organ rolled
 Contrition from its mouths of gold.

And as no mean antistrophe to Keats's great close to his Homer-sonnet in which he feels not only like Cortez on a Darien-peak but also like

some watcher of the skies
 When a new planet swims into his ken—

as a sort of counter-harmony to that great moment in the poetic thrill of the quatrain:

These perturbations, this perpetual jar
 Of earthly wants and aspirations high,
 Come from the influence of an unseen star,
 An undiscovered planet in our sky.

Talking of stars and planets I may note that Longfellow is the precursor of the two most wonderful similes in English poetry—Francis Thompson's about a poet surviving in his poetry, though himself dead and gone:

As down the years the splendour voyages
 From some long-ruined and night-submerged star—

and Sri Aurobindo's about Deiphobus in *Iliad*, Deiphobus who was "dead to the watching immortals" but who hastened

Clanging in arms through the streets of the beautiful insolent city,
 Brilliant, a gleaming husk but empty and left by the daemon,
 Even as a star long extinguished whose light still travels the spaces,
 Seen in its form by men, but itself goes phantom-like fleeting
 Void and null and dark through the uncaring infinite vastness,
 So now he seemed to the sight that sees all things from the Real.
 Timeless its vision of Time creates the hour of things coming.
 Borne on a force from the past and no more by a power of the future
 Mighty and bright was his body, but shadowy the shape of his spirit
 Only an eidolon seemed of the being that had lived in him, fleeting
 Vague like a phantom seen by the dim Acherontian waters.

Nothing so magnificent and wide-visioned in Longfellow, but a certain quiet perfection anticipates in "Charles Sumner" both Thompson and Sri Aurobindo:

Were a star quenched on high,
 For ages would its light,
 Still travelling downward from the sky,
 Shine on our mortal sight.

So when a great man dies,
 For years beyond our ken,
 The light he leaves behind him lies
 Upon the paths of men.

But, apart from poetry as poetry, what appealed to me most in Longfellow after I came to Pondicherry was a translation of his from Saint Teresa. He had on his own articulated her partly in the lines at the end of "The Light of the Stars"—

O fear not in a world like this,
 And thou shalt know ere long,
 Know how sublime a thing it is
 To suffer and be strong—

and in that hexameter of "high seriousness" from "Evangeline":

Sorrow and silence are strong, and patient endurance is godlike.

But the true spiritual touch goes home to us in "Saint Teresa's Book-mark":

Let nothing disturb thee,
 Nothing affright thee;

All things are passing;
 God never changeth;
 Patient endurance
 Attaineth to all things;
 Who God possesseth
 In nothing is wanting;
 Alone God sufficeth.

Now *au revoir* to Longfellow. And hail to Chimanbhai the typist aspiring to be the archetypist, the recorder of Platonic Ideas. Was this your maiden effort or did you in one of your protean professions handle the machine before? The work is fairly well done, though under your fingers “angels” seem very nearly to have become “angles”, reversing Pope Gregory’s perception when he saw some flax-haired Anglo-Saxon boys in captivity in ancient Rome: “You say they are Angles? No, they are Angels” (“*Non Angli sed Angeli*”). Your two compositions—“Logic and Magic: A Reverie” and “Circles and Squares: A Phantasy”—make interesting reading, but they are not Chimanbhai at his Chimanest. The first begins very well but soon turns into a semi-literary exercise. The second out-Dervishes all Dancing Dervishes by its uncontrollable weavings in and out of a fancy that has taken the bit between its teeth and bolted. But I think it has more originality, as a whole, than its predecessor.

I hope the new *Mother India* has reached you in spite of your constantly being like the Arabs in the last stanza of “The Day is Done”, who “fold their tents” and “silently steal away”. Having to poach on somebody else’s copy, as you have had often to do, must be a tiring business. But pick up heart. Poaching was the habit of another poet long ago, but young Will Shakespeare poached for deer, which is worlds away from poaching for *Mother India* which is dear only to Aurobindonians and often to many Yogic pockets because it chooses not to be particularly dear.

Excuse the punning atrocity. Mention of Shakespeare can’t help inspiring it. If he got a chance in no matter how serious a scene he could not miss playing on words. This playing he considered a right integral part of his role as a playwright.

*

14. 11. 1979

My dear Renu,

How can I refrain from writing to you? I may not always be a prompt correspondent—but writing goes on in the mind even when pen is not put to paper. One, who is in the habit (a very bad habit according to many champions of common sense) of composing (or decomposing, as these champions would hold) poetry, does most of his work first upon the inner white tablet of “a hushed intense receptivity” (Sri Aurobindo’s phrase) before externally precipitating the word-music

Sur la vide papier que la blancheur défend.
 (On the empty paper guarded by its own white.)

This line of Mallarmé's actually suggests a difficulty: Mallarmé seemed to have been repeatedly drawn back from written utterance, as if the blank sheet before him had a virginal silence which he should not violate with his quill. He appears to have felt that all outwardness of expression, whether in literature or life, was a sort of sacrilege: the inner featureless void was the *vraie vérité*, "the true truth". That is why in all his life he wrote no more than about forty poems, most of them very short. But this kind of reticence is rather unworldly—an artistic Buddhism of inexpressible Nirvana, we may call it. The majority of poets experience the opposite—an almost uncontrollable urge to attempt uttering the Unutterable in as memorable a futility of speech as possible. And—to return to my starting-point after this typically Amalian *detour* or *divagation* (I'm firing off French in exuberant response to your new Montreal-istic existence)—the poet is accustomed to create mutely within himself and even carry his dumb children in an unborn state for weeks before projecting them into verbal form. So you need not doubt that I have been writing to you although no visible signs have appeared for days and days.

And can I help writing—whether visibly or invisibly—when you and your husband are no fugitive intermittent visitors in my consciousness but are eternally domiciled in that strange section of the Aurobindonian geography—the secret country of the "Clear Ray" (Amal Kiran)?

One characteristic of this country is that there the skies are ever unclouded and everything—to quote a line from *Savitri*—

Climbs through white rays to meet the parent Sun.

"Light and Laughter", the title of my book of talks, may well be taken as a summary description of the state of affairs in this domain. So, you as a denizen of it must feel washed in happiness at all times--a happiness born not of one thing or another but subsisting causelessly by being soul-rooted in the Mother's "white radiance of eternity". Whenever a shadow threatens to fall upon you, just remember that you are no lowland inhabitant but a dweller on a mountain-reality—a *Mont Réal* of the Spirit. You may think that the goal of your search is still far away—yet, facing it, there should always be in your eyes a dancing dream and never a nerveless nightmare. I believe your husband is less prone to the blues than you. He must be a great help indeed. What on your side you are bringing to him through even these blues is the true sky-colour which they misrepresent; for, they are not derived from darkness's depths, as you may conceive superficially, but from a cerulean height too brilliant for our eyes to bear—a super-azure which is the natural hue of the spiritual consciousness. And what your blues distortedly convey is an intensity of yearning in you for that supreme vision, about whose "balcony-darshan" aspect a

poem of mine says in its first stanza:

Haloed by some vast blue withheld from us,
Her pure face smiles through her cascading hair.
Like a strange dawn of rainfall nectarous,
It comes to amaranth each desert prayer.

AMAL KIRAN

COMMENTARY ON THE ISHA UPANISHAD SHANKARA AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of January 1986)

A Review of the Critic's Arguments

To begin with, we shall examine the fundamental objections raised by the critic. (1) When Sri Aurobindo divides the Upanishads into earlier and later ones, his intention is only to show that two ways of dealing with the central idea of the Veda have come into existence. He is far from suggesting that the Upanishads are setting forth two contradictory views. That Brahman is the ultimate goal of human life is the common teaching of all Upanishads; but they differ only in respect of the condition under which the realisation of Brahman becomes possible. The early Upanishads do not consider that life is an obstacle to realise Brahman, whereas the later ones tend to emphasise renunciation of life as the condition for realising Brahman. On account of this difference we cannot say that the Upanishads are self-contradictory, for the difference arises not in respect of the central idea but about the practice of that idea. To cite an example, the Upanishads speak of Brahman as the source of the world, but in respect of the order of creation their accounts are not uniform. However, the Upanishads are not considered to be disharmonious. In the same way, they do not become self-contradictory on account of the difference in their teachings on how Brahman is to be realised.

(2) It is true that the words paramartha and vyavahara are reminiscent of Shankara's twofold standpoint. But if we carefully notice the sense in which these words are used by Sri Aurobindo, we shall find that they do not lend support to the view of Shankara. Sri Aurobindo uses the word paramartha to refer to the essential fact of the absolute mastery over the power of Maya. From the paramartha point of view, Brahman exceeds as well as dwells in the play of His Maya and there is no subjection to the power of Maya through the law of Ignorance. Sri Aurobindo conveys by the word vyavahara the sense of the practical relation which imposes the law of Ignorance so as to subject the ruling principle to the power of Maya. From the vyavahara point of view, Brahman subjects himself to the law of Ignorance and concentrates on the aspect of dwelling in the play of His Maya. In other words, paramartha and vyavahara do not represent opposite ways of existence; there is a natural transition from the one to the other. Brahman becomes man when He concentrates exclusively on the aspect of dwelling in the play of His Maya; and man becomes Brahman when he exceeds as well as dwells in the play of His Maya. Obviously the terms paramartha and vyavahara do not convey the above meanings to Shankara.

For Shankara the word paramartha stands for the absolute existence which never changes and the word vyavahara refers to the empirical existence which is sub-

ject to changes imposed by Maya. The absolute and the empirical are totally different and have nothing in common. This is what the twofold standpoint is intended to establish. From the paramartha point of view, Brahman never changes into anything, much less a human being; from the vyavahara point of view, man is identified with Maya and never becomes Brahman. But when he is said to have become Brahman, it is meant that his consciousness is no longer subject to the confusion between the two orders—the absolute and the empirical—, which led him to believe that he was an empirical being; it is also meant that he is now established in the realisation that he has been always the absolute Brahman.

It is therefore absurd to consider the passage from Sri Aurobindo's commentary as a confirmation of the view of Shankara. And all implications arising out of the alleged identity between the views of Sri Aurobindo and Shankara cease to have any significance.

(3) Now we shall examine the critic's defense in favour of Shankara. An application of the twofold standpoint to the Upanishads is to interpret the conflicting texts in the light of the eligible persons. The eligible persons are those who are qualified to receive the teachings of the Upanishads. They fall into two categories corresponding to the two standpoints, the absolute and the empirical. Those who seek the absolute Spirit belong to the first category and they follow the path of *jñāna*. Those who seek the Spirit in empirical terms belong to the second category and they follow the path of *karma*. Shankara says that while verses 1 and 3 to 8 have the first category in view, verses 2 and 9 to 18 are addressed to the second category.

Shankara says that though the verses of the two groups seem to be at variance, they do not conflict with one another because they are addressed to two different classes of eligible persons. Here he uses a well-known method of resolving a textual conflict: the conflict is resolved by showing that the conflicting parts do not fall within the scope of a single subject. By itself this is a valid method, but it can be used only when the commentator fails to work out a harmonious explanation on the hypothesis that the text deals with a single subject. If we take the words of the Upanishad in their appropriate senses, as is evidenced by the commentary of Sri Aurobindo, all verses become harmonious and describe the different aspects of a common subject. Therefore we are not obliged to accept the twofold division of the Upanishad or the conflict that supposedly exists in the text.

If the supposition is true that the verses fall into two distinct groups, then the verses of each group must naturally form a continuous series and not allow even a single verse from the other group to interpose and disturb the sequence of thoughts. But what one finds in the actual arrangement of the verses is that the two groups overlap each other: while verse 2 is among the verses of the first group, verses 3 to 8 occur along with the verses of the second group. This is a clear indication that the twofold division is entirely unfounded. In support of this conclusion we may cite another instance *viz.* verse 4 which belongs to the first group. According to Shankara himself, this verse presents Brahman both as an object of knowledge and a

source of works.¹ In other words, a part of this verse falls within the scope of the second group though the verse itself is supposed to be outside that group. Evidently this verse suggests that a dichotomous dealing with the Upanishad is an absurdity.

Shankara says that the true import of the Upanishad is to be found in the verses of the first group, because they speak of the Spirit as it is. This is implied in his reference to verse 8 which is said to set forth the nature of the absolute Brahman. But then what is the aim of the other verses which form the second group? Their aim, Shankara points out, is to speak of the Spirit as it appears to the empirical mind; they do so as a concession to ordinary people.² In other words, so far as the verses of this group are concerned, human deficiency seems to be the basis for the teachings of the Upanishad. If this deficiency were to be admitted in the Upanishad even as a mere concession, then the tradition that the scripture is absolutely free from human deficiencies would be falsified. Further, if one part of the Upanishad were to speak of something which is other than the truth, then to that extent it would become invalid and not conform to the tradition that the scripture as a whole is authoritative.

According to the ancient tradition the exact import of the scripture can be determined in reference to certain marks or *liṅgas*. One of them is fruitfulness or *pala*. If a text refers to a result in addition to its teaching on the main subject, then it may be considered as embodying the real import of the scripture. Shankara has resorted to this method several times in his commentaries (SBS., 2-1-14; Com. on *Bṛihadāraṇyaka*, 1-4-7). A cursory glance at the Upanishad makes it abundantly clear that this mark is not confined to the verses of the first group alone, for it is associated with the verses of the second group also. Following are the results mentioned in verses 3, 6 and 7.

- (a) They go to those worlds of blind gloom. (v. 3)
- (b) He does not shrink from anything. (v. 6)
- (c) How shall he be deluded? Whence shall he have grief? (v. 7)

Similarly, verses 2, 9, 11, 12, 14 and 18 refer to six other results. They are:

- (a) Action does not cleave to a man. (v. 2)
- (b) They enter into a blind darkness. (vv. 9 and 12)
- (c) They enter into a greater darkness. (vv. 9 and 12)
- (d) He crosses beyond death. (vv. 11 and 14)
- (e) He enjoys immortality. (vv. 11 and 14)
- (f) Lead us by the good path to the felicity. (v. 18)

It becomes evident now that not only the verses of the first group but also those of the

¹ Shankara's Com. on the *Isha Upanishad*, Tr. Swami Gambhirananda, Verse 4.

² *Ibid.*, Preface and Verse 4.

second group must be taken into account while determining the true import of the Upanishad. From this, two important conclusions follow:

(1) it is wrong to place a special emphasis on verses 1 and 3 to 8 and say that they alone set forth the real import of the Upanishad, because in doing so the results mentioned in other verses (2, 9, 11, 12, 14 and 18) are not given due importance; (2) the twofold classification itself must be dismissed as an artificial division, because the mark is commonly possessed by both the groups of verses.

Even if we assume for the sake of argument that the verses of the first group alone contain the purport of the Upanishad, we do not know why the scripture should devote as many as eleven verses to deal with a subject of lesser importance *viz.* karma, and be satisfied with just five verses to focus on a theme of very great significance, the theme of jnana. This only confirms that the twofold division is preposterous and does not serve to explicate the thought of the Upanishad for the benefit of clear understanding.

If Shankara thinks that a twofold classification of the verses is inevitable on account of the mutual opposition between knowledge and works, he is surely mistaken. For nowhere is it indicated in the Upanishad that knowledge and works are opposed to each other; on the contrary, there is a suggestion in verses 16 and 18 that they are not contradictory. Apart from this, another Upanishad very clearly says that knowledge and works are harmonious. The *Mundaka* affirms that he who performs works establishing himself in the self is the best among the knowers of Brahman (3-1-5). This proves that Shankara's classification of the verses is based on a preconceived idea which has no relevance to the Upanishad.

(To be continued)

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

FURTHER STUDIES IN INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY

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

(Continued from the issue of January 1986)

REGARDING Freud's theory of sex, the reader can still voice his protest. It is obviously not possible to go into the pros and cons of this much disputed theory here. But Freud as a scientist was much more interested in the realistic side of life than in its idealistic aspect. As against the right of morality and religion which had been much overdone, he felt called upon to justify the right of instinct. Among human instincts undoubtedly the sex instinct is the most important, but Freud must be said to have over-generalised it. Only the mass of instincts, the 'Id', has been so far investigated by psycho-analysis; the 'Ego' and the 'Superego' of psycho-analytical personality have yet to be fully investigated. Freud's investigations were obviously limited by the phenomenon of mental disease and his essentially scientific, realistic temperament. His attitude was not determined by the objective of human perfection, as it is in Yoga. But this attitude of perfection is a legitimate extension of psycho-analysis. From mental disease to mental health has been the programme so far and now one can easily contemplate the extension from average mental health to superior grades of mental health and happiness. This is exactly the problem of personal development. There are, indeed, some indications in Freud as to the nature and character of a *higher life* and we might now consider them.

In Freud's *New Introductory Lectures*, in the chapter entitled 'The Anatomy of Mental Personality,' we come across a number of sentences which make most interesting reading. "Superego, ego and id are the three realms, regions or provinces in which we divide the mental apparatus of the individual" (p. 102). However, "you must not imagine sharp dividing lines" (p. 110) between them. The superego "is the representative of all moral restrictions, the advocate of impulse towards perfection," and "what people call the higher things in life" (p. 95). "We have allocated to it the activities of self-observation and conscious holding of ideals" (p. 94). This recognition of 'impulse towards perfection,' and of 'ideals' in human personality is obviously significant. Freud also clearly affirms that the "so-called materialistic conceptions of history err in that they underestimate this factor" (p. 95). He continues, saying that "mankind never lives completely in the present, the ideologies of the superego perpetuate the past, the traditions of the race and the people, which yield but slowly to the influence of the present and to new developments, and so long as they work through the superego, they play an important part in man's life quite independently of economic conditions" (p. 96). Thus, a conscience which is here recognised as superego is not denied. But the psycho-analytical account of its genesis

is repugnant to many. It is here held to be the heir of the emotional tie called the Oedipus complex, and the sexual relation which binds the child to the parents. However, "the superego is constantly becoming more and more remote from the original parents, becoming as it were, more impersonal" (p. 92). And "it is also the vehicle of the ego ideal, by which the ego measures itself by that towards which it strives, and whose demands for ever-increasing perfection it is always striving to fulfil" (p. 93).

The 'id' is the sum of the instinctive desires which impulsively press for their individual satisfactions. "These instincts fill it with energy but it has no organisation and no unified will, only an impulsion to obtain satisfaction for the instinctive needs in accordance with the pleasure principle" (p. 104). The need for consistency and for a criterion does not hold good in this realm of mind as 'contradictory impulses exist side by side' (p. 104). "Naturally, the id knows no values, no good and evil, no morality" (p. 105).

Now what is the ego? The ego is "a coherent organisation of mental processes." "What, however, especially marks the ego out in contradistinction to the id, is a tendency to synthesize its contents, to bring together and unify its mental processes, which is entirely absent from the id." In the ego, the instincts tend to become 'subordinated to a large organisation,' and find place in a 'coherent unity.' The ego is, in popular language, 'the reason and circumspection' while the id stands for 'the untamed passions' (p. 107).

But how does this ego develop in us? Ego is essentially the principle of reconciliation between the instincts and the external world or reality, and one can, in fact, say that the ego is that part of the id, which has been modified by the influence of the external world. "The ego has," we read, "taken over the task of representing the external world for the id and so of saving it; for the id blindly striving to gratify its instincts in complete disregard of the superior strength of the outside forces could not otherwise escape annihilation. But the ego has the most difficult task to achieve" (p. 106). "Goaded on by the id, hemmed in by the superego, and rebuffed by reality, the ego struggles to cope with its economic task of reducing the forces and influences which work in it and upon it to some kind of harmony" (p. 109).

It may here be incidentally observed "that the ego (including the superego) does not by any means completely coincide with the conscious, nor the repressed with the unconscious" (p. 96). We have before us the empirical fact that a patient under analysis may not be conscious of his resistance. That would definitely mean "that the parts of both the ego and the superego themselves are unconscious" (p. 98). Thus the unconscious in Freud is not identical with the repressed as is often held to be the case.

We just said that the ego seeks to achieve 'some kind of harmony' between the forces of the superego, of reality and of the id. Here are a few sentences where Freud grows enthusiastic about 'harmony,' and the idealistic element of his thought comes out more vividly. He says: "it can be imagined that certain practices of the mystics

may succeed in upsetting the normal relations between the different regions of the mind, as, for example, the perceptual process may become able to grasp relations in the deeper layers of the ego and in the id which would otherwise be inaccessible to it." "The therapeutic efforts of psycho-analysis," he admits, "have chosen much the same method of approach. For their object is to strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the superego, to widen its field of vision and so to extend its organisation that it can take over new portions of the id. Where id was there shall ego be. It is reclamation work like the draining of the Zuyder Zee" (p. 111).

It would be very consoling to the idealist to learn that the id is to be transformed into the ego. But he may not relish the statement that the ego has to be 'more independent of the superego.' The difficulty is due to the fact that we do not easily see the harmful effects to a man's growth if the moral ideal is pitched too high. Psycho-analysis advocates, properly speaking, a gradual raising of the moral ideal. When Freud speaks about education, this becomes perfectly clear. What is the primary business of education? Freud answers: "The child has to learn to control its instincts. To grant it complete freedom, so that it obeys its impulses without any restrictions, is impossible. The function of education, therefore, is to inhibit, forbid and suppress and it has at all times carried out its function to admiration. But we have to learn from analysis that it is this very suppression of instinct that involves the danger of neurotic illness... Education has, therefore, to steer its way between the Scylla of giving the instinct free play and the Charybdis of frustrating them. Unless the problem is altogether insoluble an optimum of education must be discovered which will do the most good and the least harm. It is a matter of finding how much one may forbid, at which times, and by which method. And then it must further be considered that the children have very different constitutional dispositions, so that the same educational procedure cannot be equally good for all children" (p. 203).

The same exactly is the problem of personal development. Each individual has to strive for a particular "optimum" of moral development at a particular time and it serves no useful purpose to tune up the superego and the ego or the id and unnecessarily intensify the sense of guilt. But there is here evidently no preaching of the gospel of 'free living,' since the demand of the superego has really to be reconciled with the claim of the id. One cannot simply allow the id to have its own way. That will be no solution of one's troubles. The frustration of the superego can cause as much trouble as that of the id. The idea of an 'optimum,' for each individual and for each stage of development is definitely the word of the highest moral wisdom.

As in regard to moral life, so in connection with religion all that Freud denies is the divine origin of the thing. As in morality so in religion a psychological account is attempted. Psycho-analysis "has traced the origin of religion to the helplessness of childhood and its content to the persistence of the wishes and needs of childhood and maturity" (p. 229). But Freud affirms that "this does not precisely imply refutation of religion." And in fact it need not—not even the divine origin of morality and religion. For all that psycho-analysis does is to characterise the psychological circumstances

attendant upon the progress of the growth or development of our idea of morality and religion.

In this connection one might raise the question, whether a theory of non-moral origin of morality and religion, evolutionary or psychological, must needs be disparaging to the nature and character of the moral or religious life. Virtually the dignity of either primarily lies in the form of its present character rather than in the aristocracy of its birth. Psycho-analysis makes a valuable contribution to our idea of both morality and religion, in as much as it has shown the psychological and the deeper psycho-analytical processes involved in their origin and growth and one might affirm that as a result of these contributions our notion of morality and religion will become clearer and purer. Whatever the origin of morality or religion, divine or otherwise, what we today prize in the moral and religious life is certain qualities of character, such as conscientiousness, sincerity, frankness. Now it is most interesting that psychoanalysis, with all the wealth of most convincing empirical data, shows the necessity of these qualities for a man in the interests of his mental health. Modern man in general has imbibed quite a lot of the scientific spirit which has ever been on the rise in Europe since the Renaissance and, therefore, sermonising to him to be moral and good has little effect.

Heaven as an objective does not attract him just as hell does not frighten him, but he knows the consequences of mental ill-health, the worry, the anxiety and the more serious disorders of mind and hence prizes mental health as a real value in life. Now, psycho-analysis shows how sincerity, frankness, conscientiousness and correct self-knowledge are absolutely essential to it.

But how does psycho-analysis show the need and justification of the moral qualities of conscientiousness, frankness and sincerity in life? Conscientiousness is the desire and attitude to do one's duty in every situation of life. And what is duty? Duty is an absolute, unconditional command of the moral ideal to "the actual" in man to live up to it. Conscientiousness, above all, is a recognition of the supreme value of the inner life of man. Now psycho-analysis has, in recent times, promoted the spirit of examining one's motives, conscious and sub-conscious, and thus discovered for modern man a new value in his inner life. But in the determination of one's duties, psycho-analysis takes fully into account the fact that an over-strung conscience causes in many cases serious mental disorder, ruining life altogether, and fails to promote development. Therefore it considers that the voice of conscience, "the moral ideal", must be more realistically adjusted to "the actual" of a man. That is to say, the optimum of education, referred to above, has to be discovered and that will represent to man his attainable moral ideal at a particular time. This view of duty involves the recognition of the relative right of instinct, considered earlier.

Now about the qualities of sincerity and frankness. Hypocrisy is certainly the direct negation of the moral life. And in this connection what has psycho-analysis in its investigation of the etiology of nervous disorders discovered? Just this

that the repressed wish through devious mechanisms of the unconscious is the cause of the disorders. The characterisation of the various forms of the unconscious mechanisms which are, in fact, so many ways of self-deception, is the principal achievement of psycho-analysis. Moralists complain of superficial hypocrisy. Psycho-analysis has revealed unsuspected operations of hypocrisy and thus made tremendous contributions to the development of a purer moral life.

And then what does psycho-analytical therapy aim at? It does nothing more than ask the patient to be perfectly frank and sincere with himself. He must be true to himself. He must face, at the plane of consciousness, the repressed wish and give due recognition to it. Psycho-analysis thus makes a fine positive contribution to the moral development of man. "Our best hope for the future," declares Freud, "is that the intellect—the scientific reason—should in time establish a dictatorship over the human mind." And "the very nature of reason is a guarantee that it would not fail to concede to human emotions and to all that is determined by them the position to which they are entitled" (p. 234). From the rational standpoint, this is high idealism.

Freud's commitment to neurotic patients and their sexual complications became somehow a prepossession with him. In the idealistic trends which are also clearly and definitely present in him, particularly in his conception of optimum education, how much to repress and when to do it, etc. he modified his position considerably. And this modified position needs to be taken note of and duly further developed. The original sexual theory will then undergo a change. Sex is a basic trend of human nature, concerned as it is with the continuity of the race. But surely it is not the all-determining trend of nature. Moreover, for a theory of human nature as a whole, do we not need to observe it as a whole? How can we build up a valid conception of human nature on the basis of the data supplied by the analysis of neurotic patients alone? The revisionist schools of psycho-analysis have changed things a good deal.

In the terms of Integral Psychology sex belongs to the lower vital, the essential biological factor, common between man and animal, concerned with the perpetuation of the species. But besides this there is reason, recognised by Freud and also the spiritual soul, for which harmony and wholeness are spontaneous facts. For a sound and comprehensive view of human nature we have to take note of all these facts.

It can, however, be said that in a state of civilisation and in individuals or a class of individuals, sex may become dominant, but then there are also individuals who live in their souls and feel a freedom from sex. Those who live in their reason and rational activity would also find sex a secondary factor.

What Integral Psychology can Contribute

Freud delved deeply into the unconscious and discovered the devious ways of its working. The defence reactions in the forms of Projection, Introjection, Identification, Rationalisation, Displacement and Conversion are valuable discoveries and

they do contribute to the realisation of a clearer and purer personal life. Above all, he sets up an ideal of becoming conscious of oneself more and more, taking a non-moralistic attitude towards the instinctual urges. His ideal also includes recognising the three major components of personality and their respective functions: The ego and its adjustment to the objective reality, the Super-ego and its preeminent moral, social and religious demands, and the Id and its untamed passions. And there is the attempt to seek and maintain the best possible working balance among them. He even sensed that the mystics achieved through their practices a perfect unification in life. But this possibility he just entertained, and left the matter at that. For practical purposes a working balance is all that he aimed at.

Now Integral Psychology's 'Psychic Being' is a thing of simplicity, it is essentially conscious and harmonious, capable of exercising a harmonising action on the diverse components of personality. Is this fact of personality ever verifiable in Yogic practice, relevant to Freud's aim of achieving a working balance in life or not? In fact, dealing with the complexities of inner life, its divisions and conflicts and repressions, is a difficult and often an inconclusive affair. On the other hand, to take an attitude of detachment towards them and to turn to the unitary Psychic Being and seek its wholeness is relatively simple. And if a sincere approach is adopted and a contact made with this deeper fact, even weak and occasional, a wonderful effect may be achieved. This is indeed the best contribution that can proceed from Integral Psychology to Freud's conception of human nature.

The Psychic Being is self-existent delight and is the central fact of life and it can progressively bring about a domination by its own quality. The Id's sex and untamed passions, the Super-ego's uncompromising demands and the ego's precarious adjustments get steadily and firmly reshaped into a realistic wholeness of spiritual living.

This single fact added on to psycho-analysis will give a new consistency to its thought and a new effectivity to its therapeutic practice. Naturally this fact, when scientifically ascertained, will require a rethinking of other ideas and a reformulation of the view of human nature and the process of therapeutic cure. Theories are after all tentative approaches to truth and they always need readaptations.

(To be continued)

INDRA SEN

(The main part of this paper was presented at the Freud Memorial Meeting in Calcutta in 1939)

IDEAL CHILD AND OURSELVES

Compiled and translated by Ranadhir Upadhyaya from the writings of Sundaram which appeared from time to time in Dakshina, the Gujarati periodical from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

IN this booklet *Ideal Child* the Mother imparts a vital and luminous message on the ideals of sportsmanship as well as other ideals in man's life. It contains the message of the Divine Life, great aphorisms leading to perfection and the noblest words from the Mother's heart. No cultured man from Gujarat could be ignorant of or unacquainted with the name and works of Sri Aurobindo. All know that Sri Aurobindo gave to the world the Integral Yoga for raising the human consciousness to its highest state. The Sadhana of Integral Yoga is the Sadhana of the Supreme Divine. In future this Divine Consciousness will create a divine race and establish it on earth.

Man can come in contact with the Divine Mother through aspiration, surrender and purity. When man's heart is willing and ready for the Supreme Consciousness and the Supreme Mother, the Grace descends, a benevolent contact is gained. She takes man's life in her own hands and gives it the Divine Form. The process to prepare oneself to reach the Divine Mother is stated in the book, *Ideal Child*. This booklet is one of the many summits of the Yogic Message of Sri Aurobindo.

Ideal Child says something momentous in very simple language for children to help them rise to the heights of Divinity. These things are useful not only to children but also to grown-ups. It is possible that some very young children may not understand all that is there in the book, but we should not worry about this. We are sure to find a few sentences or even a few aphorisms which can touch the heart of every child; and today or tomorrow the soul of the child will be one with that of the author of the book and one day it will be a pilgrim on the Divine Path. The seeds of creation of a divine race envisaged by Sri Aurobindo are sown here by the Mother.

This booklet is not merely for interest as good reading material nor should it be given to a child with the calculation that the child will read it and the very next day it will be an ideal person. It is the messenger of a great truth. It is the symbol of the Mother. It is like the sweet jingle announcing the birth of a new creation, a new man. Remember this that it is not just a thing manufactured from paper—a product—but a thing in which the Divine Consciousness has manifested. A small but powerful element of the supreme Divine is contained in it.

When selling and/or distributing the booklet we experience the presence of the Mother and that will be helpful to us. We know that whenever we ask for it, the Mother's divine consciousness descends on us, it awakens us, inspires us, guides us, gives us light and strength. Thus we can obtain from it the greatest support.

That will give us movement and progress. Doing work for this we shall be blessed by the Mother.

Let us throw away doubt, despair and distrust and go forward with faith and hope and trust that she will take care of the things which are her own. We already have her consent and blessings for this work. Let us now spread the message and the command (ADESH) of the Mother everywhere. If we take this work in our hands in the purely Yogic sense and vision, new windows will open on our consciousness. What is done for the Mother only, with complete and pure surrender and with no ego gives our consciousness a new form and a shining face. The power lying within the booklet is deep and mysterious. It will bring us the touch of divine knowledge and delight. They will manifest in us. Our aspirations will be fulfilled, the Mother's Light will be established in us.

We have not taken up this work with the object of selling the book or collecting of funds. For all of us, it is an instrument for our inner Sadhana and *Ideal Child* is just an occasion. The sale or distribution of the book is a gross event. The fundamental thing is our movement, our awakening and our progress towards the Divine. Apparently, the work seems small and insignificant. But behind it lies hidden the grand effort of the human consciousness to rise to the highest summit from the depths of darkness and inconscience. By it the great work of Sadhana and the progress of the Soul are being realised. By it, we realise a mighty force penetrating us and the world and achieving its victories. This is a subject to be pursued with uniform quiet action. Hurry and noise are not needed, have no place. Let us go on in the spirit of self-surrender, to the maximum extent possible to us. We shall get the sparks of a new creation in us, let us keep them alive and ever increasing and aspire to give their touch to all the meetings of people. The flame born of these sparks is our AIM. The rest of the thing will be accomplished by the Divine Mother herself. Let us not worry about it.

EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

I HAVE always insisted that tourists going to foreign lands would do well to read up a few pages of history and some guiding pamphlets if they really wanted to enjoy and make their tour fruitful. True, we go out for fun and to have a good time but knowledge thus acquired also brings a deep joy and confidence. I may add here that a little knowledge of geography too helps a great deal. We had a lady in our company who moaned all the time, "Where is the Brenner Pass?" when we were actually going through the pass. She expected craggy hills, deep ravines and gorges and a lot of tunnels and hair-pin bends. The Brenner Pass was a fairly smooth ride and yet there was enough to admire and enough history to remember with a happy excitement.

Geography could be a fascinating subject if in early childhood one had a good teacher. I had one. Miss Mills, who taught us for four years, was a wonderful person. She could make the rocks alive, she could take us out of the four walls of the classroom and make us sail on the International Date line, trek along with Scott to the South Pole, and on the walls needing whitewash actually enable us to see the Aurora Borealis, eat raw fish with the Eskimos and dwell in a Red-Indian wigwam.

Nature works with the same materials everywhere but moulds them in a different fashion in different countries. Ours is a subcontinent, so when we go to the British Isles everything appears small. But that is their charm. Everything Nature can manipulate is there but on a miniature scale. "The hand that sent Jupiter spinning through heaven/Spends all its cunning to fashion a curl." The great highways of Europe built during the war for quick manouevring of men and material are admirable, wide, steely and stern. Driving from Dover to London, we were charmed by the roads which, compared to the highways of Europe, were mere lanes. But friendly and warm although if the temperture was taken I am sure it would have shown far below that of Europe. The small rows of houses, every one almost the same, had little lace curtains fluttering in the early morning breeze. What if we stopped and spent a day or two there? is the thought that comes to our mind easily. What the Britishers did and where is not my concern here, I am here describing their country, which both Sanat and I found beautiful and warm and inviting. Within the latitude of 50 and 60 and the longitude of 2 to 8 in a few square miles, Nature showed what she could do just as well as with vast lands and mountain systems and wildernesses. The British Isles are her exhibition of how perfectly she can build within so small a space.

Sailing away from the continent and seeing its lights fade slowly, one becomes pensive. We are passing to a new land. It is considered part of Europe yet is not Europe. We did not feel like sleeping at all although we were provided

with a very comfortable cabin. At about four in the morning Sanat woke me up: "Get up if you want to see the White Cliffs of Dover." We ran up to the deck; it was covered, so it was neither cold nor splashed over. The moon was up but the cliffs were still not visible. Gradually a white line appeared and then the cliffs, broken up into so many bits and each one with a name. I took care to find the names of all and remembered them when I was in England but now after so many years they have slipped out of my mind. During World War II the English had a tough job trying to hide the chalk hills. The enemy flying no matter how high spotted them and at once knew that a straight flight north-west would bring him to London, his target. After a pleasant drive from Dover we arrived at London. I have said enough about London in my previous instalments, so here I will omit it.

Sailing one sunny morning up the river Thames we came to the world-famous Kew Gardens. If ever a tourist was charmed by a garden this was one. It is no mere garden, it is a fairyland, a veritable paradise for flower-lovers. A universe of flora! And I do not exaggerate when I say the English had collected every type and every species of flowers and leaves and trees that are found from the North Pole to the South Pole and O point back to O point. There are areas open to the sun for all kinds of roses and other temperate zone flowers. In huge glass-houses the tropical plants are nurtured and the temperature is kept just what these plants are used to in their native countries. If not anything else, just think of the expense of keeping these glass-houses warm throughout the year. Anyone going out of the country is told to collect specimens and send them to Kew. Captain Cook, they say, brought a huge number of plants. Darwin too contributed a lot. Even men going out for Everest Expeditions are accompanied by a botanist. With the 1922 expedition led by Sir Francis Younghusband, a remarkable man was sent out, Howard Bury, a botanist *par excellence*. He brought back hundreds of specimens from the valleys they passed through in the great Himalaya. The names were equally fascinating: Dendrobuim, Coelogene, Cymbidium, Primula, Saxifraga, Clematis, Campylocarpum. Infinite types of roses and of course rhododendrons and irises, and so many others were in his bag.

Princess Augusta, it appears, in the middle of the 19th century, first conceived the idea of a botanical garden in London. She offered nine acres of land and asked Sir William Chambers to develop it with all classical and oriental styles. Henceforward all great kings and queens and other notable men gave it their blessing and support. Later, Queen Victoria in a great ceremonial function gave it to the nation. Today the Curator is John Simmons, a master as far as knowledge of the flora of the world is concerned. But the whole field is divided into numerous sections and departments with responsible heads and as many as two hundred experts and two hundred gardeners. Apart from its surpassing loveliness and amazing varieties in flower and plant, some points may be mentioned here that may bring home to my readers the magnitude of the venture. There are 25,000 different types of flowers in the garden. Some 2500 endangered species are pampered as if they were the children of the Prince

of Wales. The palm houses are 502 ft. long and 60 ft. wide. Within this area all species of palms are represented. There is a species of Queensland Mountain Lily (Australia) that flowers only once in 17 years. Now just imagine the patience of the Curator. A Chilean wine palm has become too big, so Queen Elizabeth planted a small one so that if the older one became too unmanageable the little one would remain as the show-piece.

In 1873, 70,000 rubber seeds were received from abroad. They say the rubber industry of the world started from Kew. There are lovely temples to adorn the place and an extraordinarily beautiful Chinese Pagoda. And for those who cannot do sight-seeing for long without some refreshment there are very inviting kiosks with tempting snacks.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA S. BANERJI

THE CLEVER YARN-SPINNER

A FOLK TALE

ONCE upon a time when an able and valiant king was holding court, one of his guards entered. He informed him of the arrival of a messenger from the Silent Country.

The king had already heard of the Silent Country where no one spoke. Since the subjects without any exception were intelligent people they used their brains and all other parts of their body to communicate their thoughts and feelings. And they invariably believed that the tongue was purely meant to taste food. Desirous of seeing a man from such a country the king permitted the guard to allow the messenger in.

The messenger bowed with a broad smile. The king welcomed him and asked about the tidings he had brought from his king.

Smiling stood the messenger. After a while he marched towards the king and drew a circle round the throne. Folding his arms against his chest he stood looking at the king.

The king was puzzled. He racked his brain but failed to find out what the messenger meant. He consulted his ministers. They too nodded their heads cursing their ignorance.

“I know a man, your Majesty!” suggested a minister, “who is by profession a yarn-spinner. He lives in a hut by the side of the temple for Goddess Saraswati. I have heard people say that he is a born genius. Perhaps he would be able to interpret the action of this messenger.”

“Hurry up,” ordered the king. “Bring him here before this messenger drives me mad. Tell the yarn-spinner that a rich reward awaits him if he is able to interpret this messenger.”

The minister, followed by a few guards, entered the hut of the yarn-spinner. There they found him training a young chicken in the art of swallowing a couple of playing marbles and then hurling them into the air. They watched the fun. But realizing that there was little time to waste, the minister rehearsed to the yarn-spinner the messenger’s drawing of the circle and the king’s plight. He then requested him to accompany him to the court immediately where he would be richly rewarded if everything went well.

The yarn-spinner ruminated in silence. He then took his chicken and the two marbles in his hand and said, “Let us hope for the best.”

When he reached the king’s court, the messenger looked at him and mischievously smiled.

The yarn-spinner reciprocated the smile and threw the two playing marbles in front of the messenger.

Unperturbed the messenger put his hand into a little bag he carried and brought out a fistful of something. Stretching his fist towards the face of the yarn-spinner he

opened his hand. It was full of paddy grains. He then drew back his hand in front of his mouth and with force blew off the paddy. The grains fell helter skelter on the ground.

Unable to understand what they communicated to each other, the king began to gaze at them with amusement and wonder. So too did his ministers and the courtiers.

The yarn-spinner without a moment's hesitation showed the young chicken to the messenger and with a funny grin on his face dropped it to the ground.

As soon as the chicken landed it began to gulp down the grains like a glutton. The fistful of paddy disappeared in a trice.

Bewildered the messenger bowed before the king and took to his heels while the yarn-spinner roared with laughter.

The king and the courtiers looked at one another in perplexity. They gazed curiously at the yarn-spinner, as if he was from another world.

"Well done!" complimented the king. A thousand gold coins will be yours. And now enlighten us about what you and the messenger communicated in silence to each other."

"Your Majesty," began the yarn-spinner. "By drawing a circle round your throne the messenger from the Silent Country meant that his king was ready to wage a war and that your fort had already been besieged. I was informed by your minister that after drawing the circle the messenger stood folding his arms against his chest. He was waiting for a reply from you. In fact he was asking you whether you are ready for a war or willing to surrender."

"Is it so?" The king laughed and said, "That did not strike anyone of us here."

"When I came here, your Majesty," continued the yarn-spinner, "the messenger mischievously smiled at me."

"Yes. Yes. We all saw him do so," said the courtiers in unison.

"He meant that I am no equal to him," said the yarn-spinner with a sheepish grin. "I too reciprocated his smile and threw the two playing marbles in front of him. I wanted him to understand that he and his king were nothing more than playthings in the hands of my king. And that if they waged war their heads, like marbles, would roll away from their necks."

"Excellent," applauded the king. "It's very interesting. Continue."

"The insulted messenger," continued the yarn-spinner, "took out a fistful of paddy grains from his bag and showed it to me. He meant that his soldiers are innumerable and that my king and his army are no match for them."

The king gritted his teeth and asked, "What did you tell him?"

"I simply let my chicken drop to the ground, your Majesty. And all of you have seen it in action. The chicken swallowed every grain of paddy. I meant that just one soldier in our army is enough to make their whole battalion disappear. The messenger understood my thoughts. That is the reason why he ran for his life.

"Superb!... Superb!" hurrahed the king. He patted the yarn-spinner on his back with affection and gratitude. He gave him the promised gold.

“One final question,” interrupted a minister. “How did your young chicken manage to swallow a fistful of paddy which is definitely heavy even for a fully grown-up cock?”

Everyone in the court looked intently at the yarn-spinner. “It is no black magic, sir!” he replied. “My chicken is accustomed to swallowing two playing marbles and then spurring them into the air. This practice has enlarged its gullet. Hence there is little difficulty for the chicken to swallow a fistful of paddy grains.”

P. RAJA

STORIES FROM TAMIL LITERATURE

(Continued from the issue of October 1985)

22. War over a Poet

IRUMPORAI, the Chera King, was a person of great learning and fine poetic gifts. Poykaiyar, a noble and accomplished poet, was his friend and tutor. They were together very often and enjoyed poetry. Irumporai's accomplishments were greatly talked about.

The Chola Kingdom lay near by and Cholan Chengannan was its ruler. He too was a great warrior, loving military glory, but he was deficient in learning. He had no poetic gifts as his neighbouring king Irumporai had. Whenever people spoke highly of King Irumporai for his learnedness and poetic gifts, Chengannan felt mortified. Proud as he was as a warrior, he felt small when he was amidst learned men and poets. So he desired to improve his learning and also to write poetry like king Irumporai. He consulted his ministers about this and they said that he must have the guidance of an able tutor. And like one man all of them said that Poykaiyar, the poet at the Chera court, was the most suitable person to be his tutor.

King Chengannan sent a message to the Chera king telling him of his desire and requesting him for the services of poet Poykaiyar for a few years. Irumporai showed the letter to Poykaiyar. The poet felt that the Chola king's love of knowledge was not genuine but was motivated by vanity. He also felt that trying to teach writing poetry to a person who had no natural gifts for it was not worthwhile. Moreover, he did not like to leave the friendly atmosphere at the Chera court and the king's loving company. So he plainly told king Irumporai that he was not at all willing to go to the Chola court. The king also did not try to persuade him. He sent a reply to Chengannan conveying the poet's unwillingness.

When Chengannan read the message he became enraged. He felt it as an insult and his immediate impulse was to march against the Chera kingdom. However, he restrained himself and sent another letter. In it he said that unless the Chera king thought it fit to send poet Poykaiyar to him within thirty days, the Chola army would march against the Chera country.

When this message reached Irumporai and Poykaiyar, they were sad. They did not like to plunge the country into unnecessary warfare, but at the same time they did not want to submit to threat. Thinking over it, Poykaiyar felt more convinced than before that he could never bring himself to be a tutor to such an arrogant war-monger. So they did not send any reply and started preparing for war. When the deadline passed, the Chola army came. The Chera army met the enemy forces outside the capital and a fierce battle ensued. Irumporai had his hopes on his mighty elephant force, but the Chola king had an excellent cavalry that struck like lightning. Scared at the swift moving Chola horses, the elephants turned and fled, causing much

devastation among their own forces. Irumporai was defeated and taken prisoner. Poet Poykaiyar was also captured. Both were taken to the Chola capital and thrown in prison.

In prison, Poykaiyar was full of remorse for the sake of the Chera king. He felt bad that it was his obstinacy which had brought all that trouble on Irumporai. He desired to make amends for it. As a respected poet he knew that he would be able to meet the Chola king if he so desired and he thought of making use of the opportunity to seek the release of king Irumporai. As Chengannan was fond of military glory, the poet knew that a poem celebrating his recent victory would greatly please him. Though it was against his principle to sing of war exploits, his sense of obligation and love for his king was so great that he decided to sacrifice his principle for the king's sake. And there seemed no other way to please the conqueror. So he started composing a poem celebrating Chengannan's victory, though actually the poem contained nothing more than a graphic description of the battle. When he finished the poem he asked to be taken to the Chola king. He presented the poem to the king. Reading it, the king was pleased beyond measure. When he asked the poet what reward he wanted, Poykaiyar asked for the release and freedom of king Irumporai. "You don't ask for your own release?" said the king. "No!" replied the poet with dignity. "My king is more dear to me than my freedom."

The Chola king thought for a moment and then ordered the release of both the king and the poet.

23. Honour of the Family

In those days there were frequent wars among the Tamil kingdoms and every able-bodied young man had to be in constant alertness to defend his country's freedom. Alertness meant cultivation of courage and rigorous training in the art of warfare. Thus a man's worth came to be measured by the bravery and heroism he displayed in the battlefield. Courage in battle was thought a great honour, and cowardice a shame. A coward turning tail in battle brought disgrace not only on himself but on his family as well. So mothers took pains to bring up their sons in courage and a sense of honour and revelled in their exploits when they grew up and went to war. Victory, naturally, was a matter for great pride, but even in defeat a mother was proud of her son if he showed courage and died without giving up.

Such a proud mother was an old woman with a wrinkled face and a withered body. She was the widow of a great soldier who had made his name in the battlefield. She had an only son born in her later years who was also a warrior fighting for the land he loved. She had brought him up as a brave soldier and was counting on him to continue the good name of the family.

The young man had gone to fight and the mother was eagerly awaiting news from the battle field. Soon, the news of victory came, but along with it came also the news of the death of the widow's son. In her jubilation over the victory for her country, she would have thought nothing of the death of her son, but it was rumoured

that the young man had not been able to withstand fierce combat and had been killed with a spear in his back while he was fleeing the battlefield.

Great was her feeling of outrage when the old woman heard this story. Fleeing from battle was never heard of among Tamil soldiers. Even when defeat was certain they fell fighting or killed themselves. And the old woman had instilled noble qualities into the mind of her son even while he had been an infant, feeding him with courage while suckling him on her breasts, and now she could not believe her ears when she heard that he was speared down while running away. In her heart she felt that the story must be false, but she wanted to make sure. So in front of all the people who thronged around her house, she swore a terrible oath. "Hear me, all who are here! I will go and find my son's body in the battlefield. If I find any injury on his back, surely he is unworthy to be called my son, and I will cut off these breasts that suckled him." So saying, she took the family sword in her hand and hurried away to the battlefield. And there, after a long search among the mangled bodies, she at last found her dead son. There he lay, as if he had fallen asleep, with a smile of content on his firm-set lips and a spear in his chest piercing right through his brave heart.

Great was her relief and joy when the old woman saw that. As she had believed, her son had died fighting, keeping the honour of the family. The rumour was false. Standing over the body, the old woman glowed with pride and experienced a joy that was indeed greater than what she had felt when she had given birth to him.

M. L. THANGAPPA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Road behind whitens in the sun: poems of India, by *Gordon Korstange*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1985.

THE name of Gordon Korstange will be familiar to regular readers of *Mother India*, for several poems from this collection were published for the first time in the pages of this periodical. The author is a musician, writer and teacher, whose deep appreciation for Tamil culture awoke when he first came to India in the late '60s as an English teacher in the Peace Corps. When his period of service was over he joined Auroville, where for many years he and his wife Jeanne gave their special care and concern to the Tamilian pupils of Aspiration School. His study of Carnatic flute with a distinguished master brought him into contact with the musical world of Tamil Nadu and he was able to maintain these studies and contacts even after his return to the States in 1980.

These poems are a distillation of this relationship with India, and chronicle its moods and stages, each complementing and refracting with the others so that something is inevitably lost by removing one from its setting for isolated quotation; and each is so much of a piece that it is difficult to select a few lines out of context. To give a taste of their special flavour, we can offer this brief poem, *Ahimsa*:

When you keep your hands
off other people
they stand like deer
in new meadow,
intent on the shifting air,
so graceful
so startled
 into an emptiness,
uncertain whether to run
or beg for the knife,
until
 an un-ease moves
through them,
 a sense
of something drawing them
away
 back into the trees.

As the first, dedicatory, poem indicates, Gordon has taken his writing as a field of *karmayoga*; and this has given it an honesty and unsentimental clarity which may seem simple, but which is far from simple to achieve. Each poem is a vignette,

catching an image, a moment, a mood, a person, with precision and without exaggeration, recording them with humour and charity. The eye is that of a sympathetic outsider—loving and admiring and drinking in the high culture that is India's inheritance from the past, but often appalled and repelled by daily sights and sounds that seem unworthy of that inheritance and yet are somehow inextricably interwoven with it: the everpresent contradictions that carry the unique flavour of India; and at the same time feeling uneasily aware of a kinship with those other outsiders, the departed colonialists. I too have found myself one afternoon drinking tea on a cool terrace with other white-skinned ladies and heatedly recounting the misdoings of our various servants, and I know the prickling of the skin that recognition brings. We may reassure ourselves that our motives for being here and our position in this country are quite different, but in that mirroring of bygone social patterns and attitude we feel uncomfortably close to the departed sahibs and their wives. We share their exile, and like them can never again belong wholly to our own origin. We play out our lives in a counterpoint between two contrasting cultures, whether we 'stay on' or decide to return. In the midst of an American wood, Gordon cannot escape a vivid awareness of the vanishing forests of the Nilgiris; looking out on a snowy street, his mind's eye recalls Chidambaram in the summer's heat.

Those who share the exile's perceptions will enjoy the humour and honesty with which he has caught and conveyed them; each of these poems speaks clearly of the perplexed love we bear for this land where our souls feel at home, but our minds and senses are constantly outraged—and delighted. To appreciate the crucial poem which records the decision to 'return home', one should know something of Paul Scott's well-known novel *Staying On*, which portrays with satire and sympathy the plight of an elderly British couple who remain in India after Independence; some other allusions may have their full flavour only for people who know Auroville. But the whole collection deserves the appreciation of all who can value the work of a sincere craftsman, who would not like to cheat the eye with showy veneers, but will spend all his skill to reveal the full colour and grain of the material he has to hand.

SHRADDHAVAN