

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

MARCH 1986

Price: Rs. 3.50

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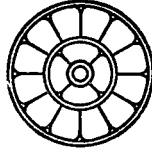
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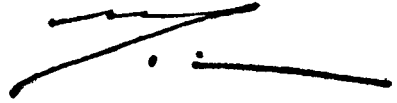


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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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. 3

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."*

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Statement about ownership and other particulars about the Newspaper  
*Mother India* to be published in the first issue every year after the last  
day of February

*FORM IV* ( See Rule 8 )

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Place of Publication  | Sri Aurobindo Ashram<br>Pondicherry - 605 002   |
| 2. Periodicity of its<br>publication   | Monthly   |
| 3. Printer's Name<br>Nationality<br>Address  | Amiyo Ranjan Ganguli<br>Indian<br>Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press<br>Pondicherry - 605 002 |
| 4. Publisher's Name<br>Nationality<br>Address  | P. Counouma<br>Indian<br>Sri Aurobindo Ashram<br>Pondicherry - 605 002                |
| 5. Editor's Name<br>Nationality<br>Address   | K. D. Sethna<br>Indian<br>Sri Aurobindo Ashram<br>Pondicherry - 605 002               |
| 6. Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one per cent of the total capital | Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust<br>Pondicherry - 605 002                                   |

I, P. Counouma, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

March, 1986

(Sd.) P. Counouma  
*Signature of Publisher*

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# TRUTH AND ITS EXPRESSION IN LANGUAGE AND LIFE

## SOME WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

TRUTH is an infinitely complex reality and he has the best chance of arriving nearest to it who most recognises but is not daunted by its infinite complexity. We must look at the whole thought-tangle, fact, emotion, idea, truth beyond idea, conclusion, contradiction, modification, ideal, practice, possibility, impossibility (which must be yet attempted) and keeping the soul calm and the eye clear in this mighty flux and gurge of the world, seek everywhere for some word of harmony, not forgetting immediate in ultimate truth, nor ultimate in immediate, but giving each its due place and portion in the Infinite purpose. Some minds, like Plato, like Vivekananda, feel more than others this mighty complexity and give voice to it. They pour out thought in torrents or in rich and majestic streams. They are not logically careful of consistency, they cannot build up any coherent, yet comprehensive system, but they quicken men's minds and liberate them from religious, philosophic and scientific dogma and tradition. They leave the world not surer, but freer than when they entered it.<sup>1</sup>

\*

We need not expect in the Upanishads a full statement of the facts on which its more grandiose statements of religious and philosophic truth are built, nor should we hope to find in them complete or reasoned treatises marshalling in a comprehensive and orderly manner the whole scheme of Vedantic philosophy. That is seldom the way in which the true Asiatic goes to work. He is a poet and a *divine* in the real sense of the word. His peculiar faculty is apparent in the very form of his philosophic books. The Aphorisms, that peculiarly Indian instrument of thought, by which our philosophers later on packed tons of speculation into an inch of space, give only the fundamental illuminations on which their philosophy depends. The Exegeses (*Karikas*) of Gaudapada and others are often a connected and logical array of concise and pregnant thoughts each carrying its burden of endless suggestion, each starting its own reverberating echo of wider and wider thought; but they are not comprehensive treatises. Nor can such a term be applied to the Commentaries (*Bhashyas*) of Shankara, Ramanuja and other powerful and original minds; they are, rather, forceful excursions into terse and strenuous logic, basing, strengthening, building up, adding a wing here and a storey there to the cunning and multiform, yet harmonic structure of Indian thought. Nowhere will you find an exhaustive and systematic statement of a whole philosophy interpreting every part of the universe in the terms of a single line of thought. This habit of suggestiveness & reserve in thought leaves the old philosophies still as inspiring and full of intention and poten-

<sup>1</sup> *Sri Aurobindo : Archives and Research*, April 1985, p 7.

tial development as when the glowing divinations and massive spiritual experiences stored in the Upanishads were first annealed and hammered into philosophic form. It is the reason of the Vedanta's surprising vitality, of the extent to which it enters and the potency with which it governs Indian life, in a way that no European philosophy except recently the Evolutionary has entered into or governed the life of the West. The European metaphysician has something in him of the pedagogue, something indeed of the mechanic, at least of the geometrician; his philosophies are masterpieces of consistent logic, admirable constructions of a rigid symmetry. But their very perfection militates against the vitality of the truth they set forth; for Life is not built on the lines of consistent logic, Nature does not proceed on the principle of a rigid symmetry: even where she seems most formal she loves to assert herself in even the slightest, just perceptible, perhaps hardly perceptible deflection from a strict correspondence. Nothing indeed can live permanently which has not in itself the potentiality of an unending Evolution; nothing—nothing finite at least—is completely true which is not incomplete. The moment a poem or work of art becomes incapable of fresh interpretation, or a philosophy of fruitful expansion or a species of change & variety, it ceases from that moment to be essential to existence and is therefore doomed, sooner or later, to extinction. The logical intellect may rebel against this law and insist passionately on finality in truth, but it rebels vainly; for this *is* the law of all life and all truth.<sup>1</sup>

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### CORRECTION

In the article on Pujalal in the February issue, it is said that he was one of the 12 persons present on November 24, 1926, the "Victory Day" when the Overmind Consciousness descended into the bodies of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Actually there were not 12 but 24 persons (well fitting the date!): (1) Bijoy Kumar Nag, (2) Nolini Kanta Gupta, (3) K. Amrita, (4) Moni (Suresh Chakravarty), (5) Philippe Barbier St.-Hilaire, (6) Barindra Kumar Ghose, (7) Datta (Miss Dorothy Hodgson), (8) K. Rajangam, (9) Satyen Bose, (10) Ambalal Purani, (11) Lilavati (Purani's wife), (12) Punamchand, (13) Champaben (Punamchand's wife), (14) Rajani Kanta Palit, (15) Dr. Upendra Nath Banerjee, (16) Champaklal, (17) Kanailal Gangulee, (18) Khitish Chandra Dutt, (19) V. Chandrasekharam, (20) Pujalal, (21) Purushottam Patel, (22) Rati Palit, (23) Rambhai Patel, (24) Nani Bala.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1984, pp. 183-84.

## A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON MARCH 9, 1955

This talk is based upon *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 5,  
"Physical Consciousness, etc."

*Sweet Mother, what is the meaning of "the psychic opening in the physical consciousness"?*

I THINK I have already told you this once. One can find the psychic through each part of the consciousness: you can find a psychic behind the physical... you can enter into contact with the psychic directly through the physical consciousness, directly through the vital consciousness, directly through the mental consciousness. It is not as though you had to cross all the states of being in order to find the psychic. You can enter the psychic without leaving your physical consciousness, through interiorisation, because it is not an ascent or gradation. It is an interiorisation, and this interiorisation can be done without passing through the other states of being, directly. This is what Sri Aurobindo means: you are in the physical consciousness, nothing prevents you from opening this physical consciousness to the psychic consciousness, you don't need to develop vitally or mentally or to return to these states of being in order to enter into contact with the psychic. You can enter directly. The psychic manifests itself directly in your physical without passing through the other states; that's what it means.

*Sweet Mother, here it is said: "a complete equality and peace and a complete dedication free from personal demand or desire in the physical and the lower vital parts are the thing to be established."*

Well, so what?

*How can it be done?*

How should you do it? You must want it, then aspire; and then each time you do something which is contrary to this ideal, you must put it before yourself and put the light upon it and the will for change. Each time one makes an egoistic movement or does those things which should not be done, one must immediately catch it as though by its tail and then put it in the presence of one's ideal and one's will to progress, and put the light and consciousness upon it so that it may change.

To catch each thing that should not be done, catch it like that, and then hold it firmly in front of the light until the light can act upon it to transform it: this is a work which one can do all the time. No matter what one is doing, one can always

do this work. Each time one becomes aware that there is something which is not all right, one must always catch it like this, prevent it from hiding, for it tries to hide: catch it and then keep it like this before the light of one's conscious will, and then put the light upon it so that it changes.

Nothing? Any questions? What?

*(Mother turns to Pavitra who is seated with his eyes closed.) Pavitra has a question? (He remains motionless, not having heard Mother. His neighbour pokes him with his pen to draw him out from his meditation. Pavitra opens his eyes amidst laughter. Mother tells him:) A question? (He makes a sign that he has no question. Laughter.)*

*Sweet Mother, sometimes an incarnated being has a very weak physical body; in this case isn't his body an obstacle to his work upon earth?*

An incarnated being? Whom do you call an incarnated being?

*For example, Ramakrishna or some others...*

Oh! oh, oh, but I don't understand your question very well. The present being, whatever it may be, and whoever may be within it, always has a psychic being. You see, usually it depends on the degree of evolution of the psychic being but still every psychic being which is in a body has states of being formed in the present formation. Its work is always to transform these; it is as though this were the part of the universe given to him for his work of transformation. And even if he has a vaster mission than that of his own person, unless he does this work in his person he cannot do the other... You cannot change the outer world unless you begin by changing yourself. This is the first condition; and for everyone, great and small, old and young—old, I mean those who have lived very long, and young those who haven't lived very long—it is always the same work. This is why life upon earth for a psychic being is the opportunity to progress.

The duration of earthly life is the time of progress. Outside earthly life there is, so to say, no progress. It is in earthly life that there is the possibility and the means of progress. But for all conscious beings it is the same thing, not only for those you call incarnated. It is for everyone the same thing. One must first begin with the work on himself. When one has done the work on himself, one can do it on others; but the first thing to do is to do it on oneself.

*Sweet Mother, the Divine has come down to this world of darkness and ignorance...*

And so, what?

*How does He feel?...*



What? What does He feel? You have never been in a place which is quite dark, where you are obliged to find your way without having a light? Has it happened to you?...A place you do not know and which is quite dark, where you have to find your way without a light? Have you never been in a place like that? No? Oh, you would know it if it has happened to you. For example, you are outside in... let us say, a forest... this is a big thing... but let us say, in a fairly large garden, and then, you have remained too long and there is no longer any light at all and you don't know how to find your way. Has this never happened to you? You always had enough light?

*Sweet Mother, if there is someone who wants to have experiences or something like that, what is the first thing he should do?*

To have experiences? What kind of experiences? Have visions or have psychological experiences or—what kind of experiences?

In fact, the whole life is an experience, isn't it? We spend our time having experiences. You mean having a contact with other realities than physical ones? Is it that? Ah!

Well, I think the first condition is to have, to begin with, the faith that there is something other than the physical reality. This can be the first condition. Then the second condition is to try to find what it is, and the best field of action is oneself. So one must begin by studying oneself a little, and manage to discern between what depends exclusively on the body and what on something else which is not the body. One can begin like that. One can begin by observing one's feelings or thoughts in their working; because... sensations are so linked to the body that it is very difficult to distinguish them, they are so tied to our senses, and the senses are instruments of the body, so it is difficult to discern. But feelings already escape... the feelings one experiences; and to try to find the root of this... and then the thoughts... What are thoughts?

If one begins to find out, to understand what a feeling is and what a thought is, and how it works, then one can already go quite far on the path with that. One must at the same time observe how his feelings and thoughts have an action on the body, what the reciprocity is. And then, there is another exercise which consists in looking into oneself for what is persistent, what is lasting, something which makes one say "I" and which is not the body. For obviously, when one was very small, and then when each year one grows up, if one takes fairly long distances, for example a distance of about ten years, they are very different "I"'s from what one was when as small as this (*gesture*), and then what one is now; it is difficult to say that it is the same person, you see. If one takes only this, still there is something which has the feeling of always being the same person. So one must reflect, seek, try to understand what it is. This indeed can lead you far on the path. Then if one also studies the relation between these different things—between thoughts, feelings, their action on the body,

the reciprocal action of the body on these things—and also what it is that says “I” permanently, what it is that can trace a curve in the movement of the being, if one seeks carefully enough, it leads you quite far. Naturally if one seeks far enough and with enough persistence, one reaches the psychic.

It is the path to lead you to the psychic; and so this is the experience, it is the first experience. When one has the contact with the permanent part of one’s immortal being, through this immortality one can go still further and reach the Eternal. It is still another state of consciousness. But it is in this way that one follows the path, gradually. There are other ways, but this is the one which is always within reach. You see, one always has his body with him, and his feelings and thoughts, and at any moment of the day whatever, even in the night one can be busy with this; while if one must have something else around him, people or things or certain conditions, it is more complicated; but this is always there within one’s reach. Nobody can prevent you from having your body with you, your thoughts and your feelings, your sensations; it is the field of work which is always there, it is very convenient—no need to seek outside. One has all that is necessary. And so what must be acquired is the power of observation and the capacity for concentrating and for pursuing a little continuously a certain movement in one’s being; as when you have some very strong feeling which takes hold of you, seizes you, then you must look at it, so to say, and concentrate upon it and manage to find out where it comes from, what has brought you this. Just this work of concentrating in order to succeed in finding this out is enough to lead you straight to an experience. And then if, for example, you want to do something practical, if in your feelings you are completely upset, agitated, if there’s a kind of storm within, then by concentrating you can try to find out the cause of all that, you see, the inner cause, the real cause, and at the same time you can aspire to bring peace, quietude, a kind of inner immobility into your feelings, because without that you can’t see clearly. When everything is in a whirlwind one sees nothing; as when you are in a great tempest and the wind is blowing from all sides and there are clouds of dust, you cannot see; it is the same thing. To be able to see, all must become quiet. So you must aspire and then draw into this storm .. draw peace, quietude, immobility, like this; and then if you succeed it is still another experience, it is the beginning.

Of course one can sit down and try...not to meditate, because that’s an activity of thought which does not lead to experience, but to concentrate and aspire and open oneself to the force from above, and if one does it persistently enough, there is a moment when one feels this force, this peace or this silence, this quietude descending, penetrating and descending into the being quite far. The first day it may be very little, and then gradually it becomes more. This also is an experience. All these are easy things to do.

But if, for example, one has a dream, when one remembers it very precisely in its details and concentrates in order to understand this dream, this too can be an experience, some door of understanding can open and one may suddenly

get the deep meaning which was hidden behind the dream; this also is an experience—many things... and one always has the opportunity to have them. Of course the experience which most gives you the sense of a revelation or something new is the one you have as soon as you enter into contact with the psychic, and in the psychic, when you are in the presence of the Divine; this indeed is the typical experience, the one which has an action on the whole orientation and activity of the being. But it may come quickly or may also take time. Yet between the state in which one is at present and that state there are many rungs. I mean these are rungs of experiences one can have.

So it is a vast programme. The first steps are these: to collect oneself, try to be very quiet and see what is happening within, the relations between things, and what is happening inside, not just live only on the surface.

There. That's all?

*When one meditates there are moments when one sees very unpleasant forms in front of himself for some days. It begins and later ends. What does it mean?*

Yes, it means probably that instead of meditating in a silent concentration, one has opened one's consciousness either in a vital domain or in a not very pleasant mental domain. That's what it means. It can also mean—it depends on the degree of development one has reached—it can mean in certain cases, when one is master of one's concentration and knows where one goes—still this already requires a fairly great discipline—it may be that it is a particular attack of adverse forces, of bad wills, coming either from certain beings or from certain domains; but it is not necessarily attacks; it can simply be that one has opened one's consciousness in a place that's not very desirable or else sometimes, often, that one had in himself a number of movements of the vital and the mind which were not very desirable, and when one enters the silence of meditation or that kind of passive attitude of expectation of something which is going to happen, all these vibrations which have gone out of him come back to him in their real appearance which is not very pleasant. This happens often: one had bad feelings, not positively wicked but still things which are not desirable, bad thoughts, movements of dissatisfaction, revolt or impatience, or a lack of contentment or... you see, one may be angry with somebody, even in thought, no need of speaking... things like that. When one is quiet and tries to be still so as to have an experience, all these things come back to him in their true forms, that is, not very pleasant forms: very ugly, forms which are at times very ugly. I think that I have already told you this several times: it's something that happens frequently if you don't control your thoughts and your vital reactions and if someone has displeased you for some reason or other, if that person has done or said something which you do not like, and you consider him hostile and so the spontaneous reaction is to want to punish him in some way or other or if one is still more primitive—if I may say so—to want to take vengeance or hope that something bad will happen to him.

However, it may even come very spontaneously, a violent reaction, like that, then you don't think about it any more. But now, at night, when you are asleep, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, in a case like this, the person in question comes to you with an extreme violence, either to kill you or to make you ill, as though he wished you as much harm as possible, and then in your ignorance you say, "Well, I was quite right to be angry with him." But it is quite simply your own formation which returns to you, nothing else but that. The person has nothing to do with it—he is quite innocent in the affair. This is a phenomenon which occurs very often, I mean for people who have movements of rancour or anger or violence; and they always see in a dream of this kind the justification of their movements—whereas it is only a very striking image of their own feelings. For the formation returns upon one in this way.

*Then in these cases what should one do?*

What should one do? First, never have bad thoughts to begin with; and then, secondly, never be afraid, even if you see extremely ugly things—not only have no fear but no disgust and no repulsion, simply a perfect quietude—and try to be as pure and calm as possible. Then, whatever it may be, whether it be your own formation or it comes from others, whether it be an attack or a bad place—no matter what it is—everything will be all right. But above all, this: quiet, calm, naturally sheltered from every kind of possible fear; and without any disgust, without any recoiling, nothing; like that: a perfect indifference with a complete calm. Then nothing bad can happen, absolutely nothing. Even if it is truly an enemy who comes to attack you, he becomes powerless.

In all cases, without exception, whatever may happen, calm and quietude and serene peace and an absolute faith in the divine Grace—if you have all this, nothing can happen to you. And you must have all this if you want to have experiences; because experiences without this—it's not good; but with this, it's excellent.

*(Questions and Answers 1955, pp. 74-82)*

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 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 21, 1940

P: Vinoba has made five speeches.

N: Has there been any effect.

S: There is some effect among the masses. On the news of his arrest there was a partial hartal in Bombay. It seems the speeches are censored. The papers mention: "two or three sentences are censored here." *The Indian Express* wanted to bring out a special number on this rumoured arrest but couldn't because of the censorship.

SRI AUROBINDO: It could have published that nothing had happened! *(Laughter)*

P: But what effect can non-violence produce? India has been traditionally non-violent from ancient times. So not much preaching is required.

SRI AUROBINDO: How? India has been fighting all the time before the English rule. Everybody was fighting and there was no distinction of martial and non-martial races. It is only after the English came that people lost their fighting habit and ability.

N: The Yugoslavian pact with Hitler seems a fact.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. However, it is good news that Turkey says she will resist. She is not depending on Russia.

N: Nothing is known about Greece.

P: There is no more blitzkrieg. So England can anticipate Hitler's moves now and prepare accordingly.

N: But what can England do in the East unless Greece and Turkey resist?

SRI AUROBINDO: If they resist it will be an effective check. England can come with her air-force and navy.

P: Italy can be easily pounded.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not only Italy; from her bases, England can attack East Germany and Poland where Hitler has factories, and then Rumania itself. The British Embassy can leave Rumania on the plea that she is now an enemy-occupied country. Then it will be an even game.

S: Ribbentrop is going to Moscow, it seems.

P: Yes, to bring Moscow into Germany's 3-power pact.

S: They say Germany's relations with Russia are sound, solid—

SRI AUROBINDO: And durable—the three words meaning the same thing.

S: *The Indian Express* has published news of the birth of Churchill's grandson.

SRI AUROBINDO: *The Hindu* too!

S: Oh, I thought it was too small a news for *The Hindu*. Soon they will give the photo of the baby.

SRI AUROBINDO: War baby! (*Laughter*)

P: Anilbaran wants to know what the relation is between Cosmic consciousness and Overmind.

SRI AUROBINDO: Relation? What relation?

P: I told him that Overmind is an instrument like Supermind.

SRI AUROBINDO: Cosmic consciousness has many levels: it can be of mind, vital and matter; of Overmind too. So what does he mean by relation between them? Cosmic consciousness is a phrase in contrast to individual consciousness. By it you get to know about the universe. Overmind is a power of Cosmic consciousness just as mind, vital and body. Only, you can have body, vital and mind without any knowledge of Cosmic consciousness while to go to or know Overmind you must have Cosmic consciousness. The Cosmic working can be known by entering into Overmind, but for the source you have to go to Supermind. You can know the working from Overmind knowledge but to get control or command or the final secret you must have Supermind, which is an instrument of Self-determination of the Divine and has organised the Cosmos.

October 22, 1940

S: In reply to the judge whether he had anything to say, Vinoba is supposed to have said that they had made a disgraceful translation.

SRI AUROBINDO: Translation?

S: Yes, Sir. He made speeches in Marathi and they were translated into English.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why disgraceful? Means inaccuracy in language or incorrectness in content?

S: Don't know.

P: Though he is a scholar in Sanskrit, he has not read *Shakuntala* and considers this a great virtue! He has learned Sanskrit to read the Gita and the Upanishads.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not *Shakuntala* because it is erotic?

P: Probably. Mahadev Desai has put forth Vinoba's philosophy in *The Hindu* today. Vinoba says—We live because we can't die. We eat, and walk, etc. because we are compelled to. Sleep because sleep overcomes us.

SRI AUROBINDO: I thought it was the other way round. We die because we can't live.

P: That was what I thought too.

S: He must have said it in relation to something. Of course a friend of mine may hold the same view.

SRI AUROBINDO: How is that?

S: I said once before, he wanted to commit suicide, took a lethal dose of opium but it didn't kill him. Another friend ran through many accidents but death escaped him.

P: He could have taken potassium cyanide! Desai continues to say that Vinoba had differences with Ramdas. Ramdas says the doer is free while Vinoba says he is not. As I said before, according to him we sleep because we are compelled to. In everything we do there is a compulsion.

SRI AUROBINDO: One can say one is compelled to be born, at least in appearance. But does Ramdas say one is free?

P: He says partially free—in the process of becoming free.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is a different matter.

P: Sardesai makes out in the course of a talk that Shivaji had no political guidance from Ramdas: Ramdas refused to give any when Shivaji approached him. This is something new.

SRI AUROBINDO: What about the ochre-coloured flag? A legend?

P: He says that Ramdas gave him advice about the succession to the throne when Shivaji wanted his second son to come to the throne instead of Shambhuji. Ramdas advised him to make his eldest son the rightful heir and to follow the usual royal custom.

SRI AUROBINDO: He did guide then?

P: It is only part of a talk Sardesai gave, in which he says that he will put forward only 2 or 3 points for the present. Shambhuji, he says, was not as bad as is made out.

SRI AUROBINDO: White-washing?

P: Yes, and if it was eating and drinking, that was a common fault. Everybody used to do it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Queer defence! If he wants to be original he must say something unexpected....

S: Lothian is also mentioned as a possible Viceroy of India.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh! In that case they will have to change Amery too. But Lothian is doing much useful work in America. Can he be spared?

P: Lord Lloyd is also suggested by the Diehards!

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord! They may as well send the devil himself or Sir John Anderson. It will be disastrous! But the Labour party may not consent. When is the present Viceroy to go?

P: After six months.

SRI AUROBINDO: That's a long time!

*Evening*

(Armando Menezes has written another book of poems and has sent a copy to Sri Aurobindo. P asked if he had read it.)

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, some of the poems. There is a remarkable change. There is one written on 21st February. He has still to go forward till every word becomes inevitable. His long poems are not so successful.

P: Yes. He says that he is afraid of reading *The Life Divine* lest he should have to make a choice between the worldly life and the spiritual. He got something at the Darshan.

SRI AUROBINDO: There are two or three poems in connection with that mood. I have read Desai's account of Vinoba. He has combined Buddha and Plato in him. He could have added Diogenes too. It seems Vinoba doesn't like literature. Only history and philosophy interest him.

P: Yes, I told you he is proud of not having read *Shakuntala*.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not only *Shakuntala*, but literature itself doesn't interest him.

P: Yet he is said to be a great lover of art. Somebody told him that he is an ascetic, he doesn't appreciate beauty. He replied that he loves beauty, e.g. he loves flowers and the starlit sky. He would rather tear off his skin than pluck a flower.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the popular notion of art and artist. If you love flowers and admire the sky you are considered an artist. I saw in *Prabuddha Bharata Vivekananda* being called a great master of art because he loved music.

S: Perhaps one can be an artist by appreciating art?

SRI AUROBINDO: In that case many people are artists.

N: If one can sing well?

SRI AUROBINDO: Singing well doesn't make an artist—that is my point. An artist must either create something or have the aesthetic understanding of art. Otherwise anybody can look at the moon or the sky and get into an emotion.

P: Now they give a new definition to art. They say art must be able to transmit emotion. Otherwise it is not art or such art has no value.

SRI AUROBINDO: What emotion?

P: Feeling, I suppose.

SRI AUROBINDO: Feeling? What feeling?

P: Such as an agriculturist or farmer can understand. That is their conception and in that they are followers of Tolstoy. You know Gandhi is greatly influenced by Tolstoy and follows his view of art, the puritanic and popular view.

SRI AUROBINDO: That puritanic element is in many places. Even Ruskin who was considered an authority on the aesthetic element in art had puritanism in his blood. Puritanism has been brought from Europe to India. In India even ascetics were not puritans.

P: Musriwalla is trying to introduce some ideas of spirituality. He has written three or four books on the lives of Buddha and others. He says that experiences are not reliable because they take place in nature.



SRI AUROBINDO: In that case you can't realise God because the experiences will be in nature. The only thing to do is to commit suicide to get out of nature.

P: Or sit quiet.

SRI AUROBINDO: That will be in nature!

P: Musriwalla has no idea of these things, not even elementary principles of *Sankhya*. He can't realise that in nature one can have the contact of something of supernature. He has no imagination, either. He says Valmiki has depicted Ayodhya as a rich, luxurious city.

SRI AUROBINDO: Should it have been described as a poor village? Then if he read Kalidasa he would squirm with agony.

P: For such people everything should be simple, bare, austere and poor. I don't understand why poverty should be made to appear so great.

SRI AUROBINDO: Because Tolstoy said it and Gandhi said it after him!

P: He is also against temples. There is no necessity of temples according to him. As somebody said, churches are not necessary, for the Bible can be read in the fields.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why houses then? Everybody can live in the fields like birds and animals, it will be quite natural....

S: Rumania seems to be in luck. It has got not only the Germans but an earthquake too.

P: Yes, like Turkey.

SRI AUROBINDO: But Turkey had no Germans!

P: The Germans are trying to penetrate into Bulgaria also in the form of tourists.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Hitler didn't find Boris very—

P: Pliable? No.

NIRODBARAN

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

*(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1986)*

## The Mother's Message

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



Volume Two: 1958

10

EARLY in the morning we reached Aden. There the Air India plane refuelled and we set off towards Nairobi. I settled into the chair with a book but it did not hold my interest. I closed my eyes for a while, then opened them. Suddenly I noticed that one of the propellers had stopped. I asked my brother whether something had gone wrong. He laughed away the matter. After half an hour or so another propeller

stopped. I became anxious, but kept mum. I did not wish to get killed in the air—how terrible! Now everybody lost the thread of their conversations when the Captain announced that we were going back to Aden, because of some disorder in the engine. There was murmuring—fear—speculation—imagination—God knew what.

Maganbhai said that the plane could fly even with two out of four propellers, but it was risky.

The plane rolled to a stop and we unfastened the seat-belts. Breakfast was served at the airport. Another Air India plane was supposed to come from Bombay but unhappily its engine also failed after arriving at Aden. So we were compelled to remain twenty-four hours in Aden. The Air India office made arrangements for all the passengers to stay in the best hotels. We could not take our luggage except hand-bags. Maganbhai had some friends there so we enjoyed our stay in spite of all the inconveniences—ghastly heat, humidity and blowing warm sand.

My brother bought me a Rolex watch which I am still wearing. At night his friends suggested that we see an English movie in an open drive-in theatre. I don't remember what the film was. I felt extremely uneasy in this environment so unlike the Ashram.

We reached our hotel very late. We were given one room, because there was a shortage of rooms. I could not sleep a wink. My brother was snoring. Besides, I did not like the place. I got up early—took my bath with slightly salty water which gave a sticking sensation.

While having our breakfast my brother pointed out that here too was the colour-bar so that we got second-class service and the white people got first-class treatment. He was annoyed.

Eventually the third plane took us to Nairobi. Our car was ready to take us to Miwani—our Estate is 220 miles away from Nairobi. We took some rest at our friend's house in Nairobi till noon. One of Maganbhai's bachelor friends came to see us. He asked me stupid questions which bored me a lot. We made a move soon after.

Maganbhai was at the wheel, I was beside him and our driver Karlos relaxed in the passenger seat.

Natives here—especially women—wore bright orange or blue pieces of cloth slung over one shoulder and tied around their waists. Their ear lobes were stretched out into a thin string of flesh hanging down to their shoulders. They were very fond of wearing coloured beads around their necks. They looked frighteningly strange.

The sky was a clear azure across which an occasional fleecy cloud was fanned onward by a gentle breeze.

I now lay in a drowsy contentment, experiencing a joy not of this world, but something from the Divine Grace which pierced for a brief while the earthly barriers of the physical consciousness and the Ego's pride. My brother was deep in thought. I did not look back at what our poor Karlos was up to.

The car moved smoothly through the greenery and the big mountains. The

sunny afternoon subsided gently into the tender dusk. In a short space of time the twilight deepened to indigo. It was a magical and lovely scene that melted into the unusual, almost melancholy beauty of the mountain night.

At last our journey ended. On Saturday night we arrived home.

My mother was shocked to see my weak condition. I saw sadness in my father's eyes. Mrs. Maganbhai—my sister-in-law—was also present. My younger sister Usha told me jokingly: "You really look like a ghost. Don't come out of your room at night."

But none could see me at night. For I was given a tiny apartment fully equipped on the second floor of my father's huge house.

To my surprise, the relaxation worked in spite of my emotional confusion and I found myself drifting into sleep.

The sun flooded through the window filling the room with warm gold. I awoke. Outside, the birds had already set up a morning chorus.

Breakfast at my father's house used to be a grand ceremony. For my father was served sumptuously. It was amusing to watch an antelope having breakfast with my father! It came without fail in time and sampled some delicacies which it fancied.

My brothers and their families who were staying in houses around ours came to meet me. I had only been there a day, yet I felt it more like weeks.

I also met relatives and friends. When my mother's friend Mrs. Sude came to visit her from Kisumu, I was there. She asked my mother who I was. My mother answered: "Strange, you could not recognise my daughter Savita who has come from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram to improve her health?" Mrs. Sude exclaimed: "Oh, no, she can't be, because when I last saw her about five years back she was not like this—she was very fair and healthy. Now her flawless complexion is changed and she has become thin. How can she be Savita whom I knew so well?"

Then she came and sat beside me. She asked me several questions about the life in the Ashram. Since she was a doctor's wife, she understood my situation and was very sympathetic. She advised me that I should not be austere with my life, God dwelt in the body, so we should take care of it and not neglect it. She added that I should eat well and be fit. Her few home-truths touched me very much. I had been quite careless about my health when I had been in the Ashram.

On Monday the 12th May 1958 my treatment by a family doctor began.

\*

There was a troop of servants and cooks. Also a fleet of cars. In fact, all the comforts. But still my mind was full of anguish. I observed a striking change in everything including my own people. I was lost, bewildered, in a world in which I could play no part. Nevertheless, I kept the aspiration of my soul burning.

I wanted to improve my health. So I remained quiet in all the circumstances—good or bad.

I had to take quite a number of injections, a variety of medicines followed by X-rays, blood tests and so on. It was discovered that I had a bad enlarged liver as a result of amoebiosis.

Proper food, the cool climate and the loving care of my mother and sister did wonders. My sister could not stay long, though. She was married and had already two sons. The younger son was left in the care of my mother.

Gradually along with the improvement of my health, the family ties loosened by themselves. My mind was slowly emerging out of delusion.

\*

Many a night I stood on my tiny terrace-garden and watched the picturesque view of the Sugar Factory with numerous flickering lights. From far it looked like a ship on a dark sea. It floated back into my life. The blue midnight sky was studded with countless stars twinkling brilliantly. I looked up at them and felt a sudden longing for the different stars of my care-free childhood and untroubled girlhood. Becoming a woman seemed to be fraught with a multitude of problems. The scent of jasmines wafted about me. I inhaled their rich perfume. It was a silent night. The silence broke only with the chirping of crickets, and the occasional barks of Alsatian dogs. The rhythmic throbbing and beating of drums came from far. Natives played them with songs they had composed themselves. There was also the sight of the fires lit by our watchmen (Askaris in Swahili) in order to chase off wild animals.

Sometimes I saw at night the moon gliding slowly across the white woolly clouds of different shapes.

The expanse of this timeless land reminded me of infinity. It made me feel insignificant, just a tiny speck in all this great immensity. Something in me went out to embrace the night. I stood quite still and let it flow around me.

Frequently I buried my face in my hands and recalled in all vividness the days, months and years I had spent near the Mother.

When I went to bed I pressed the shawl the Mother had given me against my heart and slept.

The sacred shawl has a magnificent background. In *Mother India* February 21, 1958, pp. 7-8, it is stated:

“The Mother’s diary which comprised the *Prayers and Meditations* was started two years earlier. Every day at 5 a.m. she used to sit down to meditate near her window with a Kashmiri shawl wrapped round her. The meditation being over, she would note down her thoughts and experiences; but they were meant only for herself and she always used to lock up her diary. In 1916 she stopped writing, but on her final arrival at Pondicherry in 1920 she took it up again. Later, it was only occasionally that she wrote.”

The Mother liked the following Prayer very much:

March 7, 1915

“It is past, the time of sweet mental silence, so peaceful, so pure, through which could be felt the profound will expressing itself in its all-powerful truth. Now the will is no longer perceived; and the mind once more necessarily active, analyses, classifies, judges, chooses, constantly reacts as a transforming agent upon everything that is imposed on the individuality, grown wide enough to be in contact with a world infinitely vast and complex, a world of mingled light and shadow like all that belongs to the earth. I am exiled from every spiritual happiness, and of all ordeals this, O Lord, is surely the most painful that Thou canst impose: but most of all the withdrawal of Thy will which seems to be a sign of total disapprobation. Strong is the growing sense of rejection, and it needs all the ardour of an untiring faith to keep the external consciousness thus abandoned to itself from being invaded by an irremediable sorrow....

“But it refuses to despair, it refuses to believe that the misfortune is irreparable; it waits with humility in an obscure and hidden effort and struggle for the breath of Thy perfect joy to penetrate it again. And perhaps each of its modest and secret victories is a true help brought to the earth....

“If it were possible to come definitively out of this external consciousness, to take refuge in the divine consciousness! But that Thou hast forbidden and still and always Thou forbidst it. No flight out of the world! The burden of its darkness and ugliness must be borne to the end even if all divine succour seems to be withdrawn. I must remain in the bosom of the Night and walk on without compass, without beaconlight, without inner guide.

“I will not even implore Thy mercy; for what Thou wilt for me, I too will. All my energy is in tension solely to advance, always to advance step after step, despite the depth of the darkness, despite the obstacles of the way, and whatever comes, O Lord, it is with a fervent and unchanging love that Thy decision will be welcomed. Even if Thou findest the instrument unfit to serve Thee, the instrument belongs to itself no more, it is Thine; Thou canst destroy or magnify it, it exists not in itself, it wills nothing, it can do nothing without Thee.”

\*

During that period from 11th May to 2nd September the Mother sent me three hundred and twenty-nine hand-written quotations—her wonderful collections of sayings from various countries and times. Together with these scripts she sent me beautiful painted cards all of them bearing her perpetual “Love and blessings.”

After many years these quotations have been printed in book-form under the title of *Gems from the Mother to Huta*.

I am presenting here the first and the last quotations in facsimile:

*The Eternal Wisdom*

*Introduction*

*The Song of Wisdom*

*We fight to win sublime  
Wisdom; therefore men  
call us warriors.*

*(Book of Wisdom)*

*This Wisdom is the principle  
of all things.*

*(The Zohar)*

That Intelligence is God  
within us; by that men are  
gods and their humanity  
neighbours divinity. (Herivel)

Man is divine so long  
as he is in communion with  
the Eternal. (Ramakrishna)

Deck thyself now with  
majesty and excellence and  
array thyself with glory and  
beauty.

(Job)

Thou belonged to the divine world,

(Baha Ullah)

The race of man is divine.

(Pythagoras)



The most interesting thing I now recollect is that all my letters to the Mother were posted by Mr. Milton Obote, afterwards the President of Uganda, who was the senior clerk in our office at Miwani in 1958. All the Mother's letters I received through him. Sometimes the address too was written on envelopes in the Mother's own hand.

Mr. Obote was extremely polite, courteous, cultured and literate. Also straightforward, honest and sincere. When he became the President of Uganda, he never lost his regard for our family. Unhappily, Mr. Obote who belongs to the Langi tribe was dethroned in a coup on 27th July 1985 by Tito Occalo who belongs to the Acholi tribe.

\*

I painted several pictures, but they were not up to much, because I was unable to receive the Mother's Force and inspiration directly.

I sent a statue of a lion to the Mother. She acknowledged it:

"The lion is beautiful. I kept him near me."

She loved lions. They called up to my mind the unforgettable episode, which I had witnessed when I had gone with Maganbhai's wife and my elder sister to the National Park of Nairobi. We saw various kinds of animals. I was very eager to see lions—and lo! they came! a lion, a lioness and their playful cubs which amused me immensely. The family sat relaxed near a bush as if they were posing for a snap and, indeed, there were other cars including the Warden's from which some people took photographs as well as made a movie of these big cats.

We remained there for more than two hours to watch their movements. They were absolutely at ease. I remembered the Mother—how much she would have enjoyed seeing these lovely creatures.

At last we left the place reluctantly.

It is true that the lion, the largest of the African carnivores, is sufficiently powerful to pull down a full-grown wild buffalo. We visited the Museum. It was not impressive. I was sad to see the stuffed animals there.

We also went to see Lake Kikuyu. *A Travel Guide to Kenya and Uganda* informs us:

"...One looks down into a depression, which at first sight appears to be a swamp but is really an underground lake covered by a few feet of matted growth—an accumulation of matter that has grown upon a basis of water plants and scum augmented by generations of soil and refuse from the surrounding slopes. The cover of this underground lake is strong enough to support the weight of cattle which use it as a grazing ground."

Only there were certain portions which native guides declared dangerous, because if one goes there one sinks into a yawning pit. There were cases of the Lake

swallowing quite a number of animals and people.

Walking on the matted growth gave us the feeling of a spring-bed. We walked on it for some time. While returning I lost my footing near the bank and fell into a shallow ditch which stank horribly.

Upon reaching our friend's house, I took a bath. Then from my hand-bag I fished out a scent-spray and puffed a heavy-smelling mist all over me.

\*

Laljibhai left for Pondicherry in June to finalise his stay there, because he was to build a Sugar Mill in Ariyur 12 miles from Pondicherry.

The Mother wrote to me on 6th June:

“Laljibhai has arrived with all the nice things bringing your love. Blessings.”

The Monsoon was now in full swing. Everywhere there was verdure which soothed my eyes.

In the evening I took a stroll with my mother. Many a time my sisters-in-law joined us. Often we walked two miles. Everything seemed totally different—their talk, their way of thinking and living. My thoughts flew far and fast to my own spiritual life which I loved so. But there had been several questions I had been wondering about. My mother, at times, hinted to me that I was very young and should remarry. I stared at her in numb silence, my mind a whirlpool of confusing notions. I kept forgetting the sequence of events, and had to explain anew to my mother that I was not the marrying type. I disliked being bound by any men, petty customs, social obligations and the innumerable trivial responsibilities which bore no fruit—which were useless—sheer waste. I wanted to be an individual and not a cog in a machine. I must be off my rocker, my mother must have thought. But she smiled and there was warm understanding in her eyes. I could almost weep with gratitude. I turned and smiled at her, I knew my whole heart was in that smile.

*(To be continued)*

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## OSCAR WILDE'S WAY WITH WORDS

*(It is not much known that in his late teens in England Sri Aurobindo was influenced in his writings by Oscar Wilde who was one of the literary companions of his elder brother, Manmohan Ghose. His long unfinished dialogue, "The Harmony of Virtue", composed around his eighteenth year, was ostensibly modelled on Plato's Dialogues, which indeed are the archetype of this form of writing, but the manner of the exchanges as well as a few overt or covert references to Wilde point to that Irishman's general artistic impress. Here the celebrated piece, "The Critic as Artist" comes to mind. While discussing Bernard Shaw's personality and art Sri Aurobindo has alluded to a special element brought by Wilde to the English language: "Irish poetry and colour." Sri Aurobindo has been reported to have admired Wilde's De Profundis and "Ballad of Reading Gaol". The present note tries to bring out centrally not the "Irish poetry and colour" but a feature which most struck as with a series of flashes Wilde's contemporaries both in composition and conversation.)*

OSCAR Wilde did not think that language was meant only to express thought—or even image—in a direct manner. Language was to him a means of giving to thought or image a sharpness, a complexity, a suggestive shape which mere expression would not give. It was the chief instrument of what he understood by art; but art in his view could never attain its perfection unless it added the markedly new to the true and endowed beauty with arresting novelty.

His three instruments of artistic utterance were the epigram, the paradox and the enthymeme. The epigram he employed to bring an idea to a keen focus by which he could burn through conventional assumptions. It served the purpose of destroying what had become stale by custom and long acceptance. For an example: "Every saint has a past; every sinner has a future." The common dichotomy of sainthood and sinfulness is pierced through in an elliptical fashion, bringing humility and tolerance to the former, hope and light to the latter.

The paradox, in the hands of Wilde, was a creator of unusual rules for life and literature. Behind it lay the feeling that human beings generally saw things in a distorted or at least single-tracked way which seemed normal to them because of continuous association. Hence a startling statement like: "Literature always anticipates life." The meaning of it emerges as an undeniable verity as soon as its coiner, still piquantly, goes on: "A great artist invents a type, and life tries to copy it, to reproduce it in a popular form, like an enterprising publisher."

A persistent stupidity struck Wilde as the most natural activity of the mass mind. In order not only to check it but also to put in its place a vision of the true and the beautiful he believed in neatly inverting long-standing formulas. Thus that challenging announcement: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written." The autonomy of literature as a craft

and the necessity to practise it responsibly are stressed and the refining force of a concise or a rich style in itself is thrust home. The beauty that is truth, rather than the truth that is beauty, is the theme flashed out by means of an exaggeration.

Both the themes unveil themselves in that delightful declaration: "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at." But here is not just the delightful: here is the deep as well. For without the inner quiver of a Utopian urge there would be no move towards progress, no spur to self-exceeding. Every country should have a sense of Utopia like an aura around its actual shape, the gleam of an ideal future tending to remould its all-too-human history.

The gesture of that declaration embodies too Wilde's credo that the discoverer of real values is not the discursive intellect but the poetic frenzy which is not bound by either logic or natural appearance. This frenzy could conceive of all possibilities—even the seemingly bizarre did not frighten it. It had an intrinsic freedom to dare all, try all, accept all; but for Wilde the paradox served its end not by being a sort of bombshell or a slashing sabre. There he differs from two other wielders of this instrument: Chesterton and Shaw.

Chesterton attempts always to blow up ordinary notions. His surprises have a certain violence about them. They shout and gesticulate and kick. Shaw brings a sharper way of dealing with prejudices and *idées fixes*. He has a sweeping movement and his sudden eye-openers are part of a general argumentation which delivers its blows in a series of cuts so that he does not so much end with a final crashing paradox as creates a cumulative impression of a paradoxical statement. His revolutionary activity is a kind of general saturation rather than crystallisation. In both G.K.C. and G.B.S. there is a degree of loudness. Wilde, on the other hand, is always suave and subtle. He believes in doing things with a felicitous finesse. Even his most disturbing proclamations have a quality of soft music.

He brings to the rebel in himself a strain of convincing concords as if the very novelty with which he strikes you down makes you fall not with a thud but with a spontaneous cadence. In this he is the artist *par excellence* and his affinities are with Walter Pater and not with Chesterton or Shaw. Pater it was who formed the centre of the aesthetic movement of the 80's and 90's of the last century. Not that other writers and artists were not there to attend scrupulously to the purely artistic side of expression. But Pater gave aestheticism a sort of philosophy and made it conscious of its finest and strongest springs.

Wilde caught up this philosophy of aesthetic feeling and attempted to make it a constant factor in moulding his public life and work. But he gave to the aestheticism he had absorbed from Pater a delicacy and a mystery all his own. He did not believe in revealing wholly his own sense. Glowing hints, tremulous flashes, sudden scintillations, the truth half disclosed half masked and by that semi-concealment becoming all the more fascinating and intoxicating to the mind in search of meanings: there you have the quintessential Wilde. It is this side of his art that can be characterised by the word "enthymeme" which is a term in logic connoting a syllogism with

the first premise suppressed. Pater too has his subtle phrases as in his famous essay on Leonardo da Vinci. However, he works out his subtleties in greater detail. Wilde moves rapidly from idea to idea and hits off suggestive effects in a series, as it were, of enthymemes rather than builds a whole passage on the enthymeme-principle. He may therefore seem at times not quite a consecutive thinker and it is true that he has his eye very much on his effects and appears more interested in producing iridescent surprises than in expressing, as Pater does, with exquisite art his inmost convictions.

Wilde has often the look of a *poseur*. But there is always wit lighting up that look. Take his imperious little speech when questioned at the Customs: "I have nothing to declare except my genius." Or the words that followed his chivalrous bow and sweep of hat-holding hand in response to Comtesse de Noailles's quip: "Monsieur Wilde, you are being introduced to the ugliest woman in France." Monsieur Wilde complimented her: "No, madame, in the whole world." Then there is the controlled pathos of the punning answer to a friend visiting him at Rdealing Gaol and commenting on his job of stitching gunny-bags. "Sewing, Wilde?" "No, reaping."

Due to the *poseur*-aspect of his character, occasionally his style impresses one as something bright put on instead of as an organic beauty. Still, we may say that there are people to whom clothes are as integral to their selves as their own skins. At least Wilde believed that when he was being most artificial he was not merely fooling his audience. He was setting them an example at striking attitudes to catch sleepy eyes. But there is no need to depreciate his style for the impression it gives at times of a too fine-woven tissue of self-conscious fancies. Enough is in it of genuine efflorescence of a highly original and artistic mind. The fact that this mind was not of great depth or that this originality did not come from the root of things, except in certain parts of *De Profundis*, does not lower the purely literary merit or the imagination-pricking power of his half smiling half serious way with words.

K. D. SETHNA

# FURTHER STUDIES IN INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1986)

## PERSONALITY, ITS DEVELOPMENT AND 'THE INNER VOICE' A STUDY IN JUNG WHAT INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY CAN CONTRIBUTE

C. G. JUNG gives an interesting study of the process of individuation in his book, entitled *The Integration of the Personality*. Consciousness and unconsciousness are, according to him, the two aspects of life. But they 'do not make a whole when either is suppressed or damaged by the other'.<sup>1</sup>

There is a conflict which means also collaboration, actual and possible, between 'the reason and the self-protective ways' of the conscious and 'the chaotic life of the unconscious'. But the yogis who are to him past-masters in the art of attaining wholeness of life, aim at samadhi, 'an ecstatic condition that seems to be equivalent to an unconscious state.' 'In their case,' states he, 'the unconscious has devoured the ego-consciousness.' 'The universal consciousness', alleged to be attained in samadhi, he asserts, 'is a contradiction in terms, since exclusiveness, selection and discrimination are the root and essence of all that can claim the name of consciousness'.<sup>2</sup> 'An accurate application of the methods of the Pali-canon, or of Yoga-sutras,' he is prepared to grant, 'produces a remarkable extension of consciousness.' But the content of consciousness loses in clearness and detail with increasing extension. In the end, consciousness becomes vast but dim, with an infinite multitude of objects merging into an indistinct totality, a state in which the subjective and objective are almost completely identical.<sup>3</sup> But this is not the solution to be 'recommended north of the Tropic of Cancer' where people believe firmly enough in the ego-consciousness.

The above opinions are bound to interest a student of psychology and yoga. The objective of the realisation of 'a unique, indivisible unit' or 'whole man', that ideal of personality as Jung puts it, can be, on the whole, accepted on behalf of yoga. Both are also agreed that the human nature as such involves a conflict which has to be made good. Now Jung believes that the yogi does attain to a wholeness of life, though he achieves that, says he, by reducing the conscious to the unconscious. But it passes comprehension how 'wholeness', which implies a single principle of organisation in all the elements of life, can be accounted for by the unconscious, which is recognised to be 'chaotic' in character. This single principle cannot be a moral rule, however universal, since by its very conception a moral law involves opposition to sensibility and impulse, which it seeks to govern. Thus the wholeness

<sup>1</sup> C. G. Jung, *The Integration of the Personality*, 1940, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

implying as it does a transcendence of all conflict cannot be explained with reference to any term of the unconscious or the conscious. The relative unification of wholeness, ordinarily realised in life, can surely be accounted for by the evolution of the moral sense, but the wholeness here visualised is the complete harmonisation of life and therefore that single principle must be a supra-moral principle; a sub-moral could give only the wholeness of an animal.

The concept of a supra-moral principle is bound to cause difficulty since we are ordinarily so much accustomed to treating moral life as almost the highest reach of man. Without going into a fuller discussion we will content ourselves at present with just the affirmation that a life of conflict between good and evil with an increasing ability to choose the good does seem, of necessity, to imply something beyond it: a life of spontaneous righteous activity. That is the concept of spiritual life, which involves a definite transcendence of the moral or the human level of consciousness. The conflict of moral life cannot be final as no contradiction can be. If contradiction on the intellectual side presupposes a position of synthesis and reconciliation, the conflict of moral life can also be understood only against the possibility of spiritual fulfilment and consummation of life.

Now such a supreme principle, which can afford to take up and harmonise the whole of the mental life of man, is obviously man's highest potentiality and possibility. The unconscious, collective or individual, has been pretty thoroughly investigated by the psycho-analysts. And they all agree in regarding it as almost a mass of impulses seeking their individual gratifications. This new highest possibility of men, though an unconscious content, is obviously not a content of unconsciousness. It is also not a content of our ego-consciousness. Does it then not necessitate the positing of another sphere or aspect of our consciousness which, implying as it does a mode of consciousness higher than the moral, as-yet-unrealised, may be called the superconscious? Our subconscious is the dynamic retention of our racial and individual history. Our consciousness is adapted to the practical requirements of our life in relation to the environment. That is the essential biological and evolutionary function of it. But as in the animal at its higher levels indications of the beginnings of the rational level of consciousness can be noticed, so in man there are, as there must be, indications of the future evolutionary development. Such indications are factors in human nature qualitatively different from the subconscious, which is a record of the past, and the conscious, which concerns itself with the present.

But to Jung what we are not conscious of belongs to the unconscious and no superconscious can really exist. He says, 'I am unable to separate an unconscious below from an unconscious above, since I find intelligence and purposiveness below as well as above.'<sup>1</sup> Our superconscious is surely unconscious to us except for certain extraordinary experiences, which betray its intrusion into the normal waking consciousness. But the unconscious can only have intelligence and purposiveness of an

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

order, which deserves at the human level the description of being chaotic, while the intelligence and purposiveness of the superconscious is of an order higher than man's present status.

The samadhi of the yogi, which Jung describes as unconscious, cannot really be unconscious in the sense of the chaotic unconscious of our life. It is surely not conscious in the sense of the ego-consciousness. But what necessity is there to suppose that 'exclusiveness etc.,' are the root and essence of all consciousness? Surely our normal human consciousness is such. But we know well enough that the entire extent of consciousness is so wide and varied that it may be a mistake to insist too categorically on the conditions of one mode of it being binding on all its forms. In particular, when we know that the yogi himself far from seeking to lapse into unconsciousness tries to rise to a state of higher concentration and delight.

It should further be noticed that there are, in fact, many systems of yoga, with distinct aims and ideals. Some yogas, no doubt, wind up with samadhi. But the integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo cares for samadhi just as an instrument for raising the level of the general consciousness and not for its own sake. And the main principle of the practice of it is to become increasingly more and more conscious of the subtle inner workings of life. Evidently a process of yoga proceeding by becoming ever more conscious of one's total being cannot end in dark unconsciousness. Still the consciousness which the yogi ultimately attains is different from the ego-consciousness. That is exactly the superconsciousness of yoga.

Jung says that everyone's ultimate aim and strongest desire lies in developing the fullness of human existence that is called personality. 'Education to personality' has become the slogan of modern pedagogy. But he complains, 'in general, our approach to education suffers from a one-sided emphasis upon the child who is to be brought up and from an equally one-sided lack of emphasis upon the deficient upbringing of the adult educator.' It is necessary that 'whoever wishes to educate must himself be educated'. In order to rear children to personality, it is the first thing that the ordinary parents, instead of being 'partly or wholly children' that they are, should themselves be personalities.

The ideal of personality is laudable, but for children it must not be overdone, because properly speaking it is an ideal of adulthood. Jung says, 'I suspect our contemporary pedagogical and psychological enthusiasm for the child of a dishonourable intent; people speak of the child, but should mean the child in the grown up.' For there is in the adult an eternal child needing care and fostering, which is the part now wanting to complete itself. Modern man, he means, 'darkly divining his own defect, seizes upon the education of children and fervently devotes himself to child psychology'. 'This purpose,' says he, 'is praiseworthy, to be sure, but it comes to ship-wreck against the psychological fact that we cannot correct in a child a fault we ourselves still commit. Children, of course, are not so stupid as we believe. They notice only too well what is genuine and what is not.'<sup>1</sup> 'If there is any thing,'

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.



he further says, 'that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves. Our enthusiasm for pedagogy may, in fact, be a cloak to hide from our view the uncomfortable feeling that we are ourselves still children and need up-bringing.' 'Definiteness,' 'fullness' and 'maturity' are the three characteristics, which if forced upon the child too soon will make of him a 'pseudo-adult,' and that would be a sheer 'educational monstrosity'. And where the parents fanatically want to do their 'best' and 'live only for the children' the tragedy becomes serious indeed. The result is that unfulfilled ambitions of the parents are loaded on to the child.

Then what is the solution? 'No one can educate to personality', he unhesitatingly declares, 'who does not himself have it' and it is 'only the adult who can attain personality' and 'the achievement of it means nothing less than the best possible development of all that lies in a particular, single being.' And for this 'a whole human life-span in all its biological, social and spiritual aspects is needed'.

'Personality is an act of the greatest courage in the face of life,' and that means 'unconditional affirmation of all that constitutes the individual, the most successful adaptation to the universal conditions of human existence, with the greatest possible freedom of personal decision.'<sup>1</sup> This is, indeed an inspiring sentence. But to educate someone to this is 'surely the heaviest task that the spiritual world of today has set itself' and 'a personality as a complete realisation of the fullness of our being is an unattainable ideal.'

*(To be continued)*

INDRA SEN

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286.

## COMMENTARY ON THE ISHA UPANISHAD SHANKARA AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1986)

### The Insuperable Difficulties of Shankara

THE critic's answer to Sri Aurobindo's comment deals only with the structural aspect of the Upanishad as if Shankara's interpretation of the words are consistent and does not raise any controversy. But in fact the insuperable difficulties of Shankara come to the surface only when we notice how he has explained the key words of the Upanishad, particularly the words of the crucial verses 9 to 14.

In verses 9, 10 and 11\* we come across four important words—*vidyā*, *avidyā*, *mṛtyu* and *amṛtam*. Shankara assigns the following meanings to these words.

- a) *vidyā*—the knowledge of the gods
- b) *avidyā*—karma or works
- c) *mṛtyu*—natural works of a person
- d) *amṛtam*—the immortality of the gods

In verses 12, 13 and 14\*\* the following words occur of which two are from the previous list—*asambhūti*, *sambhūti*, *mṛtyu*, *amṛtam*, and *vināśa*. Following are the meanings which Shankara has put into these words.

- a) *asambhūti*—*Prakṛti*
- b) *sambhūti*—*Hiraṇyagarbha*
- c) *mṛtyu*—natural powers of a person
- d) *amṛtam*—absorption in *Prakṛti*
- e) *vināśa*—*Hiraṇyagarbha*

While explaining these words he is conscious of the fact that he has deviated from

\* *andhaṃ tamaḥ praviśanti yo'vidyāmupāsate  
tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u vidyāyām rath.* (verse 9)

*anyadevāhurvidyayā'nyadāhuravidyayā  
iti śuśrūma dhīrānām ye nastadvicacaksire.* (verse 10)

*vidyāncāvidyāñca yastadvedobhayaṃ saha  
avidyayā mṛtyuṃ tīrtvā vidyayāmṛtamaśnute.* (verse 11)

\*\* *andhaṃ tamaḥ praviśanti ye'sambhūtimupāsate  
tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u sambhūtyām ratāḥ.* (verse 12)

*anyadevāhuh sambhavād anyadāhurasambhavāt  
iti śuśrūma dhīrānām ye nastadvicacaksire.* (verse 13)

*sambhūtinā vināśāñca yastadvedobhayaṃ saha  
vināśena mṛtyuṃ tīrtvā sambhūtyāmṛtamaśnute.* (verse 14)

their accepted senses and forced them to yield unconventional meanings. Hence he protects himself with a defense that on account of the opposition between knowledge and works he was compelled to do so. Referring to the opposition, he says:

When knowledge arises, *karma* vanishes, since in the person in whom knowledge exists *karma* cannot remain. For it is a fact that when the knowledge, "Fire is hot and effulgent", has risen in a person, then in that very person there cannot arise the ignorance or doubt or error (of the form), "Fire is cold and non-illuminating."<sup>1</sup>

In support of his view Shankara quotes from the *Kaṭha* Upanishad which says,

What are known as *vidyā* and *avidyā* are entirely different, and they follow different courses. (1-2-4)

Before we go into the question of the words and their meanings, we shall examine how far Shankara's defense is really valid. On a closer view his defense seems to collapse. First of all, the quotation from the *Kaṭha* is irrelevant, for it speaks not about knowledge and works, as Shankara wants us to believe, but about knowledge and ignorance. The word *avidya* is used only in the sense of what is not *vidya* i.e. ignorance; it does not refer to works at all. Secondly, the antagonism between knowledge and works is not inevitable, because the *Mundaka*, as we have already mentioned, speaks to this effect. Therefore it becomes clear that Shankara's attempt to read unconventional meanings into the words of the *Isha* is totally uncalled for.

We shall now turn to the words listed above. Let us take *vidya* which is read as the knowledge of the gods. In most of the places this word is used by the Upanishads in the sense of the knowledge of unity or *brahmavidyā*.<sup>2</sup> Hence in the *Isha* also it is *Brahmavidya* that is meant by *vidya*. Apart from this, we have to consider the context in which the word occurs. It occurs for the first time in verse 9; in the preceding verses (4 to 8) the knowledge of Unity or Brahman is taught; hence in this context it is appropriate to take *vidya* in the sense of *Brahmavidya*. Neither the conventional usage nor the context is favourable to Shankara's rendering of the word as the knowledge of the gods.

Once the meaning of *vidya* becomes clear it is easy to fix the sense of *avidya*. The prefix "a" in *avidya* admits of two meanings, 'opposite of' and 'other than'. Here it is the second meaning that applies to the word, 'other than *vidya*'. In Shankara's view this must be construed as *karma* or rituals. In other words, he derives the sense of *karma* from *avidya*. But this is not permissible, because it goes against

<sup>1</sup> Shankara's com. on the *Isha Upanishad*, Tr. Swami Gambhirananda, verse 18.

<sup>2</sup> See *Mundaka*, 3-2-10; 3-1-4; *Kaṭha*, 2-3-2.; *Taittirīya*, 2-1-1; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 4-4-14.

the etymological sense of the word avidya which comes from the root *vid* to know. Since karma comes from the root *kr* to do, the sense of karma cannot be derived from avidya except by an erroneous interpretation. Correctly understood, avidya (other than vidya) must be taken to mean the knowledge of multiplicity as distinguished from the knowledge of unity connoted by vidya. It is evident that this interpretation does not deviate from the sense of the root *vid*.

Shankara takes *mrityu* to mean the natural works (verse 11) or the natural powers (verse 14) of a person. This is not acceptable, because it does not agree with the etymological meaning of *mrityu* which comes from the root *mr* to die. If we notice the usage of this word in the Upanishads, we find that it has always been used to convey the sense of death or physical dissolution.<sup>1</sup> Shankara's rendering of the word is purely arbitrary.

Shankara reads *amritam* as the immortality of the gods (verse 11) or absorption in Prakriti (verse 14). The Upanishads use this word very frequently, but it is always used to convey the sense of the immortality of Brahman.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the first reading of the word becomes a misreading. As regards the second reading of the word, *amritam* like *mrityu* comes from the root *mr* to die; the word is formed by adding the prefix "a" to *mritam*. Any meaning given to *amritam* must arise out of a negation of the sense indicated by the root *mr*. Therefore, to say that *amritam* means absorption in Prakriti is to talk nonsense. Besides, this meaning does not conform to the usage of the word in the Upanishads to which we have already referred.

Assuming for the sake of argument that Shankara's renderings of *mrityu* and *amritam* are correct, we have to see if he is at least consistent with his own interpretation. For it is surprising to note that even according to his own interpretation, neither *mrityu* nor *amritam* has identical meaning, though the context in each case is identical. *Mrityu* means the natural works of a person in verse 11, whereas it stands for the natural powers of a person in verse 14. Likewise, *amritam* refers to the immortality of the gods in verse 11, whereas it means absorption in Prakriti in verse 14. This is really confusing because it goes against the linguistic rule that no word should be used in more than one sense as long as its context remains the same.

We now come to the last three words in the list—*asambhuti*, *sambhuti*, and *vinasha*. Shankara reads the first two respectively as Prakriti and Hiranyagarbha. He takes the third word as a substitute for *sambhuti*, and renders it also as Hiranyagarbha. The dictionary meanings of these words are clear and unambiguous (*asambhū*—to be unborn; *sambhū*—to be born; *vināśa*—to be dissolved). But Shankara has chosen to depart from the plain as well as the etymological senses of these words and preferred to give them arbitrary meanings.

Especially his reading of *vinasha* has led to serious complications and disturbed the harmony of the verse in the Upanishad. Since he takes *vinasha* as a substitute

<sup>1</sup> See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 4-4-19; 4-3-8; *Chāndogya*, 8-1-5; *Kaṭha*, 1-2-18.

<sup>2</sup> See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 3-7-22; 4-4-7; 4-4-17; *Kaṭha*, 2-3-14; 2-3-17; *Chāndogya*, 8-3-4; 8-7-4.

for sambhuti, the first line of verse 14 becomes repetitious, using the same word twice—sambhuti and sambhuti (vinasha). This will not make sense unless the first word is somehow changed into asambhuti. So Shankara changes it by suggesting that sambhuti in the first line of verse 14 should be taken as an aphaeresis of asambhuti in which the first letter “a” was omitted. Once the word in the first line is changed it has to be correspondingly changed in the second line also. So he supplies the letter “a” before sambhuti in the second line of the verse by saying that the letter was left out in order to conform to the *sandhi* rule governing the combination of *tīrtvā* and *asambhūti*. As will be shown later, this reading of sambhuti as asambhuti is not permissible at all. Shankara’s interpretation of vinasha has therefore resulted in a substantial distortion of verse 14, and this is a clear example of the extent to which the Upanishad has been subjected to text-torture, *śrutahāni*.

The word vinasha simply means dissolution. To fix its significance in the verse we have to know what it applies to. A careful observation shows that it applies to the idea represented by the preceding word, sambhuti, in the first line of the same verse, verse 14. Sambhūti means birth; so vinasha as applied to the idea of sambhuti means dissolution of birth. The position of vinasha in the verse provides an additional clue to its precise significance. In verses 12 and 13 *asambhūti* and *sambhūti*, *sambhava* and *asambhava* are used as pairs of words. Naturally the same pair must occur in verse 14 also, because verses 12, 13 and 14 form a triad in the thought-sequence of the Upanishad, like the previous triad consisting of verses 9, 10 and 11. But a slightly different pair, *sambhūti* and *vināśa*, is introduced in verse 14. However, it is clear that this pair is intended to correspond to the original one so that the thought developed in verses 12 and 13 will be completed in verse 14. In this respect vinasha corresponds to asambhava or asambhuti which means non-birth. This gives a clear indication that its significance must agree with the idea of non-birth. While interpreting the word Shankara has been guided by his personal preferences rather than by the clues available in the Upanishad.

We shall now turn to the reading of sambhuti as asambhuti in verse 14. Shankara offers two explanations for his reading of the word which occurs in the first as well as the second line. As for sambhuti in the first line, he says that there is an elision of the letter “a” before the word in accordance with the practice of the authors of the Upanishads. Regarding the word in the second line, he points out that the letter “a” has been dropped while combining tirtva and asambhuti according to the rule governing sandhi. From the point of view of the metre of the Upanishad, Shankara’s reading of the word sambhuti cannot stand. First of all, the addition of “a” before the word meddles with the *anushtub* metre of the Upanishad. According to this metre a *pāda* cannot have more than eight syllables under any circumstance. But Shankara’s reading of sambhuti as asambhuti adds a ninth syllable to the first pada. Hence his reading is not permissible. Secondly, this metre, as distinguished from the classical anushtub, does not at all allow sandhi between two padas. Tirtva and sambhuti belong to the third and fourth padas in the second line of verse 14; hence the in-

roduction of "a" before sambhuti, by taking advantage of the sandhi between the two padas, is prohibited.

Not only does Shankara's reading of sambhuti disturb the rhythm of the metre but it spoils the sweetness and the rhythm of the verse which is considered to be an essential aspect of the Vedic and Vedantic compositions. In his eagerness to explain the Upanishad in the light of Mayavada, he disregarded the ancient practice of preserving the rhythm by giving meticulous attention to formal metre. Commenting on this point, Sri Aurobindo says,

This disregard of Vedic practice is ruinous to the rhythm and sweetness of the verse, for it disregards the first conditions of the Vedic appeal to the ear.<sup>1</sup>

It may be argued that when Shankara reads sambhuti as asambhuti, his intention is not to change the verse or the metre of the Upanishad in so far as his reading is necessary only for the purpose of interpretation and not for recitation or chanting. But this supposes that there are two versions of the Upanishad, one for understanding and another for recitation or chanting. This is really absurd because understanding the Upanishad and chanting or reciting it are not totally unrelated acts. Our tradition says that the best way to recite or chant the Upanishad is to do it with understanding. Apart from this, the idea of the two versions of the Upanishad is not supported by any authority.

Thus exposed, Shankara's interpretation of the Isha Upanishad cannot claim any fairness or merit for itself. We cannot think of a better description of Shankara's performance than the one offered by Sri Aurobindo; Sri Aurobindo says that Shankara has dealt with the Isha Upanishad more than any other "as a master of Shruti and not its servant".<sup>2</sup>

*(To be continued)*

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

<sup>1</sup> *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, No. 2, 1983, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> *Supplement*, p. 303.

## THE NUMBER 6

IN the issue of February 21, the article "The Mother's Hour of Birth" pointed out in connection with the various time-details of the births of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother the fourfold occurrence of the number 6. My friend Pijush of the Ashram Press adds a further item of interest and significance in relation to this number: "The timing of Sri Aurobindo's hour of departure on December 5, 1950, as recorded in Nirodbaran's book, *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, is 1:26 a.m. The Mother's departure on November 17, 1973, is said to be at 7:25 p.m. From the latter to the former the difference is 6 hours except for one minute. Both the events are said to have been marked by the stopping of a clock."

A clue to perfect precision is in the last sentence here. The clock which stopped in regard to Sri Aurobindo was the one in his room, while that which stopped in regard to the Mother was in the Ashram's Centre of Education. A letter of Patrizia to the Editor of *Mother India* in the issue of November 24, 1977 said that according to an article of hers, published some years earlier in this periodical, on cosmic harmonies in respect of the Mother's passing, the official time given for it was incorrect by one minute. The letter ended with the words: "I had heard that there was a clock in the Centre of Education which had stopped exactly on the day and hour, and presumably minute, when the passing occurred. Yesterday I went to see this clock and, glory be! there it was: 7:26."

K. D. SETHNA

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## BLINDFOLD

BIND my eyes as hard as you will, O love,  
For you I'll search high and far.  
Though I may trip, stumble and often drop low,  
Yet something in me is so attuned  
To the soft-sound of your footfall  
That like a bee I fly straight to the nectar.  
To evade me you will have to hide  
Your face even from your own self-sight.

SHYAM KUMARI

## PERFECTION

IN the wide silence of namelessness,  
Far from the ways of the humdrum and the loose,  
A discerning Presence, motionless and true,  
Lived. Its vision like a searing leap of fire  
Cut clean away all the abstruse and the false,  
Reaching lightning-like the pure authentic.

There grew a Power, above the brows a force,  
A might of sight, a fount of perfect Light,  
A radiance goldening the real in things,  
Touching the ringing brightness subtly clear  
Around and beyond the forms of concrete earth.

The royal magnificent ease of divinity  
Grew masterful in every thought and act,  
Pouring into matter a white sun-energy.  
In the heart a matchless surprise of Love  
Ever recurred in waves of glimmering joy:  
As if along the inner God's radiant shores  
A vast Ocean's laughing breakers rolled,  
White and gambolling under the Spirit's sun;  
A swiftness moving towards the Future's verge,  
Assaulting ignorance and dark poverty.  
A large embrace, inescapably puissant,  
Held irrevocably Circumstance, and commandeered Destiny.  
Fate faded, and the uncertain drew not near.  
Chance took elsewhere its ghastly game.  
The sun on earth set no more upon night.

ARVIND HABBU



## THEN AND NOW

It lies in wait to plunge deep into the soul  
It's multi-nailed claws in a moment of unawareness.  
And that is man's lot—to be inadvertent  
While illusions and delusions run berserk,  
Dumping the demented mind neck-deep  
In a mire of remorse and despair.  
All from chasing a mirage in a waste of dead sands.  
Why is the divine cleansing light concealed,  
The supreme call muffled and choked?  
Evolved human beast lacks the lion's heart  
To brave your thundering presence.  
Pray, come with soothing velvety steps  
Keeping time with my expectant heart-throbs.  
Unfetter my captive vision free.  
Setting ablaze the lumber of darkness,  
Let me feel for once and love you.

DEBANSHU

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## THE DEAD

It fell with a crash  
like a bomb  
the dead leaf from the coconut palm.

Startled, I jumped in fear,  
I who sat under the palm.

The one-time active fan  
is now a fastidious broom,  
useful while alive and dead.

When I fall in silence  
to go back from where I came  
whom am I going to startle?  
Who is going to jump in fear?  
For I know, after death,  
I can't even be a broom.

P. RAJA

# THE SONG OF THE LORD

## THE GITA WITHOUT COMMENT

*(Continued from the issue of January 1986)*

### Chapter V

1. Arjuna said:  
"You praise the renunciation of action and again Yoga. Which of the two is better? Tell me clearly."
2. The Lord said:  
"Both the renunciation and Yoga of Action lead to the Highest. But of the two the Yoga of Action is better.
3. "He will be known as an abiding renunciate who neither hates nor desires. Freed from opposites, O Mighty-armed, he is easily released from bondage.
4. "Children speak of Sankhya and Yoga as different, not the wise. One who is fully established in one receives the fruit of both.
5. "What is reached by the Sankhyas, to that status the Yogins also arrive. He sees who sees Sankhya and Yoga as one.
6. "But renunciation without Yoga is hard to obtain, O Mighty-armed. The Sage, one in Yoga, soon knows the Brahman.
7. "One in Yoga, of pure soul, conquering himself by mastering the senses, knowing one's Self as the Self of all beings: though acting he is not stained.
8. "I am doing nothing' thinks one who is united, the knower of the Essence. Though seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing,
9. "speaking, releasing, holding, opening or closing the eyes, he is convinced that it is only the senses active in the sense objects.
10. "One who acts placing his actions in the Brahman, abandoning attachment, is not stained by evil, like a lotus-leaf in water.
11. "The Yogins act through the body, through the mind, through the Buddhi or only through the senses, abandoning attachment, for self-purification.
12. "United, renouncing the results of action, one attains the uttermost peace. Un-united, driven by desire, attached to the fruits, one is bound.
13. "Renouncing all actions by means of the mind, embodied, self-controlled, he sits happily in the nine-gated city neither acting nor causing to act.
14. "The Lord creates neither the means of doing, nor the doing, nor the connection of action to results. Our self-becoming simply manifests.
15. "The impersonal receives neither the good nor the evil of anyone. Knowledge is enveloped by ignorance and by this beings are de'uded.
16. "But those whose ignorance is destroyed by knowing the Self, their knowledge radiates the Supreme like a sun.
17. "With the Buddhi in That, the Self in That, established in That, with That

- as their supreme goal, they go whence there is no return, their sins washed by Knowledge.
18. "A Brahmana imbued with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, even a dog or an outcaste are seen as equal by the Sage.
  19. "Creation is conquered by those whose mind is established in equality even here in the world. Flawless and equal is the Brahman. Therefore they stay in the Brahman.
  20. "Receiving what is pleasant, he should not rejoice. Receiving what is unpleasant, he should not be troubled. Steady in mind, undeluded, the Brahman-knower is established in Brahman.
  21. "With the Self detached from outward touches he finds happiness in the Self. Self-united in the Brahman by Yoga his happiness is endless.
  22. "Truly, contact-born pleasures are only begetters of pain. They begin, they end. O Kaunteya, one who understands does not rejoice in them.
  23. "One who can bear in this world, even before being freed from the body, the impulse coming from desire and anger, he is whole, he is a happy man.
  24. "Who is happy within, who rejoices within, whose light is within, he indeed, becoming Brahman, knows dissolution in the Brahman.
  25. "For those separate from desire and anger, for those who strive with a controlled mind, who know the Self, dissolution in the Brahman is everywhere.
  26. "Shutting out external contacts, fixing the gaze between the eyebrows, balancing the inhalation and the exhalation within the nostrils,
  27. "controlling the mind, the senses, the will, the Sage with liberation as his highest goal, released from want, fear and anger: he is truly always free.
  28. "Knowing Me as the enjoyer of Sacrifice and Askesis, as the Lord of all worlds, the friend of all beings, he attains peace."

### OM TAT SAT

Here ends the fifth chapter called 'Sanyasa Yoga' in the dialogue of Sri Krishna and Arjuna, in Brahman-knowledge, in Yoga-Discipline, in the Divine Songs of the Upanishads.

*Translated by DHRUVA*

## DHYANA WITH THE MOTHER

*(Continued from the issue of July 1985)*

“You gather together all your consciousness and remain as quiet and peaceful as possible, you detach yourself from external things as though they do not interest you at all, and all of a sudden, you brighten the flame of aspiration and throw into it everything that comes to you so that the flame may rise higher and higher, higher and higher; you identify yourself with it and you go up to the extreme point of your consciousness and aspiration, thinking of nothing else—simply, an aspiration which mounts, mounts, mounts, without thinking a minute of the result, of what may happen and specially of what may not... and there I assure you that what happens is the best that can happen.” This is what the Mother asks us to do.

In this connection Sri Aurobindo reminds us that to see visions or to have other experiences in the meditation depends on many things. One should not get upset or dejected. The best thing is to remain quiet and wait for the force to act again. Generally it is something in the physical that interferes.

The Mother advises: “When you sit in meditation you must be as candid and simple as a child, not interfering by your external mind, expecting nothing, insisting on nothing. Once this condition is there, all the rest depends upon the aspiration deep within you.”

Here the aspiration is silent, rising like a flame mixed with a silent, inarticulate prayer rising from the depth of the being. One may also concentrate on a photograph of the Mother or Sri Aurobindo. One may supplement this by japa, a mantric word or name. The Mother gives much importance to japa in connection with the transformation of the body as the vibration that it creates in the cells of the body, apart from helping the mind to fall silent, is of immense help to an aspirant of Integral Yoga.

The Integral Yoga is otherwise called the Yoga of surrender. Surrender is the mainstay—Surrender to the divine Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Surrender to either of them serves the same divine purpose as Sri Aurobindo is the Supramental Avatar and the Mother is the Divine Mother herself. The Mother stooped down to help her children, to protect them with her extended hands from her very childhood. Let us surrender to the Mother. It goes without saying that faith is the essential precondition for surrender. Now, what is one to surrender—some work? some objects? a part of one’s being? All these are necessary but insufficient for an integral transformation. For that, let us hear what the Mother wants of us:

“The most important surrender is the surrender of your character, your way of living, so that it may change. If you do not surrender your very own nature, never will this nature change. It is this that is most important. You have certain ways of understanding, certain ways of reacting, certain ways of feeling, almost certain ways of progressing, and above all, a special way of looking at life and expecting

from it certain things—well, it is this you must surrender. That is, if you truly want to receive the divine light and transform yourself, it is your whole way of living you must offer—offer by opening it, making it as receptive as possible so that the divine consciousness which sees how you ought to be, may act directly and change all these movements into movements more true, more in keeping with your real truth. This is infinitely more important than surrendering what one does. It is not what one does (what one does is very important, that's evident) that is the most important thing but what one is."

Next, let us see how the Mother herself surrenders, as recorded in *Prayers and Meditations*.

"Like a child in its Mother's arms, like a fervent disciple at the feet of his master, I trust myself to Thee and surrender to Thy guidance, sure of Thy victory."  
(4-1-1914)

"I have only to bow to Thy decree and accept my condition without uttering a word." (24-9-1917)

"One must know how to give one's life and also one's death, give one's happiness and also one's suffering, to depend for everything and in all things upon the Divine Dispenser of all our possibilities of realisation, who alone can and will decide whether we shall be happy or not, whether we shall live or not, whether we shall participate or not in the realisation". (6-5-1927)

And who does not know the celebrated "Radha's Prayer"?—

"O Thou whom at first sight I knew for the Lord of my being and my God, receive my offering.

"Thine are all my thoughts, all my emotions, all the movements of my life, each cell of my body, each drop of my blood. I am absolutely and altogether Thine, Thine without reserve. What Thou wilt of me, that I shall be. Whether Thou chooseth for me life or death, happiness or sorrow, pleasure or suffering, all that comes to me from Thee will be welcome. Each one of Thy gifts will be always for me a gift divine bringing with it the supreme felicity."

Sri Aurobindo admitted after his first meeting with Mirra Richard on 29-3-1914 that he had never before seen such an example of absolute surrender as the Mother had shown. It was the most perfect conceivable form of *ātma samarpaṇa*, "giving of one's self".

With aspiration, faith, total trust and surrender comes the feeling of humility so necessary for a proper meditation and realisation.

"I am a veritable zero in the world.

"But all this is not at all important. And provided Thy work is accomplished, Thy manifestation takes place and the earth becomes more and more Thy harmonious and fruitful kingdom, it matters little whether I accomplish this work or not.

"And as it is certain that it will be done I should have no reason to worry even if I felt like it. From the depths to the outermost surface, all this my being is only a

handful of dust; it is but natural that it should be scattered on the wind and leave no trace behind.” (5-II-1914)

Elsewhere the Mother has said:

“True humility is humility before the Divine, that is, a precise, living sense that one is nothing, one can do nothing, understand nothing without the Divine, that even if one is exceptionally intelligent and capable, this is nothing in comparison with the divine consciousness, and this sense one must always keep, because then one always has the true attitude of receptivity—a humble receptivity that does not put personal pretensions in opposition to the Divine.”

We have discussed the philosophical basis and purpose of this yoga and we have seen that meditation is a process very important though not absolutely essential. Here “All life is yoga”. The attitude in life is most important for one to progress either with or without meditation. But as meditation is the most suitable discipline almost for all in all systems of yoga, we have something more to say about it.

After the supramental manifestation on 29th February 1956 the Mother once addressed her disciples thus:

“And so, now for the special case, I shall tell you what I am trying to do....It will soon be a year since, one Wednesday, we had the manifestation of the supramental force. Since then, it has been working very actively, even while very few people are aware of it!

“But since it so happens that all of us here more or less know what has taken place, well, I hope that individually each person is doing his best to benefit by the occasion; but collectively we can do something, that is try to unify a ground, to produce a particularly fertile soil to obtain collectively the maximum receptivity and to have as little wastage as possible of time and energies.”

Obviously, the Mother suggested collective meditation in the perspective of the supramental manifestation.

*(To be continued)*

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

# THE HALF-GOLD MONGOOSE

## AN ANCIENT PARABLE OF GENEROSITY

### I

EVERY Indian must know the story which Sister Nivedita retells so beautifully in *Cradle Tales of Hinduism*, of the little boy who has to walk through the forest to school; since he is frightened, his mother tells him he should call his big brother Gopal to look after him; the next day he does so, and finds a wonderful playmate who accompanies him to and from school through the forest each day; when the school-teacher celebrates a family festival and all the pupils bring him gifts, the little boy asks his mother for a gift to take with him; she has nothing to give, and tells him to ask his big brother for something; Gopal gives the boy a little pot of curds to offer to his teacher; the teacher accepts the humble gift with a good heart—and is astonished to find that however much curd is ladled off the little pot, it never becomes empty: all the guests can be served, and still more is left; thus teacher and child alike become aware that Gopal in the forest is no ordinary cow-herd, but Lord Krishna himself, who has come in answer to the simple sincerity of mother and child.

There is a story from ancient Greece which has some of the same features, and something of the flavour of this lovely tale.

It concerns an old shepherd and his wife, who lived in a simple hut on the hillside, far from any town. The hillsides of Greece are barren places, though smilingly beautiful: the rich vines and olive orchards lie on the lower slopes. This old couple were poor people, and childless; they lived as they could with their few sheep and goats, and kept harmony between themselves.

Travellers rarely passed that way, but one day the old man saw two strangers toiling up the steep and dusty path that led past the house. He called out to his wife to prepare whatever she had, and himself ran out to greet the two men and call them to sit in the shade in front of the small hut. The strangers were tall and grave-eyed; they seemed weary and glad to sit awhile; the younger one murmured a few words of thanks, but they did not seem disposed to speak much. The old shepherd brought out of the house all that his wife could offer: a jug of milk, and a small honeycomb. The strangers ate and drank gratefully, then rose to go on their way. Again it was the younger one who spoke. "Tell us your names," he said, "so that we may remember you and your hospitality." The shepherd told him his name, and that of his wife, and then watched the grave strangers walking slowly on up the hill. Only when they came to the turning that would take them out of sight, it seemed to his old eyes for a moment they were enveloped in golden light, their feet no longer quite touched the stony ground, and the younger one had wings upon his sandals. At that moment his wife called to him from the porch. "Look!" she cried "Didn't they drink the milk?"—for the jug which the strangers had drained was full again. And indeed it was never again empty...no matter how much milk was poured from it,

it remained always full. For the old shepherd and his wife had, unawares, entertained the King of the Gods, great Zeus himself, and Hermes the wing-footed heavenly messenger, and the inexhaustible milk-jug was the humble token of the Immortals' blessing.

To this day the people who live on those stony hillsides are amazingly generous and hospitable people, though the peasant's life is a hard one there today as it was thousands of years ago. When travelling in Thrace, it has more than once happened to me that a farmer came running and calling after me—to offer a bunch of grapes from his vines, or to call me to sit in the shade and eat a watermelon or a few black olives and some cheese made of goats' milk. They feel happy and honoured to share what they have with a stranger.

From India, too, come many stories of generosity. The Mother has mentioned one of an old beggar-woman who had nothing to eat but half a mango. Yet when a stranger came to her tumble down shelter, she gladly offered it to him—and was deeply blessed when the one who accepted her gift was revealed as Lord Shiva who has compassion for all, however poor and outcast. But one of my favorites is the tale of the half-gold mongoose, from the Mahabharata.

It is told that after the War was over, when the time of mourning for the dead was past, and the new King had been anointed and had taken possession of his kingdom, he declared a great festival and gift-giving. All the people were invited, and in a specially decorated vast enclosure free meals were served to everyone for ten whole days, and gifts of gold and jewels and cows and cloth were distributed again and again and again. It was a tremendously joyful celebration, with music and jugglers and acrobats and story-tellers, and sacrifices to the gods, and every kind of glad festivity. And everyone there felt re-born to joyful life after all the struggle and suffering and sorrow that was past. Many remarkable things happened during that great gathering. But on the very last day, in the evening, as things were drawing to a close, a mongoose was seen dashing hither and thither through the store rooms and kitchens and eating-spaces, rolling himself in the remains lying around, and then dashing on. And he was an eye-catching sight, for the fur down one side of his body shone like pure gold. Someone thought it worth catching this unusual animal and bringing him to the King.

The wise Yudhisthira could understand the speech of all animals, and he asked the remarkable mongoose, "How is it that half of your body is golden? And what is your reason for rolling like that in the food-remains?" The mongoose replied politely, "If it pleases you, great King, to hear my story, I shall be happy to tell it to you." So Yudhisthira made the mongoose sit beside him—and this is the tale it told:

"Many many years ago, not far from here, there lived a family of poor people: father, mother, son, and son's wife. They lived together in harmony and tended their small plot of ground, and took what they needed from the forest. My wife and I lived in a hole in their garden, and often the old woman would put out a little dish



of milk or sweet rice for us. But a time came when they had no milk or anything else to give us...The Summer went on and on, the sun beat day after day and no rains came. The crops could not grow, the wild plants withered and died, the springs and water-holes dried up and even the forest trees started shrivelling. All over the country people and animals were suffering and sickness and famine were everywhere. But these people were used to managing with very little, and they helped each other and did not complain. The cow died, but these four still lived in courtesy and harmony together, though they grew very weak. One day a stranger passed that way. He was tall and thin, and strangely dark-skinned; his limbs showed through robes that had once been rich and colourful. He stopped in front of their door, but did not speak—he was not a beggar. The father made him sit in the shade; the daughter brought him water to wash his hands and feet and to drink. I knew it was the last they had, and wondered which of them would have the strength to walk to the distant water-hole to draw more... but this did not show in her face, and perhaps it was not even in her heart. The mother brought out a little bowl of coarse flour, for him to mix with the last of the water and eat. The stranger looked at her searchingly and said, "What about your meal?" She smiled at him and said, "We eat only after sundown; take this, you are welcome." So the stranger ate, until all was gone. Then he stood up, and brushed the last of the flour from his fingers—for there was no water left to wash his hands again. He looked around at the four people standing there and smiling at him. The stranger spoke to the father—and he seemed to grow taller and darker as he spoke: "Do you know who I am?" The father dropped his eyes and folded his hands in homage, answering, "Who but You, Lord, would walk the Earth in such a time?" Then Yama the Lord of Death and Justice dropped his disguise and waved his hand and asked those four to enter into the heavenly chariot that now stood before their door. Smiling shyly at each other they stepped into it and were carried straight up into the sky, leaving only a wonderful scent of dew-filled roses behind them... and a sprinkling of flour on the clean-swept ground.

I rushed and rolled and rolled myself in that flour, O King, full of delight and amazement at what I had seen. And I found that where the flour touched my fur, it became pure gold! But , as you see—there was not enough to make me golden all over. So ever since that day, whenever I heard of any great gift-giving or act of generosity I always tried to be there—to see whether I could get gold on the other side. When I heard the people talking about your festival, Yudhisthira, I felt sure that at last I would achieve my wish; but you see—even your great generosity cannot match that long-ago gift of half-a-bowl of flour and a little water."

Yudhisthira the king looked at the little mongoose through a mist in his eyes, humbled and happy to have heard such a tale.

SHRADDHAVAN

## EUROPE 1974

### A TRAVELOGUE

TOURING the British Isles one is surprised to find that Nature has conspired to produce here almost everything in a miniature form that she has created elsewhere, on a large scale. The only things the Isles haven't got is a sandy waste, sand dunes and oases. This has been adequately compensated by the creation of the West Riding of Yorkshire. A more weird place that gives one the creeps even at day-time is difficult to find in the world. At night-time the winds coming over the merciless rocks and howling makes one nervous as if a thousand spooks are about to land in one's room. Not only nature but some unknown spirit seemed to have contrived to give England everything found elsewhere, even a miniature Pompeii.

Directly to the East of London about fifty miles away in the middle of the verdant Hampshire there is a place called Silchester, a place a few miles south of the modern town of Reading. From Silchester a narrow bye-lane runs even further south; driving slowly one comes to a place that shows a signboard "To the Roman Remains". From there one starts walking. A few steps and we come to *Calleva Atrebatum*, a Roman township now covered up by centuries of earth and sod. As parts of the town's wall are still sticking out from the earth it is easy to find it. Nothing more could be seen with our eyes, all had to be sensed by what we had read and been told. We have to imagine to try to figure what the town may have been like.

From time immemorial people had known that a Roman town once existed there; the result was that in 1890 some very clever men, all expert and specialised in excavation, were appointed to find out what the town had been like. These archaeologists cleared the rubble and gravel and opened the site to sunlight, *Calleva Atrebatum* was entirely uncovered. Then the township was meticulously examined, described, photographed, mapped. After all the work was completed, the leader of the experts, Augustus Fox Pitt-Rivers, gave orders to cover it up. For the ruins exposed to the elements were beginning to crumble down. The artefacts found during this period (1890-1910) are now housed in a Museum at Reading. The Duke of Wellington who had a vast collection of *Calleva* artefacts has loaned them to the museum to make it really interesting. So far altogether 29000 coins have been found. Of course it must be admitted that the finds at *Calleva* are far less interesting, dazzling, and magnificent than the artefacts found in Pompeii. But they throw light on how the Romans lived in Britain some 1000 years ago.

It seems *Calleva* did not meet with any natural disaster or calamity as was the case with Pompeii. Then the question arises: why was *Calleva* deserted, why did the people move away, for it seems *Calleva* was well on the way of the nation's main trade artery? *Calleva* was an important place. As in Pompeii so in *Calleva* the grab-and-s snatch method of unthinking and greedy people had gone on. The earliest yet

a famous name was King John who it seems did lot of grab-snatch but could not carry on as he was in a hurry to meet the nobles who were assembled at Runnymede in 1215 to make him sign the Magna Carta. John Leland, the official antiquary of King Henry VIII, first tried to explore the site. He has left behind many valuable descriptions in his book *Itinerary* which is a masterpiece. He had found a church. Christianity was legalised in 313 by the Edict of Toleration. A very interesting thing was found, a ring with the inscription 'May Jenicianius live in God'. A register found in the church of the rector's reported that king Arthur had been crowned here in 519 A.D.

Leland also reports that legend remembers how King Alfred defended this place against the Danes. This area was part of Wessex and the population both urban and rural spoke Latin, later Anglo-Saxon and after the Norman Conquest in 1066 Norman-French. For the French spoken by the followers of William the Conqueror was slightly different from the French spoken further east and north of France. John Leland also found a east-west path and four gates of the wall, a Roman Forum. Then a Plaza some 150 ft. square with colonnades, a Town Hall; everything was in Roman fashion. His findings naturally helped the experts in 1890. Julius Caesar discovered that Britain was a poor country. Corn, cattlehides, slaves and hounds were the only commodities the Britons could trade with other lands. Calleva is not mentioned in any important piece of literature or history. Yet it was there in the Antonine Itinerary, that is to say, the Automobile Association Road Map of the Roman Empire.

In 1570 one William Camden visited the site. In his book *Britannia* written sometime in 1586 he leaves behind a wealth of information. He was not one of those who carried on the snatch-and-grab method but John Stair was one who got away with 2000 coins and lay people got away with marble pillars and bricks and mosaic floorings. But John Stair too left information that the archaeologists found very helpful. When Gibbon published his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, interest in things Roman was reawakened in Britain. Stair found a town-hostelry which was a traveller's rest house where even state dignitaries stayed in their travels. The town had a wall 20 ft. high, 4 gates and a ditch 45 ft. wide. And the hostelry had a main courtyard, a stable, bedrooms as in our modern times, both ordinary rooms and specially conditioned ones. The latter were heated by underground steam.

From Calleva it is now possible to imagine how the Romanised Britons in the 4th century lived. It seems they lived in comfortable, well-built houses; they were well-clothed and well-fed and enjoyed many of the amenities of civilised life and society. They had law-courts, gymnasiums, clubs, theatres and could carry on export and import with other nations. If not universal literacy, at least the major portion of the populace knew how to read and write. Two men, Ausonius of Gaul (in his book *Moselle*) and Ebicatus Maqui, wrote reports on Calleva that it was a rich town. The question arises why then it was abandoned.

When the Romans left completely in the 4th century, the barbarians attacked

Britain—the Picts, the Scots, the Saxons—and England was in chaos. The great Byzantine historian Porcopius wrote in 550 A.D., six hundred years after Julius Caesar, that the Roman world—that is to say, whatever was still the Roman Empire—had almost forgotten the British Isles. One must take the lesson from history that it does not need wars to destroy a system; disdain of authority, neglect of public services, increase of crime, apathy of the hitherto industrious people and law-abiding citizens can effect the same end. This is what probably happened to Calleva Atrebatum and many other Roman towns. Seeing the breakdown of the political system, the Romans and British Romans fled to Europe. But it was like ‘from the frying-pan into the fire’. For the barbarians breaking through the enfeebled defences of the Empire were working havoc everywhere. Calleva Atrebatum silently disappeared around 600 A.D.

The story runs that around 10 B.C. a tribe of Gaul known as the Atrebates landed in Britain. Their most famous king was Tincommius. The Romans civilised this tribe for they were full of vigour and very helpful. By the year 121 A.D., when Emperor Hadrian visited Britain, he found peace and prosperity reigned in Britain south of the Scottish border. He saw at least a hundred towns built in Roman fashion. So peaceful was the atmosphere and so civilised the organisations that not only merchants but artists and scholars came from distant lands to Britain. They came from far Arabia, Athens and Rome. Actress Verecunda and gladiator Lucius visited Britain. There was also a Greek lecturer Demetrius. Such was the society of Calleva Atrebatum.

There is a very interesting find which amazed all. A piece of tile was found where most probably a schoolboy was writing out the 2nd book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, beginning with a line which in English would read: “All fell silent and fixed their gaze upon him.”

And all is silent about the men who lived in Calleva and about why they fled their once thriving city.

CHAUNDONA S. BANERJI

# STORIES FROM TAMIL LITERATURE

(Continued from the issue of January 1986)

## 24. THE HASTY WOMAN

KOVALAN was the hero in the well-known Tamil epic *Silapathikaram*. Many anecdotes are narrated in the epic to highlight the various facets of his character. The following story is brought in to prove his munificence and magnanimity.

In the city of Puhar, the capital of the Cholas there lived a brahmin and his wife. They were childless for many years and so they brought up a mongoose as a pet and showered all their affections on him. The mongoose was very attached to them and loved them like their own child. After a few years a child was born to them and it brought joy to the family. The mother simply doted on the child. One day the husband was not at home and the wife had to go to the river to fetch water. The baby was sleeping in the cradle. There was no one in the house to look after the baby, but since he was asleep she decided to go to the river which was very near and return before the child woke up.

During her absence a large cobra descended down the ceiling gliding along the rope of the cradle. He would have bit the child but for the timely interception of the mongoose. The mongoose fought against the cobra bravely and tore him to pieces. He was in the joy of triumph when he saw the woman of the house at a distance. At once he ran towards her to tell her of his victory. But the woman looking at the blood-stained face of the mongoose was scared and thought that the mongoose had killed her child. In her blind anger she threw the brass water pot at the mongoose and the poor animal was killed instantly.

The woman walked into the house and saw that the baby was calmly sleeping in the cradle. She then noticed the cobra lying dead, cut into pieces. Then she understood. She was overwhelmed by the loyalty of the mongoose and her hasty foolhardiness. Full of remorse, she wept.

When the husband came home and learnt about everything he became filled with disgust for his thoughtless wife. In those days it was considered a great sin to kill pet animals. Also they believed that the sins of the wife would be visited on the husband. So, to get himself absolved of the sin, the husband decided to go on a pilgrimage to Banares leaving his wife, as a punishment for her, to fend for herself.

The woman also desired to expiate her sins. She began a life of begging, to collect money with which she wanted to do some charitable act. It was then that Kovalan saw her. Looking at her grief-stricken face he inquired of her and she told him her sad tale. Kovalan took pity on her and gave her sufficient money to fulfil her vow. He also sent messengers after her husband, brought him back, advised him against the abandoning of his wife, settled them in a new home and provided them with all things necessary to last a life-time.

## 25. NANJIL VALLUVAN

Nanjil was a hilly region ruled over by a chieftain called Valluvan. Once he had served as a commander in the Pandian army, but later he settled down to rule his small principality in a peaceful manner.

Once Avvaiyar, the well-known woman-poet, and a party of women-minstrels were passing through the Nanjil region. After a long journey they were tired and the day was nearing noon. They camped in a shady grove and started cooking their lunch. Having cooked rice, they collected some edible greens growing wild around the place and began to make a sauce. Someone suggested that a couple of handfuls of Thuvarai gram would be nice to cook with the greens. But where would they get it? "Why doesn't one of us go and ask the chieftain himself?" was another suggestion. All of them agreed and Avvaiyar was considered the suitable person to go. So Avvaiyar went.

Seeing Avvaiyar, Valluvan was overjoyed. He received her with great warmth and asked her what brought her to his humble court. Avvaiyar told him of the camping party and of their immediate requirement. Valluvan was quite amused to hear such a small request coming from such a great poet. He was ready to fulfil it but felt that he would not be honouring Avvaiyar if he gave her just what she had asked for. Moreover, it would be beneath his dignity to send her away with such a small quantity of Thuvarai.

He asked Avvaiyar to wait and went inside. He ordered a large bag of Thuvarai to be placed on the back of an elephant and the elephant brought to the front yard. Then he returned to where the poet was waiting and told her that the thing she had asked for was ready. Avvaiyar saw nothing in his hand and was a little puzzled. Valluvan asked her to accompany him to the front yard. And there stood a cow-elephant loaded with a large sack and waiting for the poet to mount her back.

Avvaiyar could not comprehend anything and asked Valluvan what the meaning of all that was.

"Here is what you asked for—Thuvarai—in that bag on the elephant's back. The elephant also is yours," he said.

"A bagful of Thuvarai with an elephant to carry it!" Avvaiyar could not believe her eyes or her ears. All this for just asking for a handful of Thuvarai to cook with the greens!

The poet was overwhelmed by the magnanimity of Valluvan. Then and there she recited a poem in praise of Valluvan's noble act and after thanking him profusely rode away on the elephant with the big bag of Thuvarai between her arms.

## 26. THE PRINCE WHO BECAME A MONK

It was the court of the Chera king. The King was seated on the royal throne, and his two fine sons were seated on either side of him. The day's proceedings were

about to begin when the guard announced the arrival of a famous soothsayer. The soothsayer entered the court and bowed to the king. And then his eyes fell on the two impressive-looking princes and were filled with great admiration. He looked at their faces for a few seconds. On one of them his eyes rested a little longer. Then he turned to the king and pointing to the prince who was seated on the left side of the king said that he was the greater of the two princes and would one day become a remarkable ruler of the world. Hearing this, everyone was taken aback, for the prince seated on the left side was the younger of the two. In those days it was the custom that the eldest prince inherited the throne after his father. The king calmed himself and asked the soothsayer whether he was careful with his prediction. The soothsayer was sure of himself and said that he had uttered the prophecy according to his science and not according to his fancy. This upset the elder prince more. He was sure of becoming king after his father but this prophecy rudely shocked him. He thought that his younger brother might usurp the throne. This made him rather angry. Meanwhile the younger prince who was first amused at the prediction was watching the faces of his father and brother. Seeing their troubled faces he became sad. He himself had no intention of ever becoming a king, for his interests lay elsewhere. He had very fine poetic sensibilities and his ambition was to become a great poet. But he read his brother's thoughts, felt his jealousy and knew that thereafter there would be suspicions and mistrust in his mind even though he might declare his intention not to become a king. He felt that if he remained in the palace any more, the relationship with his brother would never more be cordial. So he made a decision within himself then and there. He stood up and proudly addressed the soothsayer: "I don't think your prediction is going to be true. For, this very moment I not only renounce my right to be a prince but renounce all worldly living; I become a monk." So saying he took off his royal robe, his coronet and all the rich ornaments he was wearing. He drew his princely sword and cut off the beautiful locks of his hair. And the sword clanged to the floor. While everyone watched him dumbfounded he walked majestically down the aisle and left the court.

But the soothsayer was right in his predictions after all. The elder prince became king all right but the younger prince who became a monk later became a king of poets. He was the author of the famous Tamil epic *Silapathikaram*. He is among the greatest poets of the world and a remarkable ruler of the minds of people.

M. L. THANGAPPA