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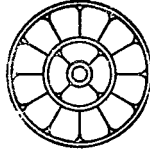
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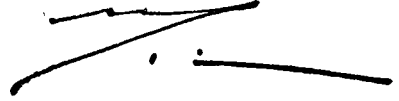


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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All correspondence to be addressed to:

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AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MOTHER:

A DISCIPLE'S NOTES OF HER WORDS

ONE can think of the Divine and yet play tennis and do any other thing. One does not have to sit down and close one's eyes to be in contact with the Divine in consciousness.

*

The aim is to be *free*. Free from all dependence on anything or any opinion or convention or mental idea. Nothing should be felt as indispensable, no comfort, no circumstance.

*

Circumstances do not matter and they can never stand in the way of one who seeks with sincerity.

*

Perfect sincerity is an essential need. Sincerity simply means that you do not deceive yourself. You must have the courage and the patience to look for the slightest pretexts in yourself.

*

Strength of will is a part of vital sincerity. You must determine to do a thing. The evil of smoking and drinking is simply this that they have a power over your will and they impair it.

*

Ask with a perfect sincerity and you will get. It is not necessary to have a guru if your call and the aspiration are strong and sincere.

*

The psychic being is the portion of us that is always in contact with the Divine. Our object is to arrange all the other parts of our nature around this central being.

*

We are convinced that it is possible to change human nature. We wish to see how and in what manner it can be done among the small group assembled in the Ashram. Once we are successful with this group, the change will come over the collectivity. We do not need any propaganda.

*

When the Supramental Force becomes effective on earth, the Divine will shall be accomplished through men without their knowing why and how they act as they do. Even now the Supramental works spasmodically, by fits and starts as it were.

6 March 1950

SANAT K. BANERJI

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

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

(Continued from the issue of June 1987)

Chapter 10: MAN THE PURUSHA, Part Two

Man seeks at first blindly and does not even know that he is seeking his divine self; for he starts from the obscurity of material Nature and even when he begins to see, he is long blinded by the light that is increasing in him. God too answers obscurely to his search; He seeks and enjoys man's blindness like the hands of a little child that grope after its mother.

Sweet Mother, how can it be that we are seeking something and yet we do not know that we are seeking?

THERE are so many things that you think, feel, want, even do, without knowing it! Are you fully conscious of yourself and of everything that goes on within you? Not at all! If, for example, quite suddenly, unexpectedly, at any moment, I ask you, "What are you thinking about?" ninety-nine times out of a hundred your answer will be, "I don't know." And if I ask another question in the same way, such as "What do you want?" you will also say, "I've no idea." And, "What do you feel?" — "I don't know."

Only to people who have learned to observe themselves, to watch themselves living, who are concentrated on the need to know what is going on within them, can one ask a precise question like that and get an immediate answer from them.

In certain circumstances of life, yes, you are absorbed in what you are feeling, what you are thinking, what you want, and then you can say, "Yes, I want this, I was thinking about that, I feel this"—but these are only rare moments in your life, not all the time.

Haven't you ever noticed that?

Well, as for seeking what we really are, seeking the reason why we are on earth, the reason for this physical existence, the reason for our presence on earth, for this formation, this existence ... the immense majority of people live without wondering about it even once! Only a very select few ask themselves this question with any interest; and even fewer of them really set to work to find out the answer. Because unless you are fortunate enough to meet someone who knows it, it is not such an easy thing to find.

Imagine, for example, that you had never set eyes on any book by Sri Aurobindo, or by any of the writers or philosophers or sages who have devoted their lives to this search; if you were in the ordinary world, as millions of people are, never having heard about anything, except, sometimes—and not even always that, these days, it is quite rare—about some deities, and some form of religion which is more of a custom than a faith and which in any case rarely tells you why you are on earth—then, you don't even think of thinking about it! You live from day to day your daily round. When you are small you think about playing, about eating, and a little later on about learning, and later still you think about all the circumstances of life. But to pose yourself this problem, to face this problem and ask, "But after all, *why* am I here?"—how many do that?

To some people this idea comes only when they are confronted with a catastrophe. When someone they love dies, or when they are placed in particularly painful and difficult situations they look into their hearts, if they are intelligent enough, and ask, "But after all, what kind of tragedy is this that we are living, and what is the use of it, where is it leading?" And it is only at that moment that one begins to try to find out.

And it is only when you have found it out—found out what he says, found out that we have a divine self and that therefore we must try to know that divine self.... That comes much later; and yet, in spite of everything, from the moment a physical body is born, there is in the being, in the core of the being, the psychic presence which is impelling the whole being towards this realisation. But who knows about this psychic being and recognises it? That too only comes in very special circumstances; and unfortunately they usually have to be painful circumstances, for otherwise people just let themselves live unthinkingly. Yet there in the depths of the being is the psychic being, seeking, seeking, seeking to awaken the consciousness and re-establish the oneness. People know nothing about it.

When you were ten years old, did you know that? No... And yet, nevertheless, deep within you, your psychic being already wanted it and was trying to bring it about. That is probably what brought you here.

So many things happen, and no-one even wonders why. You take it... it is like that because it is like that.

It would be very interesting to know how many of you, before I spoke to you about it, had wondered why they came to be here.

Of course, usually there can be a very simple answer: "My parents are here, so I am here." But you were not born here. No-one was born here. And yet you are all here. And you didn't wonder why—it was like that because it was like that! So, between even wondering and giving yourself an external answer that is satisfying enough to make you stop at that, and then saying "Could it perhaps be an indication of my destiny, of the reason for my existence?"—what a long way you must travel to come so far!

And for everyone, to a greater or lesser extent, there are outer reasons which are

not worth much, which explain things in the dullest possible way; but there is a deeper reason of which you are still unaware.

*

Only people who came here after having experienced life and who came because they wanted to come, with a conscious reason for coming—of course they could tell me, “I came because of this”, and it would be at least a partial explanation. The truest, deepest reason may still elude them, which is that they have some particular thing to realise in the Work. For that you must have already covered many stages of the journey.

In fact, it is only when you have become conscious of your soul, when you have united with your psychic being, that you can see at a glance the whole picture of your individual development through the ages. Then you begin to know—not before. And then, I can assure you, it becomes very interesting. That changes your standpoint towards life.

There is such a great difference between feeling vaguely, having a groping impression of something, of a force, a movement, an impulse, an attraction, of something impelling you in life, but it is still so vague, so uncertain, so hazy... there is such a difference between that, and having the clear vision, the exact perception, the total understanding of the meaning of your life. And only at that moment do you begin to see things as they really are, not before. Only then can you follow the thread of your destiny and clearly perceive the goal and the way to reach it. But this comes through a series of inner awakenings, like doors suddenly opening on new horizons... truly a new birth into a truer, deeper, more lasting consciousness.

Until then you live in a cloud, gropingly, beneath the weight of a destiny that sometimes crushes you, that gives you the feeling of having been made in a certain way and being unable to do anything about it. You live under the burden of your existence which weighs you down and forces you to crawl on the ground, instead of rising above and seeing all the threads, the guiding threads, the threads that connect all the different things into a single movement of progress towards a clearer realisation.

You must break out of this half-consciousness that is generally considered absolutely natural—it is your ‘normal’ way of being, and you don’t even step back far enough to be able to see and feel surprised at this uncertainty, this lack of precision. Whereas, on the other hand, to know that you are seeking and to seek consciously, deliberately, *obstinately* and methodically—that is the exceptional, almost ‘abnormal’ state. And yet it is only like this that one begins to really live.

16.1.1957

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON JULY 11, 1956

I HAVE received three questions, one of which would require some fairly unpleasant remarks which I don't want to make to you.... There are two others here which I could perhaps answer: One is about a sentence in *The Synthesis of Yoga* where Sri Aurobindo speaks of the psychic being as "insisting" on

"beauty restored to its priesthood of interpretation of the Eternal."

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 146

I have been asked what this means.

To tell the truth, I don't know why; I don't know if it is the old ascetic idea that beauty has no place in yoga, or if it is the word "priesthood" of interpretation of the Eternal, for which an explanation is being asked.

In the first case, I believe I have already said often enough and repeated that in the physical world, of all things it is beauty which best expresses the Divine. The physical world is the world of form, and the perfection of form is beauty. So I think it is not necessary to go over all that again. And once we admit this, that in the physical world beauty is the best and closest expression of the Divine, it is natural to speak of it as a "priestess", who interprets, expresses, manifests the Eternal. Its true role is to put the whole of manifested nature into contact with the Eternal through the perfection of form, harmony, and through a sense of the ideal which raises you towards something higher. So I think this justifies the word "priesthood" and explains and answers the question.

(Silence)

The other question is about a phrase I used—I believe it was last week—when I spoke of the "threshold of occultism". So a question is put to me about this occult world, that is to say, the world invisible to ordinary physical eyes, and I am asked for explanations or comments on the beings who live in these worlds which are invisible to ordinary eyes.

I am even told that I speak very often of negative entities, that is to say, of hostile formations, of small beings formed from the disintegration of human beings after their death—the disintegration of the vital or mental being at death—but that I have never spoken of the great beings, the magnificent beings or positive entities which help the evolution. I believe I have spoken to you about these quite often, but still I have been asked once again for explanations.

Well, the occult world is not one single region where everything is mixed, which only becomes occult because we can't see it. The occult world is a gradation of regions, one could perhaps say, of more and more ethereal or subtle regions, anyway, those farther and farther removed in their nature from the physical materiality we

ordinarily see. And each one of these domains is a world in itself, having its forms and inhabited by beings with a destiny, one might say, analogous to that of the domain in which they live. Just as in the physical world we are of the same materiality as the physical world, so in the vital world, in the mental world, in the overmind world and in the supramental world—and in many others, infinite others—there are beings which have a form whose substance is similar to the one of that world. This means that if you are able to enter consciously into that world with the part of your being which corresponds to that domain, you can move there quite objectively, as in the material world.

And there, there are as many, and even many more things to see and observe than in our poor little material world, which belongs to only *one* zone of this infinite gradation. You meet all sorts of things in these domains, and you need to make a study as profound, perhaps still more profound than in the physical world, to be able to know what is happening there, to have relations with the beings who live there.

It is obvious that as one goes farther, as it were, from the material world, the forms and consciousness of those beings are of a purity, beauty and perfection much higher than our ordinary physical forms. It is only in the nearest vital world, the one which is, so to say, mixed with our material life—though it lies beyond it and there is a zone where the vital is no longer mixed with the material world—of that material vital one can say that in some of its aspects it is even uglier than things here, for it is filled with a bad will which is not counterbalanced by the presence of the psychic being which, in the physical world, amends, corrects, puts right, directs this bad will. But it is rather a limited zone and, as soon as one goes beyond it, one can find and meet things that are not favourable to human life, beings not on the same scale as human existence, but having their own beauty and grandeur, with whom one may establish relations which may become quite pleasant and even useful.

Only, as I have already told you, it is not very prudent to venture into these domains without a previous initiation and, above all, a purification of nature which prevents you from entering there all weighed down and deformed by your desires, your passions, egoisms, fears, and weaknesses. Before undertaking these activities one needs a complete preparation of self-purification and widening of the consciousness which is absolutely indispensable.

In these invisible worlds there are also regions which are the result of human mental formations. One can find there all one wants. In fact, one very often finds there exactly what one expects to find. There are hells, there are paradises, there are purgatories. There are all sorts of things in accordance with the different religions and their conceptions. These things have only a very relative existence, but with a relativity similar to that of material things here; that is to say, for someone who finds himself there, they are entirely real and their effects quite tangible. One needs an inner liberation, a wideness of the consciousness and a contact with a deeper and higher truth to be able to escape from the illusion of their reality. But this is something almost similar to what happens here: human beings here are mostly convinced

that the only reality is the physical reality—the reality of what one can touch, can see—and for them, all that cannot be seen, cannot be touched, cannot be felt is, after all, problematical; well, what happens there is an identical phenomenon. People who at the moment of death are convinced, for one reason or another, that they are going to paradise or maybe to hell, *do find* themselves there after their death; and for them it is truly a paradise or a hell. And it is extremely difficult to make them come out of it and go to a place which is more true, more real.

So it is difficult to speak of all these worlds, these innumerable worlds, in a few minutes. It is a knowledge which needs a lived experience of many years, thoroughly systematic, and which requires, as I said, an inner preparation absolutely indispensable, to make it harmless.

We all get the chance to have a little contact—very partial, very superficial—with these worlds in our dreams. And the study of dreams itself already demands much time and care, and in itself may constitute a preparation for a deeper study of the invisible worlds.

I think that is all we can profitably say about it this evening.

(*Silence*)

The last question is from somebody who finds that I have made promises a little lightly and that, after all, I haven't kept my word!... Perhaps I expected more from humanity than it was capable giving me—about that I don't know. Perhaps it is a purely superficial impression.

I said more or less this, that those who are here in the Ashram will know the descent of the Supermind—they can't blame me for not having informed them when it came, I made no mystery of it!— and that they will participate in it—indeed, I did not forbid anyone to participate in it! On the contrary, I believe I encouraged everybody to be open and to receive it, and try to profit by it.

And so I said: From that moment the transforming Grace will radiate in the most effective way. Well, I challenge anyone to tell me the opposite!

But here indeed it begins to be a little more... I added: And fortunately for the aspirants this happy future—I don't think I wrote it in this way but that doesn't matter—this happy future will materialise for them in spite of *all* the obstacles that the unregenerate human nature may put up against it. I continue to hope that it will be like this.

But now that person, who is perhaps a bit impatient, tells me this: “Why have the difficulties increased for quite a large number of sadhaks?” (*Mother puts the paper down forcefully on the table.*) Who told you that it is not because you have become more conscious! that all your difficulties were there before, only you did not know it?... If you see more clearly and see things which are not very pretty, it is not the fault of the Supermind, it is your fault! It gives you a light, a mirror in which you can see yourself better than you did before, and you are a little troubled because it is not always very pretty? But what can I do?

And this person concludes: "Doesn't the supramental Force work here in spite of all the obstacles the unregenerate human nature puts up against it?" Truly. I hope it does! for otherwise, nothing could be done, the world would never be regenerated. But I have explained to you why it seems more difficult to you. It is because you are a little more conscious now and see things you did not see before.

There is yet another reason. When the Force which is at work is stronger, more insistent, naturally what resists, resists as strongly. And if instead—it is here I have to say something that's not very pleasant—If instead of being hypnotised by your little difficulties, your little inconveniences, your small discomforts, your "big" defects, if instead of being hypnotised by all that, you tried to see the other side, how much more powerful the Force is, the Grace more active, the Help more tangible; in a word, if you were a little less egoistic and less concentrated on yourselves and had a little wider vision in which you could include things that don't concern you personally, perhaps your view of the problem would change.

Well, this is what I advise you to do, and then we shall speak about it later when you have tried my remedy: don't think so much about yourself.

After all, this perhaps is the problem which interests you most, but it is certainly not the most interesting!

(Questions and Answers 1956, pp. 216-221)

PRELUDE

FOAM-tipped fingers
 Touch for an instance,
 Stretched hands form
 A continuous crest of a smiling wave.
 Crabs stop, shells cease to breathe,
 The whole shore awaits
 The coming embrace.

I feel Your wide wide self
 Eager to reach and be reached,
 All parts of my being throbbing enthralled;
 We are about to come together.

DINKAR PALANDE

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of June 1987)

(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.)

January 13, 1941

Evening

M: There are four principles of Jainism, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, what are they?

M: *dān*, *sheel*, *tapa*, and *bhābana*—*bhābana* is aspiration. This concerns our yoga, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: Only one thing?

M: Why one, Sir? *dān* also.

SRI AUROBINDO: *dān* is charity. We don't insist on charity to others. Ours is self-*dān*.

M: And *sheel*, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: What is *sheel*? Virtue? We don't insist on virtue. Virtue is a moral principle, not spiritual.

M: Morality is a consequence of spirituality.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not necessarily. *Tapa* is asceticism. We have nothing to do with asceticism.

M: No, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: So only aspiration is the common factor.

M: Yes, Sir.

(Shastri has been recently showing signs of unbalance. A few days ago I was asked by the Mother to go and see him about his health. He has not been sleeping well and not eating properly. He has been observing silence for a long time even against the Mother's disapproval. The inevitable consequence has happened: he has lost his mental balance and this evening he came right inside the Ashram only to inquire if the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had called him. After that he seems to have disappeared; news came later that he was wandering about in the bazar.)

M: I don't know anything of this story. What's the matter with him?

SRI AUROBINDO: First descent of the Supermind! (*Laughter*)—yes, that's

what he said. He asked others to be valiant warriors and write to Atreya to be one of the commanders-in-chief. (*Laughter*)

N: Is it the result of the Inconscient?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, the usual story. Going into silence and shutting himself up thinking that he is doing great yoga and that everybody is inferior to him. Such kind of silence is not good for our yoga.

M: Radhanand also observes silence.

C: No, not this kind. He has communication with selected people.

SRI AUROBINDO: Radhanand's is quite a different case. He knows what he is about. He has been doing yoga for ages before he came here. All the cases I have seen of this nature have one of two causes: excessive indulgence in sexual perversity or ambition.

M: Which was it in Shastri's case?

SRI AUROBINDO: Ambition. He wanted to be a great yogi and what happens in such cases is that they open into some intermediate zone before the vital is prepared.

M: X is said to have had the Overmind experience. Is it true, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: True if he had it. (*Laughter*) *Dr. Manilal thought that he had it. So Sri Aurobindo added—the question is if he had it. (Laughter)* It is very easy to get into some vital plane and think oneself to have all sorts of things.

M: I remember now, Sir, that *sheel* in Jainism is not virtue but *eka patni vrata*, i.e., being faithful to one's wife.

SRI AUROBINDO: We have no wives, so we are not required to keep that commandment. (*Laughter*)

M: There are five other principles too which can be said to be common with us.

SRI AUROBINDO: What are they?

M: Truth.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

M: *brahmacharya*.

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly.

M: *aparigraha* (non-acceptance).

SRI AUROBINDO: Expected to be common, but isn't. (*Laughter*)

M: I forget the other one.

N: *ahimsā*.

M: Yes, the most important.

SRI AUROBINDO: That we half observe—e.g., the killing of mosquitoes and bugs is allowed!

January 14, 1941

M: By rejection of lower impulses, Sir, is it not rejection of immoral impulses that is in view?

SRI AUROBINDO: What is meant by immoral? What society does not like? Isn't that so?

M: Yes, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: We have nothing to do with society. Otherwise we can't do yoga.

N: We couldn't leave our family and parents! It would be immoral. Of course in Dr. Manilal's case that problem doesn't arise. (*Laughter*)

M (*massaging Sri Aurobindo's patella*): It has become more flexible, Sir.

N: Not much; far less than expected. We expected a miracle from you.

M: Me?

SRI AUROBINDO: *kaivalya jñāna* (knowledge of the One). (*Laughter*)

(News has been obtained about Shastri that he is somewhere in the town. The owner of the house in which he has lodged is in contact with the Ashram. He has proposed to Shastri that he would bring him to the Ashram if he wished. And Shastri replied that the Mother would send him the car!)

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, next day he will ask for an elephant. (*Laughter*)

P: The best thing for such people is to send them home. Then they become all right.

September 28, 1941

Evening

(One L.D.M. has reviewed Sri Aurobindo's latest poems in the Hindu literary supplement. Dr. Manilal said at noon that it was a good review. Sri Aurobindo expressed a little surprise and said that the Hindu was usually not favourable to him.)

In the evening we read the paper and found that it was a very bad review.)

SRI AUROBINDO (*to M*): You said it was a good review. There is nothing good there. In fact the writer says that this is not poetry at all. At the end he did what they call damning with faint praise. When I heard about the review, my impression was correct—that it was not favourable.

N: This man doesn't seem to understand much of poetry. He says there is no colour! Good Lord, there is any amount of colour in *Rose of God* and in the very lines he quotes from *Thought the Paraclete*.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so; and he says there is no emotion or feeling. The point is what he means by emotion.

N: There is tranquillity he says but that, according to him, is more an evidence of poetic failure than a poetic gift!

M (*rather abashed at his wrong appraisal*): Of course I don't understand poetry. But at the end doesn't he say that one ought to read and reread, etc.?

N: Yes, that is the part damning with faint praise.

SRI AUROBINDO: But what does he mean by emotion?

P: Usual sentimental stuff, I suppose.

SRI AUROBINDO: If he means sentimental romantic emotion, that age has passed in poetry. Doesn't he know this? That is the concern of drama. Nowadays poetry is concerned with Truth and Beauty. If you are able to express them with sufficient power of language and rhythm, then that is what is required of you. In drama one is concerned with drawing characters, life and its reactions. I suppose what he wants is like Francis Thompson's poetry.

P: And Gerard Hopkins'!

SRI AUROBINDO: No, for Hopkins has many compound words. The reviewer also makes out that Paraclete means advocate, and there is no advocacy in the poem!

M: The dictionary also says that.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is the dictionary meaning. But one isn't obliged to accept that meaning always. Doraiswamy would then be a retired Paraclete? (*Laughter*) The Paraclete is also the Holy Ghost. What I have meant there is that thought is the intercessor between the Supreme Truth and the human consciousness. Thought flies to the Supreme Truth to connect its consciousness with the earth and after its departure all that is left behind is the Self. That is what I have meant there.

S: The images, he says, have an intellectual setting, difficult for the reviewer to appreciate.

SRI AUROBINDO: The images I have used are of course not of a mental nature. What has been seen or realised in yogic experience or vision, I have tried to put as inner symbols. All the images are symbols of inner experience. And in the poems I always put in yogic symbols. These experiences and visions have a form; the images have been used to give as correct a description of these forms as possible so that they may become a reality, even a being, so to say.

N: That is why the reviewer says "unconventional imagery"!

SRI AUROBINDO: He means original, I suppose.

M: But certainly very few people will understand the poems, Sir. I have asked many here.

S: The poems are like his prose works. But poems like *Baji Prabhu* Dr. Manlal will understand.

M (*smiling*): Oh yes, that even I can grasp.

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling*): You remind me of Molière. You know that story?

M: No, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: He used to read all his plays to his maid-servant before publication. And if she understood and liked them, Molière was satisfied that everybody would enjoy them. (*Laughter*)

(*Concluded*)

NIRODBARAN

SRI AUROBINDO ON DYUMAN

(About thirty years ago, some extracts from Sri Aurobindo's letters, written during 1932 to 1936, containing his observations on Dyuman's work and character, were sent to the Mother for her perusal. She was so pleased to read them that she called Dyuman and all her secretaries and personal attendants—Nolini, Amrita, Pavitra, Udar, Champaklal and Vasudha—and herself read out these extracts to them. After reading them she remarked to the effect that what had been written in them was still true. She also wrote her blessings at their end.

These extracts are reproduced below. One more long letter of Sri Aurobindo on Dyuman, written on 7.1.1937, is also reproduced after them. This long letter was not seen by the Mother.

These extracts and the letter are now published as the best tribute to Dyuman on his 85th birthday which fell on 19 June 1987.)

Extracts from Sri Aurobindo's Letters on Dyuman sent to the Mother

("Care only for the Divine's opinion and not for that of men.")

"The strength of Dyuman's character is his essential straightness of aim, fidelity to the highest he sees and intensity of will to receive the Light and serve the Truth."

10.4.1934

"You have done very well indeed and shown yourself as always a good and faithful instrument of the Mother's force."

18.7.1935

"Your spirit of economy is very precious and extremely helpful to us, the more so as it is rare in the Ashram where the push conscious or sub-conscious is towards the other extreme."

6.3.1932

"If Dyuman and a few others had not made themselves the instruments of the Mother and helped her to reorganise the whole material side of the Ashram, the Ashram would have collapsed long ago under the weight of mismanagement, waste, self-indulgence, disorder, chaotic self-will and disobedience. He and they faced unpopularity and hatred in order to help her to save it."

1936

"Loyalty, fidelity, capacity, strength of will and other qualities you have in plenty—a full calm and equality not only in the inner being where it can exist already, but in the outer nervous parts is a thing you have to get completely."

27.9.1936

*

“I do not know why there should be so much difficulty about the instructions, —you have been doing this work for many years and must surely know the lines on which it has been conducted by Dyuman and what to do in most cases. In the others where there is no guide in past experience, you have to do your best and in case Dyuman’s instructions are incomplete and you have to act on your own judgment, you can point it out to him if he finds fault with what is done.

“For the rest your judgment about his method of work does not agree with the Mother’s observation of him and his work. She has found him one of the ablest organisers in the Ashram and one of the most energetic workers who did not spare himself until she compelled him to do so, one who understood and entered completely into her views and carried them out not only with great fidelity but with success and capacity. She has known more instances than one in which he has organised so completely and thoroughly that the labour has been reduced to a minimum and the efficiency raised to a maximum. I may say however that the saving of labour is not the main consideration in work; there are others equally important and more so. As for the principle that everyone should be allowed to do according to his nature, that can apply only where people do independent work by themselves; where many have to work together, it cannot always be done—regularity and discipline are there the first rule.

“I do not understand your remark about the Mother. The whole work of Aroumé, of the Granary, of the Building Department, etc. was arranged by the Mother not only in general plan and object but in detail. It was only after she had seen everything in working order that she drew back and allowed things to go on according to her plan, but still with an eye on the whole. It is therefore according to the Mother’s arrangement that people here are working. When it was not so, when Mother allowed the sadhaks to do according to their own ideas or nature, indicating her will but not enforcing it in detail, the whole Ashram was a scene of anarchy, confusion, waste, disorderly self-indulgence, clash and quarrel, self-will, disobedience, and if it had gone on, the Ashram would have ceased to exist long ago. It was to prevent that that the Mother chose Dyuman and a few others on whom she could rely and reorganised all the departments supervising every detail and aiding the heads to enforce proper methods and discipline. Whatever remains still of the old defects is due to the indiscipline of many workers and their refusal to get rid of their old nature. Even now if the Mother withdrew her control, the whole thing would collapse.

“You are mistaken in thinking that Dyuman conceals things from the Mother or does as he pleases without telling her. She knows all and is not in a state of ignorance. What you write in your second letter is nothing new to her. There were hundreds of protests and complaints against Dyuman (as against other heads of departments), against his methods, his detailed acts and arrangements, his rigid economy, his severe discipline and many things else. The Mother saw things and where there was justification for change, she has made it, but she has consistently supported

Dyuman, because the things complained of, economy, discipline, refusal to bend to the claims and fancies and wishes of the sadhaks, were just what she had herself insisted on—without them he could not have done the work as she wanted it done. If he had been loose, indulgent, not severe, he might have become popular, but he could not have been her instrument for the work. Whatever defects there might be in his nature, were the Mother's concern; if there was too much rigidity anywhere, it was for her to change it. But she refused to yield to complaints and clamour born of desire and ego; her yielding would only have brought the old state of things back and put an end to the Ashram."

7.1.1937

SRI AUROBINDO

VIGNETTES OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of June 1987)

“They are Under my Protection”

X LOOKED after the Ashram Garden. In a croton tree a small bird had made her nest. The nest had three chicks. A lady famous for her cantankerousness asked for a chick to keep as a pet. X ignored her demand. But she was so persistent that after two or three days he gave in. Y who lived in the Ashram main building heard of it and reported it to the Mother. He told X that the Mother was displeased. The Mother herself didn't say anything to X, but he felt very uneasy and went to the Mother the same afternoon and reported all that had happened. The Mother scolded him saying, “They were under my protection. It was a nasty thing to do.” Woe-begone X asked the Mother, “Should I bring the chick back to put it in the nest?” The Mother replied, “It won't do. The bird will not feed the chick.” Then sensing the anguish of X she patted him.

The Mother's Squirrel

At one time there was a particular squirrel which became a pet of the Mother. The Mother used to caress it. After a time the squirrel population of the Ashram increased and became a nuisance. They nibbled at carpets and overturned vases holding flowers. The Mother asked the Ashram gardeners to trap them and to take them first to the Mother to ascertain if the Mother's squirrel was amongst the ones trapped. So each time that the senior sadhaks trapped a squirrel they showed it to the Mother. Being all compassion for all beings, she instructed them to take each squirrel to the Botanical Gardens and release it there and observe how it reacted. Twice or thrice they reported to her that at first the squirrels were a little bewildered but later climbed the tall stately trees. Thus reassured the Mother allowed them to go on trapping and releasing them. Alas, in spite of the Mother's checking all the trapped squirrels, her squirrel either got trapped or escaped somewhere.

Compiled by S.

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of May 1987)

The Mother's Message

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



Volume Three: 1959

8

I WORKED very hard to pass the speed-test in shorthand. I got ninety-six per cent marks. The professor Mrs. Duncan was pleased with me; so was the principal.

My English had improved considerably. But it was not possible to speak the "King's English"—as they say in England.

My principal Miss Darvall decided to go to India with a group to climb Mount Everest—twenty-nine thousand feet high, but there are controversies as regards the exact height.

She was to sail on the ship named LAOS. The vice-principal and other professors were there to run the college.

*

I received from the Mother a card dated 21-6-59. On it I found a quotation from her own writings, with love and blessings:

“Never forget that you are not alone. The Divine is with you helping and guiding you. He is the companion who never fails, the friend whose love comforts and strengthens. Have faith and He will do everything for you.”

I had been conscious of Him ever since my girlhood. The fire of aspiration to unite with Him became intenser with each passing year. None except Him knew this fact. Time and time again I felt boundless peace and His Presence which gave me solace and strength. If I had been alone, I would not have had the courage to face and tackle various ordeals. Life means movement, variety, constant and endless change. I disliked an easy life, because then I would have learnt nothing—achieved nothing. The aim of my life was fixed. For I detest being a drifter.”

*

Dyuman also sent me a letter informing me that the Mother would go for an outing once a month or so and come back to her apartment before 5 p.m.

Mona Pinto and Maniben Patel wrote to me occasionally. I heard from my people also.

I had been writing a daily diary, because I thought it was a good practice to keep a record of my progress. Unfailingly I noted down the expenses in my account book, so that I would know how much I was spending on my food, fees, fares, books, rent, electricity and other miscellany.

*

The combination of sun and shower was unusual. It formed a gorgeous shimmering rainbow which was momentary. There was a comforting warmth in the air when I got outside. The grass and earth smelt fresh after the night's rain.

Spring slid into summer. Lightweight clothes were displayed tastefully in shop-windows.

I bought a few cotton garments. I had a very limited wardrobe of them, because I left most of my cotton wear in E. Africa.

It was not difficult to wash nylon things. They dried quickly, and needed no pressing. Some cottons required ironing which I did in the basement of Mercury House.

One day I happened to ask a dry-cleaner about the price of cleaning saris. She said: "One guinea per sari." I thought: "It is practical to wash them myself."

I also washed the tea and other utensils. Now I got habituated to do all kinds of work—rather a study in diligence! Formerly I did not have to lift even a small spoon! Now I was taking everything in my stride, because the experiences good or bad were essential for the growth of consciousness.

*

Already numerous plans formulated themselves in my mind. I wanted to learn driving. So I went to B.S.M. (British School of Motoring) and arranged for twelve lessons. I also wished to learn how to compose flowers in the way of Constance Spry. So I applied to the Constance Spry Flower School at 98 Marylebone Lane, London W.1.

Mrs. Spry began her course in flower arrangement in 1935 and became well-known all over the English-speaking world for her exquisite and original flower composition.

She was responsible for the flower arrangement in a number of society functions, on royal occasions, in Westminster Abbey at the Queen's wedding and at the Coronation.

She lectured all over the country, judged at flower shows and, of course, published several books on flower arrangement.

I read in the *Times*, Monday 15th June 1959, as follows:

Beauty is where you find it

"For generations study of the gentle art of flower arrangement and of the preparation of good things for the table were considered wholly proper activities for young ladies. But it took a small, forthright Irishwoman with twinkling grey-green eyes, and considerable imagination as well as shrewd business sense, to make weeds from the hedgerow, onion heads and cabbage leaves not only acceptable but desirable as drawing-room decoration in the twentieth century...

And if she uses sprays of convolvulus, of old man's beard or kale leaves in a scheme of decoration, it is because Constance Spry finds them both beautiful and suitable for the immediate job in hand. 'I hate pretentiousness.' She does, too. And she also has been the means of helping many girls and women to find loveliness for their homes where they had not previously noticed it, and often at little cost....

Flowers and foliage are now accepted as an integral part of the decoration

of a room, not merely as an after thought. And from Mrs. Spry comes some helpful advice on this subject. Do not, she suggests, dissipate the decorative effect of flowers by having a few here and a few there. Concentrated in one patch of colour—light or dark—they will bring life and importance to a room. It is possible to have only two or three blooms in a container with great effect, but they must be very special and specially sited.

And before arranging any flowers consider some of the lovely ornaments that may be resting empty on shelf or table.... A neglected jug, an old ewer or bowl can add to the effectiveness of flowers or foliage.

And 'do not let prejudice ride, study their character, give them the right setting and any flowers will look lovely.' As Mrs. Spry herself found when she refused to accept her own prejudice against gypsophila and used its lace-like quality silhouetted against the light....

*

Now it was July—the month of rich blossom.

The Mother sent me a card dated 4-7-59, which depicted a painted pigeon. She inscribed:

“My dear little child Huta,
I have received all your nice letters and am glad that your studies are going on well. I was waiting for the arrival of your brother to tell you that I had got the things you sent me—but he has not yet come.
My love and blessings are always with you.”

Paroobhai did not reach Pondicherry because he was to stay for some time in Bombay, then go to Rajkot and take my mother to Pondicherry. There they would be staying for a week or so before flying to E. Africa.

*

My landladies were to give me a bigger room with a wash-basin and other facilities. The room would shortly be vacated by Mr. King who was studying the History of Art in one of the best colleges.

He was a polished conversationalist. During our dinner he talked about music and art. Later he showed me beautiful rare books about the great Masters and their lives, containing also reproductions of their paintings which entranced me.

Occasionally he made me hear the music of famous composers. I heard it absorbedly—my elbow on the arm of the chair and my chin cupped comfortably in my palm, eyes closed. My mind winged back to those days when I had listened to the music during the Mother's distribution of eatables at the Playground.

I enjoyed music and art exceedingly. They were and are my favourite subjects. Music reminds me of a real-life joke in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram:

An English lady asked a foreigner to look at the Ashram-board for her and tell her which music would be played that night in the Library Hall. He came and told her: "Hungarian Raspberry!" The lady gave a shout of laughter and corrected him: "Pal, no, it must be Hungarian Rhapsody."

*

One evening in the course of our dinner there was an incredible silence around the table except for the chewing of salad which gave me the impression of cows and bulls chewing the cud—the sound was so typical that a sudden uncontrollable laugh escaped me. All faces turned to me. I then said: "Just to break the glumness in the air which is so tangible I laughed, wishing someone would start speaking."

The newly married Scandinavian couple was opposite me. The gentleman said in his perfect continental drawl: "So, miss, you want somebody to speak. Let me say: if I were not married to this girl (pointing to his wife who understood no English), I would have proposed to you, because I adore Indian girls."

His 'out of the blue' speech made me blush but soon I recovered from it and said, "Thank Heavens, you are married." He remarked: "Touché." There were waves of laughter. The atmosphere became light.

I bade everyone a cheery goodnight and went to my room, picked up the tiny transistor, twisted the controls until I found the Pop music sung by Pat Boone, Frank Sinatra, Cliff Richard, Bing Crosby, Dean Martin and so on. But mostly I listened to classical music and the B.B.C. news.

*

Usually, when I returned from college I purchased some requirements from a grocer. I also bought fruit and flowers from a stall which was nearby.

One day while coming from college I took a long route. On my way I entered a confectionary shop. I purchased some bonbons, chocolates and biscuits. When I pulled out the wallet from my handbag, I found to my discomfiture that the money was not sufficient, because some had already been spent on lunch. I felt awfully embarrassed and told the shopkeeper to reserve the packet as I would bring the money later. He said rather impolitely: "Miss, this is the Indians' way of doing things." His cynical words pricked me on the raw. I walked out without a word and quickened my steps to Mercury House. When I reached there it was almost late evening. But I took the money and retraced my steps to the shop. I paid for the things I had bought. Further, I asked the shopkeeper to give me dry fruit. While handing the money I said with a sardonic smile: "The Indian way is beyond your comprehension. Good night." He stared and gaped.

I thought myself an absolute nut. Nevertheless, I was satisfied to make the shop-keeper swallow his own words. I walked and walked endlessly. At last I arrived home just in time for dinner. I was excessively fatigued. The diners questioned me in a torrent of words. I said: "I had a very trying day at college." I did not wait for coffee. I excused myself to Miss Jarrat and wished everybody good night. I gathered up my sari and sped upstairs to my room. Afterwards I ran a hot bath, added a handful of scented bath-salts and soaked my tired limbs in the tub. I lay in it, relaxing,—and reluctant to budge. Then gingerly I pulled myself out of it, patted my body with a fluffy towel, dabbed English Lavender Yardley talc, donned a *négligée*, brushed my hair, applied cream on my face and went to bed. As always I read a passage from *Prayers and Meditations*:

"A few minutes passed in silence before Thee are worth centuries of felicity....
Grant, O Lord, that all shadows may be dispersed and that, more and more,
I may become Thy faithful servant in constancy and in serenity; may my heart
be before Thee pure like a pure crystal, so that all of it may reflect Thee.
How sweet it is to be before Thee in silence..."

I turned off the lamp and thought: "What a day!" Then silence... soon a heavy drugged sleep rolled over me like a thick coverlet.

*

Now I was shifted to the bigger room which was spick and span and shiny. Everything there fitted into the *décor*—the bed quilt matched the curtain. The large window overlooked the front part of the house and a creeper peeped through it. I had to keep it open, because the weather had been sultry—the temperature was 90° F. I had heard that many people had sun-strokes and fainted.

The water waggon sprinkled a light shower on baked roads. I laughed inwardly: "What will happen to Londoners if they are in Pondicherry in summer?"

Sometimes at night when I looked through the window, stars littered the velvet black sky and a faint breeze whispered in the luxuriant creeper which covered the house.

On 12th July rain started falling steadily. The weather was uncertain. I leaned out of the window, shivering slightly, breathed in the rainy air of the dim morning. There was a smell of damp earth and flowers.

In my previous room a girl named Chetan from India had come to stay. She would join the same college as mine in September. Her English was very poor, so she attended English classes at L.T.C. (London Technical College). Here, apart from English, there were many other classes like Typing, English Literature, English Poetry, Economics, Foreign Languages, etc.

When Chetan visited my new room, she saw the photographs of Sri Aurobindo

and the Mother on the mantel-piece. She asked: "Are they your grandparents?" I answered: "In a way, yes, but they are more than that—the Divine—my sole reality." Then I told her about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother and the Ashram in a nutshell. I felt she hardly comprehended.

(To be continued)

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SANSKRIT SPOKEN IN HIMACHAL PRADESH TRIBAL DISTRICT

SANSKRIT has survived as a spoken language in parts of the tribal district of Lahul and Spiti in Himachal Pradesh. The dialect, which is locally called "Chinali", has a rich vocabulary of pre-classical Sanskrit and has maintained its grammatical structure. It is spoken by a small segment of people called "Chinals" who are mainly concentrated in "Shansha" and Godhala villages near this town. Yet almost all the villages in the district have a few families who speak in the "Chinali" dialect. Experts who have studied the survival of spoken Sanskrit in some areas of the district believe that the Chinals might have come to the isolated valleys of Lahul and Spiti sometime during the 5th century when Sanskrit is believed to have been a spoken language in northern India. The linguistic experts are of the view that the remoteness and inaccessibility of the area could be the reasons for the survival of Sanskrit as a spoken language. A detailed research is being carried out.

With acknowledgement to MLBD (Motilal Banarsidass News Letter) October 1986, p. 13.

LIFE-POETRY-YOGA

FROM SOME PERSONAL LETTERS TO A SADHAK

(Continued from the issue of May 1987)

You may remember my speaking to you of the difference between the “lonely” and the “solitary”. Apropos of it I may dig up some lines that arose in me at the Samadhi at 5 p.m. on October 10. There was suddenly a pull from some profound within, threatening to take away whatever might be the dearest joy of one’s days. I say “threatening” because that is how the pull seemed at first, but soon the sense of loss was gone and a recompense beyond one’s highest hope was felt. Then the lines took shape:

Suddenly life’s sweetest love was snatched away
To a veiled Within that gave no marvel back.
Then a strange silence found its final word:
“This paradise must swallow up all bliss,
Each smile and laugh and earth-intoxicate cry
Must plunge beyond its goldenest dream to a deep
Of heaven-honeyed loss, a void ever full,
Where sits the Solitary who is All,
Drunk with the infinitude of the One Self.”

Now for the sentence Shraddhavan quoted from me to you: “Our past is the only thing we can change.” Rather a cryptic and paradoxical pronouncement. The interpretations you have offered are valid and perhaps partake in their own ways of what I meant. You have written: “Our past is the only thing we can call ours and hold in our hands: the present is too slippery—one moment being the future and nearly the next the past. Since most of the time we are living unconsciously or with partial consciousness we see only the superficial part of any past, by exploring it more and more consciously we go on revealing to ourselves layer after layer or page after page and in the process of revelation of the ever new we may as well term it a change. Another approach would be to use the past to build a future as what the past could have been—this also amounts to changing it.” My own meaning was as follows:

“The past’s character depends on the nature of the present to which it has led. No matter how unlovely it may look, it can become beautiful if somehow the present gets touched by a glow from beyond the usual series of events, the normal chain of cause and effect. Realising the inadequacy, the wrong-headedness, the erring zigzag of times gone, we may awake keenly to the need of being different, the soul in us may stir to its creative sweet sadness at the sight of our life’s and mind’s missing of the true way, a light from our depths may suddenly leap out in response to the sense of

frailty and futility in all that we have done. Then the past alters its whole aspect and grows a stepping-stone towards the Ideal. All its old appearance of a tale of mistakes and miseries and mischances, logically leading to nothing more than a variation on the same theme of the human, all-too-human, takes on a new significance and becomes—to put the matter in an extreme form—hell's hidden way to heaven. To let the past be what it has been to the outer consciousness or to transmute its lines and hues by giving them a novel *dénouement* lies in our hands. And as the past is our only established and achieved possession in the process of time, it is the sole thing we have the power to reorientate by a spurt beyond our common selfhood. By such a spurt we begin to see behind all that has happened the secret Lover and Master manipulating the twists and turns of our life. A strange scheme emerges into view, everything falls into its proper place and all the scattered paths are found to come together and point to our true home that is the deep heart. At times what has impressed us as a graving in granite disperses like a mist: the entire past can vanish if the soul can give itself entirely to the Divine. The Mother has said that all Karma can be wiped out at a stroke by a sweeping self-dedication to the Divine. This would be a changing of the past in the most radical sense.”

A word on some other topics. Yes, it is good to know what the Divine within wants to manifest. But we must beware of a too mental notion which would tell us merely what we want to be manifested. While being aware of one's main trend, it is best to lay one's complete being in the Mother's hands, asking her to manifest herself as fully as possible through us. She will know what we have to express. I think you are doing this well enough. (6.1.1987)

You have asked me what provoked the lines of 10 October. They are linked to the poem “At Last” about the “Unfading Rose” which was written on 15 May 1986. The present “life-situation” was an extension of what became “finalised” then. The earlier phase was a psychic one: here is a deepening from or through the psychic into a sense of the Self—the *chaitya purusha* opening “backwards” into something of the *Atman*. I have mostly had in a very general manner the awareness-touch of a wide luminous tranquillity as the background of my being and, along with it, the frontal movement of a little soul offering its littleness to the Divine Beloved in a stream of sweet warmth. But this withdrawal through the “Unfading Rose”, as it were, into a vastness as of some secret ever-still air was quite unusual. I am reminded in a small way of the Yoga of the Upanishads. This Yoga is, as a rule, taken to be an ancient Jnana Yoga, a Path of Knowledge through the discriminative mind. But, as Sri Aurobindo once pointed out to me, it was an entry into the Universal Self *via* the heart-purusha, the being “no bigger than the thumb of a man, who is like a fire without smoke and is the one who was in the past and is the lord of today and the lord of tomorrow”. As soon as “the knot of the heart-strings” is “rent asunder” the “mortal” is said to “enjoy even in this body immortality.” This “immortality” is twofold: the realisation of the inmost soul that never

perishes and goes on growing through birth and death across the ages and the realisation of the single infinite Being who is unborn and undying and is "the immensity which alone is felicity."

I have sketched broadly the "life-situation". The particularity attached to it may be seen as a pull inward beyond all objects of love, rending all ties and destroying the mortal music played on the heart-strings. Yet, in the swallowing up of its delight by an abyss ever-deepening, the cherished objects disappeared not into sheer nothingness but into the unlimited essence of their own selves. And this essence was at the same time touched with individuality and liberated into an All-ness. In a poem entitled "Ananda" many years ago occur lines that seem appropriate to the experience here as one to which the other which brought in the rose-image has led:

Rapture that cuts away time-transient shows
Like petals from the odour of a rose.

Now for a little turn away from myself. Your "jottings" interested me by the peeps they gave of your inner movements day after day. They have in places apt expressions matching the inner movements—"Legs may shake, stomach may flutter, chest may heave, but keep your hands uplifted firmly"—"Her promises wonderful and undeserved but taking too long to get fulfilled"—"I am the sea, the sea-gulls dipping for a fish, the moonbeam-fingertips dancing on wave-crests and suddenly dipping into the depths in between"—"touches of memory like whispers of eyelashes"—"And everywhere is Your name, Your expanse softly enclosing, pervading"—"empty interstellar space softly vibrated by self-revolving"—"it is self-eroticism, the Unmanifest tickling and then shivering and smiling and creating out of the joy and movement all manifestation for its own ecstasy"—"all of a sudden I realise that all I have achieved, all wonderful happenings and visions and day-dreams have been petals of Grace, drops of honey from heaven, chunks of moonbeams which somehow I plucked"—"sometimes I am a cloud looking from above and happy that soon I will come down and join earth, come down in drops, showers, even possibly torrents"—"the tussle between the old habit of mental control and control by the soul, mental discipline versus withholding of sanction by the Purusha is now near the surface, no more hidden"—"No more do I want to look from a mountain peak, that can never be tall enough and even it may be my vision is still limited, restricted. O, it is a joy to talk and pray and tell the Mother everything at least once a day and through Her loved ones whenever I write or talk to them." (20.1.1987)

I see you are advising "patience" to yourself. Sri Aurobindo has asked for it too in the sense that we should realise how high and far the Supermind is and we should give ourselves time in order to gain Eternity instead of imagining or hoping that we can reach out to the Supreme in a few strides. It is also necessary to remember that the great planes have to be gradually climbed and we must beware of mistaking for

them the surprising illuminations that occasionally come to us. In a number of letters Sri Aurobindo has warned enthusiastic or ambitious sadhaks against fancying they have penetrated into the Overmind, if not even into the Supermind, just because some spiritual dawn-glimmer has touched their usually benighted heads. To have a frequent sense of the realms of Light above is good progress but it is different from being settled in any stratum of them or from receiving a constant downpour of God-gold from the strata nearest our mind. While writing this I recall four lines of mine summing up the overhead planes: (1) the Intuition as a general category of the immediate Overhead, (2) the Overmind as the crown of the spiritual adventure in general, (3) the Supermind as the Divine who is formative of all things and facing its own formations and (4) the Absolute that holds the source of the Supermind but is the sheer transcendent, the everlastingly world-free:

Streak on gold streak wounding the illusive night—
 Miraculous monarchy of eagled gaze—
 Eternal truth's time-measuring sun-blaze—
 Lonely omnipotence locked in self-light.

Returning to the topic of "patience", I may recount to you an incident between Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Once, it appears, the Mother was animatedly pressing for the Ashram's progress. Sri Aurobindo expressed surprise at this change from the usual calm attitude towards her erring children. "Yes," the Mother said, "I am now impatient." Maybe some foreboding was there that extra demands might be made on her in the years to come (as actually happened after December 5, 1950 when Sri Aurobindo left his body) and she wanted something fundamental to be done before that.

Sri Aurobindo himself seems to have shown impatience only when in the months before his passing away he was dictating *Savitri* to Nirod. Nirod was a little taken aback at the insistence on dictating more and more. Observing his wondering and questioning look, he is reported to have said: "Yes, I want to finish *Savitri* soon." When he had completed the Book of Fate he gave the impression of believing that he had done all that was immediately necessary. The Epilogue was brought to his notice—and perhaps also the Book of Death—but he appears to have set them aside, except for small touchings-up.

Perhaps impatience on his part may be read also in a letter he wrote to me some time in 1948. There he said that the situation had become too serious for him to have any time to waste on "intellectualities".

Why do you doubt my attitude to you? Of course you are very precious to me. Rarely does one find a soul with such trust, such openness, such concern. But this is only one side. The other side is the quality of the soul which is shown even more by its profound turn towards the Divine than by its capacity to have the trust, the openness, the concern relating to me.

(8.2.1987)

Your poem—

That intense concern
 Hid in poems and songs
 Expressed in extended hands
 ready to hold and lift,
 In thoughts and prayers ready to reach
 beseeching minds,
 In joys of silence and smiles of peace
 ready to enrich aspiring hearts,
 What happened?
 Where did it go?
 And when?—

your poem goes on finely up to the last three short lines. No doubt these express genuinely a life-situation but being true to actuality does not necessarily give poetic truth. Poetic truth has to be distilled from facts. Poetry is not satisfied by wondering what happened. What happened has itself to become wondrous or rather to reveal the core of surprise within its common existence. Perhaps, you should have said something like

What took it away
 and left this empty searching stare?

I like what you say after mentioning your sense of boredom and aloneness which is partly relieved by painting: "Fun is still there as if interspersed like a few trees proclaiming spring amongst a forest in autumn." I think "fun" is the keynote of your nature as it is also of mine. The artist nature is always like that. But we must distinguish the artist from the aesthete. The aesthete depends on outward stimulus in order to feel happy. The artist has an inner fount which splashes everything with an iridescent spray and creates beauty or, more truly, washes off the surface of ordinariness from the world and lays bare the "crimson-throbbing glow" which is the world's heart. An artist can live amongst objects or circumstances that commonly would be considered unattractive and still be full of bubbling bliss. When he looks at a puddle he does not shrink like the aesthete from its apparent dirt but sees light reflected in it and feels that there must be light hidden in it to make it light-reflective. Lying in a gutter he would not be overpowered by the filth and the stink: he would be absorbed in all the clarity and colour he can watch in the sky above him and all the freshness he can intuit in the wide sweep of air across the open spaces there. Nothing can really depress him and everywhere he will discern some magical coming together of lines and shapes—some pattern bringing to him a shock of perfection in what the aesthete might regard as commonplace or chaotic.

Yes, the artist has a far deeper source of living and perceiving than the aesthete, but it is not yet the deepest. We may say he is like the Yogi who has realised the infinite beatific Brahman in all that exists, while the other fellow will mark Brahman

springing forth in some areas and being depressingly absent from many spots. But even the aesthete character can have a contribution to make to the complete ideal we as Aurobindonians should keep before us. For there are two kinds possible of the other fellow: the selective and the creative. Ordinarily the aesthete picks out the beautiful and recoils from the ugly. The extraordinary aesthete would wish to change the ugly and refashion whatever does not answer to his quest for beauty. If the artist who is impervious or oblivious to the broken and the disordered around him and lives in the light of his dream of the whole and harmonious could add to his being the extraordinary aesthete's desire to transform the uncomely he would be more than a Shankarite seer of the Ananda Brahman and the overlooker of the phenomenal flawed universe: he would be the Aurobindonian visionary-cum-worker who not only knows that all this vast varied universe is basically nothing save Brahman but also aims at transmuting into delightful beauty all the flaws, all the phenomenal shortcomings that are still present in spite of his realisation with the Mundaka Upanishad that "the Eternal is before us and the Eternal is behind us and to the north and to the south of us and above and below and extended everywhere." (4.4.1987)

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

THERE THEY ARE

RARELY the wilful wind blows over a few seed-specks of beauty
 On the arid and barren plains of my droughty heart.
 There they hide under the sterile stones and dust.
 When at last a wayward nimbus cloud of inspiration
 Showers drops of benediction on the slumbering seeds
 They sprout up with the timid acknowledgement of a few leaves
 Lispering their heart's desires to the blazing sunlight.
 Seasons' rhythmic impulses bring them buds and blossoms.
 Faintest fragrance too sprays the air round its narrow orbit.
 They lead me flying up to the regions of unheard music to vibrate with.
 Eyes wide with amazement rest soothed
 On a rainbow of colours half seen half unseen by mortal man.
 Words and ideas surge out in a flood at the tip of my pen
 Just as a cloud-burst fulfils the dry pebbly bed of a rivulet,
 Overflowing its banks in happy abandon,
 The unknown stream's assertion of its existence in nature.
 How I wish I could borrow the joy of its being and becoming.

DEBANSHU

THE TWO GREEK MAXIMS

A LETTER TO AMAL KIRAN

READING in your talk which appeared in *Mother India's* Dec. '86 issue a reference to a possible interpretation of "*gnothi seauton*" and "*meden agan*" in a new light, I feel like putting forward to you some views of mine, especially concerning the reciprocal relation of the two maxims.

These inscriptions on Apollo's temple at Delphi have in my opinion a deeper meaning and wider implication to offer, and seem to carry as close an interrelation between themselves as would the twin lines of a distich.

Indeed, in their profound lesson lies the key to an interpretation and an evaluation of Greek culture and the civilization that sprang from it—determining the history of the "West" and the configuration of "today's" world—as only the global "solar" knowledge attributed to the inspired vision of that ancient Deity would afford to provide. These twin shining arrows shot in the dawning of Hellas, from the holiest of its shrines, seem to pierce through all those centuries that separate us from the proto-history of Greece, and strike at the clues of the apparently insoluble riddle of the modern world and contemporary humanity.

Of course, the first sentence, "Know thyself", is to be understood in the light of the Upanishadic *tat tvam asi* (*thou art that Truth thou seekest*), and that would explain the oracle acclaiming Socrates the wisest among the Greeks, as we know Socrates had intimations, intuitive perceptions of that inner reality, *daimon*, the self hidden in the secret cave of the heart—our soul.

Then, as if in contrast with the utter absolute of the first injunction (namely: all that is to be known is inside ourselves), follows that bland recommendation: "Nothing in excess." How to reconcile such a sharp beginning with a seemingly blunt close?

Yet the contradiction is only an apparent one, if we view closely both the concepts. Rather, one may find that the second statement represents nothing but the dynamic fulfilment of the first affirmation.

In the Vedic terms, the first would represent *satyam*, the second *ritam*.

For, this truth that we are enjoined to find in our consciousness, this soul that is the very self of man, what is it if not his *central* being, the core of existence, that which refuses identification with any of our parts or faculties (*neti neti*), yet stands behind all and gives everything its true value (*sarvam idam brahman*)?

And, is it not around this central spark of divinity, this "navel of the being"—was not Delphi itself called by the Greek "the navel of the world"?—that, in the dynamic truth of man's and the world's evolution, *ritam*, all the other parts have to be harmonised, rhythmically developed, happily combined?

If the soul is our true identity, the sole reality of our being, *sat*, it is also in the dynamic truth of its becoming, its progressive manifestation, the leader of our evolu-

tion, master of our works and achievements—the conscious will set in front of our march of self-finding and self-fulfilment, *purohita*.

And when this truth is forgotten, and a lesser ideal is put in front of mankind, although a considerable advance might be accomplished, yet the progress is bound to be partial, and the greatness of the achievement, however impressive, might in the end create a dangerous imbalance between those parts and faculties that have been overdeveloped and others which have been left neglected and atrophied.

We see for instance, in the contemporary world-situation, the frightening outcome born of such an imbalance between the development of a most sophisticated technology and a psychology still in its infancy... small kids playing with big weapons....

Here comes, with a poignant ring of actuality, the warning of the Sun-god: know your true self, and develop all your being in harmony with that truth—don't lay undue stress on any activity (be it in the realm of the most lofty mental abstraction, or of the most successful endeavours of the life-energy in man) which may not be in harmony with the truth of your inner discovery: *meden agan*.

This seems to have been the Golden Rule, the law of the Age of Truth, *ritam* of the Vedic Satyayuga.

This also seems to be the imperative of an age when the world is facing disintegration (at all levels) under the pressure of a huge scientific machinery which is not supported by an adequate knowledge of man's inner nature and of the meaning and aims of his evolutionary trends—a superstructure lacking the support of solid foundations and the direction of a balanced line of growth and development.

It may sound as a message of temperance, moderation, quietism. It is a call to a higher, divine harmony—perhaps that secret harmony which Heraclitus hails as superior to its outer limited formations, a supreme harmony mastering an absolute *élan*, bridging as it were a wider hiatus of inner tension and effort as in the image of a bow stretched to the limit of its flexibility, charged with the full power of its resilience, ready to deliver its shaft at lightning speed, yet still in the grip of the Archer.

For a bow has to be stretched up to the point of its breaking, but not further: *meden agan*. And the tension spplied on its string of death, is it not of the same nature as the caress stroking the chords of the Lyre? Is not that sweet melody born of a similar violence?

So, the rule of measure can apply to dynamic realities as well as static; then it becomes a subtle principle, a kind of rhythmic balance, an intuitive rather than a reasoned accord.

And what words of moderation can we expect from the Loxias, the God of inspiration, the Deity who pierces from the unknown the veils of our mental conceptions with the arrows of its dazzling revelations? His are not the spear-thrusts of Athena's reasonings, he is the archer who shoots unseen, *ekebolos*, who aims from afar. His is the oracle which, when not luminously understood, leaves the questioner in a yet deeper darkness, he speaks to us in the obscure language of the secret Mysteries

in order to lead our mind from the *tenebra* that lies beyond its limited reach towards the infinite splendour of a hidden sun.

What kind of balance can we expect to be meant by the Seer whose visionary trances exalt into ecstatic frenzy the poet's imaginative faculties, yet charge his speech with rhythmic accents and measures of unfailing precision, he who compels the Pythia to scream out in anguish the doom of her prophecies, yet fills the heart of the artist with that incomparable delight, the nectar that is tasted from the kiss of the Muse?

Feared, rather than worshipped, even by the Greeks, after they burnt down, by the help of a ruse, the holy ramparts of the city he most loved, depriving him of his Asian stronghold, he was estranged more and more from a world that has grown cold to his divine *enthousiasmos*, where Reason is the supreme ruler and Science the only knowledge (yet both are enslaved at the service of the needs and pleasures of a dwarfish and impish humanity). Now his holiest shrine is only visited by a curious noisy crowd of restless barbarians.

The man he hailed as wisest among Greeks was put to death as a dangerous criminal by the citizens of that very Athens which represents the zenith of the enlightening curve of their culture's achievements, and since then the blessings of his revealing wisdom have proved a curse and a stigma on the life of the adept, making his very presence intolerable in the society he lives in, rendering him an outcast, branded as a heretic, a subverter of rules and morals, an anarchist, the worst possible kind of revolutionary. Yet it is precisely the excess and imbalance of a civilisation which has not founded the harmonious development of its members on the central truth of self-knowledge, that make execrable his standpoint on that very truth; it is the merciless irony of the luminous smile of his simple discovery that holds the greatest terror to a world based on pretence and artifice.

For the ascent to the dazzling heights of Apollo's revealing splendours shuns the middle-way of the moralist, as his measure exceeds the compromising calculations of the logician; his is the sunlit path, *jyotirmaya marga*, the sweeping march of the hosts of light, most resolute, most daring, yet most free, for it does not follow any established norm, any predetermined track, finding as it does its direction by a flair of luminous scents, guided by that solar wisdom of global self-fulfilment

Che mena dritto altrui per ogni calle.

(Which leads us straight whatever way we tread.)

(Dante, I.I.18)

HUMOUR IN THE PLAYS OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of May 1987)

2—THE VIZIERS OF BASSORA

To portray humour without degradation of some sort is a very difficult art. That is the reason why pure and refined humour is so rare in literature. It is easy to write of animals as James Harriot or Gerald Durrell does while the humour remains innocent. But when it comes to the human level it often tends to become lewd and bawdy as in ancient Aristophanes or degenerates into buffonery and horseplay as in *She Stoops to Conquer* of Goldsmith. The more refined and greater authors like Shakespeare play upon words—puns and alliterations are their forte while in some works like Oscar Wilde's *Importance of Being Ernest* and Shaw's *Devil's Disciple* the whole trend becomes more or less a satire on human follies and a parody of pretences, exposing the vulnerability of human nature. Something of the tragic lurks behind the gaiety. And the appeal is to our mind, not to our heart.

To touch the heart's chords with a sweet sure touch of sunny delight without degrading the object of fun in any way and without making him a farce or a failure requires a craftsmanship which is seldom found. *The Viziers of Bassora* has this rare skill. The pen of Sri Aurobindo is like a bright butterfly flitting from flower to flower gathering nectar yet not diminishing or soiling the flower, rather helping its productive function. It touches lightly the weaknesses of the characters; if it ridicules them it is to make them all the more lovable. With unerring accuracy it catches the "gracious imperfections" which we human beings take the greatest pain to mask from the eyes of the world or try to exhibit as virtues—be it parental love or the high revelry of youth, the preference of a slave or the ludicrous quarrels of lovers or the humbug of an old hypocrite—not knowing that the first thing the world notices in us are our shams and our frailties.

The humour of this play unlike that of *The Maid In the Mill* is not mental. It has a vital force, a downright earthiness yet without any degeneration to erotica or absurdity. A touch of Mahalakshmi is there, a breath of Kalidasa. Nothing low escapes the lips of its high-flying and high-staking characters who face life somewhat in the fashion of Gods. With effortless ease the author weaves into an old plot from *A Thousand and One Nights* character after delightful character to make a wonderful canvas of music, love and laughter. There is high humour and low humour, dry chuckles and loud guffaws, faint smiles and broad open laughter—all the refined degrees of humour are here. Throughout there is a noble felicity, a cultured atmosphere. The lofty standard is never lowered. Even slave girls like Mymoona and Balkis, the slave Harkoos have a dignity and restraint. The humbling of Shaikh Ibrahim never turns vulgar. This is the greatness of Sri Aurobindo. He never takes recourse to the lewd or the childish, never drags down a situation to force a laugh

—this is his special hall-mark, his own distinguished seal. The humour is natural, effortless as if door after new door is opened and novel facts are added to the general amusement.

Some people walk on our earth and yet seem to have descended from a rarefied higher sphere. They are far above the vitiated dealings of the perverted lower type of humanity. They waft through life completely unsullied by the evil in man and things, and are above all petty self-seeking. Their nobility throws the ignoble and ordinary into an uneasy flutter. For the very existence of divinity in others is a silent challenge to the soulless in their lowly schemings. The heights of the godly bring out the gutter-snipes in such stark contrast that in very self-defence they try to claw and destroy these crowning peaks of humanity. To quote Sunjar of this play, "...every good kindly man is like the moon and carries a halo, while a chill cloud moves with dark and malignant natures".¹ This divinity in man will not be denied or defeated for ever, the clouds part sooner or later to reveal these glorious peaks of the ideal.

In the words of Dr. M. V. Seetharaman, "*The Viziers of Bassora* depicts the education and fate of two radically opposite temperaments with basically different orientations of the energies of life. We have the type made in God's image and growing more and more in that image of love, light and Grace and its exact opposite which has become the young baboon and threatens to develop into a 'brutish amalgam of gorilla and Barbary ape.'"²

This eternal battle of good and evil in their polarized extremes is the engrossing theme of this play. One discovers here the sum-total of all the true fairy-tales. The high and low of the hero and heroine's fortunes are so dizzying that one moment we may find them facing ignominy, torture or death, at another the equal hand of kind fate sweeps away all the obstructions from their life to install them on a throne, anointed and crowned, loved and worshipped—their happiness is so complete that one wonders what more the heavens can bestow on the faithful. One marvels at the intricacies of life in this play, for joy and sorrow, laughter and tears are intertwined with dexterous craft. There are no psychological twists. It is a straight battle of good with evil.

A glad flow of many lives, full of innocent joys and high spirits, who are yet highbred, high-souled, upright, tender and generous—such is the household of the noble senior Vizier of Bassora—Alfazzal Ibn Sawy. His home is lit up by the beauty, frolic and fun of his carefree son Nureddene and his irrepressible laughing mountain-torrent-like niece—Doonya—and the softest and most guileless of mothers—Ameena, his wife.

Enjoyment of pretty faces, tiny waists and nimble feet—dance and drink are the only concern of the fearless and frank youth Nureddene. His father calls him,

¹ *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*. Vol. I, p. 564.

² *Studies in Sri Aurobindo's Dramatic Poems*, p. 17.

“...my wild handsome roisterer, Nureddene,
 “My hunter of girls, my snare for the heart of virgins.”¹

And to his mother he says,

“He is not bad, but wild, a trifle wild;
 And the one little fault’s like a stray curl
 Among his clustering golden qualities,
 That graces more than it disfigures him.”²

For this Nureddene’s happiness, Doonya—his cousin—is ready to brave the wrath even of a Sultan. Nureddene is the golden boy of Sri Aurobindo’s play who treats life as if it were a game of ball. He is reckless and full of spirit but never deceitful or afraid. His self embraces all those who come within its orbit, friends and foes alike. Money has no meaning for him except for the pleasures it can bring to himself and to others. As Ibn Sawy very aptly remarks when Almuene Bin Khakan, the second vizier, compares his son Farid’s misdeeds with Nureddene’s—

“His are the first wild startings
 Of a bold generous nature. Mettled steeds,
 When they have been managed, are the best to mount.
 So will my son. If your Fareed’s brute courses
 As easily turn to gold, I shall be glad.”³

The very antithesis of Ibn Sawy is Almuene. If one is an angel the other is Satan himself; one just and kind, the other full of duplicity and cruelty; one trusted and loved by all Bassora, the other equally feared and hated by all. In the words of a character of this play, Sunjar—

“There goest thou, Almuene, the son of Khakan,
 Dog’s son, dog’s father, and thyself a dog.
 Thy birth was where thy end shall be, a dunghill.”⁴

Also in the greatest possible physical and psychological contrast to Nureddene is Almuene’s hunch-backed wicked son Fareed. In the original story of *A Thousand and One Nights* there is no Fareed. By creating him Sri Aurobindo further accentuates the contrast between good and bad, beauty and ugliness, naturalness and perversity. In the words of Dr. Prema Nandkumar:

¹ *S.A.B.C.L. Vol. 7, p. 464.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 586.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 567.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 568.

“The creation of a set of new characters and deliberate change in action show Sri Aurobindo intended the play to be a study in contrasts. Psychological motivations do not play any major part in this play, the playwright is interested in quick action and clear-cut intentions.”¹

To complete the intricacies of the web there are these other characters: a peerless pearl of beauty and learning Anice Aljalice—a Persian slave girl, Haroun the just and great world-renowned Caliph and his equally famous vizier Jaffer and the most delightful hypocritical superintendent of the Caliph’s gardens—Shaikh Ibrahim—and two doe-like slave girls Balkis and Mymoona equally adept at dance and music and sword-play—where dainty hands can strike with equal skill at the chords of a lute and at the hands of an abductor. Further we have Azebe—nephew of Almuene yet also a friend to Nureddene, Murad the captain of the Sultan’s army and later Doonya’s husband. Amongst the *dramatis personae*, Khatoon, the mother of Fareed, Balkis, Mymoona and the slave Harkoos are new delightful additions to the old Persian tale.

The author has woven a rich pattern of situations pregnant with scope for spontaneous mirth. The humour is uncomplicated and simple and, unlike *The Maid in the Mill*, this play does not rest solely on the wit of its characters. It is an overflow of the delight of creation from its hidden springs, from the hearts of those who are grateful to life for its joys and beauties, for to be happy is surely to be grateful to the creator.

The constant producer of humour and laughter in this play is Doonya, the orphaned niece of Ibn Sawy. She is like a pure and sparkling stream leaping from rock to rock, her laughter’s spray making life’s banks verdant with hope and happiness. Chockful of schemes, she like a magician can conjure up effortlessly, without even a moment’s notice, the most hair-brained schemes motivated by her own goodness. One wonders whether if she got the chance, she would not tease the Caliph himself. To scheme, to tease, to laugh and to stake herself to further the cause of others and in general to be a joyous nuisance is Doonya’s nature. According to Dr. Prema Nandkumar:

“Doonya’s sparkle and Anice’s sweetness make the play a legend of likeable women. Indeed it is a legend of good women as well, for the other ladies too,—Ameena, Khatoon and the slaves Balkis and Mymoona—are graceful, wise and affectionate towards one and all.”²

Dr. M. V. Seetharaman agrees:

“To inspire love by their beauty of form and character in those who are capable of it is the great privilege of the women in the play who are all of them made in God’s image and grow increasingly in that image. The love they bestow on men and on each other draws out the best in all and acts for harmony, sweetness and light.”³

¹ *Sri Aurobindo Circle Annual*, 1967.

² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

³ *Studies in Sri Aurobindo’s Dramatic Poems*, p. 26.

“Doonya is the embodiment of the very spirit of laughter. She is not only humorous in herself but the cause of humour in others. She is in the deepest part of her being a confirmed romantic but has also developed in her a thorough-going realist and she could pass from one to the other with extraordinary agility and detachment and look at the one in the background of the other. Add to this her interest in seeing life as much as living it. This is perhaps the secret of her humour.”¹

She sets off the first sparkles of humour in the IVth scene of the first act by teasing Ameena at her excessive concern about Nureddene with

“Why do you fret your heart, sweet Mother, for him?
Bad coins are never lost.”²

She knows well how Ameena will at once protest at any criticism of her son, and when she does Doonya can laugh at her protestations. Authority cannot make her submissive nor can position make her humble. As soon as she gets a glimpse of Ibn Sawy coming with Anice she proceeds to tease gentle Ameena some more—

“.... It is my uncle, mother,
And there is a girl with him,—I think she is
A copy of Nureddene in white and red.
Why, as I looked downstairs, she smiled up at me
And took the heart out of my body with the smile.
Are you going to have a rival at your years,
Poor mother? 'Tis late for uncle to go wooing.”³

This is a mild introduction to Doonya's hilarious prattling ways. In a moment she loses her heart to the beautiful Anice. Youth gets ranged on the side of youth. She does not spare her uncle, the venerable Ibn Sawy for his show of mock harshness towards Nureddene. She knows that his anger is a farce, for butter cannot become stone—

Doonya:

“Oh, uncle mine, when you are harsh, the world
Grows darker with your frown. See, how I tremble!

Ibn Sawy:

Oh, are you there, my little satirist?
When were you whipped last?

Doonya:

When you last were harsh.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

² *S.A.B.C.L.* Vol. 7, p. 586.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 587.

Ibn Sawy:

You shall be married off. I will not have you
Mocking an old and reverent man like me.
Whom will you marry, chit?

Doonya:

An old old man,
Just such a smiling old old man as you,
None else.”¹

(To be continued)

SHYAM KUMARI

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 588-589.

SWEET LOVELY SMILE

O DIVINE Mother,
Thou hast given me
Thy sweet lovely charming smile.
How much I have received Thou alone knowest!
I know that it is meant to disperse everywhere,
But very few know it.
It is Thine and only Thine.
Thou art the source of all smiles,
Thou alone art there.
Even this experience needs Thy complete Grace.
The honour that is found everywhere,
That honour is only to Thee.
Hence the entire being blossoms
And becomes grateful to Thee.
Within my heart I always experience a change.
When it will manifest, that only Thou knowest.
Surely by Thy Grace alone it will manifest.

CHAMPAKLAL

SAVITRI'S INITIATION INTO YOGA

(Continued from the issue of June 1987)

19. The Command is Given

THE command is given; the Power, which in her heart is actually the portion of the mighty Voice itself, receives the Word; preparation for the action of the incarnate Force begins. Now there is no more that storm within. Although she sits by the side of her doomed husband, she is motionless and still in her golden pose and poise; she is the statue of the fire of the inner sun. What was grief's calm self is now the surrendered heart looking for the soul. A divine certitude has established itself and already a first transformation has taken place in her. Now there are no more the externalities and contingencies in her reckoning and counting. In the savage forest the night is dark and thick with fear, the storm is furious, there is thunder and lightning lashing the life below, the tropical monsoon is fierce and hostile, the rains come like ominous voices from the wilderness. But Savitri is impassive to the rage and wrath of Nature; she is a calm witness to the thoughts of mind and to the dark-purple moods of life. Her look is now turned inward following the strange mysterious passage traversing the inner countries. Savitri has been initiated on the path of Yoga. Although it seemed as if doom and fate and the world were, in her human state, an immediate and compelling cause to undertake the search of the soul, yet these were not a mere pretext or excuse for the high divine intervention. The ghastly and horrid reality of the inconscient life had flung itself on her and she had to deal with it directly. There was a dark possibility full of false reality and it had to be exhausted and eliminated first without any other consideration. Therefore, with the receiving of the command, Savitri becomes free of the world to tackle and solve the world-issue. Her whole living is now within, in the fire of the inner sun. That shall burn all the darkness.

20. Savitri's Sadhana

Savitri's sadhana has begun under the direct command and guidance of the great deathless Voice, the Voice coming from her being's summit and heard by the Power seated in her heart. Indeed, the guiding Voice comes and initiates her not only at the beginning but at every stage of her sadhana. She had already acquired the human siddhi through the love of life by making her self of grief calm. The external nature had fallen quiet. In fact, it was only then that she was able to hear the Voice in the dim night. All the arguments and mental suggestions had stopped. Even the crashing of the thunder above her head, the hissing of the rains in the woods, the pattering of a million footsteps on the roofs of the rude huts did not disturb her.

Crossing the waking consciousness, *jagrata*, Savitri enters into the dream-world, *swapna*. But even as yet her nature is still too human and ignorant and full of self-

contradictions. She takes the surface person for soul. Hence once more the Voice that dwells on the secret heights steps down and speaks to her and leads her out of this consciousness. The command is to go deeper and to find the heaven-born soul in Matter's body with the ultimate task

To mould humanity into God's own shape
And lead this great blind struggling world to light
Or a new world discover or create.¹

Indeed, there is a sort of inevitability that

Earth must transform herself and equal Heaven
Or Heaven descend into earth's mortal state.²

Savitri surges out of her body's wall and stands looking into her subtle being's depths, there divining the mysterious soul.

The moment the body-protection is gone all the elemental entities invade her; the vital godheads awake but she moves on undeterred. Finally, one tells her where to find the occult Fire that burns on the bare stone and the secret cavern of her soul. Again, she has been put on the inward route.

She meets the Madonnas and she moves on fulfilling successively the promises she herself has given to them. But in order to bring God down into body and life she must return with His hands in hers. Savitri journeys deeper; she enters into a rock-hewn temple; she discovers her soul.

But that is not enough. Though now she has discovered the dwelling place of her soul, she is once more human upon the earthly soil. Her outward nature has remained the same and a naked Dread invades her. Immediately a greater Voice comes down telling her not to expose to the foe the newly discovered precious kingdom of her soul. But she is also told not to remain content with what she has so far achieved. She must annul herself that only God may be. With this command Savitri gets the nirvanic experience. It appears to her as if the entire creation had withdrawn into a bright Nothingness. "A formless liberation came to her."

Savitri would have disappeared into it, forgetting herself and the creation and the mission for which she had come here. Her merging into the Absolute when the formless liberation came to her would have meant the failure of the divinely assigned work in the earth-consciousness. But the Ancient Mother clutches her back: Savitri has been pulled back by the presiding deity of the Earth-evolution. This deity is the Mother herself as ancient as the Earth, if not more. She has been the perfect shrine for the God of Love "since first the earth-being's heavenward growth began."

Savitri is constantly guided by the divine Shakti. Also, as she progresses in her

¹ *Savitri*, p 486.

² *Ibid.*

sadhana under the direct command of the Voice, she acquires all the siddhis of the Yoga. Finally, she harbours the Force to conquer Death. That is her greatest siddhi.

Indeed, it is the divine Shakti who herself is doing the sadhana in the earth-consciousness. She comes down in the form of Savitri and takes the earth-load on herself. Her sadhana is the constant opening of the earth to the higher Power for the manifestation of the Supreme. The Supreme, the divine Mother, and Savitri together fight against the inconscient Adversary presently dominating the earth. It is the Supreme's involvement through his Force.

Savitri is present here and hence the supreme Lord comes as if seeking for his beloved. Without her he is unmanifest.

There is no Savitri without the Earth: the divine Mother's incarnation in the form of Savitri is for a particular line of growth and manifestation. The Yoga of Savitri is therefore to conquer Death so that the supreme manifestation shall be possible on the Earth. This she has done.

(Concluded)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

DISTURBED FLOWERS

I HAD never seen them there before.
 Those engaging flowers afar.
 They must have been buds yesterday.
 But I saw no bud there.
 I knew for certain that crotons
 never took pains to bear flowers.
 Yet I saw them there now.
 Was there a plant ever blessed
 with such flowers—
 flowers of different sizes
 that challenged the hues of the rainbow?
 Amazed beyond amazement
 I moved to have a closer look.

Alas! The disturbed flowers
 took to their wings.

P. RAJA

JUNG AND COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES

THE CREATIVE MAN, THE ARTIST AND THE TRUE NATURE OF PERSONALITY

WHAT is Human Personality? What is the true nature of personality? That is the issue. Psychology as a natural science has studied the varied phenomena of mind and can say what the phenomena structurally consist of and how the different processes react to different environmental stimuli. And it generally studies the average man.

Freud and Jung have stressed the unconscious and have sought the causation of behaviour in that part, whether personal or racial.

Science in general looks for the cause in the antecedent and to name the antecedent is to discover the cause. Freud took pains to trace a repression in the childhood memories and Jung wanted to discover the cause in primordial images of the racial unconscious.

But what about the purpose inherent in the evolutionary process and its influence on the movement? Jung has identified a trend towards wholeness in personality. What is its role in the development of personality? There is a new tendency in science itself which takes note of its reductionism, its tendency to analyse a phenomenon into its components, and seeks to emphasize the whole developing into a greater whole.

Personality is treated as a sum of certain traits and its uniqueness is sought to be represented by the manner of their combination. But is this enough as explanation? Jung had been much struck by the fact of personality and he deeply sought its secret. He has observed: "All the usual little remedies and medicaments of psychology fall somewhat short (to explain personality) just as they do with the man of genius or the creative human being. Derivation from ancestral heredity or from the milieu does not quite succeed; inventing fictions about childhood, which is so popular today, end—to put it mildly—in the inappropriate; the explanation from necessity—"he had no money, was ill," and so forth—remains caught in mere externalities."¹ He is seeking to understand the man of genius or the creative human being and then to understand the average human personality. This is a capital point to learn to appreciate. In the creative human being we have a model of human personality and if we understand that, we easily understand the average personality too. But if we limit ourselves to the average, the uniqueness is not an impressive fact and we can remain content with the manner of combination of traits as a sufficient explanation of uniqueness. But in the creative person this uniqueness is the most striking fact. That is the individual. That is personality.

Among Freud's followers it is Otto Rank who was particularly struck by the artist as the perfection of personality and he said a great deal on the subject. Jung and Rank have indeed in this a great truth to declare and expound.

Here are a few observations of theirs. At first a few words of Jung:

“Creative life is always on the yonder side of convention.”²

“Every creative man is a duality or a synthesis of paradoxical qualities.”³

“If we survey the situation as a whole we come to the inevitable conclusion—at least in my opinion—that a psychic element is present that expresses itself through the tetrad (the four primary functions of the psyche). This conclusion demands neither daring speculation nor extravagant phantasy. If I have called the centre the ‘self’ I did so after ripe reflection and a careful assessment of the data of experience as well as of history.”⁴

“The centre acts like a magnet upon the disparate materials and processes of the unconscious and, like a crystal grating, catches them one by one.”⁵

“The self is not only the centre, but also the circumference that encloses consciousness and the unconscious; it is the centre of this totality, as the ego is the centre of consciousness.”⁶

Here are now Otto Rank’s thoughts of the artistic type of personality in the words of Ira Progoff from his book *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology*. Says he:

“Rank’s consistent interest in the artist, and particularly the spirit of sympathy with which he approached the difficulties of the artist’s life, refusing to follow Freud in diagnosing the artist as neurotic, indicates a strong urge to creative activity in his own personality.”⁷

“Like Adler and Jung before him, Rank directed his more basic attack against Freud’s materialistic conception of the personality.”⁸

“...[Freud’s] medical preconceptions made it almost impossible for him to deal with the purposiveness and creativity inherent in human nature, and in his later years Freud himself seems to have recognised his lack.”⁹

“Rank defined the will as “an autonomous organizing force in the individual which... constitutes the creative expression of the total personality and distinguishes one individual from another.”¹⁰

“The Self as conceived by Jung is the psychological potentiality that emerges in each individual personality; and the life will as conceived by Rank is the vital force with which that potentiality is expressed and fulfilled in the world.”¹¹

The study of the average man ends in instincts, habits, thinking, imagination, etc. combined in an individual in a unique sort of way. But in a creative person, in a full and free personality, the uniqueness, the individuality, dominates. And there a Self, the true individual, strikes us as the most important fact of personality, which commands the entire multiplicity of life. That is the explicit conclusion which Jung and Rank both arrive at. Therein consists life and its true meaning.

INDRA SEN

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2. Jung, *Psychological Reflections*, p. 183.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
4. *The Integration of Personality*, p. 198.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 197
6. *Ibid.*, p. 96
7. Ira Progoff, *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology*, p. 189.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 197
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
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AWAY

FRIEND, let us pull our boat
 Away from the shores,
 Beyond narrow confines.
 Tonight the moon is full,
 Life's byways strangely quiet.
 In an inner hush, gently
 Some stray thoughts arise
 Only to sink, in fathomless oblivion
 Like unheard sighs.
 Let us glide in the argent night,
 In self-lost reveries of its pearly light,
 Its magic glow may reveal
 The way to the mystic core.

SHYAM KUMARI

FOR YOUR EARS ONLY

(Continued from the issue of June 1987)

6. THE BEST WOMAN IN MY LIFE

MANY a woman have I come across in my life—friends, fans, poetesses, relatives, authoresses, colleagues and so on. But I like to write only about one woman—the best in the whole lot. What? Trying to guess! I wish you success.

Certainly not the fan from Andhra Pradesh who penetrated one of my box files with a volley of love letters and unknowingly allowed a simoom to blow in my family and thereby wrecked my relationship with my beloved wife for a while. I still preserve her letters, hidden beneath a heap of paper-clippings from the sharp eyes of my wife with the great hope that some day the box file may prove to hold the quivering seeds of a novel.

Again it is not my wife who can pass for the best woman. No doubt, she is a good woman, or rather a better woman. She is only the best cook. So who is the best woman I am writing about here?

She was a student of my father, who is still a good tutor and a task-master. She told me that once he rapped her on the head so violently that she was unable to use a comb for months.

“Did you misbehave?” I asked her.

“No!” she said, “No one can be inattentive when he coaches. If perchance one did so, your father would kill one with his looks.” She then added with a laugh, “I was punished for the simple reason of confusing tomato with potato.”

She taught me the alphabets, both Tamil and English, before I was sent to the village *pial* school. Her method of teaching was so appealing that I can clearly recollect her ways. She gave much importance to curves in the alphabets. “The curves ...the curves,” she would instruct, “take care of them. And they will take care of your handwriting.” She would take me to the backyard of the house, scoop handfuls of sand and flatten the mound to the size of a slate. She would then inscribe a letter beautifully and artistically on it, hold my forefinger in her hand and direct it along the curves of the letter. I was instructed to continue with the same for an hour or so. A little later I was asked to place pebbles along the curves of the letter till I became quite conversant with the letter by writing it meticulously in the air. And, when I did, she congratulated herself by showering kisses on my bony brown cheeks.

She spared all her leisure for me. Quite often she played the elephant and I was the mahout. She took me to the open terrace of the house and taught me kite-flying, which she herself loved much. And at night she suffocated me with informative, instructive, enlightening and enthralling stories—stories she had read and stories she had listened to as a child and retained in her memory, perhaps for me. In fact, she was of immense help to me when I collected the folktales of Pondicherry, for she was

the one who told me a few stories that are typically Pondicherrian. In those days she housed thousands and thousands of riddles in her head and astonished me with them. And when I felt sleepy she put me on her lap and lulled me with her sweet melodious lullaby. She was very much attached to me for she had no other child to play with.

It was she who made me a lover of good food. I ate like a prince. By my father's grace, I continue to do so.

At night she took me to the terrace and introduced me to the grand old dame in the moon, unwithered by age, cooking *dosai* there. How many stories and legends did she tell me about her and other strange beings? I have lost count.

When I began attending the *pial* school, she carried me on her hip and instructed the schoolmaster to give his whole attention to me. But the old man with his thick glasses never noticed me escaping into the rice-fields and then into the woods. I came back to school just a few seconds before the stroke of the bell. The first few weeks went on like this, for I had nothing to learn in school. The old man was teaching only the alphabets, whereas I was able to spell out three letter words like cat, mat and rat and four letter words like book, food and love. Hence the *pial* schoolmaster was below my standard and I cared a straw for his teachings. I listened to the songs the workers sang in the fields to break the monotony of their work and above all I lent my ears to the tickling tunes of birds.

One day I was caught. It was not the teacher who caught me, but the best woman in my life.

"What are you doing here, when your friends are learning in the school?" she asked me.

I had no answer. I only blinked. At that age I knew no strategy.

She took me to the teacher and yelled at him: "Why is this boy away from the class?"

The schoolmaster shivered.

One of his faithful students came to his rescue. Just a couple of days before, I had punched his nose for stealing from my satchel the eggs I had stolen from the crow's nest. He stood up and said: "He runs away like this every day. The moment our master turns to the blackboard to write, he disappears from the class." With a whimper he added, "Please tell Raja not to punch my nose again."

That evening she came to the school as usual to carry me home. But she didn't speak to me even a single word. She was grim. That night she didn't tell me stories, though she fed me with a sumptuous supper in silence. She kept mum to all the questions I asked. She punished me by her silence. I wept. She wiped off my tears with the hem of her sari, again in silence.

"Hereafter I'll attend school regularly, though I learn nothing there. Please speak to me," I cringed before her.

My first, best teacher didn't budge.

I understood what a world this would be if no one spoke to me. She was everything to me and her silence hurt me a lot.

It was my habit to get up from bed only when she shook me out of sleep. When my eyelids parted, my eyes saw only the smiling fair woman. But unfortunately on the morning that followed the silent night, I woke up to see the fair woman with the smile missing.

“From today I won’t run away from school... believe me,” I said.

But there was no smile, not even a single syllable of approval. She started preparing me for school. She carried me on her hip and my satchel on her shoulder. I was looking at her all the time, craving for a smile, if not for a word. Obstinate woman! Her cheek muscles didn’t move and the lips didn’t part.

She left me in the classroom and looked daggers at the old schoolmaster. No sooner did she leave than he began to vent his insulted feelings on me.

She took me home to lunch and carried me back to school. I was completely upset for I found no smile on her face. I had never seen her with such a grim face, for she had been with me ever since I was born.

It was time for the home-going bell to ring. I saw her coming towards the school. The first swing of the bell made me rush towards her. She sat me on her hip. But there was neither a smile nor a word from her.

“I didn’t move out of school. I’ll never again run away from the classroom,” I broke the silence.

She looked at me. She smiled. Her lips parted. I heard “good boy”. I hugged her neck. She kissed me on my forehead. Silence gave rise to peace.

After that great lesson I never absented myself from any of the classes I attended. I was present physically at least.

Oh! I can’t afford to lose the smile and the word of my mother.

(To be continued)

P. RAJA

STORIES FROM TAMIL LITERATURE

(Continued from the issue of June 1987)

39. A KING'S TRIBUTE

MIGNILI was a veteran soldier who served in the army of King Thithian. Thithian was once fighting a fierce battle. One of the horses in his chariot was killed by the arrows of his enemies and he did not know what to do. Mignili who was fighting nearby rushed to the help of the king. He put himself in the place of the fallen horse and started drawing the chariot with his enormous strength. At the same time he fought with one arm and warded off enemy soldiers. This eventually led to the victory of king Thithian. The king was greatly pleased at the valiant and faithful act of Mignili and rewarded him accordingly.

After some years, Mignili retired from the army and returned to his native village. He had lost his wife and he had an only daughter who was called Anni. Anni loved her father very dearly, for after the death of her mother he had brought her up in a very affectionate manner.

Mignili owned a piece of land and a few cows. All day he worked in the field and in the evening he took out his cows to the meadow for grazing. One evening he was very tired and while his cows were grazing he sat under a tree, meaning to rest a while. But sleep came to his tired eyelids and he dozed off. One of his cows strayed into a neighbouring field and started eating the crops. Mignili was awake in a few minutes and he rushed to get his cow out of the field.

After some time the owner of the field came there with some of his friends. He saw the damage done to his crops and was angry. He noticed the cows grazing in the meadow and came to enquire. Mignili who was an honest man admitted his lapse and promised to make good the loss. But the young man and his friends belonged to a particular clan which was not well-disposed towards Mignili. They surrounded and assaulted him. Mignili who still had his enormous strength could have easily got the better of them all, but his feeling of remorse had bound his hands and he did not offer any resistance. The wicked young men saw their chance and treated him most cruelly. They put out both his eyes and ran away.

Soon it became dark and Mignili could not find his way home. He tied his blood-stained upper garment round the neck of one of the cows and sent it home. Anni who was already anxious and worried saw the blood-stained clothing and rushed out in search of her father. She saw him lying under a tree groaning with pain. With the help of friends he was taken home. Anni took great care of her father and nursed him back to health, though his eyesight was completely lost. When he related what had happened, everyone was shocked and angry. Anni's indignation knew no bounds. She felt that the culprits should not go unpunished. So after a few days she went and reported the matter to the king.

The king was furious and felt a deep grief over the tragic loss that had happened to his beloved soldier. He did not want to wait till the culprits were brought to the court. He himself rode to the village, taking Anni with him. He held his court under a tree and sentenced all the offenders to immediate death. When Mignili heard the news he came there groping his way with a stick in hand. Great was the sorrow and pity the king felt to see the great soldier walk like that. He embraced him and comforted him with kind words. Mignili invited the king to visit his home and the king readily agreed. Asking Anni to show the way, he took Mignili's hand in his and offered to lead him home. Mignili was greatly touched but out of respect for his monarch he did not want him to do that. In spite of his protests, the king held fast to his hand and led him gently home to the surprise of all the villagers. It was a tribute the king paid to Mignili who had drawn the chariot of the king like a horse on the battlefield.

40. THE GREAT ESCAPE

Atti was a Chera prince who was also known as Aattan Atti, because he was a great dancer. It is said that he ran a school of dance and that many princesses and girls from rich families came to learn dancing from him. Aadhi Mandhi, the Chola princess, was one of them. She was the daughter of the famous Chola king Karikalan. Atti and Aadhi Mandhi fell in love with each other and were married soon. Atti came to his father-in-law's kingdom to enjoy his honeymoon, and he and Aadhi Mandhi spent many happy days in the beautiful Chola capital and coastal city, Kaviripoompattinam, which was on the banks of the river Cauvery.

One day the lovers were enjoying a bath and a swim in a river and Atti in his enthusiasm went swimming to the middle of the stream where the current was strong. Atti was a good swimmer, but the river was in spate and the waters carried him away. Aadhi Mandhi did not know what to do and she ran along the bank shouting for help. But Atti was nowhere to be seen and in great distraction Aadhi Mandhi kept running and calling to her husband most pathetically. She ran a long distance hoping that Atti would emerge from the waters somewhere downstream, but all her hopes were in vain.

Meanwhile the news reached the palace and search parties were organized. The whole mouth of the river was combed. There was no sign of Atti. It was certain that he had been drowned and his body carried far into the sea. Aadhi Mandhi's sorrow knew no bounds and no one could console her. She kept crying for days and could not reconcile herself to the fact that her husband was drowned. Something within her told her that her husband was still alive and she could find him if she searched harder. So like a mad woman she started walking along the seashore making enquiries about her husband among the fisher-folk and other people who lived near the shore.

One day she had gone far away from the capital and was entering a village. A

young woman saw the tired and haggard-looking newcomer and enquired about her. Aadhi Mandhi poured out all her troubles to the sympathetic woman and cried as if her heart would break. The young woman listened to her patiently and tears rolled down her cheeks. It seemed she was much affected by the pathetic tale of Aadhi Mandhi. She was silent for a few minutes and then she took the hand of Aadhi Mandhi affectionately in hers and invited her to her home. She said she would help her in finding her husband. Touched by this stranger's sympathy, Aadhi Mandhi went with her. The girl told her that her name was Marudhi and that having lost her parents she was living alone in a cottage. Her cottage was quite close and they both entered it. There was a young man lying on a cot in a corner. He looked very ill. To her great surprise, Aadhi Mandhi saw that it was her husband who was lying there. In a trice she was near him and she buried her face in his chest and sobbed. He had high fever, but he managed to lift up his hand and gently stroked her head.

After a few minutes, he was able to relate to her the whole story of his ordeal in the river and sea and his miraculous survival. The girl had picked him up from the seashore in an unconscious state and managed, with great difficulty, to bring him into her cottage. She had nursed him with great kindness and it was due to her loving care and attention that he was alive. Aadhi Mandhi who had forgotten everything the moment she had seen her husband now turned to look for her benefactress. But Marudhi was not in the cottage. She was not outside the cottage either. Aadhi Mandhi made enquiries in nearby houses and someone said that she had been seen walking towards the sea. Aadhi Mandhi was puzzled and she returned to her husband to tell him.

The fact was this. Bringing Atti home in an unconscious state, Marudhi started nursing him. Quite naturally, in a day or two, she had fallen in love with him. Without knowing who he was, she had kept the flame burning deep in her heart though she was quite unsure whether he would reciprocate her feelings. Now that it had turned out that he was married and his wife had come to claim him, all her hopes were shattered and her heart was broken. She found no way but to end her life by walking into the sea. Her body was washed ashore in the evening.

M. L. THANGAPPA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

A House for the Third Millenium: Essays on Matrimandir, by *Ruud Lohman*. Privately published, available from Sabda. Rs. 40.

WHEN Ruud Lohman died last July, still in his forties, it was a shock for all who knew him. There was an immediate sense of loss: a close member of our inner family had left.

The almost immediate appearance of this book seemed a singularly appropriate memorial to him; and it comforted us by showing clearly that he had left to move on—to something in the future, in that coming millennium which these writings show him to have visioned, aspired for, worked for so intensely.

Ruud was a writer, and at the same time one of the builders of Matrimandir. Before coming to Auroville he had already published, I believe, two books in his native Dutch, and he was later to write another, about Auroville and what it meant to him. Besides contributing to several periodicals, over the last few years he was regularly producing the *Matrimandir Newsletter*, an information sheet to keep donors and friends of Matrimandir in touch with the progress of the work there. The essays in this book are a record of private thoughts and feelings over more than fifteen years, but at the same time addressed to an audience—not of outsiders, but of sympathisers, family members, who can share his love and concern and appreciate the continuous flow from inner to outer, from concrete experience in the everyday labour on the progressing building site into the inner world which sees symbols, connections, significances and hints of significances, and back out into the work again. With a writer's eloquence, and the clarity of a sincere seeker, he shares this fabric of experience with us. It is a deeply personal record, but one which touches chords of familiarity in us, for the focus is always Matrimandir—Matrimandir as a crystallisation of the Mother's creative force, the kernel of a society intended to realise and express the vision of Sri Aurobindo.

The perceptive American historian Lewis Mumford has pointed out, in the early chapters of his book *The City in History*, that historically the principal functions of a city have often preceded the city's physical existence: marketplace, university, assembly-point for political, secular or sacred functions have grown up around some powerful focal-point long before that point became permanently settled and thickly populated, while mankind was still in a nomadic or pastoral stage. And that focal-point owed its drawing-power often, if not invariably, to its sacredness: some 'power-point' encountered and recognised on long wanderings as a place to be remembered and returned to—a rock or a special tree, or the grave of some revered ancestor or sage—became the site for regularly repeated festivals and assemblies which acted like a magnet for widely-scattered peoples and formed a kernel around which a later physical city might crystallise.

And though this coming together might affirm the oneness of people not nor-

mally in close social contact, the diversity which the city allows, implies, cherishes as enrichment, is very different from the closed face which a village or clan-stronghold offers to the outsider.

Kenneth Clark, in his book *Civilisation*, records a contemporary chronicler's account of the building of Chartres cathedral—one of the first of a spate of great 'temples' to the Virgin Mother which sprang up all over France in the space of a couple of centuries:

"In the year 1144 (the old chronicles say), when the towers seemed to be rising as if by magic, the faithful harnessed themselves to the carts which were bringing stone, and dragged them from the quarry to the cathedral. The enthusiasm spread throughout France. Men and women came from far away carrying heavy burdens of provisions for the workmen—wine, oil, corn. Amongst them were lords and ladies, pulling carts with the rest. There was perfect discipline and a most profound silence. All hearts were united and each man forgave his enemies."

Clark continues: "This feeling of dedication to a great civilising ideal is even more overwhelming when we pass through the portal into the interior. This is not only one of the two most beautiful covered spaces in the world (the other is St. Sophia in Constantinople), but it is one that has a peculiar effect on the mind; and the men who built it would have said that this was because it was the favourite earthly abode of the Virgin Mary."

This is a description which will strike a moving chord of familiarity in the heart of anyone who participated in the early stages of the Matrimandir construction, when each concreting was a celebration, a coming-together for communion in work, a collective prayer of many bodies. And this is a parallel which Ruud refers to, saying: "When I visited Holland in 1975 I saw a television program that featured an Austrian city planner who, looking back on his life of planning, complained that it is a pity that building events such as the cathedrals don't take place any more—those timeless experiences of useless space in which another dimension gets stuck into stone, cast into form, hammered into shape. I wanted to call out to him, It's still happening! It's happening again! But T.V. works only one way, and he wouldn't have heard me."

Indeed a city, in its origin, is, literally, a settlement made significant by the presence of a cathedral. The magnetism of New York may be attributed to another kind of fascination, another yearning in the human spirit... I heard it described recently as the instinctive longing for *ananda*, for ecstasy, perverted to an appetite for mere sensation.

But nearer home, we can see how the presence of the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's *samadhi* in the Ashram in Pondicherry continues to draw more and more people, first perhaps as pilgrims, or purely as tourists, first at darshan time, for a few days or weeks; and then, as the pull asserts itself, families wish to establish a second residence, or working people wish to retire to Pondicherry, or to move their business here; until eventually they can reside permanently within the ambit of that focal point and its powerful atmosphere.

Surely the Mother envisioned the centre of Auroville as a similar spiritual power-point that would generate the city out of itself: not in a purely 'occult', inner way alone, but physically, practically, economically also. Those who come as tourists, or short-term visitors, aspire to come again, and maybe remain as residents, as citizens ... of a different kind of city, generated by and giving expression to a new force: not the religious spirit of the past, which however synthetic has never yet been able to avoid a limiting exclusivism, but the all-embracing, all-encompassing spirit of the Future—a consciousness we have yet to realise.

This little book is vivid with this vision, this fusion of spiritual intensity and significance with material labour. For Ruud was one of those drawn by this magnet, one who gave 15 years of his life, right up to his death, with unremitting dedication as a worker on the Matrimandir construction. When we understand this, it no longer seems strange that one with such literary gifts, one who had undergone the long intellectual training of a theologian and a Franciscan priest, one who later became a Hatha Yoga adept—should be content to devote himself day after day for 15 years to hard manual labour—for at Matrimandir he was not an overseer or supervisor but a bar-bender.

(By the way, my first contact with him, in 1971, was at a Hatha Yoga class which he led in Aspiration. I remember that the Mother gave him a special message for this course: "What is important is not so much what one does, but the spirit in which one does it"—reminding us Westerners that we should not expect to become Yogis merely by doing exercises!)

Ruud's book reveals the secret of his labour: it is a record of that fascination, of the workings of the force that will generate the new city, in one individual who, because he was literate and articulate, has been able to share with us the quality of his experience, what his work meant to him and what it brought him. For me, this entry into his personal world, with its echoes and contrasts to my own, was a thrilling and moving experience. Others, who feel close to Matrimandir and to the Mother and her work, could wish for no better memorial to one of Her children than this attractively produced little book.

SHRADDHAVAN

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

SIXTY-FIRST SEMINAR

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WHAT IS THE MEANING OF "THE HOUR OF GOD" AND HOW TO PREPARE FOR IT?

Speech by Deepa Hariharan and Somosree Biswas

WE are now at the threshold of a new world, that which Sri Aurobindo calls the supramental world.

The birthday of this new world was on February 29, 1956, when the Mother announced:

“Lord, Thou has willed and I execute:

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.”

So far the mental faculty of man has been the governor of life. This has been considered by the modern scientific mind as the final rung of the ladder of evolution. But it is necessary to realise that this is not the final stage in evolution. Man has to rise beyond this mental state of partial knowledge and enter the kingdom of supramental Truth. And the time has now come to take this evolutionary leap from mind to Supermind. So Sri Aurobindo has called it “The Hour of God”.

We are at present at this transitional stage of evolution. It is a crucial turning-point in world-history.

Sri Aurobindo has drawn our pointed attention to this crisis and also to its rootcause in the following passage:

“At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of the external life has been raised up by man’s ever-active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organised collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited

spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it... At the same time Science has put at his disposal many potencies of the universal Force and has made the life of humanity materially one; but what uses this universal Force is a little human individual or communal ego with nothing universal in its light of knowledge or its movements, no inner sense or power which would create in this physical drawing together of the human world a true life-unity, a mental unity or a spiritual oneness."¹

Because of this critical situation in the life of modern humanity, a radical change from the present to the future has become imminent. And due to the pressure for this change the struggle between the old established forces and the new has become acute. In the modern age, it is reason and science that govern our life. Men of science have not only denied God but all other higher values by affirming the sole reality of matter. They have explained everything with the help of materialistic science and concluded that this achievement is the highest step towards ultimate perfection. But now many of them are beginning to realise that science has not been able to fulfil humanity's primeval longings: the thirst for "pure Truth and unmixed Bliss."²

Modern man is now not only awakening to the fact that science cannot lead him to perfection, but has also realised that it has become a terrible destructive force. Today, if a nuclear war breaks out, no one is likely to be benefited by it, for it may destroy the whole human race. And since the possibility of such a war breaking out cannot be ruled out altogether, the question naturally arises: "Will it not affect the advent of the new age?" To this question the Mother has given a clear answer:

"All these are mental speculations and once you enter the domain of mental imaginations there is no end to the problems and their solutions. But all that does not bring you one step closer to the truth.

"The safest and most healthy attitude of the mind is like this one: We have been told in a positive and definite way that the supramental creation will follow the present one, so, whatever is in preparation for the future must be the circumstances needed for this advent whatever they are—and as we are unable to foresee correctly what these circumstances are, it is better to keep silent about them."³

And she has also given us the firm assurance:

"You can be sure that the best possible will happen and that the whole world is going as quickly as possible towards its golden transformation."⁴

The Mother has told us repeatedly that the new supramental consciousness

¹ *The Life Divine*, (Cent. Ed., Vol. 19), pp. 1053-54.

² *Ibid.*, (Cent. Ed., Vol. 18), p.1.

³ Letter dated 29.1.1967. See "Sri Aurobindo Circle", Twenty-third Number, 1967, pp. iv-v.

⁴ *White Roses* (1973 edition), p. 134. © Huta.

will follow the present one as inevitably as day follows night, and that this change is being enacted now. She says, "There are in the history of the earth, moments of transition when things that have existed for thousands of years must give way to those that are about to manifest. A special concentration of the world consciousness, one might almost say, an intensification of its effort, occurs at such times, varying according to the kind of progress to be made, the quality of the transformation to be realised. We are precisely at such a turning-point in the world's history. Just as Nature has already created upon earth a mental being, man, so too there is now a concentrated activity in this mentality to bring forth a supramental consciousness and individuality."¹

Such a transitional moment in history is "The Hour of God", when God himself incarnates upon earth to lead humanity towards its evolutionary future. These incarnations are called "Avatars" according to the Indian tradition. "India," says Sri Aurobindo, "has from the ancient times held strongly a belief in the reality of the Avatar, the descent into form, the revelation of the Godhead in humanity."

Sri Aurobindo has also explained the purpose of the Avatar: "The Avatar is necessary when a special work is to be done and in crises of the evolution. The Avatar is a special manifestation while for the rest of the time it is the Divine working within the ordinary human limits as a Vibhuti."²

At the present "hour of God" Sri Aurobindo is the leader of man's higher evolution. He has brought down the supramental consciousness on earth. Man must now cast away his old moorings and take an evolutionary leap into the supramental consciousness. Then his primeval longings will be fulfilled. He shall achieve pure truth, unmixed bliss and total knowledge.

But this might seem like a dream to the present mankind which is suffering from terrible disasters. But we should remember that the "hour of God" is always a tempestuous moment. It is through such a turmoil that a new age is born. We must remember Sri Aurobindo's words about the "hour of God": "for the hour is often terrible, a fire and a whirlwind and a tempest, a treading of the winepress of the wrath of God; but he who can stand up in it on the truth of his purpose is he who shall stand; even though he fall, he shall rise again; even though he seem to pass on the wings of the wind, he shall return."³

So we must not give way to despair. We should stand firm and act as sincere instruments of God. Then that dream is sure to be fulfilled. We should have confidence that the transformation will come, for the Lord has decreed it and it shall be done. The work of God cannot fail. The Mother has assured us: "the mighty work of Change taken up by Sri Aurobindo is going to culminate in success. For that indeed is a fact; there is not a shadow of doubt as to the issue of the work we have in hand. It is no mere experiment but an inevitable manifestation of the Supramental..."

¹ *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 12), p. 72

² *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), p. 401.

³ *The Hour of God* (1982 Ed.), pp. 3-4.

the transformation is going to be; nothing will ever stop it, nothing will frustrate the decree of the Omnipotent. Cast away, therefore, all diffidence and weakness, and resolve to endure bravely awhile before the great day arrives when the long battle turns into an everlasting victory.”¹

And Sri Aurobindo has also given us a similar promise of the bright future awaiting humanity:

“If the light that is being born increases, if the number of individuals who seek to realise the possibility in themselves and in the world grows large and they get nearer the right way, then the Spirit who is here in man, now a concealed divinity, a developing light and power, will descend more fully as the Avatar of a yet unseen and unguessed Godhead from above into the soul of mankind and into the great individualities in whom the light and power are the strongest. There will then be fulfilled the change that will prepare the transition of human life from its present limits into those larger and purer horizons; the earthly evolution will have taken its great impetus upward and accomplished the revealing step in a divine progression of which the birth of thinking and aspiring man from the animal nature was only an obscure preparation and a far-off promise.”²

¹ *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed., Vol. 3), pp. 139-40

² *The Human Cycle* (Cent Ed., Vol. 15), pp. 253-54.