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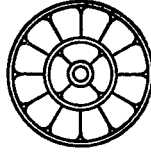
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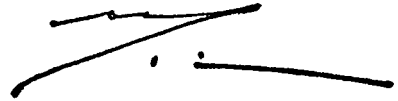


Lord, Thout hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTS ON THREE POETIC QUOTATIONS AND THEIR BENGALI TRANSLATIONS

AN UNCOLLECTED LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO*

THE BOON

The Supplication

A BOON, O God! a boon I pray!
Grant me no dwarfed and clouded guess
But eagle eyes in flaming day,
Sheer summit vision—nothing less.

The Reply

Child, ere the breakless pact we close,
Weigh thou the rare exalted stress,
For with the boon of vision goes
The dreadful gift of loneliness.

JAMES COUSINS

Flame of Beauty

O Flame of Beauty, dancing through the world,
What magic foam of passion have you hurled
Upon the austere purpose of my days,
The cool white quiet of its dream-dimmed ways?
You have flung over me the fierce delight
Of hidden fragrances on startled night,
Your mystic winds like waters over me roll
Maddening the sleeping horsemen of the soul
To trample over new fields of sudden light,
And battle with young Love upon the height.

O Beauty, was it not enough to greet
In silence and in prayer your passing feet?

JEHANGIR VAKIL

* With acknowledgements to Dilip Kumar Roy's *Anami*, p. 248. "Uncollected" means "not included in the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*".

... But who am I?
 An infant crying in the night,
 An infant crying for the light,
 And with no language but a cry.

TENNYSON

Dilip,

The first translation from Cousins is good, the second from Vakil superb and the third from Tennyson superlative. Cousins' poem is very felicitous in expression—generally he just misses the best, but here he has done very well. Your translation is close and adequate.

I don't remember Vakil's poems very well, but they gave me the impression, I think, of much talent and considerable achievement in language and rhythm. Here the poem certainly attempts and almost achieves something fine—there are admirable lines and images—a work built up by a very skilful and well-endowed intelligence. Your translation strikes me as surpassing greatly the original as it gives the impression of a thing not merely thought out but seen within and lived, which is the first requisite for the best poetry.

Of the three versions of Tennyson's lines the first is null, the second good as a translation but otherwise a leaden rather than a *golden mean*, but your third version is admirable. Here too you have excelled the original. Don't think this is a hyperbole—for I suppose you know that I have no great consideration for Tennyson. I read much and admired him when I was young and raw, but even then his *In Memorium* style seemed to me mediocre and his attempts at thinking insufferably second-rate and dull. These lines are better than others, but they are still Tennyson.

But truly you are a unique and wonderful translator. How you manage to keep so close to the spirit and turn of your original and yet make your versions into true poems is a true marvel! Usually faithful translations are flat and those which are good poetry transform the original into something else as Fitzgerald did with Omar or Chapman with Homer.

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 15 August 1987)

Chapter 12: THE END

The meeting of man and God must always mean a penetration and entry of the Divine into the human and a self-immersion of man in the Divinity.

But that immersion is not in the nature of an annihilation. Extinction is not the fulfilment of all this search and passion, suffering and rapture. The game would never have been begun if that were to be its ending.

Delight is the secret. Learn of pure delight and thou shalt learn of God.

What then was the commencement of the whole matter? Existence that multiplied itself for sheer delight of being and plunged into numberless trillions of forms so that it might find itself innumerably.

And what is the middle? Division that strives towards a multiple unity, ignorance that labours towards a flood of varied light, pain that travails towards the touch of an unimaginable ecstasy. For all these things are dark figures and perverse vibrations.

And what is the end of the whole matter? As if honey could taste itself and all its drops together and all its drops could taste each other and the whole honeycomb as itself, so should the end be with God and the soul of man and the universe.

Love is the key-note, Joy is the music, Power is the strain, Knowledge is the performer, the infinite All is the composer and audience. We know only the preliminary discords which are as fierce as the harmony shall be great; but we shall arrive surely at the fugue of the divine Beatitudes.

*

How can 'we learn of pure Delight'?

FIRST of all, to begin with, you must realise, by attentive observation, that desires and their satisfaction give only a vague uncertain pleasure that is mixed, fleeting and quite unsatisfying. That is the usual starting-point.

Then if you are a reasonable being, you must learn to discern what desire is, and refuse to do anything at all in order to satisfy your desires. You must reject them without trying to satisfy them. And the first result of that is exactly one of the first things that Buddha states in his teaching: there is an infinitely greater delight in overcoming and eliminating a desire than in satisfying it. Every sincere and persistent seeker will notice, sooner or later, sometimes very soon, that this is an absolute truth, and that the joy you feel when you overcome a desire is incomparably greater than the little mixed and fleeting pleasure you can get from satisfying your desires. That is the second step.

And naturally, with this continuous discipline, very soon desires will keep their distance and not bother you any more. Then you will be free to enter a little more deeply into your being and to open yourself in aspiration to...the Giver of Delight, the divine element, the divine Grace. And if you do that with a sincere self-giving—something that gives itself, offers itself, and doesn't expect anything in return for its offering—you will feel a kind of sweet comfortable warmth, something intimate and radiant that fills your heart; that is the fore-runner of Delight.

After that the way is easy.

Sweet Mother, what is true delight of being?

What I have just been speaking about!

Then, Sweet Mother, here, when Sri Aurobindo speaks of 'Existence that multiplied itself for sheer delight of being', what delight is that?

The Delight of existing.

A time comes, when you begin to be a little bit ready, when in everything, in every object, in every movement, in every vibration, in all the things around you—not only in people and consciousnesses, but in things, in objects; not only in trees and plants and living things, but in any object you use, the things around you—you can feel this delight, this delight of being, of being what one is, of simply being. And you see that all this is vibrating like that. You touch an object and you feel the delight. But of course you must have followed the discipline I spoke of at the beginning. Otherwise, as long as you have any desire, any preference, any attachments, or likings and dislikings and all that, you cannot...you cannot.

As long as you experience pleasure—vital or physical pleasure in a thing—you cannot feel this delight. For this delight is everywhere. It is something very subtle. You move among things and it is as if they were singing all their delight to you. A time comes when this is a very familiar part of the life around you.

Of course, I have to admit that it is a little more difficult to feel it in human beings, because all their mental and vital formations enter your field of perception and disturb it. There is too much of that kind of selfish hardness mixed into things, so it is more difficult to contact the delight there. But even with animals, you can feel that, it is already a little more difficult than with plants. But in plants, in flowers, it is so marvellous! They speak out all their delight, they express it.

And as I said, all the everyday objects, the things you have around you, that you use...there is a state of consciousness in which each one of them is delighted to exist, just as it is. At that moment you know that you have contacted true delight. And it is unconditional. I mean that it does not depend on...it doesn't depend on anything. It doesn't depend on outer circumstances, it doesn't depend on a more or less favourable condition, it doesn't depend on anything: it is a communion with the reason for the existence of the universe.

And when that comes, it fills every cell of the body. It isn't even something that you think—you are not reasoning, not analysing: it's not that...it is a *state* that you are living in. And when the body shares in that, it is so fresh...so fresh, so spontaneous, so... There is no more turning back on yourself, no sense of self-observation, of analysing yourself or things. Everything becomes like a hymn of joyful vibrations—but very, very calm, with no violence or passion, nothing of that. It is very subtle and at the same time very intense, and when it happens the whole universe seems to be a marvellous harmony; even things that are ugly, unpleasant to the ordinary human consciousness, seem marvellous.

Unfortunately, as I say, people, circumstances, all that, with all those vital and mental formations, disturb it all the time. Then one is forced back into the ignorant blind way of seeing things. But otherwise, as soon as all that stops and one can get out of it...everything changes.

As he says here at the end: everything changes. A marvellous harmony. And everything is Delight, true Delight, real Delight.

That requires a little work.

And if you undertake this discipline I spoke of, that one has to undergo, if you do it with the idea of finding delight you delay the result; because you bring in a selfish element, you do it with an aim, and it is no longer an offering but a demand, and so...It comes—it will come, even if it takes much longer—when you ask for nothing, expect nothing, hope for nothing, when it simply is like that, self-giving and aspiration and a spontaneous need, with no bargaining: the need to be divine and nothing else.

Mother, will you explain this 'drop of honey'?

Oh, the honey... But it is an image, my child.

He says: "As if..." It is just a way of giving an approach that is more concrete than intellectual abstractions. He says: if you can imagine, for example,

a honeycomb... a honeycomb that could taste itself, and at the same time taste each drop of the honey—not just taste itself as honey, but also taste itself in each drop, being each drop in the honeycomb; and that each one of these drops could taste all the others—itsself and all the others; and at the same time, that each drop could taste, could have the taste of the whole honeycomb as if it were itself. Then that would be the honeycomb able to taste itself, and to taste in detail every drop of the comb, and every drop able to taste itself and all the others individually, and the entire honeycomb as a whole, as itself... It is a very precise image—only you need some power of imagination!

Like that, I understood. I am asking what it means.

Honey is something delicious, isn't it? So these are the delights of the divine Delight.

And just now, when I was evoking the spontaneous, simple joy that is in all things, the joy that is at the heart of everything... well, for the physical body, that really has something—oh, of course the taste of honey is very crude and gross in comparison—but something like that, something extremely delicious. And very simple, very simple and very total in its simplicity; very complete in its simplicity and yet very simple.

This is not something that can be thought; you must be able to evoke it, you need imagination. If you have that capacity, you can do it just by reading and then you can understand. It is an analogy, which is only an analogy, but it is an analogy that really has an evocative power.

But won't everyone imagine something different, Mother?

Of course. But that doesn't matter! It will be the right thing for him.

23.1.1957

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 5 SEPTEMBER 1956

“A principle of dark and dull inertia is at [life’s] base; all are tied down by the body and its needs and desires to a trivial mind, petty desires and emotions, an insignificant repetition of small worthless functionings, needs, cares, occupations, pains, pleasures that lead to nothing beyond themselves and bear the stamp of an ignorance that knows not its own why and whither. This physical mind of inertia believes in no divinity other than its small earth-gods; it aspires perhaps to a great comfort, order, pleasure, but asks for no uplifting and no spiritual deliverance. At the centre we meet a stronger Will of life with a greater gusto, but it is a blinded Daemon, a perverted spirit and exults in the very elements that make of life a striving turmoil and an unhappy imbroglia. It is a soul of human or Titanic desire clinging to the garish colour, disordered poetry, violent tragedy or stirring melodrama of the mixed flux of good and evil, joy and sorrow, light and darkness, heady rapture and bitter torture. It loves these things and would have more and more of them or, even when it suffers and cries out against them, can accept or joy in nothing else; it hates and revolts against higher things and in its fury would trample, tear or crucify any diviner Power that has the presumption to offer to take life pure, luminous and happy and snatch from its lips the fiery brew of that exciting mixture. Another Will-in-Life there is that is ready to follow the ameliorating ideal Mind and is allured by its offer to extract some harmony, beauty, light, nobler order out of life, but this is a smaller part of the vital nature and can be easily overpowered by its more violent or darker duller yoke-comrade; nor does it readily lend itself to a call higher than that of the Mind unless that call defeats itself, as Religion usually does, by lowering its demand to conditions more intelligible to our obscure vital nature. All these forces the spiritual seeker grows aware of in himself and finds all around him and has to struggle and combat incessantly to be rid of their grip and dislodge the long-entrenched mastery they have exercised over his own being as over the environing human existence. The difficulty is great; for their hold is so strong, so apparently invincible that it justifies the disdainful dictum which compares human nature to a dog’s tail,—for, straighten it never so much by force of ethics, religion, reason or any other redemptive effort, it returns in the end always to the crooked curl of Nature. And so great is the vim, the clutch of that more agitated Life-Will, so immense the perils of its passions and errors, so subtly insistent or persistently invasive, so obstinate up to the very gates of Heaven the fury of its attack or the tedious obstruction of its obstacles that even the saint and the Yogin cannot be sure of their liberated purity or their trained self-mastery against its intrigue or its violence.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, pp.160-61

(*After a long silence*) It seems to me that when you begin to see things in this way, when they appear to you as they are described here, you are already close, very close to the solution.

The worst of it is that generally the whole material reality seems to be the only reality, and everything which is not that seems altogether secondary. And the "right" of that material consciousness to rule, guide, organise life, to dominate all the rest, is justified to such an extent that if someone tries to challenge this sacrosanct authority, he is considered half-mad or extremely dangerous.... It seems to me one must still go a very long way to consider material life in the way Sri Aurobindo has described it here. And I am quite convinced that if one feels it like that, sees it like that, as he has described it, one is very, very close to the remedy.

It is only *élite* natures, those who have already had a contact with a higher reality, with something of the divine Consciousness, who feel earthly existence in that way. And when one can become so fully conscious of all these weaknesses and stupidities of the outer consciousness, all these falsehoods of so-called material knowledge and so-called physical laws, the so-called necessities of the body, the "reality" of one's needs; if one begins to see how very false, stupid, illusory, obscure, foolish all this is, one is truly very close to the solution.

That is the impression I had while reading this. In comparison with the ordinary atmosphere of people around me, I had the feeling that to see things in this way, one must have already climbed to a very high peak, and that one is at the gates of liberation. It is because I felt it so strongly that I wanted to tell you this.

If you can read this passage again and be convinced of its reality and its absolute truth, well, that is already a great step.

(*Silence*)

Hasn't anyone any question to ask?... I have some here (*Mother shows a packet of questions*), but they seem to belong almost to another world.

Somebody asked me some time ago this question:

"What will be the effect of the Supermind on the earth?"

Probably one of the first effects will be exactly to reveal things on earth in this way, as in what I have just read to you.

And then another question, which I thought I had already answered, for I told you immediately that before the effects of the supramental manifestation become visible and tangible, perceptible to everybody, perhaps thousands of years may go by; but still I suppose these ideas are disturbing for the human consciousness with its sense of its short duration and the kind of impatience this brings. So I have been asked:

“Will it take long for the Supermind which is involved in material Nature to emerge into the outer consciousness and bring visible results?”

That depends on the state of consciousness from which one answers, for... For the human consciousness, obviously, I think it will take quite a long time. For another consciousness it will be relatively very fast, and for yet another consciousness, it is already accomplished. It is an accomplished fact. But in order to become aware of this, one must be able to enter into another state of consciousness than the ordinary physical consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo has spoken—I believe I have read it to you, I think it’s in *The Synthesis of Yoga*—of the true mind, the true vital and the true physical or subtle physical, and he has said that they co-exist with the ordinary mind, vital and physical, and that in certain conditions one may enter into contact with them, and then one becomes aware of the difference between what really is and the appearances of things.

Well, for a developed consciousness, the Supermind is already realised somewhere in a domain of the subtle physical, it already exists there visible, concrete, and expresses itself in forms and activities. And when one is in tune with this domain, when one lives there, one has a very strong feeling that this world would only have to be condensed, so to say, for it to become visible to all. What would then be interesting would be to develop this inner perception which would put you into contact with the supramental truth which is already manifested, and is veiled for you only for want of appropriate organs to enter into relation with it.

It is possible that those who are conscious of their dreams may have dreams of a new kind which put them into contact with that world, for it is accessible to the subtle physical of all those who have the corresponding organs in themselves. And there is necessarily a subtle influence of this physical on outer matter, if one is ready to receive impressions from it and admit them into one’s consciousness. That’s all.

Now, if nobody has any questions to ask, well, we shall remain silent.

Something to say, over there? (*Mother looks at a disciple.*) Oh! he is burning to speak!

Mother, after having realised all that, one still goes back to the lower mind to find the solution.

After having understood, one falls back into the same old mistaken ways? ... What a pity!

And every day.

Every day! Why, more's the pity! And so, what remedy do you propose?

That's what I am asking.

Oh! you are asking me! Why, to me it seems that when one has *seen* things in this way, well, if one has enough sensibility, one can no longer accept them as they are. One must truly be very insensitive if, realising to what an extent all this is degrading, one continues to accept it.

Yes, this is one more thing I have noticed and one that has always astonished me. It has always seemed to me quite normal, easy, almost elementary to eliminate from one's consciousness and nature things one considers to be unacceptable. The moment one knows, the moment one sees them as they are and doesn't want them any longer, it seems to me to be quite... indeed almost childishly simple. But I have noticed that in most cases—almost in all cases—when I tell somebody how things really are, when I give him a true picture of the condition he is in or of the nature of a movement, of what it represents, and when I express that forcefully, so that, according to me, he would immediately have the reaction which seems normal to me, and say: "Oh, if it is like that, I don't want it any more!" and almost every time I find myself before something which breaks down and tells me, "Oh, you are not very encouraging!" I must confess that this leaves me quite helpless. So, to see is not enough? To know that certain things ought not to be there, that's not sufficient? It should give you that kind of inner stimulus, a dynamic force which makes you reject the error in such a way that it can't come back again!

But to fall back into an error which one *knows* to be an error, to make a mistake once again which one *knows* to be a mistake, this seems to me fantastic! It is a long time—well, at least relatively, by human reckoning—it is a long time I have been on earth, and I have yet not been able to understand that. It seems to me—it seems to me impossible. Wrong thoughts, wrong impulses, inner and outer falsehood, things which are ugly, base, so long as one does them or has them through ignorance—ignorance is there in the world—one understands, one is in the habit of doing them; it is ignorance, one does not know that it ought to be otherwise. But the moment the knowledge is there, the light is there, the moment one has seen the thing as it is, how can one do it again? That I do not understand!

Then what is one made of? One is made of shreds? One is made of goodness knows what, of jelly?... It can't be explained. But is there no incentive, no will, nothing? Is there no inner dynamism?

We exploit the Grace!

Ayo, like a jellyfish!

But the Grace is there, It is always there. It only asks to be allowed to help—one doesn't let It work.

And nothing but this feeling: "Oh, I can't!"—that's enough to prevent It from working.

How can you accept the idea that you can't? You don't know—that, yes, you may not know—but once you know, it's finished!

Still...

(Questions and Answers 1956, pp. 289-295)

VIGNETTES OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1987)

• **Mother, Please Go Back**

X WAS going to bring the Mother to his department. He gave his assistant a new piece of cloth and told him, "As soon as the Mother comes within sight I will make a sign and then you spread out the cloth so that the Mother may walk upon it and then we can preserve that sacred cloth." The assistant was so engrossed in talking with somebody that he didn't notice the Mother's coming till she had crossed the open space where the cloth was to be spread. He rushed to the Mother and requested, "Mother, please go back, Mother, please go back." Surprised at this strange request the Mother asked him the reason for it. He told her the story and added that X would scold him if she didn't go back. The Mother laughed heartily and graciously went back. The assistant spread the cloth on the ground and the Mother walked upon it and thus fulfilled the aspiration of X.

He Is All Right

When X went to the Mother she told him that his brother Y who lived abroad was all right. X and others in the family were surprised at the Mother's words, for they had no reason to suspect that Y was not well. They made enquiries of him and found that on the day X had received the assurance from the Mother about Y, Y had been very ill and had been calling out to the Mother. Thus She knew at once and did what was necessary. She had no need of physical news.

Honest Business

A man in the construction business went to the Mother for darshan. There he prayed to her for some guidance. The Mother told him to do business honestly. He was in a great fix. His business involved all sorts of underhand practices and he had to give to the government officials a hefty share of his earnings to get contracts and approval for his work. On the stairs of the Mother's room he turned towards his wife and asked her, "What to do?" She replied firmly, "Since you have asked the Mother, now you must obey Her." He said, "You might have to face great privation." She replied, "I will bear everything." Gradually, since he refused to bribe, he lost all contracts and a day came when even bread was difficult to get.

Temptations came and great privation but the couple remained firm. Then suddenly a high official came to him. There was considerable defalcation of

public money in a construction project. A hue and cry was raised in the parliament and shortly an enquiry commission was to inspect the project to ascertain if there was any embezzlement and use of subquality material. He proposed to give 'carte blanche' to the contractor if he could in a few days make up the lapses as money was no concern. The man accepted it and he redid the foundation, working day and night, and made the construction even better than government specification. The enquiry commission came from the government and the project personnel were given a clean chit. This man reaped a rich reward. The fame of his honesty in the construction circles and many cases like the above came to him and people paid him highly because of his integrity. He became more prosperous than ever before.

The Debtor

X is a businessman with great faith in the Mother. Once a business colleague gave him a cheque for a few thousands which was not honoured. He tried his best but the man simply refused to give the money. Then one day he prayed to the Mother that if She made the man pay the money, he would offer the entire sum to Her. The very next day things took a turn for the better and the man agreed to pay in a day or two the entire sum. Now X became a little agitated and within his heart he reproached the Mother that previously he had so much trouble yet She did not help him, but as soon as he decided to offer the money to her She completely changed the debtor.

Unfortunately, the debtor now backed out and X was left with regrets for his impure thought.

Do not Spoil the Life of Your Children

A sincere devotee had a large landed property. He told the Mother sincerely that he wanted to offer his land to her but was afraid for his two young sons because they would need money in life. The Mother told him emphatically, "Even if you don't give me the land do not spoil your children's life by giving them the property. It will make them lazy, unwilling to progress." It is said that the Mother had told somebody that the way to remove poverty was 100% death duty. She believed that during his lifetime a man should be allowed to earn and to spend as much as he wanted or could. But after his death everything should go to the government. Of course the government should look after the welfare of the family and education of the children.

Incidentally after sometime the government passed the land ceiling bill. And the main part of the property of the above gentleman was taken by the government. Had he listened to his psychic being he would have had the great joy and fulfilment of offering the land to the Mother.

Wastage

The Mother said that millions of rupees spent on the construction of a Taj ' Mahal was money well utilized while one paisa spent on a cigarette was wastage.

Compiled by S

HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

2

EIGHT years old, X read the story of a devotee who had the Lord's darshan. An intense aspiration awoke in his heart, he too would have the Lord's darshan, however hard the road, arduous the Tapasya. He at once chalked out a life-time's programme.

X was the youngest in his family and his mother loved him dearly. He knew the inevitable pain of parting would be hard for her to bear. He decided to earn as much as possible to make his parents independent. They had very little income—just enough for a bare living.

From then onwards X started saving every single paisa which he could get. On the occasion of the fairs held in his village from time to time each youngster in the family was given something to spend. X pleaded with his mother to give him more. This meagre allowance he hoarded with an old woman who lived opposite their house, thus forgoing the simple pleasures so dear to child-hearts. By the age of eleven he finished all the courses of his village school. His elder brother was a court-clerk. X started learning from him the same job. At fifteen he took up the job of a teacher in a village-school—for which the villagers gave him food and a little salary, which X faithfully gave to his parents.

After seven or eight months of teaching, X realised that with this scanty salary he would never achieve the aim of making his family free of want. He decided to go to a big city to work in land-settlement offices where they offered comparatively better pay.

Then he informed his parents about his plan. Those simple people were aghast. He was not even sixteen, they scolded him, forbade him but to no avail, X remained firm. Then his father asked him how he would get money for his fare and other expenses—since they were not going to give him a single paisa. X replied that he had money and didn't need any help from them. His parents were astounded since money was a scarce commodity in this home and X had given them his salary as a teacher. X revealed his secret—how he had been hoarding the small sums he had received from time to time to spend in village fairs, etc.

Next morning X woke up at 4 a.m. He was about to go out when his mother confronted him. Reiterating his resolve X left for the big city.

As divine providence would have it he reached the city to find that there was to be an examination for clerks that very day. He sat for the examination and next day having done well was given a job which he did with great sincerity and ability.

Once when he took some papers to an officer, the officer was surprised at seeing a boy of fifteen doing the work of a responsible adult. Later he observed

X closely and admired his sense of duty and regularity. X solved some very complicated cases which scared even the seniormost clerks. The officer-in-charge decided that henceforth the worthy and meritorious clerks would be rewarded. X got many rewards. The other clerks became very jealous of him. One day they quarrelled with him threatening to implicate him in a trumped-up charge of demanding a bribe. X was scared. He knew if his mother heard of such a charge she would die. With all his heart he called to the Lord. Within a few minutes his colleagues returned with folded hands and begged pardon, promising never to say a word against him. He appeared for a departmental examination which was very tough. Many senior people failed but X succeeded. Thus he worked for five years, as *Munsaram*—a land-settlement clerk.

He was twenty now, so the family decided to marry him off. In those days it was an unheard-of thing that a lad should speak about his own marriage. But X's aim was the Divine: how could he marry? He went to his brother and told him, "Please do not ask the reason, since I would not be able to tell you but I will not marry till I am twenty-five." X thought he was duty-bound and love-bound not to leave his old mother, so he could not run away to escape the marriage. He had a belief that she would die by the time he would be twenty-five and then he would renounce the family life. His mother did die when he became twenty-five years old. X's elder brother was very perplexed by this strange request of his younger brother. He suspected that X was reluctant to marry because he wanted to renounce the world. Therefore he tried to bind him securely with the marriage tie as early as possible.

X's resolve was unshakable, his path was Tapasya, his aim the Divine. Without telling anything to his family he got himself transferred to a far-off place, requesting his family to abandon the idea of his marriage. His elder brother wrote to him that they had postponed the marriage for two months so he should take leave and come home as soon as possible. X knew that the moment to take a radical step had arrived, his family was impervious to reason. They didn't know of X's inmost secret, the dream he had kept alive since the age of eight.

X had been sending his salary to his parents. They had bought eight acres of land. His elder brother was also earning, now he knew his family would have enough for a simple living. So he felt free to take the most important step of his life. Buying a ticket to a famous pilgrimage place he left his job without even resigning.

On the station many 'Pandas' surrounded him taking him for an ordinary pilgrim. He assured them he had come to seek the Divine. They could not believe that this young man had come to become a Sanyasin. He assured them that it was so, that he had indeed come in search of a Guru, they told him of a very rich Guru suggesting that he should become his disciple, then who knows one day he might succeed his guru to become the master of his considerable riches.

X assured these people he didn't want a rich Guru. He wanted to become the disciple of a guru whose renunciation was true and sincere. He was sent to a famous realised soul who lived in the fork of a sacred river. X was accepted by this truly great saint who had numerous disciples. Among them there was great competition or aspiration to serve the Guru personally. X was lucky to get this rare chance of personally serving his Guru after a few months. He wrote a letter to his family telling them of his renunciation of the worldly life, also how it would be futile on their part to try to trace his whereabouts. He didn't leave a trace behind nor did he give them any hint of his whereabouts. The trail was completely obliterated.

Living under the protection of his Guru he had twice the darshan of his *Iṣṭa Devatā*—chosen deity—with open eyes. One day he was fanning his Guru when suddenly he saw the Lord. In his subtle body he moved towards the Lord who kept retreating. His gross body carried on fanning his Guru.

During the rainy season this casuarina-covered fork of the sacred river was completely inundated by flood-water. A handful of saints like X's Guru lived in the water itself. They drove long poles in the sand fixing some boards to these poles. Thus they passed the rainy season on these planks only half sheltered from rain and sun. The food had to be perforce very simple. Those were months of great hardship. One day a dark man came with a bag of coins—paper currency was yet to come, which he placed in front of X's Guru and went away. X was very curious about this unknown man; how had he reached their abode which was truly difficult to reach even by boat? X went outside to investigate but outside there was no boat tied to the simple jetty, no newcomer but only their own people, neither had anybody drowned. He enquired about the stranger but nobody had seen him. X was truly perplexed: from where had this man materialized in mid-river and where had he vanished? Then he asked his Guru, who only after many entreaties told him—"It was the Lord come to help us with money for our food." For fifteen years X continued his arduous Tapasya. His fame spread. Many people were attracted to him, some sought to be his disciples. He firmly refused to accept anybody as a disciple because his childhood aspiration was not yet fulfilled. He aspired to be the disciple of the greatest 'Mahatma' on the earth. To escape the constantly increasing flux of people who came to him for guidance, solace or blessings, he stopped speaking during the day. At night he spoke some sentences about his needs, etc. He was offered lands and property which he firmly declined.

One day he chanced upon a magazine which had published the translation of *The Words of the Mother*. He was electrified. Each word seemed a door to Supreme Knowledge. He felt he had found what he was seeking. Surely this was the highest possible in the world. He decided to become the disciple of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Hungry to read more he wrote to the above-mentioned magazine for some books of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. They

wrote back to say they had none.

Meanwhile a saint came to visit X along with some of his disciples. By divine chance one of these disciples had a whole treasury of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's books. He had *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Bases of Yoga*, and many others. X begged him for the books proposing that he could order new books from the Ashram for which he was ready to pay. This man said, "Sir, these books are far above my understanding. If you can read and understand them I willingly offer them to you. There is no need to order new ones." X marvelled no more at the ways of Grace for it had been guiding his each step. The Divine made a path for him where there had been none.

In the meanwhile a princely family registered a big estate in X's name without even informing him. But X's signature was needed for the registration. X firmly refused, so the matter had to be dropped.

X decided to come to Pondicherry, only one doubt kept tormenting him. The scriptures say that it is a sin to leave one Guru to take another, a sin to renounce one's chosen deity to worship another. Does it mean that X should stop and continue in the old path though greater and higher vistas beckoned to him? For he was sure that amongst the Avatars Sri Aurobindo was the greatest and his path the only one which could transform humanity, which could bring heaven on this earth.

As was his practice he put the problem before the inner deity. The answer came in a very simple and logical way. X was told that when a student has finished the course of a lower class he moves on to a higher class and another teacher. This is in no way wrong. As for changing your chosen deity—at present you worship only the 'Saguna Rupa' of your Lord but you can attain to his 'Sacchidananda Rupa' only through Supermind and by the grace of Sri Aurobindo. These two answers completely satisfied X who decided to come to Pondicherry. He wrote a letter to the Ashram, waiting eagerly for an answer. After sometime he received an answer saying since it was war time it would be better not to come just then. After two or three months he wrote again. He received the same answer but this time a blessing packet was enclosed with the letter. On reading the letter an electric current passed through the whole body of X. For three days he was in an ecstatic condition, all the time seeing a vision of Sri Aurobindo and meditating on him. He thought: "If a letter from the Ashram has such a blissful effect what will happen when I go to the Ashram?" Yet they had asked him not to come.

Many highly educated and erudite persons were coming for X's Darshan. He thought that on reading Sri Aurobindo's books all of them would realise the greatness of this path, so he lent the books to many of them. Most of them returned the books saying they could not make head or tail of them, that the books were too difficult for their limited understanding. X was astonished at this for to him the books seemed very simple. Only two persons amongst all

these could understand Sri Aurobindo and agreed with X that he was the divine Avatar. But one of them said that since he was a householder he was not meant for Sri Aurobindo's path. The other—Y—found the path irresistible but had the very same two doubts about changing the Guru and the chosen deity—which X himself had faced. Writing on a piece of paper X asked him to come at 8 p.m. (since he didn't speak during the day). Y arrived punctually and X gave him the two arguments his inner voice had advanced in his own case. Like X, Y was also fully satisfied by these answers. But he stipulated that he would follow X to Pondicherry after the latter's going and settling there.

Somebody advised him that he should ask permission for Darshan so in 1944 he wrote a letter to the Ashram asking to come for Darshan, sending a reply-paid telegram. He received a telegram granting him permission to come for Darshan. On receiving the telegram X again had the constant vision of Sri Aurobindo accompanied by a blissful state for three days.

So X arrived on 2nd February for Darshan. He was accommodated in a room where he had to share the toilet with persons of different religions and nationalities. Here it is necessary to understand the social background of X. Since renouncing the worldly life he had been cooking his own food and had not eaten anything touched by a lower caste person. He knew that in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram there was no bar of caste or religion. He knew he would have to get rid of his *saṅskāras*, but had thought that if a few words or a telegram from the Ashram could immerse him in ecstasy, surely in the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's presence and in their Ashram all these *saṅskāras* and inhibitions would automatically fall off, like autumn leaves. Alas nothing like this happened. A gentleman with a short beard served at the counter of the dining-room. X took him to be a Muslim (actually he was a Hindu) but X could neither summon enough courage to ask anybody about this person's religion nor could he partake of that food with equanimity. Sometimes he blamed himself for not having the foresight of hiring a room and cooking his own food. But he realised the problem could be solved only by an inner change. One evening he called the Divine to show him the way and received from within the answer that if he had been from a low caste even then he would have realised the Divine. In a flash there was a mental illumination. A load was lifted off his chest.

Yet there were other problems equally tormenting. X had never eaten bread. The Ashram bun had yeast in it which gave a faint sourish smell and taste. X suspected that wine was mixed in the bread. The very idea of his taking wine was like death to him. Those twenty days were a long torture to him. If it had not been for the attraction of Sri Aurobindo's Darshan he would have left the Ashram. He was given some work at the dining-room. In those days there were less than two hundred persons in the Ashram. The work was easy and was soon finished. He was constantly assailed by these doubts and ethical misgivings. One day he realised that if he was breaking the rules about food, the Divine

knew he was doing it for the Divine's sake, so the Divine would pardon his lapses.

Now fully at peace with himself and his surroundings he prepared for the Darshan of 21st February. He had heard miraculous tales from the older sadhaks—how one saw the Mother as Sita and Sri Aurobindo as Rama, how another as Radha and Krishna, some boasted of seeing them as beings of light, others in other ways. X went for his first Darshan of both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother (because he had been having three or four Darshans of the Mother every day) with an expectation of something miraculous. Alas, he saw the Mother as the Mother and Sri Aurobindo as Sri Aurobindo. Greatly disappointed he thought he was surely unworthy and full of grave faults and impurities unfit for divine Grace. His heart was riven with self-reproach, and existence seemed dark to him. He thought there must be some hidden insincerity in him, otherwise how could it happen that he didn't see the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in some supra-physical form?

Tortured thus he went to the roof and meditated there. Suddenly the Mother—the Rajrajeshwari—appeared before him and put her left hand on his forehead. At once that beatific state—twice experienced previously—engulfed him, all was peace and bliss. His self-torment vanished for ever. He felt an all-embracing Grace. He felt himself a child of the Mother.

After a few days he approached Nolini-da to ask for permission to stay permanently. Nolini-da jocularly replied, "Who has asked you to leave?"

Thus his whole life became an offering at the feet of the Mother.

Compiled by K

SHE

THE breath of All,
The breathless One—
Bounded in creation,
She is bound by none.
In vain men search
The universe for Her abode.
She who escapes
The scholar's quest
Is ever present
To a child's gaze.

SHYAM KUMARI

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1987)

The Mother's Message

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



Volume Three: 1959

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AUGUST was warm and agreeable. Chetan and I had already joined the evening classes at the Constance Spry School of Flower Arrangement. There were quite a number of women and girls here to learn this art.

Miss Simmons was our tutor who taught us with patience and zeal.

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There were two things to learn—the floristry and the flower arrangement. In floristry we had to learn how to make sprays, bouquets, crescents, chaplets and wreaths.

We required different sizes and numbers of wires and different kinds of coloured Gutta-percha. The colours were brown, green, white and natural. We were not allowed to use all these colours at a time in one spray, but were asked to follow only one trend.

Gutta-percha was meant to bind the flowers and leaves together and to cover the wires.

The first spray I made was on 21st July 1959. We were instructed:

“Take three different coloured carnations. Strip off their big leaves save for small leaves. Stitch the leaves with wire No. 32 in order to make them stiff. One stitch is to be taken in small leaves and two in big leaves. This done, make three or five pairs of these leaves and two with a loop, and remember to bind each leaf with Gutta-percha. Then arrange them artistically, fasten them with silver wire and after that with Gutta-percha.

“Now take three carnations and poke the wire No. 22, wind it softly around the carnations. Then arrange these flowers with leaves, which you have done before. Bind all of them with silver wire and cut off the excess wires. Tie the spray with green Gutta-percha and cut the remaining stalk unevenly.”

When we finished the chaplets, bouquets, sprays and crescents we were allowed to take them home except the wreaths!

I enjoyed most the flower arrangement in various vases of metal, glass, china, earthen-ware. All of them were of diverse shapes, sizes and shades.

There were masses of summer flowers—cool green foliages, grasses, fronds of ferns, purple-veined kale and so on. I was entranced by the fragrance coming from them.

There were also all sizes of mesh, wires and holders. Miss Simmons explained:

“One of the simplest and most efficient holders is made with wire-netting. A large mesh and thin wire are most suitable. This should be crumpled up into a ball of the size and shape suitable to the vase.

“A useful type of flower holder for small arrangements has now come back on the market. Originally it came to us from Japan.

“It consists of a heavy metal base closely covered with many sharp needle-like spikes which penetrate the base of the flower stem and hold it firmly in place. It has its greatest sphere of usefulness for flowers arranged in shallow bowls or chalices or even in still shallower soup plates.”

Afterwards our lesson began. Miss Simmons read out snatches from the book *How to do the flowers* by Constance Spry:

“The eye leaps to a vase of flowers, leaps to something living and colourful....

“To use them well as decorative material you must think beyond the individual beauty of the bloom, among other things you must think in terms of good line and balance, good colour-blending, and suitability of the whole to its background....

“Each individual must work to the pattern of his own ideals or there would be an end of originality; all that can be safely offered is a starting point....

“I would like, in modern parlance, to debunk the idea that there are certain set rules of right and wrong for the arrangement of flowers. Such rules and opinions sometimes go to ridiculous lengths. Perhaps it is just plain obstinacy, but when I hear or read that certain colours should never be put together, or this class of flower be arranged with that, or am told that gypsophila should always accompany sweet peas, I feel the prison walls begin to close in, threatening the freedom of ideas; *freedom of ideas*, that is the important point. I think it is helpful to make suggestions and scatter ideas about, but it is a mistake to be assertive about them, the danger is of creating barriers and limiting experiment...”

Then Miss Simmons showed us the composition of summer flowers in a shallow copper cooking utensil. She emphasised:

“These flowers are put in small groups of one kind rather than in units.

“In the arrangement of flowers one has to be very careful: No part of the wire-netting or other flower holder should show, no stained water in view, no broken leaf or ugly line, no unintended gap; and, a final precaution, it is well to see that the vase is filled to the top with water and that no leaf is so placed that it is acting as a siphon. Many a bit of damage has been done by neglecting this precaution. Keep an ever critical eye on all your effort.”

We were taught how to cut with garden shears the stalks of roses. They should not be cut straight but slanting. Miss Simmons added:

“If the stalks are hollow, a little water should be poured inside and they should be sealed with cotton-wool, so as to keep them fresh for a long time.

“Flowers with woody or hard stems should have the tips of the stems hammered or split for an inch or two; this enables them more easily to absorb water. This applies to roses, chrysanthemums, lilacs and blossoms of many trees and shrubs.”

Once again she read out to us from book:

“One must develop a great sense of beauty. If the sprays are left with curled flowers, broken stems and wilting leaves, the effect is messy. Cut off every defective stem, flower and soft leaf....

“Whether flowers are picked from the garden or brought from a shop, it is a mistake to put them straight away in their vases. They will last better if they can first have a long drink in a cool place. In some cases they may with advantage be left in deep water all night before being arranged. They dislike draught and dry air.

“The vital points are those which concern colour combination, contrast of colours, which is perhaps more generally considered than contrast of mass, harmony between flower and vase, and various other considerations like choice of colour. An interesting thing about colour in flowers is that it is possible to mix agreeable colours which in more opaque materials might be unpleasing—the fact is that translucence of petals and consequent interplay of light affect the whole composition. Then comes the effect of green on strong colour arrangement. Green, a lovely colour in itself, has the effect of cooling down other colours. Let us classify the individual colours. Red: Red flowers have a great popular appeal and are praised for their cheerfulness and gaiety. Yellow: Pale yellow in particular seems to be Spring’s own colour. The very word primroses and daffodils swing our mind into Spring song, ‘Primroses and daffodils and every meadow sweet,’ and then we begin to think of apricot, gold azaleas, tall and stately tulips—moonlight comes into the room with a bowl of tulips called by that enchanting name—then our mind runs on to yellow roses, lilies and a thousand and one flowers.

“White flowers have a special quality. They are not cold, funereal and colourless....

“When rightly used and placed, white flowers are a high light—infinitely delicately shot through with tinted light and in some cases faintly reflective of the colour surrounding them.

“White peonies and syringas in a shell-pink bowl look fantastic....”

Miss Simmons then took a plated bowl, five close-furled honey-yellow roses and arranged them. They nestled on several dainty fronds of fern and gave a simple charming and cool effect.

She said with a smile:

“Ladies, we have to watch the colour combination. Never to put yellow flowers with pink flowers. Yellow flowers will look attractive among green leaves. So also will red flowers.

“Remember, flowers must not be squashed together. They look lovely when arranged apart.

“Also, never compose purple flowers with green leaves at night on a dining table.”

Once more she peeped into the book and read out:

“Blue, mauve and purple flowers, I think the beauty of blue reaches its highest points in a bluebell wood, perhaps after a shower of rain, so that the blue is misted over, and there are shafts of sunlight—for it is not a colour that lights up well, it tends to look grey. Blue, mauve and blue-pink or magenta look well together and light up well, and these colours together with purple look particularly well in silver or pewter.

“Green: Sometimes, after a feast of colour, one longs for coolness—the coolness of green. There are many tones and groups of green. Leaves in themselves have architectural qualities. They also call for dignified and careful treatment. Green leaves themselves, if arranged without flowers, are delightful to the eyes....”

Miss Simmons showed us the decoration of blue flowers—bluebells in a slender oval sugar bowl and told us that it was good to set this composition against the light of a window. She spoke about the eye-catching arrangement of flowers, green leaves and fruits:

“Take a shallow crystal plate, put a holder in the centre and then arrange the tall flowers. Fill the same plate with some fruit on green leaves. This patterning looks elegant on a dining table.”

She told us:

“Ever-greens need replenishing with water, because they are ever thirsty. The advantage of them is: they have lasting power.

“If the green leaves are cleaned with glycerine, they shine beautifully.

“Purple-veined kale enriches the decoration—these leaves are specially used by Japanese flower-artists.”

Afterwards she introduced us to numerous flowers. She also showed us how to arrange them in gradations. She taught us the tactics of keeping the flowers fresh for a long time. She showed us innumerable arrangements such as: autumn and winter decoration, summer and shower and spring decoration and many decorations which suited various kinds of occasions. Besides she advised us that certain flowers like Nasturtiums were best when picked in bud and allweod

to open in water. Anemones often lasted for two weeks or so and opened their buds to perfection in water.

She informed us:

“Dahlias are valuable cut flowers, because they last so well provided the water is not allowed to diminish below the stemline.

“If a tea-spoonful of sugar or a few tablets of aspro are dissolved in water, the flowers remain fresh for a long time.

“Ladies, you must observe correctly what shape of vases will look attractive on either a round or square or oval table or a stand.

“Vases should be filled to the brim when all the flowers are in place. They should be filled up again a few hours later and kept filled. It is not necessary to empty and refill. This disarranges the flowers and is apt to bruise them. Once they are in place they should be disturbed as little as may be. Where there are many flowers in a vase especial care should be taken about filling up, for the vase very quickly becomes dry.

“If flowers such as tulips or rosebuds show signs of wilting they may be lifted out of the vase, have their stems recut, be rolled up in newspaper to keep them straight, and be plunged to the neck in water in a dark cool place until they have revived. Dahlias, poppies and bluebells should have the tips of their stems dipped into boiling water for a moment, but only the tips.

“If flowers show signs of wilting after a long journey, or because they have been too long out of water, the stem may be put into hot water. This is particularly the case with hardwood subjects such as roses, lilacs, chrysanthemums and fruit blossoms

“Certain flowers are blossoms which carry a large amount of foliage in proportion to flower. They will last better if some of the foliage is removed: lilac and syringa (philadelphus) are examples. In the case of garden-lilac it is sometimes advisable to remove all leaves from the flowering stems, adding a separate spray of foliage when required for effect. It would seem that the heavily leafed stems are unable to absorb enough water to keep both flowers and leaves alive. Leaves, which come below the surface of water and are not required, should be removed. They decay quickly and make the water unpleasant.”

Miss Simons said further:

“The golden marguerite-like flowers of *Dimorphotheca*, which are easy grown annuals, are suitable for daytime decoration, for they go to sleep at night.

“Zinnias and leaves and seed heads of the wild willow herb or fireweed

look lovely in a brilliant-coloured highly polished copper bowl—a warm arrangement for a dark room.”

She opened the book and started dictating. I wished I had mastered my shorthand. But alas I had to write down in long hand:

“The outline of a group of flowers is generally influenced by the shape of vase or the size and shape of the background.

“If the flowers are too wide, too low, or too high for the vase, or the whole out of proportion to the background the effect will not be good. Generally speaking, flowers of a height of approximately one and a half times that of the vase may be taken as a rough guide.

“Another consideration is the character of the container. In a heavy piece of bronze or copper or brass a massive arrangement of flowers, leaves, and fruits will look suitable, while delicate china or glass can easily be overpowered. These points must be attended to whenever the vase is to be a part of the picture. Harmony between flowers and vase is important. The simpler the background the more clearly will the character of the flower arrangement be seen. The best of all is a whitewashed wall against which every quality of colour and line stands out.

“The Japanese sometimes use small twofold table-screens of parchment behind small groups of flowers to isolate them.”

“If soft pink blossoms were here, in an opaque glass jar, set against a soft rose curtain, the colour would be bright without being harsh.

“On the whole flowers are seen to their best advantage when set against an opaque background with the light shining on them. A mixed group of flowers when set against the light may look confused. There are, of course, exceptions to this. Flowers with particularly translucent petals look charming against the light of a window. Single Shirley or iceland poppies, bluebells, willowherbs are cases in point. The light shining through their petals brings the texture and colour of individual flowers into evidence. When such special lighting can be contrived the effect is really exciting.

“The pleasure to be derived from a good group of flowers is heightened when it has relationship to some other object in the room, when, for instance, it echoes the tones of a picture or emphasises the colour of curtains. Truly, flowers have exquisite intrinsic beauty—roses in a dungeon would shine out—but when they are being used in decoration they should be used with purpose, they should, as it were, have a reason.

“And one more point: if you had to choose for the decoration of your room between one good picture and a dozen picture post-cards you would, I think, choose the one good picture. So it is with flowers, one good arrange-

ment is more effective than a number of little vases, this is one occasion when it is sensible to put all your eggs in one basket.”

After all these lessons we had to do practicals. So we practised in numberless ways. Each composition emphasised its proper place by its elegance and enchantment.

One fine evening Miss Simmons gave us different kinds of vases, masses of flowers and asked us to arrange them. This was our test and competition. We had to finish the decoration in record time.

I was given an urn and yellow lilies, carnations, roses, rich foliage, corn, saxifrage and vine leaves. After the first instinctive glance of pleasure at them, I placed in the urn a crumpled mesh and filled it with water. Then I started arranging. I kept in my mind the need of good line, good colour-blending and satisfying balance. I felt that the right effect was achieved with comparatively few flowers and helped by the use of dark-coloured leaves.

Miss Simmons went to each of us and examined our composition with keen eyes. Then she turned to the ladies, pointing to my vase and said:

“Look at this arrangement. It is perfect.”

Then with a smile she congratulated me. I thanked her. All the ladies clustered round my arrangement and asked many questions. What was I to do except smile?

As a matter of fact, I did not realise how the whole thing had been done. But I knew how the Mother had taught me painting and led me to acquire colour-sense and made me understand the sensitivities of colour-combinations. Praise to Her....

(To be continued)

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A WORD FOR TORU DUTT

ON January 9, 1939, during the talk between Sri Aurobindo and his attendants, Nirodbaran¹ remarked to him: "Toru Dutt is said to have had great genius. They say that if she had lived she would have been a very great poet." Sri Aurobindo's reported reply ran:

"Nobody knows of her in England as a great poet. Perhaps the only vigorous poetry she wrote was about the German invasion of France in 1870. That because she had a deep sympathy for that country. I remember just a few lines from it. She addresses France:

Head of the human column...

And she calls the invaders:

Attila's own exultant horde.

These two lines at once strike one as if they were spoken by the poet and were not an imitation. If one can write like that it cannot but be recognised."

From Sri Aurobindo's reply we get the impression that on the whole he regarded Toru Dutt's poetry as more imitative than carrying the writer's own voice and as lacking in vigour. Less of the nature of passing remarks, a more comprehensive verdict, though a shorter one, occurs four years earlier—in a letter of 1935* —in the course of an assessment of Indo-English poetry:

"Toru Dutt was an accomplished verse-builder with a delicate talent and some outbreaks of genius and she wrote things that were attractive and sometimes something that had a strong energy of language and a rhythmic force."

Perhaps the last relative clause refers in general to poems like the one to France in 1870, in which the best of its five stanzas is the third, opening with the phrase Sri Aurobindo picks out for some praise:

Head of the human column, thus
Ever in swoon wilt thou remain?
Thought, Freedom, Truth quenched ominous,
Whence then shall Hope arise for us,
Plunged in the darkness all again?

But what I should like to find is work to which Sri Aurobindo could point as showing "some outbreaks of genius". A streak of genius here and there is most

¹ *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* (Sri Aurobindo Society, West Bengal, 1986), Vol. I, p. 154.

* *The Future Poetry and Letters on Poetry, Literature and Art* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1972), p. 453.

probably in that best-known of Toru's poems, *The Casuarina Tree*, and may be chanced upon in her verses based on the *Ramayana* story. When I ask myself where genius shines most in her I get a clue in the spirit that drew from her the poem on France, even if in this poem itself it did not get revealed in any real strength—the spirit apropos of which Sri Aurobindo has the comment: “she had a deep sympathy for that country.”

Were I to put in a word for Toru Dutt before the tribunal of the ages I would turn to an occasion in 1876. One day in that year Edmund Gosse strolled idly into the *Examiner's* office in the heart of London. The Editor put in his hands a shabby little volume, *A Sheaf Gleaned from French Fields* by Toru and Arun Dutt. It had arrived all the way from Calcutta. “There!” cried the Editor, “see whether you can't make something of that.” Gosse opened the book at random. His eyes fell on a poem translated from Victor Hugo.

MORNING SERENADE

Still barred thy doors!—the far East glows,
 The morning wind blows fresh and free,
 Should not the hour that wakes the rose
 Awaken also thee?

All look for thee—Love, Light and Song:
 Light in the sky deep red above,
 Song in the lark of pinions strong,
 And in my heart true love.

Apart we miss our nature's goal,
 Why strive to cheat our destinies?
 Was not my love made for thy soul?
 Thy beauty for mine eyes?

Gosse was immediately captivated. He could scarcely believe that such verses in English could flow from an outlandish source like the Saptahik Sambad Press at Bhowanipore. In spite of some *gaucherie* in grammar and expression in a number of places, Gosse hailed the book with enthusiasm. What, in my view, he failed to realise is that the stanzas on which he first alighted makes the translator a candidate for a tiny bit of genuine immortality. I regard “Morning Serenade” as one of the most beautiful love-poems in English—nay, even in the world's literature—for its glory of emotional-idealistic rapture with a spontaneity at once simple and subtle.

The metrical rhythm is extremely skilful. Thus, the prolonged state of shut doors is driven home by the spondee—“Still barred”—with which the first line

begins. As against the rhythmic evocation of a continuing closure, the persistent living in the shade, we have the three consecutive stressed words at the line's end, making the glowing of the far East a power of light which should force the loved one's doors open. Spondees again and again—"blóws fresh", "Áll lóok", "Lóve, Líght", "déep réd", "trúe lóve"—create a pressure of the speaker's feeling, especially when, as in the phrase "the fár Eást glóws", the spondaic foot is preceded by a syllable which itself is stressed. This occurs five times altogether. The iamb and the trochee—that is, a slack syllable followed by a stressed one and *vice versa*—play a happy variation starting the lines. In the penultimate line we have a reversed foot—"màde for"—right in the middle of an iambic run, creating a sudden sense of something fixed, a secret destiny, which must have its way against the common trend of events. What is meant is enforced by a technical suggestion.

Mind you, all this expressive diversity of scansion is no premeditated art. Not that conscious craftsmanship is a fault in poetry. By any means the poet has to create a channel for the inner stream. But in lyricism such as here the inner stream itself makes its channel and brings a ready-made dexterity of metre and rhythm. Everywhere in Toru's translation the technique responds to the content, echoing in apt phrase and modulated movement the imaginative ardour of each stanza.

In the first the lover gives voice to his importunate heart, catching fire from the daybreak in the distance and stirring to an intimate tenderness at sight of the rose glimmering near at hand. Mark how without saying it the poet sets up the flower as a semblance of the face of the unseen girl. What holds for the cluster of delicate petals before the serenading youth, when it is dawn-livened and breeze-swayed, should be true of that face—evidently because it is a sister to this opulent shapeliness. And the unspoken yet unmistakable sisterly character renders him all the more eager for its emergence from slumber and secrecy.

The second stanza points the ardent appeal further by telling the dear slumberer that everything which the morning shows forth is one combined call to her to reveal herself. The outward scene is radiant and rapturous to draw her countenance into the open, the inward state is a deep throb of intense desire to discover the Wonder that is she. Note the way in which "Light" and "Song" come at the start of the descriptions given to them while "true love" is put at the end of the expression it gets: the effect is of a culminating fervour, a climax which at the same time conveys a sense of rich yet quiet completion. There is in this short fourth line a sweet summary of fullness in which the anxious colourful and strenuous search by the sky's light and by the lark's song finds their human counterpart in a thrilled profundity and mystery. In comparison to the concentrated eloquence of

Light in the sky deep red above

and

Song in the lark of pinions strong

we have now an utter simplicity of word for the heart's offering, almost a verbal hush hinting with its quiet power the inexpressible.

The third stanza brings a bit of a surprise. So far we had a cry to the beloved to come into sight from the seclusion of sleep and a reminder to her of the universal eagerness the lover intuits, looking around and within, that she should disclose the exquisiteness which is hers and which puts her on a par with the queen of flowers. Now suddenly we get the suspicion that for some reason or other she is keeping "apart" from the lover. This blossom of a girl, though recognising what his heart feels and herself feeling in her heart a pull towards him, is still hesitant to be his constant companion. Such is the implication of the line:

Why strive to cheat our destinies?

This question, after the lover has stated that by remaining separate she and he would fail to fulfil the goal set before them by their own beings, conjures up an attempt on her part, however vague, not to join her life to his. To overcome this strange veiling of true vision he helps out his initial statement about their "nature's goal" by a piece of enchanting logic in which the values of both body and soul are suggested. Her inmost self, her sheer psyche, deserves and needs an all-giving devotion such as he brings to her. Surely, this kind of genuine love is born just to be accepted by the divine flame in her, the soul animating her beauty? That is his argument. On the other side her marvellous beauty could not have been created except to enrapture the eyes through which his soul looks out and directs its love to her with his body's longing to be with her body and dedicate his whole heart's passion to her perfect face and form. The lover, the dreamer, the artist, the philosopher are all fused in the final stanza so that the logic of its plea about obedience to a high-fixed fate goes home to us with the magic of an infallible insight.

"Morning Serenade" is indeed a miniature masterpiece in the *genre* of the romantically fine with a glint of the reflectively great towards the close.

K. D. SETHNA

WHAT IS SERVICE ?

THERE are moments when one is turned inwards—the mind is still, the vital quiet and the body at repose. A silent direction from within guides one's movements and one smoothly allows oneself to be led.

Such a state of being took me one day to the Service tree in the Ashram. I have always admired and esteemed this royal tree and, whenever I pass by it, my hands are drawn to touch it and my heart hums a prayer to it to bestow on me a little of its great service to make my life blessed as a servitor of the Supreme.

I remember the day, some years back, when we received in the Ashram Prosperity Room a beautiful colour picture of the Service tree in its full bloom and majestic glory, with the serene sacred Samadhi nestling under its expansive tender care and radiating a subtle solid peace, power, light and love. The occasion was its completing fifty years of service, *i.e.*, half a century! I still recollect my heart's cry that day: a tree can perform such a tremendous service, why can't man? Why can't I? Since then my admiration of the Service tree turned into adoration. There are times when while touching it, I feel a strong service sensation circulating in its great trunk, many branches and sub-branches, leaves, flowers, buds and pods. I aspire for this vibration to penetrate into my every vein and artery and each drop of blood. The whole tree, right from its sprawling roots and heavy trunk to its tiny leaves, exudes an atmosphere of service—simple and selfless, silent and happy, spontaneous and loving, living the delight of its existence.

The birds enjoy shelter in its shade, the souls find restful refuge in its spiritual atmosphere, the squirrels play merrily on its wide expanse scurrying up and down and across. On its own too it is very sportive. It chooses children or aspiring men and women and shoots its golden arrows of service flowers on their heads or hearts or faces or any part and evokes their merry glances of pleasant surprise and gladness towards it. How blissful are those moments when a service flower playfully strikes our head to stimulate service sense in us and lands straight on our open palm or drops just in front to be picked up and admired and carried away!—and the moments when in rhythmic movements of joyous abandon the Service flowers descend like rain drops and design a carpet of fresh gold around the Samadhi! Only those who watch this play of love can feel the joy and cherish a fond memory of the Service tree.

With this background of overwhelming affection for the Service tree, I sat still, facing it. I was enchanted by this lone (not lonely) gallant knight, an indefatigable silent sentinel spreading its golden green canopy over the Samadhi of its Masters Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, in ceaseless soothing service, be it day or night, sunshine or rain, quiet or storm. It seemed to me to be a great noble Tapasvi who, like its Masters, effused peace and kindness, and bestowed love and compassion on all alike. It was the hushed hour of

dusk when the day was bidding good-bye. The breeze, gentle and pleasing at first, soon increased its velocity and brought news of the impending rain. I was a dumb spectator to the play of the wind with the Service tree whose courteous nodding gradually turned into heavy swaying of its branches and boisterous rustling of its hundreds of leaves. The wild wind, not to be outdone, charged boldly with thousands of rain-drops. The Service tree rose to its stately stature and looked magnificent. With its mighty trunk standing steadfast on the ground, its branches soared and roared in great glee. My solemn observation marked how firmly the true service holds its fort. Whatever the circumstances, it remains unperturbed, takes up the challenge and is not deflected or deviated from the law of its being. By its act itself, it creates a perennial reservoir of strength within and an incessant source of ever increasing stamina, ever flowering courage, ever refreshing enthusiasm and ever kindling experience of fulfilment.

Fascinated by its beatific bearing, my voiceless words asked the tree, "What is service?" It smiled gently and spoke silently:

"Service is to offer one's time, attention and interest, one's thoughts, feelings and acts, one's aspirations, aims, ideals and dreams, one's entire existence to the Lord, in adoration and love, in a simple spontaneous movement of consecration invoking His Will to be enacted in and through one.

"Sincere service is Sadhana. It widens, deepens and heightens the horizon of consciousness; imparts skill and perfection to works, quietens, purifies and enriches the feelings and emotions; stills the thoughts and sharpens and brightens the intellect turning it more and more transparent to transmit the rays from above; and awakens and unveils the psychic flame. The Master you serve makes your service a means of His manifestation through your instrumentality. Is that not what brought you here on earth, for the drop to manifest the deep? Remember?"

While I heard the wordless whisper within my heart, my eyes got instinctively closed and the whole being, flooded with the soul-stirring blessings of the Service tree and the soothing showers from the high heavens, took a deep plunge within to be one with the Supreme Delight whom it sought to serve.

SUSHILA MELVANI

“A TOTAL FORGETFULNESS OF SELF”

WHILE descending on earth, the Divine Avatars bring down with them strong, courageous and dedicated men and women who serve them in their arduous task of carrying the Creation forward. Surely amongst those who came down with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to serve them with “a total forgetfulness of self” was Bula-da.

Born on 9.9.1899, he came to Pondicherry in his early thirties and, once he had seen the Mother, life for him took an absolutely new direction.

“Once seen his heart acknowledged only her.
Only a hunger of infinite bliss was left.
All aims in her were lost, then found in her;
His base was gathered into one pointing fire.”

The whole aim of his life was to serve the Divine Mother with constant and unstinting devotion. He served for the delight of service—it was his Swabhava and Swadharma. His very existence was a beautiful expression of selfgiving.

For years Bula-da didn't leave the Ashram premises in the evening in case the electric supply should fail and he would be needed to switch on the generator. At night also he never slept more than 3 or 4 hours at a stretch in order to make certain that the incense sticks around the Samadhi burned constantly. If for any reason they had gone out, he relit them.

In August 1947 there were riots against the Ashram. The mood of the mob was so ugly that they killed an Ashramite. To make sure that no intruders went near the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's rooms, Bula-da and Dyuman-bhai slept by turns on the doormats at the foot of the meditation-hall staircase and at the foot of the one near Nirod-da's room. They continued to do so until the situation calmed down and took a turn for the better.

Recently, in the 1980's when Nolini-da was very ill the doctors attending on him decided that one of them should sleep in the Ashram till he improved. But where could they sleep? Bula-da at once offered his room and his bed. When asked where he would sleep, he gestured vaguely towards Dyuman-bhai's room and answered, “I will sleep there.” The doctors assumed that he would sleep in Dyuman-bhai's room, since Dyuman-bhai slept in the corridor of the first floor, in front of the Mother's room.

Now started Bula-da's labour of love. Each evening he made the bed in his room, tucked in the mosquito-net neatly and kept a jug of water along with a glass on the bedside table. This embarrassed the doctors who were much younger than he. They protested but Bula-da paid no heed and continued with his daily ministrations.

One midnight Dr. Dilip Dutta who was on duty that night was called to attend to Nolini-da. Before re-entering Bula-da's room he stood for a few

moments at the door in that sacred hush looking towards the Samadhi. He saw somebody lying on the cement bench along the eastern wall of the Reading Room. Somewhat concerned, Dilip-da went to check up and found Bula-da soundly asleep on that hard stone bench even though a light drizzle had started. Dilip-da woke him up and asked him, "Bula-da, why didn't you go to sleep in Dyuman-bhai's room?" Bula-da replied, "Dyuman works till late. So I slept here. It does not matter. I am accustomed to it."

Once Arun Ganguly's mother was very ill. All night her condition became serious, so at about 2.30 a.m. they knocked on Bula-da's window and pleaded with him to inform the Mother. Bula-da was in a quandary. But they pleaded so much that he said, "I'll do whatever is possible."

Bula-da used to go to sleep only after the lights in the Mother's room were switched off. Now he had seen the lights being turned off only a little while before. So he didn't want to disturb the Mother. He had a simple faith that if you told something to the Samadhi the Mother would know it. So he went and prayed at the Samadhi and told everything. Then he came back and said to Ganguly that he had informed the Mother.

At about 4 a.m., as soon as the Ashram main gate opened someone from the family rushed to the Mother's room and informed the Mother through the attendant. The Mother replied, "Yes, I know, Bula told me."

Till the end Bula-da's living was very simple. Not only did he wash his own clothes but at night after dinner he washed his own vessels. At that time for a few months I used to be at the washing place to wash some vessels of Nolini-da. Even though I pleaded, Bula-da never agreed to let me help him in any way. Such was his love and self-abnegation. Ready to bear all sorts of discomforts for others he always tried his best never to be a burden to anyone.

Though his life was a constant dedication of service his nature was not stern or solemn. He loved to laugh and share a joke and one incident which he related with great fondness was as follows:

Once Bula-da, who was in charge of the Ashram Electricity and Water Department, was doing some work in the Mother's room. The Mother accompanied by two attendants approached him and asked, "Bula, do you want some water?" Totally absorbed in his task, Bula-da whose back was towards the Mother answered in the negative. The Mother repeated the question and again Bula-da replied, "No, Mother." Then Bula-da became aware of a few chuckles behind his back and he turned his head to see what all the merriment was about. Great was his confusion when he beheld the Mother, her face alight with amusement, holding towards him a cascading bunch of the flower called "Water." Comprehension dawning on his face, Bula-da hurriedly wiped his hands on his dhoti, accepted the fragrant offering and joined in the ensuing laughter.

BIRENDA

A TALK GIVEN BY RAMAKANT ON 26.6.1987 IN THE HALL OF HARMONY, THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

By the Grace of Sri Aurobindo and our Mother, many people who came to Their Feet, developed very much and went far in their Sadhana. Although they have remained almost unknown like gems in the dark ocean, they are very precious for us. I had the opportunity to know one of these good men, our Birenda, for the last eleven years and I shall be happy to share my memories of him with you all. I shall begin with his last days.

On Friday, 12th June, at 5.00 in the evening, I accompanied Birenda to the Trésor Nursing Home. He had had fever since morning. I used to take him in this way to the Trésor Nursing Home whenever he suffered acutely from asthma. He used to stay there for a few days, recover and come home. This time, it was not an asthma attack. He had a serious infection in the chest. He remained there only for three and a half days. He spent his last night very restlessly. I had requested Batti to make available two students to help me at night. Naga-shankar, Khusru, sister Rukmini and myself remained at his bedside the whole night. He was in a state of delirium, although from time to time he was becoming conscious and talking. Early morning of the day he passed away, *i.e.*, Tuesday, 16th June, he told me in English, "Ramakant bhai, I want to go now to sleep." And I knew what he meant by that sleep, for I had already received two hints earlier, that this time he might not recover. He passed away at 12-05 afternoon in the presence of Dr. Satyabrata and his staff. I was near the Samadhi at that moment.

One hint that he might leave his body I got barely 24 hours before his final departure. Birenda's condition had unnerved me. To get some solace and strength, I opened *Savitri*. It was Book 2, Canto 14: 'The World-Soul'. My eyes fell on the lines:

There they remould their purpose and their drift,
Recast their nature and re-form their shape.
Ever they change and changing ever grow,
And passing through a fruitful stage of death
And after long reconstituting sleep
Resume their place in the process of the Gods
Until their work in cosmic Time is done.

My eyes got rivetted to the line, "And passing through a fruitful stage of death".

I closed the book and got up to face the unavoidable. He lived his whole life offering every moment of it to the Will of the Divine Mother. Now I had to turn to the Mother and say, "Mother, let Thy Will be done."

Then suddenly I remembered an incident that had happened a few weeks before, in which Birenda himself had given me a hint about his next step.

One day when I was in his room, waiting for the tea that he was preparing, a thought had just crossed my mind, "How long will he be able to continue in this body?" I quickly brushed aside the thought and tried to forget it. But Birenda suddenly turned towards me and asked, "Ramakantbhai, do you think that Birenda is living in this body?" He had caught my thought and he had revealed something inexplicable. I pondered over his statement for a few days, and thought, "Perhaps his bodily existence is only an insignificant portion of his vast inner life, and he must be meaning that."

One apparent cause that weakened his body considerably in this period was the 8½ hour long walk he undertook alone, on 17th May. He wanted to visit a Buddha-temple near the Arikamedu Archaeological site. He started at 8 in the morning, without carrying even a drop of water. He had totally misjudged his speed of walking, thus instead of returning for lunch he reached home at 4.30 in the afternoon, totally exhausted and dehydrated. He told us about this only the next day.

Now let us go back to his early life.

Birenda, that is Biren Palit, was born on 27th February 1906 at Chittagong, East Bengal. He came from a lower-middle-class family. Much is not known to me about his family-background. His mother was of a religious temperament and every night before going to sleep she used to narrate to her children stories from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, etc. This had awakened in young Biren a thirst for God-realisation. Already in the near-by town Chandannagar, there was a Sri Aurobindo Centre. Young Biren had come in contact with it. At the age of 14, he left his house, and went to stay at this Centre. Conditions were so bad that to procure even one meal a day was difficult. Our late Jyotinda, Manodharda, Surenda, they all belonged to this Centre. All of them got Sri Aurobindo's permission to come to Pondicherry and came here almost together. Lack of proper nourishment, neglect of the body in the pursuit of Sadhana at Chandannagar for ten years had weakened Birenda and he contracted Asthma, which remained like his shadow till the end. Thus the Sadhana which began at the age of fourteen continued upto the age of eighty-one.

At the age of 24, he arrived at Pondicherry railway-station in the early morning of 25th July 1930. Under the Mother's instructions, Nolinida had sent Premanand to receive him. From that day, he stayed in the Ashram for 57 years. He did not go back to see his family even once.

He was given accommodation in the Playground Guest-house, where he stayed for 25 years. He shared with Pujalalji the large hall divided by a wooden partition.

In the same house, on the ground-floor was Birenda's Binding Section. Bulada once told me, "Birenda is a fine fellow. When he was given permission to join the Ashram, the Mother advised that he could learn book-binding-work before coming here. So he learned this art. When he came here, he brought with him some simple tools needed for binding-work, so that he might serve the Divine Mother through this art. For him, binding-work was a delicate art. It was not mere handling of paper and gum. Tehmiben talked to me about Birenda's way of teaching binding-work to school-children. He made them first sit quiet, observe how his long fingers were touching the papers, as if the paper was made of some sacred material. Harikantbhai told me how he enjoyed working with Birenda in the Binding Department, and how they both went together for long walks.

Some of the senior teachers here and others will remember their childhood days in the Playground and how they loved Birenda. He used to be clad in a dhoti, his long jet-black hair reaching upto his knees, his eyes misty—partly fixed on the outward scene and partly fixed within. I shall narrate to you later how one of the boys of those days did his last service to Birenda.

After 25 years of stay in the Play-ground Guest-house, Birenda was given accommodation in Ambika House, House No. 13, Balcony St. beyond the canal. There he stayed for 26 years. As his Sadhana was not affected by outward circumstances, he never had complaints or preferences. A room became vacant besides Birenda's room in 1976 and I was given that room. And I met Birenda for the first time. I felt an instant affinity to him. I liked the old man, everything was so pure about him. He remained my neighbour only for six years and then he was shifted to House No. 10, Balcony St. It was done on the advice of Nolinida. Nolinida was trying for quite some time to find accommodation for Birenda in some ground-floor room nearer to the Ashram. Although Birenda shifted to that house, we maintained contact with each other. In this house, Lallubhai was his neighbour. And they had happy relations.

Now I shall narrate to you how Norman Junior happened to perform the last service to Birenda.

Birenda's body was cremated on Wednesday, 17th June. On Thursday, 18th June at 6.00 a.m., Behram took Sachinda and myself to the cremation ground and we brought with us Birenda's last remains for immersion in the Bay of Bengal. An expert swimmer whom Behram had called had not arrived. Instead, Norman was standing there in his swimming-costume, ready to enter the sea. Behram called him. I carried the last remains to a certain distance in the sea and then handed them over to Norman for immersion in deep waters.

Norman, when he was a child, had been very friendly with Birenda in the Playground Guest-house, and now happened to be present at this moment. He normally lives in Australia.

While returning from the tennis-ground, Sachinda narrated an incident to

Norman, about him and Birenda. Sachinda said he had heard it from Birenda himself. Norman at that time was perhaps 7 or 8 years old. One morning at about 10 o'clock, he and three other boys entered Birenda's room. Norman asked for a knife and some salt. They had brought in their hands some raw mangoes. Birenda inquired how they had come at that hour when classes were going on. The boys gave some vague answer. Then Birenda asked them, "Will you not suffer from a sore throat if you eat these raw mangoes?" Norman promptly replied, "No, Birenda, we won't have sore throats; on the contrary, if one eats raw mangoes one gets sound sleep at night." Birenda smiled at Norman's clever answer and gave the boys a knife and some salt.

Nolinida was very fond of Birenda, while Birenda held him in high respect. In those days the number of Sadhaks was limited. All notices on the notice-board were handwritten. It was Birenda's work to write these notices. His handwriting, Bengali and Roman script, was the envy of expert calligraphers.

Nolinida also used to ask Birenda to go through every article written in Bengali by him before he published it. Birenda told me that Nolinida did this out of affection, so that Birenda might be the first reader of the article.

Nolinida often invited Birenda to discuss Tagore's and Nishikanto's poems.

A year or two before Nolinida left his body, Birenda had gone to greet Nolinida on his birthday. Nolinida said, "Biren is my best friend of the old days."

Besides working in the Binding Section, Birenda worked in the Dining-room. Dyuman Bhai and Birenda did the work of sorting out bananas. Dyuman Bhai recalls Birenda's sincerity in work. Birenda once said to me, "Dyuman Bhai's concern for the welfare of the Ashram is unique."

When the Binding Section in the Playground Guest-house was closed and the New Bindery was started, Birenda was given work in the Ashram Press, in the binding section. There he worked till the last four days of his life. He used to go walking to the Press and return walking, twice a day. I asked him why he did not go by the the Press-rikshaw. He said that he preferred walking. Once he had told me that while walking he did many things. I guess he must be doing Japa, or meditation, or receiving poetic inspiration. He had on an earlier occasion mentioned to me that he used to see visions with open eyes while walking in the streets.

In spite of the various ailments that he had, if somebody would ask, "बिरेनदा, क्याँमोन आछेन ?" "How are you, Birenda?" he would smile and say, "चाँमोत्कार" ("Very fine"). He did not want others to be unhappy by knowing about his suffering.

When ill, he always preferred to go to the Trésor Nursing Home. It is because of his intimate relation with Dr. Satyabrata. The entire staff of the Trésor Nursing Home treated Birenda as a person close to their hearts. They served him happily.

He told me an incident regarding an illness he had undergone in his very

early days here. He was admitted to the Government Hospital near the Park. The French Medical Officer suggested that Birenda's long hair be cut, so that it might be easy to take care of him. As mentioned earlier, he had long hair reaching up to his knees.

In those days, every minute detail concerning a Sadhak was brought before the Mother and Her advice taken. The Mother referred the matter to Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo did not agree to allow Birenda's long hair to be cut. He said, "How fine Biren looks with his long hair!"

Birenda avoided publicity; he did not let me tell people even about the number of years he had been in the Ashram.

He told me to be cautious in praising others. Flattery and praise strengthen the ego and retard inner progress, he said. Self-praise was out of the question. He never even once mentioned his achievements in Sadhana.

But some outer results of his Sadhana could not pass unnoticed. Like me, many persons had the experience of receiving peace from him. People came to him to remain in his proximity, for his atmosphere was made of peace and the Mother's Presence. We all felt some difference in our own atmosphere, before and after meeting Birenda. A Sadhika told me last week that she did not have personal contact with Birenda. She never went to his house or spoke with him. But it was her experience that whenever she was besieged by inner difficulties, if she happened to see Birenda walking across the street, a mere glance at him would give her relief from her problems.

To receive Birenda's good wishes on our birthdays was a joy. He used to give a small bunch of flowers and it always contained a type of grass named 'Humility' by the Mother. He considered humility indispensable for inner growth.

He never contradicted anybody or entered into argumentative discussions. He saw to it that nobody's faith was disturbed. He helped them to increase their faith, so that they might reach the Divine through whatever Godhead they adored. I shall give an example of it. The evening he was admitted to the Trésor Nursing Home this time, the senior Nurse after making him comfortable, told him that she was proceeding on four days' leave on a pilgrimage to Tirupati. She wished that he would be all right in this period and that she would be at his service after four days. In spite of his fever, Birenda smiled and told her that it was God's Grace that she was able to go to Tirupati. He further told her that Lord Krishna Himself resides at Tirupati, and she would come back carrying the Lord's Blessings.

His whole life was a quiet Sadhana; violent revolts and crippling depressions had no place in it. He always maintained full faith that the Mother's Force was working in him and therefore he did not have much correspondence with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Birenda felt a great attraction towards the growing Presence of the Divine Mother at Matrimandir. In the last seven years, he went at least fifteen times to

Auroville, twice on foot and at other times by car. Whichever quarter of Auroville he visited, he was warmly welcomed there. Birenda's last visit to Matrimandir was on 6th June this year. We went in a car at about 9.00 at night and returned by midnight. Birenda enjoyed the spiritual atmosphere there and the view of Matrimandir in moonlight. On an earlier visit, Lorenzo—a Matrimandir worker—had helped Birenda to climb the ladders upto the Meditation Chamber.

Many knew Birenda for his poems in Bengali. A few of them have been published in *Purodha*.

The other day Harikantbhai mentioned to me that Birenda's was a rare case, he never asked for anything extra from the Mother. Do you know what made Birenda take such an attitude? When he went to stay at the Guest House, he found that strong sunlight was streaming into the room through the window. He wrote a note to the Mother asking if the window glasses could be painted to prevent the sunlight. As the Mother happened to be indisposed that day, the note was sent to Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo sent a reply to Birenda saying, "One must learn how to bear with such small difficulties, if one has to succeed in Yoga." This reply became for Birenda a life-time guidance.

Birenda spoke to me of another incident that occurred when he was staying in the Guest House.

A friend of his arrived from Burma. He had brought with him an easy-chair, made of Burma-teak, to present to Birenda.

Birenda wrote about it to Sri Aurobindo and asked whether the easy-chair could be accepted. Sri Aurobindo replied, "You can accept the chair, as if given to you by the Mother. You should have no feeling of obligation." With this attitude, he in his later life accepted things presented to him with love.

Whenever we sought his guidance regarding our problems, he replied only when he received some signal from above. Once I asked him, "Birenda, I lack cheerfulness very much. How to be cheerful?" He replied, "There is no need to be cheerful, it is enough if you can be peaceful." He then further explained that it would be dangerous to be cheerful if peace and equality were not deeply established. Such superficial cheerfulness sometimes swings to the other extreme.

Once very pessimistic thoughts passed through my mind regarding the future of our Ashram; these thoughts were draining away my energy. So I went to Birenda and asked what he thought about our future.

He said, "The future of our Ashram is brilliant." But I protested, I narrated to him a number of incidents which indicated that things were not going on as they should.

He told me not to take these outward presentations seriously. He said that his remark was based on a vision he had recently seen.

In this vision, Birenda found himself once again at his usual familiar place, a place he said where our Ashram exists on some subtle plane. It was a landscape similar to the Lake Estate, but full of well-grown trees. While he was

walking there, he saw above him a baby eagle struggling to return to its nest because it had lost its direction. It was harassed on all sides by vultures. Then Birenda saw that from far-off skies a huge mother-eagle descended towards the baby-eagle, took it under its protecting wings and brought it down slowly to the nest, which was in the Ashram area.

Birenda explained to me that the baby-eagle represented 'the Spirit of Sadhana' in the Ashram and the mother-eagle represented the Divine Mother. Due to her action the outer life in the Ashram will take a radical turn and we shall have a brilliant future before us.

RAMAKANT NAVELKAR

FROM THE SICK BED

ALL-KNOWER, you of all are fully aware
 How I suffer now in body and mind—
 Wallowing in slushy swamp of self-pity
 My inner being reduced actionless,
 A burden rather than the seat of joy it should be.
 This moment you choose as opportune to deign
 A drop of inspiration to my sagging psyche
 To spray down in a poetic shower.
 What desert will yield a green orchard
 And what sea provide a drink to the thirsty?
 Will my poem pain-laden and despondent meet your pleasure?
 And your approval be reflected glorious
 In the first bird-call of a smiling morning?
 Nothing else will pierce this my veneer of pain
 Than a poem pouring from my heart
 Filtered through travails and frustrations—
 A bountiful boon only your benign hands can bestow.

DEBANSHU

HUMOUR IN THE PLAYS OF SRI AUROBINDO

PART 2— *THE VIZIERS OF BASSORA*

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1987)

HAVING admired and enjoyed many facets of delight we come now to the first scene of Act IV. It is humour at its acme. Its fast flow engulfs us with frolic and revelry, fun and gaiety. Here the ludicrous and the sublime are mixed in equal parts. Humour sparkles like the very candles of the Caliph's garden where it is set. There is joy within and laughter without. Nureddene and Anice, this couple of unearthly radiance who surely hold the secret of some paradise, stray into the Caliph's garden. Unmindful of their plight, with no thought for the morrow, with faith in themselves and in Allah they enjoy the moment and its bounty. To the surface look this eating, drinking and merry-making may seem a wanton and profligate streak. It may point to a lack of depth in the characters of these two, but it's not so. If we study their characters deeply we will find them much above our average scheming, calculating, timid, palpitating insurance-armoured, pension-propped humanity. They are like half deities from other spheres who do not look beyond the hour in hand. Wealth or poverty, dinars or cowries, they face all with an almost yogic equality of heart, with a supreme self-confidence. Though they seem to play the role of fools on life's stage yet their inner divinity peeps out again and again. Blows of adverse fate reveal their true worth—the cut clarity of their core.

This scene is a merry playground of love and laughter. There is a see-saw of fortune and adversity. To quote Dr. Seetharaman:

“Perhaps the greatest of all the powers of life is love which liberates all the hidden springs of harmony and heals the most bitter wounds in the struggle of forces and beings in this harsh world. It is inevitable then that in the wake of such puissant love all forces of disharmony should get dissolved in the end and the issue must be a better and happier state which points forward to an endless progression in harmony, or there is endless growth in levels and intensities of love. And the play of love has its own varieties of pleasant incongruities and in its background the spectacle of the hypocrite who pretends to have realised the ideal while his actual life is all the time contradicting his wise words of wisdom is pitifully ludicrous. The laughter becomes hilarious, sensuous and even sensual and rollicking if the vital physical is the centre of the play. And ‘music is the food of love’ and song is the medium of all the deeper feelings of life. Love, laughter and song are the warp and woof of the Romantic comedy and the interpretative vision of the dramatist reveals itself in and through them.”¹

¹ *Studies in Sri Aurobindo's Dramatic Poems*, p. 16

This whole scene is full of faery enchantments. Anice and Nurredene wander in the garden of the Caliph and in wonder they say—

“All spring walks here in blossoms
And strews the pictured ground.”¹

To them all life had been a heavenly jest, a flow of good companionship, a bright and merry revel. While at Bassora they used to talk and dream of coming to Bagdad and there meet the Caliph. Fate favours them, their dream becomes a reality. They walk straight into the Pavilion of Pleasure of the Caliph.

With spring abroad, what wonder if at beholding the nymph-like beauty of Anice and the godlike charm of Nureddene, Shaikh Ibrahim—the keeper of the Caliph’s pavilion—loses his head and heart and boasts of being the owner of the fabulous garden and the pavilion. At some time or other who amongst us has not pretended to more than the truth? Who would not like to impress such beauty and nobility by posing to be master of so rich a place hoping thereby to rise in their esteem? And once this first step is taken it leads Shaikh Ibrahim deeper and deeper into the net of the hilarious web. Shaikh Ibrahim represents the fool, the hypocrite in all of us. Beauty is often dangerous and the extreme of beauty much more so. For in doing homage to it human beings overstep their limits—Nureddene fritters away a fortune to buy ‘a few trinkets’ for his Anice. Shaikh Ibrahim, though, has no riches to offer at the altar of beauty, he throws caution and common sense to the winds and does his best to entertain the handsome couple. He advances stealthily with a raised stick to strike at the trespassers. On their turning their faces towards him he stands open-mouthed and stuated. On beholding the wonder of their beauty he is no longer in command of himself. First he thanks Allah, then the angels and the people of Paradise. He calls himself blessed. Even before drinking the wine which wily Anice will make him drink he is beauty-drunk and, with senses slightly inebriated, his mind works overtime. The muse touches his tongue. To Nureddene’s enquiry he answers—

“All mine, my son. By the grace of Allah to a poor sinful man. ’Tis by his election, my son, and divine ordination and sanctification, and a little by the power of my prostrations and lustrations which I neglect not, neither morning nor noon nor evening nor at any of the intervals by law commanded.”²

He is so inspired by the beauty of Anice that scintillating rhyming words come easily to him, though Nureddene and Anice are not fully convinced by his claim.

¹ *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 7, p. 673.

² *Ibid.*, p. 674.

For his personality does not match the wealth around. Nureddene asks him discreetly if he had "good doctrinal justification" for his claim. This sudden shock of beauty loosens the tongue of Ibrahim. Simile, metaphor and alliteration effortlessly adorn the speech of the bland hypocrite. On one side the old lecherous fool talks high morality. "Oh my son, hanker not unlawfully after perishable earthly goods; for, verily, they are a snare and verily, verily they entrap the feet of the soul as it toileth over the straight rough road to Heaven."¹ On the other side he unashamedly makes overtures to Anice who is young enough to be his granddaughter. He talks in the language of passion, of bewitched fools "Praise the Lord who has given thee hips like the moon and a waist indeed! a small, seizable waist, Allah forgive me!"² Under the guise of old age he showers sensuous praises on Anice while addressing Nureddene:

"Allah, Allah, its floor yearns for thy beauty and for the fair feet of thy sister. If there were youth now instead of a poor venerable me, would one not kiss the marble wherever her fair small feet will touch it? But I praise Allah that I am an old man with my thoughts turned to chastity and holiness."³

The old man is in the grip of an emotion over which he has no control. Driven by desire he says—

"Allah! Allah! She is a gazelle that springeth. Allah! Allah! the swan in my lake wadeth less perfectly. She is as a willow when the wind swayeth it. Allah! Allah!"⁴

For the time being Nureddene and Anice forget their woes, their tiredness. They eat, drink and relax. The great of the world give largely and can take graciously. Nureddene, himself a fabulous host, accepts Ibrahim's hospitality. Our hero and heroine swing to another extreme of gaiety. A reaction to their late trials and tribulations sets in. They forget the nagging worry which must be gnawing at the back of their minds, they try to forget everything and live in the present. With innocent mischief they set out to make a greater fool of Shaikh Ibrahim and to have some fun at his cost. Anice-Aljalice exclaims:

"Old father, you discourage our stomachs. You shall eat a morsel from my fingers or I will say you use me hardly."⁵

Ibrahim is transported to the seventh heaven. At first he protests and tries to keep up the pretence of being a saintly old man. It is no use. The fool in us always hopes for the impossible. Shaikh Ibrahim is more of a fool than most men. With what hopes or intentions he calls Anice sister of Nureddene only

¹ *Ibid* , p. 675. ² *Ibid*. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 676. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 676 ⁵ *Ibid.*, p 677.

Allah knows. For a person of even ordinary sensibility it must have been obvious that they were lovers if not husband and wife. He hopes against hope and desires and covets Anice. His beauty-struck heart answers—

“No, no, no, no. Ah well, fr m your fingers, from your small slim rosy fingers. Allah! Only a bit, only a morsel: verily, verily! Allah! surely thy fingers are sweeter than honey. I could eat them with kisses.”¹

From one delighted folly to the next damning hyperbole this king of humbugs sets us alight with laughter. When Nureddene asks for wine he answers with an extremely fertile tongue weaving an argument of matchless nonsense—

“...But 'tis forbidden. What saith Ibn Batuta? That wine worketh transmogrification. And Ibrahim Alhashhash bin Fuzfuz bin Bienbillon al Sandilani of Bassora, he rateth wine sorely and averreth that the red glint of it is the shine of the red fires of Hell, its sweetness kisseth damnation and the coolness of it in the throat causeth bifurcation. Ay, verily, the great Alhashhash.”²

Ibrahim's genius in producing at a moment's notice such dizzying nonsense awes us. The effect of the bewitching beauty of Anice has loosened his tongue. His glands begin to work overtime, bestowing on him the gift of the gab and stimulating his inventive faculty. Still he has to keep the appearance of venerability. So he refuses the proposal for drinking:

“...Wine! Verily, the Prophet hath cursed grower and presser, buyer and seller, carrier and drinker. I take refuge with Allah from the curse of the Prophet.”³

It is not for nothing that Nureddene has freely ranged among the wine-bibbing, beauty-sampling fast set of Bassora. He must have seen many such hangers-on at the peripheries of the rich and gay life. He makes fun of his pious discourse on abstinence.

Nureddene:

Hast thou not even one old ass among all thy belongings? And if an old ass is cursed, is it thou who art cursed?

Ibrahim:

Hm! my son, what is thy parable?

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 678.

³ *Ibid.*

Nureddene:

I will show you a trick to cheat the devil. Give three dinars of mine to a neighbour's servant with a dirham or two for his trouble, let him buy the wine and clap it on an old ass and let the old ass bring it here. So art thou neither grower nor presser, seller nor buyer, carrier nor drinker, and if any be damned, it is an old ass that is damned. What saith the great Alhashhash?"¹

The very name Alhashhash makes a double hash of the mock venerability of Ibrahim. Nureddene recognises him for what he is, "the very gem of hypocrites". Anice has resolved to laugh and be merry and she answers Nureddene:

"The fitter to laugh at. Dear my lord, be merry
Tonight, if only for tonight. Let care
Expect tomorrow."²

Her heart is suddenly light, for her beloved Nureddene has escaped the claws of Almuene. Before facing the uncertainties of the morrow, she wants to enjoy the night to the full. She says, "...where is that old sober learning? I want to dance, to laugh, to outriot riot."³ Both of them in this over-wrought, extra-heightened mood make fun of Ibrahim. Anice calls him 'old sober learning' and Nureddene teases him for his quick return with the wine. "What a quick ass was this, Shaikh Ibrahim!" It is all a fairytale within a fairyland, otherwise one does not send one's supposedly wealthy host to get some wine and pay for it.

Now with delightful craft these young mischiefs enmesh Shaikh Ibrahim deeper and deeper in drunken revelry. When Shaikh Ibrahim explains his quick return thus—

"No, no, the wineshop is near, very near. Allah forgive us, ours is an evil city, this Bagdad; it is full of winebibbers and gluttons and liars."

Then Nureddene asks very innocently—

"Dost thou ever lie, Shaikh Ibrahim?"⁴

This direct question, this innuendo, drives Ibrahim to the wall and he defends himself with greater lies—

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 678-679. ² *Ibid.*, p. 679.

³ *Ibid.* ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 680.

“Allah forbid! Above all sins I abhor lying and liars. O my son, keep thy young lips from vain babbling and unnecessary lying. It is of the unpardonable sins, it is the way to Jahannams.”¹

He can contain himself no more. He indirectly refers to Anice as Nureddene’s sister, but Nureddene neither confirms nor denies his assumption. His burning desire forces from him a direct question: “But I pray thee what is the young lady to thee, my son?”² On Nureddene’s replying that Anice is his slave girl he at once takes heart—“Ah, ah! thy slave girl? Ah, ah! a slave girl! Ah!”³ Nureddene and Anice had already decided to further fuddle this befuddled fool and without even a glance or a word passing between them they proceed to entrap him with Machiavellian cunning.

(To be continued)

SHYAM KUMARI

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

BREAK OF DAWN

ERE the night had closed her dark wings
 I left my room for a nearby knoll,
 Barren, to pass the tiresome hour.
 Before me lay unfurrowed fields,
 Further a forest, mountains far off—
 All thoughtless and mute, shrouded in mist.
 But as dead hours began to creep
 Away, a ray from the sun, the lord
 Of coming day, had torn the clouds
 And mist, lighted a bud, a star,
 An only bloom on a naked bough.
 Descended from nowhere a honey-throated voice.
 Through deepest gloom a sweetness stole,
 Upbearing aeons of blind whirling darkness.

JAYANTILAL PAREKH

JUNG AND COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES

SYMPATHETIC TRENDS IN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY

AMERICA, the United States, is a new land, a new people, all set on innovations. Innovations attract the people and they experiment with them. In psychology too, while experimental natural science with a behaviouristic bias stands as the model, yet it is boldly being extended to new problems. *Extra Sensory Perception* is one important such problem. Meditation has been taken up for study in the same way at many places. Maslow has struck upon the idea of 'peak experiences' as the more important approach to the study of personality than that of neurosis or the 'sick personality' followed by Freud, Adler and Jung. Jungian Analysts are active in advancing on the lines of Jung's psychology. Transpersonal psychology, which emphasizes three levels of experience, the subrational, the rational and the suprarational. Psycho-synthesis is another sympathetic strand, which stands contrasted to psycho-analysis.

These trends in American psychology are extremely interesting and it will be useful to know a little about them.

Academic Psychology in America

In the strictly academic field, we have naturally the old traditional views of personality still persisting with modifications more or less. W. James is remembered a good deal. Titchner's influences too can yet be traced. But the influential views represent a biological-genetic base and trend.

Gardner Murphy has written a big volume called *Personality* (a thousand pages strong) and he can be taken as a representative of the academic views on the subject. The first few sentences of the 'Foreword' are a frank confession of the present state of knowledge of man so far as scientific psychology is concerned. Says he, "To write about personality in such a way as to help in clarifying the little that we know and to show its possible relations to the vast and confused domain that we do not yet understand—this is my aim." (p. x) Further he says, "Throughout the volume the approach to personality is made chiefly in terms of origins and modes of development on the one hand, interrelations or structural problems on the other. It has not been possible to do justice to the quantitative problems revealed by psychometrics, by factor analysis, by ratings, and by questionnaires, or to personality tests or therapeutic and educational problems." (p. x) It is simply an attempt at evaluation of data on how personality grows. That shows how academic psychology broadly stands at present and what its interests are. An explanatory theory of personality is not attempted.

The author takes man as an organism which grows up in interaction with the environment. It has its needs and is subject to external moulding influences.

'Situationism' and 'Field Theory' are the preferred terms of personality and regarding its growth 'Situationism' stresses the external situation and 'Field Theory' takes the organism and the environment as one fact. Individuality of the individual is not appreciated in either. The book offers an elaborate account of the external influences referring to the vast empirical investigations carried out. Consciousness as a distinct fact is not entertained. The organism is psychophysical. But after all the elaborate handling of the problems and aspects of personality the conclusion at the end is sceptical: "The future course of personality research will plainly be governed not so much by the continuation of the methods borrowed from psycho-analysis, Gestalt psychology, physiology, and cultural anthropology, to which emphasis has been given in this book, as by altogether new modes of attack." (*ibid.*, pp. 925-6) Again: "The psychology of personality as it exists today will be crushed and pulverised and a new creation made from the debris, not because of the wisdom inherent in criticisms of it but simply because in grappling with the problems of man it will be weighed in the balance and found wanting." (*ibid.*, p. 925)

Gardner Murphy did not himself think of a new mode of attack. However, his scepticism is surely not the prevalent mood in the field of psychology. Transpersonal psychology has positive ideas. Jungians have a large orientation of life and its transformation. The Freudian movement is in a creative form and there are other academic psychologists too with creative ideas.

Prof. B. Kuppaswamy among the Indian psychologists was much interested in a sound theory of personality. He was profoundly impressed by Jung's study of the subject and the influence he has exercised on other psychologists. He was equally appreciative of the work of Maslow, Allport and Rogers. He appreciated their affirmation that the highest need of man is 'self-actualisation'. Another psychologist, Kurt Goldstein, also holds 'self-actualisation' as the basic drive. Says he, "The tendency of the organism to actualise itself is sufficient by itself and no other drives need to be posited." Prescott Lacky also subscribes to the same idea in a variant form of expression. Rogers' own words are emphatic: "Below the level of the problem situation about which the individual is complaining—behind the trouble with studies, or wife, or employer, or with his own uncontrollable or bizarre behaviour, or with his frightening feelings, lies one central search. It seems to me that at bottom each person is asking: Who am I, really? How can I get in touch with this real self, underlying all my surface behaviour? How can I become myself?" (quoted from *The Self* by Clark E. Moustakan, p. 196). Maslow's words too are interesting: "The lack of meditateness and inwardness, of real conscience, real values, is a standard American personality defect, a shallowness, a superficial living on the surface of life, a living by other people's opinions rather than by one's own native, inner voice." (*ibid.*, p. 239) This is, however, general human nature, its externalist posture.

Maslow's Reaction to the Psychology of the 'Sick Man'

Abraham Maslow has been a psychologist in America who during the years 1930 and 1970 worked out a most creative idea. He struck upon the idea of a mental health and its conditions as the basis for the study of human nature. This was surely a reaction to studying man through conditions of sickness as was done by Freud and others. His own words are so clear and definite:

"When I started to explore the psychology of health, I picked out the finest, healthiest people, the best specimens of mankind I could find, and studied them to see what they were like. They were very different, in some ways startlingly different from the average...

"I learned many lessons from these people. But one in particular is our concern now. I found that these individuals tended to report having had something like mystic experiences, moments of great awe, moments of the most intense happiness, or even rapture, ecstasy or bliss...

"These moments were of pure, positive happiness, when all doubts, all fears, all inhibitions, all tensions, all weaknesses, were left behind. Now self-consciousness was lost, along with all separateness and distance from the world.. (One subject said, for instance, 'I felt like a member of a family, not like an orphan.')

"Perhaps most important of all, however, was the report in these experiences of the feeling that they had really seen the ultimate truth, the essence of things, the secret of life, as if veils had been pulled aside. Alan Watts has described this feeling as 'This is it!', as if you had finally got there, as if ordinary life was a striving and a straining to get some place and this was the arrival, this was Being. There!... Everyone knows how it feels to want something and not know what. These mystic experiences feel like the ultimate satisfaction of vague, unsatisfied yearnings....

"But here I had already learned something new. The little that I had ever read about mystic experiences tied them in with religion, with visions of the supernatural. And, like most scientists, I had sniffed at them in disbelief and considered it all nonsense, maybe hallucinations, maybe hysteria—almost surely pathological.

"But the people telling me... about these experiences were not such people—they were the healthiest people!"

Maslow had the unique inspiration of being struck by these 'peak experiences' which come to us in rare moments of life, but usually pass off unnoticed, though they really possess a quality of their own incomparable to the ordinary experiences of life. He studied these experiences and sought to build up a view of human nature, as Freud had done on the facts of conflicts and repressions of the neurotic personality.

Evidently, the approach has force and validity. The entire personality, its highest and its lowest and the average are interconnected. And what personality

can become has more guidance to give for the average than the subnormal can. The sickness is not the standard, health is the standard. Bliss can be a standard for ordinary pleasures, not suffering. This is a truth to ponder and we must appreciate the force of Maslow's original approach to man and human nature.

He studied the conditions under which 'Peak Experiences' occur and can be induced and the effects they produce on life generally. And in consequence a psycho-therapy could be conceived, which is proving useful.

Surely, the approach of 'Peak Experiences' and the attempt to evoke them works. Above all, it focusses attention on health and the highest experiences of life.

Transpersonal Psychology

Now in America, there is in particular a school of psychology called Transpsychology, of which Ken Wilber is an important representative. The main idea here is that beyond normal personality there are ranges of consciousness which too belong to man. Wilber, in all, identifies ten such levels or planes, which for brevity he reduces to five: body, life, mind and soul and spirit, the last two being the higher spiritual planes. These five he equates to the five Koshas or Sheaths of personality of the Upanishad, the Annamaya, the Pranamaya, the Manomaya, the Vijnanamaya and the Ananda-maya, the body, the life, the mind, integral (holistic) knowledge and bliss. Wilber has developed this concept and then tried to interpret the phenomenon of religion with great cogency. With great pains he has collected wide evidence in support of it. And He is thus able to meet many difficult situations of knowledge and culture. He argues that the rational level has had a pre-rational level and so is there a post-rational level too, where wholeness is the governing principle.

This is a rising conception of personality, which holds out a great promise for knowledge and culture as a whole. It is comparable to the integral personality of Integral yoga.

INDRA SEN

GLORIA LAND FARMING PRACTICE IN TUNE WITH NATURE

FROM *THE HINDU*, Sunday, May 31, 1987, p. 24

ENVIRONMENTALISTS and conservationists all over the world have been expressing serious concern about the hazardous consequences of modern agriculture, which relies heavily on synthetic fertilizers and plant protection chemicals. They favour an environmentally sound and sustainable method of food production, and the ecological agriculture, which strictly is in tune with the principles of nature, has been advocated as an effective alternative to meet the burgeoning food demand.

Organic farming, as it is frequently referred to, has been attempted in small fields with good success in different parts of the world. "Even a large farm run on ecological principles can be highly profitable," points out Mr. Manindra Pal, who manages a 40-hectare farm, Gloria Land, at Pillayarkuppam village, 17 km west of Pondicherry.

Gloria Land, one of the farms run by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, is an integrated one raising crops, cattle, poultry, ducks and honey bees, and it is practising "nature farming" for more than 17 years now. "Ecologically oriented agriculture helps to conserve and recycle organic residues and maintains a lasting soil productivity. It re-establishes a well-balanced ecological base for harmonious co-existence of crop and livestock. It is a self-sustaining system of high productivity that does not pollute the surroundings," says Mr. Manindra.

"We do not deny that modern agriculture brings about dramatic results in a short time. But the attendant problems surface soon, and in the long run it does more harm than good to society. The toxic chemicals and mineral fertilizers do great damage to the environment and result in fertility decline, soil problems and severe erosion," he says.

An ecological orientation in agriculture is guided by a set of basic principles and measures. Teeming with millions of microbes and several other beneficial organisms, soil is a dynamic medium that supports a healthy crop, and all ecological movements have great concern for soil health. "One has to work hard to restore soil health and it is a slow process," says Mr. Manindra. He took several years to reclaim the highly eroded land and bring it to a good condition.

"Years of patience, hard labour and perseverance have borne fruit. Now, our yields are quite high and are comparable with those fed with high doses of chemical fertilizers. It is economically viable and produces a range of wholesome food," he says. From traditional rice varieties an average six tonnes a hectare is reaped and the straw yields are three times that of modern rice varieties. Annually, two crops are raised on the farm.

Bananas yield hefty bunches and daily about 5000 fruits are harvested from the farm. The farm yields about 250 kg of different vegetables for the Ashram kitchen and 394 adult coconut trees annually fetch an income of Rs. 1.25 lakhs. "We are fully convinced that organic farming is quite encouraging and, if the techniques and the principles of ecological agriculture are strictly adopted, it is bound to be successful in any condition," he explains.

In Gloria Land, the crop-livestock-fish-duck system is well integrated and the organic wastes are recycled efficiently to derive maximum productivity and energy. It is almost a self-reliant unit and stands as an exemplary model-farm in the country.

A stock of 200 cattle of indigenous breeds is maintained in the pink of health without any vaccination or modern veterinary medicine. The native breeds such as Gir, Kankrej (from the Rann of Kutch), Haryana, Rathi (from Bikaner) and Pondicherry are housed in hygienic cattle yards. The healthy cows yield each an average 4,500 litres per lactation. Their conception rate is about 70 per cent. "Our native animals have immense potential. So far they have not been bred systematically. In Gloria Land, we strive to breed them selectively to evolve indigenous cattle of higher productivity," explains Mr. Manindra.

The cattle are fed with rich fodder combination of napier grass, *Leucaena* and hedge lucerne and the cattle shed is kept tidy—free of any odour—by continuous flow of water. Provision has been made to collect all the urine and dung, which are used to feed three large bio-gas plants of 20 cubic metres capacity each. The effluent from the bio-gas plants and the cattle wash-water empties into a large oxidation pond, where ducks are let in to eat up the mosquitoes and larvae. The liquid manure collected in the oxidation pond is pumped to manure the crops by rotation.

"The biogas is used to run a 30Kva generator for four hours daily. The generator powers four 10 hp submersible pumps in the farm. The biogas plants have been in operation for the last four years without any break. Surplus gas from the plants is diverted to the kitchen to meet the cooking needs," Mr. Manindra says. The farm has an excellent drainage system and the water from the drainage pits is tapped for raising different kinds of vegetables.

"In addition to that, fishes are raised in the drainage pools. Our preliminary trials showed that fishes such as catla, rohu and common carps grew well in the organically rich water and about Rs. 1.25 lakhs worth of fish could be harvested from a hectare of water-spread. We are now contemplating to launch pisciculture as a commercial venture," he says. The fish help in enriching the water with organic phosphorous and enriched water from the fish pond is used for the crops as phosphorus nutrition. To meet the specific potassium demand of banana crop salts of potassium are added from time to time to help maintain the potassium balance in banana gardens.

Compost, layers of ripe plants and green manure are liberally dumped to

build up the humus content of the soil. A systematic crop rotation is followed to allow sufficient "rest" for the soil to regenerate, according to him. About 15 hectares of land is earmarked for rice cultivation in the first season, and in the same land forages, pulses and millets are grown as second crop.

"Not a drop of plant protection chemical is used on the farm and we do not encounter any pest or disease in the major crops. We observed that only when there was some imbalance in crop nutrition, pests occurred, and they were also well within the economic threshold level. However, a small portion of the vegetables is regularly lost to pests, but the damage is insignificant when compared to the high yields," he says. The natural enemies of crop pests and beneficial insects are allowed to keep a constant check on the population of harmful insects and pathogens. Birds also help in eliminating the undesirable insects. Those birds, which cause damage to grains, are shooed away by labourers. Bee keeping is an integral part of this ecological farm, and the bees contribute significantly in pollinating the crops.

"Gloria Land is an organic and self-contained farm with less dependence on external input. It is labour-intensive and offers year-round occupation for many villagers," says Mr. Manindra. All these developments are the rewards of hard work and patient experimentation, according to him. "When we entered the land in the late sixties the landscape was predominantly criss-crossing deep gullies and gorges," he recalls. Gradually, the reclamation process began. Systematic soil conservation efforts—contour bunding, levelling and organic mulching—arrested erosion and turned the area into productive life-supporting fields.

"Initially the yields with organic manures alone were not appreciable. The soil needed some supplementation with mineral fertilizers. But slowly, as the fertility of the soil improved with the build up of humus, the chemical substitution was totally withdrawn. Green manure crops rotated with cereals, biogas slurry and fish-pond water have improved the productivity of soil, and stability of crop yield has been achieved.

"We tried zero-tillage farming using rice straw mulch with considerable success. But we do not pursue it because rice straw is becoming dearer," says Mr. Manindra. In economic terms, zero-tillage agriculture was not practicable and the time-tested ploughing with the country plough proved ideal.

"All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony." This is the credo of Sri Aurobindo and the nature of the farm goes to prove it. If the delicate natural rhythm is broken, as in the case of excessive manuring of rice, problems rear up in the form of pests and diseases. "A healthy soil produces a healthy crop."

"Organic agriculture underscores that peace, love and harmony are the basis of all life on earth. Modern agriculture deviates from the principles of nature. Therefore we should avoid it and adopt ecological farming practices to

grow wholesome food," says Mr. Dyuman Bhai, a trustee of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

"We have just made a beginning in the direction of organic farming. We are still in the process of learning the complexities of ecological agriculture and we try to understand the synthesis of agriculture," says Mr. Manindra modestly.

AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

"DOGMAS"

A DOG goes bow-wow in English, wau-wau in German, bu-bu in Italian, ouâ-ouâ in French, woof-woof in American, wan-wan in Japanese, bhaun-bhaun in Hindi and val-val in Tamil.

Among the sweet things of life, Byron has a reference to only one animal's presence:

'Tis sweet to hear the watch-dog's honest bark
Bay deep-mouthed welcome as we draw near home...

(*Don Juan*, Canto 1, stanza 123)

In the *Pocket World Bible*, edited by Robert O. Ballou in collaboration with Friedrich Spiegelberg (Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1948), the introduction to the ancient Zoroastrian religion, followed by the Parsis today, says (p. 160):

"The emphasis upon the goodness and usefulness of the dog is one of the most beautiful details in this religion of shepherd and cattlemen which, but for two defeats in battle [at Marathon, 490 B.C. and Salamis, 480 B.C.], might have been the religion of the Western World [in place of Judaeo-Christianity]. 'The dog, with the prickly back, with the long and thin muzzle...is the good creature among the creatures of the Good Spirit...Whosoever shall smite either a shepherd's dog or a house-dog, his soul, when passing to the other world, shall fly howling louder and more sorely grieved than the shepherd does in the lofty forest where the wolf ranges.'...

"By Zoroastrian rules dog life was protected as human life was, first because of its usefulness to a people dependent upon herds and flocks, but also because of a recognition of the character of the dog which has marked true and realistic dog lovers of all times."

Perhaps the most striking "dogma" ever enunciated because of that recognition is T. Earle Welby's pronouncement: "The only quite indisputable argument for the continuation of the human race is that a world empty of man would be intolerable to dogs."

FOR YOUR EARS ONLY

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1987)

8. A FRIEND IN NEED

I HAVE always wondered what this world would be without friends. If I laugh with a friend I am sane and if I laugh alone I am (must be) mad. Napoleon Bonaparte once confessed: "I made courtiers; I never pretended to make friends." But on a rocky little island he fretted away the last years of his life—alone. Books, of course, are the best friends for they don't disappoint us as friends in human frames do. But a creative writer cannot afford to do away with friends, for what is literature if it does not study life?

I too have many friends (though 'friends' is a very respectable word, and we cannot use it on all and sundry)—friends who smile at me face to face and speak ill of me in my absence; impostors who are friendly only to curry favour with me and then turn indifferent once their goal is achieved; friends who poison the mind of the higher authorities about me, pull wires and give political pressures to clip my wings so that I may not soar to greater heights.

That is the reason why I never talk ill of myself. Such friends always do that for me. And yet I don't find fault with them for they are what they are. I don't antagonize them for without them the darker side of life would remain a mystery for ever. I for one believe that we should never shun such 'friends'. Without them we may not be able to distinguish the real ones from impostors.

I don't intend to write about them here. Why waste the precious pages of *Mother India* on them? Let them go into my fictional writings under assumed names. If the cap fits, let them wear it. Let them not be foolish enough to betray themselves.

"A faithful friend is a strong defense; and he that hath found such a one hath found a treasure," says the Bible. I am indeed very lucky to find such a treasure in R. Marimuthu *alias* Murthy, whom I have already mentioned in the second chapter of this serial.

He was my classmate in the Town Missionary School. During the twelve blessed years at school, he was my only companion and friend. The vice-versa also holds true.

If I were the first to reach the school every day, he was the second to do so. Like me, he came to school from a distance of 6 kms. With a bagload of books and notebooks suspended from the crook of his left hand and a tiffin-box in his right, he came on foot to school. His very presence put my loneliness to flight. My face muscles relaxed and bloomed like a lotus at the sight of the Sun.

One day during the lunch interval when I was taking food with my first cousin in the cycle shed of the school, my friend came rushing towards us and

yelled: "Hei! Your money-box is stolen."

My cousin was about to break into tears. I stood non-plussed.

"But you need not worry. Here it is," he said opening his palm.

There sat a matchbox.

The story of the matchbox now turned moneybox is this. Like every other schoolboy, my cousin and I loved to eat toffees. Our parents gave us not more than two toffees a day; if it was in cash not more than a quarter anna to buy goodies.

"If only we had five annas to buy 100 grams of toffee and eat them all at the same time, how nice it would be!" my cousin dreamt aloud.

"Yes! It would be as nice as eating Deepavali sweets," I responded, as my tongue began to water.

We hit upon a plan. My cousin and I jointly began saving money with the higher aim of buying 200 grams of toffee and sharing them equally. For fear that we might spend the money if it remained in our pockets, we found a matchbox, put all the coins we had in it and hid it in a bush underneath a tall margosa tree that stood adjacent to the school toilet. And every day during the interval, we went to the bush, took out the moneybox, put that day's deposit of a quarter anna each and hid the box again. This we did so cleverly that it would not have aroused even the least sign of suspicion in anybody.

My cousin snatched the matchbox from my friend and began counting the coins... He then beamed with satisfaction.

"How do you know that the moneybox belongs to us?" I asked my friend.

"Well! You are the only two who are found quite often near the bush. Nobody else goes there for fear that such bushes may house snakes," my friend remarked casually. "And today I saw somebody else digging out this matchbox from the bush. I caught him redhanded and found that it was a moneybox. It revealed to me the entire story"

"Good! But who wanted to steal it?" I asked.

"I don't know the name of the fellow. You can come and see him if you like. He must be still there near the bush," he said.

We all three went only to find a small boy, perhaps from the nursery section, sitting near the bush and weeping—from the shock caused by the blows showered on him by my friend for treasure-hunting.

From that day the moneybox went into the latter's bag. He saved the coins for us and hence became a 'Walking Bank'. When the amount matured he bought toffees for us, but took only one toffee from each just to give us company.

Even today he continues to be a Bank to me, always willing to loan any amount and to accept the amount without interest or grudge when I return it at my own convenience.

Once a week I received a letter from him when I was away at Annamalai University doing the post-graduate course. Some of his letters are still with me.

Whenever I dip into them, they give me the impression of reading an affectionate elder brother's and not a friend's communications, for they are full of advices peppered with love.

I promptly answered all his letters. But once it so happened that I was unable to answer any of his repeated letters. It was not because of want of time.

He sensed that something was wrong and made a dash to the University hostel only to learn from me that no postal stationary, not even a postcard, was available at the University Post-Office.

He casually pulled out a paper packet from his bag. Handing it to me, he beamed with a smile and said: "So I guessed it right."

I opened the packet. I found ten postcards and fifteen inland letters.

There were times when we shared food from the same plate, exchanged our views on Modern Tamil literature and walked on the promenade in the evenings.

I still distinctly remember the night we sat on the beach sands near the new pier. The cool breeze fanned us and the spray of the waves that caressed us was pleasing. We conveniently stretched our limbs and went to sleep.

A sudden gust of wind followed by heavy raindrops shook us up.

We looked at our wrist-watches. It was 2 o'clock. The wind was chilly and the place pitch-dark. Not a soul was around. The leaping waves looked like mythological giant cobras and their weird sounds along the shore were like discussions held by ghosts. Hand in hand, we took to our heels.

There were times we punched each other and exchanged letters of abuse, while we were at school. Yet our enmity never lasted more than a couple of days. We were like true brothers often quarrelling over something or other and friendly again a few minutes later.

There were times we misunderstood each other when we grew up. But he had more of a forgiving nature than I. He understood me better than I understood him. Good friendship knows no end.

He is my wise counsellor too. As a teacher who loves his job, he has solved many of my knotty problems. That may be the reason why his hair has turned grey while mine not yet. I have confided in him my sorrows and joys, disappointments and exhilarations. He was always a solace to me and his words soothing comfort.

Once I voiced a long-nurtured doubt to my friend: "I know you are a great comfort and support to me. I know you help me without any self-interest. What prompts you to do so?"

He broke into a guffaw and then said: "Well! I do not know. All that I know is that some internal force pushes me to help you. That's all... And if I don't do it who will do it?"

Have I ever helped him in any way? No. He has not yet given me a chance to do so.

P. RAJA

STORIES FROM TAMIL LITERATURE

43. CLEVER REJOINER

IN those days it was not an easy matter for poets to win recognition. Any major poetic work they had finished must pass through a rigorous examination by a competent body of poets, and without its approval no book was considered to be of any worth. So an author brought his book before this august assembly that usually met at a king's court. The poet read his poems aloud stanza by stanza while the other poets listened with great care and an ear for flaws. If they found any flaw either in thought or word or technique, they immediately pulled up the author. The author must explain or be prepared to correct the flaw. Otherwise the book would never gain recognition. Usually the system worked well and no third-rate author was allowed to parade his half-baked composition as a wonderful piece of art. However, human nature being what it is, some of the examining poets took it as an opportunity to snub their rivals.

When poet Pukalendi was thus reading his book for approval, poet Ottakoothar was one of the examining assembly. Pukalendi had been a rival of Ottakoothar for many years and the latter had always been envious of the former's gifts. Here was an opportunity for Ottakoothar to harass his rival and he listened with an unholy alertness to raise an objection if he found a flaw.

Pukalendi went on reading his epic. He reached a descriptive passage and read, "It was a golden evening. The bees drunk with honey played music on the jasmine blooms. The jasmine bloom was a conch and the bee the conch-player."

Ottakoothar stood up to raise an objection. "Your image is wrong," he said. "A player of the conch puts the narrow end of the conch in his mouth and not the wider end. But the bee hums sucking honey at the wider end of the flower. So the comparison is not apt."

Pukalendi was in a daze for a moment. He knew that Ottakoothar was maliciously trying to find fault with him, for there was no need to look at the image so meticulously. However, he must answer or admit fault before proceeding further. Everyone was looking at him. In a moment he had a brainwave. He said with a smile, "Normally, a conch-player plays from the narrower end. But here, the bee is drunk. It does not know one end from the other and so has put its mouth on the wrong end."

There was applause from the examiners. All along they knew that Ottakoothar was doing it with a purpose, but they had wanted to see how Pukalendi would tackle him. And he had tackled him successfully. They told Ottakoothar that they were satisfied with the explanation and that the author could proceed further.

Ottakoothar saw that his clever objection was answered in a cleverer manner. He could do nothing but concede the point.

44. THE DEVOTED WIFE

Thiruvalluvar was the author of *Thirukural*, the world-famous didactic work in Tamil. Historically, nothing is known about him except that he wrote the book and that he was known by the name Valluvar to which the honorific 'Thiru' was added later. However, there are many legends about him which belong to a rich repertoire of Tamil tradition.

According to these legends, Thiruvalluvar had a wife called Vasuki who was very devoted to him. She is often held up to Tamil women as an example of an ideal wife. She possessed all wifely virtues and loved her husband dearly. And she offered unquestioning obedience to him.

Someone who had heard about the wonderful qualities of Vasuki wished to find out whether it was all true. He visited the home of Thiruvalluvar without revealing his intention. Thiruvalluvar read his mind and asked him to be his guest for a few days.

During one of those days Vasuki was drawing water from the well in the backyard and the guest was also in the garden doing something, but closely following the movements of Vasuki, admiring silently the way in which she went about her work. Suddenly the voice of Thiruvalluvar came from the house calling to Vasuki. The response of Vasuki was lightning-like. She suspended rope and bucket in mid-air and hurried into the house.

On another morning Vasuki served them cold rice for breakfast. Thiruvalluvar asked Vasuki to bring him a fan saying that the rice was steaming hot. Without so much as a puzzled look Vasuki went immediately and brought him a fan. That very day the guest departed, having satisfied himself with what he had learnt.

Thiruvalluvar was a meticulous person and he lived a life of discipline. Even on the very first day of their married life, he had instructed Vasuki that every time before she served him food she should place beside him an extra bowl of water and a needle. She obeyed him without question and the practice continued throughout their life. But never once did Thiruvalluvar use the bowl and the needle and Vasuki was not able to know to what purpose her husband had wanted them.

Years passed and Vasuki lay on her death-bed. Valluvar was sitting beside her, attending to her with loving care. Vasuki looked at Thiruvalluvar with something in her mind and her lips quivered. Thiruvalluvar understood that something was troubling her and that she was struggling to ask him a question. He asked her to speak her mind freely. Then with much shyness Vasuki asked him about the bowl of water and the needle. Thiruvalluvar smiled. He said that if any rice spilled to the floor while she served he might pick up the rice with the needle and wash it in the bowl of water before eating. But never once had Vasuki spilled a single gram of rice while serving and thus there had been no

occasion for the use of the needle and the bowl of water. Hearing this Vasuki felt greatly relieved, for the question that had been harassing her mind all her life had been answered at last. With great satisfaction she breathed her last.

M. L. THANGAPPA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Rupanjali: Essays in memory of O. C. Gangoly, ed. K. K. Ganguli and S. S. Biswas. Calcutta, O. C. Gangoly Memorial Soc., 1986 (no price given)

THIS substantial volume belongs to the genre of 'Festschriften': a collection of essays dedicated to some pre-eminent scholar and contributed by his colleagues, friends, disciples and students as a tribute to his influence and achievements.

In America and Europe there is a plentiful supply of academic and professional journals in every field of research through which scholars can publish their findings and keep in touch with the developments in their own and related domains. These periodicals are relatively expensive and are subscribed to mainly by the Librarians of universities or other research institutions. In India there seems to be a dearth of such vehicles for scholarship. In their absence how are scholars to exchange the fruits of their efforts? Seminars and conferences are probably the main forums, with their published proceedings providing a long-term record and reference tool, also for the benefit of those who were not present. Another possibility is the 'Festschrift' of which this volume is a good example.

The late O.C. Gangoly, though trained as a lawyer and practising much of his life as a solicitor, is one of the towering names in Indian art-scholarship of this century. Author of many books, he became editor of the Indian Society of Oriental Art's journal *Rupam*, and later Professor of Oriental Art at Calcutta University. Born in 1881, he lived to the ripe old age of 93. A function was held at Santiniketan in 1982 to inaugurate the celebrations honouring his centenary year, and this collection is the culmination of those centenary celebrations and tributes, though somewhat delayed in its publication. It is gratifying to see that the Government of India is ready to subsidise publication of such specialised works, which require many illustrations and would otherwise be priced far beyond the reach of the scholars to whom they are most useful and important. And indeed without such support it seems unlikely that such books would get published at all.

The first part of the volume is made up of reminiscences and tributes to the great man; the second, much larger part contains nearly 50 essays on numerous topics connected with Indian art in its many manifestations through the ages, thus reflecting the wide range of Professor Gangoly's interests and sympathies. Architecture, archaeology, iconography, sculpture and painting and literature, coins, arms and armour, music and dance, weaving, jewellery, and the folk-art of diverse parts of the country are all examined by scholars who are outstanding in their fields. And as most of these studies are unlikely to be made available in any other form, a volume such as this becomes a unique work of reference for any serious student of Indian cultural history.

The contributors represent the whole spectrum of outstanding art scholar-

ship in and about India today. And since each contributes a paper on his or her special field of study or endeavour, one would need to be as wide-ranging a scholar as O.C. Gangoly himself to be able to fully assess the value of each of them. Nevertheless the general reader interested in Indian Art history can get a glimpse of the kind of research work that is going on in universities and museums to gain a clearer understanding of its development and its manifold aspects. The many photographs, closely related to the text, but grouped together in several sections, naturally enhance the interest and value of the book.

Inevitably many of the essays are specialist studies, presented by specialists and intended for their specialist colleagues. Not all will be of appeal to the general reader and are not intended to be. Nevertheless, a non-specialist like myself, unable to assess the value of studies on 'The Interrelationship of Buddhist and Brahmanical iconography in 18th century Nepal' for example, or on 'Siva in the Brahmanical art of South-East Asia' may find much to appreciate in many others, such as Ms. Pupul Jayakar's contribution on 'The Human Challenge', Mrinalini Sarabhai's on 'The Dance and the meditation', G.N. Pant's on 'Ornamentation of Indian arms and armour' and Swami Prajnanananda's on 'O.C. Gangoly's findings on the origin and psychic value of the ragas and raginis of Indian music', and so on. Two studies on the connections between India and her Western neighbours in early times as suggested by art-findings, caught my interest: 'Reference to the Babylonian Goddess Nana in the inscription of Kanishka, year 10' by S.P. Tewari, who is Deputy Superintending Archaeologist with the Archaeological Survey of India in Mysore; and 'Two Byzantine objects and the Indian connection' by Pratapaditya Pal of the Los Angeles County Museum. 'Thoughts on the historical geography of the South' by M.N. Kathi has also some thought-provoking insights to offer. Presented all together these many varied offerings form a veritable *mala* of scholarship: a fitting tribute to one who would have been able to appreciate them to the full.

SHRADDHAVAN