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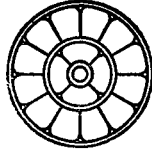
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLI

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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# 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 December 1987)*

## Chapter 17: THE CHAIN, Part Five—FREEDOM

*Freedom is the law of being in its illimitable unity, secret master of all Nature: servitude is the law of love in the being voluntarily giving itself to serve the play of its other selves in the multiplicity.*

*It is when freedom works in chains and servitude becomes a law of Force, not of Love, that the true nature of things is distorted and a falsehood governs the soul's dealings with existence.*

*Nature starts with this distortion and plays with all the combinations to which it can lead before she will allow it to be righted. Afterwards she gathers up all the essence of these combinations into a new and rich harmony of love and freedom.*

*Freedom comes by a unity without limits; for that is our real being. We may gain the essence of this unity in ourselves; we may realise the play of it in oneness with all others. The double experience is the complete intention of the soul in Nature.*

*Having realised infinite unity in ourselves, then to give ourselves to the world is utter freedom and absolute empire.*

*Infinite, we are free from death; for life then becomes a play of our immortal existence. We are free from weakness; for we are the whole sea enjoying the myriad shock of its waves. We are free from grief and pain; for we learn how to harmonise our being with all that touches it and to find in all things action and reaction of the delight of existence. We are free from limitation; for the body becomes a plaything of the infinite mind and learns to obey the will of the immortal soul. We are free from the fever of the nervous mind and the heart, yet are not bound to immobility.*

*Immortality, unity and freedom are in ourselves and await there our discovery; but for the joy of love God in us will still remain the Many.*

\*

*What does the first paragraph mean?*

At a superficial glance, these two things seem absolutely incompatible and contradictory. Outwardly, we don't think that we can be at the same time both free and in servitude. But there is an attitude that reconciles the two and makes them one of the happiest states in material existence.

Freedom is a sort of instinctive need, a necessity for the integral development of the being. In its essence it is a perfect realisation of the highest consciousness, it is the expression of oneness and of union with the Divine, it is the very meaning of the Origin and of the fulfilment.

But because this Oneness has manifested in the many, the multiplicity, something must serve as the link between the Origin and the manifestation; it is Love. And what is the first movement of love? Self-giving, service. What is its immediate, spontaneous, inevitable movement? To serve; to serve in a joyous, complete, total self-giving.

So in their purity, in their truth, these two things—freedom and service—far from being contradictory, are complementary. Perfect freedom lies in perfect union with the supreme Reality; for all ignorance, all unconsciousness is a form of bondage: they make you weak, limited, powerless. As soon as you have the slightest ignorance in you, it is a limitation, you are no longer free; as long as there is any element of unconsciousness in the being, it is a limitation, a bondage. Perfect freedom can only exist in perfect oneness with the supreme Reality. And how else to achieve that union but by a spontaneous self-giving, the giving of love? And, as I said, the first movement, the first expression of love is service.

So these two are closely linked in the Truth.

But here, on earth, in this world of ignorance and unconsciousness, this service which ought to have been spontaneous, full of love, the very expression of love, has become something imposed, an unavoidable necessity, carried out only in order to sustain life, to keep existence going; and so it has become something ugly, poor—humiliating.

What ought to have been a fulfilment, a joy, has become something ugly, a strain, a sordid obligation. And the feeling, the need for freedom has also got deformed and has become that kind of thirst for independence which leads straight to revolt, to division, to isolation, which is the very opposite of true freedom.

Independence! I remember hearing a wise old occultist give a wonderful reply to someone who said, "I must be independent!" And he replied with a smile, "Then that means that no-one will love you; for if you are loved, you will immediately become dependent on that love." It is a fine reply, for it is indeed love which leads to Oneness, and Oneness is the true expression of freedom. And so those who claim independence in the name of their right to freedom completely turn their backs on the real freedom, because they deny love.

This distortion comes from constraint.

One cannot love by force. No-one can force you to love, for then it is love no longer. So as soon as force enters in, it is a falsehood. All the movements of the inner being must be spontaneous, with the spontaneity that comes from an inner harmony, an understanding—from a free self-giving, from a return to the deeper truth, the reality of the being, the Source and the Goal.

## A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 2 JANUARY 1957

*Mother, will you explain the New Year Message? What is the meaning of: "It is not a crucified but a glorified body that will save the world"?<sup>1</sup>*

I AM going to tell you something, you will understand.

One day, I don't know when exactly, I suddenly remembered that I had to give a message for the year. Usually these messages reveal what is going to happen during the year, and as I had nothing to say, for certain reasons, I asked myself, or rather I asked whether I might receive a clear indication of what was to be said. I asked exactly this: what was the best state in the world, and the thing which could help these people or this state of consciousness to draw a little closer to the truth?

What was the best state?

A few hours later I had a booklet in my hands which had come from America and had been published as a kind of account of a photographic exhibition entitled "The Family of Man". There were quotations in this booklet and the reproduction of a number of photographs, classified according to the subject, and all for the purpose of trying to awaken the true sense of fraternity in men. The whole thing represented a sort of effort—immense, pathetic—to prevent a possible war. The quotations had been chosen by a woman-reporter who had come here and whom I had seen. And so, all this came expressing in a really touching way, the best human will which can manifest on earth at present, from the collective point of view. I am not saying that some individuals have not risen much higher and understood much better, but they are individual cases and not a collective attempt to do something for humanity. I was moved.

And then I came to the end of their booklet and to the remedy they in their ignorant goodwill suggested to prevent men from killing one another.... It was so poor, so weak, so ignorant, so ineffective, that I was truly moved and—I had a dream, that this exhibition would come here, to Pondicherry, that we could show it and add a concluding fascicule to their booklet in which the true remedy would be revealed to them. And all that took shape very concretely, with the kind of photographs which would be necessary, the quotations that should be put, and then, quite decisively, like something welling up from the depths of consciousness, came this sentence. I wrote it down, and as soon as it was written I said to myself: "Why, this is my message." And it was decided it would be this. So there it is.

This means that it is just the thing which can make the goodwill of mankind,

<sup>1</sup> "A power greater than that of Evil can alone win the Victory.  
It is not a crucified but a glorified body that will save the world."



the best being expressed on earth today, progress. It has taken a rather special form because this goodwill came from a Christian country and naturally there was quite a special Christian influence, but this is an attitude which is found everywhere in the world, differently expressed according to the country and the religion, and it was as a reaction against the ignorance of this attitude that I wrote this. Naturally, there is the same idea in India, this idea of complete renunciation of all physical reality, the profound contempt for the material world which is considered an illusion and a falsehood, that leaves, as Sri Aurobindo used to say, the field free to the sovereign sway of the adverse forces. If you escape from the concrete reality to seek a distant and abstract one, you leave the whole field of concrete realisation at the full disposal of the adverse forces—which have taken hold of it and more or less govern it now—in order to go away yourself to realise what Sri Aurobindo calls here a zero or a void unit—to become the sovereign of a nought. It is the return into Nirvana. This idea is everywhere in the world but expresses itself in different forms.

Because until now evil has been opposed by weakness, by a spiritual force without any power for transformation in the material world, this tremendous effort of goodwill has ended only in deplorable failure and left the world in the same state of misery and corruption and falsehood. It is on the *same* plane as the one where the adverse forces are ruling that one must have a greater power than theirs, a power which can conquer them totally *in that very domain*. To put it otherwise, a spiritual force which would be capable of transforming both the consciousness and the material world. This force is the supramental force. What is necessary is to be receptive to its action on the physical plane, and not to run away into a distant Nirvana leaving the enemy with full power over what one abandons.

It is neither sacrifice nor renunciation nor weakness which can bring the victory. It is only Delight, a delight which is strength, endurance, supreme courage. The delight brought by the supramental force. It is much more difficult than giving everything up and running away, it demands an infinitely greater heroism—but that is the only way to conquer.

Nothing else? I have some questions here, but now it is rather late.

*Mother, this new force which is going to act, will it act through individual effort or independently of it?*

Why this opposition? It acts independently of all individual effort, as if automatically in the world, but it *creates* individual effort and *makes use* of it. Individual effort is one of its means of action, and perhaps the most powerful. If one thinks that individual effort is due to the individual, it is an illusion, but if the individual under the pretext that there is a universal action independent of himself refuses to make an individual effort, he refuses to give his collaboration.

The Force wants to use, and does in fact use individual effort as one of the most powerful means at its disposal. It is the Force itself, it is this Power which is your individual effort.

And so, you see, the first movement of vital self-conceit when it is told, "You don't exist in yourself", naturally it says, "All right, I won't do anything any more! I am not the one who works, so I won't work any longer" and "Very good, the Divine can do everything, it is his business, I won't stir any more. If the credit does not go to me"—it comes to that—"I won't do anything any more." Well! But indeed there's no word for such things. This is something I constantly hear, it is simply a way of venting one's offended self-conceit, that's all. But the true reaction, the pure reaction is an enthusiastic impulse of collaboration, to play the game with all the energy, the will-power at the disposal of one's consciousness, in the state one is in, with the feeling of being supported, carried by something infinitely greater than oneself, which makes no mistakes, something which protects you and at the same time gives you all the necessary strength and uses you as the best instrument. And one feels that, and one feels one is working in security, that one can no longer make any mistakes, that what one does is done with the utmost result and—in delight. That is the true movement; to feel that one's will is intensified to the utmost because it is no longer a tiny little microscopic person in infinity but an infinite universal Power which makes you act: the Force of Truth. This is the only true reaction.

The other one—miserable. "Ah! I am not the one who is doing things, ah! it is not my will being expressed, ah! It is not my power that is working... So I lie down flat, stretch myself out in inert passivity and I won't move." "Very well, then," one tells the Divine, "do whatever you like, I don't exist any longer." That is poor indeed! There.

*(Questions and Answers 1957, pp. 3-6)*

# VIGNETTES OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

5

## **The Mother and a Mango**

ONCE some poor person sent a money-order of eight annas to the Mother. On it was written "Ma, you buy and eat mango." The Mother was very much moved by this gesture of love. She at once sent for Dyumanbhai, gave him the money-order and asked him to buy a mango. He bought a mango and gave it to the Mother. The Mother cut it herself and ate a piece out of it even though she was not fond of mangoes.

## **Pocket-Money**

Someone from Tiruvannamallai had been sending each month one rupee by money-order to the Mother. Among the many money-orders she received, we would not expect her even to notice it. But for the Divine it is not the largeness of the sum or offering but the sincerity of the heart that matters. One month the money-order didn't come in time and the Mother asked Amrita: "Where is my pocket-money for this month?"

## **Distribution**

The Mother used to distribute flowers to the Ashramites. Sometimes she had to stand for hours. X noticed that the Mother's legs were swollen. She pointed out the swelling to the Mother. The Mother sweetly smiled and told her, "Because I have to stand for hours there is no proper circulation." Then she held out her hands to X to show how they had become blue, and bruised for the disciples clutched them so tightly. X was aghast. She told the Mother, "I'll tell everyone they should not clutch or press your hands." The Mother forbade her to tell anything to anybody. She explained to her, "People hold on to me because of love and devotion," Alas, the devotees didn't realise that when hundreds pressed hard her flower-soft hands like that, she suffered physically. But she bore it silently so that the ardour of her children might not be dampened.

*Compiled by S*

## HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

5

ON the ninth day of the Durga Pooja ('Dasara', as it is called in the west and south) an old man after finishing the worship and the reading of the 'Devi Mahatmya' (or Chandi) started talking with his friends about a 'Uttara Yogi', whose whole life in brief had appeared along with his photo in an Andhra newspaper, *Andhra Prabha*—the Telugu edition of the *Indian Express* daily. His two sons and one grandson were deeply interested in that talk. They were all still young on that fateful day. Some seed was sown in these young hearts. His young grandson then only eight showed much more interest than the others. When he turned eighteen he heard again of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother from his maternal uncles. In 1950 he visited the Ashram with them to have the last glimpse of Sri Aurobindo's body, but alas they arrived too late, on 10th December morning. After weeping bitterly for the unseen God, X went back without having even the Mother's Darshan. But from 1951 onwards he visited the Ashram quite often and in 1958 when twenty-eight he joined the Ashram by the Grace of the Divine Mother.

One day in 1960 while meditating in the Meditation Hall, soon after the Balcony Darshan of the Mother, X had a vision of climbing a steep snowy mountain. Almost at the end of his ascent, he found that his further passage was stopped by a huge block of ice. Then slowly but spontaneously and intensely he prayed for the removal of the obstruction, uttering the fifteenth verse from the Ishopanishad:

हिरण्यमयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहित मुखम् ।  
तत् त्व पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥१५॥

"The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, "O fosterer, for the law of Truth, for sight."<sup>1</sup>

Slowly the block of ice melted and gave way. Then this aspirant found four more steps to climb. After climbing them and reaching the summit of the mountain he found himself in a small open-door temple with two lovely golden statues on a pedestal with their hands stretched out to bless. He identified them at that time as Gauri-Shanker (*gaur* means gold) and merged in them in a joyous mood.

He got up from his meditation with tears of joy. At the Ashram Gate, a telegram was awaiting him. In it he was asked to come to dispose of the ancestral property given him by his father at the time of his passing away. He was hesitant to go as his birthday was very near. After getting permission and blessings

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo's translation.

of the Divine Mother he went and sold the property for a reasonable sum but got only a partial amount just then. With that sum he returned to the Ashram just in time—a day before his birthday.

On the morning of his birthday during meditation in the Meditation Hall he heard a sweet, intimate voice as of Sri Aurobindo whispering—“Why not 1,2,3,4?” In the beginning he could not make head or tail of it. Did it have anything to do with those four steps of the mountain? Gradually it was revealed—it concerned his offering. He had arranged to give to the Mother that evening Rs. 1,111/-, an Indian auspicious offering-number. On hearing this sweet whispering he changed his number to Rs. 1,234/-. When he went up to the Mother, She after saying “Bonne Fête” asked him, “Do you know your name?” Hearing this puzzling question, he answered, “Yes, Mother, I know my name.” Then the Mother, opening the first page of the book, *The Mother on Sri Aurobindo*, and pointing to Her writing asked, “Do you know this name?” “No, Mother, this one I don’t know,” replied X. The Mother told him, “From now on this is your name, new name.... This is your New Birth.” So saying she gave some fragrant leaves signifying New Birth. Twice She gave them. Then at once he recollected a vision that had come to him during the Balcony Darshan on 7-7-60, in which the Mother had given him the same leaves of New Birth in two glass tumblers. He could not connect at that time his vision of climbing the snowy mountain to this new name which referred to a holy peak in the Himalayas.

After twenty-five years, an ex-student of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education came and showed X some of the photographs of the Himalayas taken during his recent pilgrimage. Among them was one particular photo. It was the photo of the same mountain with four steps which X had seen in his vision. Then he realised why the Mother had given him the new name.

Totally dedicated, an example of selfless service he is still climbing the difficult mountain of Sadhana, struggling to reach the summit.

*Compiled by K*

# DIVINE PILGRIMS OF THE LIGHT AND THE NIGHT

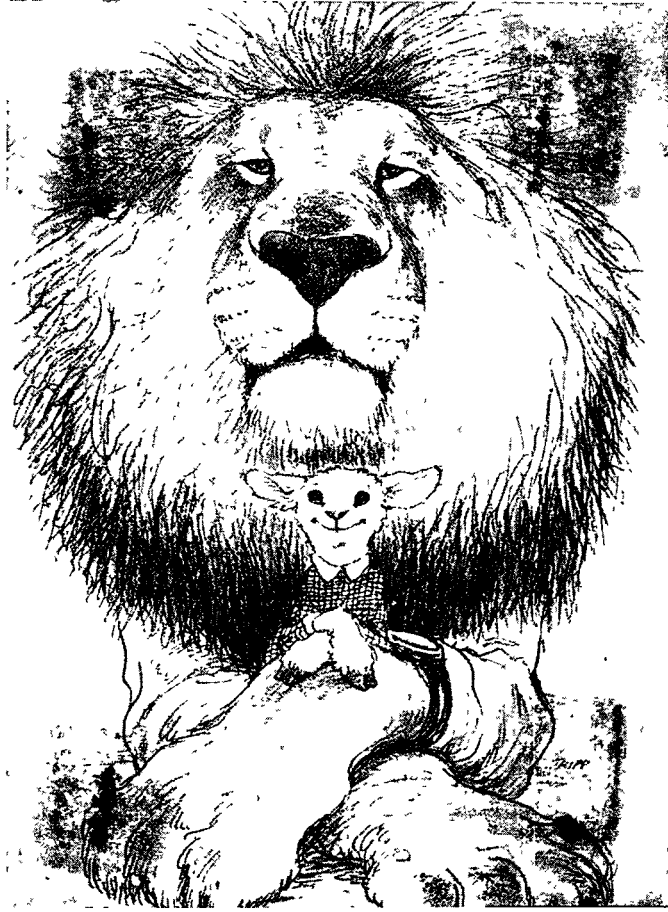
Address to the Sri Aurobindo Society, Singapore, on  
the 115th Birthday Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo on  
August 15, 1987 by C.V. Devan Nair.

To talk about Sri Aurobindo, or comment on His works, with any pretension to authority would be a fatuous impertinence. It would be like a tiny pebble on the plain pretending to pontificate on the Himalayas. For we are dealing, not with an intellect, but with a Consciousness, divine both in origin and manifestation. And Divinity lends itself neither to physics, mathematics, metaphysics, nor analysis of any kind. It is the incorrigibly separative human mind which bisects, dissects and analyses. But Sri Aurobindo is a seminal, a total experience, not just yet another chunk of magniloquent philosophy for analysis and appraisal by scholarship, or for dalliance with by intellectual dilettantes.

Idle intellectual curiosity, of course, first led me to Him, but like so many others I stayed to worship and adore a Power and an influence which was, eventually, to demolish all pride of intellect in me. Never before had I encountered a phenomenon which represented—to something deep in my being, which I had never felt so keenly before (for it seldom comes to the surface)—the assurance and the promise of the most total experience in all human history, an experience at once material and spiritual, reconciling both in a superior mode and status of being.

One day, thirty years ago, as a prisoner in a place of detention in Changi, I found myself reading Romain Rolland's *Life of Vivekananda* and came across a footnote reference to one Aurobindo Ghose. I became curious and asked one of my weekly prison visitors whether he could obtain for me copies of some of Sri Aurobindo's books. He obliged, and a few days later the prison authorities passed on to me *The Life Divine* in three volumes, procured from the university library. They took it to be a religious work, and were no doubt pleased because they considered that this was far safer reading for me than Karl Marx and Lenin. I might thus become less of a thorn in the flesh of established authority, as religion is supposed to quench revolutionary fires, and I would thenceforth agree to render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's. Little did they realize that I was about to be introduced to the greatest revolution of all time, totally subversive of the entire human order on our planet—indeed, an introduction to the ultimate sedition, “a revolt against the whole universal Nature,” as Sri Aurobindo put it.

The first three chapters, *The Human Aspiration, The Materialist Denial,*



*The Refusal of the Ascetic*, struck me as a perfect description of the contradictions I had been battling with in my own being ever since I began to read and think and feel. For I had in me both the ascetic ideal of total renunciation of this dreadful world we live in, in accordance with what seemed to be the highest ideals of all spirituality, eastern and western, as well as the drives of the fierce materialistic revolutionary who wanted very much to recast, if not the entire world, at least his own society, in a more satisfactory mould, à la Darwin, Marx, Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Lenin, Harold Laski, Jawaharlal Nehru and the rest of the modern caboodle.

The adolescent fascination for release into the bliss of an extra-cosmic Beyond vanished with the horror, cruelty, suffering, bitterness, and the cold anger and hatred engendered by the Japanese occupation of Singapore and Malaya during the Second World War. Spiritual yearnings and ideals then struck me as a cowardly betrayal of the humanity one was born into. They gave no help whatsoever to those caught in the diabolical trap of life on earth, and the gods, if they did exist at all, seemed a distant, selfish, smug and self-satisfied lot. I thus became a votary of political, social and ideological revolution. To hell with the beatitudes of Heaven. For I had seen, with my own eyes, that those who worshipped the gods were also tortured, mutilated, and massacred. Worshipers, atheists, and agnostics—they all died just the same. I thus found myself deep in the materialist denial. But the subsequent years were to reveal, here too, a slow and cankerous disillusionment, corrosive of all faith.

Here too there was betrayal, not by the gods this time, but by human beings, even the seemingly best, in the shape of aborted ideals, perverted principles, mean and cruel practices. And, the unkindest cut of all, one awoke to the fact that the enemy was not only in one's fellows, but also in oneself. How often have we not detected with ease the motes in others' eyes, but failed to see the beams in our own? Indeed, the enemy within each one of us is the very same enemy we see without. For only like can recognise like. An almost shattering discovery at first, but ultimately a liberating one. As we pursue the Light, we ourselves are pursued and caught by the shadow cast by the hidden foe, of which Sri Aurobindo wrote:

*This hidden foe lodged in the human breast  
Man must overcome or miss his higher fate.  
Thus is the inner war without escape.*

One also became painfully aware of the terrestrial dualities, common to all of us—love and hate, pain and pleasure, joy and grief, the noble and the vile, gain and loss, victory and defeat, reputation and obloquy. And to cap it all—the triple frustration of Death, Desire and Incapacity. We all end up in a hole in the ground or on a pyre. The materialist affirmation affirmed nothing but



its own bankruptcy in the management of life. Poetry, music and literature offered temporary amnesia. They were good psychotropic drugs, but they cured nothing.

It was in this mood of debilitating hopelessness that I discovered Sri Aurobindo, in my detention cell, thirty years ago. I went through *The Life Divine*, not understanding much at first, but at least grasping, in repeated flashes of illumination, that life was a slow emergence of the supreme godhead concealed in seemingly inanimate matter, in what appeared to be the absolute and utter contradiction of Divinity, and that this culmination of the evolutionary endeavour would not be elsewhere, in an escape into some extra-cosmic Nirvana, but here, on our own earth, in Life and yes, in Matter, the very same Matter which now embodies Life and Mind. And all this in language of unparalleled magnificence and beauty. I will give just one example, from among a multitude of imperishable lines, of a sentence which I kept returning to, and shall keep returning to, times without number. In a passage about the luminous emergence of the godhead in life and matter, there occurs this splendid sentence, breathing royalty in every word:

*The ascent to the divine Life is the human journey, the Work of works, the acceptable Sacrifice. This alone is man's real business in the world and the justification of his existence, without which he would be only an insect crawling among other ephemeral insects on a speck of surface mud and water which has managed to form itself amid the appalling immensities of the physical universe.*

And thus, through every chapter, one traces the inimitable paces of a calm and tranquil majesty, the sovereign authority of an overwhelming certitude. For *The Life Divine* was not a feat of intellectual gymnastics, but the outcome of a direct vision and experience. The entire being thrilled to the unmistakable accents of Divinity.

Over the subsequent years, I travelled with wonder and amazement through the rest of the Divine corpus, realms of revelation, enchantment, delight, terror and horror. Yes, terror and horror. For not only are there "luminous tracts and heavens serene and Eldorados of splendour and ecstasy," but we also encounter the diabolical disguises of Deity. All these regions, and infinitely more besides, are not elsewhere. We can meet them in ourselves. There are whole pages in *Savitri* which leave one in a cold sweat, until one learns not to be appalled by any aspect or movement of the Divine Shakti. Sri Aurobindo helps us to so learn. He wrote, "We must look existence in the face if our aim is to arrive at a right solution whatever that solution might be. And to look existence in the face is to look God in the face; for the two cannot be separated." And Sri Aurobindo and the Mother proceeded to tear the masks off from the multitudinous faces of cosmic reality. They scaled the heights, then descended into the

abyss. For the summits and the abysses are not separate, independent realities. They are part and parcel, opposite poles of the same Divine Reality. "Abysses of Truth," Sri Aurobindo said. How else will the evolutionary endeavour reach the next phase when, in the revelatory words of Sri Aurobindo, "Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face." "Salvation is physical," declared the Mother.

For both the heights and the abysses traversed by the stairway of existence are one, not two. Which is why the Truth of Heaven must, inevitably, be eventually revealed as the concealed Truth of Matter. They knew that this was an evolutionary imperative. Sri Aurobindo wrote:

*Heaven in its rapture dreams of perfect earth,  
Earth in its sorrow dreams of perfect heaven....  
They are kept from their oneness by enchanted fears;  
Sundered mysteriously by miles of thought,  
They gaze across the silent gulfs of sleep.*

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother bridged those silent gulfs of sleep. They were pilgrims, not only of the Light, but also of the Night. Let us recall the memorable lines of Sri Aurobindo's sonnet, "The Pilgrim of the Night."

*I made an assignation with the Night;  
In the abyss was fixed our rendezvous:  
In my breast carrying God's deathless light  
I came her dark and dangerous heart to woo.  
I left the glory of the illumined Mind  
And the calm rapture of the divinised soul  
And travelled through a vastness dim and blind  
To the grey shore where her ignorant waters roll.  
I walk by the chill wave through the dull slime  
And still that weary journeying knows no end;  
Lost is the lustrous godhead beyond Time,  
There comes no voice of the celestial Friend,  
And yet I know my footprints' track shall be  
A pathway towards immortality.*

It was a battle also. In a very moving poem called "In the Battle", we detect a terrible, a truly terrible poignancy, and an absolute surrender to the Supreme.

*Often, in the slow ages' long retreat  
On Life's thin ridge through Time's enormous sea,  
I have accepted death and borne defeat  
To gain some vantage by my fall for Thee.*

*For thou hast given the inconscient the dark right  
 To oppose the shining passage of my soul  
 And levy at each step the tax of Night:  
 Doom, her august accountant, keeps the roll.  
 All around me now the Titan forces press;  
 This world is theirs, they hold its days in fee;  
 I am full of wounds and the fight merciless.  
 Is it not yet Thy hour of victory?  
 Even as Thou wilt! What still to Fate Thou owest,  
 O Ancient of the worlds, Thou knowest, Thou knowest.*

But the Titan forces also serve the Supreme Purpose. They too are saved:

*Not only is there hope for godheads pure,  
 The violent and darkened deities  
 Leaped down from the one breast in rage to find  
 What the white gods had missed; they too are safe.*

What the white gods had missed was the ultimate and blinding revelation of the infinite Divine in the Abyss of the Inconscient.

The insistence on Matter as the field of the supramental apotheosis, on the Divine Birth in Matter, was the constant theme of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In "The Miracle of Birth" he spoke for all of us.

*I saw my soul a traveller through Time;  
 From life to life the cosmic ways it trod,  
 Obscure in the depths and on the heights sublime,  
 Evolving from the worm into the god.*

*A spark of the eternal Fire, it came  
 To build a house in Matter for the Unborn.  
 The inconscient sunless Night received the flame,  
 In the brute seed of things dumb and forlorn*

*Life stirred and Thought outlined a gleaming shape  
 Till on the stark inanimate earth could move,  
 Born to somnambulist Nature in her sleep,  
 A thinking creature who can hope and love.*

*Still by slow steps the miracle goes on,  
 The Immortal's gradual birth mid mire and stone.*

We dwell in several prisons, the mental prison, the vital cage of ambitions, passions, greeds and lusts and, most intractable of all, the physical prison of nerve and tissue and cell. So it was not a partial liberation Sri Aurobindo and the Mother sought, but an integral one. Their aim was to achieve the descent of the highest supramental principle into Matter, the most radical revolution ever attempted in human history. "Impossible!" said many. And again one heard the calm and majestic accents of Divinity. "Our souls accept what our blind thoughts refuse," wrote Sri Aurobindo. He went on:

*Earths winged chimeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven,  
The impossible God's sign of things to be.  
But few can look beyond the present state  
Or overleap the matted hedge of sense.  
All that transpires on earth and all beyond  
Are parts of an illimitable plan  
The One keeps in his heart and knows alone.  
Our outward happenings have their seed within,  
And even this random Fate that imitates Chance,  
This mass of unintelligible results,  
Are the dumb graph of truths that work unseen:  
The laws of the Unknown create the known.*

And how does the Unknown infiltrate and take by surprise the known? Allow some extraordinarily fine and beautiful lines from *Savitri* to infiltrate our hearts and minds.

*When darkness deepens strangling the earth's breast  
And man's corporeal mind is the only lamp,  
As a thief's in the night shall be the covert tread  
Of one who teps unseen into his house.  
A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,  
A power into mind's inner chamber steal,  
A charm and sweetness open life's closed doors  
And beauty conquer the resisting world,  
The truth-light capture Nature by surprise,  
A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss  
And earth grow unexpectedly divine.  
In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,  
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;  
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,  
The days become a happy pilgrim march,  
Our will a force of the Eternal's power,*

*And thought the rays of a spiritual sun,  
A few shall see what none yet understands;  
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;  
For man shall not know the coming till its hour  
And belief shall be not till the work is done.*

Seasoned skeptics always deride the intuitions of Faith. But very seldom has Faith met doubting Thomases with such delightful humour as did Sri Aurobindo. When a rashly skeptical disciple suggested that to realize the Supermind was an impossible fantasy because it had never been done before, he did not bargain for devastating divine humour: "What a wonderful argument! Since it has not been done, it can't be done! At that rate the whole history of the earth must have stopped long before the protoplasm. When it was a mass of gases, no life had been born, *ergo*, life could not be born—when only life was there, mind was not born, so mind could not be born. Since mind is there but nothing beyond, as there is no Supermind manifested in anybody, so Supermind can never be born. *Sobhanallah!* Glory, Glory, Glory to the human reason! Luckily the Divine or the Cosmic Spirit or Nature or whatever is there cares a damn for the human reason. He or She or It does what He or She or It has to do, whether it can or can't be done."

I find the gentle irony of Sri Aurobindo one of His most endearing traits. Puritans would be shocked, but Sri Aurobindo talked about God's laughter which he said "is sometimes very coarse and unfit for polite ears; He is not satisfied with being Molière, He must needs also be Aristophanes and Rabelais." The Supreme is not what all too many terribly solemn people take Him to be. For Sri Aurobindo once remarked about sages, "Has it not occurred to you that if they really sought for something cold, dark and gloomy as the supreme good, they would not be sages but asses?"

The initial part of the work of supramental transformation, at least in His own substance, was done. "I saw Him supramental on His bed," declared the Mother. The Mother revealed that six years after His departure, on February 29, 1956—a leap year—the general manifestation of the supramental power in the earth-atmosphere took place.

We might note a comment on this event the Mother made in 1957: "It could have been a continuation with some improvement, a widening of the same world... but what has happened—the truly new thing—is that a new world has been *born, born, born*. It is not the old world which is being transformed, it's *a new world* that has been born. And we are in the middle of the transition period, when the two are intermingled: the old one still persists, all-powerful and entirely controlling the ordinary consciousness, but the new one is stealing in, still modest and unnoticed—so unnoticed that, externally, it disturbs very little for the moment and is even quite imperceptible to the consciousness of most people.

Yet it is working, it is growing—until such a moment when it is strong enough to assert itself visibly.”

We might also note Sri Aurobindo’s remark: “When the conscious Spirit intervenes, a supremely concentrated pace of evolutionary swiftness becomes possible.” Without knowing it, the world is today right in the middle of a dizzying acceleration. As early as 1910 Sri Aurobindo had said: “The end of a stage of evolution is usually marked by a powerful recrudescence of all that has to go out of the evolution.” The discerning eye can see clearly enough that literally every area of human life the world over, our achievements, plans and programmes, our political, economic and scientific schools and systems, are all being melted in the fiery furnace of incredible change. And nobody, especially no expert, seems to know what is happening. All that we do know is that every expert disagrees with every other expert. It should be abundantly clear, even to the most dim-witted, that neither continents, nations nor individuals will ever any more lead uneventful lives. Sooner or later, tomorrow or a few centuries hence, what Sri Aurobindo described in his prevision as *The Hour of God* will be upon us.

This at least is certain. Life on this planet is in accelerated evolution, and the outcome will neither be purely material nor purely spiritual, but a third position which includes and transcends both. And that third position or force is already operative in the earth-atmosphere. All the turmoil we see on our planet, in every department of life and endeavour, bears out, to the eye of faith, what Sri Aurobindo saw in his timeless vision: “Earth’s million roads struggled towards Deity.”

The struggle towards Deity will not be waged in the Mind or through the instrumentation of human institutions. Sri Aurobindo observed: “It is clear that Mind has not been able to change human nature radically. You can go on changing human institutions infinitely and yet the imperfection will break through all your institutions... It must be another power that can not only resist but overcome that downward pull.”

To bring about a general manifestation of that power in the earth-atmosphere was the culmination of the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—the two who are one. “Without Him I exist not. Without me He is unmanifest,” said the Mother. “The Mother is Sri Aurobindo’s Force in action,” wrote Sri Aurobindo.

Sublime is the only word to describe the relationship between the Shakti and the Lord. The day after her first meeting with Sri Aurobindo on March 29, 1914, the Mother wrote a deeply moving prayer: “It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance. He whom we saw yesterday is on earth; his presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth. O Lord, Divine Builder of this marvel, my heart overflows with gratitude when I think of it, and my hope has no bounds. My adoration is be-

yond all words, my reverence is silent.”

Nirodbaran recounts a revealing event in 1938. The radiologist and the specialist had diagnosed Sri Aurobindo as having suffered an impacted fracture of the right femur above the knee, both fragments firmly locked together. They took a serious view of it, and remarked that if the fragments had projected backwards, all the main vessels and nerves running behind under the bone would have ruptured and caused a big disaster. The Mother had been shown the X-ray pictures.

Let Nirodbaran describe the rest. “The following day, Dr. Manilal had to face from the Mother such an unexpected thundering assault that we felt our hearts would stop with fear and consternation. It was Mahakali’s wrath. I have never since seen her in such a fiery mood. Sri Aurobindo was lying quietly; the Mother came into the room and, standing by his bed, asked Dr. Manilal what he thought of the fracture. The doctor either purposely gave an evasive reply with some hesitation or did not consider the case serious. The Mother exploded: ‘Don’t hide it! We know the truth.’ Then I saw something rare that I shall never forget. The Mother prostrated herself on the floor before Sri Aurobindo and, I believe, began to pray to him. From this supplication I could realise the gravity of the situation. Yet, she had shown no trace of it until then. Calm and solemn, Sri Aurobindo heard the silent prayer.”

The silence of Sri Aurobindo was a living power, not an inert emptiness. It was an impenetrable field of force. The Mother described one night when a devastating cyclone erupted in Pondicherry, with torrents of rain. She had gone hastily to Sri Aurobindo’s room to help him shut his windows. He was seated at his table, writing. The windows were wide open, but not a drop of rain had come inside his room. The Mother described the peace that reigned there as “a solid block of peace.” The peace and silence were so solid, so compact, that the cyclone *could* not enter.

It is not possible for anyone, in the space of an hour, nor even in an infinite number of hours, to touch even the fringe of the immeasurable vastness and power of the Consciousness that took birth as Sri Aurobindo. Neither do the thirty volumes of the Birth Centenary Edition of his works exhaust it. He told a disciple that he had written *The Life Divine* only to help people silence their minds. His works, and the Mother’s works, were never intended as merely intellectual or aesthetic exercises. They were signposts for seekers on the roads of the spirit. Indeed, more than signposts. “Do not mistake my words for a teaching. They are always a force in action,” said the Mother.

So, if we choose to travel the way of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, what do we do? I have no answer of my own to give, but I might quote the Mother’s answer to a child in the Ashram playground in 1956. “Mother,” the child had asked, “when the mind came down into the earth’s atmosphere, the ape didn’t make any effort to change itself into a man, did it? It was Nature that supplied

the effort. Yet now.....” And the Mother instantly replied: “But it isn’t man who is going to change himself into the superman!” “No?” asked the startled child. “Just try a little!” the Mother replied amidst general laughter. “That’s the point, you see, it’s *something else* that’s going to do the work. But no (yes, there is a “but”, I don’t want to be cruel), *Man can collaborate*. That is, he can lend himself to the process, with good will, with aspiration, and he can help to his utmost. That’s why I have said it will go faster —I *hope* it will go faster.”

How might we help to make it go faster? In the last but one darshan I had of the Mother, in 1972, I asked Her what I could do to help in Her work. Her reply went straight to the point, in just one sentence. That frail and white figure, with that golden glow on Her face, told me: “In the individual, it is the psychic that represents the Divine. Find it and unite with it.” After blessing me, She gave me a blessing packet, and said simply: “This flower is of the Divine Love.” The Mantra She gave me I can only see as the infallible response of Grace to a secret aspiration in my being, which I had never spoken about, for it was associated with the Name: Sri Aurobindo.

The discovery of the psychic, or the soul-centre in us, is the first breakthrough we have to achieve. The Rig Veda refers to it as “the child suppressed in the secret cavern,” and again as “the shining King who was hidden from us.” An Upanishad refers to it as “He that is awake in those who sleep.” Sri Aurobindo called it “The sunlit space where all is for ever known.” Those who know have said that if we have felt this flame for even a single moment in our lives, it is the only memory we will carry with us into our future lives. The discovery of this Divine Spark within presupposes that we first dismantle all our mental constructions and conquer all our vital prepossessions, and replace them with a silent mind and a calm and quiet vital. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, “You must keep the temple clean if you wish to instal there the living Presence.”

Those who have embarked, with courage and sincerity, on the great adventure of consciousness to which Sri Aurobindo called humanity, will testify that as they proceeded on the path, with hearts and minds disencumbered of all the constructions and passions of their dead pasts, they were seized by an overwhelming gratitude when they suddenly came to perceive, with an illumined and irrefutable clarity of vision, that a secret Grace had all along guided them, in all their failures and falls, their sufferings and disappointments, their pains and ordeals. This is an experience which Sri Aurobindo described in *The Synthesis of Yoga*: “As we gain in clarity and the turmoil of egoistic effort gives place to a calmer self-knowledge, we recognise the source of the growing light within us. We recognise it retrospectively as we realise how all our obscure and conflicting movements have been determined towards an end that we only now begin to perceive, how even before our entrance into the path of the Yoga, the evolution of our life has been designedly led towards its turning point. For now we begin to understand the sense of our struggles and efforts, successes and failures. At



last we are able to seize the meaning of our ordeals and sufferings and can appreciate the help that was given us by all that hurt and resisted and the utility of our very falls and stumblings. We recognise this divine leading afterwards, not retrospectively but immediately, in the moulding of our thoughts by a transcendent Seer, of our will and actions by an all-embracing Power, of our emotional life by an all-attracting and all-assimilating Bliss and Love. We recognise it too in a more personal relation that from the first touched us or at the last seizes us; we feel the eternal presence of a supreme Master, Friend, Lover, Teacher." Need I say that for the sincere seeker, Sri Aurobindo Himself turns out to be that supreme Master, Friend, Lover, Teacher?

I have attempted today a humble tribute of boundless gratitude, in words which I fear are so woefully inadequate to express the utter magnitude of all that truly aspiring Humanity owes to Sri Aurobindo—tribute to a plenary Light and Power that has touched, quickened or transformed so many lives, including our own. We celebrate the great Being whose advent the Mother saluted in categorical words of immense power: "What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme."

We might conclude with the comforting assurance that the Mother once gave a devotee. I quote from memory: "If you think of the Divine, it is only because the Divine is thinking about you." Sri Aurobindo is Divine, and as we offer Him this evening the love and gratitude of our hearts and minds, we can be certain that it is only because He perceives us in His Divine regard. Those who choose Sri Aurobindo are chosen by Him. We can ask for no greater blessing on this most auspicious of days.

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## DARKNESS AND LIGHT

MOONBEAMS sing,  
 Deep shadows hear  
 Drawing all things near.  
 Moulding the night in silence  
 Under the gaze of forlorn eyes,  
 Time has lost its track;  
 Something is awake  
 In the solitude of sleep  
 To inform darkness  
 Its kinship with light!

JAYANTILAL

# MRINALINI DEVI

## A TALK

*(Continued from the issue of December 1987)*

IN singular contrast to the delectable domestic entertainments came the rude shock on the night of Sri Aurobindo's arrest, the last day when Sri Aurobindo and Mrinalini were living together in Grey Street, Calcutta. While relating that nightmarish event afterwards to her young cousin, Mrinalini's voice used to get choked and her eyes fill with tears. She said:

"One night we were in deep sleep. Suddenly in the early morning there were loud knocks at the door. I got up quickly and opened the door to see a sergeant,<sup>1</sup> pointing a pistol at me and asking me to show where Sri Aurobindo was. He was sleeping. Dumbfounded I pointed towards him. The entire house was filled with a posse of the police. I was then asked to move to the next room. Sri Aurobindo was sleeping on a rug spread on the floor. I heard the police telling him: 'Are you Mr. Ghosh? An educated person like you sleeping on such a bed and leading such a dirty life? It is most shameful.' To which he retorted, 'What is shameful to you is a thing of honour to us. For us Hindus, such a life is a symbol of renunciation as well as an ideal.' The sergeant could only give him a hard stare. At last he broke open my box and with gusto caught hold of some letters written to me by Mr. Ghosh.

"I had collected some soil from Dakshineswar and kept it in a vessel. When the police discovered it, there was such a mad dance! I couldn't understand what made them so ecstatic as if they had discovered America. I learnt later on that they had thought it to be material for making a bomb.

"What happened next is beyond a woman's delicate nature to describe. The sergeant asked Mr. Ghosh to follow him; he wouldn't allow him even to use the bathroom. Mr. Ghosh asked, 'Where have I to go?' 'To Lalbazar'<sup>2</sup>, he replied. Then they tied a rope around his waist. Seeing this I lost all control and felt like falling upon them and snatching him away from the police's clutch, but checked myself somehow. I tried to call God, but couldn't, as I had lost faith in Him. If He was present, I thought, how could He allow such savage treatment to a guiltless soul? But all my prayer was of no avail. The police took him away to the van. What happened next I didn't know. When I regained my senses, I found myself in the house of Mr. K. K. Mitra, a relative of Mr. Ghosh."

"Since then a period of intense darkness descended upon Mrinalini's life," writes her cousin. "Aimless and bewildered she didn't know what to do, where to go. One day she was talking to me about this critical phase, 'I couldn't call

<sup>1</sup> It was the Police Superintendent, in fact. (Nirodbaran)

<sup>2</sup> A Police-station. (N)

even God. How could I? I had no other God except my husband. I have seen God's manifestation in him alone. When he spoke I felt as if a distant bodiless sound was coming out of his mouth. When he looked at me, I felt as if two dreamy eyes were pouring their effulgent rays on my body. When such an unearthly person was snatched away from my world, I felt that death alone was my resort without him. But still death did not come. At that moment Sudhira<sup>1</sup> came and clasped me.' Henceforth Mrinalini began to frequent the Ramakrishna Ashram, escorted by Sudhira."

Sri Aurobindo was in that epoch the undisputed leader in the mind of the people. Mrinalini recounts: "So when we visited the girls' school of the Ramakrishna Mission all the girls came out to see me. You don't know what an embarrassing situation I had to face. The girls began to offer me pranams. I heard whispers that Aurobindo's wife had come to bless them. After coming out I asked Sudhira, 'Knowing everything why have you brought me here?' She replied smiling, 'Dear sister, you are a fire hidden under ashes. How will you conceal yourself?'"

Anxious about her disturbed mental condition, Sudhira introduced Mrinalini to Sarada Mata, Sri Ramakrishna's wife, and prayed for her help. She listened quietly and said, "My daughter, don't be disturbed. Your husband is under the full protection of God. With Thakur Ramakrishna's blessings he will soon be proved innocent. But he will not lead a worldly life." Then she advised Mrinalini to read Sri Ramakrishna's books and visit her now and then.

After this, according to Mrinalini's cousin, her father took her away to Shillong. They used to come to Calcutta to visit Sri Aurobindo in the jail. Mrinalini always remained calm and composed.

We have a reminiscent account of Mrinalini's sojourn in Shillong from Ila Devi, mother of Dr. Satyavrata Sen. Ila was a minor at that time living with her parents in Shillong as very friendly neighbours. She writes:

"I saw her in my early teens. Minudi (nickname) was incomparable in her sweetness of character. She stole away the children's hearts with her affection. One day she was late in coming for the play. I went to look for her and found that the wife of the local magistrate was requesting Minudi to sing. Shy and hesitant she sat before the harmonium and began a well-known Bengali song. I listened to the whole song standing outside. So rapturous was her voice that I couldn't move away.

"I learnt about Sri Aurobindo's arrest from Minudi's young sister who was of our age. He became the topic of the day. Minudi used to hear the talks but never lost her composure. She was leading a very simple life and eating simple food, avoiding meat and fish. They had a lovely garden from which she would pick flowers in the early morning and enter her Puja House (House of the Deity) and spend many hours there. It was kept beautifully decorated with

<sup>1</sup> Mrinalini's life-long friend since school-days (N)

pictures of Kali, Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Sarada Mata. Two small pictures of Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo were placed on either side of a shelf. One day I entered the room after she had left and I saw flowers offered at Sri Aurobindo's feet and incense burning by the side.

"Plenty of people used to come to have her Darshan and do pranam to her. If she had any foreknowledge of it she would try to avoid them but would sometimes be caught unawares. When the news of Sri Aurobindo's release arrived, our school dispersed and we ran to Minudi to offer our heart's love. We used to think that she would one day join Sri Aurobindo and she was herself cherishing that hope till her last day."

Here is a sequel by Mrinalini's young sister: "When Sri Aurobindo was released, we all were very happy. We came to Calcutta and lived in a rented house. Mrinalini went to live with Sri Aurobindo at his aunt's place. We gave a feast in our house to celebrate his release and all were in a gay mood. Things appeared to change for the better and my sister found peace after long days of trial and tribulation, but for one year only."

After his release, Sri Aurobindo started the journals *Karmayogin* and *Dharma*. Mrinalini was living with him for some time. They also passed short periods together at Deoghar with Sri Aurobindo's maternal uncle's family. The episode I am going to relate took place probably at this time or it may be at another time before Sri Aurobindo's arrest. It is narrated by Mrinalini's cousin; he gives no date. Sarojini and Mrinalini could not get on well together. It was Sarojini who used to pick quarrels with Mrinalini over trifles. Mrinalini would complain to Sri Aurobindo about Sarojini's bad temper, but each time his advice would be, 'Endure, endure,' which did not please her much. She wanted that at least for once Sarojini should be administered a mild rebuke, but entreaties went unheeded. At last Mrinalini told Sri Aurobindo in a firm tone that unless he did something she would refuse to do any household chores. Now Sri Aurobindo had to act. Fixing his gaze upon Mrinalini he said, "Look here, do you think anybody's conduct can be changed in the way you want it? If I rebuke you or Sarojini, will it immediately make either of you give up your defects? Rather, instead of the peace you are asking for, it will have quite the opposite effect. I have told you to endure. If you follow sincerely the path advised by me, you will see that everything will move on peacefully as if by magic, after a few days." From then, as Mrinalini reported, there was no discord in their dealings with each other. Their domestic life took a sudden turn for the better without their knowing. Of course Mrinalini resolved to follow Sri Aurobindo's advice.

There is another episode related by the same cousin on Mrinalini's authority. It seems that during Sri Aurobindo's tenure as the editor of the above-mentioned two papers, he used to analyse the characters of his co-workers and find out what resemblance they bore to the characters of the Mahabharata. One day he was

supposed to have said that at the end of the Dwapara Yuga he had been born as Sri Krishna's grandson Aniruddha and Mrinalini as his wife Usha (the daughter of a Titan king). One can't vouch for the truth of the story since it involves a chronological anomaly, but it is not impossible according to occult science. But Sri Aurobindo's composition of a long poem in Bengali, "The Abduction of Usha", lends some credence to the account. If true it suggests that Mrinalini's relation with Sri Aurobindo goes back many lives. We know nothing further of Mrinalini's life during this period.

The day Sri Aurobindo left for Chandernagore she was living elsewhere in Calcutta. She and her people knew nothing about his whereabouts. Only after he had reached Pondicherry, they got the news. Naturally their anxiety was in the extreme. Then Mrinalini was taken back to Shillong by her father.

Now begins the most crucial chapter of her life—a life of austere tapasya for 8 long years. Outwardly her marriage had come to an end, but the inner bond continued and became more intense. What Sri Aurobindo wanted her to do when he was near, but she could not, now the painful separation induced her to pursue. A true Hindu wife, she embraced the ideal of the Godward life indicated by her husband. But her God was Sri Aurobindo. He was the Alpha and Omega of her existence. Meditating on him and trying to live in his consciousness brought about a radical change in her life. Eventually she united herself in death with her Lord.

There are two accounts of her life in Shillong at that period, one by her young sister and the other by her young cousin who was very fond of her; the accounts are complementary to each other. I have already given portions from them. Here is the sister's account:

"Every early morning, after her bath she would pluck flowers from the garden. She would look incomparably beautiful amidst countless flowers of all varieties of colour. She would then enter the Puja House and pass hours in meditation. After that, she would attend to the usual chores and spend the rest of the day in study of religious books, mostly of Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna. In the evening, she shut herself up for hours again in the Meditation Room. At times, at the request of her parents and friends she would take up the harmonium and sing devotional songs composed by Tagore and others.

"She was always simply but neatly dressed and looked like a Yogini. In the matter of food, meat, fish and sweets were excluded from her diet. Only at the request of her parents she would waive this austere rule.

"Letters from Sri Aurobindo arrived at long intervals addressed to her as Mrs. Ghosh. That would revive her spirit for a few days. But never did she seek sympathy or open her heart to anyone except her mother and Sudhira. My cousin who had gone to Pondy wrote to us that Sri Aurobindo was plunged deep in yoga. Sri Aurobindo asked Mrinalini to follow the same path. She began the practice according to the directions given by Sri Aurobindo. We hoped for a

long time that he would return to Bengal when the political situation had eased. But it was a vain hope, for it was feared that he would be arrested as soon as he set his foot on Indian soil. My father tried hard to take Mrinalini to Pondy, but the Government refused permission."

Now let us read the other account. The cousin writes :

"During these last eight years, occasional letters from Sri Aurobindo were her only solace and support. Shillong was a hilly place, one of the loveliest spots of Nature. Mrinalini would wander about in the garden on her leisure time. One day I asked her, 'Didi, you seem to love flowers best of all!' She replied, 'You know, your Gurudev was like a flower. I used to smell the fragrance of flowers in his presence.' [The Mother also has said that a lotus-fragrance used to emanate from Sri Aurobindo's body.] One evening sauntering through a pine wood, Mrinalini sat upon a hillock. From there, the range of hill-tops beyond was exposed to view, clear like an enormous picture. Looking at the beautiful scene, Mrinalini fell into a meditative mood. I also enjoyed the charm of the place, but since her meditation lasted too long I got fidgety. When she opened her eyes, I asked her, 'Didi, there is so much beauty all around us and you pass the entire period in darkness!' She answered, 'Silly boy, you don't know that this infinite splendour helps me to plunge into the source of its beauty. You were annoyed perhaps! You know, in your Gurudev's heart is a heavenly city many times more beautiful than this outer beauty?' I have alluded to her love flowing towards all. During her stay in Calcutta all followers of Sri Aurobindo had her touch of love and care. Sudhir Sarkar, when he used to go on secret work *incognito*, would relate with tears how Mrinalini used to dress him with Sri Aurobindo's suits.

"She had a strong attraction for the English language and wanted to improve her knowledge of it. With this object she began to coach me which was a great blessing indeed to me. She used to correct our pronunciation, and teach us how to read and articulate properly. One day I asked her, 'Didi, tell me why you are taking so much trouble to teach me English. What do you gain by it?' A bit irked, she replied, 'Leave those wise talks. Tell me, aren't you profiting by it and am I not gaining too? Do you know that your Gurudev's mother tongue is English?' 'What,' I exclaimed, 'he is the son of Bengali parents!' Then she told me the whole story of his life and added, 'If I have to follow him, I must have a good knowledge of English. Do you see now, my boy, how I gain by teaching you? I receive now and then a few letters from him. One or two happen to be in English. His letters written in Bengali are so accomplished that they put our own usage to abject shame.'

"Now arrived the fatal year 1918 which blasted all her hopes.

"In 1918 Mrinalini came to Calcutta probably from Ranchi for some eye-trouble and stayed with Girish Bose. When Sourin, Nolini Gupta and others were going to Bengal sometime earlier, Sourin asked Sri Aurobindo, 'I shall

meet Mrinalini. What shall I tell her?' Sri Aurobindo replied, 'I shall be glad if you can manage to bring her here.' Life was hard at that time, with great financial difficulties, but in spite of everything Sri Aurobindo wanted Mrinalini to join him. When somebody told Sri Aurobindo about the difficulty, he answered, 'Eat less food.'"

*(To be continued)*

NIRODBARAN

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## SHIVA

LORD of the Vast, Being Supreme,  
Clothed in sole eternity,  
Soul and Silence of the universe!  
Deathless Presence, stark, immaculate,  
To you obeisance.

O what secret call has smitten my spirit  
And into Time's beats gathered  
A stupendous Power's dangerous weight.  
Between the brows a lotus-throne,  
A Ray's unquenchable diamond gaze  
Focussed through Chronos, sunders division's house.  
Fear never known flirts with the flesh,  
Or with perilous thrill lures into the Unseen  
Or sparkling dances into bright Immortality.  
Ungessed depths your pressure unseals:  
A land of mountains whose far-flung edge  
Buries dim imagination's tireless tide  
In a blaze of iridescence and glory sun-gold.  
Visages appear whose eyes of Truth  
Pierce in exquisite Pain all I am  
And kindle Ecstasy with bright stabs of Love.  
Or a Vision's blue transcendent poise  
Towers massively into invisible altitudes  
Above the radiant steppes of the Infinite.  
The swirling cosmos is into meditation plunged  
Drawn by the ever-stillness of the sole Supreme.

ARVIND HABBU

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

*(Continued from the issue of December 1987)*

The Mother's Message

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



Volume Three: 1959

13

IN the morning of 10 September 1959, I telephoned Doris and informed her that I had enjoyed my stay at Durham. She was very pleased and invited me to lunch. She added that we would visit the National Gallery. I accepted her proposal with thanks.

31



I got ready and went to Holland Park. I pressed the button under the name Miss Doris Tomlinson and a moment later a buzzer sounded. The door opened, I stepped into a small passage, climbed a staircase, and turned right to her apartment. It was very convenient to have the intercom system to receive people.

Doris embraced me affectionately and kissed my cheeks. She remarked: "You haven't put on weight, but you are blooming. Take your seat and tell me all about your expedition."

I told her about my adventure and my pounding headache. The last phase had been unpleasant when I had been entangled in the throng of people and had carried my suitcase from one place to another and home. I said jokingly: "So I must have lost two pounds instantly!" We laughed.

She rose and suggested; "We shall fill up that loss. Let us have lunch—shall we?"

After lunch we went to Trafalgar Square. Doris informed me:

"This site was formerly the location for the Royal stables and squalid lanes, which later became the famous Trafalgar Square. Look, in the middle there is a column—one hundred seventy-six feet high on which you can see the statue of Nelson.

"Trafalgar Square is a favourite place of speakers and also musicians who play the harmonica or other instruments in order to earn their living.

"This Square is surrounded by many well-known buildings like the National Gallery, South Africa House, Canada House, Royal College of Physicians and so on.

"Come, let us feed the pigeons."

Some of these birds strutted and cooed, swooped down to pick up peanuts and other eatables, some sat on peoples' shoulders. A pigeon perched on Doris's hand and daintily ate bread crumbs. It was a pleasant sight. One sat on my palm and evacuated. I shooed it off and rushed to the fountain to wash my palm.

In the centre of the Square there was a fountain. I stared unblinkingly at the shining jets splintered into countless iris-hued diamond drops.

Doris said, gently giving my shoulder a squeeze: "Huta, now let us go to see the National Gallery. She continued:

"The present building was begun in 1832, and completed six years later. It was actually the home of both the Royal Academy and the National Collection until 1869.

"Two eminent collectors, Sir George Beaumont and W. Holwell Carre, presented their exclusive collections to the Nation.

“It was interesting to know how it coincided with the sale of the collection of a city broker Julius Angerstan. Lord Liverpool’s Government purchased in April 1824 thirty-eight paintings worth £ 56,000/- to start with. This was the beginning of the National Gallery.”

We entered the hall. I had a very strong feeling of warmth—something living—as if some spirit hovered like a guardian angel. I was spellbound to see the works of Leonardo da Vinci—especially “The Virgin of the Rocks” and “The Virgin and child with St. Anne and John the Baptist.” His self-portrait expressed his extraordinary personality and profoundness.

Doris told me:

“There are approximately nine hundred pictures of Leonardo da Vinci in the world—out of them some six hundred are in the possession of the Queen of England including a huge collection of his drawings.”

When I visited the National Gallery it contained about two thousand pictures, of which only a portion was exhibited.

I watched an artist copy a painting of a woman in one of the halls. He imitated amazingly well.

The paintings of Velazquez—“The Toilet of Venus (Rokeby Venus)” and “The Immaculate Conception”—were charming.

Then there was an attractive painting by Botticelli—“Venus and Mars”.

Matteo di Giovanni expressed in painting “The Assumption of the Virgin”, which was ethereal.

I viewed minutely the various portraits of great, noble ladies, who had placid faces—so content with their pearls, diamonds, laces and satin gowns.

My eyes could not escape the enchanting pictures by Rembrandt, Carlo Crivelli, Paul Cezanne, William Hogarth, Titian, Correggio, Anthony Van Dyck, Edouard Manet, Raphael, Watteau, Turner, Reynolds, Auguste Renoir and so forth. I was totally enthralled by the grandeur of the Great Masters. I ran out of all adjectives and accurate exclamations of praise and surprise.

Michelangelo’s half-finished painting—“Madonna and Child with St. John and Angels”—was very expressive.

But I was bored by repeating themes: Virgin and Child, Madonna and Child, Crucifixion of Christ. Perhaps during that era the mental vision and imagination were set to a certain level of consciousness.

It was fascinating to see the portrait of the Doge Leonardo Lorendan done by Giovanni Bellini. The artist brought out the Doge’s true characteristic force of determination such as his native city Venice had great need of at the time; all Europe was plotting and conspiring against Venice in the years of his reign (1501-1521).

His son was in love with his cousin Cluet, daughter of the Doge's power-hungry brother who turned against the Doge and grabbed the throne.

The Doge's brother was terribly annoyed and furious when he learnt of his daughter's affair. Cluet stood her ground—refused to desert her cousin. So he imprisoned Cluet and her cousin. Finally he got them thrown out of a high window into the river. Thus he ended their lives.

The Mother said that Cluet had been one of her incarnations. Further she explained in one of her talks all about her birth as Cluet. When she was in Venice and visited the Doge's palace and the prison she at once recognised the scrawl made by her on the walls of the jail.

She had so many births—so many experiences which were beyond our comprehension.

\*

I rang up and apprised Mrs. Margaret Fletcher of my return from Durham. She was glad and asked me to tea. I went to her apartment which was very cosy and compact.

I called her Aunt Margaret. Her husband Peter was there. He was a psychiatrist in his sixties. Aunt gave a word-picture of me to him. We instantly became friends.

She had prepared an assortment of sandwiches, cakes, scones and almond biscuits—followed by the inevitable English tea which I simply relished.

She and uncle Peter asked me a hundred and one questions about my excursion to Durham.

It was an advantage to hear perfect cultured King's English when they talked to each other and to me.

Whenever I informed Aunt that I had received a letter from the Mother, she would say: "Have you? How lovely!" Her way of speaking impressed me very much.

She asked me to watch out for the words starting with "O" and "Sh". She gave me a cute card on which she had inscribed:

"I wash my sash in the Irish Sea."

This was for me to practise so as to improve my pronunciation.

I noted—when I met people—the typical English phrases they used; "She did—did she? Gracious me! My word, Do you mind? Dear me, Do you really? Good show, Jolly good, My goodness, O Lord..." and so on.

I enjoyed Margaret's company. She carried her fifty years superbly well. Aunt had remarkable insight as well as practical understanding. She was full of kindness and good will.

Often she called me to her house. Her hospitality was prodigious. She

and uncle Peter treated me as if I were their own daughter.

Before supper uncle Peter would ask me to keep him company in taking cider. How deftly he flipped off the bottle caps with an opener. Chilled cider was simply delicious.

He was very fond of reading detective stories. He got me interested in them.

Aunt handed me a duplicate key of her flat and gave me an open invitation to come any time, any day, even if they were not present, and make myself comfortable—feel at home. She led me to her kitchen which was fitted with every conceivable modern amenity. She opened a big refrigerator full of delicacies and asked me to enjoy them. She also asked me to watch the TV and showed me how it functioned. She was extremely generous, considerate, warm-hearted. But I never took advantage of her virtues. I went to her place only when I was invited.

One day Aunt asked me to visit her studio at Ilford. She was a first-class photographer. But she took only children's snaps.

It was a nice studio. Her assistant took several photographs of Aunt and me together. Margaret wore a painted sari I had presented to her. She took my snap.

Aunt remarked: "O Huta, your expression changes every second like a child's. It is difficult to capture you in photographs." I laughed and said: "Ah, but your studio is only meant for children. So I must have received their influence and inspiration. How could I be glum and long-faced?" She and her assistant laughed out loud.

Aunt had work to do. I fell asleep in a chair, I was fatigued. Later we had our lunch.

Towards dusk we reached London by train. She asked me to come to her apartment again and again—whenever I wished. I thanked her profusely and we parted at Liverpool Station.

My nephews and nieces returned: some from India, some from East Africa.

I met them on 20 September 1959 at their hotel. It was Sunday. Suresh passed on to me the Mother's letter and gave all the news of the Ashram—he told me that after the Mother's retirement from outer activities he had found a tremendous change in the Ashram.

All of us had lunch together. Then, as the weather was agreeable, we roamed in Hyde Park. Now that autumn had shown its face, the glossy green foliage started changing its hue.

I could not restrain myself any more from opening the envelope the Mother had sent me so thoughtfully and lovingly.

I found a card depicting various-coloured pansies—"Thoughts turned towards the Divine—a certitude of beauty."

The Mother's words on the card:

“My dear little child Huta,  
 I have received all your letters and am glad you had a good holiday.  
 “Here are ‘Thoughts of the Divine’, these make life happy and beautiful.  
 “My love is always with you and my blessings.”

In the evening we bade Au revoir.  
 The following day all of them came to Mercury House. Harish tried out the piano in the lounge. He played well.  
 They sat in my room for some time, then left.  
 Suresh decided to stay in London to study at London Academy. The others went to their schools—far from London.

*(To be continued)*

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## A CRY

OH if my heart would melt  
 In Thy glorious golden wings  
 And fly with Thee in rapturous melody,  
 To play upon unearthly strings!

Or to become a flame  
 Keen with uplifted hue  
 And reflect in wonder-spaces  
 Thy marvel of mysterious blue.

But sweetest to become a flower  
 Before Thy soft ethereal gaze  
 And express in awe-fragrant breath  
 The adoration of Thy unfathomable grace.

RAJESHWARI

# LIFE-YOGA-SCIENCE-POETRY

## LETTERS TO FELLOW-ASPIRANTS

I WAS delighted to get from you for the New Year the quaint coloured picture of a Lamb sitting on one of the paws of a Lion. I construed it immediately as showing the relationship of Lamb-Amal to Lion-Sri Aurobindo. The in-drawn majestic yet most forbearing and compassionate look of the Master is very well suggested. So also is that of the disciple with his wide confident smile, his eyes lit happily with a dream of the future, his big ears stretched out to catch the message of the Lord's silence. Lamb-Amal is sitting on that paw which has a wrist-watch above it, symbolising Lion-Sri Aurobindo's time-manifestation. I see that the golden Lion is clothed in green, the supramental Truth-Consciousness putting its presence into the vital world. The white Lamb—symbol of the psychicised purified being which I seek to reflect—is wearing a chequered red coat, the sign of the physical plane. In the earth-work these complementary factors are significant. So too are the different modes in which the arms are crossed. The Lion has put his left wrist over his right, while the Lamb has done the opposite. If the Lion's left with the watch on it represents a time-involvement, the upper position of the Lamb's right points to an eternity-evolvement. The whole composition with its overall message of peace illustrating in a new manner a famous Biblical saying has gone home to me so much that I am going to stick it on one of my doors. When you come in the course of this year it will be the first thing you'll see on visiting me. And if it at all stands for something true as between Sri Aurobindo and me I shall consider myself worth visiting by my beloved friend. Nothing short of this harmonising of the high and the low is the goal of my aspiration.

I know that your aspiration's goal is essentially no other. So let me wish you too a New Year of all-linking all-equalling all-transforming Peace.

(3.1.1983)

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I have read the extract from *Time* (March 23, 1987) and given thought to your question: "Since the scientific theory estimates that the sun has a finite life (even though measured in billions of years), what is the effect of this apparently inevitable cessation of earth-life on our aspirations for the transformation of the human race and the establishment of the Divine on earth?"

Not only science but also all past spiritual tradition has considered the world to have an end. In Christianity the Second Coming of Jesus is taken as the mark of the world's end, accompanied by a resurrection of the dead and an uplifting of the resurrected bodies of the faithful into heaven after a Last Judgment which will separate the sheep from the goats, the latter going to hell, I suppose. Islam

reflects more or less the Christian vision. In Zoroastrianism we find the background of much of Christian belief. After the liberation of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity by the Persian king Cyrus (559-530 B.C.), who helped them rebuild their temple at Jerusalem and whom the Book of Isaiah hails as "Messiah", Zoroastrian doctrines entered Judaism and through Judaism infiltrated Christianity. Zoroastrianism believes in heaven and hell, the soul's survival and the resurrection of bodily life at the end of time when a saviour, mystically continuous with Zoroaster's "seed", is expected, with a Last Judgment following.

In the traditional Indian vision there is a *pralaya*, a drawing back of the universe into the Divine after ages and ages of human history and then a new creation or rather a new projection of the universe. This process goes on interminably. According to esoteric belief, there have been seven projections and withdrawals. Now there is, in the view of us Aurobindonians, a different kind of history because of the descent of the supreme dynamic consciousness which Sri Aurobindo called Supermind. The *pralaya* comes, because the principle manifested at each projection so far has been limited: it can progress thus far and no farther. The Supermind-principle brings the infinity of the Transcendent and so an endless progression is possible, revealing deeper and still deeper ranges of the ultimate Divine. There will be no need of a *pralaya*. But if no *pralaya* is contemplated, what are we to make of the scientific theory of the sun's death and the consequent disappearance of the life on earth? Endless progression and this cutting short of the earth's existence seem to contradict each other.

However, even on the basis of science may we not hope for interstellar travel and the colonisation of one or another of the millions of heavenly bodies which astronomy assumes to have conditions comparable to our earth's? Technically, their number is said to be in the neighbourhood of  $10^{20}$ . Science does not envisage a divinisation of man but it looks forward to immense technological development which could make man the scientist independent of the earth in the remote future. So the future Aurobindonian man, whom we may designate the divinised scientist, need have no worry even on purely scientific grounds. They will permit him to go past the extinction of our sun.

But the divinisation which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother hold out as the culminating hope in the time to come brings a transformation of the very stuff of man's physical being and implies certain powers: total plasticity, adaptability, invulnerability, plus immunity from disease, stoppage of the ageing process, freedom from the stroke of death. Along with this transformation of one's matter, there must come a power over matter in general, which could change world-conditions, affect even the stellar cycle of "contraction and re-expansion" which the *Time-extract* speaks of. The world in which lives Man turned Godlike cannot remain subject to the laws we scientifically regard as inexorable. Not only his own being but also his environment will be subject to the Divine Will

set active fully in the universe of time and space. The physical sun is a symbol of the highest supramental creative and transformative Light: when that Sun of the Truth-Consciousness which is apostrophised in the Rigveda and the Upanishads and which the descent of the Supermind *à la* Sri Aurobindo is meant to make completely operative, even “the fate of the sun” which science predicts according to its present observations cannot be binding. Such a prospect seems incredible, but it is nothing beyond conception by the logic (which is also the magic) of the Integral Yoga. (31.3.1987)

P.S. After writing this I came to read, in some detail, about what is known as the Anthropic Principle in physics. It is a speculation put forward by some scientific thinkers and they claim that on the basis of it one can make certain predictions which are testable and thus fall within the purview of physicists. A spur to it was given by the role of the “observer” in current quantum mechanics, a role which is sometimes taken to be such that, in a world which is subject to probability instead of classical causality, the observer, by choosing a particular set-up of observational apparatus, gets a particular picture of the physical world realised: he thus creatively turns its probability into a fact. Whether this concept of his participation in the nature of reality be correct or not, the Anthropic Principle has a philosophical basis, on the strength of which it peers both back into the past and forth into the future.

The principle takes into account the plain truth that the physical universe must be so built as to permit the observer’s physical existence as an intelligent being. William McCrea, a *TLS* reviewer, has rightly said that, roughly, the Anthropic Principle states that we cannot discuss the universe at all unless the universe includes us. In other words, the universe is what it is because we were to be its end-product. This view specially crystallised when astrophysics found a number of near-coincidences of pairs of astrophysical quantities which “happened” to enable crucial processes to proceed in the way they do. If the minute difference in size between these quantities had been the other way around, these processes would have been impossible and the scientists would not be in existence to know it. The near-coincidences depend on the values of what are termed the fundamental constants of physics such as the masses of the hydrogen nucleus (proton) and of the electron, light-velocity, the gravitation constant, the electron-charge, Planck’s quantum constant. We are told that in addition to the constants there are necessarily a series of parameters serving as initial conditions for the universe. Observation shows the number of radiation quanta to be about a billion times the number of “baryon” particles like the proton, and this is one of the parameters. It determines the cosmic epoch at which galaxies can form and finally plays a part in the various numerical coincidences crucial for the evolution of life whose ultimate outcome is the observer “anthropos”.

The Anthropic Principle in its strongest formulation argues not only that the



universe has an age by which alone the phenomenon of man can emerge from the initial “big bang” on a carbon-based life-evolution: it argues also that this emergence would have no sense if humankind were to die out before its full potentiality is realised. Man will continue to live and progress and expand his knowledge and power: he will gain control of all matter and forces and, if necessary, spread into all space. Catastrophic warnings of the sun’s death will naturally have no meaning at that stage.

Such a consummation has been called the reaching of Omega Point, after the terminology brought into fashion by the priest-palaeontologist Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard spoke of the evolution of a collective being in the far future, a super-organism with a super-consciousness compassing the whole world. But, under the influence of orthodox Christian theology, he envisaged a world-end when the souls sharing the super-consciousness will break away from matter and pass into a non-spatial non-temporal dimension. The Omega Point postulated by the Anthropic Principle is unlike Teilhard’s, a perpetual fullness of being within the framework of time and space.

There it makes contact from the scientific side with the vision of the Integral Yoga. But there is no sign in it, as there is none also in Teilhard’s “super-consciousness”, that man the mental being will go beyond the utmost possibility open to mind itself. A widening of the mental consciousness and its achievement of technological mastery on a grand scale are the limits of its prognosis. But if the cosmos is anthropos-oriented and, if life emerges from matter and mind from life, there can be no necessary terminus with mind in however wide and powerful a form: a future Supermind is naturally on the horizon of this cosmos. Again, an anthropos-oriented cosmos must have behind it as well as within it a secret divine dynamism working itself out through conditions that are a total concealment of it in sheer matter-energy. The Anthropic Principle must make room, as in Sri Aurobindo’s vision, for a Principle of Theos, the hidden drive of a pre-existent God through an evolving universe whose aim is a divine fulfilment, the varied manifestation of One about whom we may aver in Meredith’s words:

His touch is infinite and lends  
A Yonder to all ends.

\*

I like the lines you have quoted from Rilke after a search in him for the “overhead” expression—

Dir wird die Stille im Weltall niemals verkündet,  
Wie sie sich schließt um ein Wachstum—

lines which you have tentatively put into English as

Never are you informed of the cosmic silence,  
As it envelops a growth.

Rilke is full of subtle suggestions. What I gather here against the background of my general sense of the Rilkean *Weltanschauung* is something like: "Whatever develops on earth is secretly protected and fostered by a cosmic Presence. This Presence is a vast and deep silence by which alone all earthly expression gets its true and full form, but we hardly know of its nourishing ministry: it never obtrudes but with its all-accepting embrace both serves and moulds us. The more we become aware of its pervading mystery, the more we realise our authentic self, and grow into the archetype of our being which waits within that ever-watchful stillness like a guardian angel."

The series your German publisher has started is very fascinating. The choice of Meister Eckhart as the first to be compared with Sri Aurobindo is well made, for Eckhart is the one great figure in European mysticism who comes nearest to the Eastern Wisdom. Some of his formulas are pure Upanishad, beautiful variations on the theme of *tat twam asi*—"thou art That", God as the human soul's own essence and ultimate self. But these formulas which frightened the orthodox church and laid their maker open to the charge of heresy are not the whole of Eckhart. They express the Eckhart who wrote in German. The Eckhart who wrote in Latin manifests another shade of spiritual vision, the more typically Christian sense of the soul as distinct from God even when united with Him, enjoying a permeation by Him and not an identification with Him. The fact is that this sense is not actually a contradiction of the other but has been deemed such by the narrow divisive Schoolman-mind. In India it would be taken as one phase of the many-sided Truth, a shade of difference from God in order to feel the rapture of adoration and love. Shankara who was a supreme Monist was yet an impassioned singer of hymns to the Divine Mother. The Gita presents us with Brahma-Nirvana as well as with the creative Ishwara and even this Ishwara's human incarnation so that a prominent part of its message is happily summed up in the *Savitri*-line:

Living for Me, by Me, in Me they shall live.

An appreciation of the two sides of Eckhart and an attempt to reconcile them would be a great step forward in bringing Christianity closer to Oriental and especially Indian mysticism.

By the way, my derogatory reference to the Schoolman-mind was somewhat overdone. It was not incapable of piercing beyond obvious divisions. It recognised a faculty which could do the piercing. The mind's analytic movement and its resort to logic was attributed to "ratio", the purely rational power. The power to see unities was termed "intellectus", an overall grasping—what would more

appropriately be termed an intuitive movement as distinguished from the discursive, the movement by which wholes are recognised not by an outwardly additive activity but by an inwardly perceptive comprehension of the universal in things. It is such a comprehension, an intimate light of knowledge, that Spinoza designates “*amor intellectualis Dei*”—“the intellectual love of God”—the mind’s ardent seizure of the underlying unifying Reality by a direct intuition which is at bottom the One knowing the One or, in Plotinus’s phraseology, “the return of the Alone to the Alone”. But the Schoolman frowned on Spinoza’s pantheism and refrained from extending the function of the “*intellectus*” to seeing God as the highest Universal, the supreme common factor and essence of all, whether as Pantheos or as the transcendent Deity who is not exhausted by the cosmic existence. To the medieval thinker God’s omnipresence in the cosmos was not by a secret substance in all but only by a secret action and the transcendent poise was of a Creator who did not make the world from his own self but by a bringing of it into existence from nothing. The Indian vision is of a supracosmic Infinite who emanates or looses-forth the world out of His own being in whatever form He chooses.

Of course Eckhart is not the sole thinker possible for comparison. Leibniz, Hegel, Goethe, Nietzsche, Steiner are others who in various ways can provide a hold. Nor is Heidegger so far astray as you believe from the Aurobindonian line. His *Being and Time*, an early work, with its stress on *Angst*—anxiety—over one’s finitude may not seem fruitful in the Aurobindonian context, but the Heidegger of 1927 was not the same as the Heidegger of 1953 when his *Introduction to Metaphysics* appeared. Here, as if feeling an incompleteness in his old theme, he widens it out to its true shape and thus, without annulling it, he plays on it a momentous variation. I may cite something I wrote ten years back:

“To the mature Heidegger, we have fallen out of Being, we have lost Being’s ‘nearness and shelter’. We run after one thing or another instead of seeking the ‘Ground’ through which all things are—Being in its own self, Being that is the ‘Holy’ (*Heilig*) and that is ‘Healing’ (*Heilen*) and is ‘Whole’. We should not get lost in the superficial mass-man nor in the outer life’s disconnected ‘beings’—‘from genes to space-ships’, as a commentator puts it: an inner return to a direct experience of the one Being should be our pursuit. The negative inner intensity of each of us existing ‘towards our end’, which is death, and thus facing Nothingness, has been transformed into a positive expansion of the self into its basic reality which, as the absence of all separate superficial states, is a superb Nothing.

“We must distinguish the nature of Heidegger’s Being from the psychological means by which it is to be attained. Those means are dreadful and dark, yet they conduct us to a different condition, one of radiant happiness. ‘Knowing joy... is a door to the Eternal.’ Being is associated with ‘light’ and with the ‘joyful’, Being ‘calls the tune’; ‘to think Being’ is to arrive at one’s true home. No doubt, Heidegger not only criticises technological society and the role of science:

he also turns away from common religion; but, as another commentator remarks, 'Heidegger has no place for God, whose absence nevertheless plays an important role in his thinking. He does not exalt human goals but sees human existence as a cult of Being—a notion not unlike certain notions of God.'” (6.6.1986)

\*

Reading Plotinus is indeed a very good occupation. The Enneads are an old friend of mine and, in my view, next to Plato's Dialogues they are the profoundest philosophical scripture of the West. In a certain sense Plotinus, whose source is Plato, is a river that is better than its source, for though the source is the crystalline mind the river reflects something higher. For it is a paradoxical river and it does not flow down from the source but flows up from it. While Plato was a superb idealist, Plotinus was a master-mystic—though we have to guard against the ultra-mundane drift of his mystical consciousness and keep hold of Plato's Socratic sense that the Divine is present even in the market-place and remember always the prayer of Socrates that the outer should be brought into tune with the luminous inner. Plotinus is reported to have had an aversion to mirrors lest he should chance to see that contemptible thing, his body. (14.7.1986)

\*

It's good to find you in such fine fettle and at the same time a philosopher putting, as you say, your "hits" and "misses" in the right perspective. Rather fancifully I picture the "hits" as masculine and the "misses"—as the very word suggests—as feminine. The former stand out with their forward-moving vigour, as men would: they come with a future-facing enterprise. But behind them are the subtle forces like those of women: many a Miss with sweet and silent visage bringing about a delicate deepening of our nature saves us from brashness and crudity, refines our strength for the future by a distillation of wisdom from the past. To adopt another imagery, the "hits" are the mental-vital personality, the "misses" bear a breath from the psychic being: they teach us humility and allow us time to look around and contemplate and render our dynamism selective in the goals towards which it sets its course. Once the exquisite lesson taught by the Miss has permeated the consciousness of the Mister who wants to make a hit in the world, the time to come will bear the stamp of the progression hinted at by the memorable close of Goethe's *Faust* which I may render:

The Eternal Feminine  
Is leading us onward.

I discover that my fanciful picture has terminated in conjuring up with Goethe's opening phrase the presence of the Divine Mother whom Sri Aurobindo has put at the head of our human march. (11.5.1986)

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

# A FEW GEMS FROM NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

## AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS BIRTH-CENTENARY YEAR

### Compiler's Note

*Revolutionary, yogi and sage—Nolini Kanta Gupta was born on 13 January 1889. His vision ranged far and wide. His perception pierced to the core of things. His words have a power, for he noted down what he had seen, heard, lived and experienced—the sublime and the spiritual were not for him a matter of intellectual dialectics but the very stuff of his consciousness. Like his master Sri Aurobindo he emphasised and highlighted the best in everything, touching the imperfection of things briefly if at all.*

SHYAM KUMARI

Do not say: “The load is too heavy for me;” say rather: “I have not yet learnt the way how to bear it.”<sup>1</sup>

Mother's response to a prayer:

“I am always with you. I shall never fail you in prosperity or adversity, even when you sink I am with you—I sink with you! I do not stand on the shore and merely look at you from a distance. I sink with you, I am in you; for I am you.”<sup>2</sup>

Do not look with greedy eyes upon what others possess, if you do not want to lose even that which you possess.<sup>3</sup>

At a point one must go beyond strivings.

Do not strive or struggle, there must be no tension or tautness, it should be all relaxation.

Tranquillise yourself. Allow the Other to take your own place. Leave it all to That.

This too is not achieved but simply happens—through the Grace.

“Wherever you see hope, faith, courage, trust and tranquillity, there you will see Me.”<sup>4</sup>

The virtue of a spiritual man lies in his capacity to see weal in woe.<sup>5</sup>

Beauty can bloom only in and through courage.<sup>6</sup>

... a thing above the common cannot be brought down to the level of common understanding, nor is it advisable to do so. To do that is to help the common in their idleness.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol 5 p 39    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 6, p. 34.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35  
<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 35-36    <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 7. p 199.    <sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p 201    <sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 307.

# HUMOUR IN THE PLAYS OF SRI AUROBINDO

## PART 3: *PERSEUS THE DELIVERER*

*Perseus the Deliverer* is the thrilling tale of a battle between Athene, the light-girdled armipotent daughter of Zeus, and his blue-maned sea-god son Poseidon. The play tells of an age when Gods used to wander on our earth, taking sides in human conflicts—some throwing their weight in with the tyrants, others with the good and the innocent. Often men became unwitting pawns in the rivalries of these mighty Gods. Their clashes ruined some people like the Trojans and bestowed happiness on others as in Syria in this play.

In Sri Aurobindo's comedies we notice a curious characteristic—the heroine moons around in classical lovely fashion and in the time-honoured fashion the hero kills tyrants and rescues distressed damsels from unwanted ogre-like lovers and does sundry other good deeds to justify his heroism, while lesser characters break intellectual lances. Along with the hero and heroine we find another pair or two of lovers. Dr. K.R. Srinivas Iyengar points out that in Sri Aurobindo's plays, "In the tradition of Shakespearian comedy, lovers come, not as an isolated pair but many in rows and file."<sup>1</sup> Armoured with wit and irony, shielded by raillery and repartee, the additional characters lash out at their adversaries with deadly tongues and the resultant sparks of humour delight the hearts of the reader and lighten the effect of the sombre happenings and dark deeds of the play. In this welcome line of Brigida, Basil, Doonya, Harkoos and Sheikh Ibrahim follow Diomede, Cireas, Cydone and the butcher Perissus of this play.

This is a tale of cruel times when pity and compassion were unknown to the semi-barbarous people of Syria, love for fellow human beings and self-sacrifice are qualities which are new-born in the form of Andromeda the Princess. These qualities have to fight for a toe-hold amongst the grim Syrians. Yet in spite of the bloody background of human sacrifice in this play there exists a rill of humour to lighten the tragedy.

The play opens on a humorous note. One early morning we find the wilful Diomede—friend and playmate of princess Andromeda—walking the wind-swept path along the sea-shore. When Cireas, a temple attendant, surprised to find her abroad in that "wild wanton weather" queries gallantly, "...Has your mistress Andromeda sent you then with matin-offerings to Poseidon, or are you walking here to whip the red roses in your cheeks redder with the sea-breezes?"<sup>2</sup> This girl who revels in contradicting others even about the simplest thing comes down on him like a ton of bricks.

"My mistress cares as much for your Poseidon as I for your glum beetle-

<sup>1</sup> *Sri Aurobindo*—K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Vol 1 p 204.

<sup>2</sup> *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 6, p 11

browed priest Polydaon. But you, Cireas? are you walking here to whip the red nose of you redder with the sea-breezes or to soothe with them the marks of his holiness's cudgels?"<sup>1</sup>

The smiling reader can imagine poor Cireas's nose becoming still redder at this unexpected assault. In Sri Aurobindo's plays the twin vehicles of his humour are, firstly, as noted above, the intellectual duel between the side-hero and side-heroine or other lesser characters, and secondly its natural corollary—a nimble play on words. In Sri Aurobindo's language there is a "Shubhahasya", an auspicious and contented laughter. His play upon words brings out the delight aspect of the creative word that permeates all life-forms. As in his correspondence with Nirodbaran, a simple word suffices to start a hilarious train of prefixes, suffixes, rejoinders and adjoiners. Sheikh Ibrahim and Doonya are worthy standard-bearers and undisputed champions of this art, but even in this play we find ample amusement along these lines. Cireas tells pert Diomed—

"I must carry up these buckets of sea-water to swab down the blue-haired old fellow in the temple. Hang the robustious storm-shaken curmudgeon! I have rubbed him and scrubbed him and bathed him and swathed him for these eighteen years...."<sup>2</sup> And later again, "But these Gods are kittle-cattle to joke with."<sup>3</sup> Cireas's partiality to alliteration and metaphor and his rugged sense of humour add a touch of jocularly to the atmosphere and give relief from the bloody shadows of the temple of Poseidon and prove how proximity can dull the awe inspired even by a most blood-thirsty punishment-prone God. The reader feels an instant sympathy for this roguish attendant and wishes him greater reward for all the distasteful rubbing, scrubbing, bathing and swathing he has done.

A routine sparring between Diomed and Cireas is added fun. Cireas airs his fear that the priest Polydaon may some day cut out his heart as a sacrifice to his grim God. Maybe Cireas was truly afraid or maybe he hoped for sympathy from Diomed. But Diomed is made of sterner stuff. Self-pity is a thing which she would not allow in her lover and so she swoops upon him like an eagle—

You should warn him beforehand that your heart is in your paunch hidden under twenty pounds of fat: so shall he have less cutting-exercise and you an easier exit.

Cireas—

Out! would you have me slit for a water-god's dinner?  
Is this your tenderness for me?

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>2</sup> *S A. B C L* Vol 6, p 11

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p 12

Diomede—

Heaven forbid, dear Cireas. Syria would lose half her scampishness if you departed untimely to a worse world.

Cireas—

Away from here, you long sauciness, you thin edge of naughty satire. But, no! First tell me, what news of the palace? They say King Phineus will wed the Princess Andromeda.

Diomede—

Yes, but not till the Princess Andromeda weds King Phineus.<sup>1</sup>

Cireas's descriptions "You long sauciness" and "thin edge of naughty satire" accentuate the physical appearance of his arch adversary and highly amuse the reader.

Cireas is a master word-twister and this habit does not desert him even in moments of grave peril. When Perseus shakes his bright shield in the face of Polydaon, Phineus and the other beholders, and all are blinded, even then Cireas's tongue sparkles,

"Master, master, skedaddle: run, run, good King of Tyre, it is scuttle or be scuttled."<sup>2</sup>

Thus starts this cruel tale with bright endings. Unlike *Rodogune*, *Perseus the Deliverer* has a bright thread of humour running through the violent upheavals, that reassures us that all will be well, the beauty and nobility personified in Andromeda and Iolaus will not perish at the altar of a dark inhuman God. At times this tale of the horrendous deeds of Poseidon through his deputy Polydaon seems unbearably cruel and tragic.

In the second scene we see the mighty Olympians clashing. The third scene focuses on the irresistible Diomede engaged in what we suspect might have been a routine duel of will and wit with Praxilla who is the head of the Queen's household. Diomede makes Praxilla's life uncomfortable as if on principle. With the use of an imaginative invective Praxilla opens up, "So, thou art back, thou tall inutility? Where wert thou lingering all this hour? I am tired of always whipping thee. I will hire thee out to a timber-merchant to carry logs from dawn to nightfall. Thou shalt learn what labour is.

Diomede—

Praxilla, O Praxilla! I am full to the throat with news. I pray you, rip me open.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, pp 12-13

<sup>2</sup> *S A B C L* Vol 6, p 24



Praxilla—

Willingly (*She advances towards her with an uplifted knife.*)

Diomedes (*escaping*)—

A plague! Can you not appreciate a fine metaphor when you hear it? I never saw so prosaic a mortal. The soul in you was born of a marriage between a saucepan and a broomstick.”<sup>1</sup>

These adversaries are well matched and their invectives hilarious. Praxilla's whip-lashes may not be more stinging than the lash of the words of this “tall inutility” who having already put the nose of Ciraes out of joint now spars with Praxilla and comes up with one of the most hilarious similes: the marriage of a saucepan with a broomstick. Nothing if not original, Diomedes knows very well that Praxilla will have to bend, for she must be dying to hear her news. To tease her further she starts a poetic discourse on the scenic beauty of the Syrian coast. Impatient for the news Praxilla bursts out:

And could not Poseidon turn thee into a gull there among thy natural kindred? Thou wert better fitted with that shape than in a reasonable human body.

Diomedes—

Oh then you shall hear the news tell itself, mistress, when the whole town has chewed and rechewed it.<sup>2</sup>

Like a good merchant Diomedes holds back her news to vex and tantalize Praxilla further. Praxilla pays Diomedes in her own coin. The reader is left chuckling for both the adversaries have been original, apt and humorous in their description of each other. Diomedes does have a birdlike quality. She chatters in place of talking, runs in place of walking, almost flies while she runs—hers is an impatient spirit, at war with the dull ways of lesser ordinary mortals. She is ready to pick a quarrel without reason. There is a truth in her ironic aspersion, for Praxilla's office is command of the household of the queen of Syria. In such a position one cannot afford to be imaginative. That is why we find Praxilla lamenting over Princess Andromeda's fanciful ways. Her function is to chastise and order, so her parentage can be justifiably attributed to a broom. She has to have her feet firmly planted on earth to subdue and keep within bounds the rebellious royal children. A saucepan, that flat down-to-earth implement, is the very antithesis of poetry and adventure which form the core of her adversary Diomedes's character, is a just noun for her parentage. We find Praxilla and Diomedes fair-minded even in their abuses. At last Praxilla cannot bear the suspense any longer.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 27

<sup>2</sup> *S A B. C L* Vol. 6 pp. 27-28.

Praxilla—  
 Stop, you long-limbed impertinence. The news!  
 Diomede—  
 I'll be hanged if I tell you.  
 Praxilla—  
 You shall be whipped, if you do not.  
 Diomede—  
 Well, your goddess Switch is a potent divinity....<sup>1</sup>

Only now she tells her news. Diomede's tongue has a million moods. When she describes Perseus her words become vivid with light, when she talks of the crafty priest Polydaon epithet after choice epithet of derision bursts forth. Young Iolaus who has been recently promoted a captain carries himself rather haughtily, naturally proud of his new rank. Diomede is wise beyond her years. Nobody can hide his or her follies or foibles from her. She mocks even Iolaus:

I know him by the noble strut  
 He has put on ever since they made him captain.<sup>2</sup>

This outer playfulness of Diomede hides a razor-sharp intelligence and a deep insight in human nature. When the supposedly wise Praxilla says gratefully that Iolaus has been saved, "Thanks to Tyre it seems",<sup>3</sup> Diomede at once counters—

Thanks to the wolf who means to eat him later.<sup>4</sup>

She has seen through the ruse of Tyre and wonders why the king cannot see his dire intentions:

These kings, these politicians, these high masters!  
 These wise blind men! we slaves have eyes at least  
 To look beyond transparency.<sup>5</sup>

For once Praxilla agrees with her—

Because

We stand outside the heated game unmoved  
 By interests, fears and passions.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *S. A. B. C. L.* Vol. 6. p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

The golden Princess Andromeda too whose flower-figure hides a stately resolve is not devoid of humour. When Praxilla asks her to be good and obey her father and marry Tyre she demands—

Yes, Praxilla?

And if my father bade me take a knife  
And cut my face and limbs and stab my eyes,  
Must I do that?

Praxilla—

Where are you with your wild fancies?  
Your father would not bid you do such things.

Andromeda—

Because they'd hurt me?

Praxilla—

Yes.

Andromeda—

It hurts me more to marry Phineus.<sup>1</sup>

Here Andromeda whom everyone takes for a child entraps the supposedly wise Praxilla with her simple humorous logic. Praxilla is left stuttering—

O you sly logic-splitter!

You dialectitian, you sunny curled small sophist  
Chop logic with your father, I'm tired of you."<sup>2</sup>

Obviously chopping, be it of logic or of human heads, comes easily to the followers of Poseidon. Princess Andromeda, the "five foot of gold and cream and roses,"<sup>3</sup> has her own humorous ways. Even when her words hide the surge of thunder we see only the lightning—that is the way she makes mincemeat of the kingly policy of her venerable father by her simple logic—

"Why, father, if you gave me a toy, you'd ask  
What toy I like! If you gave me a robe  
Or vase, you would consult my taste in these!  
Must I marry any cold-eyed crafty husband  
I do not like?"<sup>4</sup>

Then we have a mild taste of the hilarious scene in *The Viziers of Bassora* where

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Ibn Sawy pretends to be angry with Nurredene. The comic tragedy or tragic comedy in such situations is that the children are so sure of their parents' love that they do not take seriously the threat of chastisement.

Cepheus—  
 Look, if you mutiny, I'll have you whipped.  
 Andromeda—  
 You would not dare.  
 Cepheus—  
   Not dare!  
 Andromeda—  
   Of course you would not.  
 As if I were afraid of you!<sup>1</sup>

Andromeda does not know how cruel can be the compulsion of politics. She is too sure of her father's love and is adamant in her refusal to marry this cold-eyed king of Tyre. Cepheus declares—"On the third day you marry Tyrian Phineus"<sup>2</sup>—and then hurries out to escape further importunities from his beloved daughter. Diomedes makes fun of him, knowing he hastened out because he could not bear Andromeda's sorrow:

"That was a valiant shot timed to a most discreet-departure."<sup>3</sup>

Thus youth derides the too serious and sometimes crooked ways of the aged and goes about the business of life in more radiant ways. They are not so simple or guileless as they seem. When Praxilla tries to fathom the heart of Andromeda, the latter answers—

You are not in my counsels. You are too faithful.  
 Virtuous and wise, and virtuously you would  
 Betray me."<sup>4</sup>

Outwitted by the straightforwardness of Andromeda Praxilla tries to enlist Diomedes's support—

What means she now! Her whims are as endless as the tossing of leaves in a wind. But you will find out and tell me, Diomedes.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 64-65

Diomedes—

I will find out certainly, but as to telling, that is as it shall please me—and my little mistress.<sup>1</sup>

Thus in the King's household the faithful are divided, youth siding with youth and the supposed wisdom of age with the aged.

(*To be continued*)

SHYAM KUMARI

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 65

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## *The Mother*

KEEP *me* not *remote* from *Thee*,  
*tether me* to Thy *hem*;  
 for all vast *ether* holds for *me*  
 no *other* like to *Thee*.

Though *the* world may *teem*  
 with *term* and *theme*  
 and scholarly *theorem* and *tome*,  
 Thy name alone, like a *meteor*,  
 is *the* speediest path to Thy *home*.

'U'

## KANNAN MY DISCIPLE

### A FREE RENDERING OF A TAMIL POEM OF SUBRAMANYA BHARATI

*(In this poem Sri Krishna comes to the poet as his disciple and plays his usual tricks.)*

HE who is the one and the many,  
Who is the Lord of all existence,  
Incarnate as the boy dark and resplendent,  
The elusive enchanter of human hearts,  
The peerless Player of pranks enthralling,  
KANNAN, the master-trickster,  
As if inferior to me in wisdom,  
As if with my help, through my grace,  
Keeping my company, hearing my words,  
He wished to elevate himself,  
As if he very much admired, worshipped  
My great wisdom, marvellous poetry,  
Kannan, the mischief-master came to me  
As disciple.  
Oh God, how I was caught in that net,  
How much I suffered day and night,  
How sorely vexed in heart and mind,  
All that to recount, oh, heavens,  
Is a long, long tale,—a Mahabharata.  
Fool that I was  
Not changing my heart  
To change others' thought;  
Not conquering my ego  
I sought to fix my friends firmly in God,  
Bliss everlasting ever eluding my clasp,  
The thousand and one sorrows of mankind to wipe off I fought!  
This great folly of mine,  
Him it attracted; to teach  
A good lesson he wanted;  
He came to me of his own accord  
And showered praises on me:  
My wisdom, my character,  
My genius, my poetry he admired,  
“None like unto thee in all the world.  
Fain would I become thy disciple,  
None other can I call my guide,” he said.

So goes the familiar adage,  
 "You pat a man on his back,  
 His head swells instantly."  
 So my swollen head getting more swollen  
 Greedily grasped the good chance.  
 To put him on the path of virtue,  
 To make him tread the way of the Vedas,  
 To help him climb to the summit of glory,  
 To make of him a human god  
 I poured on him advices profuse and in plenty.  
 Tread this path only and not that,  
 Do this only and not that,  
 With such people only mix, avoid the others,  
 Such books alone read, shun the others,  
 Desire not the forbidden fruit,  
 Strive only for wisdom and truth  
 And so on and so forth.  
 Endlessly I laboured, on him,  
 Quoting Shastras profound, dharmas sacred,  
 Exhorted him,  
 Struggled with him, bored him through and through;  
 Preaching all my stock of book-knowledge,  
 Preconceived notions, mental ideas, moral precepts.  
 Well you know  
 That old story,  
 Where the wife always did  
 The exact opposite of what the husband said.  
 Such a one was this disciple mine  
 Who preferred the path easy and serpentine,  
 And went along merrily in his line,  
 Whilst the pathetic guru could only look and sigh in vain.  
 This petty self of mine,  
 For which name, fame, status,  
 Position, respect, dignity among men,  
 Were of importance supreme,  
 Seeing my Kannan, my own dear disciple,  
 From first to last, disobedient to me,  
 Not merely so,  
 But going to ruin down the paths  
 Forbidden by all men wise and pure,  
 And bringing on himself and on my inflated head  
 Infamy, hate, insult, wrath and ridicule of all men,

Felt sorely hurt and in mournful mood  
 Passed day and night in sorrowful plight,  
 But he went worse and worse.  
 And reached that stage when  
 All elders of the place, good men forsooth,  
 And ladies respectable, virtuous no doubt,  
 Looked down on him with contempt and revulsion  
 And said, "A madcap he has become now, no doubt."  
 Such anguish and sorrow never have I felt before or after—  
 Torment of mind, pain of heart, misery of soul.  
 That the one disciple dear to my heart  
 For whom day and night I had toiled and wrought  
 Should become unworthy in all men's thought,  
 Cut me deep, like a sword,  
 Now as a last resort,  
 I gathered up my wits at last,  
 Exhorted him to turn a new leaf;  
 With Shastras, Puranas, Scriptures old and new,  
 With sweet words, cajolery, wise words, threats,  
 To save him I exhausted all my breath,  
 Hoping that even if to the divine life he did not rise  
 He might not from the human state  
 Down the depths of degradation  
 To perdition go. So with him I pleaded,  
 Harangued, argued, begged to my uttermost,  
 In so many words, in so many ways.  
 Alas, alas, all in vain.  
 Uncontrollable, savage, mad,  
 Naughty, no attachment, no interest in anything,  
 Careless of all consequences, of people's opinion,  
 Like a monkey, like a bear, like a ghost on the tree-top,  
 An altogether strange being he stood—  
 My Kannan.  
 All my Himalayan efforts gone to waste,  
 My words of wisdom thrown to the winds,  
 With ego and self-respect deeply wounded  
 I took a formidable vow: Change this fellow I must,  
 Anyhow, by any means, at any cost.  
 Once should I fix him to a single spot,  
 Make him stick fast to a single job,  
 Then will he walk straight with a single mind,  
 Success then shall be mine, I thought



And waited for my time to come at last.  
 One day, in my house, I caught him—  
 “Great is thy love for me, my son,  
 My entire trust I place on that precious love of thine,  
 And from thee ask a boon which thou shalt not refuse,  
 But promise to give it for love of me.  
 Thou knowest well, my son,  
 That much depends on the company a man keeps  
 For all the good that he attains  
 And his onward progress on earth.  
 Oh how I wish I could spend all my time  
 (Except that much needed for earning bread)  
 In the good company of wise men,  
 Learned in logic, versed in Scriptures,  
 Steeped in poetry, preoccupied with Truth.  
 Such a one I know not any here  
 Who can spend the whole time with me,  
 But only thou. Therefore I pray,  
 Refuse not but stay  
 With me for a few days at least.  
 Now, without delay, give thy assent,  
 And set my heart at peace and rest.”  
 So I said and he replied,  
 “So be it, I agree,  
 But thou knowest well,  
 To remain idle the whole time  
 I loathe of all things most,  
 Stay with thee I shall, if only thou showest  
 Some work here for me to do.”  
 “Well then,” I said, well knowing him  
 And his talent and his skill,  
 “Take all these my innumerable scribblings,  
 Hastily done and disorderly kept.  
 I know that thou hast the capacity and the gift  
 To make of them good poetry and write them well.  
 This work thou shalt do day after day for me,  
 Who shun sloth in earnest,  
 And thou shalt have a work to do.”  
 “Good,” he said and waited for a trice,  
 Then up he rose and spoke, “Now! I’m going.”  
 Sharp was the pain I felt in my bosom, Oh the anguish!  
 The anger raging hot in my veins like fire

I curbed and snatched some old writings of mine and threw them  
into his hands,

And shouted, "Do it now!" He took them  
As if very willing and very amenable, and waited  
For a minute more only and said again,  
"I'm going."

Wrath in my blood rushing to my head  
Made me roar like a wounded lion:  
"What a fellow art thou,  
This conduct of thine to say the least is despicable,  
Of going back on thy promised sacred word.  
True then, it is, what people say of thee,  
Indeed thou art a madcap and even worse."

"Tomorrow I shall do it," he said.  
"Here and now art thou going to do it or not?  
Speak one word and no more."

Sudden was the reply and curt:  
"No."

Fierce was the ire that rushed through my veins,  
Blood-red became my eyes and my lips trembled,  
Fire was in my speech and I blurted,  
"Out, out, thou ghost; away from my sight.  
Never more shalt thou show that fiendish face of thine.

God forbid I ever meet thee  
Again in this world, Go, go, go."  
Mild like a lamb he got up and moved through the door softly,  
Tears were in my eyes, a silence  
Strange filled my breast.

Deep in my heart a tender voice addressed him:

"Go, my son, live thou long  
And be happy, anywhere. May the gods  
Protect Thee always. All I could, I did  
For thee, to change thee, to set thee  
On the narrow path of virtue  
But failed utterly.

Go thou and be blessed!"

Kannan went, but came back in a twinkling  
With a good pen in his skilful hand  
And in a minute finished the work given by me  
And the work was the work not of one ordinary,  
But of a poet divine, a born genius, an artist.

"Sir, give up all thy worry; I shall

From now on obey thee always,  
Carry out all thy wishes in full.  
Never again shalt thou come to grief through me.”  
Such sweet words he uttered and with a sweet laugh disappeared  
Only to reappear in my heart the very next moment,  
With the self-same laughter, and that sweet voice spoke to me once  
again,

“Son, to create, to change, to undo a thing  
All these are not in thine hands  
Know this truth and when thou sayst  
That thou hast failed utterly,  
Thou hast won already.  
Do thou all thine works in the world,  
But give up all thine desire, attachments and anger of old.  
So shalt thou never become unhappy  
And my best wishes with thee forever.”  
And those words even now I hear.

P. V. SITARAMAN

## MYSTICISM PSYCHOANALYSED\*

*Mysticism: 1) The doctrine or belief that direct Knowledge of God, of spiritual truth, etc., is attainable... in a way differing from ordinary sense perception or the use of logical reasoning. 2) Any type of theory asserting the possibility of attaining knowledge or power through faith or spiritual insight. 3) Hence, vague speculation.*

Webster neatly summarizes the conventional, science-minded attitude: an approach to truth that bypasses “ordinary sense perception” adds up to nothing but “vague speculation.” Yet mystics—the experimentalists of religion—may not seem so unscientific to a mid-20th century psychiatrist. This is the case in a new book, *The Cloud of Unknowing* (Julian Press; \$ 4), a psychologist’s rendition of one of the great mystical classics of Christianity.

Manhattan Psychologist Ira Progoff, author of *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology*, feels that the insights of depth psychology in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, written by an unknown English monk around 1375, have made it “alive again with meaning and usefulness” for modern man. To enlarge the book’s modern audience, Progoff has “translated” it from vivid, lilting 14th century English—which has made it a favourite treasure-trove of poets, including T. S. Eliot—into clearer, plainer language.<sup>1</sup> Progoff has also translated many of the book’s spiritual precepts into psychological terms.

**The Dart of Longing Love.** The author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* was a true man of the Middle Ages; with a healthy horror of heresy he repeatedly affirms his allegiance to the teachings and observances of the Roman Catholic Church. Yet his discipline is a highly unorthodox struggle to pierce beyond teaching and observance to the incandescent reality of God himself. “Indeed,” he writes, “if it will be considered courteous and proper to say so, it is of very little value or of no value at all in this work to think about the kindness or the great worth of God, nor of our Lady, nor of the saints or angels in heaven, nor even of the joys in heaven.” Instead, the disciple must force his attention down and down beneath the layers of thoughts and associations.

All the outgoing diffusion of the personality must be quenched, as must all memories, pleasant and unpleasant, all attachments to the external, sensory world. Instead, the disciple must plunge into a kind of mental darkness. “And do not believe that because I call it a darkness or a cloud that it is a cloud formed out of the moisture in the air, nor that it is the kind of darkness that is in your

\* From TIME November 25, 1957 with acknowledgments

<sup>1</sup> “Ghostly friend in God,” begins the original version, “thou shalt well understand that I find, in my boisterous beholding, four degrees and forms of Christian men’s living” Progoff’s rendering: “Spiritual friend in God, understand well that I find by general observation four degrees and forms of Christian living”

house at night when the candle is out... When I speak of darkness, I am referring to a lack of knowing... And for this reason it is not called a cloud of the air, but rather a cloud of unknowing that is between you and your God."

Into that cloud may come "a sudden stirring with no forewarning, instantly springing toward God as a spark from a coal." Still higher than the experience of this "sharp dart of longing love" is God's "beam of ghostly light," but of this the author forbears to speak.

**Attrition of Consciousness.** Psychologist Progoff sees many truths of modern psychology in this mystical method. He regards its author as one of the "early experimenters in psychological development" working in a neglected field—"the faculties of the inner life."

Progoff quotes Freud as admitting that "certain practices of mystics may succeed in upsetting the normal relations between the different regions of the mind," so that the senses are "able to grasp relations in the deeper layers of the ego and the id." In his own analysis, Progoff regards the process described in *The Cloud of Unknowing* as a drawing back of all "attachments or projections, whether they are valid or false," which leads to "a deliberate attrition of consciousness." In turn, this results in a greatly increased activity of the unconscious. At this point the individual begins to run into trouble, growing increasingly "out of touch with the realities of society and of his fellow men." Progoff notes that the author of *The Cloud* seems to have had considerable harassment from extraverts, he advised his readers to pay no attention to such carping and reminded them of Martha's irritation with contemplative Mary, who, said Jesus, had "chosen the best part."

The mystic at this stage, says Progoff, may seem to an outsider to be "lost in a schizophrenic state." Like a disciple in Zen Buddhism, he is "walking across the proverbial razor's edge... On either side is psychosis." But after the blinding flash of enlightenment that Christian mystics call union with the divine, his contact with the world is restored and he can return to his former life, "the same person, but altogether different." Progoff agrees with the author of *The Cloud* that this ultimate success may regulate "his conduct so agreeably, both in body and in soul, that it will make him most attractive to every man and woman who sees him." It may also make him "well able to render judgment, if the need should arise, for people of all natures and dispositions."

While these good results may be paramount to the psychologist looking on the discipline prescribed in *The Cloud* as a kind of do-it-yourself therapy, they are mere byproducts to the true mystic, for whom union with God is the only aim. "If you desire to have this aim concentrated and expressed in one word," said the author of *The Cloud*, "take but one short word of a single syllable... The word GOD or the word LOVE... This word shall be your shield and your spear, whether you ride in peace or in war. With this word you shall beat upon the cloud and the darkness, which are above you."

# THE ETERNAL CHILD AND THE ETERNAL MARVEL

## THE SQUARING OF THE CIRCLE

(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1987)

### 1. CHILD—Soul's Divine Royalty\*

RAMSES loved solitude. God-King of the land of the Sun, mystical summit of that pyramid of life which those immense monuments standing eternal amid the silence of the sands beyond the Nile image and symbolise, to stand alone was his right and his duty. Erect in his chariot, his consciousness raised to the crown of the head, to the point where serpent becomes eagle, he felt his gaze sweep like a winged heaven over the multitudes. And yet...

The splendid millennia of Ra's course across the still dazzling azure of the land of the Nile seemed to be reddening with the last radiance that heralds the final apotheosis preceding a darkening decay. Ramses knew it, the signs were manifest. Never had the Egyptian empire been so vast and powerful—and yet the thunder of his campaigns and the miracle of his victories were constantly necessary to repel the attacks of ever more numerous and threatening foes. No other monument could equal the wonder of this temple cut into the cliffs bordering the Nile, where the mystery of human godhead dominated with its gigantic statues a nature steeped in silent contemplation—and yet, in its solitude on the confines of Nubia, how far it stood from the cities, where already the priests were exploiting faith and the generals trafficking in power.... A memory still lived of that Queen who had tried to build a new capital for a new God, and of the mystic Prince who had called a divine Energy down into his people; but their names had been effaced from the public inscriptions, and their tombs lay forgotten. Men had thought to substitute religious formulas for Spiritual Force and military hierarchies for the eternal order of manifestation; and already the nation, cut off from its true life-stream, was beginning to stagnate in the swamps of decadence.

And he, Ramses, what had he come to do, at this moment in history? The greatest of the Pharaohs, had he come to live out for one last time, in a supreme fulfilment, the great mystery of his land, the master-key of his civilisation, the secret message that an already vanishing race would bequeath to a new race even then being born beyond the sea: *the divinity of man?*

Ramses knew. All his life, he had felt above him the tremendous presence, light and energy of a divine Sun; all his life he had lived out the great ritual of

\* "The Son is one with the Father" (Gospels)

"The individual soul is one with the universal soul" (Vedanta)

this communion, had officiated at the sacrifice by which, through him, this Mightiness poured itself out upon his people. He had let his acts be guided by that wordless Wisdom, his decisions be moulded by its mute assent, his thoughts and reflections be filled with its silent clarity; but occasionally the suddenness of its unforeseen influence had surprised him in the very midst of action, in the living moment of a gesture, and a whole event, an issue, had been stamped with the intervention from above.

Ramses knew.... The memory of an unbelievable victory remained engraved forever in his mind, as in the rocks of Abu Simbel his memory was forever committed to the coming centuries. On that day, it had not been he who had chosen solitude; rather solitude had come and seized him, in the distant land of the Mitanni, on the banks of the Orontes, when the enemy had ambushed him beneath the walls of Kadesh and cut him off from his army, blocking his way on the narrow plain between the city and river. On one side, the King, escorted by a few foreign mercenaries; on the other, the army, paralysed by their Pharaoh's absence. It ought to have been the end; it was but the beginning

“No prince is near me, no officer, no charioteer—my foot-soldiers and my chariots have abandoned me!

What does this mean, Amon, O my father?  
Does a father ever forget his son?

Indeed I invoke you, Amon, my father! See me surrounded by strangers I know nothing of. All the lands are leagued against me, and I am alone, abandoned by all....

Forward! Forward! I am with you, the son with the father. Your hand is with me and I am stronger than 100,000 men, I, the lord of victory.

I have rediscovered my heart, and it overflows with gladness. What I will is immediately accomplished. My arrows stream to the right and upon the left I strike. To them I seem Baal in the hour of his fury. No man has the strength to fight. Fear paralyses their hearts and their arms are powerless.

They cry, “This is no mortal but a powerful god! What he does comes not from man; never has one man overcome hundreds of thousands as he has done.”<sup>1</sup>

And when his army saw him emerge, shining, surrounded by a flashing halo, at a tremendous gallop, from the dust and confusion of the mêlée, they rushed towards him as one man, and he had only to let their momentum carry them on, until, on the plain of Orontes, in the distant land of the Mitanni, was won the greatest victory of the God-King.

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<sup>1</sup> The text of the inscription commemorating the victory (1294 BC)

Dreams of glory, dreams of glory....

More than 3000 years had passed since the battle of Kadesh. In the golden wake of a remote memory, an ageless child wandered the world of men. He lived in the East, for the West was already dead. In India, for the breath of the Spirit still vivified this mighty land. Ages had passed since the ancient Seers chanted the eternal Truth, but still the sacred rhythms of that secret knowledge resounded in their original accents of magical poetry, and the same lustre still glowed in the eyes of the people, and the brilliance of a smile that dismissed all misery. The air still vibrated with the same calm, all-powerful energy.

This *eternal child*—like all children—cared for one thing only: the *eternal marvel*. For its sake he had left everything: the world of men and its incurable dullness, the world of gods and its unbearable rules; science and religion, politics and morals—and what in the world is left, for a free child, outside all these cages of the Spirit? He too, although he had not chosen solitude, found himself in the end alone. Alone and naked, yet always haunted by strange presences—a being of light who watched over him and sometimes showed itself, close, intimate; and an inexhaustible quiver against any attack on him: an arrow for each foe, as if the arrow came with the enemy, as if each enemy who appeared necessarily brought with him the arrow that would disarm him.

The child smiled. He was not looking for enemies—he would have preferred friends. But they had all left him—to pursue their own affairs: no time, no business.... He was left with this “presence” in solitude, and this plenitude, in which all questions, all problems were contained, solved, exceeded... *towards what goal?*

Even India, his greatest love, wearied him. But that was just a seeming, false like all this masquerade which, towards the end of the 20th century, was veiling the true face of the country... or perhaps breaking still older and more hardened masks? For yet the charming smile still sparkled just beneath the surface, like a ray of sunlight in the water of an abandoned temple-pool.

Must he wait until everyone emerged from the waters of oblivion?

Alone on the deserted strand of a desolate land the child waited, watching the sea beyond the last beach.

What well-loved face, what new being was to appear from the waves of the Unknown?

\*

Lord of the limitless spaces where Wisdom opens to Truth-Vision, Varuna the Ancient scattered over all worlds and beings his innumerable gaze. Millennia had flowed by since the happy time when he had reigned over all Aryans, men and gods; now, even where a few still turned towards the heights, only the thunderbolts of Indra lit the sky and their intellects. Who would dare to adventure into the unknown ether beyond the vault of mind? *Towards what goal?*



Varuna knew. His immense glance encompassed like a lasso the pretentious greatness of human power. Inexorable, he nailed it to the tiny pivot of its minute egoism. But those who opened themselves to the purity of his infinitude he would deliver and lead them beyond the summits of reason, beyond all narrowness and limitation, on the virgin paths "no foot has ever trod" to the Vast, to the Right, to the True.

And he was waiting—the Guardian of the worlds of Light, Lord of the Night and Day, Knower of the rhythms of the cosmic changes who would unveil the dawn preparing beyond the darkest horizons. He knew that the densest shadows only conceal the light; and that all this ignorance, this obstinate refusal, this perverse distraction were but the last barricade, the final rampart that a new sun would overturn with a single peal of innocent laughter.

If only one being, any one, would wish for this freedom, this pure air, this vivid light, this liberated love....

\*

On the last beach of human living, alone, a child was waiting for signs of a new world alone, facing the immensity of the Unknown. Men had turned their backs on him, and he had no choice but to look beyond. What was there, on the far side?

The child remembered: that other self, that being of light, that voice of silence, that presence on high where his consciousness opened to vibrant spaces.... Was that where he must seek for him, for the friend, the brother in solitude, the companion on the new journey? Like a lotus, his heart opened to the immaculate ray that filtered from above.

Varuna knew it.

Suddenly a golden power invaded the heart of the son of man. A light-delight sang in his breast, while far above, a radiant sun dissolved the last mists of human thought. The pearl-white snow of a sovereign peace spread through the nerves and tissues of his body.

When he arose, the first steps of a new being trod the beaches of the old world. Strong with the strength of his supreme revelation, the young king paced his way. Between this instant of truth and the final victory stood a whole dense, obscure, heavy, self-satisfied humanity; but...the time had come. Smiling behind the shrivelled mask of man, the eternal marvel waited, beckoned, called to him.

"Forward! Forever Forward!" Alone, erect in his chariot, once more Ramses would break through. God was with him.

*(To be continued)*

B. PETRIS

*(Translated by Shraddhavan from the original French)*

## FOR YOUR EARS ONLY

(Continued from the issue of December 1987)

### 12. BIRDS I HAVE LOVED AND LIVED WITH

As a boy I loved the company of birds. The nearby wood from the backyard of my house always remained a source of attraction to me. Poor wood! It has fallen a prey to the fast-growing population of Pondicherry.

Years ago the wood provided shelter for different kinds of birds. It was sheer fun to watch them preen their feathers or, hanging upside down, eat fruits or administer food into the mouths of their young ones or make love. I found extreme delight in listening to the songs they sang for me, for most often I was their only guest.

It was on one such occasion that the wood honoured me with a present. It was a nestling. Present, indeed, for I didn't steal it, though now and then I climbed up trees to steal birds' eggs simply for the pleasure of showing them to my interested classmates at school.

I found the nestling chirping in a bush. It must have been an outcaste or a creature in exile. I rushed to its rescue. When I picked it up, I was not quite sure what bird it would grow to be. Yet I was glad for it was a welcome addition to my dolls galore.

When I took it home, my mother identified it as a parrot. Since parrots learn human language as easily as a human child my parrot too spoke without much difficulty. It was a good listener. When it reached the stage of a fledgling, it became an expert in handling words, especially the abusive ones it had picked up from my father.

Whenever my father fell out of good humour, he hurled words of abuse (not to be mistaken for unlexiconed words) at my mother and me; my sister being too young to be used as a shock-absorber. No sooner did my father stop his hurlings than the parrot repeated his words as if they were tape-recorded and replayed. And thereby it created a comic-relief during those minutes of tension. It was a relief not only to me and my mother but to my father too who allowed a smile to play at the corners of his lips.

My parrot never knew what a cage was. It never learnt the art of flying. My home was its world and it freely hopped about and played. It entertained us by its lovely words with its special accent. Do not be surprised if I say that it played the role of a dog too.

The sight of any stranger at the threshold of my house or even a knock on the door made it uneasy. It opened its beak and said "*Thiruttu paiyan vanthuttan*" ("The thief has come"). The short visit of neighbours too irritated it. It rushed towards them with its beak open and instilled into their hearts a vague fear.

At other times, it caught hold of the bottom-end of the neighbour's sari or dhoti by its beak and dragged them towards the entrance of the house and thereby put them in their place. Many were the neighbours who loved my parrot for its watch-dog attitude. And beggars had a tough time with it.

The great entertainer let itself be an entertainment to a stray cat and thereby left me in tears for weeks together.

Very soon my grandmother (mother's side) filled the bird's vacancy with a mynah that proved to be a muff. "Mynahs too, like parrots, speak very well," my grandmother said. "But all that you have to do is to rub clean its tongue every day with a clove of garlic. Continue the process for about a month and then see the result."

I wanted to make the mynah speak as quickly as I could. The sufferings of the mynah began. In the process, I bruised its tongue. Finding it still dumb, I repeated the torture twice a day and a week later three times. The result was something that I didn't expect. My very presence drove the mynah mad. My grandmother's treatment had only inculcated fear in the tiny heart of the bird.

It didn't take much time for me to detect that nothing was wrong with the bird but everything was wrong with garlic. Hence I stopped treating my mynah to the speech-stimulator.

But I didn't leave the bird at that. "What if the garlic plant fails to make it speak? There are hundreds of plants that are of medicinal value in the wood," my boyish mind ruminated, and then resolved to invent a potion that would make any bird or animal speak the human language.

One morning I frantically searched for different kinds of serrated leaves in the wood. Having witnessed several times my father utter undecipherable noises when a slender fish-bone got stuck in his throat while eating, I jumped to the conclusion that anything that irritates the throat would make the irritated one come out with cries and later with words.

I came home with my pockets stuffed with several kinds of serrated leaves. I handpounded them together and extracted the juice. I dissolved in it a pinch of chocolate and administered the newly invented "speech-giving-potion" into the mouth of the mynah.

The poor bird drank it happily. It must have liked the treatment better than the one with a garlic-clove. It ran here and there as if it was trying to escape the cruel knife of a butcher.

I beamed with satisfaction for I thought that the bird was in a jubilant mood after having tasted that fine 'elixir'.

I kept track of the bird and closely observed it. Was it not my 'guinea-pig'?

An hour or so later it warbled a note. My joy knew no bounds. It must have been a grand beginning. That was what I thought. Hurrah! My experiment was a great success.

I ran to the kitchen to boast of my achievement to my mother and fetch her to see for herself the metamorphosis of the dumb mynah.

My mother followed me to the verandah. We found the mynah lying on its back with its claws turned upwards.

My mother scrutinized the bird. Under our very eyes the bird began to swell, and seconds later had a fit before it breathed its last.

I understood amidst tears that the note it warbled was only its swan-song.

Oh, what a great man I would have become had only my experiment proved to be a great success! I would have been honoured by Nobel, the prize-giver, two and a half decades ago. And I had narrowly missed the title 'Child-Prodigy'. What a fatal blow to the world of science?

P. RAJA

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**From Crisis to Liberation: The Gita's Gospel in Sri Aurobindo's Light** by Dr. H. Maheshwari, Published by him C/o., Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605 002. Distributors: Sabda, Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press: Rs. 25.00.

THIS book is a precious production which is entirely based on Sri Aurobindo's luminous exposition of the Gita as contained in *Essays on the Gita*. It shows the author's sustained study of this scripture, and a meaningful interpretation of his own in the light of Sri Aurobindo. It displays a rich synthesis.

Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita, though a part of the Mahabharata, is a book in itself. It needs little introduction. Many have come to value it as one of the world's spiritual classics. There are many commentaries written from diverse points of view: monist, dualist, pantheist and theist. The commentary of Sankara (A.D. 788-820) is the most ancient of the existing ones. To Sankara, works are vain and bind us firmly to this unreal cosmic process, the endless chain of cause and effect. The aim of the Gita for him is the complete suppression of the world of becoming in which all action occurs. Ramanuja (eleventh century), in his commentary, refutes the doctrine of the unreality of the world and the path of renunciation of action. He develops a type of personal mysticism. Krishnaprem (Ronald Nixon), one of the Western scholars of today, has given his insight into the Gita. He says: "Into the views (equally diverse) of the western Scholars, with their incurably external method of approach, it is not proposed to enter. Garbe considered it a Sankhya-Yoga textbook overwritten by Krishna-worshippers and then again by Vedantists, while Hopkins held that it was a Vishnuite poem worked up in the interests of the Krishna cult. Nearly all of them object to what they term its philosophical inconsistencies and loose use of terms."

"The Bhagavad Gita brings us not only metaphysics (*Brahmavidya*) but also a discipline (*yoga sāstra*). Yoga, from the root *Yuj* (to bind together) means binding one's psychic powers, balancing and enhancing them. There have been several commentaries during the twentieth century other than Krishnaprem's. Among them the chief are B.G. Tilak's, Sri Aurobindo's and Gandhi's. They have their own interpretations. But Sri Aurobindo's disclosure is unique among them. It carries in it the eternal wisdom, the *sanātana dharma*. When Anil Baran's book, *Message of the Gita*, came out, summarising the substance of Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*, of which the *Calcutta Statesman* had said: "It carries to a new perfection the difficult task of expounding Hindu thought to the West." Of similar interest is Dr. Maheshwari's earlier volume, *Bhagavad Gita in the Light of Sri Aurobindo*.

His present book tells us how the Gita came to Sri Aurobindo. It came in

a very mysterious way. He had a strange experience in Alipur Jail in the year (1908-9) which he has narrated in his famous Uttarapara Speech in 1909 as follows: "He (Sri Krishna) placed the Gita in my hands. His strength entered into me and I was able to do the Sadhana of the Gita. I was not only to understand intellectually but to realise what Sri Krishna demanded of Arjuna and what he demands of those who aspire to do His work, to be free from repulsion and desire, to do work for Him without the demand for fruit, to renounce self-will and become a passive and faithful instrument in His hands, to have an equal heart for high and low, friend and opponent, success and failure, yet not to do His work negligently." Sri Aurobindo had a vision which he called "Vasudeva Darshana."<sup>1</sup> Thus *Essays On The Gita* is not only a scholarly exposition but also a revelation from the Higher Knowledge.

The Mother has stated about Sri Aurobindo's book:

"Sri Aurobindo considered the message of the Gita to be the basis of the great spiritual movement which has led and will lead humanity more and more to its liberation, that is to say, to its escape from falsehood and ignorance towards the truth.

"From the time of its first appearance, the Gita has had an immense spiritual action; but with the new interpretation that Sri Aurobindo has given to it, its influence has increased considerably and has become decisive."<sup>2</sup>

Textually, the Gita is taken from the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata, comprising eighteen chapters. Dr. Maheswari has taken approximately a hundred slokas from the seven hundred.

The book commences with the First Chapter of the Gita in which Arjuna faces a physical and mental crisis at a crucial moment on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. When the war was about to begin, the conchs were blown from both sides. At this juncture Arjuna said to Sri Krishna, "I request you to place my chariot at a point between the two armies. I wish to see who are the antagonists." Then Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, "See and have a look at the Kuru clan gathered here." Arjuna saw his own relatives, brothers-in-law, kith and kin. Greatly perplexed, he refuses to fight and raises difficulties. He puts up plausible pleas for abstention from the activity and for retreat from the world. To convert him is the purpose of the whole Gita. Arjuna represents the soul of humanity striving to reach perfection. This crisis of Arjuna is called "Arjuna Vishada Yoga"—the Yoga of dejection.

In utter despair Arjuna turns towards the Divine Krishna. He says "*śiṣyas-teh' aṁ sādhi māṁ tvāṁ prapannam*" ("I am thy disciple, resigned to thy refuge, guide me"). Thus the conversation between Arjuna and Krishna starts. Sri Aurobindo deals with the meaningful relation between Arjuna and Krishna in his two significant essays "The Divine Teacher" and "The Human Disciple".

<sup>1</sup> *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 2, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Collected Works of The Mother*, Vol. 10, pp. 63-64.

The Second Chapter is known as Sankhya Yoga, the Yoga of the Discriminative Intelligence. This Chapter adopts the view developed in *Essays On the Gita*. "Yogasthah Kuru Karmani"—"Do Your work being established in Yoga". The author explains here that the full active life of man in the world has to go on with the inner life in the Eternal spirit. So the Sankhya, which is another name for jnana in the Gita, requires us not to renounce action. Vyāsa tells Śuka that the most ancient method of Brahman-realisation is to obtain release by knowledge and perform action. The Isha Upanishad adopts a similar view.

Next we come to the Chapter which shows the guidance of Krishna to Arjuna in the way of action, Karma-Yoga which is termed 'Disinterested Work'. Krishna says: "Arjuna, work binds only when it is done without the spirit of sacrifice." The author writes: "Sri Aurobindo reveals to us the original and essential significance of the Law of Sacrifice, the universal yoga." In the words of Sri Aurobindo: "... Sankhya and Yoga are not two different, incompatible and discordant systems, but one in their principle and aim; they differ only in their method and starting-point. The Sankhya also is a Yoga, but it proceeds by knowledge.... Yoga is the practice of the Truth of which knowledge gives the vision, and its practice has for its motor-power a spirit of illumined devotion, of calm or fervent consecration to that which knowledge sees to be the Highest." (*Essays on the Gita*, p. 64)

In the Chapter, "The Yoga of Self-mastery: Self-God-Vision", the author gives a comprehensive view of action as superior to inaction. It speaks of the importance of works even in the state of liberation. The Gita puts it thus: "Whoever does the work to be done without resort to its fruits, he verily is the Sanyasin and also the Yogin, not the fire-abandoning man who lights not the sacrificial fire nor even the actionless man who does no work." (VI:1)

Next, in Chapter Nine we come to "The King Knowledge: The Great Secret." The author elucidates it by the following two verses of the Gita: "All this universe of motion is pervasively extended by Me, the Unmanifest Being. All the existences are situated in Me; I am not situated in them. And yet not in Me are the existences situated; behold My Yoga, My Godhead: My being as Myself, being the cause of all creation, is the support and bearer of all becomings, not situated in them." (IX: 4-5)

The author affirms: "The way to the Divine is open to all, the supreme Goal of freedom and liberation and peace and felicity and knowledge and love is attainable to all. Krishna's exhortation and his invitation is for the entire humanity through the human disciple Arjuna."

The author explains the Vibhuti Yoga effectively in the light of Sri Aurobindo. The Gita makes Krishna declare: "I am the birth of everything and from Me all proceeds; thus contemplating, the wise men of knowledge, filled with spiritual feelings, love and adore Me. Me-conscious, putting all their mind and heart and inner awareness in Me and enshrining Me in their inner conscious-

ness, living in Me, moving all their life and breath and vital energy in Me and making Me the single goal of all life-seekings,... they find their contentment and delight.” (X: 8-9)

Sri Aurobindo’s explanation runs: “This knowledge translated into the effective, emotional, temperamental plane becomes a calm love and intense adoration of the original and transcendental Godhead above us, the ever-present Master of all things here, God in men, God in Nature. It is at first a wisdom of the intelligence, the *buddhi*; but that is accompanied by a moved spiritualised state of the affective nature, *bhāva* (*budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ*).” (*Essays on the Gita*, p. 339)

The author profoundly discloses Arjuna’s great realisation of the Divine Truth when the significance of the Vibhuti, the Divine’s manifestation in the chief member of every category of being, is revealed to him by the Divine Teacher. Arjuna exclaims, “O Krishna, out of your kindness for me, my delusion of understanding has vanished, I have also heard from you about the origination and the dissolution of all existences in detail, and also about the imperishable Greatness of the Supreme.... Now, O Purushottama, I have a longing to see you in your Divine Form!” (XI: 1-4)

The vision was granted with amazing vividness. Sri Aurobindo writes: “The form of the transcendent and universal Being is to the strength of the liberated spirit a thing mighty, encouraging and fortifying, a source of power, an equalising, sublimating, all-justifying vision; but to the normal man it is overwhelming, appalling, incommunicable.” (*Essays on the Gita*, p. 379)

The last six Chapters describe the message of Divine Knowledge, Divine Love, and Yoga to humanity through Arjuna who is the blessed one. Thus the human disciple exclaims: “Destroyed is my delusion and obscurity of understanding, O Lord, regained is the memory of my soul with Thy Grace. I stand now firm and free from all doubt; I will carry out what Thy Word commands.” (XVIII: 73)

Arjuna is liberated from the crisis of soul which he faced in the first chapter.

The author’s labour justifies the title of the book. He himself has said in his preface: “The purpose of the present study is threefold: a close and faithful presentation of the Gita’s Thought, free from this or that bias, a sincere suggestion for a sustained study of the Gita in its origin, and an earnest invitation for the rewarding study of the *Essays on the Gita*.”

His persistent drive to bring out this book is an adventure indeed.



## *Students' Section*

### **THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION**

*(Continued from the issue of December 1987)*

SIXTY-SECOND SEMINAR

26 APRIL 1987

#### **WHAT IS THE RIGHT WAY FOR INDIA TO DEAL WITH THE INVASION OF THE INFLUENCES OF MODERN EUROPEAN CULTURE?**

**Speech by Aravinda Das**

LATELY many Indians have started thinking about a serious problem: How to deal with the invasion of the influences of Western civilisation? Invasions are of two types. An example of the first type is Rome invading Greece and getting conquered by her culture, while that of the second is Japan which surrendered to America and soon became a prototype of American civilization. In the first case the invaded country or the people do not lose their identity, while in the second case that is almost lost.

In the present situation when India is invaded by Western civilisation, if we can still keep our identity during the invasion then it will be beneficial to us. We say that India has her own identity, but it may be asked: What is this identity that we are so keen to preserve and why should we preserve it?

To illustrate this point I will give an example. The story narrated here goes back to the 5th century B. C. It is said that once Socrates was pondering over a problem when an Indian Sadhu met him and asked, "What are you thinking about?" The Greek philosopher replied, "I'm trying to understand this phenomenon called man." The Sadhu smiled and said, "How can you understand this when you have not understood the fundamental reality called God?"

This is India's identity; we always go back to the root reality which creates all phenomena and all situations, while the Westerners study the out-products of that "one" spiritual reality. Sri Aurobindo says that for the modern Europeans the material world is the only world and so they think, "An ordered knowledge of the powers, forces, possibilities of physical Nature and of the psychology of man as a mental and physical being is... the only true science."<sup>1</sup> And they have mastered this science and have learnt its applications also. India's aim is

<sup>1</sup> *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (Cent Ed, Vol 14), p. 13.

different. As Sri Aurobindo observes, "India's constant aim has been, on the contrary, to find a basis of living in the higher spiritual truth and to live from the inner spirit outwards, to exceed the present way of mind, life and body, to command and dictate to external Nature."<sup>1</sup>

The obvious question that arises in our mind at the present time is: When we are going to enter the year 2000, do we, especially the young India, still maintain that identity or has it disintegrated? If so, why?

In fact our Indianness is always there, sometimes in the forefront, at times a little behind. There are moments when we are tempted to copy blindly the West by seeing its immediate successes. But this too goes away in time. For instance, in the 19th century India aimed at a successful imitation of Europe; everyone wanted to become an English sahib. But then came the nationalist struggle bringing along the national Indian spirit. Later, a few decades after independence, it was the American influence which dominated; presently it is still there along with the Russian influence. But this influence is on a minority compared to the number who are not influenced. I can say firmly that even in our darkest moments we still retain our uniqueness. Without it India will not exist. She cannot forget her spiritual aim. She has always been guided by her saints and rishis, even though we are not aware of it. Every century in India has produced at least ten great spiritual men. To name a few of the 19th and 20th centuries: Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Dayananda, Ramana Maharshi and, the mightiest of all, Sri Aurobindo. And there are many others who are anonymous.

Let us take a few concrete examples to show that we still maintain our identity. But before giving any example let me tell you an eye-opener. The fact that a big country like India stands firm today even with so much corruption, such a high percentage of illiteracy and a still higher percentage under the poverty-line, shows the direct proof that God exists and guides her and likes her.

Not only does God like India but the Indians too like God. Even today devotional films pull a great crowd. The T.V. serial "Ramayana" is considered as one of the most successful serials for the Indian masses. Why do Indian people want their new vehicles to be blessed by Ganesh? Why even the students who are fully modernised and behave like Americans still go to the temple before their exams? Why do shopkeepers start their day by writing "AUM" in their cash book? Why do the potters, the washermen, the farmers sing bhajans while they work?

You may say that they do it because it is a tradition or that they do it religiously as a daily routine. But no, it is not a religious routine, not a tradition, not a superstition; it is sheer faith. Every Indian, ignorant or learned, knows and believes that there is something greater than man and greater than all, who alone can change all and who alone knows all. Every Indian, however Europeanised externally, is still an Indian at heart who still has this faith. If this is

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 20

true then why the fear of the Western cultural invasion? Why should we preserve our identity if it is always there even in our darkest moments?

When we speak of the fear of the Western influence we are not referring so much to the danger involved in the external copying of the West as to the necessity of preserving our identity in the forefront. The imminent danger is that modern India may temporarily become oblivious of that faith, that uniqueness. We know it cannot be lost altogether, but we do not want our identity, our uniqueness to be veiled even temporarily by the inrush of Western materialism, specially at this critical hour, when India needs it most and the world too. We must preserve our identity because each nation has a particular role to play in the future world. If we copy the West, then who will play our role? That is why the Gita says, "Better the law of one's being though it may be badly done than an alien dharma well-followed." And specially India should keep her uniqueness because she alone can give the spiritual light to the world.

That does not mean that we should sit all day long and repeat God's name. We have to take from the West what we lack but not copy it blindly. We must take its technology, its methods of working efficiently, but we should adjust its technology and its methods of efficiency to our life-style. For instance, it is good to know how to make a good film, but the film should not become a medium for the lower impulses of man as most of the films in the West nowadays are. It is good to learn that every member in the family is independent but that does not mean that we should break the old system of the joint family because the West is doing so. And many other examples are there.

Finally, knowing that we still have an identity and there is the necessity of preserving it, we have to consider the larger question: What is India's role in the future progress of humanity?

India has to tell the world that science, reason and all other aids of this modern world have their place in the progressive human endeavour but the real truth goes beyond these things. To realise this truth and found our life on that knowledge should be our aim.

The mental and the vital and the physical stress of Europe and the spiritual and psychic impulse of India are both necessary for the completeness of the future world.

To summarise the talk, the main points are: The flood of Western materialism is making an attempt to sweep over India; if India wants to resist this inrush she must realise her own identity and know why it should be preserved; and to be able to profit by this inrush she must be able to assimilate it and use it according to the characteristic law of her own being.