

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

OCTOBER 1988

Price: Rs. 3.75

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

INLAND

Annual: Rs. 42.00

Life Membership: Rs. 588.00

OVERSEAS

Sea Mail:

Annual: \$16.00 or £10.00

Life Membership: \$224.00 or £140.00

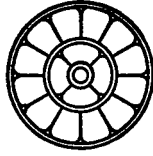
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Life Membership: \$504.00 for American & Pacific countries

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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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

Editor's Phone: 24782

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Published by: P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST

PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY - 605 002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULY

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry - 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

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

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLI

No. 10

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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TWO TALKS OF THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN

2 October 1957

... I HAVE been asked some questions about the film we saw yesterday....¹ The first one is, to say the least, bizarre! I am giving it to you exactly as it is here. I am asked:

“Is the real Buddha you know, whom you speak of in Prayers and Meditations,² the same as the one whose statues are worshipped?”

Statues... there are thousands of statues of the Buddha. There is the Buddha as he is known in India, the Buddha known in Ceylon, the Buddha known in Tibet, the Buddha known in China, in Cambodia, Thailand, Japan and elsewhere. If you are speaking of the historical fact, I think they would all tell you that it is to the Gautama Buddha of India they pray, but in fact each one of these branches of Buddhism, and many more, has its own conception of the Buddha, and it is the conception of a godhead which is worshipped in statues, much more than a divine being, so... If you show me a statue and ask me, “In this statue is there the influence or the presence of the Buddha as you know him?”, I could reply yes or no to you; but when you say “whose statues are worshipped”, I cannot answer you, for that depends on what they have drawn into the statue they worship. Historically, it is always the same name but in fact I don’t know if it is always the same spiritual person! So I cannot answer you.

If you ask me about the statues we saw yesterday... You saw how many there were and some of them were very, very different, it was a very different Buddha. There was one which was shown to us very often, and which is quite authentic, but there were many others which represented at the very least other personalities of the Buddha. It depends on what you mean; if you mean historically, yes, they always say it is the Buddha; but each statue is different.

So, that’s one question. Now we come to something quite different:

“In what way can the teaching of the Buddha now be an obstacle or help to humanity on the path of supramentalisation?”

Everything that helps humanity to make progress is a help, and all that prevents it from making progress is an obstacle!

In fact, you are asking this because we study and meditate on the Dhamma-

¹ An English documentary on the Buddha: *Gautama Buddha*

² *Prayers and Meditations*, 20 and 21 December 1916.

pada....¹ Naturally, I took this text because I consider that at a particular stage of development it can be very useful. It is a discipline which has been crystallised in certain formulas and if one uses these formulas profitably, it can be very helpful, otherwise I wouldn't have taken it. How helpful depends on each one. It depends on whether one knows how to profit from it or not.

And then, the last question:

"Sri Aurobindo has said that the Buddha was an avatar...."

We have said this several times already.

And then, here it becomes very mysterious:

"Apart from the teaching of the Buddha, what remains of his personality in the world?"

(To the disciple who had asked the question) Why do you make this distinction?

When he entered into Nirvana, it was said that his teaching would now remain in the relics.

In the relics! Well, then that means the two things go together. I don't see why you separate them. There is something of his influence in his teaching, naturally! It is the teaching that transmits his influence in the mental field.

His direct action, apart from his teaching, is limited to a very few people who are very fervent believers and have the power of evocation. Otherwise, that most important part of his action, almost the whole of his action, is associated, united, fused with his teaching. It seems difficult to make a distinction.

(After a silence) The forms of Divine Power which have incarnated in different beings, have incarnated with a specific aim, for a specific action, at a specific moment of universal development, but essentially they are only differentiated aspects of the One Being; therefore, it is in the particular purpose of the action that the difference lies. Otherwise it is always the same Truth, the same Power, the same eternal Life which manifests in these forms and creates these forms at a given moment for a specific reason and a specific aim; this is preserved in history, but eternally they are new forms which are used for new progress. Old forms can endure as a vibration lasts, but their purpose historically, it could be said, was momentary, and one form is replaced by another in order that a new step forward may be taken. The mistake humanity makes is that it always hangs on to what is behind it and wants to perpetuate the past indefinitely. These things must be used at the time when they are useful. For there

¹ For some months, every Friday in the younger children's class Mother used to read a few verses from the Dhammapada, the most sacred text of Buddhist Teaching.

is a history of *each* individual development; you may pass through stages in which these disciplines have their momentary utility, but when you have gone beyond that moment you ought to enter into something else and see that historically it was useful but now is so no longer. Certainly, to those who have reached, for instance, a certain state of development and mental control, I won't say, "Read the Dhammapada and meditate on it"; it would be a waste of time. I give it to those who have not gone beyond the stage where it is necessary. But always man takes upon his shoulders an interminable burden. He does not want to drop anything of the past and he stoops more and more under the weight of a useless accumulation.

You have a guide for a part of the way but when you have travelled this part leave the road and the guide and go farther! This is something men find difficult to do. When they get hold of something which helps them, they cling to it, they do not want to move any more. Those who have progressed with the help of Christianity do not want to give it up and they carry it on their shoulders; those who have progressed with the help of Buddhism do not want to leave it and they carry it on their shoulders, and so this hampers the advance and you are indefinitely delayed.

Once you have passed the stage, let it drop, let it go! Go farther.

Mother, the present religio-political movement for the revival of Buddhism...

What? Oh! I don't take part in politics. It is altogether useless. People use things just for political ends, but that is not at all interesting.

16 October 1957

I have received four questions. Naturally they are not about what I have just read, and they are on three different subjects. And each one needs a very lengthy answer. But still, I am going to take the first two which go together. They are about the involution of the Spirit.¹

The first question:

"If all that is to manifest is already involved in Matter, are there, hidden in it, other principles besides the supermind which will be revealed when it has been fully manifested?"

Logically speaking, "yes", for essentially, there is an identity between Matter and the Supreme. But—and this brings in the second question:

¹ Sri Aurobindo tells us that evolution is the result of an involution. Thus, life is involved in Matter, mind is involved in life and supermind is involved in mind. Nothing can come out of nothing; it is because the Supreme is involved in Matter that the Supreme can emerge from Matter. — Editor

“Did the involution take place in Time and does it have a history as evolution has?”

It could almost be said that the answer to this question depends on the mental attitude of the person who asks it.... Scholars will tell you that there are different schools which have spoken about these things in ways that are also very different. There are the metaphysicians who deny any history, minds that are essentially speculative, philosophical and, as I said, metaphysical, abstract, who consider that histories are only for children. There are the psychologists who translate everything into movements of consciousness, and finally there are those who love images and for whom universal history is a great development which might be described as “cinematographic”, and this development in pictures is for them something much more living and tangible, for even if it is only symbolic, it makes them understand things in a more intimate and real way.

It goes without saying that the three explanations are equally true, and that the important thing is to be able to synthesise and harmonise them in one's thought. But we shall put aside the aridities of metaphysics, for it is better to read about them in the books of scholars who tell you things in a very precise, very exact and very dry fashion! The psychological point of view... it is better to live it than speak about it. So we are left with the story for children. It is good to be always a child. And although we must take care not to believe in it as a dogma in which nothing should be changed if one doesn't want to be sacrilegious, we can at least take these stories as a means to make living to our childlike consciousness something which would otherwise be too remote from us.

There we can choose from many stories that have been told, stories more or less true, more or less complete, more or less expressive. But if by interiorising or exteriorising oneself—which, from a certain point of view, is essentially the same thing—if one can relive this story, at least partially and in its broad outlines, it helps one to understand and hence to master the how and why of things. Some people have done that, they are the ones usually considered as initiates, occultists and prophets at the same time—and very beautiful stories have been told.

I am going to tell you one, very succinctly. Don't take it as a gospel! Take it rather... as a story.

When the Supreme decided to exteriorise Himself in order to be able to see Himself, the first thing in Himself which He exteriorised was the Knowledge of the world and the Power to create it. This Knowledge-Consciousness and Force began its work; and in the supreme Will there was a plan, and the first principle of this plan was the expression of both the essential Joy and the essential Freedom, which seemed to be the most interesting feature of this creation.

So intermediaries were needed to express this Joy and Freedom in forms.

And at first four Beings were emanated to start this universal development which was to be the progressive objectivisation of all that is potentially contained in the Supreme. These Beings were, in the principle of their existence: Consciousness and Light, Life, Bliss and Love, and Truth.

You can easily imagine that they had a sense of great power, great strength, of something tremendous, for they were essentially the very principles of these things. Besides, they had full freedom of choice, for this creation was to be Freedom itself.... As soon as they set to work—they had their own conception of how it had to be done—being totally free, they chose to do it independently. Instead of taking the attitude of servant and instrument of which Sri Aurobindo speaks in what I have just read to you,¹ they naturally took the attitude of the master, and this mistake—as I may call it—was the first cause, the essential cause of all the disorder in the universe. As soon as there was separation—for that is the essential cause, separation—as soon as there was separation between the Supreme and what had been emanated, Consciousness changed into inconscience, Light into darkness, Love into hatred, Bliss into suffering, Life into death and Truth into falsehood. And they proceeded with their creations independently, in separation and disorder.

The result is the world as we see it. It was made progressively, stage by stage, and it would truly take a little too long to tell you all that, but finally, the consummation is Matter—obscure, inconscient, miserable.... The creative Force which had emanated these four Beings, essentially for the creation of the world, witnessed what was happening, and turning to the Supreme she prayed for the remedy and the cure of the evil that had been done.

Then she was given the command to precipitate her Consciousness into this inconscience, her Love into this suffering, and her Truth into this falsehood. And a greater consciousness, a more total love, a more perfect truth than what had been emanated at first, plunged, so to say, into the horror of Matter in order to awaken in it consciousness, love and truth, and to begin the movement of Redemption which was to bring the material universe back to its supreme origin.

So, there have been what might be called “successive involutions” in Matter, and a history of these involutions. The present result of these involutions is the appearance of the Supermind emerging from the inconscience; but there is nothing to indicate that after this appearance there will be no others... for the Supreme is inexhaustible and will always create new worlds.

That is my story.

(*Questions and Answers 1957*, pp. 194-98 and 204-07)

¹ “The sword has a joy in the battle-play, the arrow has a mirth in its hiss and its leaping, the earth has a rapture in its dizzy whirl through space, the sun has the royal ecstasy of its blazing splendours and its eternal motion. O thou self-conscious instrument, take thou too the delight of thy own appointed workings ”

“The Delight of Works”, extract from *The Superman*, Cent. Vol. 16, p. 288

THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

IN THE LIGHT OF HER PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

(Continued from the issue of September 1988)

“ALL the lights are put out by the Mother from herself,” says Sri Aurobindo.¹

What is ‘Light’? What is its inner significance? There are many forms and symbols of Light. The Mother in her *Prayers and Meditations* invokes or aspires for the Light of the Supreme. This book of hers is the supreme expression of the different views on Light and describes its forms and symbols.

Sri Aurobindo has affirmed about Light: “Light is always seen in yoga with the inner eye, even with the outer eye, but there are many lights; all are not and all do not come from the supreme Light, *parama jyotih*.”² In the following prayer of November 3, 1912, the Mother feels a light in her being which comes from the *parama jyotih*. “Let Thy Light be in me like a Fire that makes all alive; let Thy divine Love penetrate me.”

Again, her prayer on December 10, 1912 rings with the manifestation of Light in her being. “Thy light was manifested through my mouth yesterday and it met no resistance in me; the instrument was willing, supple, keen of edge.”

The above prayer indicates that the Mother’s body is quite capable of receiving the Higher Light. Sometimes when the Adhara is not ready the gross physical cannot bear the descent of the higher lights. That’s why Sri Aurobindo has said: “... In order to allow at all to the higher Light an adequate entry and force of working, it is necessary to acquire a power for quietude of the nature, to compose, tranquillise, impress a controlled passivity or even an entire silence on mind and heart, life and body.”³

Again, Sri Aurobindo sums up what the higher lights and forces do: “It is the work of the lights and the forces they represent to act in their descent on the lower nature and change it.”⁴

On June 22, 1914 the Mother implores in these words: “What a calm assurance Thou hast put into my being, O Lord, who or what will manifest Thee? Who can say it yet?... In all things that strive towards a new, ever higher and completer expression, Thou art present. But the centre of the light is still not manifested, for the centre of manifestation is not yet perfectly adapted.”

The certitude for the work is there, knowledge for the truth to be accomplished is there. But human nature is not ready to absorb the descent in a full and complete form. Sri Aurobindo’s words run: “Light has often tried to descend upon the earth, but the Light remains unfulfilled and incomplete; man may reject the Light, the world is still full of darkness and the advent seems to be

little more than a chance; this doubt is to some extent justified by the actualities of the past and still existing possibilities of the future. Its power to stand would disappear only if the supermind is once admitted as a consequent part of the order of the universe. If the evolution tends from Matter to Supermind, it must also tend to bring down Supermind into Matter.”⁵

The realisation of light in the self is a partial one and a step towards a new and complete manifestation—what the Mother means in her preceding prayer. In order to have a further clarification we may cite some lines of Sri Aurobindo: “Light of realisation is not the same thing as Descent. Realisation by itself does not necessarily transform the being as a whole; it may bring only an opening or heightening or widening of the consciousness at the top so as to realise something in the Purusha part without any radical change in the parts of the Prakriti. One may have some light of realisation at the spiritual summit of the consciousness but the parts below remain what they were. I have seen any number of instances of that. There must be a descent of the light not merely into the mind or part of it but into all the being down to the physical and below before a real transformation can take place. A light in the mind may spiritualise or otherwise change the mind or part of it in one way or another, but it need not change the vital nature; a light in the vital may purify and enlarge the vital movements or else silence and immobilise the vital being, but leave the body and the physical consciousness as it was, or even leave it inert or shake its balance.”⁶

In her prayer on July 21, 1914, the Mother has written about the process of descent and ascent of light in relation to her individual being: “There was no longer anybody, no longer any sensation; only a column of light was there, rising from where the base of the body normally is to where usually is the head, to form a disk of light like that of the moon; then from there the column continued to rise very far above the head, opening out into an immense sun, dazzling and multicoloured, whence a rain of golden light fell covering all the earth.”

Sri Aurobindo’s expositions have a great deal of similarity to the prayers of the Mother we have cited. “The Divine Light from above is of various colours... gold the hue of the supramental knowledge or of knowledge from the intermediate planes.”⁷ “Gold light means the light of the higher Truth—the moon is the symbol of spirituality. A golden moon means a power of spirituality full of the light of the higher Truth.”⁸ On July 21, 1914 the Mother has also mentioned lucidly the truth of the descent of the light:

“Then slowly the column of light came down again forming an oval of living light, awakening and setting into movement—each one in a special way, according to a particular vibratory mode—the centres above the head, in the head, the throat, the heart, in the middle of the stomach, at the base of the spine and still farther down. At the level of the knees, the ascending and descending currents joined and the circulation thus went on uninterruptedly, enveloping the whole being in an immense oval of living light.

“Then slowly the consciousness came down again, stage by stage, halting in each world, until the body-consciousness returned. The recovery of the body-consciousness was, if the memory is correct, the ninth stage. At that moment the body was still quite stiff and immobile.”

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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1. *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 25, p. 83
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 65.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 19, p. 943.
4. *Ibid.*, Vol. 24, p. 1206.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. 16, pp. 62, 63
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 98.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. 24, p. 1206
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. 23, p. 958

VIGNETTES OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of September 1988)

No Responsibility

X CAME to the Ashram on a visit. Her father told her, "Go to the Ashram, learn all that has to be learnt and come back and help in the upliftment of your family."

On coming here X felt the Ashram was her true home. She wrote to her father, "I have taken up this life. There is no question of returning." Earlier X's younger sister also had joined the Ashram.

Their father was emotionally upset. He wrote to his daughters: "Are you or are you no more my daughters? Have you or have you not any responsibility towards your parents and family? Will you or will you not come if we need or call you?" and much more in a similar vein. X asked Nolini-da to put her father's question before the Mother and prayed for guidance.

The Mother replied: "Tell them they have come to me. My protection, my love, everything is for them. Those who come to the Divine have no responsibility towards anybody."

Misunderstanding

X was upset due to a misunderstanding with her friend. Y informed the Mother that since X was hurt she wanted to come for pranam.

On seeing X whose eyes were wet with tears the Mother asked her attendant to bring a copy of the previous month's *MOTHER INDIA*, e.g., January 1961. She opened a page and told X to read some lines. It was written:

"If you can always smile to life, life will always smile to you."

"If one can smile eternally, one is eternally young."

As soon as X read the message her heart became full of peace and she smiled. The Mother sweetly shook her chin—and said like a benevolent grandmother,

"It is always like this, my child. Don't bother about all these things."

For the Stomach

X used to get stomach-trouble. One day the Mother sent her a cute tiny card with the picture pasted on it of a jolly rabbit eating out of a bowl. She had written on the card,

"This is to make you laugh. It is very good for the stomach."

Compiled by S

HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

13 (*Continued*)

AFTER living for six years in Kashmir some inner voice told X, "This is over. You have far to go." X asked, "But where? I have nobody in the world." At the time he was living with a friend. One day he had a tiff with his friend's wife. He left their house but was uncomfortable in his mind. He was an intimate friend of the family and the idea that some may talk against them and others against him troubled his mind. In April 1939 he saw an advertisement in a newspaper by a gentleman who needed a religious-minded person to tutor his children. The idea tickled X. For fun he took up his pen and wrote to the box-office number given there: "I do not believe in religion. I drink, I smoke, I play cards and believe in enjoying life. I am however in search of love, beauty and truth. If you need a man like that, I am ready to come. Money is no consideration but I should not be treated as an employee."

On second September X went to Gulmarg for a holiday. There he learned that the Second World War had started. He heard an inner voice say, "Leave this place after 2nd October." X had hardly any money, he had no programme, no destination—yet the voice insisted that he should leave. On 3rd October he left for Muzzaffargarh in North West Frontier Province. There he had a friend, an income tax officer, who had promised him some work. X earned lots of money but lost it at cards. He had Rs. 32 left.

He wrote emotionally overwhelming letters to his uncle and also to a friend in Kashmir saying, "I am going I do not know where. If I ever reach there I'll write to you."

Next morning he woke up, perplexed as to where he should go. His inner voice, which he more or less obeyed, said, "Go to the bus-stand and take the first bus wheresoever it may go." Accordingly he boarded the first bus bound for Rawalpindi. Rs. 7 from his meagre wealth of Rs. 32 went for the fare. He had only Rs. 25 left. He went to the railway station to check the price of railway tickets. He found the train-ticket to Bombay cost Rs. 21 and to Calcutta only Rs. 17. He took the train to Calcutta. After meeting other expenses he had only 8 rupees left.

At Mogulsarai junction, he got down to change trains. For a couple of minutes he hesitated and stood forlorn. He saw a tall military man nearby who enquired, "Are you going to Calcutta?" "Yes," replied X. The man chattered on, "Babuji, in Calcutta do not go to a hotel. They will fleece you." X's face fell. He said that he could not afford a hotel. The man continued solicitously, "Do not worry, Babuji. I was a sweeper in a Sarai there. Now I have got a job in Rangoon but the watchman there is my friend. He will allow you to live there for fifteen days without any payment." X was startled. He said to himself, "It is

Krishna.” He knew that he was not abandoned and God was looking after him. His faith increased a hundredfold. He did not even know the military man and left all to Krishna—his chosen deity. On his arrival he was surrounded by hotel agents. One of them said his hotel would cost only Rs. 1.50 per day. X thought he could live for four days with his meagre sum. On reaching the hotel he was informed that it would cost him Rs. 3.50 a day. After paying the rickshaw he had only four rupees. He thought, “Let me live for one day and then I will search for some place.” He heard a voice say, “You were sent here to stay. Look, I have arranged it for you.”

For ten days X searched for a job, for ten days the hotel did not ask for any payment. On his arrival X had written about his arrival in Calcutta to a former girl-student. This girl knew that X never kept money. She sent Rs. 100 by telegram. On the 10th day the hotel people asked him for payment. X answered, “I’ll pay tomorrow.” He had not the least idea how he would pay. But the next day he received the Rs. 100 and paid Rs. 35 to the hotel.

The man who was living in the next room came to him in the evening. X asked him, “Where have you been?” He replied he had had some work outside. He asked X to wake him up next morning at 5.00 a.m. X knocked at his friend’s door to wake him up. When he opened the door the man was looking very perplexed. He told X, “I need some money. I have to pay the hotel man something today, or he will turn me out.” X brought his purse from the room and handed it over to his friend. Now he feared that the man might take away the whole amount. His friend took only ten rupees. Thus the two became fast friends and planned various ways to leave the hotel which was rather costly. They both searched for jobs, without success.

One day X decided to take a cloth-sheet and move to the pavement and give his luggage as payment to the hotel for the seven days for which he had not paid. But on reaching the hotel he found two letters. One was from the gentleman whose advertisement he had answered for fun. It was redirected by his relatives in Kashmir. The gentleman had written, “I liked your letter.” He offered him Rs. 90 per month plus board and lodging. He also assured him that he would be treated as a family member and not as an employee, as X had stipulated.

With the ten ruppees he had, he bought a ticket to Delhi. The advertiser lodged X with another friend in whose house the children were to be taught. Next morning when X was alone, he saw a shelf of books. There he found a book, *The Riddle of This World*. The name attracted him and he opened the book. It opened on a page where the writer had written about the “witness self.” X had already had that experience in the mental hospital in which he had felt that he was two and not one but which he had been afraid to tell anyone lest he should be considered mad. On reading this he said to himself, “It was not madness, it seems to have been an experience.” X looked at the name of the author. It

was Sri Aurobindo. X had not heard of that name before. But a voice intervened and said, "He is the Guru you are seeking. Now you have found him." Next day X came to know that Sri Aurobindo was a Yogi at Pondicherry. He went to book-shops to find other books written by him. In a heap of discarded books at a book-shop he found a book, *The Message of the Gita: as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo*. Its author was Anil Baran Ray, X bought the book and lost himself in reading it. This was the most satisfactory interpretation of the Gita he had ever read.

(To be continued)

Compiled by K

A SIGH IN WORDS

STATISTICS, the reluctant liar, repeats and reiterates
 Man's maturity, progress and prosperity—
 Found indeed in pompous orations and books weighing tons.
 What is man today? A saint with all the sins.
 Listen how mother earth groans in pain—
 The deadly agony of injected fertility.
 Forests gone up in smoke—birds' paradise lost.
 Winds breathe heavy with layers of greedy pollution.
 Boilers the toilers defile nature's citadel of beauty.
 A dangling price tag stitched to each thing of value
 Hits the eye like a shooting piece of shrapnel,
 Mammon enthroned on God's pedestal—
 A sly eye-wash of the merchant monarchy;
 Shackles of subtle slavery clamped on unwary hands.
 Give me just a few trees planted by the fathers.
 What more precious heritage can one covet?
 Years and years of falling leaves fed the ground underneath.
 Travellers rested—dreamers dreamt in their shadows.
 Pity humanity racing like rats for the urban holes—
 While greenery perishes languishing in denudement.
 Eroded earth displays its pock-pitted face—
 Sun-bleached pebbles like gaping rows of teeth in a skull.
 This drift unarrested—gulf unbridged—
 Portends man's banishment from heaven renewed.

LIFE-YOGA-POETRY

PASSAGES FROM SOME LETTERS

I FEEL proud to have my photo so loved and honoured. Most photos that have an appeal are better than the actual persons in the sense that a good side of them is caught there whereas they themselves are changeable and subject to various moods. I am sure I also fall short of what my picture suggests to you, but I have always tried not to be a creature of moods. One of the first requisites of the Yogic life is a certain equableness of disposition—not to be on top of Mount Everest one moment and at the bottom of the Pacific the next or at least not swinging too much from gay sunshine to glum shadow. Of course it would be ideal if one were always in the light, bringing home to people the splendour of God's creative joy or, if one is a little distant with spiritual absorption, then a calm night-sky would meet the world with star on star softly smiling out the unutterable mystery of the transcendent Divine. Anyway, let me hope I'll be able to live up to the impression you have of my picture.

The affinity between you and me which you speak of is striking if long before you came to know that a fellow named Amal Kiran was knocking about in the Ashram you had a sense of his presence. I am glad my introduction as a writer came to you through *Light and Laughter* and not through any of my other books. For perhaps then you might have thought me a dry-as-dust thinker and considered me rather unapproachable. Did I tell you what a sadhak once told me? He said: "We read X and Y and Z and others like them in *Mother India*—and only when we have nothing else to read we read you." I told him: "Well, I have to be thankful for small mercies. And that in whatever circumstances you do read me at all is God's Grace enough." Under my breath I said: "Maybe it is a bit of God's Grace to you also."

Your relatives seem greatly struck by my library which forms the background in that photo. Yes, I do have a fairly large store of books and they are on a wide diversity of subjects, for I have been interested in many fields of human activity and have also written books on various topics. I believe about twenty-two have been published, two are in the press and about eighteen remain in typescript ready for publication as soon as the money appears out of the blue. I am not sure whether, even with the money, so many unpublished books can come out in my lifetime. Some people are generously helping me, but how far can they go? Besides, close on 84, do I have enough time left to see all my books through the press? And even if I have it for these old creations, what will happen to the new ones that are sure to be born during that period? In order that my lifetime may cover the publication of all my stock at present, I must stop writing any further. I seem to be like "Fate" in Omar Khayyam:

The Moving Finger writes and having writ
- Moves on...

What you say about people's maladies entering into you is rather disturbing. If you have the power to heal, it must not be exercised at the expense of your well-being. To take upon oneself the illnesses of others keeps the sum of illnesses in the world the same. Moreover, if the healer herself begins to suffer, she may even die and then who will heal the sick? The power must be used safely. It must be something that comes from the Divine through your soul and cures people without any in-take of their troubles. Though a sympathetic attitude is helpful in opening them to you, no identification of yourself with them must take place. You have to be only the instrument. The illness must be thrown out of people by the power that passes through you. If you yourself get ill, your healing gift is being misused by a hostile force. Whenever I have had the rare privilege to cure somebody, no reaction has occurred in me. A stream from the soul has entered the ailing party and infused a "brightness" in both mind and body without bringing about any "pallor" in my own self.

I think you are mixing an uncontrolled pity with the curative process and allowing your over-generous emotional-vital to get sucked into the person who seeks your help. This is an unhealthy transaction. Instead of the spiritual power using the human, the human uses the spiritual power in the human's ordinary terms. Not emotional-vital pity but a radiant psychic peace, communicating the presence of the Divine, has to be in play. Don't endeavour to heal: be quiet and invoke the Divine who is in your soul to transfuse light into the patient. If you can't do this, stop your healing activity until the orientation of which I am speaking takes place.

You must develop a protective zone around you. Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me about such a development. Call the Mother's presence, try to be in tune with her Will in whatever you do: then a zone of light and peace will form. Nothing will be able to penetrate your atmosphere and only what you wish to give out of your depths will go through it to people—with no unhealthy after-effects on yourself. As you are sensitive even to letters, appeal to the Divine before opening them, offer them to the Divine and keep the sense of offering while reading them. If the zone protection is there, the psychological aura of any letter which may affect you adversely will be kept out and you will remain safe. Of course, if a letter carries the Mother's light and peace it will automatically pass through the zone into you, for it will be in accord with the vibration there and serve to increase it. (4.6.1988)

*

You speak of "depression." It is something you must never accept. The Mother

has told us that all kinds of wrong movements can get into one when one goes on being depressed. One must immediately shake oneself free of gloom. And really where is the room for sustained gloom when the Divine Herself came to earth and allowed us to be Her children? Her presence is ever with us and there is no cause for despair. Of course, at times we don't feel quite on top of the world, but we should take care not to persist in the bottom-of-the-world feeling. For, I have always said: "There is no hole so deep that out of it the Divine Grace cannot lift us up sky-high."

Your dream-vision about your crushed head is strange but not without meaning. The particles of your brain being all separate but at the same time golden suggests that the Divine Light has touched your physical mind but its effects are not yet integrated. Their floating in water seems to imply that the God-touched particles are separate because your outer mentality is affected very much by the vital element in you which is fluid and moving in diverse directions—being subject to moods, impulses, changing impressions, passing sensations. The vital element needs some order and the mental part needs to be less dependent on this element so that it may be less dispersed. The golden light which is somewhere within you should get a good chance to assert its own power and to make steady your being and organise it in a happy pattern of self-dedication to the Divine's presence which your soul feels in the midst of all human weaknesses. (17.7.1988)

*

I woke up this morning with four lines of poetry on my lips—

This scattered life, both flux and flame,
You must seize as one and stamp
As a love-letter to Eternity
From the transience of a tramp.

The lines are not a remembrance but a reminder. They are my own and they point in the same direction in general as the end of your latest letter to me. "Love" was the cry of your being, love for the universal as well as the transcendent "That" of the Isha Upanishad's ending. This "That" is hit off in a slightly different but essentially similar vein by those two verses in *Savitri*:

The triune being who is all and one
And yet is no one but himself apart.

The philosophy of these verses is caught epigrammatically in the single line elsewhere in the poem:

Universal he is all, transcendent none.

I say “philosophy” but actually nothing in *Savitri* which looks philosophical is corn of the speculative intellect: everything carries the stab of revelation and presents a pull towards realisation. If I may use some words of the Isha-quotation, “That is far and the same is near.” It seems a vision gleaming in the distance, but the living language which conveys it makes us feel it like a truth already embodied by the one who has given it visionary expression, a truth whose seed is implanted by that expression into our own body for sprouting and leafing and flowering and fruiting.

My use of the word “body” takes me back to a passage in your letter which goes home to me very vividly:

“body’s hold.” “hold on the body.” “loosening of the hold on the body.” “Surrender—increasingly progressive—of the body to the Divine, by the soul, by the other parts and by the body itself unknown to the others”: all these seem to me to be progressive stages of attaining freedom. I think of a bird, which has nearly forgotten to fly, fluttering its wings and wondering with thrill and fear at the pressure of upswinging air built up by the wings’ action!

This is a beautiful passage and “surrender... of the body... by the body itself” strikes a chord which has been the keynote of my Yogic life for many months now—more and more pervadingly the aspiration of the outermost to reflect the innermost and to echo the uppermost or rather to feel something of its own archetype—the innermost’s and the uppermost’s outermost, so to speak: the “subtle body” and the “causal body” inherently belonging to them and waiting to manifest along with the subliminal self and the self that is superconscient. I know that the archetypal-physical is beyond our capacity to realise in any true sense at present, but a distant feeling of it is not ruled out and such a feeling is essential for a total consecration of our lives to the Perfect and the Absolute so that we may respond in however faint a way to the whole of that sovereign Overmind utterance by Sri Aurobindo of the Integral Yoga and not respond merely to its second, third and fourth lines:

Arms taking to a voiceless supreme delight,
Life that meets the Eternal with close breast,
An unwall’d mind dissolved in the Infinite,
Force one with unimaginable rest.

(By the way, the expression “taking” should not raise the question: “taking what?” It is an intransitive present participle and with the preposition “to” it makes the composite meaning: “having recourse to”, “adopting as help”, “being drawn or attracted to”.)

One of the major signs of the body's direct "intuition" of its archetype would be a complete disappearance of the sex-urge. Long ago, shortly after joining the Ashram, I had for a few seconds the sense of a total sexlessness. At that time—the early '30s—the Ashram was a complex of several separate houses with their own courtyards which were connected by small "tunnels". Every evening, after the Soup Distribution the Mother used to pass through a "tunnel" from the Library House towards her own building. Dara would be carrying a hurricane lantern in front of her. I used to go ahead and wait on the other side. It was once during my brief passage through this "tunnel" that I had that sudden experience of a total sexlessness. And it was not anything negative but a wonderful crystalline transparency of being, a quietly intense bliss, an all-sufficient emptiness which was a rapt fullness of freedom. An initial representative of this state would be the pervasion of the emotional and sensational self by the sheer psyche, a deep happy spontaneous purity. Neither the representative nor the original is loveless or insensitive to beauty, but the drive of desire, the pull of possessiveness are gone—and, though women may remain a part of one's life, there is not the slightest physical ache for any of them. In that blessed condition we can live out what Sri Aurobindo expresses in his "Bride of the Fire": we become ready to unite inwardly with that "living Sun", the sovereign Shakti of the ultimate Godhead. The "Bride of the Fire" is, according to me, the one whom Aswapaty hails in *Savitri* with the cry:

O Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the universe,
 Creatrix, the Eternal's artist Bride,...
 O radiant fountain of the world's delight,
 World-free and unattainable above,
 O Bliss who ever dwellest deep hid within
 While men seek thee outside and never find,
 Mystery and Muse with hieratic tongue... (2.6.1988)

*

You write: "I have one tendency—to take everything in my stride and because of that I do not very often get wonder-struck—marvel as anyone else would—don't know if that is a gain or a loss—Grace or non-Grace." To my thinking as well as a bit of experiencing, to take everything in one's stride is one of the best ways of getting ready for Yoga. Perhaps I should say it is already a beginning of Yoga, even if one is not consciously a Yogi. It implies a calm competence to meet every turn of life—not to be taken by surprise, not to lose one's poise—it implies a wisdom in the very act of being aware, an automatic understanding of the variable quality and character of the world-movement. I don't see why it should prevent one from being wonder-struck. What you have in

mind is possibly a kind of indifference, a lack of interest, even a thick-skinned attitude. Not being ruffled or elated by whatever happens but being "equal" to all vicissitudes is not to lose one's sense of the shades of things. When the self in us—the Purusha—stands back and watches somewhat like Alexander Pope's God

Who sees, with equal eyes as lord of all,
A hero perish or a sparrow fall,

we need not, by giving up personal reactions, give up noting the distinction between a hero and a sparrow or the difference between one hero and another or how the same hero does deeds of dissimilar degrees of courage and endurance. The condition should be, on a generalised scale, akin to an artist's, who can feel beauty everywhere, in even the mud-pool and haggard old age, and depict everything with revealing line and hue, but who knows also the high notes and the low, the intensity or immensity in one manifestation of beauty more than in another. Perhaps I should say he is wonder-struck all the while yet he is aesthetically aware of the varying range of some eternal light piercing the passing show of time.

My four lines, with which I woke up on 2.6.88, I called a reminder and not a remembrance. The last word should have stopped you from asking when they were written. They were composed at the moment of waking or, more correctly, the waking moment gave them to me as a programme or project to be worked out. Yes, they point towards "integration", but an integration into the Yogic state and the main sign of it is that Eternity should be the Beautiful One to whom must be addressed all the quiverings of the heart and mind—"flame" and "flux"—which are now vagaries and wanderings in a world of finite loves and fancies. All should be gathered together in one gesture of warm self-offering and total loyalty to the Divine. The four lines I quoted from Sri Aurobindo sum up this gesture in its fullness as well as in its fulfilment.

His starting with "arms" and then proceeding to "Life" and "Mind" and Will—"Force" does not signify that Yoga has to concentrate on the body first. Also we must see that under "Life" the heart is subsumed as we can catch from the expression "close breast". An Aurobindonian Bhakti Yoga is mainly hinted at here, just as a Jnana Yoga *à la* Sri Aurobindo is touched upon in the third line and Karma Yoga as visioned by our Master in the last. What Yoga the first line suggests may be imagined as a blend of Hatha Yoga and the Tantrik discipline. But, of course, all is to be viewed *sub specie Aurobindonis*. The stability and strength and super-powering of the body which Hatha Yoga aims at after a strenuous complicated labour of posture and breathing is no direct part of the Integral Yoga nor is the paradoxical purity which the Tantrik experimenter dangerously tries for. We do not attempt to raise the Kundalini, the "Serpent Shakti" from below to energise through the diverse poses of the limbs

the physical organism to an occult capacity. We do not with the aid of the same Shakti fill our nerves with the erotic impulse in a new orientation which through the feminine partner evokes the sense of the Goddess filling one with an illumined vitality. We invoke the free Goddess-Power of the Higher Realms to descend into us and release both occult and spiritual potentialities in the body and ultimately fit it to receive the Causal Sheath of inherent immunity and immortality which carries with it an ineffable and immutable Bliss (“voiceless supreme delight”). Our Bhakti too is something beyond the emotional exuberance of the proverbial devotee turning his heart to the chosen deity: we seek to bring forward the secret Dweller in the deep heart—the *chaitya purusha*—which has at once the poise of Purusha and the *élan* of Prakriti so that there is a quiet intensity of love moving most naturally towards the Divine. Our Bhakti is activated by that speciality of Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s spiritual path—the Psychic Being—the true Soul which lies behind what they term the desire-soul and which passes from birth to birth in a subtle progression and is not set on reaching merely some beatific Beyond like the Vaishnava Golok but is intimately connected with earth-existence. It is the core of Life—the core by which Life is able to meet “the Eternal with close breast”, taking the outer heart and its bodily sense along with it as a passage for that glowing Within. Our Jnana Yoga exceeds the static vastness of the Atman-realisation—essentially equivalent to the experience of the Silent Brahman or of Nirvana—which would find its end in the leap “to fade in the Unknowable” instead of being ready to “thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite”, across which the creative and transformative Supermind may sweep to terrestrial shores. The Aurobindonian Karma Yoga is not content with one’s becoming an instrument of Sri Krishna’s power of action: our consciousness has to receive the descent of Sri Krishna and realise Him acting as our own selves from our very bodies, not just from above them. And, along with His action, there is the experience of the everlasting Plenitude which needs no action because in it everything is already achieved and all is complete in a marvellous consummate crowning peace (“unimaginable rest”).

Your astrological reflections are a little puzzling. How can the Indian system of Zodiacal signs differ so much from the western so that one who is symbolised by a bull in the former gets characterised by a horse in the latter? How can I have faith in astrology after this revelation? Of course it would be nice to have these two suggestive signs at the same time. Historically, both the bull and the horse have the honour of going back to Rigvedic antiquity and being spiritually significant as well as anthropologically meaningful. But the bull appears to be more basic to the old Aryan thought. The supreme godhead is designated a Bull, never a Horse. That is one of my grievances against the Rishis no less than against the composer of the Gita who dubs Arjuna “Bull among the Bharatas” and nothing like “Horse among the Pandavas”. Sri Aurobindo, however, has given pride of place to the horse through Savitri’s father Aswapaty, “Lord of the

Horse". In an earlier version, a whole section was called "Yoga of the Lord of the Horse"—and when I asked Sri Aurobindo whether this horse was the Vedic white courser Dadhikravan which ever marched towards the Dawn, he replied that it was. After my question he even wrote a long passage on the theme but found it unsatisfactory and ran a line over it, completely cancelling it.

Although the ancient Aryans are nowadays remembered most as the first domesticators of the horse, they themselves did not specially emphasise this animal—nor even the bull, for all its figuring the creative power of the Godhead. The cow was the focus of their symbolic spiritual thought. But one of the most laudatory expressions in the Rigveda connected with it has given rise to India's age-long prohibition of cow-slaughter. The Mother of the Gods, Aditi, the Infinite Consciousness, gets the title "Cow unslayable", pointing to her immortal nature. The epithet "unslayable" was caught hold of by later commentators and interpreted as forbidding the slaughter of cows. Actually, it is used as a distinguishing mark of Aditi from cows that are slayable. Modern researchers like our own Sankalia as well as western scholars like Macdonell and Keith, authors of the *Vedic Index*, deduce from several expressions that the spiritual forefathers of the Indian people were non-vegetarians or at least not rigidly imitative of their own cows and horses in their dietary habits.

Mind you, I am not defending meat-eating. My own natural instinct is in the opposite direction, but I have a respect for historical situations. Furthermore, the faddist identification of vegetarianism with spirituality, as if abstention from animal flesh gave one the right to the feeling of "holier-than-thou", irks me. I don't believe that even our Mother ever encouraged this faddism. I recollect her to have always been ironical in such matters.

Apropos of the cow-theme, a curious amusing idea strikes me. My birth-sign is Sagittarius, the Centaur, half man half horse. As you know, I am a passionate horse-lover. And I think I am fairly masculine, but Sri Aurobindo's name for me—Amal Kiran, "The Clear Ray"—can have both a bovine and feminine overtone if we follow the esoteric reading of the Rigveda. For, according to Sri Aurobindo, the word *go*, connoting "cow", means also "ray". So I could be addressed as "The Clear Cow"! I suppose I thus get assimilated to the Krishna-legend and become a part of his herd and would stand out by being clearly recognisable as his ward and by being clear in recognising him as my leader. There is also the Vaishnava fancy that if Krishna is the one unique Divinity with whom the soul has to unite, all souls are feminine and He the single Male, Master, Lord, Husband. So the sex-change suggested by my ray-hood is nothing to worry about.

Nor should it be a subject of worry that your sadhana seems to you to proceed only as if you were competing with a snail. While keeping a healthy desire of the moth for the star going, one should not disturb one's nerves by forgetting what difficult jobs we are for the Divine to manage. The Divine can't help our

being slow. But we should forget the slowness and carry on our job: "Remember and Offer." Preoccupation with how much we are advancing every day would be a sign of egoism. However, we can pray to the Mother: "O let all of me belong to you—may your light take possession of me wholly!" What we shouldn't do is to ask ourselves: "Why am I not getting a halo soon and sprouting wings swiftly?" Not that impatience is forbidden. But there has to be a difference in the temper of it. The soul, not the ego, has to cry for speed in Yoga. Perhaps the difference may be phrased by noting that the soul concentrates on the Divine and appeals to the Divine to come close speedily while the ego wants itself to reach the Divine fast. The soul's impatience is humble and quiet, the ego's is pushy and clamorous. The soul, though its devotion strains to something afar and wants it to be near, is yet ready to wait for the response: the ego frets that, in spite of its insistent call, the response is not immediate.

I am afraid my rather rambling epistolary response to your two letters has been somewhat slow, but as I am very distant indeed from being anything divine you may well complain without being considered egoistic. (9.7.1988)

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

GLIMSES OF PAVITRA

FROM THE REMINISCENCES OF PAVITRA AND MRITYUNJOY

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1988)

Part 4

China, Mongolia, India: 1924-1925

Pavitra tells of his decision to leave Japan in order to live in a monastery in Mongolia.

PAVITRA: A delegation of Mongolian monks, lamas, came to Japan and visited the laboratories, the factory where I was working. I made contact with them because my research always brought me back to Asia, to *Central Asia*, as a place, a centre, under the peaks of the Himalayas. So I saw an opportunity there. I wondered if perhaps it was an indication that I should go to Tibet. So I got myself introduced to them. It wasn't very easy to talk with them, because we had no common language. There was an ex-officer of the former Russian army—he was Mongolian and he spoke neither English nor Chinese; but his wife spoke both Chinese and English, so through this intermediary we could converse! It wasn't easy! But gradually a possibility opened up to go and study for a time in their monastery, in that lamasery. It meant crossing northern China and going to what was called Outer Mongolia—that is, the part of Mongolia which was governed by China. That was in 1924. So I set off with a Mongolian lama who was a very sensible, open man. During that period I set myself to learn Mongolian, because of course I had to be able to talk to him a bit. How difficult it was to find a book to help me learn that language!

And I set off across northern China, Peking... I won't tell you about those experiences, those adventures, because there isn't time; but my attitude was more or less this: "I know that I am on my way to the Truth, towards the one who will lead me to the Truth. I don't know where he is, I don't know how to reach him. All I can do is to be absolutely alert and open for any sign I may receive. If I see a door opening in any direction, I will go through it. If I don't see anything, I will wait and watch." And even today I think that this was a good attitude.

*Mrityunjoy speaks of Pavitra's journey to Mongolia
and of his nine months with the Lamas.*

MRITYUNJOY: So in the middle of 1924, Pavitra started his travels again

towards the further unknown. He reached Peking in the beginning of July 1924. There he visited some of the important places, such as the Temple of Heaven (on July 8) and the Imperial Palace (on July 18). At this time he shaved off his beautiful black beard to accept the religion and even the dress of the Lamas. On July 20 he visited one of their famous temples and then crossed the waters of the Sha-ho into Mongolia.

The journey through China was hazardous and difficult. First, there was no proper road and many small rivers had to be forded. Pavitra sometimes crossed in a small boat, but his bags (some of which are still in his room) had to be taken over on the backs of mules or coolies, who crossed on foot. Sometimes the rivers—waist-deep in places—were full of stones, quite big ones, which made the crossing still more difficult. Again, there was the possibility of encountering bandits, who were infamous for attacking innocent foreign travellers like Pavitra, removing everything from them and even killing them. Pavitra had been specifically instructed by friends not to keep any money with him. He was obliged to carry a Post Office pass-book and draw money from Post Offices when he required it. But how difficult that was we have little idea, we who are living so near the Post Office!

By the Grace of the Divine nothing untoward happened to Pavitra; no bandits came and nothing was robbed. The physical difficulties of the journey he bore quietly, with calm determination. His childhood discipline, his military training, his service on the battle-front and stay in Japan, where he had experienced the calmness and fortitude of the Japanese people, helped him like a reserve of strength.

Pavitra lived with the Lamas for nine months, practising the most austere Buddhism, sitting for long hours of meditation. He wore their particular dress and hat, and was completely clean-shaven. We can hardly imagine the hardships he underwent. In describing them, he would never exaggerate facts or distort them, so they sounded like an enjoyable story. But what conditions! For nine months of the year, the sun is rarely seen at the monastery. The people live on scanty food and tea; their diet consists of boiled herbs and onions, salt, some root-vegetables, a fermented soyabean soup, and bread the size of a brick and just as hard—to eat it, Pavitra said, one had to soak it in hot water.

Then the smell. There were people in Mongolia who had never bathed in their lives. The extreme cold, far below the freezing point, does not encourage them to bathe—nor does it prevent them from smelling horribly! To imagine that he lived among such companions and slept beside them, with nobody understanding his language, will make one realise how strong was his spiritual urge!

Pavitra describes his stay at the monastery.

PAVITRA: I stayed there nine months—a whole winter in a cold country,

but still I cannot say that I suffered from the cold. The monastery was very protected, completely isolated from the outside. During these nine months I didn't see a single European; a few Chinese—merchants—and then Mongolians. At times it was quite hard. One was alone, thrown entirely upon one's own resources, with one's difficulties and one's moments of despair.

But the dominant thing was: "My God, if only I knew what I am supposed to do on this earth—whatever it is, even sweeping the street—I will do it joyfully. But what is it that I am supposed to do on earth?" And you see, this had already been going on for three or four years. "What am I to do on earth? Where shall I find a clear indication?"

By that time I already knew of the existence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother through mutual friends. I had even seen, before I left France, an issue of the French *Arya*; I had looked into it. I must say that it had not especially attracted my attention. I had read it, I had said, "Yes, it's interesting." But what I wanted was a *contact* with something. There had been the first chapters of *The Life Divine*, and then some passages on the Eternal Wisdom. I had seen that, it was really interesting, but, I tell you frankly, it hadn't touched me more than other things had.

When I was in Japan... I arrived there just after Mother had left. It was in 1920 and Mother had left just a few months earlier. So I had heard about her—we had mutual friends. I was interested in what I heard about her—very much so. That was why I decided to write. So I wrote to Pondicherry. I never got an answer! (*laughter*) Never. I wrote twice. No reply. I think that at that time they weren't replying much to letters! Perhaps... I hope that now we reply a little better.

So after that rather severe winter in Mongolia, I felt very clearly that this experience was over and that I should go elsewhere. Where? Well, to India. The time had come for me to go to India. Where? I didn't know. Since I was returning from Japan, I had to have some sort of destination, so for other people, for my family and friends, I said, "I am returning to Europe via India." But in my heart I knew that I would remain in India. But I couldn't say that because they would have asked me, "Where will you go?" "Oh, I don't know!" I had nothing material to base my inner certainty on, except, "In India I am sure to find what I am searching for." That was all.

*Mrityunjoy recounts the journey through China
to Japan and then India.*

MRITYUNJOY: It was while Pavitra was in Mongolia, as I mentioned, that he received the gift of a time-piece from his Japanese friends as a token of their remembrance and gratitude.

On his way back from Mongolia, he went to Jehol for some time, visiting on

14 August 1925 the Palace of Fuchung, the great statue of Buddha in Ta-ho-se, near Jehol, and the temple of the Five Hundred Arhats (*la hau-tau*), with its huge bronze statues all of the same type.

The return journey was very hard. Sometimes, as on 21 August 1925, his caravan of three mules, carrying luggage, got stuck in the sand-dunes. And sometimes they fell sick: Pavitra just had to wait until they were able to go on. Even in these circumstances he never failed to take the opportunity of visiting lamaist temples. In Peking he visited one of their temples while a marriage ceremony was being performed. That was in August 1925.

Pavitra sailed to Japan and was welcomed by Viscount S. Soga, now an old friend of his. But Pavitra didn't want to remain long in Japan. In September, after seeing Mount Fuji, he set off for India. He was feeling some uneasiness inside, he said, and wanted to get away from Japan as soon as possible.

*Pavitra tells of his journey to India where in
Pondicherry he met Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.*

PAVITRA: I left. I set off again. I passed through Indo-China, where my brother was a radio engineer. I stayed there a month and then I went south and landed in Ceylon. I arrive in Ceylon, with all India before me—on the doorstep of India.

“Where will I go? Pondicherry is nearest. I will go to Pondicherry. But I don't know what kind of reception I will receive there. I don't even know whether they will receive me at all—I have had no reply to my letters. I am going to Pondicherry because it is the nearest place. Afterwards? Well, we'll see. I could perhaps go to Adyar, which isn't far away... Perhaps! I will see.” The inner attitude remained the same: to see whether a door would open.

I waited a couple of weeks in Ceylon because the Indian train services were disrupted by floods (you see, that still happens)—the tracks were damaged. For three weeks, I waited in Colombo. Then I arrived in Pondicherry one morning by train. I booked into the Hotel d'Europe and then went straight to the Ashram. At that time Sri Aurobindo was staying in the room where Anilbaran is now—you know it. So I asked whether I could see Sri Aurobindo. In those days Sri Aurobindo was still seeing people, still meeting his disciples. He agreed to see me. I explained my position to him, what I was looking for, why I had left Europe, why I had come to India and what I hoped to find here. The first day, it was I who spoke. He told me to come back the following day.

In the evening I met the Mother. Of Mother, I remember... I especially remember her eyes, her eyes of light. I repeated my story to her, perhaps rather briefly. She said a few words, and then I went back to my hotel. I remember going for a walk on the sea-front and someone saying, “Look, there are some *swadeshis*”—that meant people dressed in white who were members of the Ashram.

There weren't many. How many? About twelve or fifteen.

The next morning I returned and met Sri Aurobindo. And it was he who spoke. Of course I had explained to him my desire for liberation; I had told him that that was what I was seeking—not so much the liberation from rebirth as the liberation... the liberation from myself, from the ego, from ignorance and sin, from falsehood, from everything that makes up the ordinary human life. *Moksha*, liberation, that was my ideal. I didn't think of it in some other place, some heaven. I didn't particularly want to avoid suffering. But it was the burden of ignorance, of falsehood, of ugliness, all that. And even more than avoiding anything, I was seeking something positive. I was seeking for light rather than to avoid suffering; neither the end of suffering nor the end of falsehood, but Light, Knowledge, Truth.

So he told me that several people in India were able to give me what I was seeking, but that they were not easy to meet, especially for a European. And then he went on to say that he himself considered that what I was seeking—this union with God, the realisation of Brahman—came first, as a first step, a necessary stage, but that it was not the whole thing, that there was a second step: the descent of the Divine Power into the human consciousness to transform it; and that was what he, Sri Aurobindo, was trying to do. And he told me, "Well, if you would like to try, you may stay here." I fell at his feet; he blessed me, and it was done. A whole page of my life was finished: the search, the search for the source of light, the search for the one who would lead me to the truth, was over. Something new had begun: the realisation, the practice. I had found Sri Aurobindo, I had found my guru.

That is how I came here.

As I told you, I was accepted. There was no Ashram then. There were a few houses that belonged to Sri Aurobindo, and Mother was mainly looking after him—looking after the disciples a little, but each one was more or less left to himself. The Ashram took birth a year later in 1926. So I had the immense privilege of seeing Sri Aurobindo every day, of listening to him, hearing him reply every day to the questions we asked him.

Finally I had reached the place I was supposed to reach.

ADDENDUM

*Pavitra's account of his first meeting with Sri Aurobindo.**

Friday Dec. 18, 1925:

For you to return to France just now would be a defeat. It would take you

* Translated from the French notes made by Pavitra shortly afterwards Sri Aurobindo, of course, spoke to him in English. The words, therefore, are not exact, but the substance is likely to be accurate.

away from the consciousness you have glimpsed. It could even be worse. Possibly you might regain the lost ground after some years, but in any case it would mean neglecting an opportunity and failing to do what you are meant to do.

You bring to your search a sincere heart and a mental capacity to learn (by reserving judgment). But the activity of your mind is a hindrance: you must silence your mind.

A new consciousness is seeking expression in you. In India there are people, yogis, who can help you in this and give you the new birth. There will be some difficulty in finding them, for you do not speak their language and they are often rather brusque with strangers. Nevertheless this is one solution open to you.

This spiritual consciousness will give you *mukti*. For me personally, my yoga would be complete if liberation were my goal. *Mukti* is only the first part of it. The second consists in bringing the light down into all the instruments, perfecting them and becoming "the embodiment of Truth". Then the universal truth and power will act through you and by you. Sometimes people are more or less unconscious instruments of *shakti* (the Divine Power), but here it is a matter of remaining perfectly conscious.

This perfecting of the human being is difficult—very, very difficult; and it is the work of a whole lifetime. One may fail, and waste his life. In fact it is so hard that I do not advise anyone to take this path. However, in you there is a powerful aspiration, and something that seeks to descend. So I place this ideal before you. If you choose it, remain here among us and see what I can give you and what you can take from me before you go further.

(To be continued)

TWO POEMS TO THE MOTHER

A MEMORY OF THE BALCONY DARSHAN

WITH hearts and minds full of devotion and love
A few hundred souls are looking up from below
To bathe in the effulgence to come from above,
To quench their thirst with a nectar's flow.

At last the moment for your coming into sight,
Sprinkled all round is a mystic balm;
Time steps back, timelessness prevails like a light—
Dear, as you appear with that aura of calm.

In the grandeur of stillness all upward gaze,
My mind perforce withdraws its wings of thought,
The lotus of the heart opens under the shower of grace,
Indeed the whole being feels as if drawn aloft.

You look benignly around emanating waves of ruth,
All eyes are fixed with steady look on your face;
Some pray for ephemeral gains, others for the riches of truth—
All the bowls are filled in conformity with their space.

ON THE BEACH OF PONDICHERRY

SITTING on the Pondicherry beach this evening
I am hearing your voice through wave on wave,
The vibrating voice, "Coming, Coming, Coming".
At once it makes my sore heart brave.

Sitting on the sandy shore, as I behold
The eternal play of the billows as they race,
Your Astral Form shedding mysterious gold,
A Hand uplifted showering grace!

Still I am wearing this flesh-and-bones robe,
Though you have since left your own sheath;
Through my heart you will ever throb
And vibrate through me as long as I breathe.

O, you gave this life a meaning and an aim,
You taught us to love and aspire,
You lived for us in a mortal frame,
O Sweet Presence, come again in that attire.

M. P. JAIN

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of September 1988)

The Mother's Message

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



Vol. Three 1959

No. 22

FEBRUARY gave way to wild and windy March. The chilliness increased in the air. Everything was freezing—these were the days of solitude and silence.

Snow whirled and spattered against my windows. Often I longed to curl up on my couch with many blankets over me.

Now I was at Mrs Bee's House. My room was big and equipped with central heating.

One morning my eyes sprang wide open. I flung the blankets back—I had overslept.

In a jiffy I got ready and rushed to L.T.C. I caught the lift in time and managed to squeeze through its door as it was closing, and found myself sharing the cubicle with five people—four boys and a girl. The lift travelled smoothly upward; meanwhile one of the boys tampered with the buttons of the numbered floors and the lift stopped in between. We were alarmed. He tried several buttons and gave two or three blows with his fist and swore. The lift refused to budge. We got annoyed with the culprit. He expressed his regret with an Italian accent: "Friends, I had no intention to stop the lift. Here, take some toffee and cheer up." The girl muttered: "O, you sublime fool!" He bowed his head and acknowledged: "Grazie mille."

Suddenly I remembered my vice-principal in the previous college to have warned: "Girls, be careful with Latins. They are like hot-plates!"

The boy shouted and banged the doors. Then after one hour we were released by the L.T.C. authorities from the cage with rotten moods. We missed two lessons.

In the evening after college when I was sliding down the escalator, to catch the tube train the same boy was behind me assuring me with a chuckle of mischief: "Miss, don't worry, I cannot stop this machine." I said: "Thank you."

The next day when I was entering my class, some boys followed suit. One of them came forward and asked: "Miss, why do you put a red dot on your forehead?" I answered: "It is an Indian custom." Then he turned to the others and complimented: "Elle est très charmante—très gentille." I felt a wave of embarrassed colour rise in my face when I said: "Merci beaucoup, monsieur." He gaped. I took my seat near a German girl—Ursula Bellersheim—who became a good friend of mine.

During that period—1959—the young men were polite, courteous and gentlemanly.

*

I telephoned Aunt Margaret asking her to accompany me and help my enrolment at St. Martin's School of Art.

We stood in a queue together. Then after paying the fees and filling the form we went to the school canteen for a cup of tea. I told Aunt that if I could get accommodation in the YWCA—Young Women's Christian Association—at Great Russell Street it would be convenient to me because it was close to my colleges. She promised me that she would inquire and let me know.

Three times a week—at night—I started going to St. Martin's School of Art which was a huge place. I came across a few interesting professors. One of them was very short—hardly five feet tall—and was extremely humorous. I entered his class which was ice-cold. There were quite a number of students busy with

their work. He welcomed me and gave me a place near a nude who was reclining luxuriously on a couch. I was asked to sketch her. I felt awkward—at the same time uneasy, because I did not know how to draw a human figure properly.

After several attempts, at last I sketched her. The professor saw my work and remarked: “Why, miss Hindocha, do you think that eyes must be on the forehead?” The whole class was in a roar of laughter along with the nude. I was taken aback but soon regained my composure. Now it was up to me to show the professor my skill in conveying my vision of her.

He then altered it a little and advised me: “You should practise drawing human figures more and more. You must join the exclusive drawing class. Here you are doing drawing and painting both. You see, all artists must learn the human figure accurately.”

After I had finished the painting the nude got up and examined it. She also went around to peep at everybody’s painting. It was the intermission. We were still fumbling with our painting materials. Meanwhile the model wore her gown and left for a cup of tea. *

*

I joined another class. Here an old man came and sat beside me. He taught me how to draw while holding my hand which I disliked... As a matter of fact, he did all the sketches—I learnt nothing. I quitted the class.

I found yet another class of life drawing. It was a big hall with a dais, chairs, benches, stands and stools.

I saw a nude sitting on a narrow stool giving a pose. She was pregnant, in her last months. I felt uncomfortable when I drew her, because I had to look at her constantly in order to capture her in my sketch book.

There were men models whose physiques were superb. They were tall, with broad shoulders and muscular chests, tapering down to lean hips and long legs.

Young women nudes were symmetrically charming and beautiful.

I marvelled at the seriousness of the young students who never raised their voices or passed any vulgar remarks. There was always a total hush save for muffled instructions by professors to the pupils.

“Miss Hindocha, how does it go, eh?” The tall professor asked, filling his pipe with a fine aromatic tobacco. Fishing in his pocket for a lighter, he thumbed it into flame and lit the pipe and drew deeply on it. He came and stood beside my bench, studying my work and offering comments: “Let your drawings flow, use your eyes. There is an art in seeing. To see well is rather difficult—it requires keenness of eyes. Also you should develop skill in your hands.”

One day the female nude gave her pose by standing near a stand. The students formed a thick semi-circle near her and began sketching. An aged man who was sitting by me told me in his bass-tone: “Miss, hasn’t she got a fabulous figure?” I smiled and nodded.

This reminds me of Rodin's words on a nude:

"The beauty of a naked woman is the beauty of God."

I was amazed to see old men and women above sixty or seventy coming to learn the art so enthusiastically. I believe that in Western countries people go on progressing regardless of their age. They never waste their time.

*

Apart from the life drawing and portrait paintings, I wished to learn still-life painting.

I went to the inquiry office and followed one of the queues. Everyone stared at me curiously. I was perplexed. Soon I summoned my common sense and asked a girl who was in front of me whether I was in the right line. She said: "Well, this queue is for models." My God! I slipped out quietly to join the right one.

After paying the fees and filling the form, I entered a very big room. There were two sections, so the students could paint whatever they liked: still-life or portrait.

As I approached two gentlemen, their attention swerved from their deep discussion to me.

I told one of them while showing the form that I wanted to attend his class. The other—a young man—was listening to me intently. When he had heard my account, the person I was addressing chuckled and said: "Sorry, miss, I am not the professor, but a student." Then he pointed to the young man beside him and informed me: "He is the professor."

We three looked at one another and burst out laughing.

In fact, the man whom I had taken to be the professor was well suited for the role. He had an elegant trimmed beard, his attire of fine English worsted was dark blue and well cut, the jacket fitted nicely across his shoulders, one hand in his pocket and the other holding a book. He wore the perfect expression of a professor. That was why I had poured out my story to him. I was really struck by his patience as well as the patience of the real professor. They both were typical Englishmen relishing fully the piquant situation.

Then I talked to the real one and wished them both good night.

The following evening, I joined the class. Both of them smiled and greeted me.

To my disgust, I had to paint dead pigeons. However, I painted them. But most of the painting was done by the professor to show me the true technique. He said: "You must give long and short brush strokes with sensitiveness in your eyes and skill in your hands. Your eyes must act as an intermediary between you and the object and your hands must accomplish what is felt and seen by the eyes."

So original and practical!

But nothing like what the Mother had taught me. In her *Collected Works* Vol. 3, pp. 104-5-6-7 & 10, she has written about authentic art and answered questions on the relation between art and yoga:

“...If you want art to be the true and highest art, it must be the expression of a divine world brought down into this material world. All true artists have some feeling of this kind, some sense that they are intermediaries between a higher world and this physical existence. If you consider it in this light, Art is not very different from Yoga....

“The discipline of Art has at its centre the same principle as the discipline of Yoga. In both the aim is to become more and more conscious; in both you have to learn to see and feel something that is beyond the ordinary vision and feeling, to go within and bring out from there deeper things. Painters have to follow a discipline for the growth of the consciousness of their eyes, which in itself is almost a Yoga. If they are true artists and try to see beyond and use their art for the expression of the inner world, they grow in consciousness by this concentration, which is not other than the consciousness given by Yoga. Why then should not Yogic consciousness be a help to artistic creation?...

“There is one way in which Yoga may stop the artist’s productive impulse. If the origin of his art is in the vital world, once he becomes a Yogi he will lose his inspiration or, rather, the source from which his inspiration used to come will inspire him no more, for then the vital world appears in its true light; it puts on its true value, and that value is very relative. Most of those who call themselves artists draw their inspiration from the vital world only; and it carries in it no high or great significance. But when a true artist, one who looks for his creative source to a higher world, turns to Yoga, he will find that his inspiration becomes more direct and powerful and his expression clear and deeper. Of those who possess a true value the power of Yoga will increase the value, but from one who has only some false appearance of art even that appearance will vanish or else lose its appeal. To one earnest in Yoga, the first simple truth that strikes his opening vision is that what he does is a very relative thing in comparison with the universal manifestation, the universal movement. But an artist is usually vain and looks on himself as a highly important personage, a kind of demigod in the human world. Many artists say that if they did not believe what they do to be of a supreme importance, they would not be able to do it. But I have known some whose inspiration was from a higher world and yet they did not believe that what they did was of so immense an importance. That is nearer the spirit of true art. If a man is truly led to express himself in art, it is the way the Divine has chosen to manifest in him, and then by Yoga his art will gain and not lose. But there is all the question: is the artist

appointed by the Divine or self-appointed?....

“Art is nothing less in its fundamental truth than the aspect of beauty of the Divine manifestation. Perhaps, looking from this standpoint, there will be found very few true artists; but still there are some and these can very well be considered as Yogis. For like a Yogi an artist goes into deep contemplation to await and receive his inspiration. To create something truly beautiful, he has first to see it within, to realise it as a whole in his inner consciousness; only when so found, seen, held within, can he execute it outwardly; he creates according to this greater inner vision. This too is a kind of yogic discipline, for by it he enters into intimate communion with the inner worlds....”

*

In our class the majority of the students did abstract and modern paintings.

A few days later I painted a portrait of a pretty girl, not nude this time for a change. When I had finished it and shown it to the professor, he exclaimed: “Well, Miss Hindocha, don’t you think the eyes are rather huge? They look like an Indian’s eyes.”

I smiled and said: “Sir, if seen by Indian eyes, how could they be otherwise?” He laughed and affirmed: “You are absolutely right.”

Then I spoke to him of the “Future Painting” about which the Mother had told me. But I did not know how much he could grasp.

A girl was doing a corner of the room in abstract art. The professor appreciated and praised her work a lot.

As regards higher painting none in this world had any idea of the Mother’s visions.

While observing and examining numerous drawings and paintings done by students I could discriminate between two opposites—truth and falsehood. I felt that a large number of the students derived their inspiration from the wrong source and the result seemed to me flat and lifeless.

Within me I knew that whatever I had learnt in my colleges I would make the most of in my future work in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

(To be continued)

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THE TALE OF SAVITRI ACCORDING TO THE MAHABHARATA

(Continued from the issue of September 1988)

AFTER the departure of Yama Savitri, getting her husband back, came to the place where his dead body was lying. Seeing her husband on the ground she went near him and sat there and took again his head in her lap. By now Satyavan regained his consciousness and, looking affectionately at Savitri, began talking to her like one who had returned from a long journey abroad. He felt that he was waking up from some deep sleep; but he carried a faint recollection of the dark-hued terrifying figure that had dragged him to some dreadful unknown world. He enquired about him of Savitri who told him that it was the great God Yama himself, the Ordainer of Creatures, who had come there; she, however, quickly added that it was now all over and that he had left the place. Satyavan wanted to know more about the entire episode; but Savitri postponed it by saying that she would narrate it the next day and she pointed out that a thick darkness was fast enveloping them in the forest.

Satyavan looked around and suddenly realised that he had not returned yet to the hermitage. He was worried lest his old parents should be very much disturbed not seeing him back in spite of the growing night. Satyavan started cursing his sleep and wanted to hasten homeward as fast as they could. He told Savitri that on an earlier occasion he had been severely reprimanded for such a delay when the dusk had just gathered in the sky. The parents had not only been anxious; all kinds of ominous thoughts had started haunting them. They had also expressed their sentiments in no uncertain words by telling him that he was a staff for them and they could not move or live without it even for two hours.

But Savitri was a little hesitant. She saw that Satyavan was still weak and had doubts whether he was in a condition to walk all the long distance to the hermitage. Getting lost in the forest could be quite risky too!

नक्तंचराश्चरन्त्येते हृष्टाः क्रूराभिभाषिणः ।
श्रूयन्ते पर्णशब्दाश्च मृगाणां चरतां वने ॥
एता घोरां शिवा नादान् दिशं दक्षिणपश्चिमाम् ।
आस्थाय विरुचन्त्युग्राः कम्पयन्त्यो मनो मम ॥

These cruel-speaking night-prowlers are moving freely now; listen to the sound of the leaves as the wild beasts go about. This fearsome howling of the jackals in the south and in the west is causing my mind and heart to tremble.

Possessed by this fear she began persuading him to return only the next morning. But Satyavan broke down and started weeping. He was unable to bear the se-

paration from his parents any longer. He told Savitri that his blind father and the old mother must be surely going from sage to sage enquiring about him and about his welfare. The more he remembered them the more he wept. He also wanted to go immediately and give respects to his revered Teachers. In a somewhat firm manner, almost rebukingly, he spoke to Savitri that if her understanding was fixed in righteous conduct, then the fit course for them was to return home the same night.

Realising the truth of what her husband was saying and seeing the deep respect and devotion to the elders he was showing, the follower of the dharma that he was in every action of his life, Savitri agreed to return without further delay. She got up and knotted her loose hair; then holding both the hands of her husband she helped him to stand. Satyavan dusted his body and, looking all round, noticed the fruit-basket lying nearby. But Savitri told him that it could be picked up the next day. She tied the basket to the branch of a low tree and with the axe on her shoulder went to the place where her husband was standing. Encircling his waist with her right arm, his left on her shoulder, they then started walking slowly. Satyavan chided her that she was a timid woman and was unnecessarily worried about getting lost in the wood. He assured her that he was quite familiar with all the paths there, as he had trod them very frequently; he could even tell the correct one simply by looking at the stars. He pointed out to her that they were actually on the same path they had taken in the morning while coming to the forest. Indicating that at the bifurcation near the group of palas-trees she should take the path leading to the north, he asked her to quicken the pace that they might reach home as soon as possible.

In the meantime, at the hermitage Dyumatsena, though surprised to have received suddenly his eye-sight and of being able to see everything clearly, was very much disturbed by the fact that Satyavan had not returned yet. The evening darkness had thickened into night and his mind was wandering wildly, thinking of unholy and untoward happenings. A great fear had gripped him. He along with his wife Shaibya went from cottage to cottage enquiring about his son and daughter-in-law. They went in search of them to the river-banks and to the innumerable lakes around and traversed the difficult parts of the forest, cutting across thick and thorny bushes. Whenever they heard some voices at a distance, they hoped or imagined these to be of Satyavan and Savitri. With their feet badly wounded and bleeding, and their limbs pierced by thorns, they raved almost in madness and went hither and thither in all directions, wailing about them constantly.

Seeing the distressed plight of the old parents, wounded, bleeding, tormented by evil suggestions, the sages of the forest gathered around them and began consoling them. Suvarcha, ever the speaker of the Truth, assured them that as Savitri was a woman of exceptionally virtuous qualities and was fixed in the dharma and had made great progress in her tapasya, nothing injurious

would happen to Satyavan. Bharadwaja also expressed the same conviction and held that Satyavan was hale and living. Gautama asserted that he had studied all the six branches of the Vedas, accumulated great might of askesis, had observed strict celibacy since his early age and had pleased his preceptors and the Fire-God well. By that power of austerity and by the concentration of his will he could know all the movements of others. Stating so he affirmed that Satyavan was alive. Gautama's disciple vouched that never had a word uttered by his Guru turned out to be untrue or wrong, and therefore Satyavan must be living. Dalbhya pointed out that Dyumatsena's getting his eye-sight back in such an unexpected way augured auspicious happenings; he also said that the way Savitri had observed the very difficult three-night vow and the fact that she had accompanied her husband to the forest without breaking the long fast meant complete safety for Satyavan. Apastambha saw in the tranquil benign surroundings and in the manner and movement of the animals and birds a secret presence of harmony, and that there was nothing which should really disturb them. As there was no trace of concern or note of uneasiness anywhere, he too was sure that Satyavan was alive. Dhaumya proclaimed that Satyavan, a noble prince of unparalleled merit, dear to everyone, had the marks of a long life and therefore he must be living.

This way the great Rishis assuaged the fears of the worried parents. Then, not too long afterwards, Savitri with her husband Satyavan arrived at the ashram-premises and entered the hermitage, immensely happy. There was great jubilation amongst all present. Indeed, in Savitri, in the union of the father and the son, and in the blind King's receiving his sight, they saw glorious and mighty portents of the future. Kindling a bright fire they all sat around it and threw a volley of questions at Satyavan. They surely wanted to know why he had been so late in returning when the night had grown dark; they were also wondering whether he had any obstacles to face on his way back. Quite understandably, they wished to know everything in detail. But all that Satyavan could say was that, while cutting the trees, he had suffered a severe headache and consequently had fallen asleep; on getting up he had found that it had already grown dark in the night; he regretted that he had slept unconsciously for too long.

But Gautama was not satisfied with the answer; the blind King's receiving back his eye-sight was still a mystery that remained unexplained. He therefore turned towards Savitri and expressed his eagerness to know the secret of it from her. He told her that she alone could unravel it.

श्रोतुमिच्छामि सावित्रि त्वं हि वेत्थ परावरम् ।
 त्वां हि जानामि सावित्रि सावित्रीमिव तेजसा ॥
 त्वमत्र हेतुं जानीषे तस्मात् सत्यं निरुच्यताम् ।
 रहस्यं यदि ते नास्ति किञ्चिदत्र वदस्व नः ॥

“O Savitri, I am eager to hear its secret from you; you are the knower, O Savitri, of all that is far and near, that belongs to the past and the future; you are one like Goddess Savitri herself, with her effulgence: this I can affirm. Surely you know the meaning and purpose of this mystery and therefore, if there is nothing in it to hide from us, tell us truly all of it.”

Savitri narrated everything in detail, right from the beginning, how Narad had foretold the impending doom of Satyavan's death, and the reason for her undertaking the three-night vow, and of accompanying her husband to the forest on that particular day. When Yama, who had come there along with his minions, after snatching the soul of Satyavan was taking it away with him, she too followed him and offered him high eulogies with the utterances of Truth. The mighty God, the Upholder of the Dharma, had become happy with her beyond bounds; he even adored her with devotion. She then told how she had received the five boons and how Satyavan had regained consciousness. The Rishis blessed the young devout lady and departed in happiness to their respective cottages, hailing her as the Saviour of the House.

निमज्जमानं व्यसनैरभिद्रुतं
कुलं नरेन्द्रस्य तमोमये हृदे ।
त्वया सुशीलव्रतपुण्यया कुलं
समुद्धृतं साधिव पुनः कुलीनया ॥

“The house of the King was plunging more and more into darkness, assailed by misfortunes. But you, of noble birth and a virtuous wife, sweetly amiable in nature and an observer of the vows, one given to meritorious conduct, redeemed the family from doom.”

But when the night was over and the solar orb had appeared in the eastern sky they all, rich in austerities, completing the morning oblations and the fire-rites, gathered once again around Dyumatsena. They spoke to him of the extreme good fortune, *mahābhāgyam*, of Savitri and were not contented even though they repeatedly narrated it.

While they were thus talking, a group of citizens of the Shalwa kingdom arrived there, unexpectedly. Extending their welcome to the mighty King Dyumatsena, they informed him that his enemy had been murdered by his own minister. Everyone in the capital had resolved that Dyumatsena should occupy the throne again as he was its rightful and worthy heir. For them it did not matter even if he was blind. Thus imploring him to return and assume the reins of the kingdom, they told him further that the full army was also ready at his command. Then, seeing the King with his sight regained and in good health, they were happily surprised and bowed down to him. Dyumatsena made

his respectful obeisances to the Rishis, worshipped them, and with their blessings departed for his capital. Shaibya along with Savitri rode a gold-embroidered and richly decorated palanquin and, accompanied by the army, left the hermitage. At the capital the priests sprinkled holy water and performed the coronation ceremony of Dyumatsena; Satyavan was also made the Crown-Prince. In the course of time all the boons of Yama given to Savitri got fulfilled.

Completing the narration of the Tale of Savitri to Yudhisthira, Markandeya told him that by her devotion and by suffering greatly for her husband, the pious lady had not only saved him from doom but also brought prosperity for both the families. In the manner of Savitri, the Rishi assured the exiled and melancholy King, Draupadi too would be the fortune-bringer for the Pandavas.

(Concluded)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

HUMAN AND DIVINE LOVE IN SRI AUROBINDO'S *SAVITRI*

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

SRI AUROBINDO'S *Savitri* is a fascinating love poem which may be enjoyed by any reader. There is that straight appeal of love poetry in the surface texture of the poem and one does not need to have a philosophical mind to understand the wide and intense love flowing out of a woman's soul. Love dwells in us like an unopened flower, but the human mind is capable of receiving the fragrance of the bud. The human mind responds to every idiom of love, great or small. In this cosmic epic there are waves of spiritual ecstasy and we find here a kind of transformation of the Keatsian and Kalidasian sensuousness.

The theme of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is the victory of love over death. Savitri's love for Satyavan expands into a vast symbol: the flaming love of the World-Mother for the earth Savitri, the answer to death, is the daughter of Savitur the Creator. She is the Divine Grace in the guise of a human being. She is born to save the world which is the field of death. Death invites love and both conspire towards one great end. Her birth is the manifestation of the Grace on this plane of death. She is not born just in the natural way, the combined need and aspiration of the Earth in evolution called for her birth. Aswapathy, Savitri's father, is the "Lord of the Horse," spiritual force and light. He is the fit father of the Grace in human shape. Dyumathsena, Satyavan's father, is the shining host which symbolises the divine mind full of the rays of the divine light which is banished from its own luminous kingdom. And so he comes to the earth blinded by ignorance.

Now these are the major characters, and all are related to the epic of love. The heroine, the saviour, is all sweetness from her birth and she has no suitor when she grows up. She has to go out in search of a suitor. One morning, she meets Satyavan while passing from one forest into another. It is love at first sight, and one does not need to be a yogi to feel the charm of this encounter.

As they exchange looks, they are instantly related. This deep romance envisaged by the seer-poet appears fascinating to us even if we do not perceive fully the essence of its spirituality. Savitri descends from her chariot, collects a few wild flowers, weaves a garland, puts it round Satyavan's neck and on his bosom and bows to him.

"She bowed and touched his feet with worshipping hands;
She made her life his world for him to tread
And made her body the room of his delight,
Her beating heart a remembrancer of bliss."

This is the symbol of an eternal commitment and even the casual reader may be elevated by the scene. One human moment is made eternal.

Sri Aurobindo, steeped in the passions of a spiritual romance, follows each movement of this wonderful girl and opens our souls to see and feel and hear her footsteps. There is a shower of original love poetry; there are inspired expositions of his views on love.

“Love must not cease to live upon the earth,
For love is the bright link 'twixt earth and heaven,
Love is the far Transcendent's angel here;
Love is man's lien on the Absolute.”

In quick-flowing periods, Sri Aurobindo records a system of growth in love.

“All our earth starts from mud and ends in sky,
And Love that was once an animal's desire,
Then a sweet madness in the rapturous heart,
An ardent comradeship in the happy mind,
Becomes a wide spiritual yearning's space.”

The evolution of love is related to the natural evolution of the spiritual seeker. Sometimes half-conscious poets like John Donne have tried to mark this evolution. Shakespeare was fully aware of it, and there is no better example than what we see in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Even the worst variety of love is a shadow of the white fire. K. D. Sethna, Sri Aurobindo's poet-disciple, sums up the essence in a fine poem:

“We love, but scarcely know
What they mean—
The unsated kisses, the deep quiets
Hung between.

“Suddenly in our eyes
A full moon glows
And, quick with tears, the mind
Feels that it knows.

“Aloof, some rounded hush,
A secrecy
Of Oneness, troubles the heart's surge
And breaking cry.”

There is a yearning in man to possess and be possessed. This is a clue to the great secret, the most sacred feeling of love, towards which every man is moving in a natural evolutionary process.

“For love must soar beyond the very heavens
And find its secret sense ineffable;
It must change its human ways to ways divine.”

The dialogue with Death shows the heart of the World-Mother, which is wider than the universe. Our heart responds to her inspired claim and leaps into a sacred flame.

“The eyes of love gaze starlike through death’s night,
The feet of love tread naked hardest worlds.”

Death threatens Savitri, tries to frustrate her by presenting a picture of dreadful nothingness and after that offers her a lone immortality. But Savitri is bent on seeking the immortality of Satyavan, the human individual. A lonely freedom cannot satisfy her, for she is the deputy of the aspiring world. Finally, Death is defeated by the white heat of love.

Love in Sri Aurobindo’s epic is an open confession of a mystic companionship, and the speeches of Savitri light in us the white flame of love. Once the fire is lit, it keeps burning, wavering from slow to bright and bright to slow, and is destined to burn upward to the plenitude of immortality. Every love is on the move and the human hankering is not an utter waste. Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* is for all lovers. To read the poem is to be convinced. But it is a call ultimately to the highest form of soul-relationship through which man is drawn to relationship with the Divine.

GAUTAM GHOSAL

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA BIRTH CENTENARY

Compiler's Note

GENERALLY the true significance of great events escapes the eyes of common men. History merely records the outer facts—if even that fully. Centuries and millenniums pass. Either no attention is paid to these events or the scholars debate over them endlessly and many deny them entirely. The name is legion of those who say there was no siege of Troy and the so-called intelligentsia of India delights in saying that there was no Rama and no Krishna. Very few rare souls can discern the echoes of the epoch-making footsteps of the Lord. Nolini-da is one of the few who like Arjuna, Ananda and the apostles of other ages served, aided and followed faithfully the Avatar of the Supermind. He was privy to many a Divine Counsel and is in a position to throw with authority some light on the events and actions which led Sri Aurobindo's steps on to the eastern shore of Pondicherry. All creation must have sighed with relief on that great day because the glorious future of creation was assured. In the following article dating to 1972 Nolini-da chronicles some of these events and lays bare their secret core.

SHYAM KUMARI

A REVIEW OF SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

I propose to speak to you on a very interesting subject—about Sri Aurobindo. You know it is his centenary, that is to say, this August¹ he completes a hundred years of earthly existence: I say earthly advisedly because although he has left his body he has not left earth's atmosphere. The Mother assures us he will be there to see the work begun completed. I will speak on a very peculiar aspect of Sri Aurobindo's life. Many must have noticed it but I wish to draw your particular attention to it. Sri Aurobindo's life is an extraordinary phenomenon. It is not that of an ordinary human being. The life of an ordinary man follows a well-marked line of development, almost a routine good for everybody. The pattern is familiar, you can even foresee and foretell the future—and the destiny of a person. You start as a student, join a school, go up to a college, after passing out you choose a profession, become an engineer or doctor or businessman or something well-recognised like that, then you continue to stick to the job you have chosen: you become a rich man or if you are unfortunate a poor man, anyhow you go through the experiences of the life allotted to you, you become old, have children, grandchildren and then pass away; that is the ordinary course of life. In Sri Aurobindo life has a different line, movement and procedure. Strangely it consists of breaks, sudden unforeseen turns almost cutting away the past alto-

¹ 15 August 1972

gether. And then what is to be noted is that these breaks or turns are not imposed upon him but they are normally his own conscious decisions out of his own deliberate will, except one or two I shall point out as I go on. These turns however may not be always a right-about-turn but anyhow, I may say, a right turn, a turn to the right, always to the right—until the final ultimate Right is reached.

First of all—let us begin from the very beginning. The very first step or turn he took in his early childhood was in fact a complete about-turn—the antipodes of what he was and where he was. For, he was almost uprooted from his normal surroundings and removed across far seas to a distant land. From out of an Indian Bengali family he was thrown into the midst of a British Christian family. He was made to forget his native language, his country's traditions, his people's customs and manners, he had to adopt an altogether different mode of life and thinking, a thoroughly Europeanised style and manner. Naturally being a baby this was an occasion, the earliest, when he had not his choice, his own deliberate decision but had to follow the choice of his father—the choice perhaps of his secret soul and destiny. His father meant well, for he wanted his children to be not only good but great according to his conception of goodness and greatness. Now, in that epoch when the British were the masters of India and we their slaves, in those days the ideal for a person of intelligence and promise, the ideal of success was to become a high government official, a district magistrate or a district judge; that was the highest ambition of an Indian of that time and naturally Sri Aurobindo's parents and well-wishers thought of Sri Aurobindo in that line, he would become a very famous district magistrate or a Commissioner even, the highest position that an Indian could achieve. So he had to appear at an examination for that purpose, it was called—those glittering letters to Indian eyes: I.C.S. (Indian Civil Service). Now here was the very first deliberate choice of his own, the first radical turn he took—to cut himself away from the normally developing past. He turned away from that line of growth and his life moved on to a different scale. His parents and friends were mortified, such a brilliant boy come to nought but he had pushed away the past as another vision allured him and he stuck to his decision.

Next as you all know, he came to Baroda, entered the State service—as Secretary to the Maharaja and professor of the College. That life was also externally a very normal and ordinary life—an obscure life, so to say, but he preferred obscurity for the sake of his inner development and growth. Still he continued in that obscure position that was practically what we call the life of a clerk. He continued it for some time, although some time meant twelve years, the same length as his previous stage. Then a moment came when he changed all that. Another volte-face. If he had continued he might have advanced, progressed in his career, that is to say, become Principal of the College, even the Dewan of Baroda, a very lofty position, a very lofty position indeed for an Indian, become another R.C. Dutt. But he threw all that overboard, wiped off

the twelve years of his youthful life and came to Bengal as a national leader, a leader of the new movement that wanted freedom for India, freedom from the domination of Britain. He jumped into this dangerous life,—the uncertain life of a servant of the country, practically without a home, without resources of his own. He ran the risk of being caught by the British, put into prison or shot or hanged even but he chose that life. That was a great decision he took, a turn-about entirely changing the whole mode of his life. Eventually as a natural and inevitable result of his political activities he was arrested by the British and put into prison. He had to pass a whole year in the prison. And this led to another break from the past, ushering in quite another way of life. The course of his life turned inward and moved from depth to depth.

In the prison one incident happened which is not known to many but extremely important and of great consequence. I have mentioned it in my *Reminiscences*.¹ When we were in prison we thought—we were the first batch of political prisoners accused of conspiracy and practically of rebellion *against the established government*—so we thought this was the end of our life's journey. One day we would be taken out and shot: court-trial and justice was a make-believe and sham. Or if we were lucky enough we would be exiled to the Andamans—the notorious *kalapani*. So a few of our leaders in the prison who were elders to us thought of escape from the prison—make a dash, break out, scale the walls, out in the open. There were plannings with outside helpers. When the plan was a little matured, our elders thought of consulting Sri Aurobindo. Without his consent naturally nothing could be done. For he was the one leader and guide. So when Sri Aurobindo was informed of the plan he said bluntly: "I am not going to do anything of the kind. I stand the trial." As a natural consequence the project fell through and very fortunately for us. It is true he already knew the result of the case, that is that he would be freed and nothing would happen to him. Still at that time there was a suspense and we all were in doubt. This decision of Sri Aurobindo was another, I may say, great turn of his life. If he had accepted the project his life and destiny would have been different, we all would have been massacred. In other words he saved his life for his spiritual work.

On coming out he engaged himself again in the national work, the British were truly perturbed and worried because they knew here was *the* man, the source of all mischief. They did not know how to control and get at him. So they thought of arresting him again and deporting him, sending him out of bounds—outside India, to Burma or some such far-off place. In the meanwhile he continued to do work as usual, editing two papers, seeing and advising people, going out on lecturing tours, etc. But it was time for the next break or turn. One day—one night, that is to say—all of a sudden he said, he would go to an unknown destination and literally he did so, dropped and left things as they were and disappeared.

¹ Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry

People knew later on that he had gone to Pondicherry. This time it was almost literally wiping out the past. He started an altogether new life, inner and outer. Here started directly his climb to the Supramental. Here too after a few years came an occasion when he had to take another radical decision. One more turn to the right—to the more, yet more right.

The British could not tolerate his existence, his safe existence in India, even though in (the then) French India. They felt themselves unsafe, for they felt this man could do anything. As France was an ally to the British, there was an *entente cordiale*, so they both came to an understanding and made a proposal to Sri Aurobindo: France would gladly receive Sri Aurobindo in her midst, give him safe shelter and quiet circumstances to pursue his spiritual life. France was ready to offer Sri Aurobindo a house, a home in Algeria. Here too Sri Aurobindo answered with a clear and definite No. He said he would stick to the place he had chosen. Sri Aurobindo had some friends and companions who also took shelter in the French territory. They would have liked to accept the proposal to escape from the constant British persecution. Sri Aurobindo's decision came as a disappointment to them, but they had to acquiesce. Now, at this distance of time we can see all the import of his formidable decision half a century ago.

There was yet one more crisis, a great crisis—the fate of humanity and also his own destiny, the fate of his work depended upon it. The world was nearing the world-shaking war—the Second World War. It was the invasion of the asuric forces upon earth to destroy humanity and human civilisation and prevent the advent of that truth which Sri Aurobindo was preparing to bring down. Sri Aurobindo opposed that mighty onrush with his will and divine strength. He broke the hostile downward-speeding force by taking it into himself, even like god Shiva who swallowed poison and harboured it in his throat to release immortality for the Gods. The subtle attack left in him a bruised body and to man a saved world. He followed up his action by a whole-hearted support to the Allies in that war against those who were the instruments of the Hostiles.

We come finally now to the last act, the last decision that he took of an almost complete turn, a full cycle. It was his considerate deliberate decision to move out of the physical material scene and take his station just in the background from where he could move and direct things more effectively.

I have spoken of Sri Aurobindo's life as a series of radical turns that changed the movement, the mode of life, almost radically every time the turn came. The turn meant a break with the past and a moving into the future. We have a word for this phenomenon of radical and unforeseen change. You know the word, it is *intervention*. Intervention means, as the Mother has explained to us more than once, the entry of a higher, a greater force from another world into the already existent world. Into the familiar established mode of existence that runs on the routine of some definite rules and regulations, the Law of the present, there drops all on a sudden another mode of being and consciousness and force, a Higher Law

which obliterates or changes out of recognition the familiar mode of living; it is thus that one rises from level to level, moves out into wider ranges of being, otherwise one stands still, remains for ever what he is, stagnant, like an unchanging clod or at the most a repetitive animal.

The higher the destiny, the higher also the source of intervention, that is to say, more radical—more destructive yet more creative—destructive of the past, creative of the future.

I have spoken of the passing away of Sri Aurobindo as a phenomenon of intervention, a great decisive event in view of the work to be done. Even so we may say that his birth too was an act of intervention, a deliberate divine intervention. The world needed it, the time was ripe and the intervention happened and that was his birth as an embodied human being—to which we offer our salutation and obeisance today.

The century salutes a divine birth and a death divine, ushering in a century of diviner moment.¹

¹ *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 5, pp. 9-14.

“ROMAN VIRGIL”

In this Birth Centenary year of Nolini Kanta Gupta it is not irrelevant to remember this month the poet Virgil who was born at Mantua in northern Italy on October 15, 70 B.C. For, according to occult knowledge, the soul which appeared as Nolini had taken birth as Virgil when one of the past manifestations of Sri Aurobindo had been the first emperor of Rome: Augustus Caesar. Augustus was led by his minister Mycaenas to patronise and be personally intimate with both Virgil and Horace, another poet who is believed to have been a past incarnation of the well-known Bengali poet and musician of our own day: Dilip Kumar Roy. This latter identification can be made directly on the authority of both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The finest tribute paid to Virgil, as the many-sided author not only of the grand epic Aeneid but also of the charming pastoral Eclogues and Georgics, is a poem by Tennyson, touching on various details and moods of his subject's creations. Here are rhymed couplets built of lines running into eight trochaic feet with one extra stressed syllable at the end—a form which Tennyson evidently adopted to suggest something of the mass and sweep of the Latin hexameter with its average of nearly seventeen syllables.

ROMAN Virgil, thou that singest Iliion's lofty temples robed in fire,
Iliion falling, Rome arising, wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre;

Landscape-lover, lord of language more than he that sang the Works
and Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy flashing out from many a golden phrase;

Thou that singest wheat and woodland, tilth and vineyard, hive and
horse and herd;
All the charm of all the Muses often flowering in a lonely word;

Poet of the happy Tityrus piping underneath his beechen bowers;
Poet of the poet-satyr whom the laughing shepherd bound with flowers;

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying in the blissful years again to be,
Summers of the snakeless meadow, unlaborious earth and oarless sea;

Thou that seest Universal Nature moved by Universal Mind;
Thou majestic in thy sadness at the doubtful doom of human kind;

Light among the vanish'd ages; star that gildest yet this phantom shore;
Golden branch amid the shadows, kings and realms that pass to rise no
more;

Now thy Forum roars no longer, fallen every purple Caësar’s dome—
Tho’ thine ocean-roll of rhythm sound for ever of Imperial Rome—

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish’d, and the Rome of freemen holds
her place,
I, from out the Northern Island sunder’d once from all the human race,

I salute thee, Mantovano, I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure ever moulded by the lips of man.

TENNYSON

JOSEPH CAMPBELL: A TRIBUTE

FOR over forty years Joseph Campbell wrote and spoke with passion and eloquence about the mystery of man and his place in the universe as revealed in the mythologies of various cultures. As a teacher *par excellence* at Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York, from 1934 to 1972, Campbell enthralled students with the grandeur of his scholarship, the charm of his story-telling talent and the loveliness of his mystical vision of man. Alongside his teaching, Campbell also created intellectual sensation with his books—classics like *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), *The Masks of God* (4 volumes, 1959-68), *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space* (1986). Celebrated television journalist, Bill Moyers, held lengthy videotaped conversations with Campbell during the summer of 1985 and 1986 at the Skywalker Ranch, San Rafael, California, and the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and edited them into a six-part PBS television series entitled *Moyers: Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth*. This engrossing television series which premiered on May 23, 1988 is a glorious distillation of a lifetime of thought of one of the most brilliant intellectuals of the 20th century. It gathers all of Campbell's major interpretative concepts, refracts his over-arching mystical perspective, and captures what a book cannot, the glamour of his voice, the enchantment of his speaking self which made him a great teacher. Campbell died on October 31, 1987 at the age of eighty-three. Consequently this series wears the aura of a swan-song.

Campbell's exposition of the meaning of mythology is cast in a wonderful mystical accent. In a voice of immense spiritual majesty, Campbell asserts: "God is a thought. God is a name. God is an idea. But its reference is to something that transcends all thinking. The ultimate mystery of being is beyond all categories of thoughts." With his typical masterly interplay of voice and gesture, Campbell is incredibly compelling when he evokes the transcendent status of God with the aid of the Upanishads: "No tongue has soiled it. No word has touched it." "God," declares Campbell, "is transcendent, finally, of anything like the name 'God'. Meister Eckhart said that the ultimate and highest leave-taking is leaving 'God' for God, leaving your notion of God for an experience of that which transcends all notions." According to Campbell, the mythological imagination has formulated images and forms which constitute a "penultimate truth—penultimate because the ultimate cannot be put into words." Mythology is a transparent metaphor for the transcendent, through which we sense that which is "beyond words", "beyond images", "beyond notions." With a memorably colourful and apt image, Campbell also calls mythologies of various cultures "the masks of God" or "the masks of eternity"—an achievement of the human imagination that bears the imprint of an ultimate mystery beyond "names and forms". In short, "myth is that field of reference to what is absolutely transcendent."

Campbell contends that the various mythologies are differently inflected patterns of a common contemplation of the origin, nature and destiny of man. The common core that the mythologies of the world share is the feeling "that we have come from the one ground of being as manifestations in the field of time." When Moyers asks him what he felt when he first saw Michelangelo's portrait of God on the vault of the Sistine Chapel, Campbell replies that his notion of God is not that of a "bearded old man," and proceeds to describe the *Trimurti* at Elephanta as an extraordinary feat of the mythological imagination. The central head is the mask of eternity and the heads on either side of it symbolize time, the "field of opposites." This is a mythic image-metaphor for the mystery of the ultimate non-dual unity vis-à-vis the field of duality. What it says to the beholder is: "Put your mind in the middle."

"The images of myths," observes Campbell, "are reflections of the spiritual potentialities of every one of us. Through contemplating them, we evoke their powers in our lives." When Campbell talks about the metaphoric significance of Tibetan paintings and the Buddhist mandala where "you have the deity in the centre as the power source, the illumination source", Moyers aptly chimes in to ask if they refer to the need for man "to be at the centre... to try to centre one's life with the life of the universe."

Campbell asserts that it is an error to confuse the characters, situation and images in myths with fact, since the significance of myths lies in their metaphoric "connotation" or "reference": "A metaphor is an image that suggests something else.... The reference of the metaphor in religious traditions is to something transcendent that is not literally anything... If you think the metaphor is itself the reference, it would be like going to a restaurant, asking for the menu, seeing beefsteak written there, and starting to eat the menu." In accordance with his concept of "the inner reaches of outer space," that the mythic image is physical in costume but metaphysical in substance, Campbell reckons the "virgin birth" as signifying "the birth of spiritual man out of the animal man." Campbell relates the virgin birth to the Indian doctrine of *Kundalini* (a system of the stages of spiritual development and the transformation of consciousness imaged in terms of seven ascending centres—*chakra*—of power), and interprets it as representing the awakening of the fourth *chakra* or the level of the heart which transcends the lower animal life signified by the first three *chakras* located in the pelvic region. To Moyers' interjection that in the virgin birth "it's a god who emerges," Campbell replies: "And do you know who that god is? It's *you*. All of these symbols in mythology refer to you. You can get stuck out *there*, and think it's all out *there*. So you're thinking about Jesus with all the sentiments relevant to how he suffered—out there. But that suffering is what ought to be going on in you. Have you been spiritually reborn? Have you died to your animal nature and come to life as a human incarnation of compassion?" Similarly, "Jesus ascended to heaven" is not a physical fact, but a glorious metaphor

for a metaphysical possibility: "We know that Jesus could not have ascended to heaven because there is no physical heaven anywhere in the universe. Even ascending at the speed of light, Jesus would still be in the galaxy. Astronomy and physics have simply eliminated that as a literal, physical possibility. But if you read 'Jesus ascended to heaven' in terms of its metaphoric connotation, you see that he has gone inward—not into outer space but into inward space, to the place from which all beings come, into the consciousness that is the source of all things, the kingdom of heaven within. The images are outward, but their reflection is inward. The point is that we should ascend with him by going inward. It is a metaphor of returning to the source...."

In contemplating myths, men achieve an inwardness into eternity that constitutes the "rapture of being alive". Campbell laments the alienation of modern man from "the inner mystery, and the lack of rapture in modern life." One of our problems today is that we are not well acquainted with the literature of the spirit. We're interested in the news of the day and the problems of the hour.... We're so engaged in doing things to achieve purposes of outer value that we forget that the inner value, the rapture that is associated with being alive, is what it's all about. How many of us ask as Campbell does: "What am I? Am I the bulb that carries the light, or am I the light of which the bulb is a vehicle." Our life comes from "the ultimate energy that is the life of the universe" and "the field of time is a kind of shadow play over a timeless ground." When Moyers asks how "the profundity of this mystery" is to be experienced, Campbell replies: "By having a profound sense of the mystery.... You have to break past your image of God to get through to the connoted illumination. The psychologist Jung has a relevant saying: 'Religion is a defence against the experience of God.' The mystery has been reduced to a set of concepts and ideas, and emphasizing these concepts and ideas can short-circuit the transcendent connoted experience. An intense experience of mystery is what one has to regard as the ultimate religious experience."

A. V. ASHOK

*With acknowledgements to the Indian Express, Weekend Review,
July 23, 1988, p. III.*

MYSTERIOUS ARE THE WAYS OF DIVINE GRACE

A TRUE SHORT STORY

MADHAVI, wife of Rajendra Nath, a successful businessman, had everything that life could offer—riches, love, two vivacious children and to top it all a refined environment. In spite of this opulence something in her aspired for a higher life. So with her two children she settled in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Rajendra found it difficult to adjust to this change but his love was deep enough so that he didn't put any obstacles in the way of his wife and children.

The annual vacation of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education where Madhavi's two children studied and where she was a teacher of music, starts from 1st November. On the night of 31st October 1979 Madhavi and her two children left for Bombay to pass the vacations with her husband. She was eagerly waiting to meet with her musician friends in Bombay.

One Saturday she went to visit Nigar Sultana who had made a name for herself. Nigar and her husband Ustad Akbar Khan welcomed Madhavi. Time passed quickly, then they asked her to sing something. She was reluctant to sing before such masters but they persuaded her—she sang one Hindi and one Bengali 'Bhajan'. Naturally their talk centred on the intricacies and fine points of music.

Next day Nigar was giving a recital at Sofia College. Warmly inviting Madhavi to come to the recital, she gave her an invitation card for two, asking her to sit in the front row. Madhavi was thrilled at the name of Sofia College, for it was her Alma-Mater. She promised to attend.

Rajendra and his three brothers lived separately in different parts of Bombay. Every Sunday the four families gathered together for the day at the residence of any of them. That Sunday they gathered at the King Circle residence of one of the elder brothers. Madhavi had earlier asked Rajendra to accompany her to the music-recital of Nigar but he had declined. Then Madhavi asked Rajendra's brothers and their wives. Ultimately Ratna the wife of one of the younger brothers agreed to accompany her.

Even though four cars and two chauffeurs were available, someone for some inexplicable reason suggested that they go by bus. Madhavi was taken aback. It was at least a forty-five minutes' journey by bus. Also to return alone at night was not safe. But Ratna who is a very well built lady took up the challenge and told Madhavi, "Come, sister, what is there to fear? We will take a bus." Nobody from the family suggested either sending an escort or giving them one of the four cars.

By the time Madhavi and Ratna reached Sofia College, the programme had started. In the dark hall only a diffused glow was reflected from the stage. Since Nigar had asked Madhavi to sit in the front they groped their way to the

first row of chairs. Nigar acknowledged Madhavi's arrival by a smile and nod.

After singing two classical Ragas she started the liquid notes of "Raga Hans-dhwani." Time passed as if in a dream. That night Nigar excelled herself. For Madhavi it was pure nectar, she felt as if her whole being was listening. At the end of the recital she was so overwhelmed that she could hardly speak so she decided not to go backstage to congratulate Nigar just then, for the music was echoing in her ears.

Seeing Madhavi and Ratna turn to leave the hall Abhinav Chaturvedi—who had accompanied Nigar on Tabla—hurried to them. He asked Madhavi, "Why are you leaving? Won't you come backstage?" Madhavi answered with difficulty—for she was in a trancelike state induced by the great music she had heard, "We have to catch a bus, tell Nigar I'll see her tomorrow." Aghast at the idea that those two ladies should travel alone by bus Abhinav offered to take Madhavi on his scooter for he lived in Bandra which is on way to Khar—where Madhavi lived. Madhavi gently explained to Abhinav that she had come with Ratna. Abhinav still felt apprehensive at the idea of these two going by bus and then on foot to their respective homes.

On reaching the bus-stop Madhavi suggested that she would first see Ratna off before boarding a bus for her destination. Pointing to her tall and sturdy built, Ratna protested that nothing was likely to happen to her and that if Madhavi's bus came first she should go first.

Just then the bus for Khar arrived and with a wave to Ratna Madhavi boarded it. It was a forty-minute ride. Taking her seat, in imagination she returned to the music hall and entered into an inner world of music. Oblivious of her surroundings, completely indrawn she heard Nigar singing Raga Hans-dhwani again. It was bliss.

Suddenly something in her consciousness shifted to another time and place. While still travelling in the bus, which was still quite far from Khar she saw, as if on a screen, herself getting down at the Khar bus-stop. She noticed the lights of Caesar's Palace Hotel and of another apartment building. After getting off the bus she started to walk down the road towards her flat. At one cross-road she saw a hefty man, dressed in white come towards her with a dagger. He first threatened Madhavi with this big dagger, then catching hold of her arm and shouting filthy abuses he dragged her towards a taxi standing at some distance. With the knife poised to strike he pushed her into the taxi, himself also climbing after her.

With a shock Madhavi came back to her senses. Trembling and cold she found herself still seated in the speeding bus which had yet quite a distance to travel to reach Khar. She cried out to the Divine Mother.

"What is this, Mother? Was it a dream? But I was not asleep, I was listening to 'Hans-dhwani.'" She pinched herself to make sure that it was not an illusion. She was safe and sound in the bus. Her heart pounding, she prayed to

the Divine Mother to protect her and give her strength. After this she felt calm, then again passed into a beatific state of listening to the pure notes of Raga Hansdhvani. When the bus stopped at Khar she got down. At a distance she could see the lights of Caesar's Palace Hotel and the light in her friend's flat in the building as she had seen in the vision.

Apprehensive, she started at a brisk pace towards her home. True to the vision, she saw the same hefty man dressed in white, coming towards her. She tried to ignore him but he started walking with her making indecent proposals, which happens often in Bombay. Unlike her vision the man had no dagger in his hand. When his language became obscene Madhavi just said, "Idiot." At this one word the man spewed abuses which would make a guttersnipe shudder. Madhavi's brain became numb, her body like ice. With folded hands she prayed to the man to let her go. Her meekness goaded him to greater abuse and insult. Just then Madhavi saw the taxi as she had seen in her vision. But from here the story changed a bit. Now it was Madhavi who ran towards the taxi, and getting into the front passenger seat she prayed to the driver, "Please, brother! save me. A 'goonda' is following me." Meanwhile her pursuer who followed her got into the back seat of the taxi and took out his dagger. The driver got frightened, and said, "Sister, don't get me involved in this affair." At this stage Madhavi shouted to the Divine Mother, "Ma", with all her might, opened the door and in a flash ran towards Caesar's Palace Hotel which was about two hundred metres away. Some other strength entered her numbed body. A few young men were standing outside the hotel, worse for drink. Madhavi begged them to protect her from her pursuer. With great cynicism they interrogated her, without lifting a finger to help her.

They: "Is he your lover?"

Madhavi: "No, I have never seen him before!"

They: "Then what are you doing here at this time of night?"

Madhavi: "I had gone to Sophia College for a music recital."

They: "Alone?"

Madhavi: "No, with Ratna, my sister-in-law."

They: "Where is she then?"

Madhavi: "She went by another bus to her flat in King's Circle."

They: "How do we know that you are not telling a lie?"

Madhavi showed them the invitation card which she had been clutching in her hand all this time. Then realising that they would not help her she went into the hotel to phone Rajendra to come and fetch her. The "goonda" didn't follow her. In the hotel she saw a group of people who had been drinking, standing around the phone. One of them went on talking incessantly. At last in desperation Madhavi pleaded, "Brother, please help me." The manager came over to her and asked her what she wanted. Madhavi replied that she wanted to phone to her husband because a ruffian was threatening her with a dagger. At this,

all those men who were quite drunk turned towards her. The manager asked Madhavi, "Where do you live?" Madhavi said, "Just behind your hotel." At this that party of six drunks insisted on taking Madhavi to her flat. Not letting her phone, they hustled her towards their Fiat car. Three of them got in the back seat with Madhavi who was too weak to resist. She suspected their intentions were dishonourable too, so she kept the door of the car open so that she could jump out if they tried to harm her. The man who was driving asked Madhavi for directions. She said, "Right", he turned right, then she said "Left", he turned left till in two minutes she guided them to her apartment building. Those men told her, "Go to your flat. Put on the lights, then we'll know you are safe and we will go away."

Madhavi went up and rang the bell. Rajendra opened the door. Seeing her stricken face, dishevelled hair and wild eyes he anxiously enquired, "What has happened? What has happened to you?" Madhavi replied, "Nothing." Rajendra insisted, "Surely something has happened? Tell me what is wrong?" Overwrought Madhavi burst out, "I'll tell you if you don't ask me why I went and if you agree that only the Divine can save." Rajendra sensed that something unusual had happened. He promised not to reproach her and also to agree that only the Divine can save us.

After hearing Madhavi's tale he added a surprising footnote. On coming back from his brother's home he was turning the pages of a magazine. He saw on one page the mutilated body of Madhavi. He could not understand its significance, for he often saw such things but didn't know then that it was an inner seeing. Thus without attaching any importance to the thing he turned to the next page.

Later Champaklalji told Madhavi, "This is the compassion of the Mother. She put a ring of light and protection around you, so the man could not even touch you."

For in her prevision the man had dragged Madhavi by the hand to the taxi. What both Madhavi and Rajendra had provisioned in their different ways was what destiny had ordained. But then a higher determinism, the compassion and protection of the Divine Mother, changed the course of events to save Madhavi.

SHYAM KUMARI

Note: All names except Champaklalji's have been changed.

THE ETERNAL CHILD AND THE ETERNAL MARVEL

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1988)

THE MYSTERY OF THE BODY

Epilogue

“...even the body of the King disappeared from the world of men!”

—and what about the body?
and the world?
and men?

So at last Narad came down to make himself
a body
in the world
among men.

BUT that all began long ago, with a monkey's dream... (for everyone knows that man is descended from the monkeys—well, not the True Man, who, even if no one knows it, is an emanation from the mind of Brahma, but, shall we say, *modern man*, the evolutionary animal)
... and, yet again, it was a love-story.

For everyone knows that the mystery of the body
is first of all the mystery of life;
And the mystery of life
is above all the mystery of love!

Love... even the gods fear the unforeseen visitations of that intolerable guest! Narad had smiled. In *his* heart, there was no room for anything but God! Only a little while ago, the *apsaras*, the celestial dancing-girls, had come to tempt him, instigated by those jealous immortals; they had been so sweet, with their minuets and mischievous glances... He had thanked them for the beautiful performances, and they had gone away smiling and confused.

Even the Great God, Mahadeva, wouldn't have been able to keep that smiling equanimity. For everyone (in India) knows how he reacted when Kama, the Lord of amorous desire, dared to aim his nectarous arrows in his direction: with an outburst of flame from his third eye, he had reduced the presumptuous deity to ashes.

So much anger, about such a little thing! Narad smilingly shook his head

—not noticing the sinful pride which had crept into his soul. Lord Vishnu was kind to him—not that he felt piqued by Narad's remarks, although he was also Mahadeva, and all the gods were bathed in his essence; but in any case, his designs are always inscrutable....

—O Narad!

A bluish atmosphere had surrounded the yogi's meditation; the visage of the Formless had appeared in the mists of a sun-aureole. "Sages who have achieved the sovereign peace no longer need to discipline themselves in asceticism. Therefore descend into the world of illusion, into the realm of Maya, there to accomplish a work worthy of a perfected being, one like you, who has mastered life and love."

And Narad had entered into a great enchantment: Maya, superb, displayed the splendour and charm of an unending richness.

Around the city, vast gardens sloped down towards meadows and countryside; the leafy branches of blossoming trees were laden with every kind of fruit. Towards the centre, parallel avenues followed a curve in space-time which at every crossroads modified the relations between matter and energy. Because of this, the beings were constantly changing their appearances: these changes, most often hardly perceptible, could, on occasion, suddenly result in radical permutations. This stranger, at a second look, turned out to be your most intimate friend, only to melt away again amongst unknown faces. This old man would behave, at times, most childishly. Besides, it was difficult to distinguish these beings: one felt that their actions only concealed their true natures; and yet this uniformity betrayed not a few quirks and grimaces. Smiles were formal; people rarely laughed; no one ever wept—especially in public. The children all went to school, animals were always on a leash. And yet this external orderliness did not seem to apply to situations, for everything was totally unforeseeable. And it was impossible ever to go right around anything at all. This palatial façade, with its rows of balconies and windows, would become, on turning a corner, railings that opened onto the park around a castle; at the next turning, its bridges would cross a canal; and when, passing the porticos and colonnades of a temple, one expected to reach again the side of the building from which one had started, instead one found oneself among the kiosks and little pavillions of a marketplace. This was perhaps the principal law of this place: "*By no way whatsoever does one ever get back to where one started from.*"

And yet, one would have sworn that *all the roads were leading in the same direction*. For, in the far distance, one always glimpsed the same magnificent monument: the domes and pinnacles, arches and crenellations, pillars and turrets of the same royal mansion.

After walking for a long time through the city...

—wandering through museums whose galleries overhung pools in which the transparent water gave a greenish tinge to vast mosaics while reflecting the

shadowy silence of statues, the shimmering chiaroscuro of balustrades and marble stairways rising to higher storeys where wide verandahs opened upon hanging gardens, cascades of terraces, observatories...

—visiting pantheons, where every cult of past, present and future mingled the perfume of their incense-offerings to the gods—who, however, each in his own niche, seemed totally to disregard the presence of the others...

—frequenting academies whose libraries were repositories of a labyrinthine knowledge, where sciences and philosophies, arts and literatures, moralities, politics, economies and religions intertwined in a web whose every thread seemed to lead to a knot that was unique, insoluble and final; while yet scholars strove to erect with trenchant dialectics arbitrary syntheses and exclusive systems of Truth—which included everything but Truth itself...

... Narad at last decided to go straight ahead.

The dazzling whiteness of the Queen's palace took on every hue and nuance of the spectrum through the passing hours of life:

At daybreak, steeped in the opalescent paleness of those nocturnal reveries which still haunt our awakenings, it rose like a pearl out of the morning mists. Dawn bathed it with her rosy charm of emotion and tenderness; but the gold of the sun's midday triumph crowned its royal stature. Through languorous afternoons, a tower of ivory, it stood absorbed in contemplative trance—which the blessing of the sinking rays seemed to set aflame with certitude. Then evening enveloped it in a purple cloak of wisdom. At twilight lingered the violet glow of a kindly compassion, until finally the indigo of a prayer was evoked—and there reigned the blue silences of the night. In moonbeams, a silver shimmer lit its mute ecstasy with gleams of magic. Rain, a curtain of aquamarine, would shroud the jade-green of its silhouette in a vapour of mystery—yet sudden lightning would reveal the dazzling purity of its soul in a blaze of miracle.

At the entrance, he was told that the marriage of the Queen was fixed for the following day. In accordance with the matriarcal customs of that country, the young sovereign was to choose her own husband. The presentation-ceremony of the suitors was under way in the Darbar Hall. Narad was ushered inside.

Passing through corridors and galleries decorated for the Swayamvara, crossing patios and inner courtyards where musicians, dancers, jugglers and trained animals were entertaining the visitors, and through chambers where the guests were attended by eunuchs and bayadères, one reached at last the immense Darbar Hall.

And there Narad froze, thunderstruck. He had no eyes for the sculptured columns or sparkling chandeliers, for the exquisite tapestries or the solemn staturary, for the frescoes on the ceiling or the mosaics on the floor: on a throne shaped like a lotus-bud, enveloped in snow-white veils, was seated the Queen of Life.

The pearly pallor of her dreaming brow, the rosy charm of emotion and tenderness upon her cheeks, the crimson wisdom of her lips, the azure silence of her gaze,

the royalty of her poise, required no crown; but in the gold of her hair shimmered, with magic gleams, the diamonds and pearls of her diadem of ecstasy. A tower of ivory, she withdrew, self-absorbed, into languorous trances of wordless contemplation—then opened her lids with a glance of flaming certitude; now there lingered in her eyes the violet glow of a kindly compassion, now shone forth the indigo of a prayer, then again there was silence and azure. The curtains of her lashes seemed indeed to cast a green shade of mystery across the absolute perfection of her face, but the sudden lightning of a smile would reveal the dazzling purity of her soul in a blaze of miracle.

Mohini, cup-bearer of nectar, of the immortal essence of life
 Mohini, enchantress of the gods, playmate of the demons
 Mohini, beauty of the worlds, body of ecstasy
 Mohini! At the heart of the great enchantment,
 the Eternal Marvel, his love.

Faust turned pale. In this face, this being, he recognised the tender light, pearl or moon-beam he had once glimpsed deep within the waters of his being...

... Life after life, age after age, the same divine smile, imper-
 turbably capricious, had rent the veils of an oblivion that seeks to
 separate us from our one eternal Love. In this life too, the shock
 of a supra-celestial sweetness had dissolved the sombre clouds of
 the last millennium of the Age of Darkness...

... 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.

Narad forgot his meditation.

He forgot himself.

Now, She alone existed.

And he heard the sound of her voice. The harps of Paradise could not
 render such melody.

"The Queen of Life can love only her Master, the Lord of the Worlds, the True
 Existent.

He is like a god—or, rather, the gods are like him. Humanity is but a shadow
 of his plenary splendour."

When evening came however, Narad did not forget his prayers. He who, always in pursuit of the ineffable, had never dreamed of asking for any boon, now implored his Lord:

“What form must I have, to become like the immortals?”

“The *devas* have four arms and their feet do not touch the dust...”

“And what shadow of humanity can cling to me, when my plenary splendour draws near?”

The All-Blissful smiled at him, and seemed to grant his prayer. Narad fell asleep in the rosy gold of hopeful dreams. And when he awoke, he found, in fact, that he had four arms and four hands, and no feet with which to touch the dust... indeed he moved mostly from branch to branch, or swinging on creepers, skipping over the palace-walls and passing with ease over roofs, domes and arches.

When in this way he reached the marriage hall and proudly and confidently approached the Queen, there was a general outburst of hilarity—as if at some circus-trick, at the mischief of some trained animals who could not restrain himself from coming to mimic the suitors. But when they tried to drive away the intruder, the whole assembly was struck with astonishment. Mohini herself was seized with total wonderment—for behind Narad transformed to a macaque, the Lord of the Worlds was entering the Hall. The Queen of Life rose and ran towards him and threw her arms around his neck, her whole being becoming the garland of Swayamvara. And as she merged with her Master and her Source, all the Maya vanished like a dream upon awakening, till at last Narad found himself ... back where he had started.

Where his Lord had appeared to him in his meditation.... He opened his eyes and shook his head incredulously. What a farce! And what a lesson! The aerial being who would precede the evolution of man....

A strange story... Evolution *towards* what?

What plenary splendour?

He heard again an echo of Mohini's words....

Mohini! Eternal Marvel!

From all this monkey-business, all this Maya dream, there remained only one burning trace, as if a glow in the depths of the celestial sage's heart:

“Once this world-image had vanished, Midas saw that it was the very Flame which he had sought in so many faces, so many beings, so many things glowing like magic lamps from its mysterious

radiance. It was the sparkle of its luminous reflection on the surface of life that had captivated him, that had seemed to gild existence for him; it was its vibration through the waters of the great Stream that had rocked him in the rhythms of universal Harmony; and now, on the other side, it was himself, this Fire, and Being, and the one World, and all Creation.”

Him or Her?

—Narayana....

(and the burning in his heart brought a touch of defiance into the divine Rishi's voice:)

“Narayana, You who gave me the body of a monkey, the better to rob me of the only love of my life,

You, perfect Being, who will descend again into the world to become there the True Man—*Rama*—

it will nevertheless be thanks to a monkey

that you will recover your beloved

Sita, the secret Force of the Earth.”

Vishnu smiled. Yes, of course it would be necessary for the mental being to be incarnated in an animal form in order for life on earth to be able to evolve towards the full realisation of its divinity, for even material existence to be transformed into the image of His Glory.

And they say that it was at that very moment that, here below, a primate began to scratch his head in puzzlement, as if to drive away something like a shadow of a first thought.

Was it that the secret of the winking... which precipitated him, far from the heavens, down on the earth, to seek here, in a body, the marvel of his love-dream?

That is how the ape of god descended into the world of man.

(To be continued)

B. PETRIS

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

A Golden Book of Prayers or Echoes of Truth. Compiled and published by *Hari Mohan Patra*, Hari Nivas, Haripur Main Road, Cuttack - 753 001, Orissa. 1987. Pp. 278. Price: Rs. 30.00

“If our minds are occupied with some intellectual work, such as reading and writing, wonderfully the physical pain is not felt at all,” wrote the late author in the foreword to his book. These words were born of experience, for he suffered from an enlarged prostate that often caused intense and unbearable pain. A voracious reader from his student days, Hari Mohan Patra, aged 93 at the time of his foreword, had the habit of jotting down memorable lines from the books he read in separate notebooks on subjects like love, hope, life, death, etc. Ever since he retired as Inspector of Schools, he had cherished a deep desire to publish an anthology of prayers culled from the works of various authors—saints and sages, poets and philosophers, scientists and leaders—of the East and the West. And it took him more than three decades to realize his dream.

This anthology of prayers actually represents the thoughts of eminent men from the earliest times to the present day. The long essay on the meaning and purpose of prayer by the compiler serves as an introduction to the book. “Prayer is the outpouring of the human heart to an invisible, super power, the creator and controller of the universe whom we call God. This longing or urge especially in times of peril, in times of physical and mental agony, comes instinctively in human beings. It is indeed a part of human nature,” asserts the compiler. Quoting profusely the words of people in diverse walks of life, he instructs the readers to cultivate the daily habit of prayer seeking the help and guidance as well as the grace of God.

The first of the two parts of this book contains prayers from Indian literature. It is divided into three sections, *viz* Ancient Age (Vedas, Upanishads, Buddha, Jesus and others); Middle Age (Chandi Das, Surdas, Mira Bai, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Tulsidas and others) and Modern Age (Ramalinga Swami, Tagore, Iqbal, Subramania Bharati, Sri Aurobindo, the Mother and others). In the second part from the makers of the Bible to Helen Steiver Rice, almost all eminent writers other than Indians find their voice.

A few poems are quoted in full and many in parts. No doubt it is a meticulous selection and it will mean a great deal to writers on the look-out for an apt support to a theme. But even common readers will profit from it. If a second edition could be brought out in a handy size so that it might be easily carried in our pockets the tedium of waiting at bus stops or ration shops would most beneficially be averted by dipping into it. Surely this anthology will not only provide us with wisdom: it will also evoke in us the desire to emulate the compiler and gather whatever fresh wisdom happens to stray within our reach.

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Sixty-fourth Seminar

23 April 1988

(Continued from the issue of September 1988)

EDUCATION FOR THE NEW AGE

Speech by Deepa Hariharan

IN November 1969, when the Mother was asked: "What should be the guiding principles of the new ideal of education?", she replied simply in three words: "Truth, Harmony, Liberty."¹

These three guiding principles enunciated by the Mother are in fact the three key-stones of the arch of the educational structure for the new age. Their profound significance is not easy to fathom. However, I will attempt a brief interpretation of each of them according to my limited understanding.

Truth first. In fact it is the most basic of all the three principles, because the other two depend on it for their right result. In the sphere of education, truth is of paramount importance because it directly touches its central aim, which is to gain knowledge. All education is oriented towards acquiring knowledge, but to be fruitful it must be a knowledge that leads to truth. But truth itself is many-sided and complex and therefore, if it is to be perfect, it must be total and integral. It must include in its scope not only the knowledge of all the different aspects of our existence but centrally and essentially the knowledge of our true self, our soul, and the knowledge of God or the supreme Reality which, in India, we call *ātmajñāna* or *brahmavidyā*, without which all other knowledge remains incomplete and inconclusive.

Next *Harmony*. Harmony in its deepest sense is implied in the integrality or wholeness of knowledge. For, in order to arrive at integrality of knowledge, it is not enough to put together all the partial and limited aspects of it, but they must all be welded together in a harmonious unity. Otherwise, it will lead to confusion, conflict and disorder. For this, they must all be organised around their true centre, which is the knowledge of the soul, the self, the supreme Reality. This integrated harmony is the real meaning of the synthesis which is the hallmark of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga.

¹ *The New Age* (First Edition, 1977), p. 285

Last *Liberty* or freedom. Liberty is the inevitable consequence of integral knowledge because the light that it brings liberates from all the darkness of ignorance. It is this darkness of ignorance which is the root-cause of all our bondage, of all the thousand shackles with which our life is fettered. All knowledge has this effect of liberation, but most of all it is the spiritual knowledge, the knowledge of the soul, the self, the supreme Reality, that brings complete liberation from the chains of ignorance with which we are bound. This is the meaning of the ancient dictum, *sā vidyā yā vimuktaye*.

Education is indispensable and in fact inescapable in life. We receive constant education all through our life, whether it is from Nature herself, or through the daily events of life. The whole of terrestrial life provides us with a vast and varied field for our education and progress. As there is no end to the marvels of creation, consequently there is no end to our education.

Ordinarily, people take the term "education" to signify academic education. Academic education prepares at best the man of society, whereas the aim of integral education is to shape and bring out the divine in man, the real person.

This new outlook on education is indispensable for those who have an inner urge or aspiration to exceed their present level of consciousness and grow into a higher, deeper and wider consciousness and manifest it in their life.

But the most important thing to remember is that education can never be imposed on anyone. If one must learn anything, in any field of life, it should be out of a joyous willingness. It is for this reason that the Mother was always in favour of the free-progress method. The students should be allowed complete freedom for a spontaneous inner growth and development. For, only in perfect freedom can any true progress be made. The Mother never liked the usual method of tests or examinations. She also said that the teacher must come in psychological contact with the student, and give individual attention to each student. It is for the sake of learning more and more and not for passing examinations and acquiring diplomas that the students should undertake their studies.

This attitude of studying for the sake of passing examinations and getting degrees and diplomas, in order to secure good jobs and earn a lot of money, is in the Mother's view most degrading. She calls it "utilitarianism" and compares it to a highly contagious disease which has become extremely rampant in every sphere of modern life. It is for this reason that she prohibited giving diplomas and certificates to the students of our Centre of Education. In a letter written in July 1960, she has explained at some length her viewpoint in this matter. It is so valuable, not only for us here, but for all the students and teachers and parents and educational institutions all over the world that I cannot resist the temptation of reading it out in full. Here is the letter:

"For the last hundred years or so mankind has been suffering from a disease which seems to be spreading more and more and which has reached a climax

in our times; it is what we may call 'utilitarianism'. People and things, circumstances and activities seem to be viewed and appreciated exclusively from this angle. Nothing has any value unless it is useful. Certainly something that is useful is better than something that is not. But first we must agree on what we describe as useful—useful to whom, to what, for what?

"For, more and more, the races who consider themselves civilised describe as useful whatever can attract, procure or produce money. Everything is judged and evaluated from a monetary angle. That is what I call utilitarianism. And this disease is highly contagious, for even children are not immune to it.

"At an age when they should be dreaming of beauty, greatness and perfection, dreams that may be too sublime for ordinary common sense, but which are nevertheless far superior to this dull good sense, children now dream of money and worry about how to earn it.

"So when they think of their studies, they think above all about what can be useful to them, so that later on when they grow up they can earn a lot of money.

"And the thing that becomes most important for them is to prepare themselves to pass examinations with success, for with diplomas, certificates and titles they will be able to find good positions and earn a lot of money.

"For them study has no other purpose, no other interest.

"To learn for the sake of knowledge, to study in order to know the secrets of Nature and life, to educate oneself in order to grow in consciousness, to discipline oneself in order to become master of oneself, to overcome one's weaknesses, incapacities and ignorance, to prepare oneself to advance in life towards a goal that is nobler and vaster, more generous and more true... they hardly give it a thought and consider it all very utopian. The only thing that matters is to be practical, to prepare themselves and learn how to earn money.

"Children who are infected with this disease are out of place at the Centre of Education of the Ashram. And it is to make this quite clear to them that we do not prepare them for any official examination or competition and do not give them any diplomas or titles which they can use in the outside world.

"We want here only those who aspire for a higher and better life, who thirst for knowledge and perfection, who look forward eagerly to a future that will be more totally true.

"There is plenty of room in the world for all the others."¹

It is in accordance with the will of Sri Aurobindo that the Mother opened the "Sri Aurobindo International University Centre", later renamed the "Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education," which is to prepare the élite of humanity to receive and manifest the new Light and Force and eventually to form the divine race upon earth.

And now that the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness have

¹ *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed), Vol. 12, pp. 353-54.

already manifested in the earth's subtle-physical layer and have been actively at work here, all the students and teachers of this Centre of Education should unitedly strive to be the fit instruments through whom the Mother can canalise and materialise this Light and Force which is to divinise Matter and spiritualise humanity.

A system of education which proceeds on these lines will produce not only brilliant students but "living souls", children of the Mother who would, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, "grow up into straightforward, frank, upright and honourable human beings ready to develop into divine nature."⁴⁵