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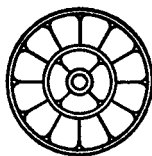
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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TRUE USE AND MISUSE OF THE THINKING MIND IN THE ASHRAM

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

I DON'T know much about these publications of X or others, mostly in vernacular and a few in English, except that they crowd my shelves; but I suppose they are not much circulated or canvassed in the Ashram. There has been no intention of discouraging clarity of the higher mind or the aspiration for intuition or the application of spirituality to the philosophic understanding. In the past the Ashram was full not so much of these things as of discussion and talk about them, talk that was often very 'small', and expositions and preachings; but there was so much misunderstanding and perversion and intellectual twist given to the truth of Yoga, truths connected with the Yoga and so much went about that was contrary to the truth without our being able to seize it at its source and from the perversions there came so many catastrophes and perturbations of the atmosphere that we were obliged to discourage, not the true use, but the misuse of the thinking mind. Things are now, I hope, rather better; but there may have been left an impression—quite wrong so far as that goes—that the thought aspect itself is looked on by us with disfavour. That cannot be—for the transformation of the thinking mind is a large part of the Yoga. It is precisely because I am very much occupied with this transformation of mind into what is beyond it (apart from any question of the time at my disposal) that it is a little difficult for me to enter into anything like intellectual explanations for the moment. When one is crossing a bridge (a long and narrow bridge without railings), one can't make excursions to the sides; a concentration on the forward steps is imperative. As for the cessation of the conversations, that was part of a much larger necessity, which had no direct concern with this question at all. There was no intention of discouraging the things of which you speak.

10-4-1932

SRI AUROBINDO

A SPIRITUAL REMINISCENCE BY THE MOTHER

IN THE YEAR OF HER PASSING

I AM nearing a hundred, it's five years away now. I started making an effort to become conscious at five years old, my child. This is to let you know.... And I go on, it goes on, only.... Of course, I have come to the point where I am doing the work for the cells of the body, but still, the work began a long time ago.

This is not to discourage you, but... it is to let you know that it does not happen just like that.

The body is made of a substance which is still very heavy, and it is the substance itself which has to change for the supermind to be able to manifest.

8 February 1973

THE MOTHER

THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

IN THE LIGHT OF HER *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*

SRI AUROBINDO has explained: "The prayers are mostly written in an identification with the earth-consciousness. It is the Mother in the lower nature addressing the Mother in the higher nature, the Mother herself carrying on the Sadhana of the earth-consciousness for the transformation, praying to herself above from whom the forces of transformation come. This continues till the identification of the earth-consciousness and the higher consciousness is effected. The word 'notre' is general, I believe, referring to all born into the earth-consciousness—it does not mean the Mother of the 'Divin Maître' and myself. It is the Divine who is always referred to as Divin Maître and Seigneur. There is the Mother who is carrying on the Sadhana and the Divine Mother, both being one but in different poises, and both turn to the Seigneur or Divine Master. This kind of prayer from the Divine to the Divine you will find also in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata."

(21 August 1936)

Sri Aurobindo has also written: "The Mother had been spiritually conscious from her youth, even from her childhood upward and she had done Sadhana and had developed this knowledge very long before she came to India."

(23 December 1933)

Born and brought up in the midst of plenty, it was not for the Mother to enjoy the riches and comforts that life can provide; hers was to shoulder the earth's and humanity's heavy burden of sorrow and suffering.

The Mother used to record her daily experience in a thick notebook of foolscap size. It commenced from the year 1912 and continued till 1920 when she came for good to Pondicherry from Japan. While she was in France and Japan, at five o'clock in the morning she meditated sitting in front of her window—wrapped in a shawl when it was winter.

Her recorded experiences are neither explanations nor theories. They are noted down exactly as they came. This is done so that they may be useful for future reference in case of need.

Anyone going through her book will come to know who the Mother is, what she stands for, her purpose and mission on earth. All her prayers are revelations. They reveal her wonderful mission and her deep consecration for the transformation of the earth and humanity.

Her unique experience at the age of thirteen is a sort of epitome of her future creative work: "When I was a child of about thirteen, for nearly a year every night as soon as I had gone to bed it seemed to me that I went out of my body

and rose straight up above the house, then above the city, very high above. Then I used to see myself clad in a magnificent golden robe, much longer than myself; and as I rose higher, the robe would stretch, spreading out in a circle around me to form a kind of immense roof over the city. Then I would see men, women, children, old men, the sick, the unfortunate coming out from every side; they would gather under the outspread robe, begging for help, telling of their miseries, their sufferings, their hardships. In reply, the robe, supple and alive, would extend towards each one of them individually, and as soon as they had touched it, they were comforted or healed, and went back into their bodies happier and stronger than before they had come out of them. Nothing seemed more beautiful to me, nothing could make me happier; and all the activities of the day seemed dull and colourless and without any real life, beside this activity of the night which was the true life for me.

“Now that deep experience, that almost inexpressible reality, is translated in my mind by other ideas which I may describe in this way: ‘Many a time in the day and night it seems to me that I am, or rather my consciousness is, concentrated entirely in my heart which is no longer an organ, not even a feeling, but the divine Love, impersonal, eternal; and being this love I feel myself living at the centre of each thing upon the entire earth, and at the same time I seem to stretch out immense, infinite arms and envelop with a boundless tenderness all beings, clasped, gathered, nestled on my breast that is vaster than the universe’....”

(February 22, 1914)

On November 28, 1913, she prayed to the Lord: “May something higher, nobler, more true be revealed to mankind.” This line scintillates with her early perception that the Divine himself would manifest on earth with his peace, grace, light, love and harmony to effectuate a radical transformation of the prevailing dark condition of human beings. We find in her diary dated January 11, 1914: “... Lord... I know that a day will come when Thou wilt transform all those who come to us; Thou wilt transform them so radically that, liberated completely from the bonds of the past, they will begin to live in Thee an entirely new life, a life made solely of Thee, with Thee as its sovereign Lord. And in this way all anxieties will be transformed into serenity, all anguish into peace, all doubts into certainties, all ugliness into harmony, all egoism into self-giving, all darkness into light and all suffering into immutable happiness.”

The above experiences of the Mother exactly correspond to those on the path of Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga as promulgated years afterwards. He wrote to Dilip Kumar Roy:

“My emphasis is on life here and its transformation and I put that as the aim at once of my Yoga and of the terrestrial manifestation.... All the old Yogas put the emphasis on going to Nirvana or to heaven, Vaikuntha, Goloka,

Brahmaloka etc., for good and so getting rid of rebirth....

“If there is something anywhere in the past which coincides with the aim and conceived process of my yoga I shall be glad to know of it.... But the nearest I could get to it were some things in the Veda and Upanishads (secret words, veiled hints) which seemed to coincide with or point towards certain things in my own knowledge and experiences.”¹

Much before this letter, the Mother had ardently envisioned the advent of the divine manifestation on earth in her prayer on January 11, 1914, from which we have already quoted: “Every moment all the unforeseen, the unexpected, the unknown is before us, every moment the universe is created anew in its entirety and in every one of its parts. And if we had a truly living faith, if we had the absolute certitude of Thy omnipotence and Thy sole reality, Thy manifestation could at each moment become so evident that the whole universe would be transformed by it. But we are so enslaved to everything that is around us, and has gone before us, we are so influenced by the whole totality of manifested things, and our faith is so weak that we are yet unable to serve as intermediaries for the great miracle of transfiguration....”

Was not the Mother aware of the dangers, difficulties and sufferings that invariably accompany a great mission? Hers was an unprecedented mission. She had the vigorous courage of the soul. She was ready to face any obstacle or suffering that might come in the way. She held, with regard to the existence of suffering, a view exactly similar to that of Sri Aurobindo. In her diary dated July 22, 1914, she prays ardently: “Grant that we may conquer the last obstacles, inner and outer, overcome the final difficulties.”

During the intensive period of his Sadhana Sri Aurobindo, in a letter to a disciple, has mentioned his difficulties in affinity with the Mother’s prayer: “I know perfectly well that pain and suffering and struggle and accesses of despair are natural, though not inevitable on the way.... It is not because I have myself trod the sunlit way or flinched from difficulty and suffering and danger.... But that was because the finders of the Way had to face these things in order to conquer.”²

The Mother’s prayers were replete with her soul’s aspiration to become a perfect vehicle for the Divine’s integral manifestation on earth which she felt as her mission in life. She wrote on March 24, 1914: “Grant that I may accomplish my mission, that I may help in Thy integral manifestation.” The Mother wrote this even before she met Sri Aurobindo. The connotation of the term “integral manifestation” is the Divine’s working in and through all the activities, in every aspect of our terrestrial life. The inner manifestation of divinity in us should be able to express itself outwardly.

We find in her diary dated July 12, 1914; “In all the states, in all the modes, in all things, all worlds, all the elements we must discover Thee and unite with Thee and if one element is left aside, however small it may be, the communion

cannot be perfect, the realisation cannot be accomplished.”

This diary note of the Mother coincides with the words of Sri Aurobindo when he wrote letters to his disciples about the Integral Yoga and other paths in the later part of his intensive yogic sadhana. In one of them we read: “I am concerned with the earth, not with worlds beyond for their own sake; it is a terrestrial realisation that I seek and not a flight to distant summits. All other yogas regard this life as an illusion or a passing phase; the supramental yoga alone regards it as a thing created by the Divine for a progressive manifestation and takes the fulfilment of the life and the body for its object.”³

Sri Aurobindo brings out some details: “Neither Buddha nor Shankara nor Ramakrishna had any idea of transforming the body. Their aim was spiritual mukti and nothing else. Krishna taught Arjuna to be liberated in works, but he never spoke of any physical transformation.”⁴

According to Sri Aurobindo, even Chaitanya was not successful in bringing integral love and devotion towards the Divine. But the Mother in her prayers aspired to bring down the integral love. She addresses the Lord on February 1, 1914: “I turn towards Thee and salute Thee, O liberator of the worlds, and, identified with Thy divine Love, I contemplate the earth and its creatures, this mass of substance put into forms perpetually destroyed and renewed.”

Again we find her writing on the next day: “Grant my prayer: Transform me into a brazier of pure love and boundless compassion.”

On herself the Mother has pronounced: “Since the beginning of the earth, wherever and whenever there was the possibility of manifesting a ray of consciousness, I was there.”

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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- ¹ *Mother India*, 1984, p. 5.
- ² *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on The Mother*. p. 371
- ³ *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 22, p. 91.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

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

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

Chapter 18: THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES, Part One

Some think it presumption to believe in a special Providence or to look upon oneself as an instrument in the hands of God, but I find that every man has a special Providence and I see that God uses the mattock of the labourer and babbles in the mouth of a little child.

Providence is not only that which saves me from the shipwreck in which everybody else has foundered. Providence is also that which, while all others are saved, snatches away my last plank of safety and drowns me in the solitary ocean.

The delight of victory is sometimes less than the attraction of struggle and suffering; nevertheless the laurel and not the cross should be the aim of the conquering human soul.

Souls that do not aspire are God's failures; but Nature is pleased and loves to multiply them because they assure her of stability and prolong her empire. Those who are poor, ignorant, ill-born or ill-bred are not the common herd; the common herd are all who are satisfied with pettiness and an average humanity.

Help men, but do not pauperise them of their energy; lead and instruct men, but see that their initiative and originality remain intact; take others into thyself, but give in return the full godhead of their nature. He who can do this is the leader and the guru.

God has made the world a field of battle and filled it with the trampling of combatants and the cries of a great wrestle and struggle. Would you filch His peace without paying the price He has fixed for it?

Distrust a perfect-seeming success, but when having succeeded thou findest still much to do, rejoice and go forward; for the labour is long before the real perfection.

There is no more benumbing error than to mistake a stage for the goal or to linger too long in a resting place.

EVERYTHING that Sri Aurobindo says here, is to combat all that is inert and heavy in human nature, all that is lazy, easily satisfied, reluctant to make an effort.

How often in life one comes across people who have become pacifists, because they are afraid to fight, who cry for rest before they have earned it, who are content with a little progress and in their imagination and desire make it into a wonderful achievement in order to have a justification for stopping short on the road.

There is so much of this in ordinary life. In fact, this is the bourgeois ideal, which has deadened the mind of man and made it what it is today: "Work while you are young, accumulate property, honour, position; be provident, save money, gather some capital, get into government service, so that later on, when you are forty or so, you can sit back, enjoy your income and then your pension, and, as they say, 'enjoy a well-earned rest.'" To sit back to halt along the road, to stop progressing, to fall asleep; to sink towards an early grave, to stop living for the real purpose of life... to sit back.

The moment you stop progressing, you fall back. The moment you are satisfied or stop aspiring, you begin to die. Life is movement, effort, moving forward, scaling the heights, mounting towards the revelations and realisations of the future. Nothing is more dangerous than wanting to rest. You must find your rest in action, in effort, in the march forward—the true rest of a total trust in the divine Grace, of desirelessness, of conquest over ego. True rest is in widening, in universalising the consciousness.

Become as vast as the world, and you will always be at rest. In the midst of action, in the thick of the battle, at the height of your effort, you will have the repose of the infinite and the eternal.

20.3.1957

Chapter 19: THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES, Part Two:

Pure Gold

Wherever thou seest a great end, be sure of a great beginning. Where a monstrous and painful destruction appals thy mind, console it with the certainty of a large and great creation. God is there not only in the still small voice, but in the fire and in the whirlwind.

The greater the destruction, the freer the chances of creation; but the destruction is often long, slow and oppressive, the creation tardy in its coming or interrupted in its triumph. The night returns again and again and the day lingers or seems even to have been a false dawning. Despair not therefore but watch and work. Those who hope violently, despair swiftly: neither hope nor fear, but be sure of God's purpose and thy will to accomplish.

The hand of the divine Artist works often as if it were unsure of its genius and its material. It seems to touch and test and leave, to pick up and throw away and pick up again, to labour and fail and botch and repiece together. Surprises and disappointments are the order of his work before all things are ready. What was selected, is cast away into the abyss of reprobation; what was rejected, becomes the corner-stone of a mighty edifice. But behind all this is the sure eye of a knowledge which surpasses our reason and the slow smile of an infinite ability.

God has all time before him and does not need to be always in a hurry. He is sure of his aim and success and cares not if he break his work a hundred times to bring it nearer perfection. Patience is our first great necessary lesson, but not the dull slowness to move of the timid, the sceptical, the weary, the slothful, the unambitious or the weakling; a patience full of a calm and gathering strength which watches and prepares itself for the hour of swift great strokes, few but enough to change destiny.

Wherefore God hammers so fiercely at his world, tramples and kneads it like dough, casts it so often into the blood-bath and the red hell-heat of the furnace? Because humanity in the mass is still a hard, crude and vile ore which will not otherwise be smelted and shaped; as is his material, so is his method. Let it help to transmute itself into nobler and purer metal, his ways with it will be gentler and sweeter, much loftier and fairer its uses.

Wherefore he selected or made such a material, when he had all infinite possibility to choose from? Because of his divine Idea which saw before it not only beauty and sweetness and purity, but also force and will and greatness. Despise not force, nor hate it for the ugliness of some of its faces, nor think that love only is God. All perfect perfection must have something in it of the stuff of the hero and even of the Titan. But the greatest force is born out of the greatest difficulty.

In the end, the whole problem is to find out whether humanity has become pure gold, or whether it has to pass once more through the crucible.

One fact is obvious: that humanity has not yet become pure gold; that is visible and certain.

But something has happened in the history of the world which gives some hope that a few chosen human beings, a few beings, are—perhaps—ready to be transformed into pure gold, and that those few will be able to manifest force without violence, heroism without destruction, courage without catastrophe.

But actually, in the next paragraph, Sri Aurobindo gives us the answer: if only man could once consent to be spiritualised.... Instead of saying man in

general, we could put 'the individual': if only individual men *would consent* to be spiritualised... if they would consent.

Something in man asks, aspires, but all the rest refuses, wants to continue as it is: the crude ore which has to be cast back into the furnace.

At this moment we are at a decisive turning-point in earth-history, yet again. From many sides I am being asked, "What will happen?" Everywhere there is anxiety, expectation, fear. "What is going to happen?" There is only one answer: "If only man could once consent to be spiritualised." And perhaps if only a few individuals became pure gold, this example would be enough to change the course of events. We are facing the need for this, it is urgent.

This courage, this heroism the Divine asks of us, why shouldn't we use it to fight our own difficulties, our own imperfections, our own obscurities? Why shouldn't we heroically face the furnace of inner purification so that it is not necessary to pass yet again through one of those tremendous titanic destructions that plunge a whole civilization into darkness?

This is the problem we are facing. Let each one solve it in his own way.

This evening I am answering the questions I have been asked, and my answer is Sri Aurobindo's:

If man could once consent to be spiritualised....

And I add: time is pressing—from the human point of view.

27.3.1957

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 7 FEBRUARY 1957

As an exception, Mother gave this talk on a Thursday evening, before the collective meditation.

BEFORE the meditation this evening I am going to say a few words to you, because several people have asked me the difference between a collective meditation and an individual meditation.

Individual meditation—I have already explained to you many times the different kinds of meditation that are possible and I won't begin to speak to you about that again.

But collective meditations have been practised in all ages for different reasons, in different ways and with different motives. What may be called a collective meditation is a group of people who gather together for a definite purpose; for example, in all ages it has been a practice to gather for prayers. Naturally in the Churches, it is a sort of collective meditation but even outside the Churches, some people have organised collective meditations for group prayer. These prayers are of two different kinds.

From the beginning of human history, it is known that certain groups of people would meet to express a certain common state of soul: some to sing together the praise of God, hymns, thanksgiving, to express adoration, thankfulness, gratitude, and to praise God; others—and there are historical examples of this—a certain number of people gathered together for a common invocation, for instance, to ask God for something, and this was done all together, united, in the hope that this invocation, this prayer, this asking would carry more weight. There have been some very famous instances. A very old one occurred in 1000 A.D. when some prophets had announced that it was the end of the world and everywhere people gathered together to offer common prayers and ask that the world may not come to an end (!) or anyway, for it to be protected. Much more recently, in modern times, when King George of England was dying of pneumonia, people assembled in England, not only in the churches but even in the streets in front of the royal palace, to offer prayers and ask God to cure him. It so happened that he recovered, and they believed that it was their prayers.... That is, of course, the most external form, I could say the most worldly, of group meditation.

In all initiatory groups, in all the spiritual schools of ancient times, group meditation was always practised and in that case the motive was quite different. They assembled for a collective progress, to open together to a force, a light, an influence, and... this is more or less what we want to try to do.

However, there are two methods, and this is what I am going to explain to

you. In both cases, one must practise as one does in individual meditation, that is, sit in a position at once comfortable enough for one to be able to keep it and yet not too comfortable for one to fall asleep in it! And then you do what I had asked you to do while I used to go for the distribution over there,¹ that is, prepare for the meditation, try to become calm and silent; not only to avoid chattering outwardly, but to try to silence your mind and gather your consciousness which is dispersed in all the thoughts you have and your preoccupations; to gather it, bring it back within yourself as completely as possible and concentrate it here, in the region of the heart, near the solar plexus, so that all the active energies in the head and all that keeps the brain running, may be brought back and concentrated here. This can be done in a few seconds, it can take a few minutes: that depends on each one. Well, this is a preparatory attitude. And then, once this is done—or done as well as you can do it—you may take two attitudes, that is, an active attitude or a passive attitude.

What I call an active attitude is to concentrate on—I shall put it in general terms—on the person who is directing the meditation, with the will to open and receive from him what he intends to give you or the force with which he wants to put you into contact. That is active, for here there is a will at work and an active concentration to open yourself to someone, a concentration on someone.

The other one, the passive one is simply this, to be concentrated as I have told you, then you open yourself as one opens a door; you see, you have a door here (*gesture at the level of the heart*) and once you are concentrated, you open the door and stay like this (*gesture of immobility*). Or else, you may take another image, as if it were a book, and you open your book very wide with its pages completely blank, that is, quite silent, and you stay like that waiting for what is going to happen.

These are the two attitudes. You may take one or the other, according to the day, the occasion, or you may adopt one of them, out of preference, if it helps you more. Both are effective and can have equally good results.

And so, now, for our special case, I shall tell you what I am trying to do.... It will soon be a year since, one Wednesday, we had the manifestation of the supramental force. Since then, it has been working very actively, even while very few people are aware of it! but still I thought the time had come for—how to put it?—for us to help it a little in its work by making an effort of receptivity.

Of course, it does not work only in the Ashram, it is working in the whole world and in all places where there is some receptivity this Force is at work, and I must say the Ashram hasn't an exclusive receptivity in the world, the monopoly of receptivity. But since it so happens that all of us here more or less know what has taken place, well, I hope that individually each person is doing his best

¹ Every evening, before meditation or the talks, Mother used to distribute groundnuts to the children of the "Green Group", in the adjoining Playground.

to benefit by the occasion; but collectively we can do something, that is, try to unify a ground, to produce a particularly fertile soil to obtain collectively the maximum receptivity and to have as little wastage as possible of time and energies.

So, now, you have been told in a general way what we want to try to do and you have only to.... to do it.

(Questions and Answers 1957-58, pp. 37-39)

VIGNETTES OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of January 1988)

SHRI D. P. Bendre is a famous Kanada poet. Even his early poetry in Kanada was of such high literary merit that it was incorporated in M.A. text-books. When he appeared for his M.A. his examiners did not know that he was the poet himself.

Shri Bendre was not only himself a devotee of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo: he also inspired many of his students and brought them to the Mother's feet—most notable among them was Shri Shankar Gauda—father of our Paru-di, Registrar of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

On 29th February 1956 Shri Bendre after receiving the best teacher award at Delhi was proceeding to Dharwar via Nagpur. He was in a first-class compartment with two Westerners. They alighted at Nagpur for tea, etc. but did not come back even though their luggage was still in the compartment.

Now Shri Bendre was alone. Outside he witnessed a glorious sunset and then the first shades of night fell. The ceiling fan was whirring at full speed. Suddenly Shri Bendre saw gold dust falling from the fan. Then he saw people ascending a mountain and this gold dust enveloping them. This vision continued for sometime. Later it was reported to the Mother. He is said to be one of those three outside the Ashram who had some extraordinary experience in relation to the Supramental Manifestation of 29th February 1956. •

*

On 29th February 1956 during meditation Justice Vasistha saw a blue light emanating from the east, travelling towards the west. The light gradually increased so much that it covered all the four directions.

*

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna) had an experience at night on February 29, 1956 in the train he had boarded at Madras on the way to Bombay. An account of it appears in the course of "Some Diary-notes" published in the present issue.

Compiled by S

HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

6

DR. Das Gupta, a friend of Dr. Sachin Ray, lived in America with his wife and their seven-year old daughter. They planned to come to India on a vacation. Being an intimate friend of Dr. Ray, Dr. Das Gupta naturally informed him in advance about his programme.

Mrs. Das Gupta needed a minor operation. They decided that to save time she should go to England to get operated upon. After her recovery the husband and daughter would rejoin her to come to India. It was a routine operation, so they expected no trouble whatsoever. Accordingly Mrs. Das Gupta was admitted to the prestigious Guy's Hospital in London. After the operation there was some infection. Due to it Mrs. Das Gupta got a fever. The doctors tried their best but they could neither control the infection nor bring down the fever. Her condition deteriorated rapidly, the doctors held out no hope. Dr. Das Gupta at once rushed to her bedside with his daughter.

From London he wrote a very touching letter to Dr. Sachin Ray lamenting, "How will I live without her? Who will look after our child?" Moved to the core Dr. Sachin asked for the Mother's Blessings. Prodyot-da informed him that the Mother had said that generally she didn't give blessings to people who didn't know her and had not asked for them but in this case due to the request of Dr. Ray she was sending a Blessing-packet. Dr. Ray asked for permission to send a telegram conveying the Mother's blessings since a letter and the enclosed blessing-packet would take at least one week to reach the lady in London. The Mother granted Dr. Ray's request who at once sent a telegram to Dr. Das Gupta: "Mother sends blessings."

Dr. Das Gupta was very puzzled at receiving this telegram: What does this mean? Who is the Mother? etc. Mrs. Das Gupta was in a coma. The doctors said, "She may go any moment." Dr. Das Gupta on an impulse pushed the telegram under her pillow and after the visiting hours came back to his hotel, bereft of all hope, afraid of the bleak future that lay ahead.

Next morning as soon as he reached the hospital the smiling nurse gave him the good news that there was a marked improvement in the condition of his wife and that the fever had come down. From then onwards Mrs. Das Gupta's condition improved steadily. The doctors were delightfully surprised at this inexplicable recovery. Soon she was discharged.

When Mrs. Das Gupta learnt the whole story about the blessing telegram from the Mother sent by Dr. Sachin she insisted that they come to offer their gratitude at the Mother's feet. Thus they came to Pondicherry and had the Mother's first Darshan and were blessed by her touch.

Compiled by K

SOME DIARY-NOTES OF 1956, THE YEAR OF THE SUPRAMENTAL MANIFESTATION ON FEBRUARY 29

(As February 29, 1988 will mark the eighth anniversary of the great event which took place thirty-two years ago in a leap year, a dip into a sadhak's Diary of 1956 will be of interest.)

Bombay, March 4

ON December 18, last year, on a Sunday night the Divine Grace came forth to meet me and lift me up. I was feeling a sense of hopelessness and helplessness. Then, towards early morning, perhaps at 4.30 or 5, I had a dream. Even after waking, I could not think it a dream, so concrete it had been, so intensely real—more real than any event in so-called waking life.

I found myself sitting at the top of the staircase leading to the darshan room. Suddenly the door of that room opened and the Mother came out and sat near the threshold, facing me. We held each other's hands and looked into each other's face. All of a sudden, with a smile she put her face forward and kissed me on my right cheek. I was so surprised, and I spoke from the depth of my heart, "Oh Mother, thank you!" She kept smiling.

A couple of days later I wrote to her, asking if this dream had been based on any genuine occult experience. In answer to my letter, she smiled as she passed by me after tennis and said: "It's all right." I said: "Was it real?" She nodded, saying "Yes" and, still smiling, passed on. I was extremely happy.

Today after two and a half months the Divine Grace has again come to me. It is a Sunday once more and I have just got up from sleep. I was feeling lost and depressed, so far away from Pondicherry. In my dream last night I found myself going to the Mother for pranam. She was sitting cross-legged. As soon as I reached close to her she caught my right hand and pulled my face to her own and again kissed me on my right cheek. Our faces kept touching for some time. Love leaped out from my heart to her and I was happy. I felt saved—and, on waking, resolved to let no depression, no influence from the past, overcome me.

I had dreamt of the Mother on the 29th of February, too, in the train on the first night of the journey from Madras. There also I was going for pranam. I saw a wide open space in the centre of which the Mother was seated. People were flocking towards her to do pranam. Somehow I could not throw off my slippers quickly enough in order to join them and reach the Mother. My left foot failed to get clear and while shaking it I woke up. But right in front of me, in the compartment, I saw the Mother standing in a faint patch of light

coming from a window. I looked steadily at her. On examining her body I noticed that some part of the berth opposite mine and a bit of the woodwork above it were making up her face and form. But this observation on my side did not make any difference to my seeing her. The material things were the support of her projection into the physical plane. I saw her for nearly one-fourth of a minute. It was fine to feel that she was with me even when I was not in Pondicherry. Then I shut my eyes for a moment and opened them once more. She was still there. A second time I shut my eyes. On opening them, I found her gone.

May I feel her presence all the time! I shall be in Bombay for about three weeks. Before I left Pondi, I said to the Mother: "I wonder how long I'll have to be away." Without any hesitation she replied: "You must be here on the 29th of March." I said: "All right, Mother. I shall come back for that date." Evidently this date which will mark the forty-second anniversary of her first arrival in Pondicherry has a particular importance this year. She has called Eleanor Montgomery also for it—up to the end of April. From March 29 to April 24 is the period of a special descent—the culminating point being 23.4.56—a series of consecutive numbers.

Bombay, March 18

Again last night I had a dream of the Mother—a very warm and intimate one.

Pondicherry, March 26

Yesterday morning I wrote to the Mother, asking what had happened on two dates about which I had heard Ashramites talking: February 29 and March 8. I opined that it was something connected with the Supermind's gripping the physical world.

In the evening, after tennis, the Mother passed by, smiling—and said: "You are behind by a century."

I gave her a note at the Distribution of groundnuts at the Playground: "From what you said after tennis I am sure that the whole blooming thing has come down. Hurrah! And now there is hope for such as I."

She read the note and laughed and said: "Years ago I had told you that I would call you when the Supermind would come down. So I did call you. But you didn't understand."

I replied: "Mother, I came as soon as I could. And on the very day of the descent—February 29, as I hear—I saw you standing in the railway compartment of the Bombay Mail in which I had left Madras."

"Oh, it was the same day? It is very good that you saw me."

Far back in 1938, just before I left for Bombay at the end of February, the

Mother promised to call me home if the Supermind came down. She was expecting the descent some time in May. I, however, got no telegram—and Sri Aurobindo later explained to me that the kind of descent expected had not happened.

I learnt many years afterwards that the Supermind did come but could not be fixed in the very substance of Sri Aurobindo's body.

Now, on February 29, late in the evening it came down for good. What Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had worked for during 30 years happened at last.

I wonder when the world will realise that the greatest event in its history took place. Of course the *detailed* working out of the Supermind upon earth and even in the Mother's body will take long, but the full general presence of it in her is there now and also its general working on ourselves and the world.

There is now hope for the weakest amongst us, for the Supermind is above the universe's laws and brings sheer omnipotence to our aid.

It seems that three immediate effects are possible. One is a sudden and radical clearing of difficulties. Another is a slow but quite perceptibly sure clearing. Still another is a final gathering up of difficulties prior to their clearance: difficulties may appear to increase but really what will take place is like the sweeping together of the dust of a room before throwing it out. One must have no fear: one must face everything with faith and certitude.

I find examples of all these effects here in the Ashram. I myself feel the second effect.

I can hardly contain myself with joy at the Mother's victory. May all our hearts belong to her!

March 27

I asked the Mother to clarify to me the exact thing that had occurred. She said Nolini had told her that I had been putting all kinds of questions to him and that I could not grasp what he had been telling me. I said to the Mother: "I was not satisfied with his answers. I had the impression that he himself did not quite know." She remarked: "I had the same impression."

I asked: "Can we say that the involved Supermind has burst open as a result of the descent?"

"No. That is what you thought. But, though it has not come up, its coming up is now a certainty. It is only a matter of time. And I may tell you that to talk of a descent as we commonly do is also not correct. We can speak of a descent only when there is a question of something below and something above. In the human frame of consciousness there are levels and there is something above which can descend. But for the universe as a whole there is no below or above. A descent can be spoken of only in relation to an individual. In relation to the entire universe we have to speak of a manifestation. The Super-

mind's light, consciousness and force have manifested. The Ananda hasn't yet done so."

"But surely something has to manifest from somewhere? The Supermind was not in the universe. Where did it manifest from?"

"You are being too intellectual. You can't understand things that way."

After this talk I figured to myself that somehow, in the universal framework, all that we call "planes" must be not in a ladder but all together—the non-physical universes subtly and secretly present along with the physical in a single original self-extension of divine consciousness.

March 31

This is the poem I wrote before the Supramental Manifestation was announced. In fact, I wrote it in Bombay.

Doors in the ultimate Secrecy cleave wide
And out of them dances an immortal dust,
A shower of scintillating silences
Falling for ever on a city of dream.

Softly the splendour stirs in every stone.
One single wideness grow the seeds of sleep.
A fathomless flower exploding with no sound,
Omnipotence unfolds from earth to sky.

(Note on December 3, 1987: The poem is a strange production. The first stanza seems to prophesy in another frame of vision what happened in late evening on February 29, 1956. The second appears to go even beyond that event to the breaking out of the involved Supermind.)

May 6

Today I feel somehow that at last I am quite ready to be taken up entirely by the Mother into the New Life.

May 24

I wrote to the Mother: "Ever since I came back from Bombay I have been constantly feeling supported by the new Power that has come into the earth's atmosphere. I have been feeling that all difficulties belong to an old world that is really dead. But, although the sense of being a part of your life and of your work is often strong, I seem to be lingering just within the borders of the new world instead of penetrating right to its centre. I want so much to be wholly yours.

Won't you do something to absorb me into yourself? What should I do on my side?"

When the Mother came out from her bathroom after reading my note, she said: "Ça viendra" ("It will come"). I asked her: "When?" She replied: "Surely you don't want me to mention the date?" Then I said: "No—but please make it come soon." She smiled.

May 30

I wrote to the Mother: "Is it true that you have said the following or something like it?—'Only four people realised the fact of the Supramental Manifestation—one in the Ashram and three outside'? I can very well believe that there was only one person in the Ashram—namely, yourself! But the three outsiders puzzle me. How did they manage to do what hundreds here didn't?"

The Mother told me: "What I said was not that four people knew it to be the Supramental Manifestation, but that when the Manifestation took place they had some unusual experiences because of it even if they did not understand why. I at first thought there was only one person in the Ashram to whom an unusual experience had happened, but afterwards I found there had been two. Among those outside, I counted you."

I was surprised to hear this. The Mother continued: "You wrote to me—didn't you?—that on the night of February 29 I was with you. I had promised you long ago when you had gone from here that I would inform you at once if the Supermind manifested. I never forgot this. And when the Supermind did manifest I went out to tell you."

"You actually did that, Mother, for one like me?" I asked. She answered: "Yes."

I feel unspeakably grateful to find that she thinks me so connected with her work.

September 20

This is what happened in the train from Pondicherry to Madras between 11.45 p.m. and 12.45 p.m. I was seeing my sister-in-law off up to Madras. I had a dream ending with a very vivid impression as if of an experience. I found the Mother sitting and I came and knelt down. On the palm of my right hand, just below the base of the index finger, she placed something with the fingers of her right hand. She said: "I am giving you the Supramental Purity." I felt extremely happy and for a moment I thought she was about to kiss me on the forehead. I said to myself: "My face is unwashed and grimy. It won't be nice for Mother to kiss it." Then she brought her face close to mine and touched my forehead with her own. She remained like this for a little while. I was deeply moved and clung on to her legs or perhaps arms, I can't say for sure. Then I

woke up, with the emotion and the happiness still with me, as well as with the sense of the beginning of a new important working in my sadhana. But was this only something with a personal significance? Or did the Mother really visit me to announce some new supramental truth manifested?

September 22

I spoke of my dream to the Mother. She said: "On that very night I wanted to give you something and I did so."

November 25

In the morning the Mother said: "I am not giving you any books on this birthday. You have all of them." I replied: "Not all. I don't have *On the Veda* and *Poems from Bengal*." She asked Champaklal to keep them ready. When she went for lunch, I kept a note for her on the table by which she would pass on her way to the bathroom: "The books you will be giving me are certainly welcome, but what I would most like to read today is something else. You once told me that you would show it to me one day—but I think you said that you would do so when I would be more worthy. If greater worthiness is the standard, I feel sure I shall not be shown what I want. But one can always hope for Grace. I am referring to what you wrote on February 29, just after the Supramental Manifestation."

On finishing her lunch the Mother stopped at the table and picked up my note. Usually she takes notes to the bathroom and reads them there. But this one she read, standing by the table. Then she went to the bathroom and afterwards came to me as usual. I had kept ready the flower whose significance is "Prayer". On taking it from me she said: "I have read your prayer. If I can find the paper on which I have written, I shall bring it for you in the evening's interview. If I have to search for it for an hour I shan't be able to show it to you."

In the evening when I went into her room, I saw that she had brought the paper with her. She said: "You won't understand what I have written, but try to keep your mind absolutely quiet and receive it." I said: "Perhaps it is not meant to be understood." She laughed and said: "Probably." Then she explained the background of the writing: "The whole thing is not so much a vision or an experience as something done by me. I went up into the Supermind and did what was to be done. There was no need for any verbal formulation as far as I was concerned, but in order to put it into words for others I wrote the thing down. Always in writing, a realisation, a state of consciousness, gets somewhat limited: the very act of expression narrows the reality to some extent. Well, here is what I wrote."

Then she read out the French. It began with the words: "La presence divine est là parmi nous." She was as if addressing all of us. The next sentence was: "J'avais une forme d'or plus immense que tout l'univers." Then she went on to say that she found herself in front of a massive door, on whose other side was the world. And she heard the words "The time has come." She heard them in English and not in French. Then she lifted up with her hands a huge hammer of gold and struck one blow upon the door. The door crumbled down. A tremendous flood of light poured out and swept all over the universe.

When the Mother had finished reading, I asked to take the paper in my hands and to read it by myself so that I might catch better the French. She hesitated just a bit and said, a little shyly and doubtfully: "You'll give it back to me?" "Of course," I replied, laughing. After I returned the paper she remarked: "When I came back from the Supermind I thought that, since the outpour was so stupendous, everybody would be lying prostrate. But when I opened my eyes I found everybody sitting quietly and perfectly unconscious of what had happened."

I thanked the Mother very much for the act of Grace in her showing me the precious document.

(Note on November 25, 1987: It was more than three years later than 1956 that on February 29, 1960 the Mother made public the contents of "the precious document." I knew I was not meant to disclose to anybody the act of Grace on November 25, 1956. So I kept the secret. It appears that the Mother had told Dr. Sanyal what exactly had occurred. He wrote down something afterwards and asked Norman Dowsett to correct the English. Norman, instead of returning the report to Dr. Sanyal, seems to have sent it straight up to the Mother. Referring to what had been submitted to her, she told me some time in April of the same year that human beings have no proper understanding of things and make a mess of what is wonderful. It was in this connection that she mentioned having written of the event of February 29.)

November 26

No hope for me unless you break
 Even from within my cave
 The gate of God the Gloom,
 Just as you broke from the infinite room
 The door of God the Gold
 And set free wave on dazzling wave,
 Omnipotence-sea that rolled-
 Over all earth and gulfed all things
 In the Love that turns clay Supermind.

But, O sweet splendour, find
Yourself not only high above
But deep below in the blindnesses
And crumble down my stone
Of a heart! Unless
You are one
With my night I shall never be
One with your solar infinity.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

A POEM BY NIRODBARAN

WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p><i>This would mean that life here is eternal— you don't mean that? "Burns within" won't do</i></p> | | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>flame of an</i></p> <p>The (deep,) eternal (flame of) life <i>inly</i> ; Burns (within) like a deathless star, from a calm Inviolable as (a steadfast) cliff <i>Its s</i> (And) incense-wing(ed) rise(s) towards the Far.</p> |
| <p><i>Much better without "dawn"</i></p> | | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>our tracts</i></p> <p>On (the) h'gh summit(s) it throws Reflections of a shadowless bliss, <i>ce of</i> Fragran(t) (with) heaven's immortal Rose, <i>A</i> (And) glory of (dawn's) crimson silences.</p> |
| <p><i>I don't think anything can be bound in a cry, besides it is the glories of the flame you are singing, not its poverties</i></p> | | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>A e of a</i></p> <p>(In a) raptur(ous) cadence wave <i>an</i> From (the) immutable moon-fringed sky <i>the body's</i> It came into (this) (embodied) cave— <i>seizing deep</i> The Timeless (seized) (in) time's (dark) cry. <i>The</i> (Like the) smile of a sun-haloed Face <i>C and ;</i> (It) colours the bare voiceless sea <i>In breathless,</i> (And desert's) bleak (breathless) and trammelled space <i>too much?</i> <i>H !</i> (With the h)earth-beats of (a) moon-white ecstasy, _</p> |

Well, it makes a really fine poem! I have reduced all to four footers—no need of being pentametric to be grave. Here four footed animals can be grave and lyrical at the same time which for a poem like this is an advantage.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA BIRTH CENTENARY

NOLINI-DA ABOUT THE MOTHER

COMPILER'S NOTE

Fifteen years back when the Mother left her body the Ashram faced its greatest and gravest crisis. The disciples did not know how to face the unexpected or to bear the unbearable.

In those fateful days Nolini-da's words became a beacon light, a source of inspiration, something to cling to. When the ground had slipped from under our feet he led us on to a firmer ground of faith and hope.

He who lived in a higher, a more-than-mental consciousness, saw with his truth-sight the reason of the Mother's withdrawal and reassured us that the Mother is waiting to manifest with her new-creation, to descend on earth in a glorious transformed body. Thus Nolini-da brought a ray of sunshine in those dark bewildering days when we did not know what to look forward to or how to reconcile ourselves to the loss. Through his writings on the subject he opened something of the future, something of the Beyond.

Here is a compilation of some of those writings.

Shyam Kumari

No one knows for certain on which particular date, at what auspicious moment, the word "MOTHER" was uttered by the lips of Sri Aurobindo. But that was a Divine moment in unrecorded time, a moment of destiny in the history of man and earth; for it was at this supreme moment that the Mother was established on this material earth, in the external consciousness of man.¹

*

....Mother has prepared for us her new body in the inner world, in the subtle physical which is as living and tangible as her physical body even though not as concrete. In one of her last Notes² she refers to this new transformed body and she describes it as presented to her vision. That body she has built up in her long arduous labours, built up in a complete form and left with us and with humanity.

This new body of hers, prepared behind the material curtain, she sought to infuse into the material form, even press into it or force into it this new element; but Matter and man's physical nature were not yet ready: Earth still considered it as an intrusion, as something foreign. The material casing broke down in

¹ *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 7, p. 502.

² Notes on the way: *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, August 1972 (Notes on 25-3-72).

consequence—perhaps not broke down, rather broke through: but that must be another story.

But it is there living and glorious in its beauty and power and is still at work within us, and around us in the world, incessantly, towards the final consummation of its material embodiment.

What is expected of us is to see this golden Mother within us and try to become, as she always wanted, her gold children, within and without.¹

*

For us now it is time to make amends for the lapses of the past—there were lapses, indeed, grievous lapses. So long as her physical body was our protection; we did not suffer the full consequences of our Karma because her body acted as a buffer: it broke the force of the impact of the karma and reduced its evil effects to a minimum. Her body bore our burden and relieved us of the misery otherwise due to us. Mankind, the world even, does not know the saving Grace that her material frame brought to them. They would have gone down to destruction and dissolution but for the presence of the Divine Body.

The world has survived, mankind has an assured future, that is the work done by her body. It aimed at a little more, to show us something of the concrete form of the future, but evidently that was not to be, because something from us also, from the world and mankind, some helping hand in the labour was needed—we remember her ringing words: *Si l'humanité consentait à être spiritualisée*—well, that is the minimum, that minimum was also not granted to her body. Her body was made so easily available to all without any trouble and effort on our part that we lost all sense of the precious things brought to us, brought to our very door. We did not know how to make use of it and have the true benefit out of it. Many a time she did say something to us to that effect regretfully, we wasted a treasure like the pampered prodigal son.

It is regrettable but she has left no cause for our regret. She has left with us the true source of her protective power, her living Consciousness concretised in the earth's atmosphere, in the personal atmosphere of each one of us. We have only to open our grateful eyes and see it. The ladder has been taken away, but she has come nearer to us and a little uplift will replace us within her arms.

Since we have no longer the support of her body on which we depended exclusively, we are compelled to seek the true support, the support of her consciousness, the inner reality—her inner presence, her living Person within—which her body represented, whose acquaintance we were not careful enough to cultivate. Now we are thrown upon the only alternative available. The way will be arduous; we could have much more easily mounted up the ladder of consciousness with the aid of her body, almost playfully like children. Now a

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, pp. 88-89.

little bit of austerity will be needed to go on our own, the austerity will be needed to bring our external life and physical consciousness in line with her own consciousness, to prepare them, to make them ready. Her material body offered an unconditional help and protection, now all that will be conditional—conditional upon our willing co-operation, our happy and conscious collaboration—of course the Grace will be always there.¹

*

The Mother's body was not meant to give us, to make a gift to us of a transformed human body, for our contemplation, our delectation. It had a more serious purpose.

It was to furnish the material stuff for the manifestation, the incarnation of the subtle Divine body preparing behind.

Humanity in its present embodied manifestation cannot be immediately changed, transmuted into the supramental body. That body must descend or reveal itself or clothe itself with a new material substance. That new material substance was being prepared in the Mother's body which was the workshop, as it were, for the Divine body.

She had been building in this way not only a personal body of her own, the new Divine body, but also a 'generic' body for humanity at large out of which other *personal bodies* may be precipitated into the material forms of the material world—the two forming but one indivisible act.²

*

The Mother is creative consciousness; wherever she happens to be, wherever she is called upon to be, her very presence moves for creation, creating a new world and a new dimension of being and consciousness, according to the need of time and place. And it is a whole world she creates and her creation endures, for it is an added achievement in the evolution of the human being.³

The Mother, Human and Divine

In our human frailty we regard the Divine Mother as mother only, forgetting that she is also divine. We are apt to seize exclusively the last term of the great Name and ignore the other term which is equally important. We demand from her the same reactions of motherly love as we expect from a human mother. Our love for her is human, human in the ignorant way—full of passion and cra-

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 33

³ *Ibid.*, p. 6

ving, hunger for appropriation, considering her as nothing else than food for our egoistic desires.

She is the mother indeed, but the Divine Mother. She wishes us to come to her in the divine way and not in the human way. For it is in the divine way that we rise to our highest and deepest stature and receive her fully and integrally, enjoy the plenitude of the delight in her Grace. A human way ties us down to the littlenesses and smallnesses of the human feeling. The human approach is more often than not that of a spoilt child. If there is one drop of true love at the bottom of the heart, the amount of ignorance and turbidity in which that is sunk is colossal. The dirt smears us and is cast upon the object of our love too.

And yet she is the mother in being the Divine. She is divine not in the sense that she is afar and aloof, cold and indifferent like the transcendent Brahman. Indeed, the Divine Mother is more motherly than the human mother can be. The human mother is only a faint echo, a far-off shadow, at times a travesty of the true Mother in the archetypal world.

The Divine Mother even in being transcendent leans down to our human dimensions, becomes one of us, is within us as our own self and with us as comrade and guide. She takes us by the hand, and if we only allow it, teaches us how to transcend the little humanity we are made of and grow into her own nature and substance through the miracle of her love—if our love responds to it adequately.

It is only by remembering her twofold truth, the two arms of her love with which she enfolds us and cherishes us that we can hope to be her true children.¹

*

Perhaps truth is too bright too compelling for his [man's] egoistic nature and obscure make-up—so he denies, obstructs as much as he can the new consciousness, the new reality. The Mother out of her infinite love tried to take this denial on her own self, tried to convince and change as many elements as was possible—then, when nothing more could be done She withdrew leaving the field to her other aspect to do what was unavoidable—the breaking up of the old rigid world. It is a necessity for the ultimate good of earth and even man.²

The new creation is already there—forming itself—whatever is happening now in the Ashram and outside, is happening so that it may come forward all the sooner. She is breaking the outer scaffolding within which the new reality has been established, or you may call it a dead shell that is being broken so that the new Reality may come out. It is Mother's action with her own Self. She has taken her *Chhinnamasta* form. All things She is destroying are her own selves—She is getting rid, as it were, of the old unutilisable limbs of her own body.³

¹ *Ibid*, Vol. 5, pp. 85-86.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, pp. 257-258

³ *Ibid*, Vol 6, p. 258.

A VISION

The Mother says:

“Just see. Look at me. I am here come back in my new body,—divine, transformed and glorious. And I am the same mother, still human. Do not worry. Do not be concerned about your own self, your progress and realisation, nor about others. I am here, look at me, gaze into me, enter into me wholly, merge into my being, lose yourself into my love, with your love. You will see all problems solved, everything done. Forget all else, forget the world. Remember me alone, be one with me, with my love....”¹

*

She is always there in that realm of the earth atmosphere from where she used to work even when here, the same now as she was when in our midst. She is available in the same way—only we must know how to approach, to attune ourselves.²

*

She is accessible to our prayer in the same way, even to our prayer most puerile and foolish—if it is genuine, spontaneous, simple and candid, spoken with a child’s innocence, She has a ear even to our nonsense.³

*

And yet....

There *is* some difference between Her being here in the body and Her not being in the body here. The value of her being here in the body we begin to find out and appreciate only when she is not in the body. The appreciation, should it be always behind the experience, should it always come too late!!⁴

*

...The Mother’s look is always upon you, her look of love and protection: be sure and certain of that. You carry that within you for all time and wherever you go, wherever in the entire world. You carry in you a portion, a spark of her Love; and that will save you from many difficulties, from much danger. If you can keep that in your active memory, it will be still more beneficial.⁵

*

....The Mother is still living and active among us and her presence is still there, even concretely, for each of you has the Divine Child in you.⁶

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 259

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 263.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 263.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 209.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 8.

SUDHIR KUMAR SARKAR BIRTH CENTENARY

SUDHIR Kumar Sarkar, "one of the bravest and most fearless sons of the Motherland", as Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta put it, was among the first batch of revolutionaries that the turn of this century produced and that became active under the leadership of Sri Aurobindo. Born in Faridpur (Bogra, now in Bangladesh) on 21st February 1889, he was the son of Dr. Prasanna K. Sarkar (Bagchi), an eminent medical practitioner, who was also a close associate of Dr. K.D. Ghose, Sri Aurobindo's father, in Khulna. The dauntless and irrepressible Sudhir could not be moulded into the pattern which the then system of education had set. He ran away from home with the intention of joining the National College, Calcutta, of which Sri Aurobindo was the Principal. But Providence had other plans for him.

The partition of Bengal in 1905 set the nation aflame to save the Motherland and roused in her children a fervour which had never been seen before. To denounce everything that smacked of slavery and to plunge into this cauldron of tests with fearless determination, brushing aside the comforts of life, were the inspirations that spurred Sudhir to action. For him nothing was greater than the imperative need to serve the Motherland, adore her or even to die for her. This was the clarion call that Sri Aurobindo had sounded and thousands of youths came forward to lay down their lives and Sudhir's inner being responded unhesitatingly to it. Thus was forged a link which was to change and shape Sudhir's destiny.

Initiated and moulded by the rites of consecration in the temple of Ma Bhawani to serve her unto death in order to free her children from the shackles of foreign domination, he was among the select few of the Maniktola Garden's intrepid group of revolutionaries inspired and led by the "Prophet of Nationalism" himself. Urged by that inner call, he found himself amidst some of the most valiant sons of the country whose love, courage, devotion and sacrifice for the Motherland have been unparalleled. Although hardly eighteen years of age, he became a trusted colleague of such notable revolutionaries as Barindra K. Ghose, Hemchandra Das, Ullaskar Dutt, Khudiram, Kanai and others.

An occasion arose when, along with six others, he was sent to Jamalpur to tackle a large number of anti-social elements who were out to disturb the age-old communal harmony of the region. He played a heroic role in the Jamalpur shootout when his small group was pitted against miscreants and rowdies in their thousands bent upon destroying peace. Fearlessly they stood their ground until the police came to intervene.

Sudhir managed to escape from the clutches of the police, foiling their plans with varied ingenuity in the course of repeated hazardous encounters, and so, for his bravery, he was given the rare opportunity to attend upon Sri Aurobindo. Sudhir lived, studied and worked with Sri Aurobindo like a member of the family. He carried letters from him to several people in order to raise funds for the revolutionary cause. Sometimes he would carry with him plans and programmes

of the revolutionaries and show them to a sympathiser or potential patron.

In May 1908 he was arrested and spent a year in jail as an undertrial prisoner along with Sri Aurobindo, in the celebrated Alipore Conspiracy Case. When judgment was delivered in May 1909 he was sentenced to life-imprisonment in the Andaman Islands along with 19 others. Sri Aurobindo in his Bengali book of reminiscences, *Kara Kahini* (Tales of Prison Life), writes about his young companions who stood trial with him: "Looking at these lads... one felt as if the liberal, daring, puissant men of an earlier age with a different training had come back to India. That fearless and innocent look in their eyes, the words breathing power, their carefree delighted laughter even in the midst of great danger, the undaunted courage, cheerfulness of mind, absence of despair or grief, all this was a symptom not of the inert Indians of those days but of a new age, a new race and a new stir." (Translation)

It is hardly necessary to dwell on the inhuman treatment meted out to the first batch of Swadeshi prisoners in the Andamans. Not only were they subjected to physical tortures, but also the jail authorities tried to break their spirit in various ways. Sudhir always said that he could survive the ordeal only because of the remembrance of Sri Aurobindo that he carried in his heart. Before parting, Sri Aurobindo had told him, "Think of me, I shall be always with you", and this mantra sustained him in times of difficulty and despair.

After seven years of harrowing experience in the Devil's Island and three more mandatory terms from jail to jail on the mainland, Sudhir was ultimately released on 22nd May 1918. The authorities extracted from him a host of promises which, if unfulfilled, would render him liable to prosecution again. In fact, the harassment never stopped. While there were other friends who still lay rotting in prison famished and tortured, those who were set free were mere breathing skeletons, sapped and drained of all vitality. It was a miracle that they survived the ordeal and what sustained them was their undying patriotism, their experience of the Motherland as a living and embodied Being. This was the basis of their inspiration which gave them the courage to make unlimited sacrifices.

Although Sudhir was released, the eyes of the law never left him alone, and to avoid harassment he had sometimes to go into hiding for months. Many wanted to help him but were afraid of incurring the wrath of the authorities. Sudhir was too independent-minded to enter employment as a job-seeker. With the help of a friend of the family at Khulna, who provided him with a small capital, he tried his hand at several business ventures—and always achieved success. He had the mind of an innovator and pioneer. He went to the forests of Assam to extract *catechu* from accacia trees. He also successfully tried his hand at manufacturing large-size reinforced concrete conduit pipes, a new enterprise in this country and he also experimented with the construction of septic tanks. But although many of his schemes became highly fruitful, he was not worldly-minded

and was hardly motivated by profits. During this phase of his life, around 1921-1922, he married Suniti Devi of Pangsha, Faridpur. It was an extraordinary blessing for him that he found in her a true friend, philosopher and guide. Not only was this highly gifted and remarkable lady a source of inspiration for Sudhir in his dangerous revolutionary activities, but also, in due course, she proved herself a comrade *par excellence* in his spiritual quest which led him to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry in 1938.

Suniti Devi often had visions of mystic realities in a state of trance and, indeed, the Mother Herself revealed that she came from a higher plane. She passed away in 1940.

As Sudhir found the culmination of his ideals and aspirations in the vision of transformation kept before us by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, in 1943 he surrendered everything to the Mother and settled down in the Ashram with his children.

He served the Mother in many ways and initiated new enterprises in the Ashram. His indomitable and adventurous spirit became a willing and humble instrument in Her Hands.

While looking through the photographs of the revolutionaries who were Sudhir's contemporaries, The Mother once said: "These people, who served under Sri Aurobindo during the revolution in India, formed a particular type. They were all valiant warriors who sacrificed everything for the Motherland. And only the Motherland existed for them. They had such a sense of duty towards the Motherland which would not waver at all. They were so devoted that they worshiped India as the Mother Aditi."

He fervently believed in the prophecy of Sri Aurobindo that India will again be re-united. He was a warrior to the core but he had also a tender side to his nature, a sweetness of heart and a childlike disposition that belong to the simple and the spiritual. Loving and generous, he was always ready to help others and he practised Homeopathy precisely because of this. People who had the privilege to be treated by him clearly felt that his diagnosis was always intuitive. The medicine he gave was as though charged with a power of love and trust in the triumph of Grace. He was a great believer in physical fitness and was endowed with fine bodily strength which made him healthy and joyful.

His intense love for The Mother, in whom he saw the embodiment of his own Motherland, and his sincerity and integrity made him Her worthy child. His fervent wish was to see India united and The Mother's kingdom established on earth.

He passed away on the 27th of April 1974, at the age of 85 at once a yogi and a bhakta,—“a lion among men,” as Jayaprakash Narayan observed. We salute this great soul on the occasion of his birth centenary and offer him our reverential tributes. May his life inspire the youth of today!

MONA SARKAR

MRINALINI DEVI

A TALK

(Continued from the issue of January 1988)

Now for the sister's account about Mrinalini:

"At last arrived the year 1918, December. She received the call from Sri Aurobindo saying 'My sadhana is over. I have achieved my object, siddhi. I have a lot of work to do for the world. You can come now and be my companion in this work.' This naturally made Mrinalini and all others extremely happy.

"Now our father thought of taking my sister to Pondy. The Government gave permission. So they arrived in Calcutta *via* Ranchi. But Mrinalini Devi fell a victim to the scourge of influenza which was raging everywhere. After a week's illness she passed away on 17 December at the age of 32. The mental agony that she had kept suppressed for years exploded during the illness in her delirium, particularly the frightful nightmarish scene of Sri Aurobindo's arrest.

"There was a mention in her horoscope that her 32nd year would be critical. Sri Aurobindo knew it and wanted us to remind him about it when she would be 32. But all of us forgot except my mother. She was at that time in Ranchi. Hearing about the illness she hastened to Calcutta but Mrinalini Devi passed away within half an hour of her arrival. When she learnt that we had not informed Sri Aurobindo, a telegram was sent to him: on reading it, Sri Aurobindo said, 'Too late!' My cousin who was there at the time wrote to my mother, 'Today I saw tears in the eyes of your stone-hearted son-in-law. With the telegram in one hand, he sat still and tears were in his eyes.' Sri Aurobindo told him too that Mrinalini's soul had come to him soon after her death. (Also a photo of Mrinalini Devi that was on the mantel-piece fell down.)

"In the evening after Mrinalini's expiry Sudhira took my mother to Sri Sarada Devi. She was at that time in deep meditation. When she opened her eyes and saw them, she said, 'You have come? I was seeing in my vision my daughter-in-law, Mrinalini. She was a goddess born as your daughter in consequence of a curse. Now that her karma is exhausted her soul has departed.' She often used to enquire after her health.

"A few days before her death when she had realised that her end was near Mrinalini sold many of her ornaments and wished that the proceeds should be utilised in charitable works. The remaining unsold ones were kept in Sudhira's custody and with Sri Aurobindo's approval a scholarship was to be awarded to a poor girl-student of the Nivedita Girls' School out of the interest on the investment of the money realised from the sale of those ornaments. She had a small boxful of letters received from Sri Aurobindo. She desired that the box

should be drowned in the Ganges after her death. It is a great pity that most valuable letters were lost to us in this way.

“Though my sister led an outwardly simple life people who came in contact with her had felt the aura of her extraordinary personality. Even her nearness was guarded by a zone of aloofness which could only be breached by her friend Sudhira and her mother.”

Thus ends the sad story of Mrinalini's life. She had fulfilled the role of a Hindu wife assigned to her by her husband and her life became an embodiment of the Gita's famous sloka “मन्मना भव, मद्भक्तो, मद्याजी...”—“Be my-minded, devoted to me...” Her one-pointed love and self-abnegation remind us of those sacred Hindu wives of historical fame and her name certainly falls in line with them. I do not accept Bhupalbabu's view that while being linked with a most forceful person of the epoch Mrinalini had nothing uncommon in her.

A pragmatic modern Bengali writer of the life of Confucius raised a pertinent question regarding the marriages of spiritual persons in which Sri Aurobindo, also figured as one. I sent it in the form of a questionnaire to Sri Aurobindo more out of fun than with a serious intention. Here are his good-humoured replies, albeit a bit sharp.

MYSELF: Somebody writing a life of Confucius in Bengali says: “Why do the Dharma-gurus marry we can't understand. Buddha did and his wife's tale is heart-rending.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Why? What is there হৃদয়বিলাসক (heart-rending) in it?

MYSELF: He goes on: “Sri Aurobindo, though not a dharma-guru but dharma-mad, ধর্মপাগল, has done it too.” Well, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it is better to be ধর্মপাগল (dharma-mad) than to be a sententious ass and pronounce on what one does not understand.

MYSELF: “We feel so sad about Buddha's wife, so too about the wife of Confucius.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Poor sorrowful fellows!

MYSELF: We don't understand why they marry and why the change comes soon after the marriage.

SRI AUROBINDO: Perfectly natural—they marry before the change, then the change comes and the marriage belongs to the past self, not to the new one.

MYSELF: The wives of Buddha and Ramakrishna felt proud when they were left.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then what's the harm?

MYSELF: If married life were an obstacle to spirituality then they might as well have not married.

SRI AUROBINDO: No doubt. But when they marry there is not an omniscient ass like this biographer to tell them they were going to be বর্ষাঙ্ক বা বর্ষাপাণ্ডা or in any way concerned with any other ঋণ than the biographer's. Well, if the biographer of Confucius can be such an unmitigated ass, Confucius can be allowed to be unwise once or twice, I suppose.

MYSELF: I touch upon a delicate subject, but it is a puzzle.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why delicate? and why a puzzle? Do you think that Buddha or Confucius or myself were born with a prevision that they or I would take to the spiritual life? So long as one is in the ordinary consciousness, one lives the ordinary life. When the awakening and the new consciousness come, one leaves it—nothing puzzling in it.

Sri Aurobindo's argument was irrefutable. Still, my puzzle remained. For it was based on a different reason altogether. I thought that Sri Aurobindo had already taken a vow to fight for India's freedom and had already been engaged in a secret revolutionary movement before his marriage. How, then, could he contract any marriage? Knowing very well what would be the consequence of his political struggle against a strong and powerful alien Government how could he entangle an innocent girl's life in his perilous fate? This was my puzzle. I was to find later on that his old friend Charu Dutt was troubled in the same way with this question and he asked Sri Aurobindo quite frankly, "You knew that one day you would jump into the whirlwind of political revolution. Why then did you marry?" Sri Aurobindo's answer was very strange, indeed. He replied, "You see, Charu, at that time I was under a spell of despair. So I thought that instead of passing my life as a pedagogue, why not marry?" I am afraid this answer is not at all in keeping with Sri Aurobindo's character. Was it then Dutt's invention which he was quite capable of at times? Or was it Sri Aurobindo's trick to cover truth with truth which he also used to employ? At any rate, it seems like putting off a child with a facile answer. We have seen what has been the consequence of the marriage. It was a long tale of woe, leading, however, to a marvellous spiritual consummation. And I need not add that Mrinalini herself would prefer a thousand lives of suffering with Sri Aurobindo as her husband to a life of earthy bliss with richer conjugal ties. Still, her earthly frustration cannot but evoke a profound sympathy for her. She suffered for no fault of hers. As an Indian, one will be prone to attribute it to her past karma, as Sarada Mata would have it. But I believe that there was a greater cosmic purpose she came to serve. The very fact that she became Sri Aurobindo's wife goes in support of that conjecture, even if we are not disposed to accept Mrinalini's statement that she was said to have been Usha in one of

her previous lives. In India, a woman's life is held to be not of *bhoga*, but of self-giving, renunciation, *tyāga* as exemplified in the lives of Sita and other women of holy birth. My contention therefore is that Mrinalini's soul chose this destiny to hold up an example of an ideal Hindu wife in this materialistic age. And that example which had remained buried for hundreds of years in the earth-memory now revives and Mrinalini will be remembered as an unforgettable part of Sri Aurobindo's early life.

As regards Sri Aurobindo, I seem to have stumbled upon the key to the deeper mystery concealed behind his apparently futile marriage. The letter he wrote to Bhupalbabu after Mrinalini's demise holds that key. Here is the letter:

My dear father-in-law,

I have not written to you with regard to the fatal event in both our lives; words are useless in face of the feelings it has caused, if even they can express our deepest emotions. God has seen good to lay upon me the one sorrow that could still touch me to the centre. He knows better than ourselves what is best for each of us, and now that the first sense of the irreparable has passed, I can bow with submission to His divine purpose. The physical tie between us is, as you say, severed; but the tie of affection subsists for me. Where I have once loved, I do not cease from loving. Besides she who was the cause of it, still is near, though not visible to our physical vision.

It is needless to say much about the matters of which you write in your letter. I approve of everything that you propose. Whatever Mrinalini would have desired, should be done and I have no doubt this is what she would have approved of. I consent to the *chudis*¹ being kept by her mother; but I should be glad if you would send me two or three of her books, especially if there are any in which her name is written. I have of her only her letters and a photograph.

Aurobindo

I find this letter extremely interesting, even revelatory, full of surprises. It brings to light hitherto unknown aspects of Sri Aurobindo's life and throws overboard our accustomed notions about him. It is therefore a very precious document. I shall try to probe the deeper meanings as I have understood them, knowing very well that my interpretations may be met with a strong disbelief and dubbed romantic fancy.

First of all, the letter is written in a very simple style and a restrained tone. It has a classical sublimity and is vibrant with a poignant pathos. People can be easily deceived about its inner richness. It is a masterpiece in the genre of letter-writing.

Sri Aurobindo addresses the recipient as 'my dear father-in-law.' The first surprise is that one who had apparently snapped all worldly relations and had been living in a supreme consciousness admitted still the old bond, unlike any

¹ Gold Bangles.

other yogi. Next, we discover that he had maintained an intermittent connection with his wife also, though in the correspondence with me which I have quoted earlier he has said that once one becomes a yogi, the past relations belong to the past. He called his wife to join him in his sadhana. Also in his Calcutta period, he hoped that his separation from Mrinalini would end and they would pursue their sadhana together, somewhat like Sri Ramakrishna keeping his wife Sarada Devi with him after he had attained his siddhi. If that is so, how are we to understand Sri Aurobindo's earlier statement that marriage becomes a thing of the past when the husband takes up yoga? Would it not mean that though the wife may live with the husband, the basis of the relationship will be entirely spiritual as in the case of Sri Ramakrishna? We cannot find any other satisfactory solution to the apparent contradiction. Also it is consonant with Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga where all relations are sublimated into a higher consciousness, not rejected. Then comes the stupendous phrase, 'The one sorrow that could still touch me to the centre,' with the mighty crescendo to 'where I have once loved, I do not cease from loving,' and the climax is reached in the last phrase, 'She who is the cause of it'. All this cannot but bewilder us and show how deep was Sri Aurobindo's love for Mrinalini. We are likely to ask ourselves, "One who realised Nirvana, had the cosmic experience of Vasudeva and other high experiences, can he still harbour, or be subject to, such human emotions?" We would have brushed the matter aside as a fictitious story, had the letter not carried Sri Aurobindo's own signature. But I shall not enter into a controversy over the genuineness of the feelings expressed in the letter, or over this point, but humbly state that we know very little of the great Enigma that was Sri Aurobindo. The Mother herself confessed that though living for thirty years with him she did not know him. Besides, we, the attendants of Sri Aurobindo, have witnessed on the one hand his vast Impersonal Self high-seated above the turmoils of the world and on the other his aspect of the Person who, before his passing, embraced passionately his devoted servant Champaklal. That would have been indeed incredible, had we not seen it with our own eyes.

Sri Aurobindo has said somewhere to the effect that in the heart of the Impersonal there is the Person who, if one can approach him, is inexpressibly sweet and lovely.

So let us not be too hasty in labelling and categorising Sri Aurobindo according to our fixed, preconceived notions. Love was indeed the principal theme of his dramas, narrative poems and finds a crowning note in that passage where Savitri says:

"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."

But, of course, this Love which Savitri celebrates is not a common emotion:

“For Love must soar beyond the very heavens
And find its secret sense ineffable.
It must change its human ways to ways divine,
Yet keep its sovereignty of earthly bliss.”

Yes, heaven and earth must fuse in Love, and such Love is indeed the secret of the Integral Yoga.

Lastly I shall try to solve the riddle I have posed earlier: Why did Sri Aurobindo marry? As far as I have understood his philosophy of life, he held from the beginning the view that life is not an illusion; he refused even to accept a yoga which rejected life. The wholeness, the integrality of the experience of life was his doctrine, not certainly life as we know it, but in its modified form, as he stated. And love through marriage playing a very important role could not be excluded from the pursuit of his avataric mission which meant to change the world. Leaving out that experience would not give the seal of completeness to that mission or enable him to say to us, “This experience also I have had.” Therefore he entered the worldly life and knew what love was, particularly woman’s love from direct experience. As soon as he met the destined woman he chose her at a single glance. As in the case of Savitri love met her in the wilderness, so in the case of Sri Aurobindo love met him in the city in the heart of a simple girl unknown and unaccomplished, a common girl according to her father, but rich indeed in soul-quality.

Sri Aurobindo once wrote to D that he had been deprived from his childhood of what could be called love and brought up as he was in a Europeanised home and then in a foreign land his nature became reserved and shy of expression. Now Mrinalini’s soul of sweetness and candour touched that chord and became the cause of his love which had remained dormant.

To conclude: you will be happy to learn that Bhupalbabu visited the Ashram with his wife in the thirties and did pranam to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, during the Darshan. The Mother seems to have told him that Mrinalini’s soul was with her. I believe that in the intervening years she has taken a new birth and is now perhaps living as a sadhika in the Ashram.

(Concluded)

NIRODBARAN

A NOTE ON SRI AUROBINDO'S "SIDDHI"

It is bound to be surprising to our ears that a little before December 17, 1918 when Mrinalini died Sri Aurobindo had written to her that he had attained his "Siddhi" ("Goal") and that she should come over to Pondicherry and join him in his world-work.

Surprising, for two years later, on April 7, 1920 he wrote to his brother Barindra that he was only rising then into the lowest of the three levels of Supermind and trying to draw up into it all the lower activities and that his Siddhi would be complete in the future. Even as late as November 1926, when the Overmind Consciousness descended into his body, he declared that he would be going into retirement for a dynamic meditation to bring about the Supermind's Descent. November 24 of that year is generally called the Siddhi Day or the Day of Victory, and this is understandable since the Overmind's descent forms the firm base and promise of the final step. The Overmind, the World of the Great Gods, may rightly be considered the Supermind's delegate, constituting the door to the Supreme Dynamic Divine. The ultimate Siddhi, of course, was still in the future and it was so as late as 1950 in which on December 5 Sri Aurobindo left his body. Early that year he had told the Mother in anticipation of his own departure: "You have to fulfill our Yoga of Supramental Descent and Transformation." How, then, shall we come to terms with the letter to Mrinalini at the end of 1918?

The mystery gets further deepened when we come across a letter Sri Aurobindo wrote in late August 1912 to Motilal Roy of Chandernagore: "My subjective sadhana may be said to have received its final seal and something like its consummation by a prolonged realisation and dwelling in Parabrahman for many hours... My future sadhana is for life, practical knowledge and shakti—not the essential knowledge or shakti in itself which I have got already—but knowledge and shakti established in the... physical self and directed to my work in life..." And the crowning shade of the puzzling situation comes in a letter, again to Mrinalini, not from Pondicherry but from Calcutta itself. The English translation reads:

"I have not written to you for a long time. I feel that a great change will soon take place in our life. If it does, all our wants will come to an end. I am waiting for the Mother's Will. A final change is also going on in me. Frequent *avesh* ("afflatus") of the Mother is happening in me. Once this change is finished and the *avesh* becomes permanent, there will be no farther separation between us, because that day of Yoga-siddhi is near. After that will begin a full flow of action. By tomorrow or the day after it some signs will appear. Then I shall meet you."

It seems certain that at different times Sri Aurobindo had different goals in view and, once they were achieved, there was a sense of Siddhi during the

interval before he saw a further path ahead.

What, however, renders the letter of 1918 the most astonishing is the fact that the other two announcing the Siddhi were penned before the *Arya* was started in August 1914, the year in which earlier (March) the Mother had come to Pondicherry from France. We can understand that when Sri Aurobindo wrote those letters the full ideal whose realisation consisted in the Supermind's taking possession of the physical being itself had not been formulated. But by 1918 the *Arya*, expressing this ideal, had already run for over four years, the Mother had begun co-operating with Sri Aurobindo and, though she left in 1915 with her husband owing to the outbreak of World War I, she was expected to return, as she did in 1920. Some definite spiritual milestone of great moment must have been reached at the end of 1918 and required some immediate assistance in work. Such a milestone alone could have prompted that letter. But we have no clue to its nature.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

MY MAUNA (Silence)

BY CHAMPAKLAL

PEOPLE ask me, "Why are you observing mauna (silence)?" And then about my mauna strange stories are spread. One of my friends informed me of one such story he had heard. It runs as follows:

"Champaklal keeps mauna because he had some kind of disease of the throat and therefore Sri Aurobindo had asked him to observe mauna so that the disease might not spread."

I replied to him: "There was no disease and even now there is none, so the talk of its spreading does not arise! Besides, Sri Aurobindo left his body in 1950, the Mother also left her body in 1973, I started observing mauna after that. Then how did Sri Aurobindo ask Champaklal to observe mauna?"

I remember an old poem in Gujarati, which can be translated in English as follows:

Because of the wind, a roof-tile fell.
Seeing it a dog barked,
And then there was a lot of noise.
Someone said he saw a thief.

Now in this story the only truth is that there was a noise due to the falling of a roof-tile.

Around my mauna also such a lot has got woven and rumours have spread. The facts are:

When I was speaking to others, sometimes in the middle of my talk my voice would suddenly become low without any pain, but after a few moments it would become normal automatically. I do not remember if anybody noted this change or any one's attention was drawn to it. Now, I benefited from this occurrence as I would cut short the conversation. Even then, I wanted to find out why such a thing was happening to me. I wanted to consult an expert in Madras. Nirod-da gave his opinion that it was not necessary to go specially to Madras as there was nothing really wrong. I persisted in my desire to consult an expert. In Madras, there was a doctor who had been a close friend of Doraiswamy and was acquainted with Counouma. So Counouma arranged for my visit to Madras. Moreover, this doctor had visited Pondicherry sometime earlier. Counouma sent Puru with me to Madras and Puru took special care of me. Earlier Nirod-da and Dr. Bose had expressed their desire to accompany me but I told them that it was not necessary. If these doctors had come with me, some people even in the Ashram, without knowing the facts, would have thought that the case was serious.

Kamalaben and Counouma suggested that I go to Madras in a car. But I felt that it was an unnecessary heavy expense and that I would get the bus experience. So I went by bus.

We returned the same day after consulting the doctor. This was the first occasion of my going out of Pondicherry. The doctor said, "The throat is all right; only the nerves need some rest. Observe mauna for 21 days or speak as little as possible. Speak only when it is absolutely necessary." For me it was a heaven-sent suggestion, so from the next day, 24th November 1975, I started observing complete mauna. After 21 days were over, I spoke on the 22nd day and again from the 23rd day I resumed my mauna which continues even now. When I spoke on the 22nd day, people told me that my voice was normal as before. I did not remember the date on which I had started mauna. I had noted in on a piece of paper but I could not find it. Saroja, Amrita's niece, had visited Nainital and, after her return, had met me the next day. That was my speaking day after the mauna of 21 days. So I got the date and the year from her: 16th December 1975. From a long time back I had wanted to observe mauna, but could not do so because of my work. The Mother arranged the circumstances in such a way that I could do what I had wanted.

My mauna is not a Tapashcharya, an act of austerity, nor is it a religious observance. I enjoy mauna and I take it as a gift from the gracious Mother, Kripamayī. Even so if some people insisted on calling it a Tapashcharya, then I would write the reply, "A Tapashcharya is that in which a person feels some pain in doing it whereas I do not feel any discomfort. On the contrary, it is so easy for me. Just as speaking is spontaneous for others even so for me mauna is natural." Children also ask me, "Why are you not speaking?" I reply to them in writing, "Even as you enjoy speaking, I enjoy non-speaking. I relish my mauna much more than I did my speech. It is a joy worth experiencing."

This was my earlier standpoint or viewpoint. But now I do so much of talking by writing, I ask so many questions which others may feel unnecessary, that I ask myself sometimes: "Where is my mauna"? With this kind of activity the importance of my mauna is lost. Mauna has become as if an excuse to suit my convenience. Sometimes a question arises in me whether I am not satisfying my urge for talking by so much of written talk. But about that, only the Mother can judge. Every person has in him, to some degree, an urge to enjoy talking. Am I then enjoying it under the pretext of helping others in their higher life by written talks? Again, only the Mother can determine. For now, I have a faith that just as the Mother made me observe mauna by creating suitable circumstances, in the same way when she feels these written talks to be unnecessary she herself will put me in circumstances where these written talks will also cease. I find satisfaction in my faith that when she feels it necessary, she will surely do it.

Lastly some people also question: "Is there a place for mauna in Sri

Aurobindo's yoga?" My reply is: "Is Sri Aurobindo's yoga an imitation of what he did or is it doing Sadhana according to his guidance? Do we have the capacity to do what our guru, our master, did? In Sri Aurobindo's yoga what is important is not any single external practice but the attitude behind it. From this point of view, both mauna and speech have their place in his yoga."

This is how I understand it.

—Translated by Sharad Joshi, Baroda

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of January 1988)

The Mother's Message

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



Volume Three: 1959

14

My college opened on 22nd September 1959—a Tuesday. Chetan and I went there together. Her English was still not up to the standard. This reminds me of an amusing episode.

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One day during our English lesson, the teacher asked an Italian girl: "Have you brought your book? Where is it?" The girl groped for words, then she framed this sentence: "Madam, she is at home." The teacher exclaimed: "What?" "She is at home," reiterated the girl.

Now the professor was perplexed. She looked over her glasses and stared at the girl. Her face puckered—it was a mixture of varied expressions which were undefinable. But the Italian girl was unruffled.

The other girls who knew good English were bubbling with laughter. I buried my face in my book and pretended to read it seriously, but, dear me, I wanted to laugh madly—not because the girl committed a mistake but because of the most comical expression on the teacher's face. The remarkable thing was that she herself did not laugh.

Then there was a girl Jenny from Trinidad who was in my class. We became friends. She had the habit of keeping chewing gum in her mouth. When I talked to her, she listened to me, hands in her coat-pockets, tongue still curling round the piece of gum relishing the final flavour. I asked her why she chewed gum perpetually. She answered in her characteristic Negro accent: "E'm it's a good ex'acise for the mow."

Then one day during our class she informed me that she had to rush to a dentist. I inquired: "Whatever for?" She said: "A fill'ng in one o' my teeth come ove and now I'm in pain."

Later she told me that the dentist had ordered her strictly to discontinue chewing gum.

She was a very nice and brilliant girl. Once she took me to her flat in one of the suburbs where many Negroes lived. The area was dull. I had tea with her and a relative of hers. I invited Jenny to Mercury House to dinner.

*

Often Chetan and I went to the Shabbic restaurant which was not very far from our college. We got one and a half hours' lunch-break. Unhappily we could not get decent food in any of the restaurants—the food always smelt of meat and animal fat which repulsed me.

At 2 p.m. our college commenced and continued till 5 p.m. I felt so bored and tired. But the only interesting thing was that time and again our Vice-Principal arranged for us to visit various places like printing presses, factories, the Stock Exchange and so forth. It was amazing how systematically, meticulously people worked.

One day we were taken to Lyons. We saw how they made ice-creams, biscuits, cakes and a variety of other eatables. During that time they were busy making Christmas pies.

They gave us huge bars of ice-cream and packets of biscuits.

We were shown the dummy of Queen Elizabeth's wedding cake—an enormous, several-tiered snow-white cake adorned with numerous decorations.

After a week or so we were taken to the Stock-Exchange, Throgmorton Street, which was a continuation of the Exchange established in Chapel Court in 1801. This building was not open to the public but visitors might find a walk through Throgmorton Street after 4 o'clock of considerable interest, as dealings were conducted in the street. We were told that this Stock Exchange was the headquarters of all the main banks. We watched from the gallery the crowd of Englishmen with striped trousers, black coats and bowler hats—some had rolled-up umbrellas and papers under their arms—typical brokers of the Stock Exchange! They noted down astronomical figures very quickly on their pads. Some wrote down on a huge score black-board. Many raised their hands—there was a great hum among them. O God, all for money!

On the other side of the gallery a guide conducted us to a very large hall which he said was a conference room. Then he led us to another room where a movie of the Stock Exchange was shown. He explained that the Stock followed the "Yellow Book". I cannot recall many details now, because the subject was absolutely "double Dutch" to me—whether it was a yellow book or a red book or a multi-coloured book made no difference whatsoever.

Nevertheless, it was fascinating to see such a place on which depended the financial future of Britain and other countries connected to her.

The printing presses were functioning remarkably. Their up-to-date offices were well organised.

I never knew at that time that in the future I would have to deal with a few printing presses. Otherwise I would have put countless questions to our guide in order to know the full technique.

*

Now it was October. The summer stole away and autumn crept in. The phenomenally warm weather which had lasted till September changed.

The sharp winds of autumn made trees quiver and there was a heavy shower of rain which continued for four days unabated. The warm weather wore out in a series of downpours, which had left the earth smelling sweet and fresh. The parks had lost their rich summer radiance. Alas, the lovely summer was washed away.

The trees were turning from green to scarlet, russet, bronze, yellow. The leaves fluttered down like cups of gold and copper. There was a gleaming dust in the air that seemed to come only in golden October.

Wherever I cast my eyes, the grass of the lawn was spattered with autumn leaves. The melancholy autumn shook down the once green leaves, all curled up—almost all the trees were bare without leaves save a few which still fought for their right against the blowing cold wind. Mother Nature had her one last

fling, painting the whole city with rampant splashes of scarlet, orange, red, golden-yellow, brown and so on before the winter set in. The days became darker and shorter. When it was 3 p.m. I thought it was 7 p.m.

Everyone was making their winter preparation—clothes of light-weight synthetics and cottons were stored away. Sweaters, heavy coats, gloves, nylons and woollies were shook free of the mothballs.

Once more we confronted the ruthless winter.

*

On 6th October Doris sailed on S. S. CHUSAN (P & O Line) to go to India. She would reach Bombay after a fortnight. Then she would go to Pondicherry to meet the Mother. I sent with her for the Mother some charming gifts especially the bath-oil-pearls.

I missed Doris terribly. But there was always Aunt Margaret.

One day after the college Aunt Margaret rang me and asked me to dine with her and Uncle Peter. I said that I was dead beat. But she would not hear of it. I went to her. On a pleasant burst of affection she bent to give me a quick hug and a welcoming: "O I do love having you here." Her face creased into a smile. I shed my coat which she draped over a chair and sat me down on a sofa with my legs stretched along it: she wedged cushions behind my back and brought a plate of soup, took a spoon and fed me. I felt so embarrassed, so overwhelmed that I could not utter a word for a few seconds. Then I said: "Aunt, I can manage myself—why all this trouble? You are really spoiling me." She laughed softly and said: "You are like my child." Suddenly tears clouded my eyes and I felt that the Mother was everywhere.

Meanwhile Uncle Peter came from his consultation room which was downstairs and said "Hello" to me. Then I followed Aunt into the kitchen. We brought food to the dining table which was elegantly laid out. I admired the delicately crocheted mats, crystal glasses, beautifully designed, plated and silver cutlery. In the centre stood a shallow silver bowl decorated with autumn flowers.

I could hardly eat as I had lost my appetite because of the fatigue. But Aunt put morsels in my plate when I turned to Uncle Peter. She remarked: "You are eating like a sparrow." Uncle set down his fork, dabbed at his mouth with his serviette, took a sip of cider and agreed: "Yes, you do eat very little. You really need nourishment. Why don't you take Becosul tablets?"

Aunt placed a cutlet bit by bit in my plate and coaxed me: "Eat this teeny weeny bit, will you?"

After the supper I insisted on washing the dishes. Eventually Aunt gave in. She got busy with other jobs. Meanwhile I carried the plates to the kitchen, filled the sink with hot sudsy water and carefully washed them sparkling-clean, transferred them into the draining-rack, wiped them with a tea-towel and finally

put everything in their proper places. Margaret appreciated my washing up and thanked me.

To go to her made a refreshing change for me. I was grateful to them for treating me so wonderfully.

Aunt saw me off at the tube-station. I reached home. But suddenly I felt unutterably weary—perhaps it was more a tiredness of my spirit than an actual bodily one. The real cause I found of my depression was a longing to get out of this city and meet the Mother.

I went to sleep and drifted into blessed oblivion.

(To be continued)

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SO MANY WISHES

(Dedicated to the memory of Birendra Kishore Palit, a senior sadhak of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, who passed away on 16.6.1987)

So many wishes in life remain unfulfilled!
I had a great desire to walk with you
Along some unknown pathway
And get lost...

Whenever I decide to go anywhere—
Before setting out I make plans, detailed plans:
A bottle of water I must carry
To quench my thirst. Some tasty food too...
The pure dedication
With which you loved the dust of the road
Has never been mine.
You used to tell us not to carry money
Lest on the way back
The lure of a bus-ride
Became too tempting for the tired legs.
And food?—why burden oneself needlessly?

One desire I'd cherished long:
To tread with you
The far road to the Matrimandir.
But I lacked the courage to be your companion.
So I just came to you again and again
To hear from your own lips
The tales of the wayfarer...

To go with you I did not dare!
And then, one day, as soon as the call came
You went away—all alone...

KANUPRIYA CHATTOPADHYAY

(Translated by Aniruddha Sircar from the original Bengali)

HUMOUR IN THE PLAYS OF SRI AUROBINDO

PART 3. PERSEUS THE DELIVERER

(Continued from the issue of January 1988)

IN the third scene we meet another sunny and softly adamantine woman, Cydone—the beloved of Iolaus. These two live in an ideal world of their own. They find the grim inhuman cult of Poseidon and the cruelty of his priest Polydaon repugnant and grope for a better world, made of love and compassion. Cydone with her woman's intuition knows that Polydaon hates her, Iolaus and on some pretext or other would try to eliminate him. So half seriously, half jokingly she asks Perseus to turn Polydaon into a stone statue. Her language carries the stamp of a carefree nature—

“...Fix him to frowning grimness
In innocent marble.¹

To Cydone's play on words is added the mock seriousness of Iolaus's proposed punishment. The author strikes a sweet note of relief from the grimmer goings-on elsewhere.

Cydone—
To stone!
Iolaus—
Hush, hush, Cydone!
Cydone—
Iolaus—
I'll whip thee, shrew, with rose-briars.
Cydone—
Turn him to stone,
Stone, hard stone!
Will you promise
To kiss the blood away? Then I'll offend
Daily, on purpose.”²

There is another small passage of a lover's banter, of which we have many enchanting examples in all of Sri Aurobindo's comedies—

¹ *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 6, p. 69.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

Cydone—

Give me a kiss

That I may spend the hours remembering it
Till you return.

Iolaus (*kissing her*)—

Will one fill hours, Cydone?

Cydone—

I fear to ask for more. You're such a miser.

Iolaus—

You rose-lipped slanderer! there! Had I the time
I would disprove you, smothering you with what
You pray for.¹

In the second scene of the third act we meet Cireas again who with his penchant for alliteration and partiality for weighty unknown adjectives makes the baffled reader reach for a dictionary. Neither a hypocrite nor a coward, he can laugh at the generally dreaded Poseidon and makes fun of his own fears. Here we have a prime sample of Cireas's brand of humour based on a very original estimate of a god's character and value—

“I am done with thee, Poseidon Ennosigaios, man-slayer, ship-breaker, earth-shaker, lord of the waters! Never was faithful service so dirtily rewarded. In all these years not a drachma, not an obolus, not even a false coin for solace. And when thou hadst mocked me with hope, when a Prince had promised me all my findings, puttest thou me off with two pauperized merchants of Babylon? What, thou takest thy loud ravenous glut of the treasures that should have been mine and roarest derision at me with thy hundred-voiced laughters? Am I a sponge to suck up these insults? No! I am only moderately porous. I will break thy treasury, Poseidon, and I will run. Think not either to send thy sea-griffins after me. For I will live on the top of Lebanon, and thy monsters, when they come for me, shall snort and grin and gasp for breath and return to thee baffled and asthmatic.”²

Cireas is going to steal and he does not cover his act by any moral platitude, nor does he hesitate to call himself a thief. For him handsome is as handsome does. According to his logic how can a god be great if his slave is poor or ill-rewarded? He believes in the maxim that self-help is the best help and therefore Poseidon having forgotten to help him he decides to help himself from the Temple-treasury. Others may call this act robbing but morality's fine points do not disturb his robust self-righteous self-confidence. After all, isn't a god helpless in the face of non-believers?

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

Thus Sri Aurobindo keeps a just balance between laughter and tears. When the adventurous Cireas is surprised by the unexpected arrival of prince Iolaus before he can rob the god his lament is in his own unique literary style—

“I am overheard! I am undone! I am crucified! I am disembowelled!”¹

But to his delighted surprise instead of a whip or chain Iolaus assures him that he has come to help him. At this Cireas indulges in another delightful outburst,

“Do you indeed! I see, they have made you a god, for you know men’s minds. But could old father Zeus find your newborn godhead no better work than to help thieves and give wings to runaways? Will you indeed help me, god Iolaus? I can steal then under thy welcome protection? I can borrow Poseidons’ savings and run?”²

And then came his answer to the offer of gold by Iolaus—

“Prince, art thou under a vow of liberality? or being about to die, wilt thou distribute thy goods and chattels to deserving dishonesty? Do not mock me, for if thou raise hopes again in me and break them, I can only hang myself.”³

One thinks that the Lord created Cireas in a moment of precious ease from the labour of creation and with an uproarious and devil-may-care attitude. A long life of rewardless service has made Cireas a bold soul above the usual petty restraints of morality. He is always ready to stretch a point to raise an extra laugh, even though death may beckon towards him. After dealing with Iolaus he takes on Perseus. He has witnessed the might of Perseus when he shook out the aegis of Athene which sent reeling back a hundred lances, yet this slave is not in the least afraid, truly he is a free soul fearing neither man nor god. When Perseus asks Iolaus not to bribe Cireas, for he can in one minute free the captives, Cireas breaks out again in his own inimitable style—

“Zeus, art thou there with thy feathers and phosphorus? I pray thee, my good bright darling Zeus, do not come in the way of my earnings. Do not be so cantankerously virtuous, do not be so damnably economical. Good Zeus, I adjure thee by thy foot-plumes.”⁴

Irreverent to divinity of all brands—be it the sombre Poseidon, or the sun-bright Perseus—with a novel appraisal of divinity his tongue shreds to pieces

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴ *Ibid.*

their greatness. Numberless times he has witnessed the strength of Perseus and the might of Poseidon. Yet he answers Iolaus's question by mocking :

Cireas—

Will I? Will I? I would do any bad turn to that scanty-hearted rampageous old ship-swallower there. I would do it for nothing, and for so much gold will I not?

Iolaus—

And thou must shut thine eyes.

Cireas—

Eyes! I will shut mouth and nose and ears too, nor ask for one penny extra.

Iolaus—

Dost thou not fear?

Cireas—

Oh, the blue-haired old bogy there? I have lived eighteen years in this temple and seen nothing of him but ivory and sapphires. I begin to think he cannot breathe out of water; no doubt, he is some kind of fish and walks on the point of his tail."¹

And when Perseus stops Cireas's babbling by saying—

"Enough, bring forth the Babylonian captives."²

He answers irreverently as if divinity is his boon companion and gods his buddies to be mocked—

"I run, Zeus, I run: but keep thy phosphorus lit and handy against Polydaon's return unasked for and untrumpeted."³

Hope for money and gold, dreams of freedom and fields have oiled his tongue. First Iolaus and then Andromeda offer him wealth. He is beside himself with joy and thus prattles to Andromeda,

"Steal boldly, O honey-sweet image of a thief, steal and fear not, I rose for good luck after all this excellent morning! O Poseidon, had I known there was more to be pocketed in thy disservice than in thy service, would I have misspent these eighteen barren years?"⁴

Sri Aurobindo has woven humour with the consummate artistry of a Kalidasa in this play of strife, rebellion, cruelty and anarchy. Now he introduces the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Butcher or the Carver of live hearts, Perissus, who has his own variety of humour to add to the distinct brands of Cireas's and Diomedes's. For there is a laughter of the hurricane and the tempest. The hurricane or the tempest has nothing against their victims—to destroy the good or bad with an impartial fury but without animosity is their function and their *Dharma*. The good and kind citizen butcher Perissus is an echo of the terrible laughter of Rudra, of the mocking smile of Yama.

Apart from Perissus Sri Aurobindo has also used with great expertise the mob scenes to enhance this streak of humour. The glib orator Therops reminds us of Mark Antony of *Julius Caesar*. Perissus mocks the mob thus:

“...Follow me and observe my commands, brave aristocracy of the shop, gallant commoners of the lathe and anvil, follow Perissus. I will lead you tonight to your soft downy beds and tomorrow to the Palace.”¹

In the 1st scene of the IV act we see the populace swayed by the oratory of Therops. This rabble-raiser, who with a few barbed remarks, innuendos and plain perjury gets the awesome power of command over the crowd, is now on the high crest of popularity. He gives the ancient version of the modern call to the barricades and the approving crowd chants—

“Yes, Therops king! Therops king!”²

Demoetes who is wiser deflates these windbags by deriding Therops—

“Good king Lungs! Oh, let us make him king, Morus,—he will not pass wind in the market-place so often.”³...

What an awesome power can be there in the tongue, how insincere or cruel words can change history, or bring down thrones is boldly painted in the street scenes of this play. The quick change in the popular mood, now ready to exalt, now eager to trample is true to this day. Though it seems amusing it is at the same time frightening. Queen Cassiopea aptly calls this mob:

“An unwashed majesty and a wolf-throated!”⁴

She succinctly spurns the offer of Therops branding it—

“A tearing mercy, a howling judgment!”⁵

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

² *Ibid.*, p. 121. ³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136. ⁵ *Ibid.*

The humorous vein in Perissus is perforce different from Cireas's. Cireas might have heard too many long-worded Greek prayers and thus got into the habit of using unusual and long-drawn-out words, while Perissus's profession of dexterous operations on live hearts of men and animals makes his speech anatomy-prone and organ-partial. When the crowd would tear and desecrate Andromeda he holds them off with a few rebukes:

"Off! off! thick-brained dogs, loud-lunged asses! What do you do, yelping and braying here? Will you give a maimed meal to Poseidon's manhound? Do you know me not? Have you never heard of Perissus, never seen Perissus the butcher? I guard Poseidon's meat, and whoever touches a morsel of it, I will make meat of him with my cleaver. I am Perissus, I am the butcher."¹

The crowd always obeys any show of authority. Like a dog with its tail between its legs, now this crowd is suddenly and dexterously stopped in its bloody tracks from its worst and the reader cannot but appreciate the artistry with which Sri Aurobindo makes this agent of death, this butcher Perissus an agent of laughter. His very reassurance to Andromeda makes us smile, for he does not know how to be kind more than this. Each man has his own *Swabhava* or *Swadharna* and a butcher can be kind only in a butcherly way,

"Kind! Why should I not be kind? Because I am a butcher must I have no bowels? Courage, little Princess: none shall hurt thee but thy sea-monster and he, I am sure, will crunch thy little bones very tenderly. Never had man-eater such sweet bones to crunch. Alack! but where is the remedy?"²

This proves that whatsoever his profession Perissus is a human being like us, just like us he has his sympathies and repulsions. He takes an instant dislike to King Phineus. This intriguer's haughty long nose offends the noble butcher. At the very moment of the sacrifice of princess Andromeda, when the reader's heart is sad, the author, even at that most unexpected moment, with the butcher as his instrument, again lightens the gloom—

Perissus—

Who art thou with thy nose and thy fellows and thy spits?

Phineus—

Know'st thou me not? I am the royal Phineus.

Yield up the Princess, fair Andromeda.

Perissus—

Art thou the royal Phineus and is this long nose thy sceptre? I am Perissus,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

² *Ibid.*, p. 146.

the butcher. Stand aside, royal Phineus, or I will chop thee royally with my cleaver.”¹

In this scene and later also the wrath of the worthy butcher is directed towards the nose of the King of Tyre. When he retreats, his suit being refused by Andromeda, Perissus bursts out,

“So then thou art off, royal Phineus! so thou hast evaporated, bold god of the Hittites! Thou hast saved thy royal nose from my cleaver.”²

(To be continued)

SHYAM KUMARI

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

² *Ibid.*, p. 154.

THE ETERNAL CHILD AND THE ETERNAL MARVEL

THE SQUARING OF THE CIRCLE

(Continued from the issue of January 1988)

2: HE AND SHE

Man, Woman, Devil, and the Soul of Dr. Faust*

THAT evening, as on almost every other evening of all those long years of toil and study, Dr. Faust was sitting alone at his desk. His whole life had been a search for knowledge and the power that knowledge gives.

There was a knock at the door of his study—how could anyone have reached it unchallenged?

It was Lucifer—the Devil.

“What the devil...?” Faust must have exclaimed.

The Devil entered the room.

“What do you want?” Faust must have demanded.

“What *do you* want?” the Devil must have answered, seating himself.

And Faust admitted to him his longing for knowledge and power, adding with a sigh, “For my own delight... and for the good of humanity.”

“You can have all that—I can give it to you,” said the Devil with a smile; and then added gravely, “if you only give me your soul.”

In spite of all his learning Dr. Faust had no idea what his soul was. And so he agreed.

For a moment, he seemed to glimpse, deep inside himself, a pale glow, like a moonbeam, or a pearl in the waters of his being; then the light dimmed, the pearl vanished—and with it his smile, and his peace of mind.

From that night onward, a new life began for Faust. He knew everything, he had power over everything he encountered. He mounted the path of the world as if it were a great mountain or a pyramid, from knowledge to knowledge, from power to power, ever higher and higher....

All the pleasures of life were his; he took them, and then let them fall by the wayside, all along his ascending path.

Where was he going?

* Nolini-da, in his “Dr. Faust Retold”, enlightened us on the nature of Faust’s soul. Yet a mystery remains still: how could it be that Faust got back his soul, which he had sold to the Devil, through the love of the very woman presented to him by the Devil in exchange for his soul? What strange relation links man, woman, devil and soul? Or is it simply yet another love-story? Into that deep mystery this tale attempts to take a plunge.

Was the devil driving him forward, or was something drawing him upward? A greater delight? A more perfect knowledge and power? What kind of perfection? Could it be Love? After all these beloved faces, whose face? Whose love?

Love itself.

She

He met her on the summits of his being. She, the one, the face, sought in so many faces, through so many loves.

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, that long-ago evening.

He fell to his knees, wept.

He believed he could have sold her to the Devil. He sobbed, remembering... he closed his eyes.

A garden—long ago. How beautiful! There she was close to him, beneath a tree—that tree, and the second tree, the Tree of Life, forbidden.

Was this the mountain, the pyramid he had climbed?

That morning—in those days it had always been morning, a beautiful morning—it had been on her door that Lucifer had knocked. He had offered her a fruit—a mango, fruit of knowledge. Then he had glided away between grasses and shrubs.

And at noon, they had left that small Garden, and the old God.

Towards...

He recognised her again, recognised everything.

It was She who stood at the summits of his being.

The other, Lucifer, was the path, winding serpentine to the summit of the pyramid, the mountain, the Tree of Life....

The eye of Osiris opened upon Isis.

OM SHIVA SHAKTI

And the serpent bit its own tail.

(To be continued)

B. PETRIS

(Translated by Shraddhavan from the original French)

EARTH LIFE AND BEYOND

A SHORT STORY

YES, it is a story but not merely a story. Life's facts are here, 't is a story of life. Not mine but Pinaki's. Once Pinaki asked me, "After the death of the body does anything remain? If so, where does that stay?" An ever old and never ending query. I questioned him in turn, "Pinaki, what makes you ask this, eh?" In reply he narrated a few events of his life. Let me reproduce them in his own words:

One day I was feeling restless, a kind of dumb yearning led me to my garden. I moved about aimlessly. Suddenly I stood still in front of a flowering plant. I stooped down to examine its soil and then rushed to fetch a bucket of water. I emptied it at the roots of the plant and waited for some time. Then I touched its leaves softly. Oh no, there was no cause of alarm, it simply suffered from want of water. I brooded, "Has this any connection with my yearning restlessness.?"

"Letter....," announced the postman. I took the letter, stretching my hand over the fence. But just as I looked into it I dropped down on the ground extremely sad and perplexed. At the same time a stream of past memories came crowding into my mind.

During my childhood I was very much attached to puppies and kittens. I could play with any of them for the whole day forgetting food and drink. But as I grew up to adolescence I became an ardent lover of dogs. All dogs irrespective of their colour, form and pedigree were my favourites. A street dog would attract me in the same way as a fashionable pet. At their very sight I would hurry to meet and caress them. I would utter sweet and soft words and they would wag their tails with half-closed eyes. At times they would reciprocate my care and love by licking my hands and feet and even my face. I would not mind their so-called nasty acts. Rather I would be tickled to smile. Because I knew that they had no language other than those to express their feelings.

One day while on my way to the children's park I came across the stalwart dog of Dr. Bright, Thomas. But how could he come here? Almost always he would be kept on a chain inside the house. Or when free he would roam about in the closed garden. It was there that I met him first. Supporting his front feet on the gate he was cocking his head to look outside. Below his chin on the gate hung a notice in bold white letters: "BEWARE OF DOG." Seeing me the dog was overjoyed. He welcomed me by wagging his tail and making a kind of friendly noise. I hastened to meet and caress him but the notice made me halt. From a distance I also let out an affectionate sound. The dog danced happily and strove in vain to come out. "Such a lovely dog, why should I fear?" I thought and neared him to touch his head. Just then came the command of Dr. Bright from

within the house, "Thomas, come here, quick." Like an obedient servant the dog went away ignoring me. Dumbfounded I looked for a while in the direction of his going and then went my own way.

Today finding Thomas free and alone my tender feelings towards him revived. He too, wagging his tail, made gestures in token of recognition. I approached him straightaway and placing my hand on his head whispered lovingly, "Thomas, how could you come outside? With whom have you come, eh?" Immediately there was a bomb-blast. "Baw... grhhha..." Panicking, I receded a few steps, still there was no respite. The brute advanced showing his sharp, nasty teeth and, I had no alternative but to take to my heels. But the barking dog chased me and I felt that he was just going to jump upon me. I increased my speed as much as I could. As I ran two turns around the park I heard Dr. Bright's order, "Thomas, stop it, stop it, I say. Come here, quick." The barking stopped. I looked behind to see that the brute was being chained by his master.

"Hello, boy, why did you run? Thomas wanted to play with you..."

"Play with me! What does Dr. Bright mean? How could he know about that? Can a dog speak? Besides, where had he been so long?" The questions cropped up in me but I could not utter a single word. It was as if something choked my voice. Let aside speaking I hated even to look at them, particularly at the tricky, treacherous and unfaithful creature, Thomas. Without my knowing it, tears rolled down my cheeks; the more I tried to control them, the more I felt like weeping. And to add fuel to the fire a thorny pricking pain surged upward from my stomach. So postponing the play for the day I headed homeward wiping my eyes all the while.

From then I severed all connection with dogs. I simply ignored them. But the pain persisted. Normally it was negligible but at times it would increase and give me trouble. Doctors examined me several times but failed to diagnose the disease, so no effective treatment could be done.

On one occasion when I went on a picnic with my school-mates, abruptly the pain worsened. The picnic spot was picturesque. A rivulet ran across a vast green meadow bordered by hillocks where stray clouds of diverse hues played hide and seek. Amidst such beauty of nature I was feeling ill at ease. In order not to disturb others I stealthily left the place and moved along aimlessly. Suddenly I stopped smelling a fine fragrance, I looked around to find the source of such a captivating gift of Nature. Failing, I stepped ahead sniffing the air minutely. Finally I saw a tree adorned with greenish yellow flowers. I took a bunch of them between my palms and inhaled deeply. Instantly the lingering pain in me vanished—as if the petal fingers of the flowers reached the paining spot and lovingly picked up the pricking thorn. O what relief, what joy, what freedom and lightness! I ran directly to join my friends and enjoyed the picnic in full measure. In the evening I returned home happy and satisfied.

I already knew about the role of the vegetable world in human well-being.

But this strange healing by the influence of flowers made me study them with keen interest. I observed that plants and flowers respond to love, care and a friendly attitude in a subtle but tangible way. We may not perceive the response with our outer eyes but can feel and experience the vibration inwardly. This fact drew me to gardening and I derived a lot of joy and satisfaction out of serving and taking care of plants and helping them grow. So, now instead of dogs and puppies, plants and flowers became my favourites.

Years rolled by, I grew up to be a matured worldly man and knew a great deal about the secrets of soil, plant and flower through my experience of gardening. Once in response to an invitation of Ranen, my school friend, to see his newly-built house I went to a town in Madhya Pradesh. It was winter and I reached there at midnight. In the morning we two friends were taking tea sitting in the sunny courtyard in front of the house. I was very pleased to see beautiful flower gardens on both sides, and remarked, "Ranen, the fact that you are interested in gardening has become a matter of additional joy to me and..." I could not finish due to some commotion inside the house, sounds of falling vessels, shouting of children and words of caution from elderly persons, etc. I thought perhaps a thief had come but how was it possible in daytime? I looked at Ranen questioningly and found him undisturbed. Not only that, a suppressed faint smile played on his face. He called out, "Dolly, come this side, quick." A brownish puppy of about 4-5 months came running, jumping and panting. Ranen threw a biscuit for her on the ground. Dolly did not pay any heed to it. Instead she gazed at me with awe and interest, and an interrogation in her glossy eyes, "Who are you?" At this the memory of my childhood days emerged and my heart melted with affection for the puppy. By then Dolly came near and sniffed my feet. The next moment she turned round abruptly in a very sportive and agile manner and ran inside the house. While going she picked up the biscuit between her teeth as if it were a plaything, not an eatable, a sign of complete detachment and desirelessness. As for me, my childhood nature raised its head and I was emotionally drawn towards the pretty little thing. To conceal that from Ranen I went off to the garden with the plea of observing it. The smell of flowers and the dew-soaked soil diverted my feelings away from the puppy.

Henceforth I evaded and avoided Dolly as far as possible. At mid-day while others took rest I used to read sitting in the verandah facing the garden. One day at that time Dolly came and first sat and then lay down near my feet beside the chair. I was too busy with the book to pay any heed to her. Suddenly I was startled and pain-stricken. She bit me on the toes, I got hurt but it did not bleed. Astonished, I looked at her questioningly. She also glanced at me with guilty eyes. Had I hurt the sleeping puppy first and did she then react automatically? However, I left the place without using harsh words or showing anger to her. But I made it a point to be more careful about association with her in the future.

My reading programme went on as usual. After a few days while reading I got disturbed at the feel of a hairy touch on my feet. I saw that Dolly was brushing them with her head. As I noticed her she lifted her feet gracefully and politely towards me as if to ask forgiveness for her wrong-doing the other day. The sight was so delicate and beautiful that my heart was all love and sympathy for her. I could no longer control myself. I simply stooped down and lifted her to my lap, whispering, "Dolly, I am not at all annoyed with you. Perhaps that day I myself hurt you first. Do you understand?" With slightly curved neck and cocked ears and with shining eyes she looked at me as if to say, "Don't bother, we are friends."

Thereafter we became inseparable friends. Dolly would not leave my company except when I would go outdoors for any work or an evening walk. Then I would be careful to see that she stayed at home. One day when I returned home from a stroll, Minu, Manju (Ranen's wife and daughter) and others asked me all together, "Where is Dolly?" "Dolly! why, is she not at home?" "No, she is not at home, not in the garden, not even in the houses nearby. We could find her nowhere and thought perhaps she had gone with you." "Oh no. However, let me see." Immediately I went out in search of the puppy, I searched for her in all probable places but in vain. I came back extremely sad and morose. It was already night. Ranen went to the police station and returned with diary-notes. The night passed in anxiety and expectation but no news came from the police station, it did not come even late in the morning. Ranen was deeply depressed, tears rolled down from Minu and Manju's eyes. I took the initiative to form a sort of search party. But all our attempts proved useless. Noon followed morning, afternoon passed and evening came. Ranen visited the police station several times and finally returned with a stooped head and a broken heart.

In the evening as I stepped out of the door in search of Dolly for the last time I exclaimed abruptly, "Oh here is she, she has come back." All came running. Yes, it was Dolly, quietly sitting on the road-side but what a Dolly! Reduced to almost half her size, body covered with mud and dust, breathing half-consciously with a misty vacant look. Ranen shouted, "She was stolen surely, but could not be kept. Thank God, she has managed to escape anyhow." Sobbing, he picked her up close to his chest and hurried into the bathroom, gave her a good wash, wiped her body and placed a plate of milk in front of her mouth. She sniffed, tried to take some milk but could not. After a while she slept quietly as if she were drugged. Next morning she woke up at about 9. She was much better, ate some food. It took about a week before she got back her normal state.

Back in my own home I often remembered Dolly, particularly her sportive nature and attacking attitude towards all sorts of intruders into the garden cows, goats, crows, lizards, rats and frogs, etc. But in course of time I got absorbed in sundry matters and my real hobby, gardening, and she was completely blotted out from my memory.

After quite a number of years while on my way to Bombay for some work I decided to give Ranen a surprise visit. Accordingly I got down from the train at midnight and took a rikshaw. Just as I alighted from it at the gate of Ranen's garden a fierce dog came running from the house and jumped upon the gate to attack me. Luckily the gate was locked. Still the barking and attacking mood of the dog made me step backward. But then I remembered in a flash and said, "Dolly, what's the matter with you?" The barking stopped at once and Dolly turned and twisted her body and wagged her tail to receive me with a typical friendly sound.

While opening the gate Ranen remarked, "It seems Dolly hasn't forgotten you even after so many years." "Yes, you are quite right." "Now, Pinaki, what's the news from you? Never bothered to let me know you were coming..."

"The fact is I wanted to give you a midnight surprise."

"But it seems you yourself have been taken by surprise," observed Minu from behind with a smile "Yes, of course, I completely forgot about Dolly. Strange, how big, strong and ferocious she has become during these years." "And exceptionally calm, quiet and poised as well," rejoined Ranen.

During my short stay there I got enough proof of the truth of his statements. In fact Dolly's nature consisted of a number of aspects. On the one hand she was terribly fierce and hostile to suspected strangers and all kinds of intruders in the garden. On the other hand she was very docile, gentle, affectionate, poised and meditative. But with Ranen she was all sport. Her running, jumping, wrestling and game of hide-and-seek with him were a sight to see, enjoy and appreciate.

So, unlike last time, this time Dolly became unforgettable to me. Back home, her image used to appear often before my mind's eye, particularly that of her poised and meditative figure. That is why my letters to Ranen mainly wanted to know about Dolly's health and well-being. Needless to say his reply always would bring happiness to me as regards Dolly. Only this time his letter was a bolt from the blue. It pierced me through and through. It ran thus:

"Dolly is no more with us. She passed away due to an incredible accident. It is unbelievable but true. That day after dusk at about 9.00 p.m. we were gossiping in the courtyard beside the garden. As usual Dolly was sleeping on the ground near my chair. Suddenly she sensed something in the garden, she thought it might be a running rat. She woke up and in a half-sleepy state chased something at a tremendous speed but inadvertently her head dashed against a big and black flower pot. The pot broke and she also fell flat on the ground motionless. It happened within a twinkle of an eye. We went to the spot and stood awe-stricken not knowing what to do. Then Minu shouted, 'What are you looking at, call for a doctor at once, ring him...'

"The doctor came, examined Dolly and gave the verdict, 'Sorry, too late, she has already passed away.' 'Passed away! but how?' we exclaimed. 'I can't tell you definitely, how? Nobody knows for sure how, when and why the heart

stops. In this case it may be concussion, maybe internal brain hemorrhage and so on and so forth.' So, Pinaki, take it easy, take it as a divine decree. Dolly is no more but her memory will remain ever alive with us..."

The letter finished here. But sitting on the ground in my garden I felt a kind of suffocation. I looked at the high and blue sky above, took a deep breath and asked myself, "Dolly, where is Dolly now? Does anything remain after the death of the body?" Now the same question I asked you.

Pinaki stopped.

I looked at him for long in surprise and sympathy and then opened my mouth. "Pinaki, your question is like that of Nachiketa of the Katha Upanishad but I am not Yama, how can I answer?"

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

FOR YOUR EARS ONLY

(Continued from the issue of January 1988)

13. I HAVE TIME FOR YOU

ONE of my students is a voracious reader. He has a flair for writing too. A few of his effusions have already seen print and they foretell a bright future for the writer in him. It is no wonder that he is one of my admirers. He keeps track of my writings and passes a word of appreciation now and then. On week-ends he spends an hour or two in my study, browsing through the books or reading the titles when involved in a literary chit-chat with me.

Three months ago, on one such occasion, he said with admiring eyes: "I have read your poem in the *Mirror*, your short story in *The Heritage*, your article in the *Deccan Herald*, your autobiographical pieces in *Mother India*, your translation of a Tamil short story in *Canopy* and your book-reviews in *The Times of India* and *World Union*." He heaved a sigh and added: "Seven publications in a month! My God! How do you find time to write all these and prepare your classroom lectures too?"

"Oh! You have seen only seven! What about the rest?" I beamed with a smile and showed him ten more of my publications during the same month, a few of them in foreign periodicals.

My student-friend gasped for breath. "Tell me the secret, Sir! How do you find time to be a writer and a lecturer?"

"It is simple. I love lecturing. I love writing, too. One is my mother. The other is my wife. Of course, it is difficult at times to live with both. But if a perfect harmony prevails between them, there is absolutely no difficulty at all."

He was not the first nor the last to ask such a question. Once a colleague of mine who had heard rumours about me that I spent all my time in preparing classroom lectures and writing for journals and that I had no time to spare for my family members was surprised to find me with my wife and children on the sands of the New Pier.

"Ah, who do I see here? Raja!! That too with his family, eh! You find time for all this?" he asked with wide-opened eyes.

"Why, Sir?", my wife came to my rescue. "He takes us twice a week to cinemas and on Sunday evenings we find ourselves here for a couple of hours."

My colleague was unable to believe his ears.

Time, oh, time! Why do you run away from others? Is it to keep me good company?

I hate people who say, "I have no time for visitors," especially if he or she happens to be a creative writer. What can a writer create if he or she refuses or is reluctant to mix with people?

I adore K.D. Sethna, M.P. Pandit and Manoj Das, for in spite of their very tight schedule they never say 'No' to visitors. During the Darshan times the visitors sat on their heads. I too have tried their patience many times and they withstood my test without the least sign of disturbance on their serene faces. From this famous trio of Pondicherry I learnt a lot in my literary career. From the first I learnt patience, from the second perseverance and from the third humility.

A couple of years ago a great scholar and very well known writer from Calcutta sojourned in Pondicherry. Fixing an appointment with him by post, I went to meet him in the Guest House. The moment I introduced myself, the great scholar said, "I have no time for you."

"But you have asked me to come at this hour," I said showing him the postcard he had sent me.

"Maybe! But I am very busy now. I can't spare you even a single minute," he said putting on airs. "Let us make it tomorrow at this same hour. I believe I'll be able to spare five minutes for you."

"Well, Sir! That's more than sufficient. I'll certainly meet you tomorrow," I said and took my leave. I was under the impression that the writer was really hard pressed for time owing to unforeseen circumstances.

It was not that I had any urgent work with him. Neither was I seeking any help or guidance. I desired to meet him because of my sheer love for all those who write.

On the next day at the appointed hour, the scholar opened his door for me but said, "I am sorry again. Today also I am busy. I'll write you at a later date." He shut his door on me.

Two weeks later, I received a postcard from the great scholar. He had fixed an appointment for the third time. Meanwhile I had lost all respect for him. Hence I taught him the lesson that my time too was precious. I played blind to his letter. No doubt, he is a great writer. But he is yet to learn humility—the last lesson in any subject.

I know a writer in whose study hangs a placard that makes every visitor uneasy. It reads: "I have a lot to do. My time is precious. Leave me alone." And if you peep into his study you are in for a shock. You will find the writer doing different things all at one and the same time: sleeping, snoring, dribbling and perhaps dreaming.

Now I must tell you how I find time.

My wife takes care of the kitchen. Everyone's tongue in our family would begin to water the moment we hear her call, "Come on. Food is ready." And we are lovers of good food. She keeps everyone's stomach in harmony.

My mother takes care of my children who return her love with compound interest. She is a good story-teller and my children have so far never asked me to buy a television.

My sons dust and clean my books and wipe the glass-doors of book-cases, while the last one, my little cherub, runs after moths and silver fish to crush them with a vengeance for puncturing holes in her father's treasures.

My father takes care of the entire family. He is the one who settles accounts with the rice-merchant and pays school-fees for my children. Though in his early seventies he does not grudge to walk the distance to the market any number of times in a day. Having spent several years under active Englishmen, he likes to keep himself engaged some way or other.

As everyone shares the burden of the family, I have all the time in the world to mind my work.

Time, no doubt, is the subtle thief of youth. Yet if we don't misunderstand him, he is not only the best companion, but also a guardian angel.

My mornings don't begin with bed-coffee. Perhaps that is the reason why I find enough time to trim my moustache.

P. RAJA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

We Five and Other Tales, by *Sunanda*. SABDA. Rs. 20.00

ABOUT thirty years ago, a young Ashramite, Sunanda, presented a collection of her own stories to the Mother. The Mother herself arranged for the publication of these tales, "Stories and Poems for children". A little later, she encouraged an even younger Ashramite, Upendra, to prepare the illustrations to her own "Tales of all Times". This year, these two, Upi and Sunanda, have collaborated to produce another illustrated collection of stories for children.

Consider the plots of a few of these stories. In the title-story, *We Five*, Vijay, a boy whose unkind stepmother does not allow him to attend school, meets four school-children who become his friends and find a way to earn money to buy books for him; one of these children is not strong... when he falls seriously ill he has no will to recover; mysterious messages which start appearing on his bed bring him a new zest for life—when Raju starts to grow stronger, it turns out that it is Vijay who has found an ingenious way to encourage his friend.

Rainbow Play tells how a little girl is inspired by the sight of a rainbow to put on a pretty dress and take flowers to sick people in the hospital to cheer them up and help them to get well. In *A Thing of Beauty* a class of boys find a way to help their teacher discover the joys of beauty and overcome his bad-temper. Or *Summer Rain*: what is a little girl who loves her garden to do when there is a drought? The flower-fairies do some magic to help her help her plants. *Different* tells of a king who is a great patron of the arts; he wants his little daughter to become a fine artist—but she seems to have no talent for drawing and painting; but she does see wonderful pictures in her head. When she gets permission to wander in the forest to seek for inspiration, she discovers something that leads her to develop her own gifts as a sculptor.

And so on. One feels this book has been made by a gifted and sweet-hearted child for other such children... the child-like quality of the stories is matched by the unsophisticated illustrations. Here all darker tones—cross teacher, unkind stepmother, sickness and gloom—yield readily to the magic charm of innocent goodwill. Do such innocent good-hearted children really exist anywhere? In the land of the Heart perhaps, where wise parents and teachers also live, and flowers have the power to heal, fairies can bless our paint-brushes and colours and bring water to our drought. There the forces of love and goodwill are truly omnipotent and it would be out of place to question the ability of a dog, however intelligent and well-trained, to carry a cage with two birds in it into a strange house to a sick boy's bedside, or the readiness of the nurses to admit an unknown little girl to the room of the sickest patient in the hospital, on the strength of her pink dress and bouquet and wish to help—all such unlikelinesses belong to the drab, boring, difficult, grown-up world of every day, and have no place in this book.

year old niece to read the book and to select some stories to read aloud to her younger brother and sister. I am happy to report that they responded enthusiastically to the spell. My niece especially liked *Different*—"It's really different!" she said; and her 10-year old brother demanded to have *We Five* read to him a second time, because he enjoyed it so much—I'm sure he would love to have a dog clever enough to carry a bird-cage when necessary! The little sister liked them all.

So it seems our children might be missing the dew-sparkling rainbow-coloured world of wonder and fairies and innocent goodness more than we might think. I therefore recommend this attractively produced collection of tales as a gift to any English-knowing child between 6 and 12; grown-up children might also enjoy a touch of its fragrant magic.

SHRADDHAVAN