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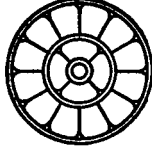
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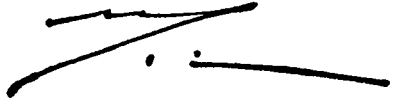


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLI

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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## A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 18 SEPTEMBER 1957

*Mother, what place will occultism have in the supramental life?*

WHY particularly occultism?

*Because everything will be known, won't it?*

Why occultism? There is a place for everything in the supramental life.

Does this interest you specially?

*According to what we know about occultism, it is the science which shows us things that are invisible to us, the invisible world, the invisible forces.... But in the supramental world all this will be known.*

What do you understand by occultism?

*The knowledge of the invisible world and invisible forces.*

And so—I don't quite understand. In the supermind one will no longer have any knowledge, or what?

*One will have the knowledge already, so...*

Already.... But then it will be an occult knowledge! I don't quite understand. Occultism is a special way of dealing with things. In *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo has explained this in great detail. It is a special approach to knowledge and action, and there is no reason why it should disappear or why....

*It will become the natural consciousness. Then perhaps one won't need to learn this occult knowledge.*

Oh, you think one learns occultism as one learns to play the piano! (*Laughter*) But it is not quite like that, anyway, that things happen. In fact, those who have no special aptitude could read all the books on occultism in the world and never know how to practise it. It needs a special capacity.

It is true that you may also read all the books in the world on how to play the piano—if you do not play, you will never know how to play. But there are born musicians, born artists, and there are people who may work at it all their lives and never come to anything at all. It is the same thing with occultism. If you mean that when one becomes a supramental being, one will have the gift

of doing everything, very well, but it doesn't imply that the gift is spontaneous. It is possible that you might have to concentrate on the subject and then learn your work. And it is also possible that one may be potentially capable of doing everything but it is not necessary that one has to do everything! There will be differences and classifications all the same, and special functions according to people and their individual tastes. I don't see why you should deprive the supramental world particularly of occult activity more than of any other.

How do you conceive of the supramental life? As a paradise in which everyone will do the same thing in the same way?...The old conception of paradise where everybody became an angel playing the harp? It is not quite like that! All the differences will be there, all differentiations and different activities, but instead of acting in the ordinary human ignorance, one will act with knowledge, that's all; that is what will make the difference.

*And the capacities will also increase, won't they?*

Capacities?... You take occultism in the sense of the power to act on life and things, as a process; but that is not occultism, that is magic.

Occultism is a special use of the consciousness, that's all. That is, at the moment, as it is practised by human beings, it is a direct and conscious perception of the forces behind appearances and the play of these forces, and because one has the direct perception of them, one has the power to act on them, and one makes some higher will intervene in the play of these forces in order to obtain a required result.

*In the supramental world one will have these powers spontaneously.*

Spontaneously!... But everybody practises occultism without knowing that he does. Everybody has this power spontaneously but doesn't know he has it. It may be a very slight one, like a pin-head; it may be as vast as the earth or even the universe. But you cannot live without practising occultism, only you don't know it. So the only difference you can make is that when one has the supramental consciousness one will know it. That is all. So, your question automatically vanishes.

When you think—I have explained this to you I don't know how many times—when you think, you are practising occultism. Only, you don't know it. When you are thinking of someone, some part of you is automatically in contact with this person, and if to your thought is added a will that this person may be like this or like that or do this or that or understand this or that—whatever it may be—well, you are practising occultism, only you don't know it.... There are people who do this with power, and when they have a strong thought it manifests and is realised. There are people in whom it is very feeble and they do not

obtain many results. It depends on the power of your thought and also on your power of concentration. But this kind of occultism everybody practises without even knowing it. So the difference from someone who really practises occultism is that he knows he is doing it and perhaps how he does it.

*But as you have spoken to us so often of Mr. X who was a great occultist, I thought that in the supramental world it would be something natural. All would be as capable as he.*

But why this in particular? That is what I don't understand! Why particularly occultism?

*Because I thought that all knowledge of the invisible world entered the sphere of occultism.*

Yes.

*So, now, in ordinary life man is unconscious, half conscious: but in the full consciousness he would also have the full consciousness of occultism.*

No, this is all very well, but do you believe that in the supramental life there will no longer be any classification of activities, or what? That everything will be mixed up in a general spontaneous capacity?

*No, there will also be a hierarchy.*

There will always be different ways of dealing with things. Perhaps the occult power will be more common, but if you imagine a world where everyone has equally the same occult power, there will no longer be any difference. You understand? There are people who have the occult power and act on those who haven't, but if everyone has it equally it will no longer be occultism!... Is that what you meant?

Yes.

Ah!... Well, I am convinced that even in the most perfect supramental realisation there will *always* be a differentiation between the capacities and functions of each one; but instead of being or not being in one's right place, of doing or not doing what one ought to do, unconsciously, one will be in one's right place—I hope always in one's place—and will always do what one ought to do, consciously. That is, instead of always trying to know and groping in the dark, one will know what one ought to do and do it well. But that is the whole difference. Differentiations will be there, each one will have his own role, his own place, each one will have his own activity. Don't think that everybody will begin to look alike and do the same thing in the same way! That would be a terrible world.

We could say that the difference between the supramental world and our present world will be this: what you don't know, you will know, what you can't do, you will be able to do, and what you don't understand, you will understand, and of what you are unconscious, you will become conscious. But fundamentally this is the basis of the new creation: to replace ignorance by knowledge and unconsciousness by consciousness, and weakness by strength. But this does not necessarily mean that everything is going to be so mixed up that it is scarcely recognisable!

*(Long silence)*

Sri Aurobindo has told us that in the Supermind itself there are different planes of realisation and that these planes will manifest successively, with the same progressive movement that has always presided over the universal development. And simply because, till today, it is a world that is closed to the greater part of mankind or hardly half-open to some, it is difficult to conceive of this progress in the supramental life, but it will exist; and the moment there is progress, there is ascension, and there is a perfection which develops according to a law of its own, which is gradually unveiled to the consciousness—even to a fully illumined consciousness—and works in the truth instead of working in ignorance.... This something<sup>1</sup> which is not there completely, totally, all at once—it could almost be said massively—in the Manifestation but is progressive, will follow the same law of development as that of the world we live in now, but instead of not knowing where we are going, well, we shall know the way and follow it consciously. Instead of standing there imagining or guessing or speculating about what ought to be, we shall see where we are going and know how to go there. That will be the essential difference. Certainly it will not be a dull existence in which everything goes on indefinitely without changing.

I believe there is always a tendency in the human consciousness to want to get somewhere, to sit down and feel it is at last all over: "We have arrived, we settle down and don't move any more!" That would be a poor type of Supermind.

But this ascending, progressive movement towards a growing perfection will be still more prominent, certainly, and instead of unfolding itself in the darkness where everybody is blind and gropes along, it will unfold in the light and one will have the joy of knowing where one is going and what one is doing. That's all.

So one must not come and ask, "Will this be there?" or "Won't that be there?" There will be many more things still than we have now. Every possible thing will be there.

*(Questions and Answers 1957-58, pp. 184-89)*

<sup>1</sup> When this talk was first published, Mother defined this 'something': "The unmanifest which will use the supramental world to manifest itself."



## THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

### IN THE LIGHT OF HER PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

*(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1988)*

THE Mother has realised that to reach the essence of beauty one must turn from the earthly object to the spiritual force which constitutes all Beauty and Light.

Apropos of this theme, Sri Aurobindo has given a vision of beauty: "Indian Bhakti... uses human relations and sees a divine person, not as mere figures, but because there are divine relations of supreme Delight and Beauty with the human soul of which human relations are the imperfect but still the real type, and because that Delight and Beauty are not abstractions or qualities of a quite impalpable metaphysical entity, but the very body and form of the supreme Being. It is a living Soul to which the soul of the Bhakta yearns; for the source of all life is not an idea or a conception or a state of existence, but a real Being. ... He is sought within in the heart and therefore apart from all by an inward-gathered concentration of the being in the soul itself; but he is also seen and loved everywhere where he manifests his being. All the beauty and joy of existence is seen as his joy and beauty; he is embraced by the spirit in all beings; the ecstasy of love enjoyed pours itself out in a universal love; all existence becomes a radiation of its delight and even in its very appearances is transformed into something other than its outward appearance."<sup>1</sup>

On January 23, 1917 the Mother has prayed:

"Thou didst fill my being with so complete, so intense a love and beauty and joy that it seemed impossible to me that this would not be communicated. It was like a glowing hearth whence the breath of thought wafted far many sparks which, entering the secrecy of men's hearts, kindled other similar fires, fires of Thy divine Love, O Lord, that Love which impels and draws all human beings irresistibly to Thee. O my sweet Lord, grant that this may not be only a vision of enrapt consciousness, but indeed a reality, effectively transforming all beings and things.

"Grant that this love, this beauty and joy which flood all my being that is hardly strong enough to bear their intensity, may also flood the consciousness of all those I have seen, all those I have thought of and all those also whom I have never thought of or seen.... Grant that all may awake to the consciousness of Thy infinite Bliss!

"O my sweet Lord, fill their hearts with joy, love and beauty."

According to the Mother, beauty is not that which implies the Hellenistic aesthetic sense. It announces the glorious tidings of a deep ocean of itself. She says on July 19, 1914: "O Lord, Thou art the omnipotent Master of Thy own manifestation; grant to these instruments that they may escape from frames too

narrow, from limits too fixed and mediocre. All the riches of human possibility are needed to translate even one atom of Thy infinite Force.... Open the doors that are closed, make the sealed fountains spring forth, that the floods of Thy eloquence and Thy beauty may overspread the world. Let there be amplitude and majesty, nobility and grace, charm and grandeur, variety and strength: for it is the will of the Lord to manifest.”

The Mother in her diary on 12th February 1913, has expressed the spontaneous overflow of beauty: “As soon as all effort disappears from a manifestation, it becomes very simple, with the simplicity of a flower opening, manifesting its beauty and spreading its fragrance without glamour or vehement gesture. And in this simplicity lies the greatest power, the power which is least mixed and least gives rise to harmful reactions. The power of the vital should be mistrusted, it is a tempter on the path of the work, and there is always a risk of falling into its trap, for it gives you the taste of immediate result; and, in our first eagerness to do the work well, we let ourselves be carried away to make use of this power. But very soon it deflects all our action from the right course and introduces a seed of illusion and death into what we do.

“Simplicity, simplicity! How sweet is the purity of Thy Presence!...” Sri Aurobindo gives an exposition on “Beauty” in the following words. “To find highest beauty is to find God, to reveal, to embody, to create, as we say, highest beauty is to bring out of our souls the living image and power of God.”<sup>2</sup>

On January 29th 1917 the Mother has figured the inner beauty and its special manifestation on earth. She tells us: “... Beauty is the divine language in forms. And a consciousness of the Divine which is not translated externally by an understanding and expression of Beauty would be an incomplete consciousness... Pure beauty is universal and one must be universal to see and recognise it.”

These words of the Mother have a link with Sri Aurobindo’s revelations on beauty. He has said: “The spiritual realisation has a sight, a perception, a feeling which is not that of the mind and vital, it passes beyond the aesthetic limit, sees the universal beauty, sees behind the object what the eye cannot see, feels what the emotion of the heart cannot feel and passes beyond Rasa and Bhoga to pure Ananda,—a thing more deep, intense, rapturous than any mental or vital or any physical Rasa reaction can be. It sees the One everywhere, the original bliss of existence everywhere, and all these can create an inexpressible Ananda of beauty, the Beauty of the One, the beauty of the Divine, the beauty of the Beloved, the beauty of the eternal Existence in things. It can see also the beauty of forms and objects, but with a seeing other than the mind’s, other than that of a limited physical vision....”<sup>3</sup>

When the Mother says, “Pure Beauty is universal”, she is in tune with the idea of Sri Aurobindo. In the following lines he touches on the experience of beauty:

“All things are creations of the Universal Consciousness. Beauty, also, The ‘experience’ of the individual is his response or his awakening to the beauty which the Universal Consciousness has placed in things.”<sup>4</sup>

“There are two kinds of beauty. There is that universal beauty which is seen by the inner eyes, heard by the inner ear, etc.... There is also the aesthetic beauty which depends on a particular standard of harmony, but different races or individual consciousnesses form different standards of aesthetic harmony.”<sup>5</sup>

The Mother sees beauty and realises beauty with the inner eye.

In the same prayer, she exclaims: “O Lord of Beauty, how many faults I have committed against Thee, how many do I still commit.... Give me the perfect understanding of Thy Law so that I may not again fail to keep it. Love would be incomplete without Thee, Thou art one of its most perfect ornaments, Thou art one of its most harmonious smiles. At times I have misunderstood Thy role, but in the depths of my heart I have always loved Thee; and the most arbitrary and radical doctrines could not extinguish the fire of worship which, from my childhood I had vowed to Thee...”

*(To be continued)*

NILIMA DAS

#### REFERENCES

1. *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 21, p 551.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 15, p. 135.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, p. 492
4. *Ibid* , p. 494.
- 5 *Ibid* , p 495

## VIGNETTES OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

*(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1988)*

### **Her Love**

In those days the Mother used to give a morning darshan from her second-floor terrace. First she would feed her crow and then climb to the terrace and look at each person below.

Prithwi Singh used to stand in front of his room in the western wing of the Ashram for this darshan. Once some creepers grew up so as to obstruct the Mother's view. She wrote to Noren Singh who was in charge of this garden: "You have to leave some space between the two groups of beans, so that your father can see me from his verandah when I walk on the terrace."

### **"I can See You"**

In the later years of his life Prithwi Singh could hardly see. Once when he went to the Mother on his birthday he said pathetically to the Mother that he was very sad because he could not see the Mother. The Mother very emphatically said, "It does not matter for I can see you."

### **"I Called the Ashwini Kumaras"**

Prithwi Singh told the following story to X:

"One day after I went to sleep, at about 1-00 a.m. in the morning, I became uncomfortable as I had heaviness in the heart-region and then there was severe pain. Immediately, I called for The Mother's help by prayers. And I could see two tall and long persons entering my body through my head. Then one of them with his huge palm started massaging my heart and I got complete relief.

"In the morning when I saw The Mother, I narrated the above experience.

"Yes, Prithwi Singh, you prayed for my help and I summoned the two Ashwini Kumaras to be at your service."

*Compiled by S*

## HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

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FROM HIS early childhood, as soon as X became a little conscious, he had the feeling that he was destined for a special thing, that he had a mission in life.

He was born in a poor family in a village which had a holy atmosphere and a mystic ambience, for Guru Nanak Dev had resided there for 14 years. His mother died when he was only one. His father married a second time. X was brought up by his grandmother. He went to study in the village school which had educational facilities only up to the eighth standard. Luckily for X the year he passed out of the eighth standard the school was upgraded as a High School and in due course he appeared for his matriculation.

Their examinations over, X and his friends were in a boisterous mood. They played all sorts of pranks. One day they thought of a novel amusement. The examination results were eagerly awaited by all the students. X and his friends made an imaginary result bulletin in which they showed all their friends as having passed and all the boys they disliked as having failed. Each of them wrote a few lines so that their handwriting might not be recognised and pasted it on the school notice-board with themselves forging the signature of the Principal.

Soon a crowd of students collected as the 'news' spread that the results were out. Some of the boys so liberally failed by X and his friends went to the Principal to lament their failure.

The Principal assured the students that he had not till then received the results and it was a prank played by some students. He strongly suspected X, and summoned him. X was in a quandary but he decided to stick to the truth. When the Principal demanded whether he had written the results he exclaimed, "No." The Principal put his finger at random on one line written by one of X's colleagues and asked, "Have you not written this?" X could say truthfully that he had not written it. The perplexed Principal dismissed X and sent a message to X's father to appear before him the next day with X.

On hearing the whole story X's father was much afraid that the Principal might send X to jail for having forged his signature. He asked X to go to Lahore where his elder brother was studying. This is what X had been wanting all along, to proceed to Lahore to continue his studies, but his father had no money. Two rupees were needed for his rail fare. X's father borrowed the two rupees and sent X to Lahore.

The day X reached Lahore his result was announced. He stood first and got a scholarship. Four years passed and X got his B.A. degree. He had a fixed idea that he must study for an M.A. So he took up odd jobs to pay for his education.

After his M.A. X took up some tuitions, etc., since his whole being revolted at the idea of joining service. His elder brother had died and X was living alone in a room. Now his life took a strange turn. The Divine stormed into his placid existence, upsetting his ideas, feelings, even his mental balance. An astrologer came from his village in Kapurthala to Lahore and went to one of X's friends who, like X, hailed from Ambala. This friend having no convenient place for the astrologer sent him to X's room. X welcomed the guest. Then giving him the key to his room he went for his tuition. In the meanwhile the astrologer found the horoscope chart of X lying in his room. With its help to while away the time he worked out X's horoscope. This man had come only that day from a different city. He knew nothing about X. On X's return he asked him, "Did your mother die when you were only one? and do you have very weak eye-sight?" An astonished X replied, "Yes, it is so. But how did you know?" The astrologer pointing to his horoscope replied, "It is all written there." X was staggered. "What?" he thought, "are we free or bound? Is every thing in our life prefixed by somebody called God? If it is so I must find God." For two days he could not eat and could not go out to teach. One question assumed tremendous importance, "What is God?" After ten or twelve days of inner churning and agitation one night in August 1931 at 1 a.m. he felt some power touch his forehead. There was a lightning flash in his room which for a moment illumined the room, and he heard a voice say, "You wanted to see God. Go and look into the mirror." X went to the mirror. He saw his eyes and face flushed red and suffused with bliss. He asked, "Am I God? No, I am a person full of weaknesses. It cannot be so." The whole night a strange spiritual phenomenon took place and X was in an abnormal state of consciousness. Seeing this, one of his friends took him to a supposedly wise man who declared that X's stomach was upset. It surely was an anti-climax.

Three or four months passed in a semi-tranced, semi-conscious state. One day while X was walking with a friend a beggar asked X for money. X gave him his purse. The strange beggar asked for his keys. X gave him his keys also. His friend remonstrated, "Are you mad? Why are you giving him everything and what will he do with your keys?" X replied that the beggar was only testing him whether he was ready to give his all or not. Anyway X's friend made the beggar return the purse and keys. Very perturbed at X's state, the friend led him to his maternal uncle's house, where his cousins invited him to join their card-game. X refused and said, "I am Krishna. I have come to save Gandhiji whom the British are troubling."

X's cousins were alarmed. It was the year 1932. Convinced that he had become mad they took him to the lunatic asylum where one of the doctors named Ramsingh was known to X's uncle. X, who had truly become desperate in his search for God, thought that Dr. Ramsingh, having this name of Lord Rama, would surely lead him to Rama. Since the doctor knew X as a promising educated

young man he asked him, "Why didn't you come to my house?" X replied, "I didn't come because I had some work. I had to find God." Realising that X was not normal, Dr. Ramsingh ordered the attendants to take him to "Yogi's room." "Yogi" had been a mental patient who had recovered and been later discharged but his cell was still known as "Yogi's room." Now X was delighted. He thought, "Surely the good doctor is sending me to meet a Yogi who will show me God." On reaching his room he was most anxious to know how he should greet the Yogi when he appeared. He asked two passing attendants, "Sir, tell me how I should do pranam to the Yogi." These worthies had better things to do than answer the irrational questions of mad people. Two other warders came to X's room. He asked the same question. These two told each other, "He is a fake. He is pretending to be mad and is telling lies." On hearing this X became greatly agitated and protesting that he was not telling a lie he attacked and overwhelmed these two. Five or six persons were needed to control him. Meanwhile another mad man came there. With folded hands X asked him, "Are you Guru Nanak?" The loony replied, "No, but I am his disciple." This new arrival remonstrated with the warders, "Do not beat him. He is a devotee." At this stage the keepers understood that X was not faking but was truly deranged.

After passing two days in a solitary room X had quietened down. So he was taken to the courtyard where all the other inmates had assembled. He saw them all as Krishna and Shiva. He fell at everybody's feet. Another lunatic came to X. X asked him, "Surely you are God?" He replied, "I am not God, but I can give you the mantra by which you can realise God." He took up a twig and instructed X to repeat the following mantra—"Pa, May V all go to that: pen is not much good." He further instructed X to trace the words on his palm in a certain direction with the help of the twig and to always go forward or to the right—never to turn back or to the left. He added, "If you want water don't say, I need water, say I want H<sub>2</sub>O." X interpreted the mantra as pa standing for Pita, father, and the rest as—let us go to God, this body should be changed.

Rejoicing in his good fortune at getting the mantra, X went forward religiously obeying the instruction of his mad guide. He walked forward reciting his mantra till he reached a drain. There was another drain to his right. He was in a dilemma, for he could neither go back nor turn left. He jumped into the drain. The warders took him out and washed him and changed his clothes. The name of this lunatic who had given the mantra was Harishchandra. The warders were talking amongst themselves that X was better (less insane) than Harishchandra. X swelled with pride. He thought he was better than the legendary king Harishchandra famous for his truthfulness.

Now X had a hallucination-vision. He was on trial, charged with teaching immorality and murdering Gandhiji. They passed the judgment that he should be thrown to the ground from the 7th storey of a building. It was done but X remained unhurt. Then he was burnt by candles. Millions of people saw him

and said, "He is God. He is God." In the vision itself at this stage the other lunatic Harishchandra came to X and said, "It is the old way to find God. I will take you to God in a new way." Then the whole world started moving. X saw all the saints and sages. Then they reached somewhere. Harishchandra remarked, "It is Switzerland."

X saw that it was not Switzerland—then where were the mountains? With this thought, in a flash X's sanity returned. He realised that he had been insane and was in an asylum. He understood that being thrown off the 7th storey (in the subtle plane) had somehow purified and freed him.

It was 21st February 1932. He asked to see Dr. Ramsingh and told him, "Now I am normal." Dr. Singh asked, "How can we believe it?" X asked for a newspaper and told him and the warders exactly on which date he had been admitted and narrated objectively the whole course of events. They were convinced but kept him under observation for ten more days. After that they asked him to proceed to his village. X told them, "Thank you, you are sending me from a smaller to a bigger asylum." The doctor said sternly, "If you say such things, you will be locked up again."

While in the asylum X constantly heard a Divine Voice repeating the famous couplet from Tulsi Das:

"Raghukul reet sada chali ayi pran gaye per vachan ne jayi."

"This is the tradition of Raghu's that they would rather die than break their word."

In this way the Lord assured X, "I'll never abandon you." Also his riddle, his tormenting query, "Are we bound or free?" was also solved there. The Lord told him, "You are playing at being bound."

X was free within and without. He decided, "I will not work for money, I will work for joy only. In this way whatever comes my way I will accept." During his madness X had found himself as two—one part of him did all the mad things, the other part calmly observed them. He found that this division continued. He told people, "First I was one, now I am two." People suspected he was still insane.

X came back to Lahore. He had a cousin who wanted to go to Jammu. X willingly escorted her and then went to Kashmir where he stayed for seven long years. He had decided earlier not to work for money but for joy and happiness. He took odd jobs, tuitions, etc. Mainly his friends fed him and looked after him. He made them merry and led an easy life smoking and drinking. If he earned any money, that too his friends took away. In Kashmir he tutored the children of the Director of Education, Dr. Tikku. The doctor was so impressed by X that he offered him Rs. 150/- per month, plus board and lodging to teach his children. X accepted the job. Suddenly some enemies of the doctor worked



against him. He was prematurely retired on a paltry pension of Rs. 300/- per month. Dr. Tikku regretfully told X that he would not be able to afford his services any more. X replied that he would work only for simple board and lodging. Dr. Tikku found it hard to believe that there were such selfless persons left in the world.

Later in 1934 X came to Lahore for a few months. Here he had a premonitory dream that a certain friend of his, the inspector of police, had died. On meeting the inspector he narrated his dream to him and both had a hearty laugh since the inspector was hale and hearty. After fifteen days the inspector actually died. X was constantly haunted by guilt. He felt: had he not told his friend about his dream he would not have died. He was tormented, could not sleep. Some days passed thus. One night he saw in a dream a man with a shining face and beard, all clad in white, come to him. He sat near X and said, "I am not your enemy, I am your guardian angel. It is not a dream. I have come to bless you. Why are you afraid of me?" He touched X on his head. X perspired and then all his fear and guilt vanished.

After four months X was on his way back to Kashmir. On the way he stopped at a guest house, on the bank of a river. In a dream-vision he somehow crossed this river and climbed a very steep mountain crawling up the steep ascent. On the summit he saw a man working a Persian wheel and the water was coming out and spreading all round. Some other people were doing yogic asanas around. They were all perspiring. He hesitated to approach him. Just then he heard a voice say. "He is the same person you saw in your previous dream." Thus reassured, X went to the person and said, "Sir, you are working very hard." "Yes, some people have to work hard so that others may enjoy themselves." On hearing this X said, "I am ashamed. I should not have come here." The person, his guardian angel, replied, "No, it is all right. Go to the opposite mountain." X saw a European lady standing on the opposite mountain. He wondered what this European lady was doing in Kashmir. He went to her. The lady told him, "Don't look at my face, look towards my feet." When X looked there, he saw a big stone between her feet. She asked him to lift it. X lifted it and a fountain of sweet and cool water shot up and reached the head of the lady. She asked him to open his mouth and X drank it and bathed in it. It was like being soaked in honey. This taste and feeling of an indescribable bliss lasted for six months. When he told his friends about it, they laughed and said, "You are still mad." Later when Acharya Abhay Dev showed him the photographs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, he at once recognised her as the lady of the mountain and him as his guardian angel.

*(To be continued)*

*Compiled by K*

## LIFE-YOGA-POETRY

### TWO LETTERS TO A FAR-AWAY ŚĀDHĪKA

I AM so glad my earlier letter has proved helpful to you, both inwardly and in regard to your health. I have been very much concerned about your physical condition and again and again I have offered it to the Mother with intense concentration at the Ashram Samadhi which I visit from 4 to 5.30 p.m. every day as well as at the inner Samadhi which I carry in my heart. I am sure there is such a Samadhi within you also. If your health does not permit a flight to Pondicherry, do not feel discouraged ever. As long as the urge to fly over is present, the Samadhi in your heart will grow more and more powerful and render an actual visit unnecessary in the existing state of your body. If in my little way I have been instrumental in making more and more real in your consciousness the Divine Presence at that sacred spot in the midst of worship-breathing flowers and heavenward-aspiring incense, I feel most humbly happy in the service of our two Masters who have brought their immensity home to us by being at the same time our souls' parents.

Of late a certain method of sadhana has been taking an increasingly concrete form with me. In the face of difficulties, however large-looming, and of sensitive situations when one's self-importance is hurt, and of personal problems whether psychological or physical, the best thing to do is *immediately* to make an offering of the whole affair to the Mother. Mostly one tries to get the shape of the problem clearly in one's mind and then to decide on one's attitude. What I am saying is that without spending a single moment, without giving the slightest thought, one must catch the sense of the problem at the place where it occurs—that is, in the region of the “funky” or “touchy” heart—and pull it off from there and push it towards the Mother, delivering it into her ever-outstretched hands or laying it at her feet which are ever-waiting to receive the world-wanderer back to his starting-point beyond time and space.

This instantaneous gesture has to be made in a very realistic way as if one were physically plucking something from the heart-region, freeing oneself from all relationship with it. At once there will be a tremendous relief—far greater than any to be experienced if one has spent even one minute revolving the occasion in one's thoughts. The next step is not to figure out the occasion and wonder how the Divine will act. Stop bothering about it altogether—as if it had completely vanished from your life. Leave the Divine to work out the solution. I don't mean that one should sit motionless and see what happens: one should go about one's business but not expect this or that result. The Divine will do all that is necessary and you will have won a wide persistent peace. If a solution is to come, it will surely come, but often the problems that arise do not require a solution: they need only a dissolution. And the gesture I have indicated will

bring it. Of course, one should not lose one's practical sense: if, for example, a medical course is to be followed, it should be followed, but whatever worrying situation takes shape has to be dealt with in this manner which is simultaneously self-abnegating and self-liberating because it calls the Supreme into immediate remembrance and unhindered action. Believe me, the results are amazing.

What you write about *Savitri* gladdens me a great deal. We are so lucky to have this gigantic treasure-trove of spiritual truth and beauty at the disposal of tiny creatures like ourselves. All that Sri Aurobindo did was charged with—to quote one of his happy coinages—“immensitude” and yet within this vastness there vibrates a knowledge of all our minute needs. Along with

Words that can tear the veil from deity's face  
we get  
Words winged with the red splendour of the heart.

The illimitable Beyond reveals a rich concern for our little throbbing souls and brings—as a disciple of Sri Aurobindo has said—

A love that misers not its golden store  
But gives itself and yearns to give yet more,  
As though God's light were inexhaustible  
Not for his joy but this one heart to fill!

(By the way, the word “misers” as a verb, transitively used here, is a coinage of the disciple referred to, whom you must have recognised.) You have alluded to some passages of *Savitri* which you have by heart. Some day when you have time you may tell me what they are. Knowing them I shall feel closer to your inmost being and get in keener touch with their beauty and truth in the depths of the sweetness and light that are you.

I should say “you here”, for there is a “you yonder”, a high-above counterpart to the deep-below Psyche, the Divine-impelled aspirant. It is the “you yonder” who is hidden in the glowing red sun you saw in your dream-vision, the bliss and fire which have to take possession of the sweetness and light already with you. Of course the sun is the transcendent Truth-Power, not exactly unquiet and struggling, as you say, but intensely acting for the highest Self of you to break out from it and, blazing through those trees in your vision, be in close contact with the Psyche. I think the “dark tall coniferous trees” are the cosmic ignorance in us which is still an aspiration, however blind it may be, towards the luminous Unknown. They are an upward call but rooted in the earth's dense inconscience. The downward pressing sun is at once an answer to them and their conqueror. They surge towards some uncomprehended fulfilment, which, paradoxically, would destroy their present character of darkness in the very

act of responding to them and fulfilling their instinctive cry. The fiery red of the sun seems to be the supramental arch-mage of the dull red of the earth. And it occurs to me that a great Force of the Divine has announced its coming to work on your very body. Meet it with a great calm, a wide silent happiness, a quietly self-dedicating receptivity—and whenever you take any medicine do so with a thankful awareness of the Mother making a special intervention on your behalf, taking a particularly direct hand in your treatment. (22.11.1987)

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I am always happy to hear from you, for there is always a soul-touch in your letters and the breath of deep things wafts to me from them. Sadhana means a great deal to you—in fact it is your way of life and that is why whatever you write brings the soul in me to the surface or, rather, makes the surface feel more intensely the soul which is mostly hovering there after all these years of seeking for the presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother with the waking consciousness. They have said, while not discouraging meditation, that to remain calm and concentrated and self-consecrated in the midst of one's occupations in life is more helpful towards our goal than being locked in a shut-eyed in-drawnness. For, is it not our goal to manifest dynamically the Divine Truth in our day-to-day dealing with the physical world? This Truth has to become a normal active part of our bodily awareness instead of remaining a static supernormal fact of inner experience. A smiling equality of attitude as the wide background of the constant act of remembering and offering—such is the state in which we are expected to be on the way to our goal, the state best expressed in a certain phrase of the Gita: “a fire burning steadily upward in a vast windless space.”

Let me add that what the tongues of this fire convey to the Supreme is not only a keen “Take me, take me” but also a glowing “Thank you, thank you.” For a gratitude, moving Divine-ward for all the Grace that has come to one, is a true sign of the awakened soul and the more grateful one feels the closer will one get to the infinite freedom of the all-blissful, all-bountiful—the “Beauty of ancient days that is ever new,” as St. Augustine puts it at the beginning of his *Confessions*.

It is indeed good news for me that your health is better. Quite often, when I sit facing the Samadhī, a warmth from my heart goes forth, carrying an image of you in a prayerful gesture to that Silent Source of Blessings. On your part I would ask you to keep a memory of the Samadhī vivid at the same time that you invoke our Gurus. For here is something that can serve as a symbolic physical link with their subtle omnipresence. This way you will increase the effectivity of the healing Force which already your spontaneous call has set soothing your trouble. When I say “call” I do not mean that you have asked the Divine just to cure you: you have sent out your cry basically for the Divine just to come.

There is nothing wrong in praying for the welfare of your body, but the core of every invocation is the appeal to the Divine to fill wholly your being and make it a humble part of his perfection. I remember those lines of the poet AE:

Some for Beauty follow long  
 Flying trace.—some there be  
 Who seek Thee only for a song—  
 I to lose myself in Thee.

Now for your selections from *Savitri*. To get mental guidance from the lines is naturally the immediate response we make and even when we have profounder responses this guidance is never absent, for even the most recondite expressions in *Savitri* communicate a glint of seizable significance. *Savitri* is not what passes most often as Surrealism in Europe, over-entangled emblems or else disjointed apparitions from the subconscious. *Savitri* has both clarity and harmony: if we fail to get all of them, it is because the clarity is colossal, the harmony immense—too great for us to catch at one stroke or at the start. Some purchase-point, however small, is invariably there and from it we try to fan out our consciousness into the unknown to receive the impact of the many-splendoured Secrecy. Sri Aurobindo gives us always a visible spectrum to begin with, but it is often a pulsating pull towards the infra-red of the sheer mystical, the intricately revealing, or towards the ultra-violet of the pure spiritual, the straightforwardly revelatory. Perhaps we should say that everywhere the grip is felt of what is beyond the mind: the only difference between the two kinds of phrases is that in the latter the “overhead” power is felt mostly through the rhythm, whereas in the former it touches us predominantly through the vision. I may try to illustrate the difference. Take that favourite of most readers:

All can be done if the God-touch is there.

There is an organ-music of the wide-spreading “overhead” in the rhythm. The substance is comprehensible to every religious mind. Even a non-religious one can make out its message without believing in it. A little baffling to both is a verse such as:

Years like gold raiment of the Gods that pass.

We get a sense of the mysterious in our temporal process, making it strangely radiant by a hint of the formations of light in which divine beings appear during their courses of action in the supra-terrestrial. Perhaps a denser challenge to the day-to-day intelligence is:

Earth's winged chimeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven.

Possibly as dense yet intuitively more graspable comes the line:

Our minds hush to a bright Omniscient.

Half mystical half spiritual is the notation of an all-transcending experience:

Across a void retreating sky he glimpsed  
Through a last glimmer and drift of vanishing stars  
The superconscient realms of motionless peace  
Where judgment ceases and the word is mute  
And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone.

Maybe equally puzzling and still communicative is that single-line mantra on the mantra:

Sight's sound-waves breaking from the soul's great deeps.

The passages you have chosen are very good for practical spirituality—practical in the sense of the efforts we make to keep going on the Great Path. The heart-warming declaration—

An outstretched Hand is felt upon our lives—

and its sequel are surely a tremendous encouragement in sadhana, as is the grand assurance breathing through the lines starting with

His failure is not failure whom God leads

and ending in

And how shall the end be vain when God is guide?

I have found great solace in these two phrases:

One who has shaped the world is still its lord...  
A mighty Guidance leads us still through all...

The passage from

At the head she stands of birth and toil and fate

to

Below, the wonder of the embrace divine

is one of the finest in *Savitri*, revealing the Divine Mother in magical words that can stand full comparison to what I have termed the mantra of mantras, the description of the Divine Mother's incarnation in the young Savitri, breaking upon our marvelling eyes and wondering ears with

Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven

and leaving us ecstatically dumb with the final sweep of the Love-God's satisfaction:

In her he met his own eternity.

In this long passage comes that masterpiece of complex cryptic vision which, for all its strangeness of image and word, bursts upon us like a revel of light:

As in a mystic and dynamic dance  
A priestess of immaculate ecstasies  
Inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault  
Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods,  
A heart of silence in the hands of joy  
Inhabited with rich creative beats  
A body like a parable of dawn  
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity  
Or golden temple door to things beyond.

Your selections from Book Six, Canto Two, excerpts from Narad's speeches, are deep-toned and such as might change one's tenor of life or at least lift one above distressing vicissitudes. Especially memorable are lines like

Make of thy daily way a pilgrimage,  
For through small joys and griefs thou mov'st towards God,

the second of which creates by its long-drawn-out run of monosyllables ending with "God" the sense of life's littlenesses adding up to a sight of the Infinite, the Eternal, who from the distance pulls silently the labouring soul. The other passage—"Thy goal, thy road... the indwelling God"—seems a counterpart to the earlier one. While the latter gives the feel of outer time and space as the field of spiritual realisation, the former points inward, the "road" of days and nights leading to a discovery of the Immortal within—"thy secret self", "the indwelling God."

Book Seven, Canto Two provides you with a brief vision of the height to which our Yoga has to mount and the depth from which it has to work out its destiny. High above "There is our aspect of eternity" and towards it the "great-

nesses hidden in our unseen parts” toil with help from overhead and from deep within. What is deep within is given a clear sight in the phrase about “our soul” acting from “its mysterious chamber” and this clear sight is widened when we read:

Out of the mystic cavern in man’s heart  
The heavenly Psyche must put off her veil...  
And step into common nature’s crowded rooms...

The master-key is here—the emergence of the psychic being without which the “hidden greatnesses” cannot find their full play. This key on the one hand conducts us to a fulfilment of light and power in our relations with the outer waking world and on the other hand it breaks open a way to

Our summits in the superconscient’s blaze...

The long passage in Book Seven, Canto Five is dear to me also. One line from it had struck me a long time ago with an “empathic” force touching the full reality of its theme with a marvellous brevity:

This dark knew dumbly, immensely the Unknown.

A fitting close to your cullings is that cry, “O soul, my soul, we have created Heaven... And made of the body a capitol of bliss”. From this and from all else I can reach out to the centre of your Aurobindonian life: that centre is the “crimson-throbbing glow” of the inmost heart where the supreme Harmonist, the divine Flute-player, is our beloved and refuge and trail-blazer. (8.2.1988)

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)



## **THE MOTHER'S CONTINUED PRESENCE AND ACTION**

EVER and again one feels reminded by the physical happenings at the Ashram of the continued Presence and Action of the Mother. The occasion of 21st February, the Darshan of the Mother's birthday, is still fresh in our minds. What crowds had assembled! And how orderly was the behaviour of the crowds, outside on the street, where thousands sat waiting for their turn to go up, then their going up in a line to the Mother's room, then in the Mother's room all so quiet and peaceful and then coming out and taking their place in the Ashram courtyard for meditation. There they sat packed more than an hour in advance of the meditation time, which was 10.00 to 10.30 a.m. Meditation was so quiet and thousands thus assembled dispersed so quietly. All is a miracle of silence, the essential quality of spiritual training. And the quality of joy is so evident all around. All are happy, happy within themselves.

Just, when the crowd was dispersing the writer stood outside the window of the Ashram Reading-Room in the Ashram Courtyard. Then an old disciple from Delhi beaming with joy and surprise came up to him and said, "What is this, what a crowd and how happy is everybody, see how Mother continues to work. Even at the Delhi Centre now the crowds are swelling and people are happy." I said, "This is nice."

While we witness this miracle of silence, we might remember how restless is human nature and how agitation is considered activity. And these crowds come out of the same general life and return there. What a training in quiet, un-agitated life this short visit to the Ashram people get here, though only a few retain it as a valued possession to be cultivated and enjoyed. And it is interesting to observe how people feel happy and refreshed after their visit. Who gives them this joy?

The Mother was the central personality in our educational life. Every child, young or grown-up, has almost felt a direct contact with Her and sought Her help in his or her everyday problems. The Mother left Her body in 1973 and fifteen years have passed since then. We have now children who never had the chance to see Her. And it is more than a miracle to see children having a vivid feeling of the Mother and dealing with Her in a concrete living manner. They seem to feel Her alive, listening to their problems and solving them. This is true, though difficult for the adults to believe.

Sumedha is a teacher at our Centre of Education, teaching English to a class in the age group of about 16 years. She gave them a subject for an essay, 'My most memorable moments with the Mother' and all took the subject as natural and wrote their experiences with the Mother. These experiences surprised Sumedha and she brought the essays to the writer and said, "See, how

living is their contact with the Mother, even though they never saw Her.” These essays truly make inspiring reading, so honest and so straightforward they are. They are given here for the joy of their contents.

One girl gives a vivid account of the last 21st February. She says,

“Just a few days ago it was the 21st February, Mother’s birthday. With all enthusiasm and full of energy I got up early in the morning to wish Her ‘Bonne Fête’ and a very good day. I was in the 4th line. Impatiently, I waited for the memorable moment of wishing Her a Happy Birthday in Her room. We were taken in at 5-45 a.m. I felt in me a strong surge of energy. And finally I entered Her room. I saw Her sitting on the chair, wearing a full white dress. I wished Her a very very Happy Birthday. She had a mysterious smile on Her lips. As we were not allowed to do Pranams, I had to come out of Her room very fast. But when I came out, there rose a question in my mind, ‘Did I really see Her? Or was it an illusion? Or was it a reaction of my wish? Sometimes when we wish a lot for something, it happens.’ I haven’t found any answer to my question yet.

“Meditation time was nearing. As I had such a lovely experience in the morning, there was no excitement in me. I was calm and quiet. Because of the great rush in the Ashram, I sat in the school in a room, closing all the windows. I know that wherever one is, Mother’s presence and protection are always with us. So I sat down for meditation. As I had got up very early in the morning, I felt sleepy, and unknowingly I dropped off to sleep. There was no one else with me in the room. I was so tired that I slept very deeply. I think I was fully unconscious. Suddenly I felt a soft touch, not on my body, but somewhere in me. The touch was so soft and so delicate. I was never touched with such a soft hand full of affection. The touch wasn’t to make me sleep but to wake me up. I slowly opened my eyes. I saw no one in the room but the time was 10.45. The meditation was over a quarter hour back. Then, who was it? Who woke me up?

“I understood that it was none other than Mother. Of course, it is Her job to wake up her child. I thanked Mother and was grateful to HER.

“The whole day was just fantastic; I spent my whole day remembering the experience which I had had in the morning. It was the most memorable moment with Mother.”

This is her full essay. Is it not inspiring? Here is another full essay of a girl aged 15.

“After a hard day I feel I need to relax and have comfort. When I feel dull, my heart is heavier than lead and my mood is blacker than coal. I try to find a cure for it. There is only one medicine for it, I feel, and the only one I know: that is to go to the Ashram and sit there quietly in the Meditation Hall or on the staircase near the Samadhi and try to feel the Mother’s presence all around. The smoke of the Agarbatties gives a mystic feeling of loneliness. I think of the

Mother and imagine Her on the bed in the Meditation Hall or sitting on a chair by the Samadhi looking at me and I looking at Her with big eyes. Sometimes I try to feel as if She is trying to tell me something but till now I have never understood. I can say in short, every day I have a memorable moment with the Mother because every day I go to the Ashram quite late at night and try to feel Her presence surrounding me. I feel fresh and new-born when I go home."

How honestly the student speaks! She is conscious of her dullness and knows the remedy for it, knows the source of help and seeks it clear-mindedly, is not confused and perplexed. What a discovery for life is it to know our difficulty, to know where to seek help and act accordingly!

Here is a third student with a problem of her own and the situation she had. This too is given whole.

"This incident had taken place about four years ago. It was the night of Dec. 23, 1983. At that time I was not studying in 'Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education'. My name had been on the waiting list for three years and this year I had a lot of hope of getting admitted to the school. But already the yearly new admissions list had been declared and the school had started, but my name was not to be found on the new list. I was feeling really very bad, but still I had some hope left, but it was getting less, day by day.

"So, on the night of the 23rd of Dec. 1983 before going to bed, I just looked at the Mother's photo, and I kept on staring at it, as though I was seeing Her in reality. As I was staring at Her, in my mind I kept on asking her one question, 'Why didn't I get admitted to the school?' After a while, the thought that I hadn't got admitted to the school became really unbearable and as I had lost most of my hope, I burst into tears. I kept on crying and blaming the Mother for not admitting me to the school. I was feeling as though I was really speaking to the Mother and not just thinking. Then, after some time, I stopped crying, and I felt as if the Mother had consoled me.

"I went off to bed later. I had lost all hope of joining the Ashram school. Then on the 25th of Dec. as it was Christmas, I went to the Theatre, and there, to my utter surprise, Gangaramda came and told me that there was a seat vacant, as one person hadn't come, so I could go and meet Parudi. I got very excited and the very next day I went at about 9 a.m. and met Parudi. When I went there I came to know that I would get admission if I wanted to. So, at once I said 'Yes' and I was admitted to the school on the 26th Dec. 1983, ten days late. I was so happy, that I just went on looking at the Mother and thanking Her.

"At that moment I felt that the Mother had listened to my prayer and fulfilled my wish. So, those two moments, before getting admitted to the school and after my admission, were my most memorable moments that I enjoyed with the Mother."

Can this student forget this experience? And what an invaluable gain for life it is!

Here is a fourth student. He says,

“Although I haven’t seen Mother in her physical form, yet I meet Her in my dreams or when I am in difficulties.

“She is just like a friendly Mother to me, and I always want to be near Her. When I am in difficulties, I pray to Her and in very little time my problem vanishes. It seems as if She has a magic wand which She waves and touches the difficulty with it, and whoosh! vanishes the difficulty. Some of my experiences I am writing below.

“Now I am in the Ashram School, but there was a time when I used to be a visitor to Pondicherry. Once I saw the students marching and I too wanted to join this school. That day, I remember having cried bitterly in front of Mother’s photo. I frankly told her my wish. She seemed to be telling me, with a friendly smile, ‘Wait and you will get it.’ Now any day, if any difficulty comes I pray to Her.”

A fifth student says:

“On my birthday I feel Her presence and that is why I am quiet and calm. When I jump around I feel as if She leaves me alone, but when I am quiet I feel that She helps me.

“In Group I feel Her presence. She gives me the courage to do the one and half somersaults, dive from the five metre board in the swimming pool. She gives me the sportman’s spirit in all sports.”

The students who wrote the essays were in their early teens. And all the essays are sincere expressions and most enjoyable. These five may be taken as representatives.

Young students getting this living contact with the Mother and feeling Her constant help for all difficulties is really wonderful. And their only physical basis is the photo of the Mother and the atmosphere in which they live. Actually the Mother Herself gives Her contact and help to one who aspires for them, whether a general seeker or a student.

The Mother’s continued Presence and Action at the Ashram and the School is a fact to be sought, felt and profited by.

INDRA SEN

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

*(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1988)*

## The Mother's Message

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



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THE frigid February month began.

There were swirling grey clouds, thickening mist and dampness. Fierce, raw, windy and foggy winter was here.

Now the snowflakes drifted down through the chilled air. I loathed to leave my cosy room.

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On the 5th a folder arrived from the Mother. There was a picture of Mahasaraswati on the right side—beneath it, the Mother had written:

“To my dear child Huta  
With blessings.”

On the left I read a message from Sri Aurobindo, in Sanskrit reproduced in his own handwriting:

*“Tat Savitur varam rūpam jyotiḥ parasya dhimahi  
Yannah satyena dipayet.”*

His translation ran:

“Let us meditate on the most auspicious form of  
Savitri, on the Light of the Supreme which shall  
illumine us with the Truth.”

This is Sri Aurobindo’s own “Gayatri” modifying the traditional Gayatri of the Rigveda to express the new realisation of his Integral Yoga of Supermind or Divine Truth-Consciousness.

His comment on the Gayatri is:

“The power of Gayatri is the Light of the Divine  
Truth. It is a mantra of Knowledge.”

The Mother distributed on 2nd February 1960—the day of Mahasaraswati Puja—the message she had sent me in advance.

\*

The pale winter sun was shining, the weather had warmed slightly—just enough for the snow on the street to melt.

Doris and Aunt Margaret came to meet me separately at the Palace Hotel. They found my room exceedingly small. I told them: “I intend to go to Mrs Bee’s House as soon as the room I want is vacated. Here there is no attached bathroom. I have to go down to take my bath and wash my clothes. Since it is shared by others, I scrub the bath-tub with Vim and Dettol before using

it. The only advantage is that now the hotel-owners occasionally let me cook curry and rice near my room in their small kitchenette.”

When I came back to the Ashram Aunt Margaret kept on writing to me. In one of her letters dated 16th February 1973 she wrote:

“Our poor London is very much soiled by all the modern buildings and has lost most of its former character. I doubt if you would find your way about any longer. And yet, I was walking near Marble Arch the other day and saw the Palace Hotel was still there looking exactly the same. I so well remember visiting you there in the basement and watching you cook some curry with chick peas in it. In my recipe book I still have a page with the heading—HUTA’S CURRY.”

\*

Sudha and I, after our colleges, went twice a week in the late evening to one of the Educational Institutions run by LCC—London County Council—where we were learning how to make flowers from silk, satin, velvet and cambric. We were also learning bead-work on a tambour-frame twice a week as previously arranged.

There were two lady-teachers—one ample in proportions, rather strict, and glum, the other slim, smiling and sympathetic.

We were introduced to several sizes and shapes of tools named goffer, curler and marker. Besides, our requirements were: forceps, gloves, scissors, small electric hot-plate, powder gelatine, tissue-paper, tiny cushion, Milliner’s Indian-rubber solution, durofix, sable and hog’s-hair brushes, wires, cotton-wool, turpentine, methylated spirit, stencil colours and different kinds and textures of fabrics.

First, we had to cut the pattern of certain flowers, then stiffen and dye the material, trace the pattern on the fabric, cut the petals and leaves out of it, give shades of colours to them. Afterwards we had to shape them with hot tools. Finally we were asked to fix them and arrange them artistically.

We made quite a number of flowers—carnations, roses, buttercups, daisies, love-in-a-mist, chrysanthemums, pansies and poppies.

I loved making roses, which after being finished looked like real roses. More attraction was added when I sprayed them with rose-perfume.

The slim teacher called me “Butterfly.” This reminds me of a letter by the Mother to me:

“Do not be confused. All this is to teach you to be like a butterfly without care for the future—leaving all to the care of the Supreme in full trust and confidence.”

The teacher asked me to read the book *Flower Making* by Clara Kebbell. Her introduction is interesting:

“The art of flower making, like many other arts, is helped by treasured examples from the past, from which we can learn a great deal. The Romans were expert in it, and their flowers and wax fruits reached a high degree of perfection. We read that the ladies of Henry VIII’s court prized sprays of yellow silk fennel, made in Paris—and also in London, by a little hunchback woman. Unfortunately neither the wax fruits of the Romans nor the yellow silk fennel of the Tudors survive for us to see and admire, but a seventeenth century example of the flower-maker’s art has recently been discovered at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

In the eighteenth century the Meissen porcelain factory was manufacturing for the Marquise de Pompadour flowers which were so marvellously naturalistic that when she had four or five hundred of them placed in a conservatory for Louis XV to see, the King believed them to be real. Porcelain flowers are exactly what one would expect the exquisite Pompadour to favour. In the centre of the eighteenth century French posy on page 59 we have flowers in Meissen porcelain, gold and pearls. This posy was also discovered quite recently at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

In England, at about the same time, Mrs Delaney was making flowers cut out of coloured paper. She called them ‘paper mosaiks’, and told Horace Walpole that they were ‘wrought from Nature’, and that she had been supplied with models from all the great gardens in England. Examples of her art can still be seen in the British Museum and a ‘flower necklet’ of ribbon and cloth flowers, *circa* 1870, is in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Artificial flowers are obviously better for wearing than real flowers, for they do not fade. Paris has taught us to understand and appreciate this particular branch of the flower-maker’s art.

Flowers for exhibition stands, for decorating stage and film settings and for shop-window displays, all have their place in the following pages. I hope to show readers how the flowers are made and, if their study of flower reproductions gives them as much pleasure as it has given me, they have much happiness in store, and the hard work and the inevitable disappointments will seem worthwhile.

André Maurois quotes Bacon as saying that ‘Art is Man added to Nature’, while Paul Nash has said that ‘When you paint Nature, observe with intelligence and interpret with imagination’. It seems to me that Bacon and Nash explain how it is that flowers modelled by hand from different materials can be quite as ‘right’ and satisfactory in their own way as flower pictures painted on canvas. Perhaps, as they begin to be familiar with the marvellous intricacies of the flowers from which they are modelling, readers will realise



the truth of what a wise old artist friend once said to me: "Nothing is put there, everything had to be there."

\*

On the third floor two teachers were teaching us bead-work on a tambour-frame.

There were two stands supporting the frame. Each student had her own frame. We had to sit on a chair to do the work.

First we passed beads through a long thread and stabbed the special hooked-needle through the respective designs on the material which was fixed in the frame. The real pattern took shape automatically under the frame.

We did many specimens on diverse coloured cloths. Then we made the white satin evening-handbags with bugle-beading and pearls. Finally we sewed on them elegant handles with chains. Our teacher informed us: "Girls, do you know at what price these types of evening-bags are sold in big shops? Not less than 50 guineas!"

The teacher examined my work and said: "Miss Hindocha, would you like to take a job in our college? We do admire your efficiency in work and it will be a great help."

I said: "Madam, I am very thankful to you for offering the job, but I can't stay on in London, for my home is in India." She tut-tutted.

In that class when there was no bead-work, the teachers taught some ladies how to make hats.

They showed us several hats, also a beautiful satin gown which was heavily encrusted with pale rubies, pearls and bugle-beading. They said with pride: "Occasionally we make gowns for the Royal Family."

\*

The Mother sent a folder. On the right side there was a reproduction of a painting by Pramodkumar. It depicted two golden swans gliding in a vast sky. Underneath the picture the Mother had inscribed:

"Les annonceurs du monde Supramental."  
("The announcers of the Supramental world.")

On the right she had written:

"To my dear little child Huta  
With my love and blessings."

After her signature she had added:

“This is the picture I shall distribute on the 21st of February.”

Tears of gratitude dimmed my eyes. Invariably she sent me messages in advance, which moved me so much.

I hastened to buy some gifts for the Mother and send them by air-mail so that they might reach her on her birthday.

\*

On 19th February, 1960 there was a tense atmosphere of excitement. Hundreds of Londoners' eyes were rivetted on Buckingham Palace, eager and expectant with the hope that they might share the joy of their beloved Queen and her husband, Duke of Edinburgh, when the birth of the Queen's third child, Andrew Albert Christian Edward would be announced.

These people slept overnight in the Park equipped with blankets, pillows and thermos-flasks and eatables.

\*

On 21st there was a gathering at Doris's place, because that day was the Mother's birthday. As always there were readings and meditation ending with high tea and exchanges of pleasantries and good will.

The devotees of the Mother liked the folder I showed them.

\*

It was a great joy to receive yet another folder from the Mother on 29th February—the first recurrence of the date of the Supramental Manifestation in the leap year 1956.

On the outside of the folder she had written:

“To my dear little child Huta  
With love and blessings.”

After her signature she had added:

“This is what I shall distribute on the 29th February.

Your parcel has just arrived bringing all the nice things for my birthday. They have been fully appreciated.”

Inside the folder there was a message in French on the left side and its translation in English on the right:

During the common meditation  
on Wednesday the 29th February 1956

“This evening the Divine Presence, concrete and material, was there present amongst you. I had a form of living gold, bigger than the universe, and I was facing a huge and massive golden door which separated the world from the Divine.

As I looked at the door, I knew and willed, in a single movement of consciousness, that ‘*the time has come,*’ and lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer I struck one blow, one single blow on the door and the door was shattered to pieces.

Then the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow.”

29-2-1960

The Mother

Here I recall the following verses from *Savitri*, Bk. I, Canto II:

“The great World-Mother now in her arose:  
A living choice reversed fate’s cold dead turn,  
Affirmed the spirit’s tread on Circumstance,  
Pressed back the senseless dire revolving Wheel  
And stopped the mute march of Necessity.  
A flaming warrior from the eternal peaks  
Empowered to force the door denied and closed  
Smote from Death’s visage its dumb absolute  
And burst the bounds of consciousness and time.”

The Mother has emphasised in her writing:

“The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality.

It is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it.”

\*

There was a meeting at Doris’s. All the people present read the message the Mother had sent me. They were highly appreciative.

It was a luminous day for us.

That very night I wrote a letter to the Mother.

“My dearest Mother,  
Pranam.

Please accept my gratitude for sending me messages and *Bulletins* unfailingly.

I am extremely happy you liked the things I had sent you.

In the depth of my heart there is always a stream of love for you, flowing serenely, sweetly.

Outwardly I am meeting with hideous difficulties and setbacks. Harrowing experiences, confusions and sufferings have besieged me.

Now gradually I am waking up fast to the fact that I cannot sail along in a smooth and tranquil sea expecting everything to be marvellous.

Ma, I feel empty—as if I have forgotten my goal. I do await the new page of my life to be turned by the Supreme.

Believe me, I am far from doing worthwhile things. My heart grieves with sorrow.

Your Force, Grace and Love make me go on—and I live.

Again and again I thank you for loving me.

Yours,  
Huta

(*To be continued*)

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## BUDDHA'S HAND: *Abhaya Mudra*

THIS lifted hand of princely tenderness,  
Rose-petalled softness gliding forth in streams,  
To stem the tide of woes that thickly press—  
Thy unperturbèd calm how moveless seèms,  
Yet ever moved to see life's nightmare dreams  
Ensnaring fools of time. Love's granite Might!  
Thou hurlest back dark waves that come to dash  
Against our human shores. An endless fight  
Behind this calm I hear, a plangent crash  
Of two opposing seas: one towering high  
In furious storm to overwhelm the earth,  
And pall with hate and lust the azure sky,  
The other a frozen peace of the Arctic zone  
For ever beating back the hordes of death—  
Eternal, tranquil, puissant, mute, alone.

R. N. KHANNA

## SRI AUROBINDO AND THE HOOGHLY CONFERENCE

*(This September marks the 79th anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's visit to Chinsurah in order to attend the Provincial Conference of Bengal held in 1909.)*

THE Bengal Provincial Conference of 1909, well-known as the Hooghly Conference, bears a considerable importance in the life-history of Sri Aurobindo.

This Conference saw 'Arabinda Ghose'—'a dangerous character'<sup>1</sup> of British India—at his last big political meeting before he entered his 'cave of tapasya' at Pondicherry for the preparation of lifting humanity to the rung of Divine Life. This Conference witnessed the most practical Sri Aurobindo, knew his effort for unity, felt the Yogi Sri Aurobindo in the worker. Some also felt in his presence that a 'great spiritual force was working'<sup>2</sup> on this political platform. All these things can be dealt with by able aspirants at length in future. Here we will confine ourselves only to two issues in the present paper:

First, to find out the dates on which the Conference was held,

Secondly, to find out the date of Sri Aurobindo's arrival at Chinsurah, the venue of the Conference.

In all the authentic biographies of Sri Aurobindo either no specific dates are mentioned in the case of the Conference or the dates are said to be the 6th or the 7th of September. We may take some examples.

(a) In the *Chronology of Sri Aurobindo's Life* we find 'September, Leader of the Nationalists at the Bengal Provincial Conference, Hooghly.'<sup>3</sup>

(b) In all the editions of A. B. Purani's *The Life of Sri Aurobindo* again only the month of September is mentioned with no date.

(c) K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, in the first edition of his *Sri Aurobindo*, wrote: '19 September 1909', but in the fourth edition of 1985, he writes: 'on the 6th and 7th September 1909'. But he does not refer to any source for it.

(d) It is the same with the book by Rishabhchand. In *Sri Aurobindo: His Life Unique* he too mentions 'on the 6th and 7th September', without giving any note as to where he got the dates from.

But if we look at the Government notes of that time and the reports in the contemporary papers about the Conference, we will find that the dates given in the aforesaid books are not correct. Let us have a look at the reports of that time.

(a) On the 2nd September, 1909 *The Bengalee* writes: 'The Bengal Provincial Conference meets this year at Chinsurah on the 5th and 6th September next.'

(b) In the telegram dated the 10th September 1909 from the Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, to the Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, we find: 'Provincial Conference was held at Hooghly on fifth and sixth September.'<sup>4</sup>

(c) An informer named 'L' sent a report on the 8th September where we find: 'on the 5th and 6th instants.'<sup>5</sup>

(d) *The Bengalee* informed its readers on the 2nd September 1909: 'For the convenience of the delegates and visitors, the East Indian Railway authorities have arranged to stop the 7 Up Express train at Chinsurah and to run a Special train from Bandel to Howrah at 9 p.m. (Calcutta time) on the 5th and 6th September next.'

(e) In the detailed report of the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal we get: (i) 'The Conference was opened at Chinsurah on the 5th September...' (ii) 'On the 6th the Conference re-assembled at 2 o'clock...'<sup>6</sup>

(f) In *Dharma* (a Bengali journal edited by Sri Aurobindo) under the title 'News' we find: 'Bengal Provincial Conference was held in Hooghly last Sunday and Monday.'<sup>7</sup>

(g) *The Bengalee* (September 8, 1909) wrote that the Conference met 'on Sunday and Monday last.'

One finds that these 'Sunday and Monday' were the 5th and the 6th September of 1909.

So from all the contemporary reports we can be sure that the Bengal Provincial Conference of 1909 met at Chinsurah in Hooghly District on the 5th and the 6th September and not on the 6th and the 7th September.

#### *Arrival of Sri Aurobindo in Chinsurah*

When Sri Aurobindo, the leader of the Nationalists, arrived to attend the Conference is a point of note to those who are interested in historical facts. But Sri Aurobindo's arrival (both date and time) is of great importance to the devotees in general and the people of Hooghly Chinsurah in particular, who have cherished it in their hearts and have been celebrating this day for long with love and respect. The people of the locality have had no problem with the date of his arrival, as Professor Jyotishchandra Ghosh, an eminent revolutionary who had taken a leading part in receiving Sri Aurobindo at Chinsurah, had himself marked the 6th September as the date of arrival and had for years attended meditation in the same room where Sri Aurobindo had sat for the first time in Chinsurah.<sup>8</sup>

But when it came to be known that the Conference was held on the 5th and 6th September, questions cropped up. It was then found that Jyotishchandra had never mentioned any date for the Hooghly Conference in his well-known book, *Life-Work of Sri Aurobindo*. He wrote simply: 'in September, 1909.' It may be remembered that this book was first published in 1929 and its 2nd edition came out in 1951. In both the editions he had maintained the same statement.

Moreover, in one of his early writings too, Jyotishchandra had noted, 'That

year (1909), it was decided that the Bengal Provincial Conference will be held in the month of September in Hooghly.<sup>9</sup>

In 1957, forty-eight years after the Hooghly Conference, Jyotishchandra mentioned<sup>10</sup> the 6th September as the date of arrival, which he had never recorded in any of his earlier notes.

So in the context of the new findings with regard to the dates it began to be wondered whether Sri Aurobindo had attended the Conference on the last day only, that is, the 6th September. But that could not be, because all the documents of the period indicated clearly that he was present on both the days.<sup>11</sup>

We may quote here only two reports which establish that Sri Aurobindo was present on the first day of the Conference.

(1) *The Bengalee* reports on September 7, 1909 about the first day's proceedings: 'A huge pandal... by 12 a.m. the place was crowded to overflowing.... Both Babu Surendranath and Babu Arabinda received animated welcome.'

(2) On the 20th September, 1909, the Chief Secretary of the Government of Bengal sent a report which says: 'The Conference was opened at Chinsurah on the 5th September.... Arabinda Ghosh attended as the elected delegate for Uttarpara and Diamond Harbour and for the students of Hooghly and Chinsurah and the senior students of Calcutta.... Babu Surendra Nath Banerji and Arabinda Ghosh were each presented on arrival with a printed address by the students of Hooghly and Chinsurah. Arabinda Ghosh receiving warmer welcome.'<sup>12</sup>

We can, therefore, be sure that Sri Aurobindo was indeed present in Chinsurah before 12 a.m. on the 5th September, 1909.

Did Sri Aurobindo leave Chinsurah on September 5 and come back on September 6? That could not possibly be because all the reports coincide in stating that the Subjects Committee had met on the *night* of the 5th and again on the morning of the 6th September and that Sri Aurobindo had participated in both the meetings. Besides, as already referred to above, the Chief Secretary's telegram of the 10th September, 1909, also reports that "Surendranath Banerji and Arabinda Ghosh were both present and latter received warmest reception on sixth."<sup>13</sup>

So the only question remains as to when exactly Sri Aurobindo came and on which precise date.

Here Jyotishchandra's reminiscences help us most because he was actually present at Chinsurah station and was in charge of receiving Sri Aurobindo. Jyotishchandra recalls: 'Sri Aurobindo... will arrive at Chinsurah with 200 nationalist members from Calcutta by a train in the evening' (*Sandhyā gārite*).<sup>14</sup>

Here we may remark that after a lapse of many years one might err as to the date, but the impression of a particular time, like morning or evening, is most likely to remain unmistakably vivid in the memory. Thus, we should give importance to the time mentioned by Jyotishchandra, that is, 'evening'.

If evening was the time of Sri Aurobindo's arrival, then we can reasonably presume that he would come with so many delegates on the evening *before* the Conference, which is evidently the evening of the 4th September. A further support is found in an announcement appearing in *The Bengalee* of Thursday, the 2nd September, 1909, relating to the arrangement that had been made for the reception of the delegates, which says: 'Volunteers will be in attendance at Chinsurah EIR station, Hooghlyghat EIR station and Naihati ERSR station on the evening of the 4th September and on the mornings of the 5th and 6th September next.' Reception by the volunteers had been contemplated for only *one* evening, that is to say, the evening of the 4th September, other timings being the mornings of other dates.

Thus, in the light of the above facts, we feel certain that Sri Aurobindo did *not* arrive on the evening of the 6th September; and since it is equally certain that his arrival time was before 12 a.m. of September 5, the most plausible conclusion seems to be that he arrived at Chinsurah on the evening of the 4th September, 1909.

TRIJA RAY

#### NOTES

1. Archival Notes, *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research (SAAR)* April, 1983, p. 89.
2. *Life-Work of Sri Aurobindo* (2nd edition, 1951) p. 73, by Prof. Jyotish Chandra Ghosh.
3. *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL)*, Vol. 30, p. 11.
4. Documents, *S.A.A.R.*, December 1983, p. 190.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 191, 192.
7. *Dharma*, Monday, 28th Bhadra, 1316, p. 13 (translated from Bengali)
8. 'Sri Aurobindo's Visit Recalled', *Hindustan Standard*, September 16, 1960.
9. 'Gare Othar Pathe, Na Bhanganer Pathe': *Atmaparichayer Yatkinchut*, p. 8. (translated from Bengali)
10. *Atiter ek Diner Smaraklipi*, 29th August, 1957.
11. Apart from all the Government and newspaper records, there is one personal note by Shri Arunchandra Dutta of Prabartak Sangha, Chandannagar to the effect that he had seen Sri Aurobindo on both the days only in the Conference. *Nachiketa* (15 8 1978 edition).
12. Documents. *S.A.A.R.*, December, 1983, p. 191.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
14. *Atiter ek Diner Smaraklipi*, 29th August, 1957. (translated from Bengali)



## THE TALE OF SAVITRI ACCORDING TO THE MAHABHARATA

*(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1988)*

ASWAPATY began attending to the details of marriage. He invited the elderly Brahmins and all the priests officiating at the holy sacrifice and the chanters of the Riks. Choosing an auspicious day and time he, along with them and his daughter, commenced the journey to the forest-hermitage where dwelt the king-sage Dyumatsena. On reaching the place, and following the high tradition of proposing a marriage, he formally made a request to Dyumatsena to accept Savitri as a bride for his son Satyavan. Dyumatsena was somewhat hesitant in the beginning, as he felt that he was living the life of a destitute, devoid of royalty, having lost his kingdom and having been driven out into the wilderness; he felt that he was no equal in several respects to King Aswapaty to establish this tie. He also had the apprehension whether the young Princess would at all be able to adjust herself to their present pattern of life and bear the hardships of a forest-dwelling. But Aswapaty assured him that he had made the proposal in the full knowledge of all these circumstances and pleaded not to be refused. He further told him it was with affection and in the friendship which does not discriminate between persons according to their status that he had approached him. Dyumatsena finally accepted the offer and confided in him that it was actually his long-cherished desire that was being fulfilled in this relationship. The marriage was duly solemnised by the learned Brahmins in the presence of the great Rishis of the forest. Satyavan was happy that in Savitri he had found a beautiful wife with all the exquisite qualities of a high-born virgin; Savitri too was joyous that her heart's desire had been so well fulfilled:

सत्यवानपि तां भार्यां लब्ध्वा सर्वगुणान्विताम् ।  
मुमुदे सा च तं लब्ध्वा भर्तारं मनसेप्सितम् ॥

Soon the marriage-party left for Madra leaving Savitri behind to live in the hermitage with her husband and her parents-in-law. She laid aside all the ornaments and jewellery; she also gave up rich clothes and started wearing bark garments and red-dyed robes, accepting the simple and sacred life of those forest-dwelling ascetics. She looked after the physical needs and all the small wants of her old mother-in-law; whatever little she spoke with her father-in-law, it was always with a sense of deep humility and reverence. Both of them were immensely pleased by her conduct and behaviour. She also performed, with noble composure and grace and poise, the various routines and the household chores of attending to the kitchen-fire and using broom and jar. In a like manner, always remaining calm and contented, employing soft and sweet language, mindful of her

husband's needs and desires, she kept Satyavan ever happy. Thus devoted to service and with absorption in tapasya a lot of time went by.

But the virtuous woman suffered greatly within. With each rising sun or while sleeping in the night, at every passing moment, she remembered Narad's words and felt the cruel day approaching closer. When she counted that only four days were left, and Satyavan would be living no more afterwards, she resolved to perform the three-night vow, *trivātra vrata*, of fasting and standing at one single place through the entire period. Dyumatsena, on coming to know of this, was very much distressed and tried to explain to her how difficult the vow could be and advised her to abstain from it. Savitri, however, assured him that she was quite capable of standing upto the demand and rigour and told him that he need not have any apprehensions in her fulfilling it. Dyumatsena finally conceded her wish seeing her determined to carry it out and blessed her in her undertaking. Remaining erect like a stick without moving from the chosen spot and without taking any food for three days, Savitri succeeded in her vow by the power of her strong will and a woman's strength to suffer.

On the fourth day, the destined day of Satyavan's death, she got ready well before sunrise and lit a bright fire and made offerings to the gods. Then she went to the parents-in-law and paid her respects to them. When they told her to break the fast, for she had become extremely weak, not having taken food during the entire period, she replied that she would do so only in the evening. Afterwards, she went to the various hermitages around and made obeisances to the Rishis. They all blessed her with auspicious things dear to a young devout wife. She, accomplished in the Yoga of Meditation, willed their blessings to come true. On returning, she saw Satyavan, with the axe on his shoulder, leaving for the forest; she halted him and told him that he would not go alone for work and that she would accompany him to the forest on that particular day. He tried to dissuade her but to no avail. Finally he asked her to get the permission from his father. Savitri approached her father-in-law and pleaded that she could not bear separation from her husband and asked for permission to go with him; she even told him that had it not been to fetch for his gurus flowers and fruits and sacrificial sticks required for the holy Yajna, she would not have allowed Satyavan to go for work. She also expressed her own little desire to see the beautiful forest, full of trees and flowers, to which she had never gone since her coming to the hermitage. Dyumatsena, recollecting the past one year, noted that ever since her father had left Savitri in his charge, never had she requested him for any favour nor had she asked for anything in particular. He could not refuse her request now. He told her that she could do what her heart desired. Then counselling Savitri not to be inattentive in duty while following Satyavan, he permitted them to go together to the wood.

Permission granted, the young couple set out happily, hand in hand. Satyavan would show to Savitri the sacred rivers carrying waters and point out

trees laden with flowers. In the lovely and delightful forests, with flocks of peacocks dancing there, they heard all around a lyrical note of joy. Satyavan would speak to her in honey-sweet words.

नदीः पुण्यवहाश्चैव पुष्पितांश्च नगोत्तमान् ।  
सत्यवानाह पश्येति सावित्रीं मधुरं वचः ॥

And Savitri too, delighted by the beauty of the surroundings, and in the company of her lover, responded to him with equal sweetness. But she was constantly watching her husband in all his movements and did not allow him to go out of her sight. Remembering Narad's words she knew that his life was now in hours and he would die with the arrival of the Time-Person, *kāla-purusha*. Within, she was in great agony all the while. Yet, accomplished in austerity as she was, and reckoning the swift-approaching fatal moment, she remained calm.

Satyavan, lustrous in his strength, collected a basketful of fruits with the help of Savitri. Then he started cutting the fire-wood. He wanted to complete the day's task quickly and spend the rest of the time with his beloved. But he suddenly felt exhausted due to over-work and began perspiring profusely. There was a severe headache, as though shafts of agony were piercing through the skull. The limbs were in pain and in the heart there was an intense burning sensation. Savitri immediately went closer to him and sat on the ground under the tree and took his head in her lap. She knew that the foretold moment had arrived and that the *kāla-purusha* would now soon appear.

Presently, Savitri saw a bright Person standing there in front. He was luminous and beautiful in his red attire and wore a splendid crown over his head; it looked as though the Sun-God himself had come there. His body was dark in hue, yet lustrous, and he had red eyes and was steadily staring at Satyavan. There was a noose in his hand. It inspired great dread, indeed. On seeing him, Savitri laid aside her husband's head on the ground and stood up with folded hands. Her heart was trembling, but she asked him who he was and why he had come. She told him that he did not look like one who was a human being and that he must be some god. The Person introduced himself as Yama and averred that he could converse with her because she was a devout and chaste woman and a practitioner of difficult austerities. He, instead of sending his subordinates, had come there himself to take away the soul of Satyavan. Yama explained to Savitri that Satyavan's was a virtuous soul with fine and beautiful features and that it was an ocean of noble qualities; as such, his deputies would not have been able to seize or snatch it. He then threw the noose and forcibly pulled the soul, no bigger than the thumb, *aṅguṣṭamātram puruṣa*, and started moving towards the South. When Satyavan stopped breathing, his body without its soul became pale and remained immobile and the lifeless corpse appeared very frightful. Savitri, afflicted with agony, followed Yama on his path. This

she could do because of the siddhi of the vow she had successfully observed.

A little while later Yama looked back and observed Savitri following him. He advised her to return as she had paid the debt to her husband by accompanying him after death over the permitted distance. She was free of the obligation and now she had to attend to the funeral rites of the dead. Savitri did not accept Yama's advice. She had walked with him for more than seven steps and therefore, according to the precepts of the well-versed, a friendly relationship was established between them. She told him so and made use of it and argued extensively with him on fundamental issues, he being the son of Vivasvan, the Sun-God, and the knower and upholder of the Law of Truth in the Universe.

विवस्वतस्त्वं तनयः प्रतापवां-  
स्ततो हि वैवस्वत उच्यसे बुधेः ।  
समेन धर्मेण चरन्ति ताः प्रजा-  
स्ततस्तवेहेश्वर धर्मराजता ॥

You are the mighty son of Vivasvan and that is why the learned call you Vivasvat; to all the creatures you are fair and you follow the dharma, for which reason you are also known as Dharmaraj.

Her speech was perfect following the rules of grammar and syntax, complete in knowledge of etymology and well-structured prosodically; and her reasoning too was flawless. She told him that her own place lay near her husband and she could not go back without him, firmly as she was fixed in the dharma. By austerity, devotion to the preceptor, love for the husband, observance of the sacred vows, and by the grace of Yama himself, there is nothing, she told him, that cannot be accomplished by a woman. Further, she asserted that all holy people abide in virtuous conduct and never have they sorrow nor are they any time afflicted. Company with pious people is always rewarding and therefore one should be ever closer to them. In the fellowship of saints and sages all fear disappears. For that reason, more than himself does a man trust holy persons and so does he give more of his love to them. Then in a tremendous moment of revelation, she even disclosed that it is by the Truth that the saints lead the sun; by askesis the saints uphold the earth; in the saints all the three divisions of Time find their refuge; noble persons in the midst of the saints have never any grief:

सन्तो हि सत्येन नयन्ति सूर्यं  
सन्तो भूमिं तपसा धारयन्ति ।  
सन्तो गतिर्भूतभव्यस्य राजन्  
सतां मध्ये नावसीदन्ति सन्तः ॥

In that conduct of the dharma the illustrious, the excellent, help each other and

do not do hurt to others. Therefore they are the protectors of the entire world.

Immensely pleased with the sublimity of these soul-felt utterances and with their Truth-contents, Yama granted her boon after boon. Indeed, the more and more she spoke the well-adorned and lofty things of the dharma, acceptable to the Truth adorer, in the same manner his admiration too grew for her. By the first two boons she desired eye-sight for her blind father-in-law and his lost kingdom; in the third boon she asked for a hundred sons for her father Aswapaty, true and heroic brothers to her. By the fourth boon she would have got a hundred sons for herself, but she argued that this boon was of a different kind than the other three. It could not have been fulfilled without the proper matrimony. She therefore reiterated her request for the life of Satyavan. Without him, she told Yama, she herself would be dead; she would abstain from any pleasure, even of entering heaven. If Satyavan was not present with her the boon would thus be waste, unfructuated. Then, in a kind of dialectics she pointed out the strange anomaly in Yama's words and actions;

वरात्सर्गः शतपुत्रता मम  
 त्वयैव दत्तो ह्यियते च मे पतिः ।  
 वरं वृणे जीवतु सत्यवानयं  
 तवैव सत्यं वचनं भविष्यति ॥

You have given me the boon of a hundred sons and you yourself are taking my husband away; for that reason I again ask the boon of life for Satyavan, by which your words shall come true.

Yama, exceedingly gladdened by Savitri's Words of the Dharma, saying 'Let it be so', released the noose around the soul of the dead. He told her that Satyavan was now in good health and fit to return to the earth with her. Further, he granted a life of four hundred years for him to live with her and perform the holy Yajnas for the welfare of the world. Then Yama, blessing Savitri and sending her back with the soul of Satyavan, returned to his own Abode.

*(To be continued)*

R. Y. DESHPANDE

# THE IMAGE OF "ETHER" IN SRI AUROBINDO'S WORKS

## A PRACTICAL HELP IN MEDITATION

*(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1988)*

### (1) Ether

Hard is it to persuade earth-nature's change;  
Mortality bears ill the eternal's touch:  
It fears the pure divine intolerance  
Of that assault of ether and of fire,  
It murmurs at its sorrowless happiness,  
Almost with hate repels the light it brings;  
It trembles at its naked power of Truth  
And the might and sweetness of its absolute Voice.

(Vol. 28, p. 7)

In her he found a vastness like his own,  
His high warm subtle ether he refound  
And moved in her as in his natural home.  
In her he met his own eternity.

(Vol. 28, p. 16)

In the wide signless ether of the Self,  
In the unchanging Silence white and nude,  
Aloof, resplendent like gold dazzling suns  
Veiled by the Ray no mortal eye can bear,  
The Spirit's free and absolute potencies  
Burn in the solitude of the thoughts of God.

(Vol. 28, p. 57)

Till in the naked ether of the peaks  
The spirit's simplicity alone is left,  
The eternal being's first transparent robe.

(Vol. 28, p. 106)

A soul not wrapped into its cloak of mind  
Could glimpse the true sense of a world of forms;  
Illumined by a vision in the thought,  
Upbuoyed by the heart's understanding flame,  
It could hold in the conscious ether of the spirit  
The divinity of a symbol universe.

(Vol. 28, p. 176)

As he moved in this ether of ambiguous life,  
Himself he grew a riddle to himself;  
As symbols he saw all and sought their sense.

(Vol. 28, p. 188)

They point above themselves with index peaks  
Through a pale-sapphire ether of God-mind  
Towards some gold Infinite's apocalypse.

(Vol. 28, p. 280)

A fire of passion burned in spirit-depths,  
A constant touch of sweetness linked all hearts,  
The throb of one adoration's single bliss  
In a rapt ether of undying love.

(Vol. 28, p. 291)

The Happy in their bright ether have not hearts  
More sweet and true than this of mortal make  
That takes all joy as the world's native gift  
And to all gives joy as the world's natural right.

(Vol. 29, p. 430)

Although designed like a nectar cup of heaven,  
Of heavenly ether made she sought this air,  
She too must share the human need of grief  
And all her cause of joy transmute to pain.

(Vol. 29, p. 457)

Then looking to know whence the intruders came  
She saw a spiritual immensity  
Pervading and encompassing the world-space  
As ether our transparent tangible air,  
And through it sailing tranquilly a thought.

(Vol. 29, p. 544)

I curbed the vacant ether into Space;  
A huge expanding and contracting breath  
Harboured the fires of the universe:  
I struck out the supreme original spark  
And spread its sparse ranked armies through the Inane,  
Manufactured the stars from the occult radiances,  
Marshalled the platoons of the invisible dance;  
I formed earth's beauty out of atom and gas,  
And built from chemic plasm the living man.

(Vol. 29, p. 617)

In him the architect of the visible world,  
At once the art and artist of his works,  
Spirit and seer and thinker of things seen,

Virāt, who lights his camp-fires in the suns  
 And the star-entangled ether is his hold,  
 Expressed himself with Matter for his speech: ...  
 His is the dumb will of atom and of clod;

(Vol. 29, p. 680)

But since our secret selves are next of kin,  
 A breath of unattained divinity  
 Visits the imperfect earth on which we toil;  
 Across a gleaming ether's golden laugh  
 A light falls on our vexed unsatisfied lives,  
 A thought comes down from the ideal worlds  
 And moves us to new-model even here  
 Some image of their greatness and appeal  
 And wonder beyond the ken of mortal hope.

(Vol. 28, p. 261)

I have heard strange voices cross the ether's waves,  
 The centaur's wizard song has thrilled my ear;

(Vol. 29, p. 401)

A Truth supreme has forced the world to be;  
 It has wrapped itself in Matter as in a shroud,  
 A shroud of Death, a shroud of Ignorance.  
 It compelled the suns to burn through silent Space,  
 Flame-signs of its uncomprehended Thought  
 In a wide brooding ether's formless muse:  
 It made of Knowledge a veiled and struggling light,  
 Of Being a substance nescient, dense and dumb,  
 Of Bliss the beauty of an insentient world.

(Vol. 29, p. 658)

There was a greater tranquil sweetness there,  
 A subtler and profounder ether's field  
 And mightier scheme than heavenliest sense can give.

(Vol. 29, p. 677)

## (2) Ethereal

A magical accord quickened and attuned  
 To ethereal symphonies the old earthy strings;

(Vol. 28, p. 27)

His greater consciousness withdrew behind;  
 Dim and eclipsed, his human outside strove  
 To feel again the old sublimities,  
 Bring the high saving touch, the ethereal flame,  
 Call back to its dire need the divine Force.

(Vol. 28, p. 35)



- A breathless summit region drew his gaze  
Whose boundaries jutted into a sky of Self  
And dipped towards a strange ethereal base. (Vol. 28, p. 120)
- Ethereal creatures drawn by body's lure (Vol. 28, p. 174)
- Ethereal thinkings into Matter's world; (Vol. 28, p. 243)
- Above were bright ethereal skies of mind, (Vol. 28, p. 264)
- And fallen from his ethereal element (Vol. 29, p. 428)
- To subtle worlds takes his ethereal course, (Vol. 29, p. 479)
- Touched by the ethereal raiment of the winds, (Vol. 29, p. 686)
- ...none touch,  
Arriving through a vague ethereal mist  
Out of which all things form that move in space,  
The shore that all can see but never reach. (Vol. 29, p. 688)
- The frontiers of the Ignorance shall recede,  
More and more souls shall enter into light,  
Minds lit, inspired, the occult summoner hear  
And lives blaze with a sudden inner flame  
And hearts grow enamoured of divine delight...  
These separate selves the Spirit's oneness feel,  
These senses of heavenly sense grow capable,  
The flesh and nerves of a strange ethereal joy  
And mortal bodies of immortality. (Vol. 29, p. 710)
- She bore the burden of infinity  
And felt the stir of all ethereal space. (Vol. 29, p. 711)

### (3) Etheric

- The records of the future and the past  
Outlined their excerpts on the etheric page. (Vol. 28, p. 44)
- At first was only an etheric Space: (Vol. 28, p. 155)
- He bore the ripples of the etheric sea; (Vol. 29, p. 415)

(Concluded)

Compiled by SHIVABHAI

# NOLINI KANTA GUPTA BIRTH CENTENARY

## Compiler's Note

ONLY the great can show the greatness of the greatest and none but the godly can lead others to God. This is the second half of Nolini-da's article on Sri Aurobindo. Here the adept of the divine mysticism opens a little more the door to the mystery of the Divine Mystic.

SHYAM KUMARI

## SRI AUROBINDO

### II

“The poet of patriotism, the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity” he was, in the famous words of his advocate and friend and follower who stood for him before the bar of History for his cause, and not merely before a British Court of Justice. Indeed he was all that, but today we have to add another epithet and complete the description. For he is now the builder of the Life Divine. This was indeed the secret Truth that worked in him from behind and gave to these earlier preoccupations the reality and the beauty they attained and the fullness of their significance. He worked for human evolution, that was his life mission. He thus formulates the stages of human evolution:

“Family, nationality, humanity are Vishnu's three strides from an isolated to a collective unity. The first has been fulfilled, we yet strive for the perfection of the second, towards the third we are reaching out our hands and the pioneer work is already attempted.”

But the supreme secret lies in Vishnu's fourth stride, from humanity to divinity. That is the goal of the evolution and that furnishes also the key to the solution of the problem. Whether in the matter of the family or the nationality or humanity in general there has been a stalemate, a stagnation, even a frustration; an effort towards progress seemed to lead more towards conflict, disharmony, away from what is beautiful and good and happy. That is bound to be. Man must reach his very highest and deepest, his absolute itself before he can arrive at perfection in the lower and the relative. Man must exceed himself if he is to fulfil himself. A new connotation has to be found for family and nationality and even humanity. That connotation, Sri Aurobindo says, is divinity.

We must understand however that there is divinity and divinity. There is a divinity that suffers, supports and transcends all that is existent. For it is the all-reality, all-consciousness, the ever-present and omnipresent Immutable behind the mutabilities of creation. That does not take part in the cosmic struggle, the universal urge of progress forward. Apart from the divinity that suffers,

there is a divinity that shapes—and is shaped at the same time, shapes from behind and is shaped itself in front. This dynamic Divine Sri Aurobindo calls the supramental Divine or the incarnate Divine Mother.

In the inevitable course of evolution man is something that will be surpassed, not in the sense that he will be rejected and thrown out as an unnecessary element, like some of the prehistoric animals, no, he will still be at the head of earthly creation, but undergo a sea-change, as it were, and be transmuted into a divine creature.

As at present man is a mental being, that is to say, it is his mind—his reason and intellect—that governs him and it is through that faculty that he governs the world. But mind is not the highest or the most powerful faculty in him, nor the last term of his consciousness. Beyond the mind there rise other powers of consciousness, tier upon tier, and man can go there, live there or bring them down into his normal life and change it into their pattern. The highest of these Sri Aurobindo calls the plane of Truth-Consciousness, the Supermind. It is the supreme luminous Power—the Light of lights—towards which the creation moves and by which the creation is moved in secret. It is the heart-centre of fulfilled harmony.

Man has been striving through his lesser powers, through the grace of the lower gods since his advent upon earth to arrive at a reconstruction of his life and surroundings. That is why he has never attained the full measure of success. Indeed a period of success or progress was always followed by a period of decline and retrogression, a so-called golden age by an age of iron. As a matter of fact today humanity finds itself terribly enclosed in a cage of iron as it were. The earth has become too small for his soaring capacities and multitudinous necessities—he is already thinking of a place on the moon! That is only the sign and symbol of an inner impasse to which he has arrived. The anguish of the human soul has reached its acme: the problems, social, political, educational, moral it is facing have proved themselves to be totally insoluble. Yes, he has run into a cul-de-sac, where he is caught as in a death-trap. No ordinary rational methods, half-way nostrums can deliver him any more. All the outer doors and issues are now closed for him; the only way is to turn inward, there lies the open road to freedom and fulfilment. That is the way to transcendence and surpassing. To attempt any other way is not only to try the impossible but to head straight towards doomsday.

The time then is now, for the time is ripe. It will not do to say that the way proposed is beyond the reach of the common man. He has neither the capacity nor the knowledge nor even the inclination or impulse to surpass himself, to do anything non-human. First of all, as I said, if man is to survive in any form, this is the only way and there is no second. Next, what do we know of the capacity and impulsion even of the common man? Even on a smaller scale and on the material level, have we not seen to what tremendous acts of heroism he

can rise automatically, through what travails—tapasya—of concentrated effort he agreed to pass, simply because the occasion demanded it? Man's secret soul is greater than all the limitation of his outward frame.

That does not mean that the entire human race will wholly change over to the new life. All, without exception, are not expected to come up to the highest level of fulfilment. But that is not required, for the beginning at least. It is always the few pioneers, a select group of forerunners that form the foundation of a new creation. A first snowball perhaps, but it moves and gathers others on the way and builds up larger and larger collectivities. At all crises of evolutionary cycles such beings inevitably appear, they are thrown up by Nature or they come down from above and incarnate; especially it is so when Nature proposes to take a leap and not merely trudge and crawl.

It is the fulfilment of Nature that has to happen and is happening, the fulfilment of the inferior Nature in and through the higher divine Nature. Here we come perhaps to the very heart of the mystery. For till now, till almost yesterday, we may say in a general way, the spiritual life, any kind of divine life was considered possible only through battling with Nature, through a struggle upstream against the current of Nature. Indeed Nature was despised, feared, rejected as an enemy of the Spirit. But today the wheel seems to have turned full circle. The Spirit recognises the body as its counterpart and visible form, welcomes the body as its earthly figure and expression. The old antinomy has become obsolete, because the body too on its side recognises that it has not the structure and character that millennial ignorance gave it. The material particles that constitute the physical body are found to be after all not inert masses but quantas of energy, of luminous energy. The spiritual Light above demands nothing better for its earthly home.

This is symbolical of the collaboration that Nature is now offering to the Spirit. A new substance, made of light-energy emanating from Consciousness-Force, is now slowly permeating the earth atmosphere, as the Mother declares and it is this that will serve as the basis of the new creation and give it its law and constitution. A new world built out of knowledge and vision and luminous power is destined to come, for man is no longer in love with his ignorance, but a divine afflatus is possessing him.

The new world has to be based on new foundations. The old world was built from outside with superficial cheap elements that lower Nature offers easily and profusely. It is body's needs, vital hungers assembled and arranged according to a plan supplied by mind's ideas and notions under the directive and compulsion of the ego, the sense or consciousness of one's separate individual existence as against others. The new world will start from the soul, the luminous divine element in man which is one with all and grow from within outward. It is as if the foundations are laid not below, but above—the tree of existence would branch out not from below upwards, but from above downward, in the image given by

the ancient Rishis of India. The individual will therefore be not primarily a body housing secondary—or as it is sometimes called epiphenomenal—movements such as those of the mind and the vital limited and largely conditioned by it. The individual will primarily be a consciousness, a focus of energy-consciousness existing and acting in union and communion with all other similar individual foci, for all form one single undivided entity. The body and life and mind are moulded in the substance and rhythm of that sovereign consciousness. The hard egoism or self-centredness, the gross animality that seem to be the very constitution of the human individual are dissolved into the soul's radiant urges.

The individual can be and is to be fulfilled in and through his soul—the presiding consciousness that has at its disposal the mind, the vital and the body as its instruments and means of expression, but which till now, because of an evolutionary necessity of growth and development, acted more as an obstruction or a veil than as an aid or a channel. When in the new consciousness the individual attains its soul-status, in other words, its divinity, then a reshaping and recasting of the lower limbs becomes possible and even inevitable. The soul status means freedom, harmony, purity, knowledge, power, delight and immortality, absolute and inalienable.

As individuals grow in this line, the social structure too is altered and transmuted. The harmony and fullness that individuals present are automatically represented in the collective grouping. Instead of a battling competitive society we have not merely a cooperative but a unitive community striving in a common aspiration towards a single unique achievement. For all individuals know and feel that they are but various limbs of the same organism, luminously and unfailingly functioning each in its and for its own appointment—expressing differently the one Light supreme.

And nations that are finding it so difficult, almost impossible, to form a comity that are in their disparate tendencies driving towards a catastrophe, perhaps annihilation, shall undergo a sea-change. The nation, the national being is also a reality, a divine reality that has to come to its own—that is to say, its own soul. For there is a collective soul, as well as an individual soul. It is the presiding deity, the norm of consciousness and being that works out the growth and evolution of a collectivity that has found a common life. This collectivity is also enlarging itself in wider and wider commonalty. As we see actually today the nation is tending towards and growing into the supranation or Commonwealth or Federation as it is termed politically.

The conception of the United States of the world is taking possession of the human mind; it is being applied and larger and more integrated collective groupings than the nation are developing; they may ere long become familiar realities. Such formations moving towards and effectuating the one indivisible humanity open out the possibility towards a superhumanity which will have to base itself on a new principle of organisation; for that must be a new mode of consciousness.

Even the family, the first unit of collective formation in humanity that has attained a fulfilled status, is yet capable of a remodelling, a transmutation in the higher supramental consciousness. The family instead of being built upon blood-relationship may surely have a different foundation in soul-kinship, in affinity of consciousness, comradeship in life-work. It means a total revolution, a reversal of nature, the roots being above instead of being below, as already referred to.

Such far-reaching changes may well be called for and inevitable if mankind is to be radically cured of all the illnesses of which it is till now a natural prey. The full health of a divine body in its individual as well as its collective and global functioning is assured only when the human being is lifted out of its mental sheath and established in the supramental status.

It is an adventure for the heroic soul, for the vanguards of humanity; but its fruition will spread abroad a benefit that even the common level shall share, even those that denied shall offer their accession and adhesion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 4, pp. 357-363.

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## RILKE'S DEATH MASK

INVISIBLE the true country.  
 So much he strove and sought  
 To find it within himself,  
 He had no other country.  
 So long, so much he looked,  
 Contemplated and tried  
 To understand its shapes,  
 Textures and colours, each shade  
 Of the landscape appealing  
 To him in its own way.  
 This was his form of courage—  
 To wait. How long he waited!  
 When he grew almost ready,  
 Ready, that is, for death,  
 When he took up and handled words  
 As if they were holy things,  
 Beauty flew out of his hands  
 Like the spirit, leaving him  
 Empty and completed.

MARTA GUHA

# THE GREATEST DEVOTEE

## A SHORT STORY

THE three worlds reverberated with the glory of the peerless devotion of Narad. The millions of saints of India looked to him to guide them on the path of true love, devotion, surrender and self-giving. It was universally accepted that nobody could attain to such perfect love and devotion as Narad.

Millenniums passed, but nobody could equal Narad, to say nothing of exceeding him. From all the lower, higher and mid-worlds aspirants to divinity came to him to ask for the boon of devotion. Now a hidden ego, the most dangerous *sattwic*—that is, virtuous—ego entered stealthily into the heart of Narad. Sometimes he became a little intolerant of the imperfections in the other devotees, sometimes he teased them, at other times he looked down upon them. True, these were only like passing shadows of birds' wings across a glorious autumn full moon, yet the insect had entered the flower.

Narad was now no longer satisfied with the praises of the Gods, sages or *siddhas*, *gandharvas* or men. He wanted that once Lord Vishnu should declare him as his greatest devotee. The liberated part in him reproached him, "Narad, this is the path to the abyss. The greater the devotee the greater his humility. Take heed, Narad. You might land in a mess and bloody your nose."

But the unenlightened parts in Narad pretended innocence and said, "Why! What is the harm in asking my Lord Vishnu? Surely if he tells me of somebody whose devotion is greater than mine then I'll go and sit at his feet and perfect my devotion."

The soul realised that Narad was in the grip of the incurable disease of ambition. With a sigh it veiled itself. Vanquishing his true being thus a Narad visibly puffed up reached *Vaikuntha*, the abode of Lord Vishnu.

Lord Vishnu knew of all that was happening within Narad. He carries the whole creation within himself. So nothing can be hidden from him. Especially vigilant is he about his dear devotees—he keeps a constant track of their progress and saves them from downfalls. So he was ready for Narad.

Narad came and fell at the feet of the Lord. The beauty and wonder of the Lord's presence filled him with such a felicity that he played ecstatic hymns on his *veena*. For the time-being the clamour of his ego was quietened. He truly became the greatest devotee. Each cell of his body sang a hymn of self-offering and of total surrender. The wind forgot to blow, the sun stopped in its tracks, the Gods sat on their thrones and heard the immortal music like sculptured images. All creation ceased to advance.

Then slowly the notes faded, the stars started on their courses, the wind began blowing and the Gods again became busy with the intrigues of their heavens. And the Asuras were greatly relieved, for had Narad continued his

chant Evil which was finding it hard to breathe might have just perished. So the insect ego made a small movement to remind Narad of his purpose in visiting the Lord.

The Lord smiled and himself helped Narad by asking, "Dear Narad! Why this sudden visit? Have you come up against some doubt? What is it that is gently agitating your settled serenity?" Narad who in the presence of the Lord had become a shy child answered, "O Lord! if it pleases you I would like to know who is your greatest devotee?" At once Narad caught a mysterious smile flitting across the Lord's face. He hastened to add in self-defence, "My Lord! progress is always progressive and never complete. So I want to learn something from other great devotees." (He could not bring himself to say greater.)

Lord Vishnu replied with mock seriousness. "Narad! how right you are. It gives me great joy to think of my greatest devotee. He has no equal. Do go and see him. He lives in a village and cultivates his small plot of land. Then come back and tell me how he is. His very memory brings tears to my eyes."

Narad's face fell. What is this? He had come hoping to hear from the lips of the Lord that he, Narad, was the greatest devotee. Who is this unknown? His name has not been mentioned by any of the saints or sages. What austerities has he undergone? How many years of tapasya? How many Japas and how many chants? Can he play some instrument like my Veena that is capable of breaking by its rhythm the arrangements of the atoms? How has he attained the summit of devotion?

For one moment the soul came forward and Narad rejoiced in the greatness of the other devotee. He thought, "This surely is the Lord's Grace. Now I have something more I can attain, an ideal which I can follow. The lonely summit is barren and to have nowhere to go, to stop progressing is a sort of death." But the next moment his ego jostled his soul back into its luminous recess and cried, "It is all very well to talk of having the good fortune to have somebody to look up to. But what about my reputation? Now the gods and saints will respect me no more. I'll be just one of the millions of the saints and devotees of India." His eyes filled with dark tears of frustration. With faltering steps he left the Lord's presence. The Lord called out, "Narad! As soon as you have learnt all you want from my devotee come back to give me his news. I do love to hear about him."

It was like a parting blow to Narad who had for the moment identified himself completely with his ego. Like a streak of lightning Narad flashed across the worlds and in a moment stood before the door of a thatched mud-house. The simple door was open. Inside the sage saw a typical Indian farmer's household, a few copper vessels, a trunk with some clothes, the string-cots and to one side in a cowdung-patched corner a cheap picture of Vishnu. Dawn was breaking, its rosy fingers had not yet touched the buds. The man had just taken his bath. He stood for a moment before this picture of the Lord Vishnu reclining



in *Ksheer Sagar* (milk ocean) and stood there with folded hands. Just then his wife cried out, "A snake, a snake." The man didn't jump at once to her succour. For about half a minute he bowed his head to the Lord and then ran like a whirlwind, took a stick and killed the snake. Narad had become invisible. He was standing by the side of the farmer. He had noticed the few seconds that the farmer had stood before the Lord even after the panicky call of his wife and had said, "Salute to the Lord." This Narad appreciated. For a moment he forgot to be jealous and became his true soul and murmured within himself, "Bravo!" But then the ego edged out the soul and with derision Narad thought, "Let us see how he can chant and worship the Lord day and night as I do." It was obvious that the man was poor and must be working hard for a living. The children were only half-dressed and his wife had only a few ornaments of silver.

An invisible Narad walked with the man to his fields, to the market, to the well and when he went to his friend's house or to the money-lender's, to the Panchayat—but during the whole day he never heard the farmer recite the name of the Lord or do Pooja or sing hymns, to say nothing of japa or austerities. Narad was perplexed. Was this a joke of the Lord? Why has he sent me on a wild-goose chase? Anyway, Narad had inexhaustible patience, so he stuck to his man.

Next day and for many days after, Narad followed the man but except for that one minute of early morning when after his bath the man stood before the blurred print of the Lord to say, "*Vishnu ji ki jai*" (Victory to the Lord) he never did any worship, flower-offering, sandal-grinding, scripture-reading, or singing of hymns—all the things connected with devotion. And Narad was especially pained to see that distorted print which did not do justice to the beauty of the Lord or his abode.

Like a most vigilant examiner Narad stuck to the man. Slowly his bewilderment changed into resentment. To leave the ever beatific worlds and live on this planet of woe and misery was no joke. Narad could not even play his heavenly veena. His only solace was the name and memory of the Lord. Otherwise he would have gone back to the higher spheres.

The man had a million troubles. His creditors took away his bullocks and the eldest son was very sick. His condition became critical. One day when the man stood with folded hands for his morning salutation the wife cried out, "My Mohan is going, save him, save him." Narad observed that the man became pale but didn't run towards his beloved child before uttering his salutation to the Lord.

Time and again Narad observed that the man never deviated from his half or one minute worship but otherwise though a kind, hard-working, honest man he surely was no devotee. In this one month Narad had become fond of the farmer's family and when he left them he contrived that they should discover a pot full of gold in their courtyard while digging the ground to plant a *Tulsi* sapling.

Then with a sigh, Narad streaked back to *Vaikuntha* and fell at the feet of the Lord. The Lord who knew everything pretended ignorance and asked Narad in detail all about his *Bhakta*. Narad thought the Lord had made a mistake. By no yardstick could the man be judged a devotee, to say nothing of being the greatest devotee. He was not jealous of the man any more and had no cause for speaking ill of him or withholding anything that was good.

As he told of the simple honesty, hard life and good humour of the man the Lord was visibly moved. When Narad told of his morning salutation and how even though his wife had cried, "Snake, snake" he had finished his half-minute worship, the Lord was content. When Narad related how one day even though his child was about to die, before running to the child he completed his four-word salutation to the Lord, Lord Vishnu's lotus eyes filled with tears. Now Narad could contain himself no more. He told the Lord about the pot of gold he had left for them and then humbly enquired, "O Lord! why did you call that man your greatest devotee?" The Lord smiled enigmatically. Then suddenly there was a complete change of mood. Lord Vishnu became serious and told Narad, "Narad, I have some work for you. It will need your total attention. Will you do it?"

Narad was pained. Why did the Lord doubt him? Surely he knew that he would do anything for him. He had but to ask. The Lord repeated, "Narad! It will be a great test. See this bowl of oil. I want you to go around the world but take care that not a drop gets spilled or my purpose would be defeated."

Narad thought, "Today I am blessed. The Lord himself has asked me to do something for him. The task is strange but who can fathom the purpose of the Lord?" Narad used all his will power to steady his hands as he took the bowl from the Lord. Even the Gods become nervous if the Lord makes an open declaration of a test. Narad was a devotee—he was not detached like the Gods. To fulfill one wish of the Lord he would willingly lay down his life.

It was truly a difficult task, almost next to impossible—but by a fierce and total concentration Narad managed to fulfill it. Not a drop was spilled from the brimful vessel. More than a little proud, he stood before the Lord. The Lord received him kindly and asked an attendant to take away the bowl.

Then he softly asked, "Narad! during the time while you were going round the earth did you remember me?" A little shamefacedly Narad replied, "O Lord! my whole attention was centred on the oil. I forgot all about you."

Then Lord Vishnu said, "Now you know why I call that man my greatest devotee? Bowed down with life's burden, even during an emergency or a catastrophe he completed his morning salutation while you, who claim to remember me with each breath, forgot me for full twenty-four hours?"

## TALES OF MULLA NASRUDDIN

*(Chandamama and New Times Observer have already published a selection of tales of Mulla Nasruddin, collected from various sources and retold for children of all ages by P. Raja, our frequent contributor. The collection containing 50 tales is to be shortly published by B. R. PUBLISHING CORPORATION, New Delhi.*

*We give below a selection of four tales from the attractive forthcoming book.)*

### A NOTE ON MULLA NASRUDDIN

MULLA Nasruddin, the protagonist in the tales that follow, is both great and small, noble and mean, a hero and a jester. In certain stories we laugh at him, but in many others we laugh with him. Though no one knows for certain if Mulla Nasruddin ever existed or is simply a legendary figure, many countries claim him as a native. Turkey prides itself upon exhibiting his grave and holding an annual Nasruddin festival. Greece regards his quips as part of its own folklore. Russia has honoured him by erecting a statue in the Soviet Central Asian City of Bukhara (Uzbekistan). In the world of folktales his Indian counterparts are Tenali Rama and Birbal.

### The Signature

One day Mulla Nasruddin heard a man giving a lecture. What the speaker said by raising his voice, thumping his chest and throwing his arms about, was nothing but nonsense.

Once when the speaker paused, the Mulla who was unable to contain himself broke into a guffaw. What the speaker had said had been quite serious and it was not at all meant to stimulate laughter in any.

The speaker was surprised and annoyed. "What made you laugh?" he asked gravely.

"I laughed because I had to laugh!" replied the Mulla.

"You can't escape with that. If you think that I am wrong you must prove that with arguments," insisted the speaker.

"All right, all right," said the Mulla, who was scared of arguments. "We will not argue today. Certainly tomorrow. You are most welcome to pay me a visit." He even hinted at a good dish for the speaker and for anybody who would care to come with him to benefit from their arguments.

Eager to argue with the Mulla and to snub him, the speaker reached his house at the appointed time. He was accompanied by some well-dressed idlers who would support him at the Mulla's cost.

To their great disappointment they found the Mulla's door locked.

“Surely, he is away at the market buying food for all of us,” observed a companion of the speaker.

This put hope into all. They waited...

Two anxious hours passed. There was no sign of the Mulla's return.

Cursing the Mulla, the party left the house. But the speaker wrote with a piece of chalk on the Mulla's door: FOOL.

The angry party had just reached the market when the Mulla came running after them.

“Learned speaker! I'm sorry. I had forgotten all about the appointment. I went to the market, Sir, and feasted to my belly's fill and just returned home and saw...” the Mulla paused.

Everybody giggled. To many in the market the speaker's companions had declared what the speaker had inscribed on the Mulla's door. They cocked their ears to hear the Mulla.

“What did you see?” asked the speaker mischievously winking at his friends.

“I saw your signature on my door!” the Mulla said. There was laughter. But the speaker and his companions had no share in it.

### All at the Same Time

“Go to the market. Buy three eggs and bring them safely,” the master ordered his newly-appointed servant Mulla Nasruddin.

The Mulla obeying the command of his master went to the market. He wandered in the market place in search of an egg-vendor and after a half hour finally found one. He was about to buy three eggs. But his master's words “bring them safely” were still ringing in his ears. He thought: “If I carry all the three eggs at the same time, they may dash against one another and break. And my master, O what a terrible man! will shout at me. So it is better that I carry them one by one.”

So the Mulla bought an egg and carefully placed it on his right palm. Covering it with his left, he started walking slowly and carefully towards his master's house. He kept it safely in the kitchen and then went again to fetch a second egg. He repeated his act for a third time.

By the time the Mulla brought home the third egg, his master who was impatiently witnessing his stupid act shouted: “You fool! Have you any sense? Should you take such a long time to buy just three eggs? Hereafter if I ask you to do a thing you should do it all at one and the same time. One who does so saves much time and energy. Behave properly, or else I'll throw you out of service.”

The Mulla made an apology to his master for behaving in a foolish way.

After a week or so the master fell ill. He called the Mulla and said: “I'm unwell and dying slowly. It is high time that I consult a doctor immediately. Fetch a good physician.”

The Mulla ran out to obey his master's order.

Two hours passed. There was no trace of the Mulla. The master became sad. He spoke to himself thus: "What a stupid ass have I for my servant! To fetch a physician should he take two hours? Where is he now? Ah... Will I be able to live till he brings a physician?"

Half an hour later the Mulla came rushing into the house. He was followed by a group of seven men.

The master blinked, wrinkled his forehead and asked the Mulla: "Who are these? Where is the physician?"

"Sir!" replied the Mulla, "I faithfully followed your instructions. Look, how I have saved much time and energy by doing all the work at one and the same time."

"I can't make out anything," said the master scratching his scalp.

"Look, Sir! The physician is here to diagnose your illness and prescribe the medicine. The compounder is by his side to prepare the syrup. And there stands the compounder's attendant to administer the medicine into your mouth."

"And who the hell are the other four?" roared the master.

"By your ill-luck, if the medicine fails to cure you and by chance you die, these are the four coffin bearers to carry you to the burial ground."

The master gritted his teeth in anger.

"And as a time-saving measure, Sir", continued the Mulla with a sense of satisfaction, "I have sent a grave-digger to dig a grave for you."

### **The Mulla Talks to a Fish**

One evening the Mulla's wife dashed into her husband's chamber and told him: "Our relatives...oh, I'm sorry... my relatives have come. Rush to the market and buy some good fish. Come back as soon as you can."

The Mulla dressed up and before he could leave his home for the fish market, his wife came running again. Wagging her finger she warned him, "Don't get me rotten fish as you did last week. Remember my advice and the way I gave it."

"Yes," replied Nasruddin with fear-filled eyes. On his way to the market, he touched his nose and could still feel the pain there. He mused upon the torture he had undergone a few days before.

"What's this big nose for?" the Mulla's wife shouted at her husband seizing him by the nose. "Use your nose to smell the fish before you buy it from the fishwife." She continued tweaking his nose.

Caught between her forefinger and thumb, the Mulla's nose struggled. Its repeated attempts for release only ended in repeated failures. The pain was so excruciating that tears welled up in his eyes and threatened to trickle out.

"Remember my advice till you breathe your last... Use your nose. Next time if you fail to bring good fish, your nose will not be yours." With these

words, she released her hold of the Mulla's nose.

The Mulla shrugged his shoulders. When he came back to his senses, he was already in the fish market.

The market was crowded. He elbowed his way to a fat fishwife. He gazed at the wide variety of fish displayed for sale. He picked out one and, holding it close to his big nose, smelt it.

The fishwife threw a look of contempt at the Mulla. Snatching the fish out of his hand, she yelled, "Fish is for eating and never for smelling."

"What did you say? Smell it?" retorted the Mulla. "No, I didn't do that."

"Then what the devil were you doing with your big nose so close to the fish?" she yelled again.

"Well! To tell you the truth I was only talking to the fish."

Amazed at the wit of the Mulla, the fishwife enquired: "What did you say?"

The Mulla answered with all seriousness, "I asked him if there was any news from the sea. That's all."

The fishwife roared with laughter. She then asked him, "What did the fish reply to your question?"

"The answer is not very encouraging," said the Mulla. "The fish told me that he didn't know the latest news because he hadn't been to sea for more than three weeks."

The fishwife's face turned pale. While she found no words to speak, the Mulla walked back home to inform his wife that he found no good fish in the market.

### **Courtesy, Sir, Courtesy**

The sun had already set. It was beginning to get dark. Yet the Mulla's wife was not back from the market. She had left the house when the sun was still present in the sky. Nasruddin grew impatient. For it was already time for him to go for a walk. And his companions would be eagerly awaiting him to join the evening stroll.

He went to the terrace of his house to see if his wife was coming at a distance. But the breeze that blew there was so pleasant that he forgot the purpose of his going up.

As he was pacing up and down the terrace enjoying the gentle breeze, he heard somebody shout from below.

The Mulla leaned on the parapet and looked down. There he saw a rich farmer standing.

"What can I do for you?" shouted the Mulla.

"Will you come down? I'll tell you what you have to do for me," replied the farmer in a bossy tone.

"Well! I am not short of hearing. You can tell me from there," responded the Mulla.

“It’s not that. I have something to tell you. It is meant only for your ears. Do you want everyone of your neighbours to come to know of it? Yet if you want me to shout...”

“Wait! I am coming down.”

The farmer said in a low voice:

“I have found your black cow with a brown tail in my field damaging my crop. Hence I have detained it. If you want me to set it free, you have to give me compensation.”

The Mulla was silent for a few seconds. He then asked the farmer, “Will you please come up?”

“Certainly, with pleasure,” replied the farmer.

The Mulla went up and the rich farmer hopefully followed him.

As soon as they reached the terrace the Mulla told the farmer: “You see, gentleman, I never had a black cow with a brown tail. That’s for your information.”

The farmer was dumbfounded for a minute. He then roared: “Why the hell did you bring me up to say this?”

The Mulla replied with a smile, “You were courteous enough to call me down to say something meant only for my ears. Don’t you think that I should pay back your courtesy by calling you up to say something meant only for your ears? Courtesy, Sir, it’s courtesy that counts.”

Rebuffed, the farmer went back.

P. RAJA

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo Circle—44th Number: Sri Aurobindo Society Annual, 1988.

WHEN shown this new issue, a friend exclaimed, “Oh good! This is the best thing that the Society does!” This may be the overstatement of uninformed enthusiasm, but surely bringing out the *Sri Aurobindo Circle* as their annual, as they have done since 1970, is one of the best things that the Sri Aurobindo Society does. Both quality and format have remained constant over the years. As usual, this issue is prefaced by photographs—this time four of the Mother, two of which are especially beautiful. Then come five pages of facsimile reproductions of handwritten letters: two from Sri Aurobindo and two from the Mother. The first part of the journal is always devoted to selections from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; this year Sri Aurobindo predominates, but there are two very interesting conversations of the Mother, one from November 15, 1958, and one a very late one—from April 12, 1972.

Among the many treasures on the 45 pages of this part, the passages which stand out for me are those on pages 17-18, in which Sri Aurobindo characterises his own Yoga and its aims and methods in distinction from other paths; on page 24, where he defines his use of the word ‘psychic’, which, as he says, “is not the sense in which the word is used in ordinary parlance”; and the three paragraphs at the top of page 27. These are all ‘new’ passages, in the sense that they do not appear in the Centenary Edition of Sri Aurobindo’s works, but have so far been published only in Ashram periodicals: the first in the *Bulletin* some years ago, and the other two in the *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research* journal.

On page 41 appears a hitherto unpublished note, dated 28.2.1936, on whether anyone “who is not a born and bred Englishman... should try to write or can really write English poetry”. It casts a valuable light from the Master on a topic of ongoing debate. The facsimiles on the early pages amply demonstrate the difficulties of deciphering Sri Aurobindo’s handwriting, and this note appears to be unrevised, so the three points I am offering here are to be taken as contributions rather than criticisms. In line 7, the name of Rossetti’s sister should of course read ‘Christina’; in line 11, the word ‘them’ should be inserted after ‘acquire’ and before its following comma; and surely in the phrase ‘seemed to say perfect and beautiful English prose’ in line 17 the Master’s pen has let slip some words that would give the intended sense.

One interesting passage, ‘The Sources of Poetry’, reproduced from Vol. 3 of the Centenary Edition, juxtaposed as it is with a couple of sentences from the revised version of *The Future Poetry*, provokes the thought that perhaps, when possible, the date of composition of the passages selected from Sri Aurobindo’s writings should be given. His views on many topics are known to have changed over the years as his yoga heightened and deepened. Has he not himself said that



to present his early political views as applicable to modern conditions would be a sign of "an unprogressive mind"? I believe that on one occasion the Mother advised that we should not take as definitive anything written by him before coming to Pondicherry in 1910. The present passage looks as though it would be an early statement, and perhaps the reader should be told to bear this in mind. But this is a minor criticism. Another small flaw may be mentioned in passing: the title given to the facsimile of Sri Aurobindo's letter on p. i, 'Utility of Trance in Integral Yoga', might, in view of its content, have more appropriately been given as "Insufficiency of Trance in Integral Yoga."

This first part of the magazine closes with an instalment of A.B.'s account of his interviews with Sri Aurobindo during 1926.

Then comes a transitional section of poems: the first four little-known, though already-published, classics from Arjava, Amal Kiran, Nirodbaran and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. (The discussion of its beauties and flaws which this last one suggests, in connection with the debate about whether Indians can or should write poetry in English, would take up too much space here!) These are followed by some new material from other Ashram poets: four from R.Y. Deshpande, two (dated 1947 but apparently so far unpublished) from Lal Kamal, two from 'Gleaner' and two from Romen; all are fine poems, and the two sonnets from 'Gleaner' I find really outstanding: movingly unusual in thought and imagery, and perfect in technique and music.

In the second part, themes from the Master's work and writings are taken up by four of his disciples. In 'The Spiral of Consciousness' K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar readably draws together many of the topics appearing in the earlier pages. Then K.D. Sethna, in his third article in the series, 'Sri Aurobindo and Greece', examines with masterly clarity Sri Aurobindo's understanding of the typical Greek epic metre, the hexameter, his solution of the technical problems attendant upon transferring its characteristic rhythm and force into English, and exemplifies the superb poetry which this can yield in the hands of the Master with illuminating lines from *Iliad*. Prema Nandakumar, continuing her series on 'Sri Aurobindo's Interpretation of Indian Culture', deals with the literature of the classical period of Sanskrit, touching on the epic poets following in the footsteps of Vyasa and Valmiki, and especially on the dramatists: Kalidasa and Bhasa and those who came after them. She gives an interesting overview of the significant works from this period which have come down to us, enhanced by Sri Aurobindo's own illuminating insights, and offers clear signposts to those who would like to go deeper into the study of this literature. The last essay is from A.S. Dalal, another regular contributor to the *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, who is an experienced psychotherapist and the compiler of the very useful book on the psychology of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, *Living Within*, which appeared last year. His article is entitled 'Self-awareness: a comparison of viewpoints of modern psychology and Sri Aurobindo's yoga'. It summarises

with admirable conciseness and clarity the viewpoints of several important schools of thought and practice in Western psychotherapy, and shows how Sri Aurobindo's completer understanding of human psychology both parallels and goes far beyond their insights. He points out that 'self-awareness' has become an increasingly sought-after goal in the West; but there are some fundamental differences between the self-awareness aimed at in yoga and the insight given by analytical and other psychological and psychotherapeutic methods; psychotherapy's goal of psychological well-being can truly be achieved only by the full development of consciousness and divine living which is the goal of Sri Aurobindo's yoga.

There is no advertisement section: the whole magazine, more than 100 impeccably produced pages, is taken up with stimulating material. Kishor Gandhi is a gifted editor and compiler, and the individual values of these articles, poems and selections are enhanced by being brought together: they form, as it were, a series of multi-faceted mirrors, reflecting back and forth, for added delight and illumination, the play of one central light. Time and again the reader, whether proceeding systematically from beginning to end, or dipping here and there, will be struck by words and passages that recall and reflect the insight of others he has encountered shortly before elsewhere in the volume. Discerning readers will be grateful to the editor and to the publishers, for each year unfailingly making available such a reliable collection of high-quality material which is of lasting value. This is the 44th number. Anyone who possesses the whole set owns a mine of treasure: it is always worth turning back to vintage issues of the past. We hope this valuable periodical will continue to appear well beyond its half-century—at least until the 56th number, 12 years hence, at the turn of the century!

SHRADDHAVAN

**Indian English Writings 1981-1985, Experiments with Expression**—Edited by R.K. Singh and published by Bahri Publications Private Limited, New Delhi. Page 168. Price Rs. 130.00

IN recent years Indian writing in English has produced not only volumes of poetry and fiction but also a number of books in the form of compilations of critical writings by well-known and not so well-known critics. The task of editing such critical writings is being undertaken by several practising writers themselves. Mr. R.K. Singh who is a poet and critic has done a useful job in bringing out this collection of critical writings by eleven writers, most of them poets. The essays in this volume are oriented towards a search for the significance of Indian writing in English during the last half a decade. Except three all essays deal with Indian poetry in English. An attempt is made to view the language and idiom of Indian writing in English as something new, independent, self-sufficient and

dynamic. Here Indian writing in English is considered an experiment at the linguistic level as well as an expression of the cultural constants that are natural to the Indian ethos.

*Indian English Writing: 1981-1985* contains eleven essays along with a short preface and an introduction by the editor. Besides attempting to define what is 'Indianness' in Indian English writing, the book poses two questions—have the Indian English writers developed an idiom of their own, a 'literary ecology' special to themselves and can Indian writers in English be judged by world standards? The answers given to these questions are in the affirmative.

O.P. Bhatnagar in a perceptive essay on 'New Indian Poetry Today' analyses the cause of the 'poverty and monotony' of Indian poetry in English. He pleads for naturalisation of English in Indian terms and proclaims, "English cannot be Indian unless its British identity is tampered with" (p. 20). The question is whether English will be English when its British identity is tampered with! Bhatnagar applauds most of the Indian English poets and discusses six of them. However, I fear, Bhatnagar is over-enthusiastic about R.K. Singh and errs on the side of idolatry when he says that Mr. Singh wields his English "with absolute control, authority and originality *never witnessed before in Indian English poetry*" (p. 27). But a redeeming note in Bhatnagar's essay is his refusal to recognise any originality in Krishna Srinivas's poetry which R.K. Singh nonchalantly and most ineptly compares with that of Tagore and Sri Aurobindo (p.13). For Bhatnagar Krishna Srinivas is 'repetitive and lifeless' (p. 32).

In 'Indian English Poets 1981-85' Nar Deo Sharma, a 'practising poet', speaks of the impact of contemporary reality on Indian English poetry which is expressed through what he calls Indian 'idiolects'. A. Russell attempts an investigation into the manner in which Indian English poets use language. This manner, he says, is characterised by violation of syntactical rules, use of inversions, infatuation with multisyllabics, invention of new phrases and words and redundancy. In 'Voice Behind the Wheel' Nirranjan Mohanty, himself a poet of no small repute, discusses with great insight some of the poets from Orissa. The essay contains an excellent study of Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry. He makes perceptible to the reader the elusive beauty of Mahapatra's work as no other critic has done. R.K. Singh's essay on the Orissa poet L.N. Mahapatra focuses attention on the poet's two significant traits—romantic manifestation and quest for identity.

Bijay Kumar Das's essay on Kamala Das is an attempt to establish that in her love poems 'she creates a new Indian English idiom hitherto unknown in poetic diction' (p.94). He not only repeats the assertion several times but also mentions several 'unconventional words' used by the poet to prove his point. However, the point is not proved because use of unconventional words alone does not constitute a new idiom. The last part of Das's essay is boringly plati-

tudinous and hence uncritical. Observe the following sentences, "She does not experiment with English language but uses it in a typical Indian way with native accent and collocation. She is not obsessed with the use of English language either in the manner of the British or the Americans. She uses English as an Indian speaks, writes and perhaps understands it. It is in this sense that she is a modern Indian English poet."

The first part of 'The Nativization of English in India' by R.S. Pathak consists of a string of quotations from several Indian writers about the use of English as a medium of expression. The latter part of the essay is a painstaking study of O.P. Bhatnagar's poetic language. G.D. Barche's stylistic analysis of O.P. Bhatnagar's poem 'Man is Lived' is an exercise in strenuous and meticulous hunting for stylistic peculiarities, grammatical structure and verbal significance employed by the poet.

One of the two essays on fiction is P. Raja's critical account of Manoj Das's short stories. It is a penetrating study and should serve as an introduction for anyone who wants to read meaningfully the stories of that enchanting storyteller. Raja shows detailed understanding of the art of Manoj Das and analyses a few stories to illustrate his technique of narration, use of nature symbols, humanism, humour and social awareness. Raja's perception and critical acumen are matched by his easy style and thoughtful expression. In 'Salman Rushdie's Shame' O.P. Mathur critically analyses the novel and shows that it is not merely a 'fantasy' but a novel of reality about Pakistan as seen by one whose roots are fixed in undivided India. The last essay in the collection, 'Indian English Literary Scene: a Critique' by A.N. Dwivedi contains a long list of books purported to be Indian English literary criticism. The essay is documentary in nature rather than critical and to call it a 'critique' is misleading. One wishes that the writer took more care with his sentence structure, style and grammar.

This book is the 9th in a series of publications by Bahri Publications Private Limited, New Delhi. It is brought out in an attractive form and format. However, it is regretted that there are an inexcusable number of spelling and punctuation mistakes. This may be remedied in the next edition.

K. R. RAMACHANDRAN NAIR

## **DR. VENKATASWAMY HONOURED FOR A LIFETIME OF COURAGE AND ACCOMPLISHMENT TO PREVENT BLINDNESS**

At the age of 30, Dr. Govindappa Venkataswamy was all set for a career in obstetrics when he was struck with crippling arthritis in his hands that robbed his strength. He switched his specialty to ophthalmology and mastered the skills of intricate eye surgery.

Last May, almost forty years later, he was given the Helen Keller International Award for his achievements as a leader in the world-wide fight against preventable blindness. Helen Keller International is the oldest and one of the largest agencies in the United States working overseas to prevent blindness and provide rehabilitation and vocational training to the incurably blind.

Dr. Venkataswamy has personally performed more than 100,000 cataract operations, pioneered safe assembly-line techniques for performing such surgery in seven minutes at mobile eye camps, and has established the Aravind Eye Hospital in Madurai, India, as well as a children's hospital and a nutrition centre to prevent blindness in children under the age of six.

Dr. Venkataswamy has been guided throughout his life by the teachings of the Indian yogi Sri Aurobindo, a world-famous spiritual leader. The son of farmers in the Turunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, Dr. Venkataswamy received his advance degrees at universities in India, served in his nation's army for several years, and worked in government services until 1976 when he reached the age of mandatory retirement.

It was then that he set up the Aravind Eye Hospital with funds supplied by a family-created charitable trust. The hospital, which now has a 600-bed capacity and 150 staff members, operates under a unique system whereby 250 paying patients support eye care for 350 indigent people each week, who receive consultation, medication, surgery and hospital stays without charge.

Dr. Venkataswamy has enlisted the help of his sister and brother in law, their spouses, his nephew and his niece, to carry out his humanitarian work. They form a team, serving as doctors, administrators, building engineers and entrepreneurs, the latter manufacturing eye-glasses and other equipment.

Blindness is a staggering public health problem throughout the developing world. In India alone, some nine million people are estimated to have lost their sight, costing the government US\$ 800 million each year, and with a loss of productivity estimated at US\$ 1 billion annually.

To reach more people in need, Dr. Venkataswamy established the Aravind Children's Eye Hospital in 1984 to focus on pediatric diseases, and set up satellite eye hospitals to service the 100 mile area around Madurai. Both provide free care to the majority of patients. In addition, he has established a training pro-

gramme for ophthalmic assistants and nurses, a rehabilitation centre, and mobile eye units that visit remote rural areas. Helen Keller International announced it was entering into partnership with Dr. Venkataswamy to expand eye care services in Southern India.

For more information contact:

*Helen Keller International*  
*15 West 16th Street*  
*New York, NY 10011 USA.*

*or*

*Aravind Eye Hospital*  
*1 Annanagar*  
*Madurai, 625 020*  
*India.*

(NGO Committee on UNICEF, Vol. II No. 3, 1987)

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## AT THE HEART OF THINGS

THERE is a silence at the heart of things.  
You may not sense it through the world's loud sound  
That echoes in the mind and roars around  
Our life with its incessant clamourings.  
But it is there, if you but have the will  
To turn within yourself in selfless prayer  
And listen quietly for what is there,  
When you ask nothing, but are only still.  
For you may find it when you do not seek  
But stand and wait, and like a hill or tree  
Are for a little while content to be—  
Then you may even hear the silence speak.

JAMES DILLET FREEMAN

# FOR THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY

## A LETTER

“A New spirit of oneness will take hold of the human Race.”

SRI AUROBINDO

Dear Friend,

I learn with interest through a letter from the UNESCO that this year has been declared the International Year of the Family; and am urged to help to the best of my ability. We are passing through a critical phase in the development and progress of humanity as a whole and each individual effort towards a better life holds out a promise of a growing awareness. Sri Aurobindo says:

There is a need within the soul of man  
The splendours of the surface never sate;

It is this that more and more people are becoming conscious of and they are groping for a light that will lead them to a brighter day. How often one hears people exclaim, “Wouldn’t it be nice if people understood each other better and strove to live together in harmony and peace?” But what do we do to take that one step forward? Yes, a chain is indeed as strong as only its weakest link. The well-being of the whole depends on the quality of the small units that make the whole. One such unit of humanity is the family which consists of two smaller units, the parents, and the children. It is a very important aspect of life. The bringing up of children who are the future humanity ought not to be a task but a privilege and a pleasure to the parents, because there is so much that they themselves can learn by it.

With this end in view, we have brought out two booklets entitled IDEAL CHILD and IDEAL PARENT by the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

IDEAL CHILD: to date over two million copies have been printed in 14 Indian and 8 European languages: i.e., English, French, German, Spanish, Flemish, Italian, Portuguese and Russian. This little booklet containing words of the Mother could guide and prepare the future generation by setting before them a high ideal and a way of life based on truth, courage and love. Let us then present this to all students to inspire them to become ideal children growing into ideal citizens in the midst of the present world turmoil.

IDEAL PARENT: it is a booklet compiled from the Mother’s writings in logical sequence to *Ideal Child*. Rather the Ideal Parent is needed most for the Ideal Child. Nothing more need be said about this little booklet at present. Let it speak for itself. One challenging sentence in introduction enough: “To educate a child is to educate oneself.” It is now available in English, German, Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati and Marathi.

There may be persons and organisations in your country who, though they want to have the booklet for distribution to children and others, may feel handicapped for want of foreign exchange payable towards its cost price or may feel constrained to have it in the language of their country. To resolve this stalemate let us propose that you, your Government and any organisation or individual of your country may have the booklet printed, of course, with prior intimation to us, and may distribute the copies to the children and people of your country. In that case, we would be pleased to mail you a copy of any of the booklets in the language of your choice that we may already have. You may even get photo copies of the booklets done in the language of your country. Our prime aim is that the booklets should reach every aspiring soul.

The cost for *Ideal Child* and *Ideal Parent* is the same: Rs. 1/- for a single copy and Rs. 60/- for 100 copies in India. You may purchase 1,000 copies or more of both the booklets for distribution, in which case the cost in India is Rs. 500/- including transport and for outside India \$80 U.S. by surface mail. The cost for 500 copies is Rs. 275/- and \$40 U.S.

The work for distributing the booklet *Ideal Child* is continuing and will continue till all the children of the world get one copy each. And the work for the booklet *Ideal Parent* has just started and we are hoping that in its own way it will kindle the flame of noble aspirations in the minds of the young and the old alike. Your cooperation for both these projects is solicited and will be received with gratitude. You may contribute towards the work of distribution in India and elsewhere—drafts should be made payable to Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. All orders and contributions should be addressed to Keshavji, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605 002, India.

A line in reply will be highly appreciated. Your co-operation in this gigantic task is solicited.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely, KESHAVJI

“The first thing one learns on the way is that the joy of giving is far greater than the joy of taking.”

THE MOTHER



# *Students' Section*

## **THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION**

**Sixty-fourth Seminar**

**23 April 1988**

### **EDUCATION FOR THE NEW AGE**

**Speech by Ila Joshi**

THE subject of this Seminar is "Education for the New Age". By 'new age' we mean the next stage in evolution which will be created by the manifestation of the supramental Truth and which will divinise human life and change man into a new evolutionary species, the supramental being. So education for the new age would mean the training or the discipline that is needed for this great evolutionary change. In this sense education for the new age would mean the same thing as the discipline of yoga. Education itself would become yoga.

However, since Sri Aurobindo's yoga is integral and includes in its scope, all the activities of life, the education for the new age will not be confined to the acquisition of the spiritual knowledge only but will include in its scope the knowledge of all the spheres of life and existence. This means that all the branches of knowledge relating to our physical, vital and mental education, all the sciences and arts, all the philosophies and humanities and social sciences will find a place in it, but will be pursued with a different orientation.

But though the education for the new age will be all-inclusive in its scope, the central emphasis will certainly be on the discovery of the soul, the psychic being, which is our true immortal being and which is an eternal portion of the supreme reality. This will be followed by the discovery of the cosmic self, one in all, and still further by the ascent to and the descent of the overhead planes culminating in the manifestation of the supramental Truth which will transform human life and turn man into the divine superman. This, in brief, is the discipline of triple transformation which alone can bring the complete attainment of the aim of the integral yoga.

My other friends who will speak after me will tell you about the education of our physical, vital and mental parts which are the instruments for the expression of the soul and spirit in external life. I propose to confine my speech to what the Mother calls the psychic education, the discipline needed for the discovery of our inmost soul, our true self and eternal reality. She calls this discovery of the soul "the great discovery" and compares the discipline required

for it to the difficult endeavour of the discoverers of new continents or the explorers of virgin forests, an endeavour which needs tremendous courage and endurance.

What are the requirements of the discipline for undertaking this great endeavour for the discovery of the soul? The Mother herself has stated them in some brief sentences. These are so intensely inspiring that I prefer to read them in her own words rather than explain them in mine. And I may add that they are supremely important not only for students but for all aspirants because the discovery of one's soul is the indispensable necessity of all who aspire for a higher life.

Here are her own words:

### **The Great Discovery**

“... the path to that realisation is long and difficult, strewn with snares and problems to be solved, which demand an unfailing determination. It is like the explorer's trek through virgin forest in quest of an unknown land, of some great discovery. The psychic being is also a great discovery which requires at least as much fortitude and endurance as the discovery of new continents. A few simple words of advice may be useful to one who has resolved to undertake it.

The first and perhaps the most important point is that the mind is incapable of judging spiritual things. All those who have written on this subject have said so; but very few are those who have put it into practice. And yet, in order to proceed on the path, it is absolutely indispensable to abstain from all mental opinion and reaction.

Give up all personal seeking for comfort, satisfaction, enjoyment or happiness. Be only a burning fire for progress, take whatever comes to you as an aid to your progress and immediately make whatever progress is required.

Try to take pleasure in all you do, but never do anything for the sake of pleasure.

Never get excited, nervous or agitated. Remain perfectly calm in the face of all circumstances. And yet be always alert to discover what progress you still have to make and lose no time in making it.

Never take physical happenings at their face value. They are always a clumsy attempt to express something else, the true thing which escapes our superficial understanding.

Never complain of the behaviour of anyone, unless you have the power to change in his nature what makes him act in this way; and if you have the power, change him instead of complaining.

Whatever you do, never forget the goal which you have set before you. There is nothing great or small once you have set out on this great discovery; all things are equally important and can either hasten or delay its success. Thus

before you eat, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the food you are about to eat may bring your body the substance it needs to serve as a solid basis for your effort towards the great discovery, and give it the energy for persistence and perseverance in the effort.

Before you go to sleep, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the sleep may restore your fatigued nerves, bring calm and quietness to your brain so that on waking you may, with renewed vigour, begin again your journey on the path of the great discovery.

Before you act, concentrate in the will that your action may help or at least in no way hinder your march forward towards the great discovery.

When you speak, before the words come out of your mouth, concentrate just long enough to check your words and allow only those that are absolutely necessary to pass, only those that are not in any way harmful to your progress on the path of the great discovery.

To sum up, never forget the purpose and goal of your life. The will for the great discovery should be always there above you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being.

Before the untiring persistence of your effort, an inner door will suddenly open and you will emerge into a dazzling splendour that will bring you the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have always lived and always shall live, that external forms alone perish and that these forms are, in relation to what you are in reality, like clothes that are thrown away when worn out. Then you will stand erect, freed from all chains, and instead of advancing laboriously under the weight of circumstances imposed upon you by Nature, which you had to endure and bear if you did not want to be crushed by them, you will be able to walk on, straight and firm, conscious of your destiny, master of your life."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed), Vol. 12, pp. 33-35