

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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The sudden rise in printing costs because of an unavoidable change-over from letter-press to photo-offset from the March issue obliges us to raise our inland subscription by a small amount—that is, from Rs. 42 per year to Rs. 47 and accordingly our inland life-membership from Rs. 588 to Rs. 658. Those who have already become life-members need not pay anything more unless they themselves feel inclined to do so. Our subscribers, both old and new ones, are requested to understand our difficult situation and be kind enough to send us Rs. 5 more. We shall be very thankful.

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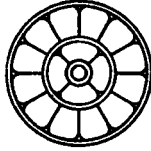
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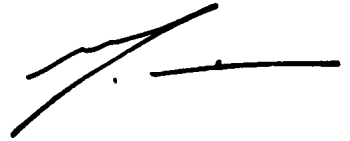
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 26 NOVEMBER 1958

What is the role of the spirit?

ONE might say that it is both the conscious intermediary between the Supreme and the manifestation, and the meeting-place of the manifestation with the Supreme.

Spirit is capable of understanding and communicating with the highest Godhead and at the same time it is the purest, one might say the least distorted intermediary of the highest Godhead in the outermost manifestation. It is spirit which, with the help of the soul, turns the consciousness towards the Highest, the Divine, and it is in the spirit that the consciousness can begin to understand the Divine.

It might be said that what is called "spirit" is the atmosphere brought into the material world by the Grace so that it may awaken to the consciousness of its origin and aspire to return to it. It is indeed a kind of atmosphere which liberates, opens the doors, sets the consciousness free. This is what enables the realisation of the truth and gives aspiration its full power of accomplishment.

From a higher standpoint, this could be put in another way: it is this action, this luminous and liberating influence that is known as "spirit". All that opens to us the road to the supreme realities, pulls us out from the mud of the Ignorance in which we are stuck, opens the doors to us, shows us the path, leads us to where we have to go—this is what man has called "spirit". It is the atmosphere created by the Divine Grace in the universe to save it from the darkness into which it has fallen.

The soul is a kind of individual concentration of this Grace, its individual representative in the human being. The soul is something particular to humanity, it exists only in man. It is like a particular expression of the spirit in the human being. The beings of the other worlds do not have a soul, but they can live in the spirit. One might say that the soul is a delegation of the spirit in mankind, a special help to lead it faster. It is the soul that makes individual progress possible. The spirit, in its original form, has a more general, more collective action.

For the moment the spirit plays the part of a helper and guide, but it is not the all-powerful master of the material manifestation; when the Supermind is organised into a new world, the spirit will become the master and govern Nature in a clear and visible way.

What is called "new birth" is the birth into the spiritual life, the spiritual consciousness, it is to carry in oneself something of the spirit which, individually, through the soul, can begin to rule the life and be the master of existence. But in the supramental world, the spirit will be the master of this entire world and all its manifestations, all its expressions, consciously, spontaneously, naturally.

In the individual existence, that is what makes all the difference; so long as one just speaks of the spirit and it is something one has read about, whose existence one vaguely knows about, but not a very concrete reality for the consciousness, this means that one is not born into the spirit. And when one is born into the spirit, it becomes something much more concrete, much more living, much more real, much more tangible than the whole material world. And this is what makes the essential difference between beings. When *that* becomes spontaneously real—the true, concrete existence, the atmosphere one can freely breathe—then one knows one has crossed over to the other side. But so long as it is something rather vague and hazy—you have heard about it, you know that it exists, but... it has no concrete reality—well, this means that the new birth has not yet taken place. As long as you tell yourself, “Yes, this I can see, this I can touch, the pain I suffer from, the hunger that torments me, the sleep that makes me feel heavy, this is real, this is concrete.. ” (*Mother laughs*), that means that you have not yet crossed over to the other side, you are not born into the spirit.

(*Silence*)

In fact, the vast majority of men are like prisoners with all the doors and windows closed, so they suffocate, which is quite natural. But they have with them the key that opens the doors and windows, and they do not use it...
 *Certainly there is a time when they don't know they have the key, but long after they have come to know it, long after they have been told about it, they hesitate to use it and doubt whether it has the power to open the doors and windows or even that it is a good thing to open them! And even when they feel that “after all, it might be good”, there remains some fear: “What will happen when these doors and windows are opened?...” and they are afraid. They are afraid of being lost in that light and freedom. They want to remain what they call “themselves” They like their falsehood and their bondage. Something in them likes it and goes on clinging to it. They still have the impression that without their limits they would no longer exist.

That is why the journey is so long, that is why it is difficult. For if one truly consented to cease to exist, everything would become so easy, so swift, so luminous, so joyful—but perhaps not in the way men understand joy and ease. In truth, there are very few people who do not enjoy fighting. There are very few who could accept the absence of night, few can conceive of light except as the opposite of darkness: “Without shadows, there would be no picture. Without struggle, there would be no victory Without suffering, there would be no joy.” That is what they think, and so long as one thinks in this way, one is not yet born into the spirit.

This is the last of the talks given in the Playground.

(*Questions and Answers 1958*, pp 429-432)

THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

IN THE LIGHT OF HER *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*

(Continued from the issue of October 1989)

THE Mother met Sri Aurobindo on the very day of her arrival in Pondicherry on 29th March 1914. It was in the afternoon at 3.30 at his residence at 41, rue François Martin . She records in her diary dated March 30, 1914 her experience of their meeting.

“It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance He whom we saw yesterday is on earth; his presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth

“O Lord, Divine Builder of this marvel, my heart overflows with joy and gratitude when I think of it, and my hope has no bounds ”

The Mother realised that it was Sri Aurobindo who had been the master of her occult experiences, the “Krishna” she had met so often in her visions. Perhaps Sri Aurobindo recognised in her the emanation of the Divine Mother whom he had felt to be guiding him during the Baroda days. We might note *Savitri* appropriately for this moment:

Here first she met on the uncertain earth
The one for whom her heart had come so far...
Attracted as in heaven star by star,
They wondered at each other and rejoiced
And wove affinity in a silent gaze.
A moment passed that was eternity's ray,
An hour began, the matrix of new Time.¹

There is a report by Nolini Kanta Gupta about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

“The first time Sri Aurobindo happened to describe her qualities, he said he had never seen anywhere a self-surrender so absolute and unreserved. He had added a comment that perhaps it was only women who were capable of giving themselves so entirely and with such sovereign ease. This implies a complete obliteration of the past, erasing it with its virtues and faults...²

The Mother writes on April 2, 1914:

“Every day, when I want to write, I am interrupted, as though the new period opening now before us were a period of expansion rather than of concentration. It is in the activity of each moment that we must serve Thee and identify ourselves with Thee rather than in deep and silent contemplation or in meditation, written or unwritten.”

“But my heart does not tire of singing a hymn to Thee and my thought is constantly filled with Thee.”

K. D. Sethna comments: “The meeting of the two represents the coming together of the necessary creative powers by whom a new age would be born. And it is to be noted that both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had been pursuing the inner life on essentially identical lines which would unite Spirit and Matter. So their joining of forces was the most natural thing. And it was not only a doubling of strengths but also a linking of complementaries. Sri Aurobindo’s main movement of consciousness may be said to have been an immense knowledge-Power from above the mind, though whatever was necessary for an integral spirituality was also there in one form or another. The Mother’s chief movement may be said to have been an intense Love-Power from behind the heart, even if all else needed for an all-round Yoga was present as a ready-accessory. When she and Sri Aurobindo met, they completed each other, brought fully into play the spiritual energies in both and started the work of total earth-transformation from high above and deep within.”

A self-poised and puissant new world, a new earth, was the cardinal aim of both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and their yogic endeavour. But it cannot be fulfilled in a hurry or at somebody’s order. It would involve a long procedure. For a total and absolute surrender to the Supreme would be required for the descent and ascent in order to achieve a total transformation. The Mother in her prayer dated April 3, 1914 notes:

“It seems to me that I am being born to a new life and all the methods, the habits of the past can no longer be of any use. It seems to me that what I thought were results is nothing more than a preparation. I feel as though I have done nothing yet, as though I have not lived the spiritual life, only entered the path that leads to it, it seems to me that I were stripped of my entire past, of its errors as well as its conquests, as though all that has vanished and made room for a new-born child whose whole existence is yet to be lived, who has no Karma, no experience to learn from, but no error either which has to be set right. My head is empty of all knowledge and all certitude, but also of all vain thought. I feel that if I learn how to surrender without any resistance to this state, if I do not try to know or understand, if I consent to be completely like an ignorant and candid child, some new possibility will open before me. I know that I must now definitely give myself up and be like an absolutely blank page on which Thy thought, Thy will, O Lord, can be inscribed freely without danger of any deformation.”

So, the final plunge of complete atma-samarpana by the Mother was taken. The transformation of Nature and the divinisation of man was seen as the work to be done on earth by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

(To be continued)

REFERENCES

- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 29 pp 393, 399
 - 2 *Reminiscences*, p 81
 - 3 *Mother India*, February 1973, pp 111-12
-

GREATEST MYSTERY

It is His greatest mystery
That, being the Truth, still we
Go struggling to be free

We pray, we aspire,
We tend the heavenly fire
Which lifts us from the mire.

Through the light of an ardent flame
We go past form and name
And find with the eye within
There is no virtue, there is no sin,
None that is ignorant, none that is wise—
Each only His temporal disguise.

Then with stilled mind
By His mercy we shall find
What we thought far from us
It dwells in each self luminous
But we seek it round and round,
Dreaming ourselves forever bound.

Now the eye in wakeful trance
From the peak where there's no fall
Beholds His Splendour's dance
And sees the One in the depths of all.

VIKAS BAMBA

GOLCONDE: A LOOK BEHIND

(Continued from the issue of october 1989)

10. THE BUILDERS

(6)

This series is an arrangement of material about Golconde that has been deposited with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library. The compiler and the Archives would be happy to receive additional information about this exceptional building and those who were the Mother's instruments in realising it.

SHRADDHAVAN

The Ashramites

Apart from the professionals—the architects who came from abroad to design and guide the construction of Golconde, and the local craftsmen and labourers who were employed on it—many sadhaks of the Ashram were involved in the realisation of the Mother's project. The chief architect, Antonin Raymond, has this to say:

RAYMOND: The purpose, as a matter of fact, of the dormitory was not primarily the housing of the disciples; it was the creating of an activity, the materialisation of an idea, by which the disciples might learn, might experience, might develop, through contact with the erection of a fine building ...

On the job, perfect order was maintained, every nail was counted. Among the various disciples chosen to work on the building, this one engrossed in the business of testing the soil might have been a retired dentist; that one responsible for opening and closing the gate—he actually had been a banker—did his job with a conscientiousness impossible to obtain in a world where a man listens for the sound of the 5 o'clock whistle. There were engineers amongst the disciples: everyone lent a hand.¹

Of course, perhaps only a couple of hundred people were in the Ashram when the work began in 1938. As Mrityunjoy puts it. "There were not many young enthusiasts in those days in the Ashram—and to volunteer for the hard work on Golconde there were still fewer."²

One of those whom the Mother asked to join the work was Shanti Doshi, then still in his teens. His correspondence with the Mother during the early years has recently appeared in translation in the

*Bulletin.*³ Here we would like to reproduce the exchanges which have some bearing on the Golconde work.

Letters from the Mother's Correspondence with Shanti Doshi

1 February 1938

I wanted to ask you something. You know that we want to put up a new building, using the most modern methods. A great many workers are needed to supervise the work. I thought the time had come for you to take an active part in the overall work. Of course this will imply regularity, steadiness and a great sincerity. You would have to work eight hours a day *regularly* except Sundays. The architect, who will arrive from Japan in a few days, will give you all the instructions required for the work. Tell me what you think of it, and whether I can put your name on the list of workers.

THE MOTHER

10 February 1938

I am happy with the work You have so graciously granted me. O Mother, let me feel Your presence constantly.

I am glad that the work pleases you. I am sure that it will do you a lot of good to work; it increases receptivity considerably.

THE MOTHER

6 March 1938

I would like to talk to You about the work in general. A free exchange of ideas and opinions between the man in charge and the supervisors; not a blind work, but a work of knowledge.

What you speak of cannot happen in an arbitrary way, nor through any conversation; it demands a change of consciousness, and only yoga can bring about this change.

THE MOTHER

22 April 1938

Raymond found the shuttering perfect, he said it couldn't have been done better.

Are you sure?

If you want to learn to work *really well*, you must be modest, become aware of your imperfections and always maintain the will to progress.

One does not progress through boasting

THE MOTHER

30 April 1938

The organisation is getting more and more complicated and I am more and more anxious. I don't know where all these obstacles are coming from; up to now everything was going well.

Mr. Raymond wants a particular organisation; he himself has explained to me what he wants and *I fully agree with him*. It is the resistance of egoism in certain people which is complicating the situation—otherwise everything would be very simple.

THE MOTHER

10 May 1938

Mother, I would like to know whether I have reached the point of being able to surrender in work. I don't think so. I am going to try to take an attitude of complete obedience to the person in charge; whatever he says, must be done without any argument.

Yes, this is good. If you do not obey, it is you who become responsible for the slightest mistake; if on the other hand you obey scrupulously, the whole responsibility rests with the person who has given the orders.

THE MOTHER

12 May 1938

Mother, do You know that I am thinking all the time about the work—which perhaps is not very good.

On the contrary, it is very good; it teaches you to concentrate.

THE MOTHER

22 January 1939

Sweet Mother, please tell me why this room at Golconde, which is to be concreted on Tuesday, has taken so long to get ready. I must know my mistakes.

The work is not going on well because at Golconde there is an atmosphere of discord and disagreement which prevents the Force from working effectively. If each one made an effort to overcome his own preferences and dislikes, the work would go much better.

THE MOTHER

(To be continued)

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- 1 *Architecture* (N Y) No 10, Oct 1961
- 2 *A Look Behind*, by Mrityunjoy Mukherjee unpublished ms in Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library
- 3 *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, Vol 38, No 3, August 1986. pp 63-71

SHE

SHE came to me
 Riding the cold waters
 Of the little Indus that flows
 Through the bare mountains of Ladakh

And in the silent dawns
 Of a thousand days
 I became her loving slave
 As She spoke with joy
 Of the Truth and Beauty
 Inherent in the Soul of things

I asked, when the time came
 To take leave of the mountains and river,
 "How shall I find you
 Amongst the jostling crowds
 Of the cities to which I go?"

And She smiled and said,
 "It's I who will find you
 Wherever you may go."

SURESH THADANI

YOGA—LIFE—POETRY

PERSONAL LETTERS

YOU say you are preparing for the birthday of Sri Aurobindo, August 15. May I put down a few thoughts that occur to me? They would, no doubt, apply to all Darshan days and not only to the one that is just ahead of us.

On a Darshan day now we have not only to think of Sri Aurobindo but also to visualise him, with the Divine Mother sitting on his right. Visualisation is important, for he and she are the Lord and his Executive Power in a physical shape and unless the physicality of them goes home to us in a vivid way we may fail to receive the full impact of the Light and Love they sought to transmit through a materially concrete channel to us who are so sadly caught in the density of our own bodies. Only by the Divine becoming human can we humans best approach divinity. So we would do well to focus our minds on their photographs—preferably on the picture taken on the Darshan day of 24 April 1950 which shows them both together. Those who have seen them with their own eyes do not need the picture but even they are likely to have got the image of Sri Aurobindo a little hazed because he was seen no more than four times a year. So the photograph can be helpful to them also. Of course, we don't have to go on staring at it: we may surely shut our eyes to meditate, but the sense of it should be there.

Some of us don't find it necessary to keep our eyes closed for meditation, for it is not so much the head meditating as the heart doing it with a spontaneous flow from the depth where the true soul of us knows itself a child of God. I have heard that Sri Aurobindo mostly kept his eyes open during much of his sadhana for the earth. In the old days he would be walking for six or seven hours a day. Nine years I spent in the two first-floor rooms which he had once occupied for six years or so. His persistent walk across them had dug a slightly curving path. Cementing had been done over it and I often retraced its winding progress in the hope that I might find my way to the Supermind sooner by literally walking in Sri Aurobindo's footsteps! He was a vigorous walker, as I know from having sat at times in the meditation hall on the ground-floor of the Ashram's main building and heard him moving on the floor above in the corridor next to his room. Surely, his eyes being generally open during meditation to and fro was not due only to the spiritual movement going on in the soul-profundities, the inmost heart, rather than through the mental consciousness playing about the brain. A greater action was going on along with it. His mind was eternally silent and what acted in him was a self-luminous immensity above the head which reached out towards an endless Beyond and transmitted its magnificent mysteries to his embodied being. Do you remember those two stanzas from his poem, *Descent?*

Swiftly, swiftly crossing the golden spaces
 Knowledge leaps, a torrent of rapid lightnings;
 Thoughts that left the Ineffable's flaming mansions,
 Blaze in my spirit.

Slow my heart-beats' rhythm like a giant hammer's;
 Missioned voices drive to me from God's doorway
 Words that live not save upon Nature's summits,
 Ecstasy's chariots.

The Mother, by contrast, used to shut her eyes very often. Sometimes, even in the midst of a conversation she would suddenly go within. This was so because she would receive messages from all over the world for help. She was like a wireless operator and the SOS would come to her at any moment and, being the gracious Mother of all, she would be bound to answer her children—appeals from helplessness, invocations for assistance, direct prayers to the Unseen, desperate cries of unbelievers to they-knew-not-what. Often her in-drawn movement was for getting into touch with the inner state of those in front of her so that she might meet their needs most effectively. But occasionally she would keep her eyes open during a whole half-hour of general meditation as if she were trying to draw subtle realities into physical action by herself looking at them across bodily sight. On Darshan days she would be compelled to look outward, but even then she would snatch a moment of in-drawnness between meeting the gaze of one devotee and facing that of another as they passed before her.

Darshan days were special occasions when the fact of the Divine's physicality grew more intense—and to match the effect of these days we may try to render most real to our perception the marvel of their embodiment, the grand outflow of the Ultimate through the intimate achievement of Avatarhood.

And with what attitude should we approach the vision of their consenting to be our companions in flesh and blood? I would answer: "A happy blankness." We must have nothing to ask, nothing worked out in our minds, nothing even to be offered. Happiness should be ours because they are there and because they are our father and mother ready to give us new birth into a greater life—blankness we must carry to them so that they may find us ready to receive from them what they wish to give us, our beings a wide white space empty of our usual self and waiting for them to write on it the golden story of our soul's manifestation and of their radiant presence with us for ever. And if at all there is to be any message from us to them, it should simply be this of gratitude and aspiration: "You have become like us in appearance, may we be like you in reality!" (8.8.1989)

It is 7 past 11 p.m. on August 15. Your letter—most welcome as always—came yesterday I carried the thought of it and the image of its writer to the Samadhi this afternoon. I was very thankful to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for the help they had given you to be within sight of normality at last My heart was really singing at the news you have reported No matter how weak and stumbling you may feel yourself to have been, it is the pervading presence of the psychic being in the midst of all frailty and falling short, that has kept you going with what I may paradoxically call a smiling sigh on your lips. And the same soul-presence I feel when you write. “My faith in the Divine Grace is unshakable. But whatever, strictly speaking, the Mother decides to be my fate, I will accept without the slightest hesitation.”

Ever since I woke up this morning and remembered what a wonderful day it was and looked at the photo of Sri Aurobindo on my bedside table, the photo which the Mother had titled “Compassion”, I have carried within me a quiet coolness, a silent steadiness which even the body seemed to reflect by its unhurried movements, its calm gestures. But this state was no self-absorption Out of it flowed unwaveringly a self-forgetful warmth towards the twofold Divinity I had had the supreme good fortune to have seen and touched. Such a state remained—sometimes just as vivid as in early morning, sometimes a little vague while doing my writing work—throughout the day. Even now, when I am ready to go to bed after finishing this letter it is still there, a happy depth not shut up in itself but with doors thrown wide open to the world. This inwardness taking spontaneously a form of outwardness is permeating the sheet on which I am typing. I am sure it will be felt by you as Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s love channelling itself through one human being to another, through something like what a poem of mine has called “a sun grown soft and small”.

The four-lined Mantra in my last letter, which has so impressed you—

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

has to be made vibrant in its original English, set free from all translations which have been published Perhaps the most foolish rendering is the German to which you have referred. The “taking tō” of the first line cannot be deprived of its preposition and the present participle should not be made to have as its object the remainder of the line: it means at the same time devotedly moving towards an ultimate radiance and resorting to a refuge of perfect rapture, a distant marvellous Ineffable which yet gives itself in silent response to the earth’s reaching out for it. The second line’s “Eternal” hardly bears to be changed into “Eternity” The “Eternal” here is a glowing Super-Person whom our psychic-

vital self can intimately touch “Eternity” is not a word to be scorned as too abstract: it can be made living by a line like Sri Aurobindo’s

White chambers of dalliance with eternity,

but here it is out of place and would denote simply a transcendent state rather than One who is such a state and who can be in warm contact with us “Force” in the last line is certainly a substantive, as you have discerned, both in the grammatical sense and in the sense of being a Power that is a palpable substance, as it were, going forth to create and transform without losing a self-possession and a poise and an inherent plenitude as if what it seeks to achieve in terms of time and space has already been achieved beyond them There can be no disturbance in the Divine despite his millionfold activity The German version, construing “Force” as a verb, would mean that the “arms”, “Life” and “an unwall’d Mind” compel us by something unimaginably restful I am afraid the translator has made a hash of an utterance at once massive and wonderfully winged from a Himalayan height which yet goes thrillingly home to the aspiring human heart
(15 8 1989)

There is a character in Proust’s famous novel, translated as *Remembrance of Things Past*, who on failing to attend some important occasion would send a wire “Impossible to come Lie follows ” My case is different I don’t have to invent an excuse for not writing to you earlier My colossal comment on the famous Finnish scholar Asko Parpola’s huge new thesis—a splendid synthesis of varied research—hasn’t yet come to an end Twice I thought I had done with it, but new points cropped up and the perfectionist in me couldn’t rest Perhaps a couple of days will be needed before I sit back and heave a sigh of relief So many things have been set aside Some fascinating books have been forced to wait Perhaps they may have to wait for some time even after I have finished with Parpola (or should I say “Finnished” in view of my equally long and detailed article?). For my eyes have been strained, both by poring over small type and by not shutting long enough in sleep. On several successive days I have gone to bed at 2 or 2.30 or even 3 a. m. and got up at 6. I never sleep during the day—I have only about half an hour of quiet lying-down Luckily I am alone at night and there is nobody to worry about my health Ostensibly what I am doing is to burn my candle at both ends, an indulgence supposed to be dangerous when one is 85, but as I am enjoying it enormously and never worrying about the consequences, I believe the candle will attend to my mood and, dwelling on each bright moment, burn more slowly than it would ordinarily do and thus I shall be saved from any shortening of my life. It is anxiety and the frightened imagination that

do most harm. There are untapped resources in us which can cope with unusual demanding circumstances I hardly feel any the worse for sitting-up at my typewriter till the small hours. Besides, there is a trick of drawing in or pulling up subtle-vital energy through the abdominal region as well as a way of recuperation by opening upward to the immense ether of

Force one with unimaginable rest.

The eyes, however, have not found a means of getting easily refreshed. Too much time would be spent in doing Dr. Bates's exercises I resort at bedtime to Locula 30%—drops which burn like hell but tone up the "optics"

I am glad to have been the subject of the talk between you and Ravindra Khanna He has been a very affectionate friend for years and we have a keen common interest in poetry. If he or I pop off, the survivor will have nobody left to swap lines of poetry from memory. His memory is more richly stored than mine—I believe he knows almost the whole of Ghalib and Iqbal by heart in the original Urdu or Persian I don't think I can recite at short notice even my own poetical works *in toto* But a good number of lines of English poetry float through my mind at all hours and if a particular word of note is brought up it recalls half a dozen or more lines of various poets in which it occurs For the joke of a test I am picking out the word "note" in the preceding sentence and jogging my memory. Some lines from Sri Aurobindo are responding at once First a triplet from *Savitri* about whose source I had questioned him and he had replied: "It may be the intuitive inner mind with the psychic fused together." Here it is:

But joy cannot endure until the end
There is a darkness in terrestrial things
That will not suffer long too glad a note

The second visitor is from *The Life Heaven*:

Heaping note on enrapturing new note.

This pulls in another phrase from the same poem

A high note and a fiery refrain

The next discovery is provided by *Descent*.

Mind and heart and body, one harp of being,
Cry that anthem, finding the notes eternal. .

Going backward in time I find the ending of *Reminiscence*:

A song, not master of its note, a cry
That persevered into eternity.

Next, further back in years are a line and a half towards the end of *Love and Death*:

a single grasshopper
Near him repeated fierily its note.

Out of a pre-Pondy past the last line of a poem by another poet peeps out but I am not sure of the wording:

The songs are forced, the notes are few

I shall ask that walking treasury of verse, Ravindra, to tell me the correct version and its context.¹

Well, enough of this tomfoolery! Let us go to more serious things I don't know how the topic of death arose in your chat with Ravindra. Perhaps the mention of "disease" triggered it off. The Mother's letter which he quoted to you seems to be an answer to some apprehension of dying as the result of a disease. When she writes—"Keep quiet and fearless—everything will be all right"—she can't mean that if Ravindra keeps quiet and fearless he won't ever "shuffle off this mortal coil". She must mean that he need not fear he may die because of some bodily trouble he may be suffering from at the moment. Or possibly she means that even if R dies there is nothing to worry about since she is there to take care of him. But her message—"This suggestion of death comes from the 'ego' when it feels that soon it will have to abdicate"—gives us the idea that if the ego would abdicate while we are still alive, not only will the suggestion of death never come but also we shall enter a condition in which we shall rise above both life and death into the consciousness either of the inmost immortal soul, the true individual, or of the highest eternal Self of selves, the universal One within the many.

You are very lucky in your sleep-state. I think it is the constant presence of the psychic being in all your actions and reactions that makes your sleep a rendezvous with Nolini again and again and even with the Beyond-Nolini.

Your latest dream is indeed amazing. It shows how close your heart and mind are to your friend's and how illumined your inner contact can be. The

¹ Postscript Note On consulting Ravindra I have learned that the line I was trying to recollect occurs in Blake's lyric "To the Muses" about the rarity of true poetry in the 18th century and really runs

dream that I am “concentrating on Vedic verses” and that you are feeling “their atmosphere” brings into view, without my telling you anything, my present pre-occupation for the last several days. In the course of my critique of Parpola’s treatment of India’s antiquity I got steeped in the Rġveda and have been haunted by its hymns. Especially has the God Varuna come alive to me. Glorious verses connected with him who is at once like an all-encompassing ether and an all-pervading ocean are part of my thought day and night or rather he has taken my thought at all hours into his infinity. Here are some renderings by Sri Aurobindo:

“Luminous Varuna has embraced the nights, he holds the Dawns within him by his creative knowledge; visioned, he is around every object ”

“He is the hidden ocean and he climbs passing beyond heaven; when he has set the sacrificial words in these dawns, then with his luminous foot he tramples asunder illusions and ascends to Paradise ”

“Vast is this wisdom which I declare of Varuna the far-heard, the mighty Lord, for he stands in our mid-world as with a measuring-rod and wide he measures our éarth with his illumining sun

“Vast is this wisdom of the godhead, greatest in seer-knowledge and none can do violence to it; for into him, the one, the ocean, the bright fostering rivers pour their waters, but they cannot fill him.”

I shall stop now, leaving you with the vision of this Aurobindonian immensity, within which as co-sharers of its blissful transcendence are carried Amal and his precious friend, close-hearted to each other, hand in hand in their aspirations.
(20.8.1989)

*

If the study of astrology has led you to the distressing question—“Am I at all free to do anything or is everything destined so that I am just a puppet?”—it is high time you laid aside your astrological chart. I shall not go into theological questions, for you have not raised the crucial point which at one time drove me nearly crazy as you may learn from the book *Light and Laughter Some Talks at Pondicherry* by Amal Kiran and Nirodbaran. I shall touch only on a simple fact of psychology which is relevant to your context.

What is the basic psychological difference between the mentality of animals and ours? Surely, animals are conscious but they are not conscious of being conscious. We humans have a self-observing poise. Something in us stands a little apart from the diverse processes going on in our physical-vital-mental system. It knows that it can watch these processes to a certain extent, adopt an attitude towards them as if it were not identical with them though at any moment

it may plunge into them and be carried along in whatever dull or dynamic, weeping or laughing, vicious or virtuous turn the endless movement within us may take. The very fact of this witness-posture, however limited and precarious it may seem, the very fact of its ability to judge even if it be at an inch's distance the never-ceasing stream of thoughts, feelings, proclivities and sensations is evidence of a degree of freedom in us—a degree of being uncaught by that stream and a degree of being the acceptor or rejector of it. Such freedom as an inherent part of our make-up and of our existence should convince us that no astrological chart can completely rule our life—unless we are sophists enough to argue that our very conviction or decision that it cannot rule our life is itself predicted in it and therefore fixed! But then we can play counter-sophists and say that we can be fated to be free!

My general advice is: “Get out of the astrological obsession.” Astrology at its best shows a graph of physical possibilities. By saying “physical” I don't exclude the life-force and the mind, for, while being essentially non-physical, they have their surface-manifestations which are closely linked with material factors. Physical possibilities do not exhaust the range of our existence. And, remember, the astrological chart can show no more than what can *tend* to become actual, for man the witness, the stander-back, can say—at least for one critical moment—“Yes” or “No” from his in-drawn poise (5.9.1989)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

LALJIBHAI'S STORY

The Mother's Yoga in the Material World

(Continued from the issue of October 1989)

IN 1961 one night, in a dream-experience, Sri Aurobindo appeared before Laljibhai and asked him, "How many of the suits which you had brought from Africa are still left?" Laljibhai replied, "A few." Sri Aurobindo said, "Don't use them. Go to the Ashram tailoring department and get white suits made. Always wear simple white clothes."

Next day Laljibhai narrated his dream to the Mother. She said, "Yes, it is true. Sri Aurobindo has accepted you as a disciple. It is his way of initiating you." Since then Laljibhai has always worn simple white clothes.

In 1962 Laljibhai wanted to go to Africa for some business meetings. As usual he asked for the Mother's permission. She said,

"Why do you want to go to Africa? Things will be worse in Africa. If you have got anything there bring it out. I give you a maximum of ten years from now to come out from there. Come out honourably, otherwise you people will be thrown out. From now each year will be a bad year. There will be chaos from the Cape to Cairo for fifty years to come and beyond that I cannot see."

Laljibhai asked the Mother, "Shall I tell this to my relatives and friends so that they may take precautionary measures in future?" The Mother replied, "Definitely you can tell them. It will help them, if they follow it faithfully."

With the Mother's permission Laljibhai went to Africa and told his friends and relatives and other people about the Mother's message, but nobody believed it, for at that time they were in the full bloom of prosperity. But in 1972, exactly ten years after, as the Mother had predicted, Iddi Amin expelled all the Indians from Uganda. Laljibhai heard the news on the B B C. London and immediately went to the Mother and informed her. He also prayed for physical protection for all the Indians. The Mother said, "Granted."

And by her Grace most Indians did leave Uganda safely.¹ Then after three days the B.B.C. announced the news that Iddi Amin had jailed a famous Indian industrialist, Manubhai Madhvanı. On hearing the news Laljibhai hurried to the Mother and told her, "Mother, Manubhai Madhvanı is my cousin and our partner's son. He has been persecuted and jailed by Iddi Amin. His life is in danger. I pray for your blessings and protection for his life." The Mother said, "Send this blessings packet to him." Laljibhai replied, "Mother, there is no communication channel and perhaps the packet may not reach him." The Mother replied, "Never mind. He will be quite all right."

After a week Laljibhai heard on the B.B.C. that Manubhai had been released by Iddi Amin without any difficulty. He at once went to the Mother, gave her the news and offered his gratitude. The Mother was happy. After six months when Manubhai Madhwani came to India Laljibhai wrote to him, "The Mother had granted you blessings and you may believe it or not, you were saved by her." Manubhai believed and came to Pondicherry with his family and asked Laljibhai to request permission to see the Mother, so that he might offer his gratitude. The Mother granted permission and Manubhai and his family received the Mother's blessings.

Laljibhai has four sons and one daughter. When the question of the marriage of Ashok, his second son, arose, Laljibhai said, "Since we have dedicated our whole lives to the Mother, on this important issue let us ask for her instructions." Everyone agreed and one day they all went to the Mother and put the whole thing before her. The Mother said to Ashok, "Look, if you want to get married and I say 'No' your life will be miserable and if you don't want to marry and I say 'Yes' your life will still be miserable. So tell me whether you want to marry or not?"

Ashok replied, "Yes, Mother, I want to marry." They had taken the photographs of the different prospective brides and showed them to the Mother. She chose a photograph and asked Ashok, "Do you like her? If so, marry her." Ashok agreed and said, "Whichever girl the Mother chooses I will accept." The Mother remarked about this girl—Kala—"Her soul is good." Then the Mother showed the photograph to Laljibhai and his wife.

Now turning towards Laljibhai the Mother broke into merry and hearty laughter and, spreading out her arms wide, said to him, "Laljibhai, you will be a grandfather." Then, taking his hand into hers, she said, "Congratulations." Laljibhai said, "Mother, even the betrothal has not taken place and you have called me a grandfather." The Mother again said, "You will be a grandfather, Laljibhai." And so it proved with the coming of Lokesh.

After some time Ashok and his mother took the Mother's blessings and went to Africa for fixing the betrothal and marriage. Laljibhai instructed them, "Do not ask astrologers or Pandits for an auspicious date or moment for the marriage. I will ask the Mother." He went accordingly and asked, "Mother, when should the marriage of Ashok and Kala take place?" The Mother graciously fixed a date and the exact time. Then he asked, "Mother, when should I go for the marriage?" The Mother replied, "I say sincerely No. But you tell me Yes or No?" Laljibhai replied with folded hands, "Ma, your will is my will. I will not go." Then the Mother said, "I am very happy that you have made this decision. Now I will go there and perform the marriage."

The marriage took place on the date and at the time fixed by the Mother. Later she asked Laljibhai, "Is there any news from there?" By this time he had received a telegram from Nairobi, "With the Mother's Grace everything went

well and we felt her concrete Presence throughout the marriage ceremony. All went peacefully Our *pranam* to the Mother ” Laljibhai read out the telegram to the Mother. She said, “See, didn’t I tell you I would go there and perform the marriage?” Laljibhai beamed and said with folded hands, “Grateful thanks, Ma ”

The Mother did not permit Laljibhai to go to London for the marriages of his other two sons Suresh and Harish, either

When his sons Suresh, Ashok and Harish returned from England after completing their education they went to the Mother for her blessings She said to them, “Now you have completed your studies, take charge of different companies ” She asked Ashok to take charge of the Sugar Factory and to Suresh and Harish she said, “You take charge of the other two factories You will work accordingly and I want your father Laljibhai for my work ”

Suresh had taken a degree in Electrical Engineering and Electronics In 1967 he was invited to become a member of the first Administrative Committee of Auroville as a technical advisor to help with the founding and planning of Auroville He also started Hindocha and Allied Industries. In 1969 he and his brothers started Auroville Electronics and Allied Industries with a view to making ferrite ceramic magnets The Mother herself especially designed a symbol for the magnet factory Suresh single-handed did all the research for the processes involved in the magnet-manufacturing unit The Mother herself fixed the time of the inauguration of the magnet factory. He also started teaching electronics, electricity and mathematics at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. The course continued for three years.

In 1983 the brothers started a rubber sealant business. As with the magnet factory with his inventive genius, here also Suresh undertook the basic research and technical work while finance and administration were looked after by Harish. At the same time Suresh had been delving deeper in the world of computers. He took diplomas in Computer’s Systems and Applications and Software Development and Management, and also took an on-line Systems Course

Thus the Mother prepared in Suresh an exceptional instrument The students of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education would talk of him with awe, “He is a walking encyclopaedia.” When a young sadhak of the Ashram, who loved computers above all things, was in difficulties Suresh gave him free access to his office, computers and library He, with the permission of Laljibhai, financed this young man’s research activities.

In 1987 Laljibhai’s mother Zawerben was not well She put her affairs in order. On first August 1987 she made namaskar to all those people who were around her and said, “Now I am going to *Vaikuntha* (the abode of Lord Vishnu)” and then this saintly soul peacefully left her body.

In 1987 Aurelec, a computer firm in Auroville for the benefit of Auro-

villians, was started by Suresh's old students Kalia and Nini with some others. They invited Suresh to work with them. Laljibhai said that since Ashok was helping him in running the New Horizon Sugar Mill, Suresh could use his multifarious talents for the Mother's work—for to serve Auroville is also to serve the Mother.

To complete this splendid canvas of a dedicated life let me add the hues of some of Laljibhai's inner experiences with the Mother's confirmations and comments when he narrated them to her. Here is a vision.

1) "I had the occasion to go where Sri Aurobindo lived. Champaklal opened the door and informed Sri Aurobindo that Laljibhai had come. Sri Aurobindo said, 'Seat him in the adjoining room.' Sri Aurobindo met me and asked me about the significances of some flowers. I didn't know anything about them. He explained to me their significances. Then he put some sandal paste from his forehead on my forehead and caressed my head. Immediately Force, Ananda and Peace started to descend into me with intensity, and my hair became black. Then Sri Aurobindo gave me his blessings. Champaklal was seated nearby doing something. Sri Aurobindo looked young and his beard and hair were black. Champaklal also looked young.

"When I narrated this experience to the Mother she said, 'Your experience was true. Sri Aurobindo gave you the experience of Transformation.'

2) I dreamt that I was late for seeing the Mother. I was waiting to go to her room. Sri Aurobindo came out from the adjoining bathroom and asked me, 'Are you waiting to see the Mother?' 'Yes,' I replied. He called me near him and, taking me in his arms, kissed and blessed me. Just then Champaklal came and Sri Aurobindo said, 'The Mother is calling you,' and Champaklal led me to the Mother."

3) "In a dream while passing a building I saw Sri Aurobindo and Champaklal standing there. I approached them and did *pranam* to Sri Aurobindo. He said, 'Laljibhai, do you know all this is decaying?' He explained at length, 'Men and buildings, birds and animals, the vegetable kingdom—all are decaying. The age is changing. The Mother's Yoga and mine of Transformation is for this reason. Our Yoga will be successful in the whole world. Then nothing will decay. Sorrow, poverty, wars, the sense of mine and thine, enmity, jealousy, selfishness—all these will go. And Sachchidananda—the empire of Love, Light, Harmony, Unity and Peace—will spread over the earth. There will be no enmity amongst people. Sorrow will become extinct, a thing of the past.' Sri Aurobindo continued speaking thus and I and Champaklal listened.

"Next day I narrated this dream to Champaklal. He at once took out a notebook and said, 'Look, what you have experienced, I was writing in poetry—the same thing. It is an inspiration from Sri Aurobindo.'"

4) "I went to a field in the snow-clad Himalayas and stood in the shade of a clump of trees. There was a river near the valley and Sri Aurobindo and the

Mother were standing by its side. Champaklal who was with them saw me and informed the Mother and Sri Aurobindo about my being there. Then he called me and said, 'Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are waiting for you.' I approached them and did *pranam*.

"Nearby there was a temple of Goddess Shakti. The Mother led me to it and asked me to stand opposite it. She said, 'Do not be afraid of what is going to happen. Let it happen peacefully.' I said, 'Yes,' and stood quietly. Then I saw in the sky a globe like our earth. It had fire inside but it was a cold fire. This globe started coming towards me. I became a little afraid. But immediately I repeated the Mantra 'Om Anandamayi, Chaitanyamayi, Satyamayi Parame.' Then all fear vanished, my chest opened and the globe entered into my chest. A small white serpent started climbing my body. The Mother came running and threw away the serpent. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were very pleased and after blessing me said, 'The Supramental Light-consciousness has started working on the earth. It has started working in the consciousness of men. In reaction to its influence much suffering, the cold war and natural calamities have started on the earth with great force. These will become so terrible that they will be unbearable. People will lose faith in the Divine. Then the victory of the Supramental Truth will take place in the world and the world will become Anandamaya, Chaitanyamaya, Satyamaya. The age of this world of sorrow will be over. This is a war between the Divine and the hostile forces for the world. The Supramental will be victorious. In the coming Divine Age man will become enlightened and the present sorrows will lessen.'

"Then Sri Aurobindo, the Mother and Champaklal went away.

"Next day I went and narrated the experience to the Mother. She said, 'It is a true experience. What Sri Aurobindo and myself said is the Truth. If man keeps faith in the Divine Working and keeps faith in the Divine Work, then his mental tensions and sorrows will be less.' "

5) "One early morning I was walking on the sea-shore. Champaklal was standing at a distance waiting for the Mother. A. B. Patel stood by my side. Sunlight was spread all around and was reflected in the waters of the sea. The atmosphere was intensely divine and golden. Clad in a sari the Mother was sitting on the old pier in an immense form—*Virāt Rūpa*. The Sun-God was coming on his seven-horsed chariot from the east. A Rakshasa came between me and the Sun-God. He aimed to kill me. The Mother saw it. She ordered the Sun-God to kill the demon. The Sun-God killed him with an arrow and the experience stopped.

"When I narrated it to the Mother she said, 'It was a symbolic experience. Such demons always obstruct the Supramental, and only the Supramental will destroy them. It is the beginning of our New Creation. If man thinks positively and keeps faith in the Divine's working then the realisation will come more quickly.' "

6) “One day I was restless and felt a pressure on the mind. Suddenly a light flashed. With it a thought came that I should offer some money to the Mother. Immediately I felt Ananda.

“In the afternoon I went to the Mother with a cheque. On taking the cheque and reading the amount the Mother enquired, ‘Were you asked to offer exactly this amount?’ Then I narrated my mental tension and the flash. The Mother was pleased and said, ‘I sent out a formation in the world that whosoever brings me exactly this amount first will have the *adhikār* of the highest Divine blessings. This *adhikār* you have attained now. I am very happy that you received this Blessing.’ ”

On this exalted note of her Grace I end the story Though Laljibhai has countless other treasures, they are too intimate and sacred to be revealed.

He lives quietly, unostentatiously. He says about himself and his family, “We always sincerely and faithfully executed the Mother’s will, never caring for our personal convenience or inconvenience. It is the surest way to succeed ”

(Concluded)

Postscript: Owing to new unsuitable circumstances Laljibhai sold the Sugar Factory in September 1989. In July he had gifted the Mother’s House at the Sugar Factory to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.

Compiled by SHYAM KUMARI

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Information for this story is drawn from the following sources

- 1 Talk by Laljibhai to the students of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education on 25th March 1989
- 2 Interviews with Laljibhai
- 3 Aurelec Times, August 1987
- 4 *Apno Champaklal* published by Ambapremi Shah
- 5 *The Story of a Soul* by Huta *Mother India*, May 1984

THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(Continued from the issue of October 1989)

A NEW scene, a new setting Sri Aurobindo was sitting in his arm-chair exactly as in his photographs. But his body was quite bare, except for a fine handloom Bengali dhoti. It was crisp and white with a narrow black border, tucked in (at the waist) in an old-fashioned manner. The creases in the front were carefully gathered around the feet. It was strange how the aristocratic elegance of a Bengali gentleman seemed to enhance the physical beauty of the Lord of Yoga, Sri Aurobindo, dwelling here in Pondicherry. Every day a freshly washed and starched dhoti was ready and waiting for him. In fact, to make it ready was the daily duty of a particular sadhika. And yet there had been times long ago when Sri Aurobindo had to manage with two dhotis a year, at best, and one small handloom towel or gamcha that was used by five or six other people. And even earlier, as a student, there were years and years of poverty and near-starvation. And always, in all circumstances, the same calm, the same equanimity.

The soft small feet were resting on a footstool. On his right was a tall nut-brown table, on its round top a small clock was ticking away, indicating time to the Eternal.

The children filed in quietly, almost soundlessly. After bowing down before Sri Aurobindo's feet, each of them sat on the carpeted floor, facing him. The room seemed more crowded than on the previous occasion, and I thought there were quite a number of new faces. All of them were looking up at Sri Aurobindo, their wide eyes filled with reverential expectation, perhaps mixed with the surprise of finding the Lord looking so typically Bengali. I was reminded of the forest hermitages of Ancient India, where the Gurus, the Rishis, sat surrounded by their young students, eager seekers of Wisdom. Of course now the times had changed, and so had the methods of imparting knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo looked around the room and, with lids half-lowered, said—
“Many new faces, I see.”

“Yes,” I answered, “and they are a little older too. They are all my students. I have told them, in the class, all about our evening sessions with you and that made them very eager to come here with the younger children. They asked the Mother, if they could come, and she agreed. So here they are.”

“Oh.” A long silence followed. Who would break it? And how? And then a girl piped up, “While we were returning home after our last visit, we all found Gita terribly serious and silent. We asked her so many times what the matter was. She simply wouldn't say.”

All heads turned towards Gita, and at this unexpected attention she

blushed, embarrassed. She saw Sri Aurobindo smiling down at her, and the smile gave her the courage to say, "I was completely fascinated by that experience you told us of, when you were eleven years old. I could hardly sleep, thinking about it. I also sometimes feel like that, that I don't belong to the world, that I have no one, neither friends nor family, except the Mother who alone is my real mother. Someone seems to beckon to me in my dreams. At other times I see an exquisitely beautiful figure, like our Mother, waiting for me by the wayside. Then, again, there are times when the trees come alive. The palm tree in the garden downstairs seems peopled with spirits. I see so many things that it becomes very difficult to concentrate on my studies or on my activities in the playground. And if I tell my friends about them, they simply laugh at me."

"They laugh, do they? Haven't you heard of Joan of Arc, the little peasant girl? When she used to take her flocks out to graze in the fields, angels from Heaven would come down to her and speak to her and even play with her. When you grow up a little, you will understand all this better. For the present, whenever you experience that special mood, remain as calm as possible and continue doing your work but as quietly as you can."

Encouraged by these words from Sri Aurobindo, another youngster spoke up, "Whenever I go home after seeing You, I dream of You all night. You seem to come so close to us, and sometimes even caress our faces and hands. How soft Your hands are, just like Mother's hands. Mother also visits me now and then in my dreams. And the day after, I am filled with an intense joy, but then, gradually, it begins to diminish. Other thoughts get into the mind and the usual restlessness and stupidities of everyday life start all over again. Why does this happen?"

"Why? Well, in order to explain why I would have to tell you all about Yoga and spirituality. But to put it briefly, we are not one person. We may appear to be someone on the outside, but within us there dwell many different personalities, small and big. Each of them has different temperaments, and they are all the time disagreeing and even quarrelling among themselves. We call them Mind, Life and Body. Have you read of the quarrel between the Eye and the Ear, between Mind and Life that the Upanishads relate? No? Well, then, haven't you ever noticed a struggle within yourself, your mind on one side, your life-forces on the other? Your mind, which may admonish you one moment, reminding you that you ought to study and not waste your time in pleasures and, the next moment, make excuses to yourself and tell you there is always tomorrow when it will be time enough to study."

"Oh! that happens all the time!"

"So there you are! You find that you are two people, one is called Mind, the other Life. The third person inside you, may intervene in the quarrel and say that it will obey neither; instead it may prefer to fall asleep. Such is human nature. It's as if it were China, Russia, America, all in one. (*Laughter*)"

“If you can bring together all these bickering beings within you, harmonising them in the light of your soul, then your life grows truly beautiful and happy. You say you cannot retain the feeling of joy that you experience. That is because these lower personalities within you demand their quota of excitement, their vitamins consisting of cheap noise, trashy books and vulgar films! The higher delight and beauty and peace, the food of the gods is too hard for them to stomach. You follow?”

“Then what is to be done?”

“There’s no need to worry. But since it is a difficult task, one should proceed slowly and carefully. That is what we are striving for, ceaselessly, that man should attain his godhead. But, in the meantime, you are expected to move forward quietly, doing your work without impatience, rejecting all that is wrong, accepting instead whatever you feel is true and good in life and thought, in the books that you read or in the friends you surround yourself with, or even in the simple nourishing food that you eat. Most important of all, put yourself totally into the hands of the Mother, as completely as the little kitten surrenders itself to its mother.”

“That is to say?”

“Why, have you never observed little kittens whom their mothers pick up by the neck and carry wherever they want? The little ones look perfectly content, they have nothing to worry about. The baby monkey instead looks so terrified as it clings to its mother’s back when she moves from one place to another. You all should rather imitate the baby-cat.”

“Could you tell us something about dreams? Do they tell the truth?” interrupted suddenly one of the older boys.

“Not all of them.”

“But she just said she saw You and Mother in her dreams...”

“Oh! those of course are true. How else could she feel waves of joy washing over her all the next day? You see, though science may believe that man is merely a being of flesh and blood, it really is not so. For example, if you read the *Prayers and Meditations* of the Mother you will come across her description of an experience she had when she was your age. She saw herself rising up into the sky and, as she rose up, her gown extended itself below her, like a parachute. It grew longer and longer as it reached down towards the earth. And towards it rushed all the miserable, the poor, the unhappy and the sick. They stretched their hands out to the dress. The moment they touched it their pain vanished and a tranquil joy filled their being. You see. We all have another body besides this physical one, one may call it the subtle one. When you sleep at night, Mother visits you in her subtle body to bring you peace and light, health and wisdom—according to your need. If you are conscious, you may realise this, sometimes even you may yourself go to her. You will understand all these complex truths better when you grow up. In the meantime, shall we resume our story, eh?”

“Oh yes! You had told us that you had gone to London, to join St. Paul's.”

“Well, now began a new chapter in our lives. In me, the child was giving place to the boy and though I had not yet quite learned how to fly freely, my wings had begun to show. I no longer needed the safety of the nest that old Mrs. Drewett had made for me, though I believe it was for our sake that Mr. Drewett suggested to his mother to come and live in London. Indeed, this did help us to some extent, otherwise that vast unknown city would have swallowed up the three boys from a far-away land. So we found a shelter. And now about the school. My brothers had no difficulty in being admitted, but I was asked to pass a stiff examination set by the headmaster, Dr. Walker. He questioned me about various subjects and my answers must have satisfied him, in fact he seemed very pleased indeed, especially with my knowledge of Latin, so that he began to coach me personally, along with some other bright boys. He always enjoyed helping and teaching the very good students. I think he was largely responsible for the good name acquired by St. Paul's. Of course, his coaching helped me beyond all expectations. Earlier it had been Mr. Drewett who had taught me personally, now it was the headmaster of St. Paul's who took me in hand. This, I have noticed, is one of the finer traits in the English character. If an Englishman grows fond of you or is impressed by you, he will go to any length to help you. Later I will tell you what great though vain efforts were made to get me a job!”

“Didn't you feel lost and lonely among so many English boys?”

“Why lonely? You mean because I was an Indian? But at that age one is not supposed to have all those notions about racial distinctions! Or perhaps I believed I was English myself, since I spoke like them, dressed like them, in every way I was like them—where was the difference? Yes, there was the colour factor, but after the cold climate of Darjeeling and 5 years of Manchester, even that had become somewhat English, maybe!”

“Completely English, were you?” (*Laughter*)

“I said, maybe. You know, when I was staying at Baroda, someone had come to see me. On finding that I was not quite sure who he was, he exclaimed, ‘What? Don't you recognise me? I'm Hesh.’

“‘Oh! you're Hesh? But you look absolutely like a foreigner!’

“‘I've grown fair, haven't I? That's why I sometimes think that if one sent a whole shipload of us darkies to those cold European countries, at least our complexions would begin to resemble theirs and the distinction between white and black would begin to disappear. It's this colour complex that is at the root of our slave-mentality,’ he concluded. So now, you know that your complexion can change. Not only due to geographical reasons, but spiritual ones too.”

“Is that so?”

“Haven't you heard that I was quite dark-skinned?”

I interrupted here to say—“When Bhupalbabu came here for your Darshan, the first question he asked me was—‘I hear that Sri Aurobindo's colour has

changed, he has become very fair; is that true?' He was extremely surprised by my answer. However, during the actual Darshan, he may have been too nervous to be able to notice all that "

"Why nervous?" asked one of the children.

"You haven't seen the Darshan! And then of course you are all children, and fear is something you know little of. Also the Sri Aurobindo you are seeing now is quite other than the Lord who sat before us at the Darshan. The poet Nishikanto wrote of one such occasion. In English translation the opening would read:

Filled am I with fear and love, O Lord, O Beloved,
For merciless is Thy marvellous light that shatters my darkest night.

So it is not at all surprising if one feels nervous during Darshan, even if one does not admit the feeling of fear. One of our doctors also told Sri Aurobindo, 'Sir, you look majestic during the Darshan.' "

"Well, I do not understand why anyone should fear me. However, let that pass. Have you children now understood how the practice of yoga can change the colour of your skin?"

"Actually it was the ladies of my family who first noticed the change in my complexion. Women's eyes are very sharp with regard to such matters."

"By the way, are Nolinida and Amritada doing Yoga too?"

"If they are not, then who is?"

"But their complexions have not altered!"

"They have, only you do not have the eyes to see that "

"But I can see your colour!"

"You will see theirs too, a little later "

"Will their skin really appear lighter, fairer?" a girl asked.

"Fairer, newer, younger and so much more "

"Are you joking with us?"

"Why should I? If my complexion can change, so can theirs. I see from the way you argue that you all share Nirod's doubting nature. But one day the testimony of your own eyes will set all your doubts at rest. But.. haven't we moved very far away from our topic? What were we discussing earlier?"

"Your schooldays "

"Not exactly. It was about the way your schoolfellows behaved with you."

"Well, anyway, it's late today. We'll start from there the next time and move further afield."

*

On the way home, whispered exchanges flew among them

"Did you see how beautiful his colour was? Molten gold!"

“Yes, we hadn't noticed it the last time because he was lying down.”

A third child broke in, “What gold are you talking of? I only saw him as very fair ”

A fourth, “Did you notice the dhoti, all the fine pleats made with such care? Really, not at all like our simple old Shiva! And here was I, really frightened of him at the beginning. How silly of me.” (*Laughter*)

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

(Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali)

CONVERSATIONS OF THE DEAD

TRANSLATED BY SATADAL FROM THE BENGALI OF
NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

6

Sultan Mahmood, Firdausi

Mahmood

ALL hail to your poetic genius, Firdausi! It is not for mere fancy that I appointed you my court-poet. I will never forget those extraordinary and novel adjectives with which you have bedecked me, those radiant praises with which you have glorified me! Thanks a lot for that! I never did trade a better deal than to purchase you, never before was my money so amply rewarded.

Firdausi

A money-grubber, a ghoul in human form as you are who have plundered through the whole of your life, what else can you understand but money's worth! Mahmood, you are nothing but a beast of burden. You have gathered together many wise and talented men in your court, it's true, but you did not enjoy the nectar of knowledge and virtue, nor did you realise their worth.

Mahmood

I did not want that, either. I had wanted beautiful ornaments for myself. As I have plundered diamonds and pearls from alien stores to decorate Ghazni, as I have enriched my harem with jewels among women, in the same way I have collected literary geniuses like you to decorate my court. It means nothing more to me. But you, Firdausi, at least you won't be able to say that your greed for money is less than mine. It is apparent that you judge the worth of your words with money. Poor soul, how much you bother for a few chips of metal.

Firdausi

The value of a poet's words cannot be determined by money. The poet is grieved by the stupidity of man, for the lack of a little amount of brain inside the skull of a hero like you, for the lack of a drop of appreciative feeling in his heart. Your scanty dole is the very sign of the sort of respect you have shown to a heavenly treasure like poetry. I did not bother for the money. I was cut to the quick at the humiliation meted out to poetry. Abusina understood your worth, so somehow he did not surrender to you. Mahmood, even if you give away your whole empire including Ghazni, that won't be the just honour shown to a single couplet of mine.

Mahmood

Bravo! Really you are heroic with words. But feminine is this heroism. A poet and a woman are of the same category. The rough wind and the storm of the world, the scorching sun and summer of day-to-day life, the dusty soil of the earth do not suit you, or befit you. That's why it is the job of kings and emperors to keep you people safe and properly looked after under their protection, and to give rest to their body and mind, joy to their heart on hearing at leisure one or two charming words from your mouth.

Firdausi

How will you, a bandit, realise the glory of words? The rhyme and rhythm, the music, the panorama which the poet has created with words is like God's creation, equally beautiful, equally wondrous. The whole universe is caught in the words of the poet. The world is created out of the Word, the poet's word has given form to Allah's vision, the poet's word is the splendour of Allah's eye.

Mahmood

Your creation is in thin air, in a void. He whom you call a bandit, Firdausi, has created a greater poetry than yours. But then my poetry is not on animal hide, my poetry is on the earth's surface. You have written with a pen, I have drawn with a sword. You have arranged letters, I have arranged men, countries. Whose creation is more living, more sound, more glorious? In whom is God's bounty more prominent?

Firdausi

The proof lies in the permanence of creation. Your creation, Mahmood, vanished with you. So much care, so much effort, so much labour—do you find even a trace of them today? But my creation continues to be a thing of delight for men even now, age after age, from country to country. There is more of discord in your creation than rhythm. Your creation is made of temporal and fragile stuff. Your creation is extremely external, only physical

Mahmood

Even then, you people are the echoes of us, aren't you? Whatever we do in reality, you shape that alone in words. We do the work, you give its explanation. Your Shahnamah, Firdausi, is merely a translation of the Shahnamah that I have inscribed on the world.

Firdausi

The poet takes support from your work as a mere shelter, as a trick and a means. Lotuses bloom in cowdung—does that imply any inherent glory of cowdung itself? The poet sees an unearthly domain, and to place an idea of it before the

eyes of common men he gathers whatever materials he gets from any source whatsoever. A poet is a poet precisely because he turns something puny into something grand, something temporal into something eternal, something ugly into a thing of beauty. Reality is not the only truth, Mahmood.

Mahmood

I admit, you people are worshippers of beauty. But we are idols of power. That's why I was comparing you with women. You have captivated people from country to country, from age to age in a feminine manner only. Not beauty, but power is the essence of the world. Power makes man a creative person, power is the measure of man's manhood. You influence the sentiment, the heart, but the influence of our work enters the very flesh and blood of man, lies hidden in between the body-cells of the earth.

Firdausi

Physical strength is not the only strength—it's brute force. The thing of beauty of a poet contains the highest and the deepest manifestation of power. The *tej*, the force of the spirit, of the Creator is at the root of the creation of beauty by a poet; a fragment of that has come down and made a hero-worker like you powerful and arrogant.

O REVEAL THYSELF

THE promise of the Absolute was revealed to the human heart
With the Sacrificial Flame!
The Rishis heard the words of the Supreme Wisdom
And sang them with mantric rhythm and symbolic diction...

But with the cycle of time the sacred hymns
Have withdrawn into unfathomable depths.
Only they surge up at times in a musical murmur
Mingled with the incessant roaring of the sea .

I am the offspring of the Rishis of yore,
Born in the days when their glory has waned.
Still I bear within me the spiritual charge
To keep ablaze the secret flame of Self-law!

Often the message comes rippling in me
From beyond the horizon of the senses,
“Child, seek the radiant source of life
And attain the ancient Truth in a new way.”

Above me smiles the vast immaculate blue,
Below broods the all-enduring silent soil,
In front lark the many-mooded waves...
But I am bewildered at the lethal growth of science!

O immortal Master, where art Thou?
Where is the hidden Mystic Truth?
Reveal Thyself, O Lord, to the assembly of men
And sprinkle sanctifying Fire on the sullied earth...

O India, implant the image of awakened soul
Amidst the trees, rivers, hills and plains
And depict the mystery of short-lived human life
On the golden book of an eternal future..

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

FOUR CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH NEHRU

MUZAFFARNAGAR, my home town, is situated only eighty miles north of Delhi. In a way it is almost an extension of Delhi and in olden days used to throb with the heart-beats of the freedom movement. Being so near to the centre of action had many rewards. In the 'thirties to people living in the far-flung corners of India, the national leaders of that era were mere names read in newspapers or seen in photographs and once in a while in some newsreel. They might hope to see a national leader only in a decade. But we were living so near Delhi that Jawaharlal Nehru, Jaya Prakash Narayan, Aruna Asaf Ali, Achyut Patwardhan, Acharya Narendra Dev—all these fiery young patriots visited our city frequently, and addressed huge public meetings.

My maternal uncle, the late Shri Radha Raman, was in the forefront of the Freedom Movement in our district. So whenever these national leaders came to Muzaffarnagar and visited my uncle's house, I had the privilege to see them, and accompany them when they went to address public meetings in nearby towns.

I was a born hero-worshipper and we children of that era had a detailed knowledge of the tortures inflicted by the British on our revolutionary heroes. In a very tiny way we became a part of the great Revolution sweeping the country. At the early age of seven or eight I read the clandestinely circulated and avidly read proscribed books, *Hanging of Maharaja Nanda Kumar* and the three volumes of Shri Sunderlal's *Bharat me Angrezi Rajya*. Once my maternal aunty bought from a hawker a piece of foreign nylon fabric and swore to secrecy the other members of the family but they never gave me a thought, thinking a five-year old would not understand boycott, Swadeshi, etc. As soon as my maternal uncle came home I reported the matter to him. I still remember the burst of flame which ensued when he forced aunty to bring out the piece of cloth and then put a match to it.

In 1937-38 the nation was electrified with a new spirit. The breath of revolution was making heroes out of ordinary people. In those days, life in my maternal grandfather's house pivoted around the national movement because of my eldest maternal uncle's dedication to the cause. When I was about three or four years old there was great excitement in the town. The grown-ups were using big words—non-resistance, lathicharge, swaraj, etc., which were a mystery for me and were beyond my understanding but I could sense the ripples of mixed joy and apprehension, for Nehru was coming to the city. I expected it to be some sort of special Ramlila play and wondered why everyone refused to take me to the *tamasha*, the super-show as I conceived it to be.

I could sense some sort of fear in the atmosphere which was not altogether new. For whenever my uncle was arrested my young aunt would become ill. She had several miscarriages due to the shock of these arrests as my uncle had passed nine of his youth-years in jail. On that day I created such a rumpus demanding to

see the procession that ultimately to quieten me my mother asked the sales boy from grandfather's shop to show me the procession from the platform of the shop. Now, this shop was situated opposite the Khadi Bhandar. In those days Khadi Bhandars used to be the hub of nationalistic activities.

So there I was perched on the shoulders of this young man. I asked him to take me nearer to glimpse Nehru and suddenly we were in the midst of a milling crowd and relentlessly lathi-wielding policemen. But I had eyes only for the young handsome face which seemed familiar even to a three-year old. Screams of the injured were drowned in the full-throated slogans of the crowd *Bharat Mata Ki Jai, Jawaharlal Nehru Zindabad*. Nehru had climbed or was rather forced by the volunteers on to the platform of the Khadi Bhandar. I was bobbing on the shoulders of the terrified clerk. With lightning speed, agility and compassion Nehru jumped down or leaned down to pull me up. It might have been catastrophic for me, for what chance had a child against the frenzy of police lathis. Nehru for a moment put me on his own shoulder. Somebody relieved him by taking me and standing me to one side. This was my first and closest encounter with Nehru.

The second encounter earned me a scolding from him. As I have recounted, my maternal uncle was one of those in the forefront of the freedom struggle in Muzaffarnagar. When the national leaders came to address public meetings, being related to the local leaders had many advantages for us kids. My cousins, myself and the children of other local leaders had a grandstand view of all the proceedings. During public meetings we were allowed to sit on the dais along with the luminaries. Once, as usual dressed in spotless white *Achkan*, Nehru was addressing a public meeting. He spoke for more than an hour, and one hour is quite a long time for a five-year old. I could not follow what he was saying but like everyone I gazed at him with adoration and right in the middle of his impassioned speech I threw some marigold petals on him. Turning his gaze towards me he shouted, "Yah kya battamizi hai?" ("What is this impertinence?") Readers can easily imagine my mortification.

Years passed. In the mid-fifties we went to Kashmir and from there to Manali. Manali was a favourite holiday hill-station of both Nehru and Indira Gandhi, actually they had put it on the tourist map of India. One day we were going on a mountain road—a jolly group with a picnic-basket. Suddenly from around the mountain bend we saw an open jeep coming, one look at the jeep and its occupant, and my young sisters were jumping up and down shouting, "Chacha Nehru Zindabad." ("Long live Uncle Nehru"). The jeep slowed at a command from Nehru and stopped on coming alongside. A beaming Nehru stood up and with folded hands said, "Jai Hind" My irrepressible kid-sister Raka threw a handful of toffees at Nehru which fell around him in a shower, for we were standing on boulders a little higher than the jeep. Nehru stooped and picked up some of them and threw them back at us. By a sudden insight I could

read his thoughts and feelings. He was happy and gratified. We were his success. This is how he wanted to see every Indian—happy, well-dressed, well-fed and carefree. All this happened in a minute and the jeep passed on with Raka, Ila and Priti and Pankaj still shouting “Chacha Nehru Zindabad ”

The fourth encounter took place a few years later at an old Boys’ Reunion at Roorkee University, Roorkee. Nehru was truly proud of his country’s engineers and their achievements. He was to be the chief guest and was going to attend and later address the people at the old Boys’ Reunion Dinner. There had been week-long cultural activities. The last function before the dinner had been musical chairs. After musical chairs everyone left to dress for dinner. During the musical chairs I was introduced to some engineer friends of my husband who invited us to accompany them on the ropeway boat across the swift flowing waters of the Ganges canal. There were no shadows, no signs of the lurking tragedy around these friends. But the Divine Mother protected us. We asked to be excused as we had come by car. These friends pressed that we go and come back with them in the boat pulled on a rope and after the dinner collect our car. But something held us back, we refused their offer though I was strongly tempted, for I had never been in a trolly-boat pulled on ropes. We came to know after the dinner that while these friends were crossing the canal the boat fell in the swirling waters and three of them drowned.

Unaware of the tragedy we came happy and excited to attend the dinner. Nehru was very far and his words didn’t reach us, and we just thumped our tables to applaud whatsoever he was saying but were later hushed up by those who were sitting in front. After the dinner and speech all of us stood in a circle while Nehru stood in the middle. He was always quickly touched by the woes and weals of his countrymen. His face reflected the various moods of the Indian people. Just then he looked pensive, subdued and vulnerable. It was the same sad face which the nation saw during the holocaust of 1947 and would later see in his last years after the Chinese attack on India. I, who had seen him two or three years back on that mountain road of Manali where one minute had seemed a happy eternity, now felt his sorrow as my own. As if an invisible link was established between us, I wanted to ease his pain. When he came near me, impulsively I blurted out, “Aap baith jaiyé.” (“Please take a seat”) Not a little surprised at this suggestion from an unexpected quarter Nehru replied, “Yahan? Sabké beach mé?” (“Here? In the midst of everybody?”) Then he saw my crestfallen face and at once threw away his burden and became his usual smiling self. There were some chairs placed here and there. He went and picking up a chair planted it right in the middle of hundreds of venerable professors, their wives and young engineering students. Then he took me by my shoulders and pushed me into the chair and gave me a mischievous smile, “Tum baitho” (“You sit down”), and thus made me a cynosure of a thousand envious eyes. Then he held the namecard of my husband—an old student—with his fingers and joked,

“Have you written your own name so that you may not forget it?” [New and old students each wore a card giving his name and year of passing, so that other students might know him] Nehru then went on smiling broadly.

It is unbelievable that in an average lifetime this idol and heart-throb of India could touch with personal warmth so many persons of his country.

SHYAM KUMARI

RYŌKAN*

COMPOSED of many perfumes, the subtle scent—
 A diamond suspended on air,
 All facets lit from the same source,
 At the same time: Ryōkan reads the old poets.
 Ruefully he admits, he whose sincerity
 Shines as the mountain snows, confesses —
 He has become a monk, partly at least,
 To gain the leisure for reading and writing
 In his begging bowl violets and dandelions.

Cold, age, hardship There isn't enough food.
 The wind sings. Sometimes he longs for a friend
 Tonight he has eaten and made a good fire.
 The elderly fingers caress the pages,
 He has kept the books by him for many years,
 Carried them on his back, guarded them with his love.
 How well they read in those days! Now Ryōkan writes
 And his mind scented by the ancient poems
 Pours out its own fragrance mingled with theirs.

MARTA GUHA

* Ryōkan, a Japanese Zen-monk and poet (1758-1831)

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

(Continued from the issue of October)

Life on Mars (?)

IN 1960 the astrophysicist and science writer Johannes von Buttlar took part in a geological expedition in Australia west of the Kimberley highlands. It was night time in the outback when he suddenly started hearing the monotonous murmuring of a human voice in the far distance. After some searching he reached a clearing and found an aboriginal performing a ritual. The latter soon stopped the ceremony, sat down quietly and seemed to await V. Buttlar. The sorcerer was very old and talked to the German scientist in Pidgin-English. He disclosed that he was a rain-maker and added, after a while, "You have come in search of Guriguda."

The mysterious man got up and took V. Buttlar into a very large cave through a small cleft. He headed towards the left wall and lit it up with his torch. V. Buttlar gazed at a wall painting from ancient times which showed some men and women who looked European, but there were also figures resembling astronauts. He also discovered strange hieroglyphs and figures like spirals. At a little distance the rain-maker pointed towards six coloured circles. There was a large yellow one and then at certain intervals others in brown, white, blue, red and green colour. The blue and red circles were connected by a boomerang. The aboriginal told V. Buttlar that in very ancient times so-called guriguda-men had come from the red circle in a boomerang. "They stayed with us for a while," he said, and his finger wandered to the blue circle. Then he took the amazed scientist outside and pointed to a small, reddish light in the night sky—it was Mars.

V. Buttlar has done since then a lot of research on the possibility of extraterrestrial visits from Mars or other planets and published his findings in books such as *Leben auf dem Mars* (Knaur Verlag, 1989). The evidence he has gathered is quite astonishing and contradicts a number of established beliefs of modern science. Indeed, all over the world discoveries have been made which suggest the existence of human or human-like beings on earth long before they could have existed according to our present knowledge. And there are cave paintings 45,000 years old which anticipate advanced knowledge of our solar system as developed in Europe only in the 16th century. And, most recently, we have those NASA pictures from Mars which show nothing else than human faces.

Millions of TV viewers had a chance in July 1976 to witness the landing of

the American Viking 1 on Mars. Meanwhile, the Viking Orbiter from its lofty station was beaming 300.000 pictures to earth. Only 60.000 have been evaluated so far. In 1980 the American computer specialist Vincent DiPietro examined some pictures and made an incredible discovery. On a black-and-white picture he recognized a human face sculptured in rock on a diameter of 1500 metres. Its base was twenty-five times larger than that of the Cheops Pyramid in Egypt.

Now we know it often occurs in nature that a human face seems to form itself naturally in a cloud, rock or whatever. Therefore, DiPietro took help from another computer expert and together they used the most advanced technologies for analyzing the picture. The results were all positive. Soon they discovered a second photo showing the same face from another perspective with a different position of the sun. Again the result of their computer analysis was positive. There was a perfect symmetry, the eyes, mouth, chin and hair were clearly discernible. And at a distance of about 15 km they discovered six giant pyramids which seemed to be constructed and aligned according to a definite astronomical principle. One of the pyramids was broken on one side. A quadrangular chamber became visible inside. Even a second Mars face was discovered which had a big tear on its right cheek. According to NASA rumours, ten more such faces are known. Here it must be mentioned again that a large number of pictures have not yet been evaluated at all.

V. Buttlar develops an interesting hypothesis. There is a great possibility, recognized by some astronomers, that once there were not nine, but ten planets. The Soviet scientists Kowal and Senkawitsch believe that the tenth planet, Phaethon, burst into pieces (due to whatever catastrophe) about 175 million years ago, perhaps creating the belt of asteroids known to us. As a result of the explosion of Phaethon there was a bombardment of meteoroids of giant size on neighbouring planets. Thus, Mars has craters 25 km deep with diameters of 600 km. The largest craters on earth (in Sudbury, Canada, for instance) have diameters of 140 km.

Now V. Buttlar suggests that Phaethon (which may have had a highly developed civilization) burst and the Martians were more and more affected by the catastrophe as the damage through crashing meteoroids increased and resulted in dramatic changes of climate. A small group of Martians was evacuated to earth, as they realized life on their planet would come to an end. As a lasting monument for posterity they erected those giant statues, with the tear expressing their sorrow over the loss of their planet. And then V. Buttlar suggests that the green ring in that Australian cave painting (see second paragraph) might have symbolized the once prosperous Phaethon.

All this is only a hypothesis, of course. But the fact of the Mars faces is there. Indeed, if they were not created by human hands, it would be a still greater miracle if Mother Nature had formed them all by herself. That chance is dwindling more and more, because V. Buttlar mentions as the latest news that

DiPietro told him he had discovered another Mars face exactly resembling the first one.

V. Buttlar even claims in evidence from the Vedas and the Mahabharata to support his thesis that in very ancient times there may have been incredibly potent civilizations with advanced technical capacities. Thus, in the Drona Parva of the Mahabharata we are told about a weapon which very much resembles a nuclear missile in its devastating destruction and fall-out. The Vedas, according to him, describe multi-storeyed "vimānas" which can fly forward and backward, stand still or rise vertically. "With the vimānas human beings could fly into star regions." Unfortunately, V. Buttlar does not give the references but they may be found in a book by Dr Dileep Kumar Kanjilal (Calcutta Sanskrit College) on flying machines and space cities in ancient India (here again the English title is not given in the original). V. Buttlar also refers to the work done by the International Academy of Sanskrit Research in Mysore which has translated a Sanskrit text of Maharshi Bharadwaja in modern terminology. We are given a treatise on eight types of vimānas which can fly not only on earth, but also in space from planet to planet. And we learn about the secret of creating flying machines that cannot break... that can be made invisible . that can know the direction of approaching hostile flying machines, etc.

I may add a passage from the Mahabharata which struck me a lot when I read it a few years ago. It forms part of the description of the battle between Śālva and Krishna. Śālva is fighting from his Saubha "which could go anywhere" and fight from the sky.

Vāsudeva said: "I took my glittering bow... and shot well-robed arrows, which looked like poisonous snakes, high-flying and burning arrows .. Then the Saubha became invisible, concealed by wizardry, and I was astounded. The bands of Dānavas, with grimacing faces and dishevelled heads, screeched out loud .. To kill them I quickly laid on an arrow, which would kill *by seeking out sound*, and the screeching subsided. All the Dānavas who had been screeching lay dead, killed by the blazing sunlike arrows that were *triggered by sound*." (Mbhr 3.23, Poona Ed.)

Here again we have the astonishing phenomenon of something like a gigantic helicopter gunship which can even be made invisible. And we are given the description of a weapon which is actually known today as the most successful defense against such attackers: sound- or heat-seeking missiles.

Obviously, this whole subject is not only a challenge for science, but a stimulus to all kinds of phantasy. In any case, the evidence given by V. Buttlar and other serious writers (American readers are referred to *The Monument on Mars* by R. C Hoagland) must be examined without preconception and emotion. The issue of a Mars civilization may be solved definitely within a few years, since the next major Mars project is scheduled for 1992. All that the Americans have to do by that time is to direct their cameras towards the Cydonia Region to provide more and closer views of those faces and pyramids.

THE TIDES

A NOVELLA

(Continued from the issue of October 1989)

WHILE Bose-da waited for Mr. Roy's letter, I was set on finding the land-route to the dilapidated building but without success. For the directions I received from two or three sources turned out abortive due to the obstruction of inaccessible jungle or dirty canal in the way. Meanwhile Alok and Archana insisted every day on listening to Deepu's diary. But Bose-da wanted to read Mr. Roy's letter first which was expected to come at any time. So he requested the children to wait for a day or two before taking up the diary again.

Baffled in tracing the route, one day I was sitting morose in Bose-da's dispensary. He noticed my dejection and during a respite from his patients suggested to me, "Why don't you try the route by which Deepu went there?" Releasing a sigh I said, "I have already tried it, Bose-da, but what was possible for strong and agile Deepu is quite impossible for men like us. We are not gymnasts or acrobats. How to cross and scale the huge Ghat?" "Oh, I see, that has to be considered, no doubt." Just then the peon came and delivered a letter to Bose-da, quite a heavy packet. "Must be from Mr. Roy," he said and though it was addressed to me he himself opened it and hurried to read it aloud.

MR. ROY'S LETTER

Let me first apologize for the delay in replying to your letter. In fact I got confused as regards what to write and what to omit. The problem was how to express the exact thing in the short span of a letter. However, finally I thought it better to note down events in a narrative form so that you yourself might select information according to your need.

We come from a prosperous family of East Bengal. I am the youngest of the three children of my parents. The eldest is my sister; Kalishankar, my brother, is the second one. I was born long after both of them. I lost my mother at an early age, thereupon my sister took her place and brought me up. In spite of this she loved Kalishankar more than anyone else. My sister liked him for his good health, upright nature and the spirit of doing good to others irrespective of age, caste, creed or religion. Apart from this he was a brilliant student from his boyhood.

My father cherished high hopes about him and when the son passed his M.A. examination with a very good result he wanted to send him abroad for the study of Law, to become a barrister. But giving a good blow to my father's long cherished hope and showing no genuine cause he flatly refused to go abroad. My

father endured the shock quietly and kept on the look-out for the reason for his refusal of the golden opportunity. Shortly he came face to face with a fact of which he had not the slightest apprehension before. He helped my sister to get self-educated, but that she was secretly committed to patriotism was not known to my father at all. Not only that, she inspired Kalishankar also to add patriotic works to his selfless service for the good of others. Gradually it so happened that the work for the freedom of India took a predominant part in his life and the prospect of higher education abroad lost all importance.

When my father came to know about this he lost no time in taking a quick decision. He arranged for my sister's marriage without paying any heed to her opposition and protest and Kalishankar's earnest appeal. After this his ambition centred upon me. To undo the influence of my brother's patriotic spirit on me he sent me away for education to a distant relative. Years rolled by and I was not allowed to go home even during holidays. Suddenly one day my relative advised me to go home immediately without mentioning anything about its rhyme or reason. I was overjoyed at the prospect of seeing my sweet home and near and dear ones. But joy turned into intense grief as I set foot in my house. My father had fallen seriously ill. My sister and her husband also came to see my ailing father but their little son Saroj did not come with them as he was somewhere else away from his parents. The arrangement was made by his father to avoid the mother's patriotic influence on their own son even when he was quite small.

My father recovered gradually, thanks to the efficient nursing and loving care of my sister. He was cured no doubt, yet according to the doctors my sister's presence became absolutely necessary for his future health and wellbeing. Without her love and care he might fall ill again at any time. But my brother-in-law was not ready in any circumstance to leave his wife behind or stay himself with her. On the other hand my sister vehemently objected to parting from my ailing father. To avoid an ugly quarrel between the couple and to induce the husband to come to terms my father offered him our old building and the annexed property in the eastern part of the village as an additional dowry to their long-past marriage. In this way a reconciliation was brought about but it did not last long. The discord came from an altogether different angle.

Kalishankar, with the consent of his sister, took possession of our brother-in-law's newly owned old building at the eastern village and made it the centre of his revolutionary work. At this her husband got furious and rebuked my sister savagely. Then he took her to task for letting Kalishankar have access to his house. She did not reply, remained absolutely calm and quiet. He became disarmed and swallowed his anger for the time being. Henceforth he stopped talking with her. But it was not long before he gave vent to his wrath in a different way. It came in the form of a police raid on my brother's secret centre of work. But the situation was saved by the far-sightedness of my sister. She anticipated the attack and warned my brother beforehand. As a result all

escaped excepting one who was arrested and died in the long run due to police atrocity.

After the episode the relation between the husband and wife grew still more bitter and the former left home on the plea that he was going to see Saroj, their only son. Even after the escape my brother used to keep contact with my sister secretly. But soon after her husband's departure the connection with the brother severed all on a sudden.

In fact I left home after my father's recovery and heard all this afterwards. I devoted myself fully to my studies and in due course came out successful with good result in the law examination. I was waiting for my father's direction as regards making arrangements to go abroad. Then as a bolt from the blue I got a telegram from my sister saying that my father had fallen seriously ill again. I hurried home but he had left his mortal frame even before I could reach there. My sorrow was deep and beyond expression as I could not have his last Darshan. But instead as an anticlimax I saw my brother-in-law. He had been reduced to a skeleton for reasons best known to him. Still he maintained his animosity against my sister as before and would not speak with her. On the demise of my father my sister also was terribly shaken at heart, and in order to be reconciled with her husband, one day she asked him very politely, "You went to see Saroj. How have you found him? Did he say anything about me? Oh, it's ages since I saw him." "Why, your dear brother Kalishankar is there. Have you not seen him?" came the rude reply. It was too much for her. She uttered feebly but with a stress of tremendous fury and hatred, "You are not only mean and cruel but a brute also."

I resolved to go abroad for further study and to fulfil my father's cherished wish. But in his absence the only person whom I could approach for money was my sister, because she had all along been with my father and must be in the know of the arrangement my father had made with regard to his wealth and property. But before I could actually ask her a very strange event occurred. One night my brother Kalishankar returned home under cover of darkness with his wife and a boy of about two. That he was married was known to none of us. He addressed me in a subdued voice, "Uma, she is your Baudi, my helper, associate and co-worker." Then he approached our sister and said, "Didi, this is our son, Deep Shankar. From now on he will stay with you." My sister picked up the boy with deep affection and said with a sweet smile, "Why, you won't stay?"

"Don't know yet, let's see," was his brief reply. In the dead of night my sister's sleep broke at the whisper of Kalishankar, "Didi, the police is on our trail, we are leaving forthwith, please take care of Deepu." So saying he and his wife disappeared in the darkness even as they had appeared. With this difference that this time their son was not with them. As it was supposed, my brother-in-law could not be found in his room. It was he who slipped away to inform the police and my brother had not failed to notice that. However, immediately Didi handed

over sleeping Deepu to our reliable maid-servant and asked her to flee by the back door. In no time she vanished into the mango grove behind our house with Deepu in her arms.

No sooner had she left than the police came in and searched every nook and corner of the house, roughly throwing aside arranged things at random. My sister observed everything patiently without a word. But, after their futile search, as they prepared to quit, my sister came forward and requested very politely, "You see, it is already daybreak. Please allow me to have the pleasure of serving you with morning tea, will you?" "Thank you, we are in a hurry. Very sorry for the disturbance..." "No, no, it's nothing, you have done your duty. Now, let me perform the duty of a householder. Please have your seats, tea is almost ready." They were moved by her polite hospitality and took their seats, though reluctantly. But they spent more time in taking tea than was expected.

My sister's objective was to detain them to allow Kalishankar sufficient time to escape and that she achieved. Now Deepu became a lovable little thing in our family. But my brother-in-law abhorred him, my sister grew suspicious and one day warned him to his very face, "Listen, if you do any thing against Deepu's peaceful stay here your own life will be at stake."

I observed that Deepu was an exceptionally quiet boy. He would hardly speak but his innocent, bright and deep eyes would convey an ocean of ideas to me, drawing my whole soul towards him. I thought that due care and understanding were necessary for the upbringing of this boy. But I was at a loss to decide regarding the next course of action to be taken by me. To stay here and look after the interest and education of Deepu or to go abroad and fulfil my father's hope and intention about me. The latter entailed a lot of money. My position was precarious as I did not know if my father had left any will. Besides, I knew nothing about my father's papers and documents. During my absence and father's illness what my sister or brother-in-law had done with them was known to them best. I felt shy to ask them about this when the shadow of sadness due to my father's demise was still lingering.

I had hardly any attachment to my father's wealth and property. He gave me a proper education and I could build my career without difficulty. But the question of dear Deepu was different. He was a mere child, there must be someone to look after his interest. So one day I gave a hint of this to my brother-in-law. The outcome was such that it became difficult for me to live with him under the same roof. Though Didi was on my side, what could she do against such an obstinate, adamant, greedy and selfish man? Apprehending a still more ugly scandal and quarrel and even litigation at the end I quietly left home for good, leaving no word for anybody. Inwardly I handed over Deepu's charge to the Almighty and hoped at the same time that so long as my sister was there Deepu's education and interest would be looked after.

In spite of that I tried all means within my command to trace the

whereabouts of my elder brother and tell him about the situation at home but failed to get even the slightest indication about him except vague rumours. Then I thought it was a waste of time and energy looking for him and devoted myself to building my own future and fortune independently.

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Bose-da stopped reading, perhaps the letter also ended there. He was speechless and his face glowed with suppressed emotion and inspiration. Finally he opened his mouth, "By whatever means the old patriot must be found He should not be allowed to remain obscure for ever. Meanwhile, try to trace the way to that dilapidated building by tomorrow. If you fail we shall go there by boat and finish that part of the work by day after tomorrow, because I have got other plans in my mind. Another thing, please narrate briefly the story of Deepu to Alok and Archana as far as you have read in *Dharitri*. For the rest, they can read by themselves. Please make them a subscriber of the magazine." "I can give the diary to them instead," I said. "Oh no. Keep the diary securely with you and here is the letter, keep this also." Bose-da pressed the bell and the next patient from the side-room entered and he became busy with him.

That day the whole afternoon I spent in search of the fisherman who had directed me to the way which had been cut short by a jungle. This time I wanted to take him with me to avoid any possibility of the mistake I might have committed then. But he was nowhere to be found. So I decided to catch him next morning during market time.

After dinner I went to the drawing room, sat alone in a solitary corner and was planning my next day's programme of work. Suddenly Alok and Archana appeared there in a jolly mood. "Now you have no work, please read the diary to us," they requested together. "No reading, I can narrate Deepu's story to you." "But we wanted to listen to his life-story in his own words." "Please don't worry, you will read the story yourself. You are going to be a subscriber of the magazine *Dharitri* where the story is being serialised. Meanwhile if you want you can hear from me about Deepu in brief."

"Oh yes, please tell everything, tell us first what happened with his turtles."

"Ho, ho, ho.. turtles! That I don't know myself. Deepu did not bother to mention them in his diary any more. In fact he was overwhelmed with the sweet love and tender affection he received from Saroj-da. It was this for which his stricken heart had been starving from his childhood. Actually the magic sunshine of Saroj-da's magnificent heart illumined and enwrapped not only Deepu but also the other children of the locality. Consequently all gathered around him forgetting their petty differences and Deepu also could no longer remain aloof from others. Under the guidance of Saroj-da he joined them in all activities, namely, games, sports, swimming, fishing on the one hand and cultural

programmes like music, drama, art, painting etc. on the other. They would give equal importance to practical work also. Often they would do weaving, carpentry, gardening, agriculture, etc., etc. They would go on outings too visiting places of historical or legendary importance.

“One day Saroj-da reminded Deepu of the repair of Lord Shiva’s Muth. Deepu replied, ‘Saroj-da, this work we cannot do ourselves. Expert men and money are necessary. I have none at my disposal.’ ‘That you have money you don’t know yourself. Doesn’t matter, I myself will get it done on your behalf. By the way, have you seen the old building at the eastern village?’ ‘You mean that haunted house?’ ‘Haunted house! Nonsense, that is our own house and a sacred place at that. I shall renovate it also and shift to stay there with my parents.’

“He did what he had said and the house turned out to be a very nice place after renovation. He built for himself a separate parlour house as well. Then he went to stay there with only his mother. His father refused to go and stayed on where he was and tried more and more to tighten his hold over Deepu. After that you know what happened till Saroj-da and Smriti-di disappeared. The impact on Deepu was unexpected. Saroj-da never uttered a single word about patriotism or the struggle for the freedom of India. Now Deepu got inflamed with a new spirit and inspiration which in the long run played an important part in his life. Aunt perhaps grew aware of the change in Deepu’s attitude. So he appointed Ganesh, a new servant, to keep watch over his movements.

“In the meantime one day Deepu and Rasu could manage to escape the watchful eyes of Ganesh and went to the adjacent village to visit the ruins of the capital of Ballalāsena, once the king of Gaudabangla. Then they went to the village Bajrajogini to see the house-site of the great Buddhist scholar Deepankar Sreegnana. On their way back they met Somesh Basu, the famous mathematician, and heard interesting stories about his childhood. Thus it was almost evening when they were ready to return. Being late they wanted to take a short cut. Instead of following the open path through the field they tried to cross an elevated area full of trees, bushes and shrubs but could not make their way out. They moved round and round reaching the same spot over and over again. It was already dark, the two boys got tired and nervous and started shouting helplessly at the top of their voice, ‘Help, help. we are in danger.’

“A tall stout man in an ochre robe and with a long stick in hand heard the call and came running to the jungle from the opposite side. He asked, ‘What’s the trouble?’ They said, ‘We have been the victim of an evil spirit and don’t know how to go to the towering Muth of the Roy family.’ ‘Follow me,’ came the command from the ochre-robed Sadhu. They walked for a long while and when the Muth came into sight the Sadhu asked abruptly, ‘How is your Pīṣima, Deepu?’ ‘You know me, you know my Pīṣima!’ Deepu was all surprise. ‘Yes, yes, I know everything, now tell me how she is.’ In fact after Saroj-da’s departure he had not been to her. So he told the truth, ‘I don’t know how she is

at present.' 'Please find out and inform me tomorrow at this time. I shall be in the garden beside the Shiva-Muth.' So saying he turned round and moved away with quick strides.

"Next morning they both went to Pisisma and she asked with a wrinkled brow, 'What brings you here after so many days, eh?' 'A Sadhu wanted to know about you, Pisisma' 'Sadhu! what Sadhu? What does he look like?' 'He looks like this,' with these words the Sadhu entered himself, 'Deepu, I could not wait for the information till evening,' he bowed down and touched Pisisma's feet with both hands. A few moments of suspense, then came out her animated voice, 'Asit, really I could not recognise you, you have become a pucca Sadhu.' 'No longer Asit, Didi, I am Dandibaba now,' he looked around the house 'Oh, it has become a new house altogether, but I remain the same, the youngest in age and tallest in size of all the members of the party.' Suddenly his eyes fell on Rasu and he exclaimed, 'He is Mahananda-da's son, I suppose, exactly the same face O what a torture his father endured before death but never uttered a word which would bring harm to party-men and the country.'

"Deepu reflected and sensed some mysterious episodes behind the words. He wondered if his own father also had died due to a police atrocity. Immediately an upsurge of sorrow and uncertainty overtook him and he tried his best to control an outburst of lamentation. Pisisma sensed it and quickly went near the two boys and placed her loving hands on their heads. Both of them were surprised to feel that streams of strength, courage, love, sympathy, consolation flowed into their beings through her fingers, making them normal and steady again. Dandibaba asked, 'Deepu, where did you go yesterday evening?' 'We went to see historical and legendary places, we met Somesh Basu also in his ancestral house' 'Very good, but I should like to tell you that a very hard time is ahead of us. The night is darkest before dawn, the dawn of independence of India is not far off but a dense cloud of darkness is lurking in between.'

"Deepu and Rasu got startled to hear the profound and serious voice of Dandibaba. His look and attitude had completely changed and it appeared that he had gone far, far away from the visible world and was visualising things and facts of the future. He continued, 'A world-wide war has started An Asura is fast advancing with a gaping mouth to devour all that is good and lofty The culture, civilisation, progressive movements, evolution, religion and spirituality of the world are at stake. That Asura must be kept at bay and destroyed before he can advance further and at the same time the yoke of domination must also be thrown away from our shoulders. You are young still, the seed of future fulfilment is dormant within you. Remember Swami Vivekananda, try to understand and follow Sri Aurobindo's message for India, hearken, rise up and know that India should be free not only for her own sake but for the good of the obscure, selfish, strife-stricken and apparently soulless world.'

"Deepu's consciousness got inflamed with the soul-inspiring words, the

words pregnant with truth, beauty, strength and power. He gripped Pisma's hand with all his might and whispered, 'Pisma, do you know anything about Saroj-da and Smriti-di? Where are they now?' "

At that juncture Bose-da entered and asked, "How about your work, could you trace the track to the dilapidated building?" "Bose-da, I am trying my best and hope to do something by tomorrow " "Very good, yes, go on trying, never feel discouraged. Alok and Archana, no more story tonight, please go to bed and let him also take rest. He has got to do a lot of work tomorrow."

(To be continued)

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

PHANTASMAGORIA

Scene One

FIRST IDLER: The great war fought on the plain of Kurukshetra is over. Do you not, friend, feel now an emptiness, a pervading purposelessness in our ways of life?

SECOND IDLER: I feel even the food has lost its taste. The bravest have fallen and disappeared leaving a frightening vacuum.

FIRST IDLER: Small men like you and me stop and tarry, whiling away our empty time

SECOND IDLER: What more profitable pastime could be found? The leaders have departed and brave words have yet to take a form and get a driving force.

FIRST BYSTANDER: Did you see him? Did you hear of him?

SECOND BYSTANDER: Who the devil are you speaking of?

FIRST BYSTANDER: Who else could it be?

SECOND BYSTANDER: Why bother, friend? Let us talk of inanities and drink from the cup a potion of leisureliness.

THIRD IDLER: I hear that a shepherd saw him

FOURTH IDLER: He was passing on untrod paths like a fugitive.

SECOND BYSTANDER: In tattered clothes or naked?

FIFTH IDLER: My friend saw him as a strange person, like one who has lost his occupation yet totally unconcerned.

SECOND BYSTANDER: Are you talking of the person who brought the vault of the sky down, this destruction and ruination of dynasties?

FIRST IDLER: Yes, the person who donned the garb of a Charioteer.

THIRD BYSTANDER: Yes, his name is Parthasarathi.

FIRST IDLER: His was the brain behind the upheaval. He planned the whole act with meticulous care, leaving nothing to chance for its success

SECOND IDLER: Else would the Pandavas' boat would have floundered and sunk?

FIRST BYSTANDER: Now he has chosen to hide.

FIRST IDLER: I feel, though we damn him now, he has never cared to fear or repent or wail or ask for anybody's mercy.

SECOND IDLER: His fate is matched with a martyr's

THIRD BYSTANDER: I do not know. These are queer things.

Scene Two

HUNTER: Who are you, sitting under the tree?

FUGITIVE: I am a stranger.

HUNTER: You must be a prince but wearing a haggard look. Misfortune always dogs a hero!

FUGITIVE: Though wed to a wretched profession you are wise. Sit, then, before me and listen. Who knows, you might help me in my last act.

HUNTER: I do not desire to see you again. With my tribe I am happy and safe.

FUGITIVE. Give me a chance, friend. You have bagged enough game for today Hear me.

HUNTER: You cast a magic spell, why?

FUGITIVE. I am not a magician

HUNTER. They talk about a person whom they liked and despised.

FUGITIVE: I have been lauded and lampooned, worshipped and cursed.

HUNTER: You? You who look innocent and are easy to be killed?

FUGITIVE: I was once a leader of men and Ideas I carried the world through its crisis and cleared its path of all hazards. I gave man's forward journey a new dharma Though much suffering was witnessed in the process, it was unavoidable.

HUNTER: Are you a god such as we adore amongst us?

FUGITIVE. Take it as you will. I have done my part. I have left all greatneses and virtues like a cloak in the dust I wore them easily and when I must retire I am as denuded and simple a person as you are. It is great fun even for a god to live humanly for a while.

HUNTER: I must take my leave now We must always be on the move.

FUGITIVE: You must

HUNTER. What service could I render to you, good man?

FUGITIVE: You will know when the time comes.

HUNTER: You prophesy?

FUGITIVE: Remember, friend, I do not know hate nor act out of malice I love all and every thing of this universe

Scene 3

HUNTER. A strange day A day of fruitless labour

ASSOCIATE: Can't bear any more, really can't. Feel like lying down. It matters hardly if there is food or no food

HUNTER. To fall asleep to be eaten up at nightfall by a wolf or a hyena! It will relish your bones and marrow!

ASSOCIATE I am least worried.

HUNTER: You fool, get up. There is still some daylight left We must shoot an animal, a pig at least or whatever.

ASSOCIATE. They have disappeared in the heavens today. You can only chase and chase and chase

HUNTER: A damned pessimist you are. The green calmness of the forest has cast its spell on you. A hunter's ears and eyes are good only to kill a bird or a beast for our ration of meat.

ASSOCIATE: I won't budge.

HUNTER: I will then kill you with this dart and make a feast with your flesh.

ASSOCIATE: Do as you please. My legs can't carry me any further

HUNTER: Dear, dear, a little forward, and I would urge no more.

ASSOCIATE: Chief, I will walk only a hundred steps from here. And then return. Agree?

HUNTER: Here we come up to the end of a hundred steps and still no prey. But, wait, what is that red bird seen through the dense foliage of the yonder tree?

ASSOCIATE: Hush, lest you frighten it away. It is quite high and you must take a careful aim. It is your last chance.

HUNTER: I never miss the mark. Just see.

ASSOCIATE: Oh, oh, what is this queer bird plunging down and falling in a heap!

HUNTER: Alas! The good fugitive!

ASSOCIATE: You know him, it appears!

HUNTER: Yes, met him some time ago.

FUGITIVE: Friend, you have served me well.

HUNTER: Forgive me, I was hasty in my action. Please forgive me.

FUGITIVE: There is poison on your arrow, and there is not much time left. You must leave the place as quickly as possible.

HUNTER: How do you know everything in advance! You look like a god. Your presence gives us a soothing peace. You are so good, so good, so unearthly.

ASSOCIATE: All my weariness is gone and hunger too.

FUGITIVE: I did that little bit for you.

ASSOCIATE: Are you a man?

FUGITIVE: As you see and perhaps more. Friends, you have opened the gate for me. I thank you. We shall meet elsewhere again.

HUNTER: He has a halo around his beautiful face. How beautiful!

ASSOCIATE: Let us leave this place.

HUNTER: To obey his wishes.

ASSOCIATE: Nay, boss, say 'his orders'.

SAMIR KANTA GUPTA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Blake's Tyger: A Christological Interpretation by *K. D. Sethna*, Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Distributors: Sri Aurobindo Books Distribution Agency, Pondicherry - 605 002. Price Rs. 60/-.

(With acknowledgements to *The New Swatantra Times*, July 1988.)

It was just a year ago that a masterly work of Sethna's on Mallarmé was reviewed in these columns—NST, June 1988. *Blake's Tyger*, published in last March, is a finer piece of "research", to use the author's own word, than even the work on Mallarmé or any other: Sethna's interests are truly multidimensional and he does not touch anything he does not make out to be uniquely brilliant. In about 260 pages in demy octavo, he probes into the meaning of a famous short lyric of twenty-four lines, the last four of which are almost the same as the first four but for a single word. Kathleen Raine, an accredited authority on Blake, and like Sethna a poet in her own right, wrote to Geoffrey Keynes, another authority on Blake who in fact had sent her an earlier draft of the essay

"I think he has seen a profound truth not seen by any of us, hitherto."

The profound truth is much more than the identification of the Tyger of the poem with Christ. The Editors of Blake's and Eliot's Works—Eliot in his *Gerontion* speaks of "Christ the tiger"—have noted in a general way the Tyger and the Lamb as two aspects of Jesus. No one before Sethna has seen the profound implications of the identification and the bearing it has on the rest of the poem.

Kathleen Raine did not approve of the whole of Sethna's thesis. A born polemist, Sethna enjoys crossing swords. In Raine, Sethna has his real match, perhaps for the first time in his writing career. That he has been able to make her concede point after point till at last she has even conceded victory to him on reading the book under review is no mean achievement for an Indian scholar. But, how many Indian scholars can boast of Sethna's vision and insights which express themselves through a penetrating intellect and an erudition that is at once deep and wide?

With all their differences, there is a point of resemblance which Raine herself states when she speaks of

the poem you and I both love and have studied perhaps more carefully than anyone else in the present 'world of generation.'

But what are their differences? To Sethna the poem is steeped in Miltonic vision. To Raine it bears the influence of the Alchemical-Hermetical writings. Raine grants the Miltonic as only one of the influences.

Sethna shows that the Tyger presents a mythopoeic vision of Christ's battle in heaven with the revolted angels as described by Milton in *Paradise Lost*. The Tyger is none other than the embodiment of the wrath of Christ against the "stars" of the armed forces of Satan in the dense obscurity entangled in error which constitutes the Forests of the Night. The embodiment of the wrath of Christ defeats the "stars" and forces them to throw down their spears and shed tears in heaven before they are pushed down to hell.

The forging of the Tyger in the heavenly smithies is Christ's creation of his own power that can counter the "stars" of the Forests of the Night. The Tyger is so different from his other manifestation as the Lamb that the poet amazed by the picture he has visualised asks

Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who make the Lamb make thee?

Such is Sethna's vision of Blake's Tyger. Raine quarrels with Sethna for seeing "Jesus who is God" as an inferior power to the Father. The words in the poem as well as Blake's own attitude to Christ warrants Sethna's interpretation.

But, arguments apart, the book reveals a mind that we rarely meet in the academic world. To contact such a mind is, if one may use a trite expression, truly a liberal education in itself.

K B. SITARAMAYYA

A Spirit Indomitable—*Ed. by Mona Sarkar*. Published by Sri Sudhir Kumar Sarkar Birth Centenary Committee, Pondicherry-605 002. Pages xvi+147. Price Rs. 50/-.

It is said that the attendants in Buckingham Palace make huge fortunes by writing their memoirs after their retirement. But we in India praise Shahjahan and the Taj Mahal, ignoring the men of talent who worked day in and day out in creating that piece of art. Sri Aurobindo is like a Colossus whose intellectual and spiritual dimensions are beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals. Hence there is every need to know about his associates, for every bit of information about him is sure to help us in understanding his personality as well as in reconstructing the great saga of the independence struggle on a scientific basis. Taking into consideration the need of the hour, some members of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram have taken the lead in publishing the biography of Shri Sudhir Kumar Sarkar, a friend of Sri Aurobindo, on the eve of his birth centenary celebrations.

Sudhir Kumar Sarkar was a Nishkama Yogi like many of the revolutionaries and Satyagrahis who hailed from Bengal. Bengal is like the 'burning crucible' of

Modern India and every type of movement has got its genesis from it. Sudhir Kumar Sarkar and the other revolutionaries are like the replicas of the Royal Bengal Tiger, the Vehicle of the Mother-Goddess Kali traversing the length and breadth of India to fight at Her behest against the oppressive forces of the British imperialist regime. Sudhir Kumar Sarkar did not aspire for fame, power or pelf. He did not care even to put on paper an account of his adventures as the warrior of freedom, let alone his adventures in the realm of spirit. His son Mr. Mona Sarkar has taken meticulous care in compiling various incidents from the life of his father and has given a graphic description of Sudhir Kumar's sense of duty as a bodyguard, as a co-prisoner and as a servitor to Sri Aurobindo. It wrenches our hearts when we come to know the miseries that he was subjected to in prison along with Sri Aurobindo and the other compatriots. Though the Britishers professed a sense of decency in dealing with political prisoners, the Cellular Jail in the Andamans was in many ways comparable to the concentration camps installed by Hitler and Stalin. The rule of law which the Britishers themselves enjoyed in their homeland was put in abeyance in the case of colonial countries and many of the freedom-fighters languished in jails as under-trials for a very long period. Sudhir Kumar and his co-prisoners had staunch faith in Sri Aurobindo's assurance: 'Think of me, I shall always be with you'—and they overcame every ordeal miraculously. All of them were prepared to sacrifice even their lives, for they knew that India was destined to become independent as decreed in the subtle world and the fulfilment of it in earthly terms would be in proportion to the worthiness the nation would achieve by selfless service and the spirit of sacrifice. Sudhir Kumar, as the Mother says, is a 'Gandharva' who has come into this mundane world to enjoy the glory of God in human terms. He is a true Sadhaka who turned the senses of perception inward and this enabled him to listen to the music of the spheres epitomised in 'Om'. The advice of the kapalik, the sense of individuality, the special faculty of his wife Suniti Devi in probing into the future, the strong as well as the weak points in Sudhir Kumar—are all extensively dealt with in an impassioned tenor. His life is inextricably interwoven with the lives of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in such a manner that every page in the book is sanctified with their presence. After doing his bit of service towards the cause of freedom Sudhir Kumar enjoyed the bliss and love as of a Universal Mother, in the vicinity of the Mother of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram in Pondicherry. Indeed "Sudhir is very fortunate—a life lived in Sri Aurobindo's aura; one can feel it immediately A life lived in His aura".

The book is well brought out in every aspect with an impressive picture of Sudhir Kumar Sarkar. The preface written by the well-known littérateur and short-story writer Shri Manoj Das adds value to the book. It is a fitting tribute by a dutiful son to his father. The flame of patriotism and the love of humanity will for ever continue to exist if profiles of this sort are published, keeping in view the

financial status of the middle and lower middle class people as they form the major part of society

Let us expect many more books of this sort to put us on the right track when there is the danger of deflecting tangentially from it by the force of modern circumstances.

V. GURUNADHA SARMA

***Integrated Healing Arts* by Dr. J. M. Jussawalla; Popular Prakashan, 35-C, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya Marg, Bombay - 400 034, pp. 96; Price: Rs 25/-.**

Integrated Healing Arts, a slim and very well got-up volume of less than a hundred pages, is a welcome addition to the books which try to deal with healing as such and not with one particular system of medicine. This book on holistic medicine is so all-embracing that one cannot think of any system of healing or medicine which does not come within its purview. Allopathy, homeopathy, surgery, Ayurveda, Unani, nature cure, biochemical remedies, acupuncture, magnetotherapy, osteopathy, chiropractic, hydrotherapy, colonic therapy, the therapeutic effects of psycho-analysis, rational vegetarianism, dieting, fasting, massage, exercise, and even humour—you name it, the book has it.

The abiding impression left on the reader is that of Dr. Jussawala's sanity. Though he points out the benefits of many types of treatment, he never exaggerates the value of any such treatment. He also warns the practitioners and patients against being carried away by a particular therapy or technique just because "it is in the limelight, or has become the latest fashion or craze" (p. 61).

Another outstanding aspect of the book is its admirable brevity. On matters on which many others write pages and pages, he manages to condense a lot of valuable information into just a few pages without, at the same time, allowing the clarity of his writing to be affected even to the slightest extent. It is also noteworthy that he writes with authority about the various therapies he deals with

The account he gives of colonic therapy can serve very well as an example of the manner in which he deals with the other therapies. After entering the caveat that colonic therapy is by no means a panacea for all ills, he adds that it "deserves a great deal of attention because of the important diagnostic and therapeutic results that can be achieved through its employment" (p. 54). Towards the end of this account, he asserts: "Colonic therapy is one of the most important therapeutic agents in chronic diseases, especially in rheumatism, gout, arthritis, diabetes, heart (complaint), cancer" (pp. 54-55).

The most valuable insights of Dr. Jussawala are to be found in the chapter entitled "The Missing Link". It is here that he warns both practitioners and patients against being enamoured of particular therapies or techniques. After

making this remark, he adds. "knowledge, understanding and caution on the part of practitioners as well as patients are very necessary as no system of medicine or therapy is a cure-all."

Dr. Jussawala also deals admirably with the nature of stress in the twenty-sixth chapter. The next chapter, the twenty-seventh, is appropriately entitled "The Toxic Society". Here, as in the chapter on rational vegetarianism (the twenty-first), he advocates a diet which is preeminently vegetarian as the most suitable for human beings. In chapter 28, he discusses in a very perspicuous manner all the problems that surround euthanasia ("merciful termination of life"). The writer also sheds some light on topics like preventive medicine (of a new type), drug abuse and the latest researches on cholesterol

It would not, really, be an exaggeration to say that a book like this one which deals so sensibly and so well with such a large number of things in such a short compass is the kind of book which one meets with only once in a blue moon.

P. S. S. SASTRY

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Sixty-sixth Seminar

23 April 1989

WHAT IS OUR CONCEPTION OF INTEGRAL PERFECTION AND HOW TO ATTAIN IT?

Speech by Hema Shah

THROUGHOUT the ages man has always aspired for perfection. But his ideal of perfection has varied according to his conception of himself. According to Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary view, "Man is a transitional being, he is not final; for in him and high beyond him ascend the radiant degrees which climb to a divine supermanhood....Man is a mind imprisoned, obscured and circumscribed in a precarious and imperfect living but imperfectly conscious body....Mind, even free and in its own unmixed and unhampered element, is not the highest possibility of consciousness; for mind is not in possession of Truth....Man is a being from the mental worlds whose mentality works here involved, obscure and degraded in a physical brain, shut off from its own divinest powers and impotent to change life beyond certain narrow and precarious limits. ..Most often and in most men it is only a servitor, a purveyor of amusements, a caterer of needs and interests to the life and the body"¹ And yet to some men the perfection of the mind, life and body is the ultimate perfection. Sri Aurobindo calls this the terrestrial or mundane ideal of perfection which governs the life of modern man.

Another ideal of perfection is the religious which seeks for some kind of pure sainthood. This ideal "looks, not only beyond this earth, but away from it to a heaven or even beyond all heavens to some kind of Nirvana."²

Beyond the religious ideal is the ideal of spiritual perfection. Even here we come across two views: the first is that of the ascetics who seek for spiritual liberation by withdrawal from life, but leave the parts of Nature imperfect. The other is the view of the integral yoga which aims not only at liberation from Nature but also at transformation of Nature with the help of the highest dynamic divine power. It is only the integral yoga that can give us integral perfection, because it brings not only perfection in the soul and spirit but also the perfection of the body, life and mind, a total and harmonious perfection of the whole being,

¹ *The Hour of God* (1982 edition), pp 91-93

² *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 21), p 594

inner and outer. Sri Aurobindo says: "A divine perfection of the human being is our aim."³ I quote here a passage in which he elaborates this idea:

"Our Yoga is a Yoga of transformation, but a transformation of the whole consciousness and the whole nature from the top to the bottom, from its inmost hidden inward parts to its most tangible external movements. It is neither an ethical change nor a religious conversion, neither sainthood nor ascetic control, neither a sublimation nor a suppression of the life and vital movements that we envisage, nor is it either a glorification or a coercive control or rejection of the physical existence. What is envisaged is a change from a lesser to a greater, from a lower to a higher, from a surface to a deeper consciousness—indeed to the largest, highest, deepest possible and a total change and revolution of the whole being in its stuff and mass and every detail into that yet unrealised diviner nature of existence. It means...a breaking out from the narrow limited individual into a wide cosmic consciousness; an ascension from mental to spiritual nature; a still farther ascension from the spirit in mind or overspreading mind to the supramental spirit and a descent of that into the embodied being. All that has not only to be achieved but organised before the transformation is complete."⁴

Man is a complex being, multiple in his aspects and attributes; his perfection therefore must needs be a manifold perfection. His spiritual, mental, emotional, volitional and physical parts must all attain to their utmost perfection, if they are meant to be instruments of the divine manifestation in the material world.

From the point of view of evolution we can say that when man realises this integral perfection he will become the true Superman or the supramental being. A very brief description of the Superman is given by Sri Aurobindo in these words: "The superman will be a supramental spirit which will envelop and freely use a conscious body, plastic to spiritual forces. His physical frame will be a firm support and an adequate radiant instrument for the spirit's divine play and work in Matter."⁵ The Superman will have "a supramental or gnostic power of consciousness that is in eternal possession of Truth; all its motion and feeling and sense and outcome are instinct and luminous with the inmost reality of things and express nothing else."⁶

I have explained briefly Sri Aurobindo's conception or ideal of integral perfection. But Sri Aurobindo not only reveals to us the ideal; he also shows us the way, the method, the process of its realisation. This method or process is the practice or sadhana of integral yoga. It is only this practice of integral yoga that

³ *Ibid* , p 590

⁴ *Sri Aurobindo, Archives and Research*, Dec 1982, p 201

⁵ *The Hour of God* (1982 edition), p 91

⁶ *Ibid* , p 92

can bring to us the integral perfection, the supramental transformation of our whole being and nature.

What are the essential requirements of this practice? By what practical steps can we attain this supreme aim? Instead of explaining this in my own words, I prefer to read here from a letter of Sri Aurobindo in which he has stated the main conditions of supramental yoga in seven precise points. Here is the letter:

“Get the psychic being in front and keep it there, putting its power on the mind, vital and physical, so that it shall communicate to them its force of single-minded aspiration, trust, faith, surrender, direct and immediate detection of whatever is wrong in the nature and turned towards ego and error, away from light and Truth

“Eliminate egoism in all its forms; eliminate it from every movement of your consciousness.

“Develop the cosmic consciousness—let the ego-centric outlook disappear in wideness, impersonality, the sense of the Cosmic Divine, the perception of universal forces, the realisation and understanding of the cosmic manifestation, the play

“Find in place of ego the true being—a portion of the Divine, issued from the World-Mother and an instrument of the manifestation. This sense of being a portion of the Divine and an instrument should be free from all pride, sense or claim of ego or assertion of superiority, demand or desire. For if these elements are there, then it is not the true thing.

“Most in doing yoga live in the mind, vital, physical, lit up occasionally or to some extent by the higher mind and by the illumined mind; but to prepare for the supramental change it is necessary (as soon as, personally, the time has come) to open up to the Intuition and the overmind, so that these may make the whole being and the whole nature ready for the supramental change. Allow the consciousness quietly to develop and widen and the knowledge of these things will progressively come.

“Calm, discrimination, detachment (but not indifference) are all very important, for their opposites impede very much the transforming action. Intensity of aspiration should be there, but it must go along with these. No hurry, no inertia, neither rajasic over-eagerness nor tamasic discouragement—a steady and persistent but quiet call and working. No snatching or clutching at realisation, but allowing realisation to come from within and above and observing accurately its field, its nature, its limits.

“Let the power of the Mother work in you, but be careful to avoid any mixture or substitution, in its place, of either a magnified ego-working or a force of Ignorance presenting itself as Truth. Aspire especially for the elimination of all obscurity and unconsciousness in the nature.

“These are the main conditions of preparation for the supramental change;

but none of them is easy, and they must be complete before the nature can be said to be ready. If the true attitude (psychic, unegoistic, open only to the Divine Force) can be established, then the process can go on much more quickly. To take and keep the true attitude, to further the change in oneself, is the help that can be given, the one thing asked to assist the general change.”⁷

⁷ *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 23), pp 554-55