

MOTHER INDIA

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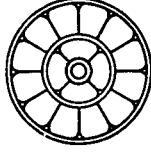
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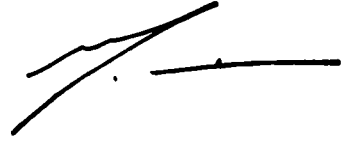
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

| | <i>Page</i> |
|--|--|
| A TALK BY THE MOTHER TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 9 APRIL 1958 | .. 235 |
| THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE IN THE LIGHT OF HER <i>Prayers and Meditations</i> | <i>Nilima Das</i> . 238 |
| GOLCONDE A LOOK BEHIND 4. THE BUILDERS (1) | <i>Shraddhavan</i> . 240 |
| ALTHOUGH... (Poem) | <i>Sonal</i> . 243 |
| YOGA—POETRY—LIFE SOME LETTERS | <i>Amal Kiran (K D Sethna)</i> . 244 |
| HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM <i>Compiled by K</i> | . 250 |
| THE NEW HORIZON (Poem) | <i>Aju Mukhopadhyay</i> . 254 |
| THE STORY OF A SOUL | <i>Huta</i> . 255 |
| ANGEL WITH HORNS AN INTRODUCTION TO FRANÇOIS VILLON: THE MAN AND HIS WORKS | <i>N. Santhalingam</i> 260 |
| AN EXPERIMENT IN SURRENDER MY INITIAL ATTEMPT AND THE DIVINE'S RESPONSE | <i>N. B.</i> . 267 |
| THE INDIAN BELLE | <i>Arvind Habbu</i> .. 270 |
| SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA | <i>Nilima Das</i> . 271 |
| THE MESSAGE OF VYASA'S SAVITRI | <i>R. Y. Deshpande</i> .. 273 |
| THE NOVEL AND THE COMMON READER | <i>G. S. Balarama Gupta</i> . 281 |

CONTENTS

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

A BOUQUET OF FLOWERS FOR THE
MOTHER *by Amar Singh*

Review by P Raja 285

THE INDIANISATION OF ENGLISH
by Braj B. Kuchru

Review by Arvind Kala . 287
(Courtesy. *The Hindu*)

STUDENTS' SECTION

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE—
14 AUGUST 1988—Sri Aurobindo's
TEACHING AND METHOD OF SADHANA

Speech by Ila Joshi ... 288

MOTHER INDIA: INDEX 1988

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 9 APRIL 1958

Sweet Mother, with the human mind is it possible to recognise another person's soul?

THINGS are not so clear-cut and separate as they are in speaking; that is just why it is quite difficult to see very distinctly and clearly in oneself the different parts of the being, unless one has had a very long training and a long discipline of study and observation. There are no watertight compartments between the soul and the mind, the vital and even the physical. There is an infiltration of the soul into the mind. In some people it is even quite considerable, it is perceptible. So, the part of the mind which has a kind of sensibility, of subtle contact with the psychic being, is capable of feeling the presence of the soul in others.

Those who have the ability to enter to a certain extent into the consciousness of others to the point of being able to see or feel directly their thought, their mental activity, who can enter the mental atmosphere of others without needing to use words to make themselves understood, can easily differentiate between someone whose soul is active and someone whose soul is asleep. The activity of the soul gives a special colouring to the mental activity—it is lighter, more comprehensive and luminous—so that can be felt. For instance, by looking into someone's eyes you can say with some certainty that this person has a living soul or that you don't see his soul in his eyes. Many people can feel—"many", I mean among evolved people—can say that. But naturally, to know exactly how far somebody's soul is awake and active, how far it rules the being, is the master, one must have the psychic consciousness oneself, for that alone can judge definitely. But it is not altogether impossible to have that sort of inner vibration which makes you say, "Oh! this person has a soul."

Now, obviously, most often what people—unless they are initiated—call "soul" is the vital activity. If someone has a strong, active, obstinate vital which rules the body's activities, which has a very living or intense contact with people and things and events, if he has a marked taste for art, for all expressions of beauty, we are generally tempted to say and believe, "Oh! he has a living soul"; but it is not his soul, it is his vital being which is alive and dominates the activities of the body. That is the first difference between someone who is beginning to be developed and those who are still in the inertia and *tamas* of the purely material life. This gives, first to the appearance and also to the activity, a kind of vibration, of intensity of vibration, which often creates the impression that this person has a living soul; but it is not that, it is his vital which is developed, which has a special capacity, is stronger than the physical inertia and gives an intensity of vibration and life and action that those whose vital being is not developed do

not possess. This confusion between the vital activity and the soul is a very frequent one . . . The vital vibration is much more easily perceptible to the human consciousness than the vibration of the soul.

To perceive the soul in someone, as a rule the mind must be very quiet—very quiet, for when it is active, *its* vibrations are seen, not the vibration of the soul

And then, when you look at someone who is conscious of his soul, and lives in his soul, if you look like this, the impression you have is of descending, of entering deep, deep, deep into the person, far, far, far, far within; while usually when you look into someone's eyes, you very soon come to a surface which vibrates and answers your look, but you don't have that feeling of going down, down, down, down, going deep as into a hole and very far, very, very, very far within, so you have... a small, very quiet response. Otherwise, usually you enter—there are eyes you cannot enter, they are closed like a door; but still there are eyes which are open—you enter and then, quite close behind, you come to something vibrating there, like this, shining at times, vibrating. And then, that's it, if you make a mistake, you say, "Oh! he has a living soul"—it is not that, it is his vital.

In order to find the soul you must go in this way (*gesture of going deep within*), like this, draw back from the surface, withdraw deep within and enter, enter, enter, go down, down, down into a very deep hole, silent, immobile, and there, there's a kind of.. something warm, quiet, rich in substance and very still, and very full, like a sweetness—that is the soul.

And if one is insistent and is conscious oneself, then there comes a kind of plenitude which gives the feeling of something complete that contains unfathomable depths in which, should one enter, one feels that many secrets would be revealed... like the reflection in very peaceful waters of something that is eternal. And one no longer feels limited by time.

One has the feeling of having always been and of being for eternity

That is when one has touched the core of the soul.

And if the contact has been conscious and complete enough, it liberates you from the bondage of outer form; you no longer feel that you live only because you have a body. That is usually the ordinary sensation of the being, to be so tied to this outer form that when one thinks of "myself" one thinks of the body. That is the usual thing. The personal reality is the body's reality. It is only when one has made an effort for inner development and tried to find something that is a little more stable in one's being, that one can begin to feel that this "something" which is permanently conscious throughout all ages and all change, this something must be "myself". But that already requires a study that is rather deep. Otherwise if you think "I am going to do this", "I need that", it is always your body, a small kind of will which is a mixture of sensations, of more or less confused sentimental reactions, and still more confused thoughts which form a

mixture and are animated by an impulse, an attraction, a desire, some sort of a will, and all that momentarily becomes “myself”—but not directly, for one does not conceive this “myself” as independent of the head, the trunk, the arms and legs and all that moves—it is very closely linked.

It is only after having thought much, seen much, studied much, observed much that you begin to realise that the one is more or less independent of the other and that the will behind can make it either act or not act, and you begin not to be completely identified with the movement, the action, the realisation—that something is floating. But you have to observe much to see that

And then you must observe much more still to see that this, the second thing that is there, this kind of active conscious will, is set in motion by “something else” which watches, judges, decides and tries to found its decisions on knowledge—that happens even much later. And so, when you begin to see this “something else”, you begin to see that it has the power to set in motion the second thing, which is an active will, and not only that, but that it has a very direct and very important action on the reactions, the feelings, the sensations, and that finally it can have control over all the movements of the being—this part which watches, observes, judges and decides

That is the beginning of control.

When one becomes conscious of that, one has seized the thread, and when one speaks of control, one can know, “Ah! yes, this is what has the power of control.”

This is how one learns to look at oneself.

THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

IN THE LIGHT OF HER *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*

(Continued from the issue of March 1989)

THE *Prayers and Meditations* of the Mother trace the lines of her life and work. The work which she means is a sovereign functioning of spiritual energies in her life and activity. Her work represents the manifestation of the Supreme in the terrestrial nature. The mantras expressed in her prayer dated June 26, 1914 run.

“O Lord, grant that we may rise above the ordinary forms of manifestation so that Thou mayst find the tools necessary for Thy new manifestation.

“Do not let us lose sight of the goal, grant that we may always be united with Thy force, the force which the earth does not yet know and which Thou hast given us the mission to reveal to it.

“In a deep meditation, all the states of manifestation consecrate themselves to Thy manifestation.”

What is the meaning of “Thy manifestation” mentioned above? It is the revelation of the One in the many, or it may be put in more concrete terms as the manifestation of the Divine in Matter. Each individual is a part of the Divine without being aware of it and is striving towards the divine fullness in life.

Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple during the period of the 'thirties on the required manifestation. “The way of yoga followed here has a different purpose from others,—for its aim is not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the divine consciousness, but to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter.”¹

The Mother has set forth her vision of the new manifestation on 19 July 1914. She says:

“O Lord, Thou art the omnipotent Master of Thy own manifestation, grant to these instruments that they may escape from frames too narrow, from limits too fixed and mediocre. All the riches of human possibility are needed to translate even one atom of Thy infinite Force. Open the doors that are closed, make the sealed fountains spring forth, that floods of Thy eloquence and Thy beauty may overspread the world. Let there be amplitude and majesty, nobility and grace, charm and grandeur, variety and strength: for it is the will of their Lord to manifest.

“. Thine is all this world, Thine all these creatures and all these atoms. Transfigure them, illumine.”

The spiritual leaders of the past in India strove for their own salvation neglecting the conditions of the world needing to be transformed.

Sri Aurobindo says: “According to both Buddha and Shankara liberation

means *laya* of the individual in some transcendent Permanence that is not individualised—so logically a belief in the individual soul must prevent liberation while the sense of misery in the world leads to the attempt to escape.”²

About the teaching of the Gita, the most inclusive so far, Sri Aurobindo gave the following comparative note: “It is not a fact that the Gita gives the whole base of Sri Aurobindo’s message; for the Gita seems to admit the cessation of birth in the world as the ultimate aim or at least the ultimate culmination of yoga, it does not bring forward the idea of spiritual evolution or the idea of the higher planes and the supramental Truth-Consciousness and the bringing down of that consciousness as the means of the complete transformation of earthly life.”³

The Mother gives the key-note of the new manifestation in the prayer of June 13, 1914:

“First of all, knowledge must be conquered, that is, one must learn to know Thee, to be united with Thee, and all means are good and may be used to attain this goal. But it would be a great mistake to believe that all is done when this goal is attained. All is done in principle, the victory is gained in theory, and those whose motive is only an egoistic aspiration for their own salvation may feel satisfied and live only in and for this communion, without caring at all for Thy manifestation.

“But those whom Thou hast appointed as Thy representatives upon earth cannot rest content with the result so obtained. To know Thee first and before all else, yes, but once Thy knowledge is acquired there remains all the work of Thy manifestation; and then there intervene the quality, force, complexity and perfection of this manifestation. Very often those who have known Thee, dazzled and rapt in ecstasy by this knowledge, have been content to see Thee for themselves and express Thee somehow or other in their outermost being. He who wants to be perfect in Thy manifestation cannot be satisfied with that; he must manifest Thee on all the planes, in all the states of being and thus turn the knowledge he has acquired to the best account for the whole universe.”

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCES

- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 23, p 505
- 2 *Ibid* Vol 22, p 66
- 3 *Ibid* , p 69

GOLCONDE: A LOOK BEHIND

4: THE BUILDERS: (1) *Continued*

Mrityunjoy Mukherjee's remembrances of the visit of Mr Antonin Raymond, the chief architect of Golconde, to Pondicherry with his family in 1938 continue:

MRITYUNJOY For about a year before the Raymonds arrived in the Ashram, I had been hearing from Pavitra about them and the work they had undertaken. And I knew that Pavitra and the Raymonds esteemed each other as intimate friends. So when I saw them for the first time, it was as if meeting known people after a long time. They appeared to me to be nice Europeans, talking very pleasantly with an air of experienced authority. But when Pavitra told me what the Mother had remarked after seeing them—that they were both “specimens of the best human stuff”—I was terribly shocked. I even went so far as to think that the Mother, wanting to please Pavitra, had praised his friends in such extreme terms. Yet to think of the Mother in that way made me feel uneasy, so after a day or two I frankly asked Pavitra what the Mother had meant exactly by her words. “These people know nothing of the spiritual life,” I said, “nor have they come here for Yoga; in their very atmosphere one breathes only the achievement of the external life. So how can the Mother compliment them by calling them ‘the best human stuff’?” Pavitra at once understood my difficulty, and his explanation was a revelation to me, something I understood for the first time in my life. What he made me realise is this. “Being an Indian, I have, from my very childhood, been accustomed to judge men by their charitable disposition, their kindness to people and their religious tendencies. But the Raymonds obviously did not pretend to be religious, and they were far from being charitable in the way an Indian would wish them to be. Yet as I spent more time with them—and in those days I was to be the only go-between for them with the Mother—I would see their finer human qualities: the refined taste and idealistic thinking, the wide scope even in their material outlook, and the genuine interest they had in doing things as perfectly as possible.” Pavitra told me to notice especially their husband-and-wife relationship: it was just like that of a brother and sister, each conscious of the help he or she was receiving from the other to fulfil themselves. He told me I would notice many such things if I cast off my prejudiced way of looking.

I tried to do this. I was glad to see things in a less prejudiced light than before, although still I did not find the Raymonds to be quite the most ideal people on earth. But I understood that the qualities they possessed were very much lacking in the majority of us Indians and over the years I have come to understand the meaning of the Mother's remarks about them.

The Raymonds were really remarkable appreciators of the things of the Ashram, yet they were frank critics of the shortcomings of the Ashramites. A few unforgettable instances remain with me. For example, the Harpagon workshop was at that time no more than an open plot with one or two old godowns on it. In one workshop's adjoining antechambers, which had a small opening at the top for its only ventilation, one door and no window, a narrow rectangular room where hardly one cot could be put, Mme Raymond was experimenting on the durability of varnish for furniture—evidently for the Golconde furniture that was to be made later. Chandulal had given her a painter to help her in this job. One day very spontaneously Mme Raymond said to me, not too seriously but also not quite jokingly, "You Ashram people are not very enthusiastic about learning new things!" As I did not quite follow what she meant, she explained: "For the last ten days I have been experimenting by mixing different proportions of varnish elements to find a mixture that might stand the local climate. Finally I have found one that will last. Now where is there a sadhak who would watch me doing this and learn from me what I have achieved? We shall go away after some time. So I shall be obliged to explain my formula to a simple illiterate Tamil workman, whose language is not known to me, nor mine to him. Only by signs and showing things can we help each other. No sadhak has offered to learn. But so many of them come to visit us in our house!" To this I had no answer to give.

Another instance. On the night before they left, I went to bid them good-bye. After all the good wishes and hopes for the future, she told me, "You know, one thing pained me very much in the Ashram. So many people came to visit us during these few months; they were all very kind and nice. But some of them spoke against others, knowing full well that the others also meet us. And we are only visitors!" Again I felt shocked and embarrassed.

As for their food and drink they were as much European as anyone, and the Mother instructed us to provide what they asked for. Even in February, when we feel cool here, they were feeling hot, so we had to arrange to send them to Kodaikanal, a nearby hill station. They spent about three weeks in the bungalow of a person we knew there. I personally felt quite vexed at all these expenses to the Mother. But when they came back, I was surprised to see the volume of paintings and sketches each had done during their tour.

I once heard Mr. Raymond say about something, "This is very good, although personally I do not like it." That meant that he could appreciate the creations of other people in their proper place, even though they were not to his personal taste. Sometimes I had to accompany him into the interior of Pondicherry, into some villages there. The old houses and their way of construction, the local materials used, were a source of great interest to him. He often remarked that these local people were real architects—if they had been educated they could have been famous.

Yet on another side, nobody could convince Raymond that he was not

correct in his judgment or conception. At times it was almost unbearable to us to hear him reject what the Mother suggested about some way of doing something connected with the Golconde construction. But later, he would himself spontaneously say that the Mother was right, it should be like that. A sincere man in his own way. Once I asked Pavitra why Raymond, who was such a nice person in so many ways, could not stand a suggestion from anyone else. Pavitra told me that Raymond was a self-made man; he had had to fight hard against tremendous odds to build up his career. Pavitra explained that during the great earthquake in Japan the country was devastated: perhaps more than half the island was in débris. Just at that time Raymond began working there. But the Japanese government was not at all hospitable to foreigners, especially to American nationals, and did not like them to do business there unless it was all to Japan's own interest. As an architect Raymond got a chance to be helpful, but only private people called him, not the government. And he had to start from scratch, doing everything himself, with the help of his wife. His sincerity in work and his strong will-power, and also his wife's one-pointed helpfulness, allowed him to pass through this ordeal. Gradually he was able to establish himself as a renowned architect with his own office in Tokyo and quite a few assistant architects and engineers working under him. So what he had realised by his own hard labour and sacrifice was the last word to him. Yet he did have in him the sincerity to appreciate what is genuinely good and beautiful in others. When I drew Pavitra's attention to the way Raymond would take the Mother's suggestions lightly, but then later admit that what she had said was right, Pavitra remarked that this indicated Raymond's extraordinary capacity to change his nature, for otherwise it would be unimaginable for a man of his character.

Raymond mentions in his autobiographical article: "No time, no money were stipulated in the contract...."

But money was stipulated in the beginning—it had to come, but no one knew from where. The Mother asked somebody to try to get a lakh of rupees from the Nizam of Hyderabad. In those days Sir Akbar Ali Hydari, an aide of the Nizam, was coming to the Mother often. Through him a lakh was received, though not very easily, I heard; for any project furthering Islamic culture the Nizam would have given readily. Anyway, due to the Nizam's gift, the architect himself suggested that the building be named "Golconde", after the Golconde gold-mine in Hyderabad State. By the time the money was received the work had already started, and the Mother had spent plenty from her Ashram funds. And then the conditions changed, as we mentioned earlier: Sri Aurobindo did not approve of employing new labourers by the hundreds, and the Second World War started. So one lakh of rupees was nowhere near enough to complete the building. In these circumstances the Mother showed the Light: not to calculate in human terms but to leave it to the Divine and work for Him only, without considering anything else. The wonder is that these materialistic architects

understood it. The Mother was certainly preparing them by giving regular interviews. But the fact that they accepted those uncertain financial conditions justifies Mr. Raymond's words: "Not only was the life in this Indian monastery the revelation of another way of life, but the conditions under which the work of the building was done were so remarkable when compared to those we had known in this materially bewildered world, that we lived as in a dream"¹

(To be continued)

SHRADDHAVAN

REFERENCE

¹ *A Look Behind*, by Mrityunjoy Mukherjee unpublished ms in Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library

ALTHOUGH...

ALTHOUGH your image has faded
 in my eyes,
 like the impression of a dead mother
 in a new-born baby's vision,
 I dwell in your wondrous presence,
 your gaze remaining to melt my heart
 with the silent celebration of love.
 Having lost the notes of your utterance,
 my being still dances to your music,—
 your steps strumming the strings of my soul,
 in a welcoming song of your presence.

SONAL

YOGA—POETRY—LIFE

SOME LETTERS

RECENTLY two Russian scholars from Moscow were brought by Balkrishna of SABDA to have a talk with me. They said the Russians had replaced traditional religion by a much worse one—the worship of Stalin—from which they were now free. I gave them an example of the absurd length to which this substitute had once gone. They were amused by it. I recounted how the poet Lermontov came to be celebrated for his work. A huge statue was built of Stalin holding in one hand the book of Lermontov's poems!

When the subject of Gorbachev came up I tried to explain the Indian vision of the Avatar and the Vibhuti. The Avatar is the Divine Himself incarnate with full knowledge of His being. The Vibhuti is an instrument driven by the Divine to do His work but not necessarily aware of what is driving him. And I said Gorbachev struck me as a Vibhuti by his masterly attempt to break the rigours of a system that had come short in his country as well as the deadlock between Soviet Russia and the U.S.A , so as to avert the nuclear threat to the world by the antagonism of these two superpowers.

My visitors were talking now and again in Russian. The topic of linguistics came up. We discussed the difference between agglutinative languages and inflected ones, the former proceeding by the addition of word to word without changing their forms, the latter by changes in their terminations according as the words relate to different genders and cases. Thus in English the word *door* or *doors* remains unchanged with any preposition or verb, whereas in Latin we have various forms. *porta, portae, portam, portarum, portus, portas*. The lady remarked that Russian also had inflections.

Then we spoke of the way certain studies have been carried on in countries with a materialistic turn of mind. The study of religion is subsumed under "Anthropology" which undertakes, among other things, a comparative research in culture—culture being defined as the manner in which social groups live, both physically and mentally. Thus the mode of cooking in India would be put on a par with the Indian mode of conceiving God and both the modes would be examined without the slightest notion that there might be a reality answering to the God-concept.

Now to your problem, which very much relates to God's reality. Your lament about sadhana issues from an inadequate idea of what we are supposed to do as practitioners of the Integral Yoga. It is idle to imagine that such a Yoga of complete transformation by a power beyond all that has worked so far on earth—namely, "Supermind"—can be done fully on his own by any johnny who has a spiritual aim. From the beginning Sri Aurobindo has said that this Yoga can only be done by the Mother for and in each of us. The Mother too has

declared that the best thing in this Yoga is for the sadhak not to stand in her way but allow her to work towards making him a true Aurobindonian. One of the basic things in our spiritual path is, as you know, *samatā*, “equality of consciousness”, which empties us of personal reactions and produces a huge vacuum in which the impersonal Self of selves can slowly emerge and draw into that serene wideness the light and love of the Mother. I may add that another central need in our Yoga is that this *samatā* should be self-giving. The presence of the Mother has always to be kept in the heart’s view. Then the *samatā* is not only a superb passivity but a fount of illumined activity by something infinitely more than our tiny being—something at once calm and dynamic:

Force one with unimaginable rest,

as a line of Sri Aurobindo’s puts it, creating a Mantra born of what he has characterised as the ideal state of a poet for such messages—namely, “a hushed intense receptivity turned upwards”—and invested with the potency to re-create us in the very image of our Master.

(31.12.1988)

*

I have read a little about Stephen Hawking and I know of at least one revolutionary development of scientific theory by him. The “black holes” in space, which had been believed to be so gravitationally powerful that nothing could come out of them, not even light, were theoretically proved by him to emit gamma rays! This may be poetically compared with his own situation—how, from a physically stricken condition which would seem to prohibit any fruitful manifestation of the mind, Hawking has proved himself capable of making fundamental contributions to physics, so much so that some people have dared to speak of him in the same breath as Einstein.

It is news for me to hear from you that he favours the Einsteinian re-entrant universe—“a cosmos,” as you say, “which is both finite and boundless, comparable to the surface of the earth which begins and ends nowhere.” According to Einstein, gravitational masses so affect the “field” round them that objects move in it as if space were not flat, as in Euclidean geometry, but curved as in the geometry of Riemann. It is the curvature of space which renders the universe re-entrant. Thus, a ray of light starting anywhere would travel in a huge curve and ultimately reach back to its starting point. What further development Hawking has made of the Einsteinian concept I don’t know yet. The book you mention hasn’t come into my hands.

You may be interested to know that Sri Aurobindo adopted Einstein’s expression: “boundless finite.” In *Savitri*, after describing in brief all the “over-

head” planes—Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition—up to Overmind he begins the description of the Overmind:

Then stretches the boundless finite’s last expanse,
The cosmic empire of the Overmind,
Time’s buffer state bordering Eternity..

(*Centenary Ed.*, 660· 23-25)

The overhead planes, including Overmind, are boundless because there is an infinite in them but each infinite is of a particular aspect of the Supreme and not the totality of the Supreme’s aspects. That totality would be the true infinite. everything else would be a finite even though boundless in a particular aspect. Similarly we can speak of the Supermind’s boundlessness as the true one, charged as it is with an infinity of infinities, being the Supreme itself fronting from the Transcendent *Sat-cit-ānanda* (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss) its own creation. The planes that are not overhead can also be designated each “a boundless finite” in terms of the Cosmic Ignorance as contrasted with each member of the overhead series which is so in terms of the Cosmic Knowledge—“Knowledge” being defined as the inherent experience, the natural pervading realisation, of the One Self everywhere. The extended meaning of the Einsteinian phrase in Sri Aurobindo’s hands is suggested when he lists the hierarchy of levels—

The seried kingdoms of the graded Law—

and ends with the lines about the Supermind:

A last high world was seen where all worlds meet;
In its summit gleam where Night is not nor Sleep,
The light began of the Trinity supreme.
All there discovered what it seeks for here.
It freed the finite into boundlessness
And rose into its own eternities

(*Cent. Ed* , 89: 24-30)

I gather from the report you have sent that for Hawking the processes of physics can explain the universe and therefore God even if he exists is not necessary. An Aurobindonian can understand such an outlook whereas the conventional religious or spiritual world-visions would think it absurd and shocking. For, Sri Aurobindo’s vision of evolution has two sides. On the one hand he posits a Supermind, a Divine Truth-Consciousness, both creative and transformative, which holds a super-cosmos of perfect originals of all that is gradually evolving in our space-time. These originals are not like the Platonic archetypes aloof from the flux of time which can only give vague broken reflections of them.

They are dynamic and work towards their own incarnation, as it were, in the forms of that flux. The forms are themselves aspiring to incarnate them, aspiring deep down in their being although the outer self may not always be aware or co-operative. And these arise across millennia of slow development from a beginning which is apparently the very opposite of the Perfect, the Divine. Sri Aurobindo calls this opposite the Inconscient. But the Inconscient, the apparently lifeless, mindless, soulless process known to physics, still carries hidden and locked within it the whole Superconscient. Because of the utter secrecy of the Superconscient, the process is bound to create the impression of a blind brute existence, a Godless universe, such as scientists like Hawking begin with but contemplating which they are likely to be amazed at life and mind appearing in the course of the ages in it and even an open or indirect soul-search for a God. Thus Sri Aurobindo grants a ground for the possibility of materialism and atheism without really legitimising them as being anywhere near a final reading of the cosmic riddle.

As for Hawking's concessive formula—"God is the embodiment of physical laws"—it seems to be a variation of Einstein's "religious" outlook: God is the intelligence embodied in the cosmic order. Here too God is impersonal, but this intelligence which renders the universe comprehensible to our minds evoked in Einstein what he termed "the cosmic religious emotion" which he put as the fount of all true scientific quest for some all-synthesising, all-harmonising, all-explaining "unified theory". Here he is nearer than Hawking to the philosopher Spinoza. There seems to be something cold-blooded about Hawking. Spinoza is even more suffused than Einstein with the cosmic religious emotion. In fact he has a mystic in him and that is why he was called "God-intoxicated" although from the orthodox Jewish or Christian viewpoint he was dubbed an atheist. Actually he was a pantheist to whom the universe was an infinite reality manifesting to us two of its innumerable modes: thought and extension. The thought-mode he named *natura naturans*, the active energy responsible for the world-order, while the extension-mode he labelled as *natura naturata*, the passive matter undergoing the order. One may see the two as the mind and body of the universe and to him they are not only inseparable but also constitute the whole of reality. There is nothing beyond the cosmos for Spinoza but the cosmos is God, and Spinoza compares his feeling of it to St. Paul's spiritual sense when he told the Athenians: "In Him we live and move and have our being." Even if no recognisable Transcendent is granted by Spinozism, the pantheist in Spinoza takes at the same time the universe as God and God as the universe without realising that the latter formula is open-ended, as we mark in Indian pantheism where the Divine is perceived beyond the physical world as well as in it. The Mundaka Upanishad, in Sri Aurobindo's translation, says with a super-Spinozistic enthusiasm.

The Eternal is before us and the Eternal is behind us and to the north and to the south of us and above and below and extended everywhere. This magnificent universe is nothing but the Eternal.

The same Upanishad goes on to declare with a seer's exaltation what exceeds the cosmos.

There the sun shines not and the moon has no splendour and the stars are blind. There these lightnings flash not nor any earthly fire. For all that is bright is but the shadow of His brightness and by His shining all this shineth.

In the light of such knowledge one would like to reverse Hawking's "God is the embodiment of physical laws" into "Physical laws are an embodiment of God." This, of course, does not mean that science should give up its ardent search for the how and the why of things on the assumption that no supernatural agency is at work. A pragmatic materialism and atheism is the very source of scientific inquiry for immediate causes—an inquiry which has to be pressed as far as it can go without taking soul or God as necessary. But I believe with Sri Aurobindo that if science pushes more and more into the depth of things with an unabated honesty and an unprejudiced mind it is bound to touch upon a background of vital and mental and psychic forces and a basis of spiritual dynamisms. And these subtle realities will help the scientific consciousness to discover finer and wider complexes of physical laws, for in their true functioning such realities are not meant to distract our intelligence from the realm of matter and energy but to make it explore and utilise and enrich this realm in various ways, one important way of which is that of science with its working method of not invoking supraphysical causes. Man spiritualising himself will in addition bring to bear upon the natural world a keener insight, a larger grasp, a light of intuitive comprehension out-Hawking Hawking. (17.11.88)

*

To try to follow the ideal and example of a Schweitzer without sharing his faith is, no doubt, possible: the ethical nature is not dependent on the religious motive for its instinctive impulsion and emotional exaltation. Even intellectually it can justify itself without that motive: to do unto others as we would others to do unto us may seem capital sense to the thinking mind. But there are two levels of thought—the provisional and pragmatic, the fundamental and philosophic. Although the first level can provide the ethicist with "sensible" supports, the second will give him no standing ground except religion—of course the truly felt and not just the conventional kind. For this level lays bare the full implication of the ethical consciousness. Ethics is essentially normative: its key-terms are.

“right”, “duty”, “obligation”, “good”, “ought”. These terms cannot be derived from natural factors with any finality.

The study of natural factors is science—a study which is purely descriptive and not in the least normative. The universe of the scientist is impotent to yield those terms. Not even a human natural factor like “society” can be their source, for it can only impose on the individual what many individuals consider to be advantageous to collective existence: its will is not from any plane higher than that of the individual and hence cannot have a definitively binding character. Mere numbers cannot make a thing right. Nor can any punishment visited on the recalcitrant individual prove the duty of not being dishonest, cruel and selfish: it can impress him only with the inexpediency of certain types of behaviour, convince him merely of the need to be clever enough to get away with dishonesty, cruelty and selfishness instead of being foolishly found out.

The real logic of ethical conduct can lie in nothing else than a Law eternal behind the codes and statutes of men, a Law which men strive to embody according to their best lights. Our ideals and morals may not always image the divine depths of the eternal Law, but logically there can be no idealism and morality without an effort or aspiration to image the depths that are divine of a Law that is eternal. The sense of unconditioned imperativeness and inherent validity, without which no “ought” can have justification, must argue that we are ethical inasmuch as we strain to express a supreme Reality faultlessly guided by its own Truth-light. Ethics can be neither valid nor imperative without a religious sanction.

Of course, merely to be religious does not guarantee that one is ethical: religiousness often has a self-righteous fanaticism as its bedfellow. What is needed is a genuine religious life—or, rather, a life of inward-plunging and outward-radiating spirituality. But, philosophically, we may aver that if religion means a feeling of divine operation, it is the sole reliable basis of ethics. Good-will has its strongest logical support in a sense of God-will.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

18 (Continued)

WHEN Beni Madhava's family came to know that he had renounced the world and had become a sadhu, his brothers came to take him back. He refused firmly and they had to go back without him. This shock was too much for his loving mother. In grief she jumped into a well and died. Beni Madhava's brothers came again and said, "Our mother has died for you. If you refuse to come back we will also drown ourselves in the Sarayu." He was shaken to the core and asked his Guru. The Guru didn't want him to go but instead of an outright refusal he said, "Ask the Divine." Beni Madhava didn't want to have the death of his brothers on his conscience. The blow of his mother's death was too recent. He thought, "What will happen if the Divine says 'No'?" So without his Guru's permission he went back to his village. There for one month he told the story of the *Rāmāyana* to the whole village. Then the family became reconciled to the idea of his becoming a sadhu and with their tacit consent he came back to Ayodhya, where many years passed in intensest sadhana, at the feet of his Guru in that holy city on the banks of the sacred Sarayu. Even during floods he lived for months on platforms constructed in the stream itself. It was a life of great austerity and hardship. Once on the occasion of the twelve-year Kumbha Mela he asked his Guru's permission to go to Haridwara for the sacred occasion. The Guru answered, "You proceed, we will follow." He started on the journey. On the day of the sacred bath his Guru left his body.

Beni Madhava's chanting of Rama-Nama charmed another senior disciple, Khaki Baba. Now that their Guru was no more, he asked Beni Madhava to accompany him to Bhivani where he lived in a house adjoining a temple which was in ruins. Here Beni Madhava had to work hard the whole day. He had to look after Khaki Baba and the temple and had to cook for both the Baba and the temple-visitors. Even at night the Baba woke him up many a time to ask the time. Here Beni Madhava had many occult experiences. One night he saw in a vision one of his fellow-disciples getting down at Bhiwani station and proceeding towards their temple abode. He was with him in his subtle body during the travel from the railway station to the temple. When he opened his eyes, he saw this person standing there. He had just arrived. Another night he saw in a dream that thieves were carrying away their cow and calf. He awakened Khaki Baba. Both came out and saw the thieves leading away the cow with her calf. In the meanwhile the cow became intractable and the thieves ran away.

One day Khaki Baba said to Beni Madhava, "In future, out of the temple offerings all loose change shall be your share and the rupee coins my share." This mercenary proposal hurt Beni Madhava very much. He thought, "Have I come here for paltry sums of money? I didn't serve him for money at all." He had

come to serve without any thought of self. He left the place then and there. Khaki Baba gave him a dhoti and Rs. 20. He thought that while bringing him to Bhuwani Khaki Baba had spent Rs. 8 on his ticket, so he returned him that sum. On Khaki Baba's refusal he left Rs. 8 in the temple and the dhoti on the gate. He was extremely unhappy. He felt the whole world burning. He lost all peace. On the train to Ayodhya he bought some fruits to eat. But still he felt the whole world was on fire. As soon as he reached Ayodhya he felt a divine peace engulf him. There he spent the rest of the money in feeding sadhus and was at last fully at peace with himself.

For eight years he did tapasya at the place of his Guru. Day and night he did Japa of Rama Nama. Then his fellow-disciple Sri Ramakrishna Das turned towards Sri Aurobindo. Sri Ramakrishna Das asked for permission to visit Pondicherry but due to the Second World War he didn't receive it at once. But once he came to the Ashram he never went back. Beni Madhava became very curious as to what was so special in this place that his brother disciple had never returned to Ayodhya. Thinking that at least it would take two or three years to get the special thing, he also applied for permission to come to the Ashram. To his surprise he received permission at once but he was not ready to take the plunge. So he let the permission lapse and came after one year taking permission afresh.

He reached the Ashram on 14th August 1945, dressed in a loin cloth and a knee-length dhoti which was none too clean, with the upper part of his body uncovered. Somebody shoved him out. He was bewildered at all this. He had come expecting to find the people immersed in chanting of hymns and living a life of great austerities, etc. Even on 15th August during his first Darshan he did not feel anything special. He thought, "Everyone says Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are the Divine. How can that be?" Yet even though beset with doubts this much he felt that they were Mahatmas and there was a great power in the place. Secondly, this most modern Ashram, with its people well dressed like householders, went against his ideal of an Ashram. But in spite of the outer differences he felt as if all the people there were a part of his own soul. On one hand he wanted to leave the place, on the other hand his Guru-bhai Ramakrishna Dasji would not allow him to go. In this inner life too he was not getting anything. There was a tussle in his heart: "Should I leave the place or not?" At last he decided to fathom the secret of this place, of this power which he felt but which was an enigma to him.

Now a period of utter bewilderment followed. He was given work at the laundry. He was asked to do this or that the whole day. Before coming here Kirtan had been the mainstay of his sadhana but here he got no time at all for Kirtan. He was constantly ordered to do little jobs. He used to ask himself, "I am a sadhu, why do they make me work?" Two years passed like this. People reassured him, "You will get the same joy in work as you used to get in Kirtan."

He participated in the evening March-Past. It gave him some peace. One afternoon he went to meet a sadhak. The door was shut and he could hear the voice of a lady inside. He jumped to conclusions and felt people here indulged their lower self and there was no ideal. Though he didn't express his doubts before anybody, he was deeply shaken.

In those days the Mother held a midnight meditation. Only after she had gone back to her room Beni Madhava would return to his place. One night as soon as he came back to his room and sat down, the Mother appeared before his eyes. She started to grow taller and taller and broader and broader till she became as high as the sky, and as big as the earth or even the universe. After this experience all doubts vanished from his mind. The way to further progress opened and he had many spiritual experiences. Once when he stood before Sri Aurobindo on a Darshan day he had a marvellous experience. With open eyes he saw all the previous Avatars, the great saints, sages and āchāryas in Sri Aurobindo. The inner struggle ended. One day the Mother revealed to him her forms from the time she was a child, as she was in France and in Japan, etc. He also had the Darshan of the Mother's transformed body. One day he saw Sri Aurobindo descend and jump in a dark ditch below. He realised that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were Rāma and Sitā. His sadhana proceeded happily.

He used to eat excessively. One day he decided to fast. Ramakrishna Dasji informed Nolini-da. During this fast Beni Madhava slept for all the twenty-four hours for three days. One day he felt his body below the chest had become glowing. This state lasted the whole night. In the morning when he came to work at the laundry, the state vanished. Beni Madhava loved the March-Past and exercises. He used to run with all his might. Now he felt that when he ran blood came into his mouth. He used to gulp it back but he had to tell Ramakrishna Dasji, who at once informed Nolini-da. He was tested at the local hospital where they found he had T.B. He was advised to leave the Ashram. Before leaving he wanted to have the Mother's darshan at the Playground but could not get permission.

He went to Kerala to the Ashram of Swami Ramdas. On the way he stopped at the Ashram of Raman Maharshi but could not have his Darshan since the sage was resting. He lived in the Ananda Ashram for one month. He was deeply hurt at not having been allowed to have the Mother's Darshan before leaving Pondicherry. One day in a dream-vision he saw the Mother manifest before him. She said, "Look, I have come." She started giving something to him. He took it in the folds of his shawl. But she went on pouring till the cloth was torn and the thing started falling on the ground.

He could not continue living in the Ananda Ashram and decided to go back to Ayodhya. He asked for some money and received Rs. 25. Now his psychic being came in front and suggested, "Why not go to see Ramakrishna Das first

before leaving for Ayodhya? ” Of course the real pull was the Mother. He came back and found his T.B. cured. He was again admitted to the Ashram. But alas after some months the dreaded disease again manifested. The Mother sent him to Patna for treatment at the Ashram’s expense. His other Guru-bhai Bhavani Prasad accompanied him to Patna to look after him. At Patna they could not find any signs of T.B. So he went back to Ayodhya. In Bhiwani a devoted band of admirers had never forgotten him. One of them came and took him to Bhiwani. There he was tested in the local hospital. After examining him the doctors said that he had had T.B. at one time, but was now cured. They said that his habit of living with his upper body bare had helped in his recovery.

His soul hankered for the Mother, so he wrote to Ramakrishna Das, “I have fully recovered. Please take permission for me.” But he was not granted it. Instead he came for the Mother’s Darshan but had only the Balcony Darshan. At first he was not granted an interview. But later he had the chance of laying his head in the Mother’s lap. After ten or fifteen days he returned to Bhiwani.

There Khaki Baba drove him as mercilessly as before. He didn’t get time even for meditation. Then came the great blow. Sri Aurobindo left his body. But Beni Madhava could not leave Khaki Baba and so was denied even the last Darshan of the Lord. The great realisation he had when he was living in the Ashram that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had taken everything but had given him something ineffable and indescribable remained with him.

He would come to the Ashram every few years and would live in it for a year or two. The place at Bhiwani had prospered under the care of Khaki Baba who was a realised soul.

The ruined temple was replaced by a high proud temple and many buildings were added, the property developed. Thousands thronged there. But it was a temple dedicated to Rama and Sita. Khaki Baba didn’t accept the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Beni Madhava worshipped the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s photos in the privacy of his room and there he told the tales of the Mother to two or three persons.

In 1958 Khaki Baba died. He was nearly 120 years old. Though he didn’t remember the year of his birth, he used to tell the stories of the 1857 Mutiny. After his passing, Beni Madhava became the head of the place. Now he started the worship of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo openly and told their story, ‘Kathā’, to all those who came there.

In 1973 he heard the shattering news of the Mother’s passing away and started at once for Pondicherry but like many others reached here after the Samadhi had taken place. He felt totally bereft and heart-broken. He thought, “I have lost heaven and earth both. There is no place for me in this creation.” He felt that if he remained in this condition of utter misery even for one hour his soul would leave his body. Somehow he went and sat in the Meditation Hall. Then in a conscious meditation he saw the Mother in a young, tall, sexless, supremely

beautiful, transformed body come skipping down the Meditation Hall staircase. She came near him and revealed to him again all her forms since her childhood. She said, "I have not left. I am still here." She bestowed on him a faith which was a hundred times more alive than when she had been in her body. He experienced a divine peace and faith. Henceforth he belonged to her alone.

(To be continued)

Compiled by K

THE NEW HORIZON

(A MIDNIGHT VISION)

IN the hush of the midnight when sleep all world's men
 Life moves towards those half-lit obscurities
 Where the vast sea goes to meet the vaster world
 Of stars and planets and skies;
 Across the mystery of that confluence
 Flashed a far sudden line of a myriad hues—
 White-pinks, deep-purples, gold-blues.

The darkness was dispelled; all vaguenesses lost their way.

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of March 1989)

The Mother's Message

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



Vol. Three 1959

No. 28

It was cool and windy, not very pleasant for July.
I received a letter dated 7.7.60 from the Mother:

“My dear little child Huta,

As far as I know I have answered your letters, but both ways some may have been lost. This one also I do not know if it will reach you in time before you leave England.

I have received the nice things you have sent through Laljubhai's son, and was hesitating to write as he told me that you would soon leave London. But now I have your letter in which you say you have received nothing from me since a long time, so I venture to send this letter.

I know nothing about the pin. I did not send you any
I am glad that you are all right and coming back soon.
With my love and blessings always.”

A wave of relief washed over me.

*

My father wished me to visit the continent. But now I was eager to be back home.

I requested our Agent Mr. I. Gundle to help me send my extra luggage to India by ship. I had come to London with one suitcase. Now I had three, apart from a big trunk which I had stuffed with my paintings, sketches, colour-tubes, brushes and heavy garments.

I gave away many things to Aunt Margaret for churches from where warm clothes would be distributed to poor people.

Doris suggested that it would be nice if I gave my crockery to Jayantibhai Patel who was to settle in England. I did so. He was appreciative.

*

Aunt Margaret and Uncle Peter asked me to tea at their place. After the enjoyable refreshment we set off to St. Martin's Theatre to see the play—*The Mousetrap*—the world's longest ever-run play—by Agatha Christie.

I sat between Uncle Peter and Aunt Margaret with a big box of assorted chocolates on my knees. They really pampered me like their own daughter.

How many thousands of people must have sat in those same seats seeing that same play since then!

Uncle Peter guessed during the first act who the murderer was, but we did not know till the very end.

After thirty-six years the play is still running. Numerous different actors and actresses played their roles, but the authorities kept two things intact as a mark of respect—the old chair and the time-piece.

*

I was caught up in a whirlwind of frantic activities—booking a ticket, last-minute shopping, final packing, saying goodbyes to friends.

On 15th July 1960 I bade adieu to London in the morning.

The agent's car came to take me to Heathrow Airport. Aunt Margaret accompanied me to see me off.

We reached the airport. The chauffeur got out of the car, opened the door for us, saluted with a jaunty flip of the hand and wished me "Happy Journey". Then he stayed for Aunt to take her to Harley Street.

Aunt and I had a long wait in a ramshackle shed on the outskirts of the airport. Quite a number of people were standing in groups awaiting their calls of departure.

At last we went slowly to the appropriate door when the announcement came over the loudspeaker. Aunt Margaret kissed my cheeks and said goodbye in moving words. My eyes filled with tears when I expressed my gratitude with the same gesture.

I took my seat in the huge aircraft, snapped the seat-belt on. The big bird took off with much clamour. I peeped from my window. The city lay below like an enormous carpet with a wonderful varicoloured floral design. The panorama floated in a soft sunshine.

These lines of Wordsworth's sonnet—"Westminster Bridge"—flashed into my mind:

"Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull world he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!"

*

The flight to Entebbe (Uganda) was tolerable. The food was good. There were two stops—Rome and Khartoum. In Rome we had a long stay. It was already dark. There were rows and rows of planes—we had to be alert for the announcement and board the right one!

The next morning we reached our destination.

My second brother Vasantbhai and his wife Manju received me cordially. Then we headed for Jinja, their house, fifty miles from Kampala.

On the 17th Maganbhai, my fourth brother, came from Miwani (Kenya) to fetch me. The following day we left for Miwani.

My parents were pleased to meet me. They inquired all about my studies and stay. I never told them my difficulties, setbacks and sufferings. I gave them the impression that I was the happiest person in the world!

I handed gifts to my family members, which I had brought from London.

*

Days passed with monotonous slowness. I felt bored. The only refuge I took was in Nature which conveyed so much to me in her silent, secret, sweet way.

The Mother sent me a lovely card depicting the painting of a mauve Iris on white satin. Her words were:

“The Aristocracy of Beauty—
With love and blessings”

She remembered me—my soul responded to her unchanging love.

The Mother gave this significance to Iris in the book—*Flowers and their Messages*:

“Aristocracy of Beauty—of so perfect a form that it compels admiration.”

She has also described the flower in the book—*Letters to my Little Smile*:

“Aristocracy of Beauty. It is a noble flower which stands upright on its stalk. Its form has been stylised in the ‘fleur-de-lis’, the emblem of the Kings of France.”

*

During my fortnight’s stay we had full programmes, parties, picnics, movies and social gatherings.

At one of the parties, my father introduced me to a very tall Englishman—a Bank Manager. He asked me: “Well, Miss Hindocha, what is your further plan—aren’t you going to get married?” I told myself: “Ah, there it goes again!” I said: “No, I don’t wish to do so. For, my goal is quite different, which, I am afraid, you’ll not comprehend.” He gave up.

So much entertainment. so many diversions, yet I could not set my heart on anything

My parents were worried and suggested to me several times to consider marriage. How to explain to them?

Our house was surrounded by huge mountains. I wanted to climb the peak of one of them and shout and scream at the top of my voice: "I DO NOT WANT TO GET MARRIED—LEAVE ME ALONE."

But I was silent and refused to answer any questions. More and more I felt suffocated among my own people. I was aloof, because within me I was absolutely conscious that I never belonged to them. Nonetheless, I appreciated their good will with a thankful heart

*

On 1st August 1960 I left Miwani at night by train to catch a plane from Nairobi for Bombay

My father, who came along with others to see me off at Miwani station, whispered privately: "Please don't go anywhere—stay at Pondicherry." I was perplexed, but assured him: "Father, I promise you, I will respect your wish." Then at once I understood what he really meant

Maganbhai accompanied me upto Nairobi. The whole night I could not sleep. My vagrant thoughts mingled with the tedious sound of the fast-moving train. The darkness of the night matched my gloomy heart. The only solace in the whole world was THE MOTHER.

Suddenly I felt very strongly that it was my last visit to Miwani—I would never be able to go there again—to the small paradise. For now, unfortunately, our beautiful place does not exist—the Government of Kenya took it over in 1988.

The following morning we arrived at Nairobi. In the evening I flew to Bombay.

The time was anxiously awaited to unfold the next phase of my life. These words of Sri Aurobindo were really encouraging:

"So the Light grows always. As for the shadow, it is only a shadow and will disappear in the growing Light."

(To be continued)

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ANGEL WITH HORNS

AN INTRODUCTION TO FRANÇOIS VILLON: THE MAN AND HIS WORKS

VILLON is first and last a great French poet of the Middle Ages who has mirrored the spirit of his time with what seems to be a completely personal voice. There were, of course, a host of contemporary poets like Jean Bodel, Eustache Deschamps, Alain Chartier who were courtier poets experimenting in traditional forms like *rondeau* and *ballade*, their allegorical works give occasional glimpses of their personal lives. But it is in Villon that we hear in verse an intense reliving of his life's poignant cry, mode of existence, a meditation on death at once personal and universal, which strike the common reader with a singular clarity. "He is both universal and personal enough to carry us beyond his age—or, if one prefers it, to carry his age to ours."¹

Although Villon's life was under a cloud, it would be incomplete to talk of his poetry without a reference to his notorious career. In fact much of Villon's poetry derives its strength from the trials and tribulations he passed through and his narrow escape from the hangman's noose. François de Montcorbier was born in Paris in 1431, the very year when Joan of Arc was burnt to death at the stake. Being poor, he was adopted by a churchman Guillaume de Villon, his benefactor from whom he took his name. He obtained the degree of Bachelor in 1449 and Master of Arts and Licentiate in 1452. A scholar's life being somewhat hard in those days, constant battles raged between the town and the gown, and the students usually got off scot-free. Villon was no exception to the rule. While at University, he made disreputable friends and fell into evil ways. In 1455 he killed a priest called Philippe Chermoye in a brawl and fled Paris to avoid arrest. The following year he was pardoned *in absentia*. But hardly had he returned to Paris when he was involved in a theft at the college de Navarre and again fled Paris to lead a bohemian life. In 1463 he was condemned to death in another street brawl. After that Villon vanishes from the pages of literary history and the little we know of his last years is in the form of anecdotes and legends by Rabelais and Marot.

Villon's *Le Lais*, his first major work, was written in Paris in 1456 when he was about to leave for Angers. A light burlesque, it has forty stanzas in all—each containing eight octosyllabic lines. The first seven are cast in the conventional love tradition. The professed poetic reason for Villon's flight to Angers is his unreciprocated love. Hence the poet likens his condition to death-in-life:

To Angers I depart,
Since she will not accord to me
Her grace—not even sparingly.
Stout-limbed I die for her²

Ah God! If I had studied always,
 In my mad youth that now is fled,
 And devoted myself to better ways
 I'd have had a house and a fine soft bed.⁶

Fleeting time, the age-old theme, robs him of his precious youth.

He did not travel on foot, they say,
 Nor riding a horse to gallop or crawl—
 But suddenly, youth has flown away,
 Leaving with me no gifts at all!⁷

To Villon death is so terrible that it spares none and all are made equal in the dust:

This I know, that rich and poor,
 Sage and fool, layman and priest,
 Mean and prodigal, noble and boor,
 The fair and ugly, highest and least,

 Death will seize them one and all.⁸

After the forty-first stanza the two ballads *Ballade des dames du temps jadis* and *Ballade des Seigneurs du temps jadis* have perhaps the most moving lines which have a haunting refrain:

Where are the snows of last year gone?⁹

and

Where is the mighty Charlemagne?¹⁰

What we admire here is the intuition of even more “subtle values far beyond the mere object of normal communication: the choice of the haunting refrain with the lingering sounds that build the main portion of the rhyme-scheme, and so efficiently call up the sadness of vanishing memories.”¹¹

Then the poet bemoans the brevity of youth and makes the beautiful Heaulmière regret her lost beauty. This evidently throws him into a melancholy mood and makes him brood over the past.

The second section of *Le Testament* which begins from the seventy-first stanza can be regarded as a separate poem though conceived as a part of the design of the work. The poet calls it final and irrevocable. Although in *Le*

Testament the burlesque is lighter than that of *Le Lais* the sequence of the former begins with Villon leaving his books to Guillaume de Villon, his benefactor, a ballad to his poor mother and his Christian soul to God; a duck to his mendicant brothers and its bones to the sick in the hospital, to the thief Jean Le Loup 'a dog' to catch the ducks in the ditches of Paris and a coat to hide himself, to his mother he leaves his *Ballade pour prier Nostre Dame*

In the last section of the poem Villon describes the dead bodies in the charnel-house in *Le Cimetière des Innocents*. The poem offers him ample scope to dwell upon his favourite theme—death. His last ballad where he gives instructions for his burial serves as a fitting finale to the whole poem.

The interest and strength of *Le Testament* lies not so much in the topical allusions and gifts he leaves behind as in the moving personal reflections of the poet: his bohemian life full of mistakes, disappointments in love, his horror at sickness, sufferings, poverty and death. And he parodies even the legal forms of will-making. Some bequests are pathetic, some ironical and some facetious raising the legal forms to a complex literary form.

Although dire poverty, vanishing beauty, fleeting time and death are the possible themes in Villon's poetry, it is the theme of death which figures prominently in *Le Testament* and the other ballads which he composed towards the end of his life. More than any other French poet of his time, Villon's treatment of death brings out the horrors of death with a rare poignancy and immediacy. His reflections on death time and again may give us an impression that he deludes us toying with the idea of death. In fact, it is his life as a vagabond and criminal, his bitter experiences in life, his narrow escape from death by hanging egged him on to give poetic expression to his feelings and thoughts.

On a careful reading of his observations on death we discern as it were a pattern emerging. First his description of death is after the literary tradition of love poetry where the poet whose love was unreciprocated decides to leave for Angers:

That look of her did capture me,
Cruel and harsh, she brought me woe.¹²

From this traditional literary metaphor the poet passes on to a realistic description of death which sends a shiver down the spine:

Dying he'll tremble and grow pale,
His nose grow peaked, his veins grow tender,
His neck shall swell, his flesh shall fail,
Joint and sinews stretch asunder.¹³

The realistic description of the hanged men figures prominently in his

famous *La Ballade des Pendues* where we are given an insight into the hanged men creating images which are unequalled in medieval literature. Professor Cohen, referring to the images of death, rightly points out: "never has the medieval lyrical poetry found similar images which are as lively as they are familiar"¹⁴

Such vivid and awesome description may create an impression that the poet is very much obsessed with the physical agony and the putrefaction of the flesh. If his poetry is studied in the light of his dangerous life, his reflections on death may lose their edge and cheapen the lament that rises to our lips. But judged by the way in which he pleads guilty and his sense of remorse, his *cri de cœur* gains credence and earns our sympathy. But Villon has a few redeeming qualities to his credit. He has a tender filial feeling for his mother; he evinces keen interest for 'douce France', his fatherland, and the innate power to repent for his past misdeeds. To crown it all, Villon towards the end of *Le Testament* and in the last poems he wrote was a changed man and was after a decent life, his firm faith in God makes us feel that he "has a deep-seated connection between his own consciousness of sin and his wide humanity. It is in this sense that the poet's morals are here still relevant"¹⁵

Villon then moves from the horrible details of the dead bodies to an intuitive awareness of Death and its finality. When he exclaims "Death ends all" it throws light on how death seems to be all-pervading and man has to be content with his lot with a sense of resignation. According to Villon death levels the differences between the high and the low, the rich and the poor.

This does not mean that the poet has developed a negative attitude to life. He is not unaware of the joy that comes from good food.

They have good wine that's often broached
And fine fat fish on fasting days,
Tarts and flours, eggs fried and poached,
Scrambled or cooked in other ways.¹⁶

Being poor, Villon could not enjoy the luxuries of life. His was a precarious existence. His life is not complete, his vision of life is lopsided. It is vitiated by his hardships and sufferings. However, his agonies, his shortcomings, his yearnings and ironical observations—hovering between a momentary sparkle of laughter and long-term tears—are woven as it were into the very matrix of his poetry.

Besides being a poet of genuine feelings, Villon distinguishes himself from the other poets of his time as one who is endowed with a razor-sharp sensibility and a delicate ear for the music of poetry. Having had a sound education in the liberal arts in the university, he acquired a sensitive ear for the contemporary literary forms. He experimented with traditional forms like *Rondeau* and *Ballade* as vehicles of poetic expression. He tried various rhyme-schemes and caesuras. *Le*

Testament, Villon's Epitaph and *Ballade des Pendues* are octosyllabic and follow the rhyme-scheme ab ab bc bc. His other ballads are decasyllabic. In his *Ballade pour Prier Notre Dame* the rhyme scheme is ab ab bc cd cd.

In *Ballade des Pendues*¹⁷, for instance, Villon makes use of mere archaic verbs like *occis, rassis, debuez, cavez* which take on a new lease of life in his hands. At times the old construction where there are sudden inversions—placing the verb after the object as in:

Son pitié de vous poures avez—

gives way to rhyme. Such constructions make him achieve technical rhythm

Frères humains/ qui après nous/ vivez

This line contains 10 syllables. Along with the following ones always it succeeds in creating an unrelieved monotony like a litany or a funeral note. There are, of course, three exceptions to which professor Marcel Cichoki draws our attention. First, verses one and four of the second strophe have a main pause after the sixth syllable, secondly he notes that in the long divisions there is a fervent appeal of the hanged to the brotherly feelings of the passers-by and the crowd which lack good sense. The third irregularity is found in the third line of the same strophe which has three syllables.

Par justil ce

Although these metrical experiments pose their own difficulties in containing the feelings of the poet in words, Villon's verses move with an alarming ease by which his lyrical impulses are rendered into metrical versification. His bitter past, instead of being an obstacle to his poetic fervour, helped him to look inwards, regret the wrongs done, reflect on poverty, vanishing beauty and the inevitable. His works look forward to celebrated modern French poets like Baudelaire and Verlaine. Whereas by his misfortune, feelings of suffering and misdeeds Villon reminds us of Verlaine, by his lyrical observations on death he comes very close to Baudelaire. Like Verlaine, he is not guided by reason. But by sheer spontaneous and powerful expression of his sensibility he steals a march over his contemporaries in pouring forth his poignant feelings in measured rhythms and rhymes.

Villon's greatness as a poet lies not so much in the treatment of a variety of themes and in continuing the literary tradition of the Middle Ages as in the untrammelled poetic expressions of the sorrows and privations of his notorious life winding up with a sense of remorse, and resignation to the inevitable. "Villon's poetry," as Kinnell observes, "starts from the base. It is made of pain

and laughter and it is indestructible.”¹⁸ His poetry, churned out of his own bitter experiences in life, is so haunting and poignant that it acquires a universal significance. To the modern reader it represents the sufferings of all humanity tossed by the earthly passions and torments of a creature hovering between birth and death

N. SANTHALINGAM

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AN EXPERIMENT IN SURRENDER

MY INITIAL ATTEMPT AND THE DIVINE'S RESPONSE

YEARS or rather decades of medication had led to a state nearly desperate, yet 'the will to get cured' generated enough enthusiasm and energy to take a journey to the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda near Washington D.C several thousand miles away and even to agree to being hospitalised for several weeks/months to complete exhaustive tests for finding the precise cause of the ailment.

The only 'silver lining' in the situation was the writer's belief and faith in a force beyond mankind more powerful, understanding, just as well as mighty—The Divine.

This faith helped the writer to constantly feel, and accept, that this force was all-knowing, all-powerful and always present everywhere. On completion of the various formalities involved, when left alone in the hospital room, he prayed and poured out to the Divine, as one would to a dear friend, why he had been admitted to the hospital, *i.e.*, to let the doctors test and conclude whether he was a medical or surgical case.

The great sage, Swami Vivekananda, in course of giving a detailed description of Hinduism, has stated that Hinduism is not a religion that can be fully explained, it has to be experienced. This set the writer thinking that if just reading any sentence or extract from the Gita made one feel good, what would be the bliss after experiencing it. This thought also made easy the resolve to attempt an experiment in 'surrender' to Him above, *i.e.*, do one's best and leave the result, nay, the very idea of result to Him.

The writer argued with himself that if some others had achieved success in the past, he could definitely make an attempt: besides, the only cost or loss could be that he might fail. With this argument the above resolve to attempt 'surrender to Him' was strengthened.

While continuing his prayer, the writer told Him, 'You are hospitalised, not I. You bother whether it will be a medical or a surgical case.'

Before the above attempt to experiment in surrender, the writer's glass of water was always half empty. However, with the sincerity of the attempt the glass of water fast changed to half-full *i.e.* the writer was not moaning and groaning for what was not, but began to be grateful for what was.

It was amazing how the will to try, blended with a faith coming from the heart instead of one's mind, can get one the bliss of His direct care, giving one courage, determination and patience. Moreover, even surrender of one's worries fills one with true humour, *i.e.*, the art to laugh and make others laugh at one's own expense.

Having surrendered one's worries, the talk of initial surgery as well as of being taken for surgery gave one no anxiety even when those present near one

were full of anxiety. A call to Him was enough to make the almost impossible become an achievement of the past.

After the first surgery when man almost failed, He prevailed, converting a hopeless situation into the most ideal possible.

During the first surgery the skull had to be opened for skilfully applying electrodes on the very surface of the brain in a delicate and critical operation of over 8 hours. The wires were half inside and half protruding out for connection to a recording apparatus. The intention was to render precise not only the region but also the very point or focus from where the problem originated.

However, to achieve the above, the doctors needed that the writer should have several recurrences of the problem, in fact, the more the recurrences the better. After a lapse of about a week and in spite of doctors' effort to induce them by all known methods, the writer had none. For fear of bacterial infections developing in the half-open wound, medical considerations made the doctors impatiently think of giving up and conducting the second operation, also of 8 hours, to close the wound. After several months' hospitalisation and two neuro-surgeries the writer was to be told: "Nothing can be done. Try your luck again some months/years later."

My mother's faith propelled her to pray for His intervention while seeking forgiveness for lapses, all known as well as not recollectable, either in thought, word or deed—but all in the spirit of humility and selflessness only a mother can bring. His response was immediate and what had been elusive became a reality!—that too the most ideal. Not only did the recurrence take place, but also the focus was clearly pin-pointed. Now, the second neuro-surgery charged the place with an 'aura' full of calmness and expectation.

After a lapse of a few weeks came the greatest opportunity to attempt the experiment in surrender to Him. The writer was to undergo a critical, about 12-hour-long, third neuro-surgery with a possibility even of death.

On the morning of the surgery, the writer said his normal prayers, with an emphasis on gratitude for all the good that he remembered to have happened as well as for all He had done, which did not come to the writer's mind. Then the usual seeking of His help and His guidance followed, along with a prayer for the health and welfare of others.

Soon after, the writer paused and said to Him, his friend, "Oh, by the way, to-day is the neuro-surgery, not mine, but Yours. The scalp will not be in the surgeon's hand, but in Yours. If You want me to go to the next world, I am ready. If You want me to stay here awhile, I am ready too. You want me to be cured, I am ready. You want the illness to aggravate, I am ready. Now the problem is Yours and You do what You want. So You may as well do the thinking and worrying about it."

How did He respond? Not only did He make the most critical operation a success, but also within 13 hours of this critical 13-hour operation He made the

writer walk Pardon, He walked, after all He had undergone the surgery. No wonder it became a medical paradox.

From the writer's experiment he can state that 'surrender' is an impossibility till one tries, difficult once one tries, easier the more one tries. Come to think of it, what in life works otherwise?

The results of the experiment were no accident. Similar experiments, subsequently attempted in a spirit full of humility and childlike innocence, have always resulted in the Divine's response. As the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram used to say, "The Divine is always out to help, but it is we who do not allow the Divine to help."

N. B.

THE INDIAN BELLE

IF the wind took texture to clothe the human form, it would easily translate itself into a sari, giving overtones to the feminine grace of India, stressing only and subtly all sweet amplitudes, surrounding our women with an aura of woven cloth, modulating itself continuously as would a living thing, to their vivid purposes. On the undertone, the sari covers much from the eye and reveals more to the mind. Perhaps Botticelli would have conceived of Venus more profoundly than he so well has in her emergence from the Ocean, had he but visualised what wind-clothing can do to Woman. In any case, the zephyr in his masterpiece does begin to suggest the eventual materialisation of the Indian garment.

Undoubtedly, the sari in its present ethnic avatars of designing, weaving, dyeing, texturing, draping and length, is the recasting of a single theme into diverse fugues, minuets, pavaues, and the less explosive verbes of eurhythmic expression. It cannot but be the noumenal recurrence of the Indians' perception of themselves and their women, for nothing so well brings out to vision the strange and liquid grace that must characterise the better half of humankind, with almost none of its unbecoming characteristics.

It also imposes a responsibility. To those unused to wearing it, the sari is an endless hassle of too much cloth, uncertain pleats, wayward mobility, as if dress had a logic all its own. To those inured to it, the attire is indifferent, for even magic cannot mitigate voluntary ugliness, stupidity or unconsciousness.

But for those women whose personality has crossed that inner threshold of subtlety, poise and refinement, our dress is an extension, ever-changing, discreet and beautiful, of the soul's quiet dignity, its glimmering warmth as delightful as the wind that moves silently over skin and imagination, flowing in diverse currents and shapes before our very eyes, lending amplitude, charm and enchantment that far too rarely visit our earth from spheres happier than our own.

There are many ways of looking at the many dresses which must represent agglomeration of so many earth-people, but surely the simple truth and profundity that is the limpid secret of the raiment's millennia-old endurance, cannot be gainsaid by the fantasies devised by modern clothiers.

There still remains the unsolved mystery, so repetitively observed everywhere in our land, of a girl maturing into tranquil, responsible, almost self-contained womanhood, at the touch of an enveloping sari, remoulding her three-dimensionally from without, and fourth-dimensionally within. Fall away from her the illiquid gestures and expressions of the brat, the tomboy who is her friend turns gallant soldier and strong. In her eyes begins to shine the primal far-seeing innocence of Botticelli's Venus, when the universe first discovered the feminine aspect of God, and clothed it in India from a dance of light and wind.

ARVIND HABBU

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1989)

THE Classical Age covers the Purano-Tantric stage of Indian religion. Sisir Kumar Mitra says “Tantrik cults were widely prevalent in various parts of India in the latter centuries of the Classical Age, although they had been there from much earlier times. It is said that Tantric discipline and forms of worship had their origin in the Upanishads, if not in the Veda. In fact, the Vedantic and the Tantric Yoga are the two principal lines on which Indian spirituality has developed into a dynamic force in her historic evolution. And this was because man grows towards his perfection as much through the practice of the Vedantic Yoga of the Divine Self as that of the Tantrik Yoga of the Divine Shakti. When the seeker realises the truth of their oneness he opens to the truth of his integral perfection.”¹

Sri Aurobindo says about the Tantric synthesis “which though less subtle and spiritually profound, is even more bold and forceful than the synthesis of the Gita,—for it seizes even upon the obstacles to the spiritual life and compels them to become the means for a richer spiritual conquest and enables us to embrace the whole of Life in our divine scope as the Lila* of the Divine; and in some directions it is more immediately rich and fruitful, for it brings forward into the foreground along with divine knowledge, divine works and an enriched devotion of divine Love, the secrets also of the Hatha and Raja Yogas, the use of the body and of mental askesis for the opening up of the divine life on all its planes, to which the Gita gives only a passing and perfunctory attention.”²

Sri Aurobindo goes very deep into the evolution of India’s spiritual history and gives a comparative insight of all religious schools of India. He tells us about the new Puranic and Tantric orientation: “The Vedic godheads were to the mass of their worshippers divine powers who presided over the workings of the outward life of the physical cosmos, the Puranic Trinity had even for the multitude a predominant psycho-religious and spiritual significance. Its more external significance, for instance, the functions of cosmic creation, preservation and destruction, were only a dependent fringe of these profundities that alone touched the heart of its mystery. The central spiritual truth remained in both systems the same, the truth of the One in many aspects. The Trinity is a triple form of the one supreme Godhead and Brahman; the Shaktis are energies of the one Energy of the highest divine Being. But this greatest religious truth was no longer reserved for the initiated few; it was now more and more brought powerfully, widely and intensely home to the general mind and feeling of the people. Even the so-called henotheism of the Vedic idea was prolonged and heightened in the larger and simpler worship of Vishnu or Shiva as the one

* The cosmic play

universal and highest Godhead of whom all others are living forms and powers. The idea of the Divinity in man was popularised to an extraordinary extent, not only the occasional manifestation of the Divine in humanity which founded the worship of the Avatars, but the Presence discoverable in the heart of every creature. The systems of Yoga developed themselves on the same common basis. All led or hoped to lead through many kinds of psycho-physical, inner vital, inner mental and psycho-spiritual methods to the common aim of all Indian spirituality, a greater consciousness and a more or less complete union with the One and Divine or else an immergence of the individual soul in the Absolute. The Purano-Tantric system was a wide, assured and many-sided endeavour, unparalleled in its power, insight, amplitude, to provide the race with a basis of generalised psycho-religious experience from which man could rise through knowledge, works or love or through any other fundamental power of his nature to some established supreme experience and highest absolute status.”¹

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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THE MESSAGE OF VYASA'S SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of March 1989)

THE little Savitri-episode, like the mammoth of the Mahabharata, presents to us, every now and then, instances and aspects of daily life founded on principles of the dharma. That seems to be the common thread weaving the whole of the narrative. Be it the marriage proposal or the coronation ceremony or the funeral rites, all have to be conducted according to the prescribed norms, norms that have been evolved by the learned Brahmins and sages. Aswapati retires to the forest to perform the Yajna and returns, after getting the boon, to rule over the kingdom. Exiled Dyumatsena lives the life of a king-sage but has no hesitation in going to the capital to resume his rule as soon as the kingdom comes back to him. The duty of the kshatriya, of the warrior-prince, has to be performed for the full maintenance of the social order. For him this duty is his dharma and is above everything, even above sagehood at this stage. The sages of the forest approved of it. And the sages too, though ever absorbed in tapasya and given to spiritual practices, were not world-shunning recluses cut off from the stream of life. Indeed, they participated in life for its fullness, but from an entirely different level where the worldly and non-worldly conflicts do not exist. To put it in the words of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*:¹

- One-souled to all and free from narrowing bonds,
Large like a continent of warm sunshine
In wide equality's impartial joy,
These sages breathed for God's delight in things.
Assisting the slow entries of the gods,
Sowing in young minds immortal thoughts they lived,
Taught the great Truth to which man's race must rise
Or opened the gates of freedom to a few,
Imparting to our struggling world the Light
They breathed like spirits from Time's dull yoke released,
Comrades and vessels of the cosmic Force,
Using a natural mastery like the sun's:
Their speech, their silence was a help to earth.

In the Vyasa-tale of Savitri itself we have an illustration of how the sages participated in human affliction and jubilation. Savitri has won back the soul of Satyavan from Yama, but they are late in returning to the Ashram. Dyumtsena is very worried about his son's fate and is tormented by horrible thoughts. He goes

¹ P 383

around, from place to place, almost in madness, enquiring about him from everybody. The Brahmins of the Ashram, speakers of the Truth-Word, console him in various ways. Thus Suvarcha tells him:

His wife Savitri, I know, is engaged in tapasya and has control over the senses and is of a good well-poised conduct; from that I can proclaim that Satyavan is alive.

Similarly, Gautama asserts:

I have studied the Vedas and all their six limbs, accumulated great might of askesis, observed the strictest celibacy from my early youth, and pleased well my preceptors and the Fire-God. With the power of concentration I have completed all the vows; and in former times I observed meticulously the fasting-rites by drinking the air only. I can, by the strength of these austerities, know all the movements of others; believe, therefore, in my words that Satyavan is living.

On an earlier occasion, on the fated day, Savitri, after completing the three-night vow, had gone to the various sages to pay her respects and receive their blessings. They all had wished her auspicious things dear to a young woman and a life without widowhood. Life's plenty and penance were ever combined harmoniously in their living.

It looks as though by acquiring worldly lores and laurels the path of the spirit itself becomes surer and more definite. For instance, Gautama. He had studied all the Vedas and the six Vedangas consisting of Shiksha, Chhandas, Vyakarana, Nirukta, Kalpa, and Jyotisha—that is, Phonetics, Metres, Grammar, Etymology, Religious Practices, and Astronomy. Savitri too was well-versed in several of these branches as was attested by Yama himself. He has snatched the soul of Satyavan and is proceeding towards the South, his abode. Savitri follows him, disregarding his advice to return, and tells him.

Wheresoever lies the destiny of my husband, or wheresoever he goes of his own, there must I follow him, that is the eternal dharma, the conduct of righteousness. By austerity, devotion to the preceptors, love for the husband, observance of the holy vow, and by your grace, there is nothing that can arrest my going with him. Knowers of the science of reality proclaim that by taking seven steps with a person a friendly relationship is established with him; honouring our friendship in that respect, I shall tell you something to which I request you to listen. Those who are not self-possessed, even though they may stay in a forest, cannot practise dharma, or go by the preceptors, or undertake austere penances. The wise who know discrimina-

tion hold happiness to lie in the dharma alone, therefore the sages give to dharma such pre-eminence. Following one's own dharma, approved by those who are established in the truth, one knows the path which takes one to the goal; therefore, one should not covet any other person's dharma: such is the dharma which the sages hold to be excellent.

Yama is immensely pleased and replies:

O Unblamable, return now; for true accent and for knowing the letters well and making the right use of the words, and the proper reasoning that you express, I am pleased with you. Ask for any boon and I shall grant all except life for the dead.

Abandoning the world, the sages established themselves in dharma to uphold the world. The esoteric and the secular merged into one manner and pursuit. There is no dichotomy in their dealing with them. Indeed, even the gods participate in the matter of upholding the dharma in the world.

Brahma's bestowing the boon of an effulgent daughter, *kanya tejaswini*, to Aswapati is a shining illustration of the Creator's participation in the entire process of the creation. Gautama recognised this effulgent daughter to be none other than Goddess Savitri herself, Brahma's own daughter. She has now come here as an incarnate power to uphold the Order of the World. She must do that by confronting Death who is as though epitomising all the opposition to dharma.

Satyavan's death is not an ordinary mortal's death. Yama himself has come to seize his soul and to take it away along with him. When Savitri asks him why he did not send his subordinates for this purpose, he replies to her:

As his is a soul fixed in the dharma and has beautiful features and is an ocean of noble qualities, it is not proper that he be taken by them; for this reason I have come myself in person.

Satyavan's sanctioned life is over and he must now be taken away; but none dare touch that nobility except the Lord of the Dharma himself. And if the Order of the World is to be maintained, then he must do what is preordained. Yama is simply following the Law obtaining in the mortal creation. However, Savitri cannot accept this; Satyavan has not yet fulfilled his life's dharma here and Yama cannot sever his life's cord. There is thus a direct confrontation between the two. But behind the figure of Death Savitri sees a larger divinity operating in the cosmic workings and it is to this divinity that she addresses her prayer and solicitation. No doubt there is presently an occult need for life to grow through the process of death; but at some stage a moment has to come when this should not be necessary. She therefore appeals to that divinity that for the higher

fulfilment of the dharma the full run of Satyavan's life must be allowed Yama should not terminate it; he should not force the soul to leave the body with the work only half-done or incomplete. Her plea is not to the figure of Yama dark in hue with blood-red eyes and with a noose in his hand but to Dharmaraj in all his gracious and glowing nobility. To this Lord of the Dharma Savitri offers high eulogies in utterances of the Truth and tells him:

You are the mighty son of Vivasvan and that is why the learned call you Vaivasvat; to all the creatures you are fair and you uphold the dharma. For that reason you are, O Lord, also known as Dharmaraj More than himself does a man put his trust in the sage and so everyone gives more of his love in particular to him Only with a good heart can living beings find trust in one another, and hence the sages are particularly trusted by everybody. Holy people always abide in the dharma and never have they sorrow nor are they afflicted any time Such a company or fellowship with the pious is never without rewards or fruits. In the fellowship of the saints all fear disappears. By the Truth the saints lead the sun, by askesis the saints uphold the earth; the past, present and future find their refuge in the saints. Noble persons in the midst of the saints have never any grief. The high and honourable know that what stays for eternal years is virtuous conduct, in that they strive for the supreme good of one another and do hurt to none Benedictions of persons established in the Truth go never unfulfilled; neither in them is the ill of selfishness nor is there the wounded sense of lost pride; and because such three qualities are ever present in the saints, they are hailed as protectors of the world.

Yama, pleased as he was with these Truth-utterances, salutary for the welfare of the world, grants her a boon:

O devoted and chaste Lady, the more in well-adorned verses, full of great significance and agreeable to perception, you speak of the noble things conformable to the dharma, the more does my excellent devotion for you increase; therefore choose yet another but an appropriate boon from me

Savitri had already received from Yama a boon for a hundred sons, noble and heroic in deed, well-born, extending the glory of the house, but she wanted these sons to be born out of her union with Satyavan. Therefore she re-asserts:

O Destroyer of Pride, this boon which you have granted me is of a different kind than the earlier ones and it cannot be fulfilled without proper matrimony; that is why again I ask you for the life of Satyavan without whom as a husband I am as good as dead If I am to get such pleasure without my

husband I will abstain from it; even if heaven were offered to me I would not enter it without my husband; I am not anxious to possess wealth or fortune if it is without my husband; actually, I do not wish even to exist without my husband. You have given me the boon of a hundred sons and yet you yourself are taking my husband away; for that reason once more I ask the boon of life for Satyavan by which your words shall come true.

Yama, the Dharmaraj, genuinely impressed with these words of Savitri, releases the noose from around the soul of Satyavan and, delighted, speaks to her:

O gracious Lady, here I free your husband, O daughter doing honour to the House; by your words intent on the merit of the dharma you have fully gladdened me. Take him now, of sound health and fit to return, to accomplish your desire which shall come true soon. He shall have a life of four hundred years to live with you; also, by performing the holy Yajnas of fire-sacrifice and by the conduct of the dharma, he shall be renowned in the world.

Satyavan comes back with a new life. God has fulfilled himself in creation. By the power of words carrying the merit of the dharma, utterances in the nature of the mantra that can actualise what is spoken, Savitri has won him to accomplish her desire in the world. The holy Yajna is kindled again and a new fire leaps to the skies. And in that new fire of Yajna earth's plenitudes grow like the richly shining abundances of heaven itself.

Savitri saw in Yama a great God who could fulfil her desire. And it was the desire of the daughter of Brahma himself, she the one who had come to earth to help her grow in the completeness of the dharma. Mighty powers seem to have converged towards the accomplishment of this single goal. Satyavan's death and resurrection appear to be charged with tremendous occult significances. No wonder Narad had visited Aswapati carrying the Word of Fate to "steel the will of Savitri".

Yama as the son of Vivasvan is the Ordainer who governs the world by the Law of the Truth-Light, by divine Illumination. The Sun-God Vivasvan, in his various aspects is the Fosterer, the Seer, the Ordainer, the illumining Sun, the power of the Father of creatures. "His realm is described as the Truth, the Law, the Vast. He is the Fosterer or Increaser, for he enlarges and opens man's dark and limited being into a luminous and infinite consciousness. He is the sole Seer, Seer of Oneness and Knower of the Self, and leads him to the highest Sight. He is Yama, Controller or Ordainer for he governs man's action and manifested being by the direct Law of the Truth, *satya-dharma*, and therefore by the right principle of our nature, *yatha-tathyatah*, a luminous power proceeding from the Father of all existence, he reveals in himself the divine Purusha of whom all beings are the manifestations."¹ Savitri's eulogies and solicitations were essen-

¹ Sri Aurobindo *The Upanishads*, p. 67, the first footnote

tially to this noble Yama who is the upholder of the Satya-Dharma. The new life for Satyavan that she has claimed back from him comes therefore charged with the very luminous breath of this Dharma of the Truth. She has established something new in the process on this earth. That something new was her heart's desire fulfilled by the blessings of Yama. She was always "driven from within" towards this.

Hence Vyasa's Savitri-tale, in its essential message, speaks to us about the Path of Righteousness, the Path which while it unfolds itself becomes at the same time its own goal and destiny. It has been laid out from high above and like a river, while running its course here, becomes its own sea. The two are one in the supreme Dharma. The gods protect the Path and keep it safe for treading, and the sages upbear it like Truth's Sun to live in its light, and the incarnate power brings to its glories newer dimensions of manifestation. This sacredness is not only cherished as a prized gift but also taken as a dynamic means to achieve progress. In it is the plenty of happiness and all the riches of truth-living grow in it as does the harvest with rain and sunshine. Vyasa sings the lauds of the Path. He, by putting it in the context of the issues and conflicts of existence, gives to it an extra-sharp edge of effectivity, even amounting to its inevitability in the balance of forces. Savitri, Aswapati's daughter, has herself shown how this balance of forces can be decisively tilted, through inner sacrifice, in favour of the dharmically fulfilled life. What Savitri received from Yama has turned out to be the greatest and the finest boon, perhaps unparalleled in the whole spiritual history of the earth.

However, it must be noted that Vyasa, while delivering to us this message of the righteous conduct in life, does not care to go into several metaphysical questions which from a certain logical point of view could be considered rather necessary for the completeness of the narrative's structure. For instance, we are not told why Brahma granted the boon of a daughter to Aswapati when he wanted to have sons for the continuance of his ancestral line. He was, on the contrary, told not to have any reservation in accepting what was being given to him. Aswapati, recognising it to be the will of the Creator himself which should ultimately be for his good, submits to it in all humility. But the immediate reason for such a boon not conforming to the solicitant's wishes remains still unknown to us. Similarly, we do not know why Satyavan's life was preordained to be short, to end only one year after his marriage with Savitri. Of course, we must admit that the poet has taken enough care to provide answers to such questions in another form in the sequel to the happenings. He has done ample poetic justice to these events by presenting them as deep imponderables of life. In fact, he has very satisfactorily and convincingly incorporated them in the framework of an entire occult working. Besides, there is the knowledge of the tradition and hence it is not so much obligatory for him to explicitly spell out everything. We can quite well understand the poet immediately capitalising on this knowledge of the

tradition for his purposes. After all he had not set out to write a treatise on the metaphysical foundations of cosmic operations. In the present narrative his chief or primary concern is to convey, and to drive home with the force of his poetry's logic the importance of truth-values in the conduct of life. Vyasa has in that process established, through this little episode which is at the same time epically grand and vast in proportion, the all-pervasive character of the Satya-Dharma held so high by saints and gods. What protects has to be dearly clung to and ever embraced. It has to be breathed all the time, made an integral aspect of our daily activities. Indeed, while it constitutes the true and total essentiality, the very stuff of the whole existence itself, it must turn out in the operative part of life's conduct, in our day-to-day functionings, to be the state of being "driven from within". Satya-Dharma in the world is precisely this state and it is in it that the poet-seer wants us to live; he wants us to base our life's actions upon it. Yudhishtira is thus enjoined by Markandeya to enter into this state of being "driven from within" and thus fulfil the Satya-Dharma on the earth. The Rishi then assures him that not only will all his calamities disappear from him, but he shall also discover that this path is the path of salvation. The pressure of the narrative therefore brings with a tremendous persuasiveness the efficacy of the Satya-Dharma in the commerce of life.

At the behest of Brahma Savitri, to accomplish his purpose in the creation, takes birth as Aswapati's daughter. The Father-Creator has missioned her with the task of re-establishing Dharma in the face of Death. It is perhaps out of it that a new order shall emerge. The world has until now been running the same course under the stars and this must change into the illumination of the everlasting day. Only when the past Law, its force spent, is eliminated from the path and the karmic load symbolised by death removed, can the higher Law born of the supreme Wisdom be founded here. Aswapati's tapasya seen in this context turns out to be an invocation to this divine Power, the World-Force, in the figure of Savitri who should descend and bring about the miracle of transformation. And who else could have been more fit to father such a flaming daughter, such a *kanyā tejasvini*, than Aswapati himself? It looks as though the opportune moment, the auspicious *muhūrta*, has arrived and issues and events must now be precipitated towards the commissioning of the New Order. For this to happen the World-Force must agree to descend and there must be the sanction of the Supreme. The sanction has come in response to the invocation from the earth; the process must therefore be set in motion. Savitri is born. She meets Yama, walks with him seven steps and thereby establishes a friendly relationship with him, asks back the soul of Satyavan that they may together work out the Creator's will here. The Upholder of the Law is made to break the well-founded Law, he is persuaded to do so and he consents to it. Satyavan, "sound of health", returns with a life of four hundred years to perform the holy rites of Fire-Sacrifice. The boon is of the benign godhead.

To get back Satyavan was certainly the desire of Savitri's heart. But actually she saw a more fundamental issue in the matter. Satyavan has just completed his Brahmacharyashrama, the life of celibate studentship, and entered into the next stage of the household, the Grihasthashrama. But Yama comes too soon and snaps his life-breath. If the four ages of man have the authority of the Wise, of the Dharma itself, then Yama's action is in direct conflict with it. He proclaims Satyavan's soul to be beautiful, fixed in dharma and an ocean of noble qualities and, at the same time, denies him the full measure of life to carry out his fourfold duties prescribed by the Satya-Dharma. In that process the Ordainer himself is destroying the Order. Indeed, as the four ashramas fulfil each other, Satyavan's Brahmacharyashrama itself then remains incomplete. Savitri's dialectics wins over Yama. The Law-upholder by breaking the Law, an apparent anomaly, becomes the benefactor of the creatures. His grace transcends all rules and constraints and comes as a definitive force in the forward march of the manifestation. If the saints lead the sun by the Truth, then Yama himself as the supreme Saint, Dharmaraj, upholds the creation by the Satya-Dharma.

The Savitri-tale therefore becomes the Tale of the Triumph of the Satya-Dharma in the world.

(Concluded)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

THE NOVEL AND THE COMMON READER

I START with the assumption that a discussion of the novel in relation to the common reader is a subject of vital importance to the sustenance of the novel as the most popular literary form as well as to the intellectual health of the common reader

Even in the absence of the supporting proof of statistical data, it should be possible to make the assertion that the largest segment of the average reading public in India today is in the habit of reading prose fiction rather than any other kind of literature. The reasons for this, I believe, are twofold. On the one hand there is the commonly held, though of course not altogether correct, belief that of all forms of literature fiction alone demands the least amount of linguistic equipment and literary training for its full comprehension and appreciation. And on the other, what induces the average readers to take to fiction so avidly is their desire for easy entertainment. Fiction provides them with a sort of escape mechanism, escape from the ever-pressing problems and frustrations of their drab daily routine. However, we ought to pause for a moment and consider if light entertainment alone is the benefit that can accrue from fiction. Entertainment and instruction—these have always been considered to be the twin functions of all literature, including the novel. Regarded in this light, it is highly doubtful if the fiction that the common reader consumes today offers any valuable instruction at all.

Let us not shirk facts, but face them squarely. The reading material of the present-day average reader is extremely limited and highly debilitating—astrological forecasts, recipes, crude jokes, erotic stories in popular “mags” and novels serialised in them and, equally commonly, crime and detective fiction, that is, hair-raising thrillers and spine-chilling pennydreadfuls. One wonders if this were not the kind of fiction that Charles Varle, an American author of the last century, had in his mind when he declared: “Novels are mean imitations of literature, and usually the poorest part of it. They devour much precious time, and what is worse, have a bad effect on mind and morals. Their fanciful, distorted, and exaggerated sketches of life tend to vitiate and corrupt the taste, and to excite expectations that can never be fulfilled.” Another author of the same country and century, Greyson, is no less emphatic in his denunciation. He avers: “Three-fourths of the popular novels of the day enfeeble the intellect, impoverish the imagination, vulgarise the taste and style, give false or distorted views of life and human nature, and, which is worst of all, waste that precious time which should be given to solid mental improvement.” And James Beattie, an eighteenth-century Scottish poet, is positively acerbic when he calls novelists “public poisoners” because he believes that novels give false notions of life and they tend to destroy a relish for history, philosophy, and other useful pursuits of knowledge.

My purpose in citing these vehement statements is only to point out how noxious novel-reading can be if the piece is not chosen carefully. But, when a good choice is made, the novel's impact can be beneficial. Sir John Herschell, though an astronomer by profession, considers the novel, in its best form, as "one of the most powerful engines of civilization ever invented." William Ellery Channing, a unitarian clergyman, reinforces this idea when he says: "Fiction is no longer a mere amusement; but transcendent genius, accommodating itself to the character of the age, has seized upon this province of literature, and turned fiction from a toy into a mighty engine." The point is: there are novels and novels around us—novels which are deleterious as well as novels which are salubrious. Balzac, that greatest master of French fiction, helps us clinch the issue. He says: "Fiction is a potent agent for good in the hands of the good; and so it may be a potent agent for evil, according to its character and the character of the readers."

It is certainly difficult as much as it is impracticable to expect the average reader to be interested in poetry of any variety or in drama except as it is put on boards, but it should be possible to educate him in the art of selection of the fictional material he wants to read with such relish. It is high time we made him realise that he has had too much of light fiction. His tract of interest must be gradually widened so that he may come to see for himself that fiction-reading need not remain a frivolous pastime, a mere waste of leisure. He needs to be told that the world of fiction has other and definitely greater deities he can worshipfully go to than Chase and Robins, Mason and Hailey, and Cartland and Christie, and the like. Nor is it necessary for him always to run after new books alone. We have enough of old, established masters and one or two new ones, whose study can be amply rewarding—Hardy, Lawrence, Conrad, Kipling, Tolstoy, Gorky, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Zola, Balzac, Hugo, Flaubert, Hawthorne, Hemmingway, Melville—to mention a few names at random. What Samuel Rogers said over a century ago has substantial relevance and a lesson for us even today: "When a new book comes out I read an old one." There is certainly no dearth of good novels, but the average reader has no particularly useful manner of choosing them. The mass media, such as the radio, the television and popular magazines, should try to educate the common reader in the art of selection of his reading material. Talks and write-ups on great masters of fiction and dispassionate reviews of the current novels should prove of immense help in refining the taste of the average reader and thus help him choose the right kind of novels. And once this taste is improved, it should be easy to persuade him to try, at least for a change, such difficult novels as Joyce's *Ulysses* or Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. It is hard to prognosticate as to how far such attempts can be successful. But all the same the attempt is itself worth making.

At this stage I believe it deserves to be mentioned that the range and variety of good novels that one can read is astonishingly unlimited. There is no need for

falling back upon British and American novels alone. One may read good novels available in one's own regional language or their translations in English wherever they are available. One can also go to the English translations of good French, German, and similar other foreign novels. And more importantly, we have several Indian novelists in English who have received critical acclaim from all the world over—Anand, Narayan, Raja Rao, Bhattacharya, Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Kamala Markandeya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal—again to mention only a few names at random. And we have a wide range of good novels to choose from the writers of the Commonwealth countries too—Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Patrick White, Harris Wilson, Peter Abrahams, and V. S. Naipaul, and the like.

Now, it would be difficult—nay, impractical, I should say—to expect the common reader to acquire a thorough knowledge of all the technical principles that are involved in the creation of the novel as a literary species before he actually launches upon the reading of particular novels. That is an area which is better left to the professional student of literature. However, a little acquaintance with the basic ingredients of the novel, its varieties, its latest developments, and its master practitioners can be of great help to the common reader. Besides helping him to a better understanding of what he reads, it helps him in making a judicious choice of what he may profitably read. Otherwise, there is the danger of his being lost in a welter of all kinds of novels without ever finding enough time to read really good ones.

The popularity and predominance of the novel form in modern times is primarily due to the fact that it is a full and authentic report of human experience and that it projects a close correspondence between life and art. In other words, it is the novel's closeness to the texture of daily life that has gained for it a sizable audience. Realism has always been the distinguishing feature of the novel form. A good novelist draws his facts from real life, filters them through his imagination, and creates a well-organized and vital human story.

The novel form enjoys great flexibility and freedom in both technique and subject matter. Therefore, it is difficult to give a definition of it at once concise and all-inclusive. For the same reason, it is difficult to classify novels. In fact, whatever may be the principle of categorization, many novels refuse to lie wholly within any one specific pigeonhole. Yet, of course, we are familiar with certain general types of novels—the realistic and the romantic, the allegorical and the symbolic, the homilectic and the humanitarian, and then the novel of manners, the novel of protest, the historical novel, and so on. A closer understanding of these types may ensure as well as enhance the quality of our response. Let's take, for instance, the case of a novel like Kafka's *The Castle*. It is a symbolic novel. In a symbolic novel the author uses a material object to represent an abstract quality. Here the castle stands for faith. And this knowledge is likely to help the reader to follow the story at two levels as it is certainly intended by the author.

Or take the example of Camus's *The Plague*. It is only apparently that the novelist describes here bubonic plague. This epidemic is actually meant to be a symbol which relates man to the problem of evil in general

The greatest amount of difficulty in comprehension that the novel reader faces today is posed perhaps by what has come to be known as the psychological novel. There may be little or no external action described here, and the narrative is primarily employed to lay bare the inner life of the characters. The novelist allows a character to reveal himself by the "stream of consciousness" technique. That is, everything that supposedly passes through the character's mind is recorded without any ostensible order or restraint. It may therefore appear that the modern novelist is less of an artist and more of a pathologist or a psychologist. However, some writers like Joyce and Woolf have achieved enviable success in this category of novels. Their method of writing is a sharp deviation from the normal convention of novel writing, and all such deviations are bound to be disturbing. This is no doubt difficult writing, but there is no question of abandoning it totally. It needs perseverant study to come to grips with it. Otherwise, the loss would be ours. Mark Harris, himself a novelist, says: "I write. Let the reader learn to read."

A good novelist has a vision of life which he presents in terms of his theme, worked out in his novel with the help of the characters he creates and the situations he invents. A good novel mirrors the history of mankind, and often moulds it too. As Ralph Ellison puts it, "the novel seeks to take the surface 'facts' of experience and arrange them in such ways that for a magic moment reality comes into sharp and significant focus. . . the primary function of the novel. . . is that of seizing from the flux and flow of our daily lives those abiding patterns of experience which, through their repetition and consequences in our affairs, help to form our sense of humanity and our conception of human value."

I am not sure whether it is possible or entirely desirable to close the cleavage between the popular novel and the serious novel. But I am confident that the novel as such matters so long as life matters, and imagination matters.

G. S. BALARAMA GUPTA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

A Bouquet of Flowers for the Mother, by *Amar Singh* Available at 39, Udyan Marg, Bhubaneswar - 751 009, Orissa Pages: XXI + 292, Price: Rs. 50.

Is there any place in the world other than Pondicherry which is at once small and very famous? I wonder. What attracts tourists from the known and the unknown corners of the world to this place which is nothing more than a speck on the map of India? Why do people who come to sojourn here prefer to stay forever? And the moment you say you are from Pondicherry why do people of other states and nations immediately jerk their shoulders and ask in amazement: "Oh! from the little heaven?" The answer is It is all because Pondicherry houses the biggest human nursery of the world—the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Sardar Amar Singh's interesting and informative book is written for anyone who wants to know about the Ashram and how it hums with activities of different sorts and thereby tells the world that work can be divine. The Ashram which is a spiritual laboratory that "trains up the future teachers, workers and organisers to create a new race on our soil", and Auroville, the City of Dawn, the City of Tomorrow, which is "an attempt to bring about transmutation of humanity and earth life, into life divine," are the two places on which a lot of light is flashed. The story of these two places that have put Pondicherry on the map of the world is admirably told in this book.

A devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Amar Singh edited *Oriya Aurovillian*, a journal from Orissa to propagate the life and teachings of his chosen gurus. In his journal he wrote about men and women—administrators, politicians, social workers, writers, saints, spiritualists and many others—who impressed him. He did so for he sought to bring out the best in their character and deeds so that "we could emulate them to make our life sublime"

I believe it was Pliny who said: "Visit men who are supremely great." Amar Singh has followed his words. On his various visits to Pondicherry, he had met and moved with several noteworthy sadhaks and sadhikas, studied them, and had written about them with the noble intention of telling his readers what sort of work is done inside the Ashram—"to transform society and to remove the ills of the world that are tearing us into shreds today." And in this book we can read Amar Singh's impressions of the nine chosen Ashramites who are loved by everyone who knows about their work. Thus we meet Navajata, once a flourishing industrialist of Bombay who surrendered to the Mother and worked for the fulfilment of Her mission on earth till he breathed his last on January 19, 1983. We shake hands with K. D. Sethna, whom Sri Aurobindo named Amal Kiran, "The clear Ray", the ray that is not only bright in itself but brightens and transforms others too by its contact. It won't be out of place here if I say that I

am one among the many animals who are transformed into a 'thinking' animal by his contact.

The readers are introduced to M. P. Pandit who has authored more than 120 books that cover a wide range of subjects under the sun and the moon. One feels really "elevated and uplifted" as Amar Singh puts it, when we come into contact with him or hear him or read his rich literature for his philosophy of life is. "Each form contains something of the Divine and all together strive to embody and express more and more of the Divine as they develop in their evolution... A relentless pursuit to contact and establish a union with this inner Divine is the master idea that governs my life. " Read his book *Life Beautiful* and your eyes, like mine, would open to see the beauty in life. Who is not carried away by the enthralling stories of Manoj Das? Amar Singh profiles this Marxist turned Spiritualist and comments on his stories thus: "He is well known abroad for his superb artistry, and for the manner in which he tells a story—the story that always trails in your memory and which is always so vivid that one feels it real in life; the effect of the story on you is remarkable—this is my personal experience " :

Apart from these luminaries we also meet Champaklal, an attendant of Sri Aurobindo for 40 years and then the 'Mother's Lion'; Professor Prapatti (Kangali Charan Pati) who has gone round Orissa organising Schools to spread the message of the Mother; Bawajee Maharaj who in the prime of his youth had run away to Ayodhya in search of Rama and finally found him in the Ashram in Pondicherry, Udar Pinto who would all the time speak about the Mother and give you the "impression that he knows nobody else except the Mother"; and Huta, the Mother's inspired painter, her "pet child" to whom She has written the largest number of letters. Amar Singh's meticulous description of these people bring them before us in flesh and blood.

The rest of the book is devoted to the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Amar Singh's understanding of the writings of his chosen gurus is put in such a simple way that it needs no knowledge of high philosophy or spirituality to understand their concept. He also answers questions like "Is it possible to introduce the yoga of Sri Aurobindo into our daily life?" and gives us good guidance.

Highly informative and interestingly presented, Amar Singh's book is a valuable work. If people ask you to give information about Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram's activities and the luminaries who live there, don't waste their time by telling or writing to them, for you may go wrong somewhere and your facts may not be accurate. Instead, present them with this honest and authentic book. In any case, this is what I'll do

The Indianisation of English by *Braj B. Kachru*; Oxford University Press; pp. 280; Rs 100

AFTER the U.S. and Great Britain, India vies with Canada as the country with the largest number of English users: around 18 million. But barring perhaps a few hundred, most Indians write clumsy English. The reason is that Indian English is bookish; it is not nourished by the living English of the day.

Language is going terse world-wide. An Indian, however, says "a large number of medical practitioners" when he means "many doctors". He says "as a matter of fact" for "actually", and he prefers the ponderous "therefore" to the simpler and better "so". Indians commit innumerable atrocities in pronunciation, too. A Bengali, for example, says "shame to you" for "same to you" and an Oriya says "phissing" for "fishing".

But Braj B. Kachru, an authority on English in India, does not study Indian English for linguistic entertainment. He wants to publish a dictionary that standardises it. India's English-users comprise the leaders of her economic, industrial, and professional life, he says. After Hindi, English is India's most widely-understood language. In 1978, only Hindi papers and periodicals outnumbered English ones. Eighty-three Indian universities use English as an instrument of higher education.

"English had deeper roots in South Asia than the Raj had," Kachru says. "The Raj crumbled and became a part of history, but the English language has been South Asianised and has become a part of the culture of that vast area."

This book is aimed at the language scholar. It crawls with phrases like "collocational deviation", "lexical range", "contextual parameters" and "phatic communion". Ignore these obscure terms and race to the marvellous snippets about the Indianisation of English in India. "I bow my forehead," an Indian will say, literally translating the Hindi sentence, *Mein sir jhukaata hoon*. But that's all right, in Kachru's opinion. If English in Britain can assimilate Hindi words like curry, chutney, guru, pundit and Raj, why shouldn't Indian English also innovate?

According to Kachru, the Indianisation of English in India is nothing unusual. English in America, Canada, Africa, the Philippines and the Caribbean has its own idiosyncrasies. One hundred and fifty years ago, Macaulay suggested the formation of "a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, opinions, morals and intellect".

Indians may not speak English, Kachru says, but that's no reason that their indigenous English should not be respected and standardised.

ARVIND KALA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

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(Continued from the issue of March 1988)

SRI AUROBINDO'S TEACHING AND METHOD OF SADHANA

Speech read by Ila Joshi*

As we have organised this Conference to celebrate Sri Aurobindo's birth anniversary, it is the most fitting occasion to recollect what are the essential elements of his teaching, the central principles of his Integral Yoga and the main steps of its sadhana. Instead of explaining these in my own words, I have thought it best to read out to you four excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's own writings in which he has stated them in a succinct, lucid and illuminating manner. Here are these excerpts:

(I)

“The teaching of Sri Aurobindo starts from that of the ancient sages of India that behind the appearances of the universe there is the Reality of a Being and Consciousness, a Self of all things, one and eternal. All beings are united in that One Self and Spirit but divided by a certain separativity of consciousness, an ignorance of their true Self and Reality in the mind, life and body. It is possible by a certain psychological discipline to remove this veil of separative consciousness and become aware of the true Self, the Divinity within us and all.

Sri Aurobindo's teaching states that this One Being and Consciousness is involved here in Matter. Evolution is the method by which it liberates itself; consciousness appears in what seems to be inconscient, and once having appeared is self-impelled to grow higher and higher and at the same time to enlarge and develop towards a greater and greater perfection. Life is the first step of this release of consciousness; mind is the second; but the evolution does not finish with mind, it awaits a release into something greater, a consciousness which is spiritual and supramental. The next step of the evolution must be towards the development of Supermind and Spirit as the dominant power in the conscious being. For only then will the involved Divinity in things release itself entirely and it becomes possible for life to manifest perfection.

* Revised and enlarged

But while the former steps in evolution were taken by Nature without a conscious will in the plant and animal life, in man Nature becomes able to evolve by a conscious will in the instrument. It is not, however, by the mental will in man that this can be wholly done, for the mind goes only to a certain point and after that can only move in a circle. A conversion has to be made, a turning of the consciousness by which mind has to change into the higher principle. This method is to be found through the ancient psychological discipline and practice of Yoga. In the past, it has been attempted by a drawing away from the world and a disappearance into the height of the Self or Spirit. Sri Aurobindo teaches that a descent of the higher principle is possible which will not merely release the spiritual Self out of the world, but release it in the world, replace the mind's ignorance or its very limited knowledge by a supramental Truth-Consciousness which will be a sufficient instrument of the inner Self and make it possible for the human being to find himself dynamically as well as inwardly and grow out of his still animal humanity into a diviner race. The psychological discipline of Yoga can be used to that end by opening all the parts of the being to a conversion or transformation through the descent and working of the higher still concealed supramental principle.

This, however, cannot be done at once or in a short time or by any rapid or miraculous transformation. Many steps have to be taken by the seeker before the supramental descent is possible. Man lives mostly in his surface mind, life and body, but there is an inner being within him with greater possibilities to which he has to awake—for it is only a very restricted influence from it that he receives now and that pushes him to a constant pursuit of a greater beauty, harmony, power and knowledge. The first process of Yoga is therefore to open the ranges of this inner being and to live from there outward, governing his outward life by an inner light and force. In doing so he discovers in himself his true soul which is not this outer mixture of mental, vital and physical elements but something of the Reality behind them, a spark from the one Divine Fire. He has to learn to live in his soul and purify and orientate by its drive towards the Truth the rest of the nature. There can follow afterwards an opening upward and descent of a higher principle of the Being. But even then it is not at once the full supramental Light and Force. For there are several ranges of consciousness between the ordinary human mind and the supramental Truth-Consciousness. These intervening ranges have to be opened up and their power brought down into the mind, life and body. Only afterwards can the full power of the Truth-Consciousness work in the nature. The process of this self-discipline or Sadhana is therefore long and difficult, but even a little of it is so much gained because it makes the ultimate release and perfection more possible.

There are many things belonging to older systems that are necessary on the

way—an opening of the mind to a greater wideness and to the sense of the Self and the Infinite, an emergence into what has been called the cosmic consciousness, mastery over the desires and passions, an outward asceticism is not essential, but the conquest of desire and attachment and a control over the body and its needs, greeds and instincts are indispensable. There is a combination of the principles of the old systems, the way of knowledge through the mind's discernment between Reality and the appearance, the heart's way of devotion, love and surrender and the way of works turning the will away from motives of self-interest to the Truth and the service of a greater Reality than the ego. For the whole being has to be trained so that it can respond and be transformed when it is possible for that greater Light and Force to work in the nature.

In this discipline, the inspiration of the Master, and in the difficult stages his control and his presence are indispensable—for it would be impossible otherwise to go through it without much stumbling and error which would prevent all chance of success. The Master is one who has risen to a higher consciousness and being and he is often regarded as its manifestation or representative. He not only helps by his teaching and still more by his influence and example but by a power to communicate his own experience to others.

This is Sri Aurobindo's teaching and method of practice. It is not his object to develop any one religion or to amalgamate the older religions or to found any new religion—for any of these things would lead away from his central purpose. The one aim of his Yoga is an inner self-development by which each one who follows it can in time discover the One Self in all and evolve a higher consciousness than the mental, a spiritual and supramental consciousness which will transform and divinise human nature.”¹

(II)

“... the Yoga which we are pursuing has for end none of the ordinary aims of humanity. It neither accepts our earthly existence as it is, nor can be satisfied with some kind of moral perfection or religious ecstasy, with a heaven beyond or with some dissolution of our being by which we get satisfactorily done with the trouble of existence. Our aim becomes quite other; it is to live in the Divine, the Infinite, in God and not in any mere egoism and temporality, but at the same time not apart from Nature, from our fellow-beings, from earth and the mundane existence, any more than the Divine lives aloof from us and the world. He exists also in relation to the world and Nature and all these beings, but with an absolute and inalienable power, freedom and self-knowledge. Our liberation and perfection is to transcend ignorance, bondage and weakness and live in Him in relation to the world and Nature with the divine power, freedom and self-knowledge. For the highest relation of the Soul to existence is the Purusha's

¹ *On Himself* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 26), pp. 95-97

possession of Prakriti, when he is no longer ignorant and subject to his nature, but knows, transcends, enjoys and controls his manifested being and determines largely and freely what shall be his self-expression.”¹

(III)

“It is not a rationalisation but a supramentalisation, not a moralising but a spiritualising of Life that is the object of the Yoga. It is not a handling of externals or superficial psychological motives that is its main purpose, but a refounding of Life and its action on their hidden divine element; for only such a refounding of life can bring about its direct government by the secret Divine Power above us and its transfiguration into a manifest expression of the Divinity, not as now a disguise and a disfiguring mask of the eternal Actor. It is a spiritual essential change of consciousness, not the surface manipulation which is the method of Mind and Reason, that can alone make Life other than it now is and rescue it out of its present distressed and ambiguous figure.”²

(IV)

“This is a Yoga of transformation of the being, not merely a Yoga of the attainment of the inner Self or the Divine, though that attainment is its basis without which no transformation is possible. In this transformation there are four elements, the psychic opening, the transit through [the] occult, the spiritual release, the supramental perfection. If any of the four is unachieved, the Yoga remains incomplete.

I mean by the psychic the inmost soul-being and the soul-nature. This is not the sense in which the word is used in ordinary parlance, or rather, if it is so used, it is with great vagueness and much misprision of the true nature of this soul and it is given a wide extension of meaning which carries it far beyond that province. All phenomena of an abnormal or supernormal psychological or an occult character are dubbed psychic; if a man has a double personality changing from one to another, if an apparition of a dying man, something of his mere vital sheath or else a thought-form of him, appears and stalks through the room of his wondering friend, if a poltergeist kicks up an unseemly row in a house, all that is classed under psychic phenomena and regarded as a fit object for psychic research, though these things have nothing whatever to do with the psyche. Again much in Yoga itself that is merely occult, phenomena of the unseen vital or mental or subtle physical planes, visions, symbols, all that mixed, often perturbed, often shadowy, often illusory range of experiences which belong to this intervening country between the soul and its superficial instruments or rather

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 20), p. 417

² *Ibid.*, pp. 165-66

to its outermost fringes, all the chaos of the intermediate zone, is summed up as psychic and considered as an inferior and dubious province of spiritual discovery. Again there is a constant confusion between the mentalised desire-soul which is a creation of the vital urge in man, of his life-force seeking for its fulfilment and the true soul which is a spark of the Divine Fire, a portion of the Divine. Because the soul, the psychic being uses the mind and the vital as well as the body as instruments for growth and experience it is itself looked at as if it were some amalgam or some subtle substratum of mind and life. But in Yoga if we accept all this chaotic mass as soul-stuff or soul-movement we shall enter into a confusion without an issue. All that belongs only to the coverings of the soul; the soul itself is an inner divinity greater than mind or life or body. It is something that once it is released from obscurity by its instruments at once creates a direct contact with the Divine and with the self and spirit.”¹

SRI AUROBINDO

¹ *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, Dec 82, pp 198-99