

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

MAY 1989

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

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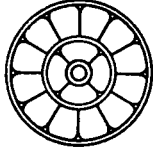
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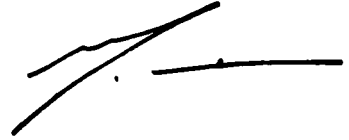
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MENTAL HONESTY

A TALK BY THE MOTHER TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 21 MAY 1958

Sweet Mother, what does “mental honesty” mean exactly?

It is a mind that does not attempt to deceive itself. And in fact it is not an “attempt”, for it succeeds very well in doing it!

It would seem that in the ordinary psychological constitution of man, the almost constant function of the mind is to give an acceptable explanation of what goes on in the “desire-being”, the vital, the most material parts of the mind and the subtlest parts of the body. There is a kind of general complicity in all the parts of the being to give an explanation and even a comfortable justification for everything we do, in order to avoid as far as possible the painful impressions left by the mistakes we commit and undesirable movements. For instance, unless one has undergone or taken up a special training, whatever one does, the mind gives itself a favourable enough explanation of it, so that one is not troubled. Only under the pressure of outer reactions or circumstances or movements coming from other people, does one gradually consent to look less favourably at what one is and does, and begins to ask oneself whether things could not be better than they are.

Spontaneously, the first movement is what is known as self-defense. One puts oneself on one’s guard and quite spontaneously one wants a justification.. for the smallest things, absolutely insignificant things—it is a normal attitude in life

And explanations—one gives them to oneself; it is only under the pressure of circumstances that one begins to give them to others or to another, but first one makes oneself very comfortable; first thing: “It was like that, for it had to be like that, and it happened because of this, and .”, and it is always the fault of circumstances or other people. And it truly requires an effort—unless, as I say, one has undergone a discipline, has acquired the habit of doing it automatically—it requires an effort to begin to understand that perhaps things are not like this, that perhaps one has not done exactly what one ought to have done or reacted as one should. And even when one begins to see it, a much greater effort is needed to recognise it.. officially.

When one begins to see that one has made a mistake, the first movement of the mind is to push it into the background and to put a cloak in front of it, the cloak of a very fine little explanation, and as long as one is not obliged to show it, one hides it. And this is what I call “lack of mental honesty”.

First, one deceives oneself by habit, but even when one begins not to deceive oneself, instinctively there is a movement of trying, trying to deceive oneself in order to feel comfortable. And so a still greater step is necessary once

one has understood that one was deceiving oneself, to confess frankly, "Yes, I was deceiving myself."

All these things are so habitual, so automatic, as it were, that you are not even aware of them; but when you begin to want to establish some discipline over your being, you make discoveries which are really tremendously interesting. When you have discovered this, you become aware that you are living constantly in a... the best word is "self-deception", a state of wilful deceit; that is, you deceive yourself spontaneously. It is not that you need to reflect, spontaneously you put a pretty cloak over what you have done so that it doesn't show its true colours.. and all this for things which are so insignificant, which have so little importance! It would be understandable, wouldn't it, if recognising your mistake had serious consequences for your very existence—the instinct of self-preservation would make you do it as a protection—but that is not the question, it concerns things which are absolutely unimportant, of no consequence at all except that of having to tell yourself, "I have made a mistake."

This means that an effort is needed in order to be mentally sincere. There must be an effort, there must be a discipline. Of course, I am not speaking of those who tell lies in order not to be caught, for everybody knows that this should not be done. Besides, the most stupid lies are the most useless, for they are so flagrant that they can't deceive anyone. Such examples occur constantly; you catch someone doing something wrong and tell him, "That's how it is"; he gives a silly explanation which nobody can understand, nobody can accept; it is silly but he gives it in the hope of shielding himself. It is spontaneous, you see, but he knows this is not done. But the other kind of deception is much more spontaneous and it is so habitual that one is not aware of it. So, when we speak of mental honesty, we speak of something which is acquired by a very constant and sustained effort.

You catch yourself, don't you, you suddenly catch yourself in the act of giving yourself somewhere in your head or here (*Mother indicates the heart*), here it is more serious... giving a very favourable little explanation. And only when you can get a grip on yourself, there, hold fast and look at yourself clearly in the face and say, "Do you think it is like that?", then, if you are very courageous and put a very strong pressure, in the end you tell yourself, "Yes, I know very well that it is not like that!"

It sometimes takes years. Time must pass, one must have changed much within oneself, one's vision of things must have become different, one must be in a different condition, in a different relation with circumstances, in order to see clearly, completely, how far one was deceiving oneself—and at that moment one was convinced that one was sincere

(Silence)

It is probable that perfect sincerity can only come when one rises above this sphere of falsehood that is life as we know it on earth, mental life, even the higher mental life.

When one springs up into the higher sphere, into the world of Truth, one will be able to see things as they truly are, and seeing them as they are, one will be able to live them in their truth. Then all falsehoods will naturally crumble. And since the favourable explanations will no longer have any purpose, they will disappear, for there will be nothing left to explain.

Things will be self-evident, Truth will shine through all forms, the possibility of error will disappear.

(Questions and Answers 1957-58, pp 327-30)

MENTAL SINCERITY

A TALK BY THE MOTHER FOR AUROVILLIANS IN FEBRUARY 1968

THERE should be an absolutely transparent sincerity. Lack of sincerity is the cause of the difficulties we meet with at present. Insincerity is in all men. There are perhaps a hundred men on the earth who may be totally sincere. It is man's very nature that makes him insincere—it is very complicated, for he is constantly tricking himself, hiding the truth from himself, excusing himself. Yoga is the means to become sincere in all the parts of the being

It is difficult to be sincere, but you can at least do so mentally; it is this that one can demand of Aurovillians

The force is there, present as never before, it is the insincerity of men that prevents it from descending, from being felt. The world is in falsehood, all the relations between men have so far been based only on falsehood and fraud. The diplomacy among nations is founded on lies. They claim to desire peace and, on the other hand, arm themselves. Only transparent sincerity in men and among nations will permit the advent of a transformed world.

Auroville is the first attempt of the experiment. A new world will be born if men are willing to make the effort of a transformation and of a quest for sincerity; it is possible. From animal to man thousands of years were necessary, today man, thanks to his mind, can speed up and will a transformation towards a Man who shall be Divine

This transformation with the help of the mind (by analysing oneself) is the first stage, afterwards we have to transform the vital impulses. That is much more difficult, and, above all, to transform the physical: each cell of our body has to become conscious. This is the work I am doing here, it will permit the conquest of death. That is another story; that will be the humanity of the future, perhaps in centuries, perhaps more rapidly. It will depend on men, on peoples

Auroville is the first step towards this goal.

(Translation from the French, approved by the Mother)

SRI AUROBINDO AS I KNEW HIM

SOME REMINISCENCES OF HIS POLITICAL DAYS

By Suresh Chandra Deb

Mother India has great pleasure in republishing this specially written article which first appeared in our issue of August 15, 1950, the interesting result of a request to the author to put together his reminiscences of Sri Aurobindo as he came personally to know him during the years when Bengal was making history in and for India

Silent Watcher

MY eyes first set themselves on Sri Aurobindo—known at that time as Aurobindo Ghose—on a November evening on the eve of the Benares Congress held during the last days of December, 1905. The place of the meeting was a room at the Field and Academy Club in the Sib Narayan Das Lane just north east of the present Vidyasagar College Hostel on Cornwallis Street. The Club had been organised by the young men of the Bengalee higher classes headed by the then Maharaj-Kumar of Cooch-Bihar. Many of them had completed their education in Britain and the time-spirit had caught them and been influencing them to think of things other than personal pleasures and the diversions of intellectualism. Leaders of thought and society had been discussing the *pros* and *cons* of the then methods of political activity that were confined to petition, prayer and protest to the alien Authority which held India under subjection. Bankim Chandra had characterised these as “dog politics”—waiting for crumbs and bones from the master’s plate; Rabindranath Tagore had directed at them his shafts of ridicule in his essays read before the Calcutta learned societies and in articles in the papers edited by him; Sri Aurobindo had held up the example of Parnellism* with a view to discredit this “mendicant policy” in a series of articles in the *Indu-Prakash*, the *Bombay Weekly*, during the later part of the last decade of the 19th century. Bipin Chandra Pal in his *New India* (Weekly), started in 1901, began challenging the postulates of the Congress politics.

It was in this climate of opinion that we had grown up and naturally were drawn towards principles and policies that suggested activities that were dynamic and “dangerous”, to use a word very popular amongst us in those days. To young Bengalees in those days Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Rabindranath Tagore, Bipin Chandra Pal and Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya and those who came to be

* EDITOR’S NOTE It may be remarked that, though the example of Parnellism might be salutary, Sri Aurobindo’s own policy in India was not based on Parnellism. It had more resemblance to Sinn Fein, but was conceived before the Sinn Fein movement and was therefore not inspired by it.

associated with them were objects of admiration and no little curiosity. On the November evening referred to above, there were gathered Bipin Chandra Pal, Chittaranjan Das, Surendranath Halder, and Sarat Chandra Sen—all familiar faces; the only exception was a retiring figure sitting quietly in a chair, whose name I later came to know was Aurobindo Ghose. The discussion that ensued referred to the resolutions of the forthcoming session of the Congress. The Boycott resolution had been passed at a meeting held at the Calcutta Town Hall on the 7th of August, 1905, it had angered and harmed Anglo-India—the finance-capital interests of British merchants and manufacturers. And the State in India whose only reason for existence was the service of these interests naturally attempted to stamp out the rising temper of the subject population symbolised by the Boycott resolution.

This repression helped to disrupt the front of the politically-minded India; the seeds of two party alignments were sown, the “Moderates” and “Extremists” had their birth, the former desiring to tone down the “Extremist” resolution on the Boycott, the latter desiring to have it and other items of a defiant policy endorsed by the Congress. Though the control of the Congress was in the hands of the “Moderates” they dared not resile from the position taken up at the Calcutta meeting. Advanced opinion in Maharashtra and the Punjab, represented by Balwant Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai, pressed home this advantage, and the Benares Congress endorsed the resolution under pressure of that militant group of Indian politicians. All the possibilities of the situation were discussed at this meeting. Sri Aurobindo remained a silent listener. It appeared that he was a watcher of the sky over Bengal and was satisfied with the signs on the weather-chart; he could wait.

Another topic that had been discussed at this “gathering of the clan”, was the need for a daily English-language paper to propagate the principles and policies of the New Party waiting to be born, as the *New India Weekly* was felt to be unequal to the task of interpreting the ever-evolving revolutionary changes in the country and of giving a lead that would bring to fruition the dreams and aspirations of the people. No decision could be arrived at as finance stood as a stumbling block. On this topic also Sri Aurobindo appeared to be watching developments.

The next occasion on which I saw Sri Aurobindo was during the days when the Bengal Provincial Conference was scheduled to meet at Barisal in April, 1906, during the Easter holidays. I accompanied Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya to Barisal as a delegate to this Conference. Chittaranjan Das, Bipin Chandra Pal, Surendra Nath Halder and Sarat Chandra Sen were guests of the Lakutia House, a famous zamindar family of the district. I found Sri Aurobindo there, studying the situation. The Conference was dispersed by the bureaucracy at the point of the bayonet and the “regulation lathi”. This outrage inflamed even the leaders of the “Moderate” party, one of whom, Bhupendranath Basu, declared. “This is

the end, the beginning of the end of the British Rule in India.” The feeling all over India was electric; the Barisal episode laid the foundation of terrorism in Bengal. I recall that while all the others were excited, Sri Aurobindo was unperturbed; and interpreting the past in the light of later events, I can say that he was satisfied with the evolution of thought and activity precipitated at Barisal.

Delegates from East Bengal clustered round the leaders of the New Party for light and lead. And they arranged that some of the latter should tour their areas and help preach the new message. Three of them—Bipin Chandra Pal, Sri Aurobindo and Subodh Chandra Mullick—agreed to this proposal. I had the privilege of accompanying them as one of the “volunteer” workers. Thus was I thrown into intimate relation with these leaders, and for about 45 days had occasion to observe matters and unconsciously imbibe the lessons of a new *Sadhana*, devoted work, in politics. Thousands had their initiation during these days, each receiving the gift of understanding and dedication according to the law of his being. Since then life has been different to them through good report and evil, through success and failure. The sacrifices made, the risks taken with the happiness of dear and near ones involved in this refusal to follow the ordinary path, have been worth-while. For, millions felt that “bliss was it in that age to be alive, to be young was very heaven”. We had glimpses of the future, dreamt dreams, saw visions. Thousands of our fellow-workers left the field of their mundane activities; those of us who have lived to see their dreams realised, their visions taking concrete shape, have reasons to feel themselves blessed. Personally speaking I have remained a worshipper at the gate; so it was decreed.

Writing after about 45 years of those days of high exaltations and self-forgetfulness, the impressions of these 45 days of April-May, 1906, as these related to Sri Aurobindo, were those of a silent distant figure lost in his own thoughts, speaking the fewest of words, observing the effect of the language in which Bipin Chandra Pal clothed the present degradation and the future ennobling of his people. For he was the orator of the party; neither Sri Aurobindo nor Subodh Chandra would open their lips at public meetings. They had their closed-door discussions with active politicians, with young men burning to wipe out with their blood the insult implicit in foreign rule.

We, “Volunteers”, sensed that something was afoot, some “new departure” from the lines of the then current politics. Hints were thrown at us, suggestions made that told us of days big with brave deeds and sacrifices in the service of the Mother, as Sri Aurobindo used to call the land of his birth. Thousands chose and trod the path indicated by the new prophets of a new life. This tour with its flaming words and silences created the history which reached its end on August 15, 1947.

Master Journalist of Nationalism

On return from this tour, I had few occasions to meet Sri Aurobindo for

about two months. He was busy as Principal of the institutions started by the National Council of Education. Then something happened that threw me into his company—a privilege undreamt of. I have spoken before of a project for an English-language daily to propagate the principles and policies of the New Party. Since November 1905, it had been receiving fitful attention. The visit of Balwant Gangadhar Tilak to Calcutta on the occasion of the Sivaji Utsav of 1906 imparted an urgency to it. But in June and July, it appeared to halt. And in desperation Bipin Chandra Pal took the plunge almost unknown to the fellow-members of the Party. His weekly was being published from the Classic Press on Corporation Street, now known as Raneeshmani Road; its proprietor Bihari-lal Chakravarty agreed to take the risk of publishing the daily on the assurance that the daily sale proceeds of the paper would be his. Bipin Chandra could procure from Haridas Halder and Kshetra Mohan Singh Rs 450 for the initial stock of paper and certain other incidental expenses. The name chosen for the paper was *Bande Mataram*—Salutation to the Mother—the refrain of Bankim Chandra's famous song; the day fixed for the first issue was the 7th of August, 1906, the anniversary of the "Boycott Day". It had to be changed to the 6th owing to Bipin Chandra's absence from Calcutta on that day—a last minute change occasioned by the Political Conference in his own home district of Sylhet.

As editor of the paper Bipin Chandra had to think of a leader-writer who in his absence would play the part. In this extremity he went to Sri Aurobindo on the evening of the 5th; the latter had been residing at the Wellington Square Mansion of Subodh Chandra Mullick. He appeared to be taken by surprise at this novel development but readily agreed to Bipin Chandra's request. Relieved of anxiety on this point, the editor started for Sylhet on the 6th August morning with the *Bande Mataram* hot and wet from the press in his hand. Sri Aurobindo started his contributions from the 2nd or 3rd issue, his first article was entitled; "John Morley—3 Phases". It fell to me to come to him every evening at about 5 p.m. and receive from him the article promised. I found it ready; I did not have to wait for it on any single day.

The *Bande Mataram* was an instantaneous success, and the soreness felt by certain leaders of the New Party for the way in which Bipin Chandra Pal had sprung a surprise on them soon wore away and was replaced by pride at the adventurousness of it. The Classic Press could not cope with the demand for the paper. And there was again a gathering of the clan. On the guarantee of Rs 6,000 by certain members of the party, Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya undertook to have the *Bande Mataram* published from Sandhya Press on Cornwallis Street from which his own Bengali-language daily, the *Sandhya*, used to be published. Till the end of August, the Classic Press printed the *Bande Mataram* and it was my privilege to put in a daily appearance at Sri Aurobindo's residence. Now and then he used to ask me questions with regard to how the rest of the paper got the materials for publication, with regard to Bipin Chandra's tour programme and

whether articles from him came regularly. These were rare occasions.

Now and then I found him with friends—Subodh Chandra Mullick, Charu Chandra Dutt, Surendranath Halder, Bijoy Chandra Chatterjee, Rajatnath Roy, Hemendra Prasad Ghosh, Jogendra Krishna Basu—when he opened out; and still do I appear to hear the tinkling laughter that expressed the joy of his heart at the temporary release from the burden of thought and responsibility generally felt by him. Now and then politics cropped up in these discussions and their handling in the daily Press, in his own articles. He generally spoke in English, but when he used his mother tongue, Bengali, the foreign accent and a lisping sound made it pleasant to the ear. Even during these pleasantries, a book was always by his side into which he would dip and lose himself. And there were silences eloquent of the prevailing mood of all present. Now and then there was small talk, and Sri Aurobindo extracted the utmost pleasure from it. It is not easy to recall at this distance the nature of the discussions held on these occasions. But one stands out prominently where he and N. N. Ghosh, editor of the weekly *Indian Nation* and Principal of the Metropolitan College, now known as the Vidyasagar College, were engaged in a controversy over the principles and practices of the New Party. N. N. Ghosh had a reputation for crisp, nervous English and Sri Aurobindo was Sri Aurobindo and the controversy between these two giants attained the character of an epic, neither giving quarter. This controversy and the words and phrases used in it became the talk of the politically-minded people of the day.

But this was later in 1907. In August-September, 1906, Sri Aurobindo's writings showed the quality of a master that was an inspiration to thousands. And almost daily Reuter and correspondents of the foreign Press used to cable the news and views published in the *Bande Mataram* as reflecting the authentic feelings of the Indian people in their struggle for national self-respect, which is *Swaraj*. By the end of September, 1906, Bipin Chandra Pal returned from his East Bengal tour and took editorial control of the paper. Sri Aurobindo fell ill and repaired to Deoghar for recuperation. The problem of *Bande Mataram*'s finances came up again and Subodh Chandra Mullick offered to take up the whole responsibility of this concern, and from Cornwallis Street had it transferred to Creek Row in a building owned by himself. This change was symptomatic of a minor change in the internal affairs of the new Party. Balwant Gangadhar Tilak tried to bring about a reconciliation during the Congress Sessions at Calcutta over which Dadabhai Naoroji was to preside. But he failed as the younger people were for a more outright support to the tactics of Parnellism—a combination of constitutional and unconstitutional activities directed against the alien State in India. Bipin Chandra Pal retired from the editorial charge of the paper and in a letter handed it over to Sri Aurobindo—a letter which I carried to the addressee's Mott's Lane residence.

And since this letter afterwards gained importance as evidence against Sri

Aurobindo as Editor of the *Bande Mataram* in a sedition case, the episode should be related. "The charges concern the article entitled 'Politics for Indians' which appeared in the Town Edition of the 27th June and the Dak edition of the 28th June and the republication on the 26th July of certain seditious articles which had originally appeared in the *Jugantar* newspaper," to quote from the judgment delivered on September 28, 1907, by Mr Kingsford, first Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta. Sri Aurobindo was acquitted, as the prosecution failed to bring home to him the charge that he was the editor of the *Bande Mataram* on those days in spite of the letter of Bipin Chandra Pal found in a course of police search of his house at Mott's Lane. And as Bipin Chandra refused to swear in the witness box when called upon to do so by the Magistrate, the latter drew up proceedings against him for contempt of Court and sent him to his subordinate Magistrate, Mr. Ram Anugraha Narain Singh, for trial. Mr Kingsford had not allowed Bipin Chandra to put in his plea for refusal to cooperate in the discharge of justice by the State. But in Mr Singh's court he fully explained his stand. His was not a case for total non-cooperation with British Administration as was evolved in the "open conspiracy" during the twenties of this century under Gandhiji's inspiration and guidance. But he stood on his right as a citizen to withhold co-operation from the State in a particular case in which the policy followed would be creating greater confusion in the country by suppressing the liberty of the people to express their opinion on particular matters of State or the basic principles of its being. He was sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment on the 10th September, 1907. The Press of India hailed the action of Bipin Chandra's as confirming the opinion of Srinivas Shastri that Bengal was introducing an element of "grimness" into Indian politics which had become more than ever necessary.

With the transfer of *Bande Mataram* from Cornwallis Street to Creek Row my connection with it ceased. But in March, 1908, I was called in by Sri Aurobindo to serve as a sub-editor. Here I found as my colleague Krishna Chandra Ghosh who has died this year on the 8th of May. We "edited" the telegrams, and Sri Aurobindo passing through our room would ask us for the day's news on which to comment. He generally finished his articles by 3 p.m., and when handing these over to us would inquire whether they would be sufficient. If we replied in the negative, he would stand by our table, look over the telegram sheets, and write a "para" or two, as the mood was on. Other denizens of the editorial sanctum were Syam Sundar Chakravarty and Hemendra Prasad Ghosh, the latter still happily with us, a witness to the "high audacity" of those days, Sri Aurobindo's favourite words. The "Chief", the title by which he was known in the *Bande Mataram* Office, showed an instinct for journalism that was remarkable for one of his retiring and recluse habits.

During 1907, I had been a fitful visitor to Sri Aurobindo. On the eve of the Surat Congress, December, 1907, the organisation of the New Party delegation

to it took me more often to the Wellington Square mansion of Subodh Chandra Mullick where Sri Aurobindo generally resided or passed the evenings when he had his own house at Calcutta. One day I found him absorbed in "automatic writing", and certain of the indications about the Surat developments were fulfilled; the insult to Surendra Nath Banerjee, for instance, which was compared to death. I was one of the Bengal delegates who accompanied Sri Aurobindo and Syam Sundar Chakravarty to Surat. All of us travelled "3rd Class". On reaching Surat we were housed in a Dharmasala; we spread our beddings over carpets. Sri Aurobindo and Syam Sundar had cots to distinguish their position. We took the same vegetarian food arranged on behalf of the new Party's conference, and Bengal delegates were recipients of marked public notice as having done something significant in the evolution of Indian Nationalism during the British period.

Guide and Deliverer of the Indian People

Sri Aurobindo presided over this Conference. He was no orator. But the Conference hung on his words limpid and flowing, instinct with a new meaning, though the words had been familiar enough. Even during this Conference Sri Aurobindo appeared as a soul that dwelt apart from the tumult and shouting of politics of an awakened people newly roused to the degradation of its subjection and grown conscious of its high destiny in the world recalling and fulfilling the achievements and promises of our storied past. Sri Aurobindo had been chosen to help in transforming the thoughts and activities of his people, and it was enthralling to watch the evolution of this drama involving individuals who left home and family, and dared and did deeds that awed millions and thrilled them to a new realisation of their weaknesses and a new determination to rid their social polity of these. As the guiding spirit of the *Bande Mataram* he had been a distant figure; the Surat Congress ended that recluse life and pushed him before hundreds of thousands as the tribune of their rights, as the long looked-for guide and deliverer.

From Surat he went to Bombay: the conduct of the *Bande Mataram* devolved on Syam Sundar Chakravarty and Hemendra Prasad Ghosh who had deputised for them all during the Congress session; and it was he who put in the *Bande Mataram* a banner head-line describing Dr. Rash Behary Ghosh's speech as "The undelivered Masterpiece". We resumed our normal life at the *Bande Mataram* office. The "Chief" returned after about 30 days. I do not remember anything particularly noticeable to be recalled except that the newspaper controversy between the "Moderates" and "Extremists" with regard to the responsibility for the abortive Surat Congress showed no signs of abatement. During those tumultuous days at Surat, he had been his own self, unaffected by them, in-drawn generally to a world of which we knew little. And, therefore, we could not

imagine that the days were hastening towards a crisis in the affairs of his own life, in the fortunes of the *Bande Mataram*. Financial difficulties had always been dogging this paper. Except in an extremity, the management generally did not pester him with them. And the majority of us were taught to treat them as part of the day's work, the "Chief" preferring to forgo any "salary" that he now and then drew; the others followed the example. For, in those days journalists regarded journalism as part of a mission, not a profession to be carried on under Trade-Union rules. Those of us who linger on the scene still follow something of the old-world practice.

Sri Aurobindo during the three months that he remained free was in requisition as a speaker at public meetings, he having got over his resolve not to address his people in English, and the latter refusing to accept any refusal now that reports of meetings addressed by him in Western India had carried eloquent head-lines. His articles in the *Bande Mataram* gained a new reality from this closer touch with the people imparting to his thoughts a this-worldly colour of their daily struggles with wants and other deficiencies in their material existence. The alien bureaucracy having failed to capture him with laws of sedition were ever on the watch, and their "spies" were on the prowl, even planting themselves in the *Bande Mataram* office. We members of its staff were careful of our words and avoided "loose" talk before less known people such as generally crowd into newspaper offices. We felt the tension in the air. But we were not prepared for what happened on April 30, at Muzaffarpore in Bihar then under a common Lieutenant-Governor. A bomb burst at about 9 p.m. shattering the carriages in which Mr. Kingsford was supposed to be returning home. In reality the victims turned out to be Mrs. Kennedy and Miss Kennedy, wife and daughter of one of the leaders of the Bar and a Congressman, Mr. Pringle Kennedy. Rumours floated over Calcutta of this event on the 1st of May, 1908. The next day-break found Sri Aurobindo in police custody. Days of confusion followed. The *Bande Mataram* struggled heroically to ride the storm. It was in vain. The bureaucracy itself inflicted the death-blow by confiscating the press which printed the paper.

Life became a victim to rumours. The "Chief" was withdrawn behind the jail lock-up; the Manicktala Bomb Conspiracy case was lengthening its weary days; the assassination inside the jail of the approver Narendra Nath Goswami by Kanai Lal Dutta and Satyendra Nath Basu introduced an element of exaltation that upheld public morale. The blackest day, however, has to come to an end. The Conspiracy case before Mr. Beachcroft, a fellow entrant of the year into the Indian Civil Service with Sri Aurobindo, resulted in his acquittal. The judge accepting the verdict of the two assessors on the 13th of April, 1909, Sri Aurobindo was let out of the jail lock-up about 30 days after. He came to a world where a "hush" and a "silence" had set in, the national mind waiting for a new lead. I was then teacher in the National School of Sylhet, the headquarter station of the farthest east Bengalee-speaking district. During the next Puja recess two

or three of us hastened to Calcutta to meet the "Chief"; he was putting up at the College Square house of Krishna Kumar Mitra, husband of his maternal aunt. We had our *darshan*, a winsome smile welcoming us. We felt ourselves as on a pilgrimage, believing that he was engaged in a new *Sadhana* that would give him supernatural powers which would make an end of the hated foreign rule. My companions were more receptive of the new psycho-physical discipline that the "Chief" was prepared to impart; the *Karma-Yogin* (English) and *Dharma* (Bengali), the two weeklies preaching a new Nationalism, were more in my line. We interpreted the truths inculcated through these two papers in the light of our own experience, in consonance with our individual capacities. These brought to our thoughts and activities some sort of a coherence out of the confusion created by the repression by the Government and the safe policy of our elder politicians. He showed us the way out of bewilderment; we learnt to understand what Indian Nationalism stood for and the ideal of the "Karma-Yogin:"

"It (Indian Nationalism) must be on its guard against any tendency to cling to every detail that has been India. This has not been the spirit of Hinduism in the past. . . In all life there are three elements, the fixed and permanent spirit, the developing and constant soul, and the brittle changeable body. The spirit we cannot change, we can obscure or lose; the soul must not be rashly meddled with, must neither be tortured into a shape alien to itself, nor obstructed in its free expression, and the body must be used as a means, not overcherished as a thing valuable for its own sake . . ."

The return of self-respect to a people is characterized by a sort of revivalism that leads men and women to "cling to every detail" that is in practice in everyday life. Indian nationalism of the times I have been trying to indicate was not free from this defect. And it was in the fitness of things that Sri Aurobindo, the "prophet of Nationalism" as Chittaranjan Das had called him during the peroration of his address to Mr. Beachcroft and the assessors, should take the earliest opportunity to warn his people of this aberration of their life. Many of us who had been carried away by this spirit of revivalism needed this warning so that we could devote ourselves to the service of our people with a becoming spirit of humanity, with a new awareness that the alien values introduced into their life by Britain had made contributions towards its enrichment, winnowing the chaff from the grain. Thus would we be able to take part in rebuilding the life of humanity on a new basis in the construction of which East and West would cooperate out of mutual knowledge. Sri Aurobindo, a graft of the East put on a Western trunk, was best suited to work out this synthesis. The *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma* were chosen as the instruments fit to be placed in his hands for the evolution of the Master Plan of a saner humanity rooted in honest labour, disdaining to exploit the labour of others, and bearing love for all created things. This was an earnest of the "divine life on earth" of which Sri Aurobindo speaks with certitude in his 76th Birthday Message. The *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma*

gave us intimations, faint and obscure, of the “human dream of perfectibility”, of “aspiration to a heaven on earth common to several religious and spiritual seers and thinkers.”

The weakening of political fervour turned the minds of many of us inwards. But the presence of External Authority in our country had had such a disturbing effect on our minds that, except the chosen few, none could settle down to this new *Sadhana*. The majority of us looked to the *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma* to give us a new lead in our political bewilderment. Sri Aurobindo’s “Open Letter to My Countrymen” that appeared in the *Karmayogin* on July 31, 1909, was regarded by us in this light. And we who lived in the countryside could not know that this letter would prove to be his “Last Political Will and Testament” to his people. So, when in August, 1909, rumours reached us that he had vanished from Calcutta, we thought that it was part of political tactics — a refusal to be caught and put behind prison bars; we fondly hoped that he would come back to his accustomed place in the political leadership of his people, refreshed and renovated by the new *Sadhana* he had undertaken. We of the generation that grew up under his piercing eyes, caught fire from his flaming words, the few of us who have had no inspiration other than the ending of alien rule, the few of us who still linger on the scene have been awaiting for 40 years for the arrival amidst us of one of the builders of our youth whom the Creator has yet spared to us. We have waited in vain. So it has been decreed. Sri Aurobindo is a distant figure to us beyond our comprehension. The realisation of this disability in us has not been a pleasurable experience. But we have learnt to accept it as a decree from on high.

These reminiscences cover a period of about 45 years. They are coloured by growth and retrogression in thought and life that are part of human evolution. I am conscious that they do not throw much light on the development of the personality from a political thinker and activist into a seer. They are here for what they are worth. I am thankful to *Mother India* for according me an opportunity to recall the age when Sri Aurobindo was the centre of a people’s hope, a path-finder to them over stretches of life littered with lost opportunities, it may be with failures and weaknesses, but now and then shot through and through with exaltations of spirit, acts of high audacity, silent dedication to a far-off divine event that dawned on the 15th of August, 1947, coincident with the anniversary of Sri Aurobindo’s birthday. This attempt to recollect has been a healing experience. It has confirmed my faith in the people. Saint Augustine’s mother had been consoled with the words — “the child of so many tears can never go wrong for long”, the people among whom Sri Aurobindo was born can never go wrong for long. This thought upholds many of us.

THE PROBLEM OF THE PAST*

AN OLD ARTICLE BY SRI AUROBINDO

COMPLETE domination of the educated class in India by Europe for nearly a century deprived the Indians of the Aryan enlightenment and the Aryan nature. They became impotent and developed a predilection for inactivity and dependence on others. That tamasic feeling is now going. It would be helpful to discuss the reasons for its appearance. In the eighteenth century, tamasic ignorance and rajasic impulsion enveloped the whole of India. Thousands of men of strong asuric character, selfish, irresponsible, inimical to the country, took birth in India and prepared favourable conditions for her eventual bondage. At that hour, the English merchants came to her from the distant British Isles to fulfil a deep intention of the Divine. India, prostrate under a load of sins, passed into the hands of the foreigners. The world still looks with wonder at the miracle. In the absence of any other satisfactory explanation, every one is extolling to the skies the virtues of the English. In fact, the English have many qualities, otherwise they would not have become the greatest triumphant nation in the world. But those who say that the inferiority of the Indians and the superiority of the English, the vices of the Indians and the virtues of the English are the only reasons for this miracle, though not entirely wrong, still give rise to a few false ideas in the minds of people. Let us therefore carry out a penetrating investigation on the subject in order to arrive at the correct conclusion.

The conquest of India by the English is an unparalleled achievement in the history of the world. If this immense country had been inhabited by a nation weak and ignorant, inapt and uncivilised, then such a statement could not have been made. On the contrary, India is the native country of the Rajputs, the Marathas, the Sikhs, the Pathans, the Moguls and others. The Bengalis with their quick intelligence, the thinkers from South India, the politician Brahmins from Maharashtra are children of Mother India. A capable statesman like Nana Farnavis, a general adept in the science of war like Madhaji Scindia and mighty geniuses and kingdom-builders like Hyder Ali and Ranjit Singh could be found in every province at the time of the British conquest. In the eighteenth century, the Indians were not inferior to any other nation in power, courage or intelligence. India of the eighteenth century was the temple of Saraswati, the treasury of Lakshmi and the playground for Shakti. Yet the country which the mighty Muslims, constantly growing in power, took hundreds of years to conquer with the greatest difficulty and could never rule over in perfect security, that very country in the course of fifty years willingly admitted the sovereignty of a handful of English merchants and within a century went into an inert sleep under the

* Translated by Nirranjan from the Bengali

shadow of their paramount empire. You might say, it was the result of the want of unity. We admit that the lack of unity is truly one of the principal reasons of our misfortune but then there was never any unity in India even in the past. There was no unity in the age of the Mahabharata nor in the time of Chandragupta or Ashoka. There was no unity during the period of the Muslim conquest of India or in the eighteenth century. The lack of unity could not be the exclusive reason for such a miracle to happen. If you say that the virtues of the English are the reason then I would ask those who know the history of that period whether they would venture to say that the English merchants of that epoch were superior to the Indians either in virtue or in merit. It is difficult to suppress laughter when we hear someone talking of the great qualities of those devils, cruel and powerful, selfish and avaricious, — Clive, Warren Hastings and others, English merchants and robbers who by plundering and conquering India have given to the world not only examples of incomparable bravery, labour and pride but also examples of unsurpassable wickedness. Courage, labour and pride are virtues of the Asuras, their good points. Clive and other Englishmen also possessed them. But their vices were in no way less than the vices of the Indians. Therefore the virtues of the English did not accomplish this miracle.

The English and the Indians both were equally Asuras. It was not a battle between the Gods and the Asuras but a fight of the Asuras against the Asuras. What was the sublime quality of the Occidental Asura which crowned with success his power, courage and intelligence? And what was the fatal defect of the Indian Asura which nullified his power, courage and intelligence? The answer is, in the first place, that though the Indians were equal to the English in all qualities, they did not have any national feeling whereas the English possessed it to the full. From this it must not be hastily concluded that the English were patriotic, and that it was patriotism which inspired them to build up successfully a vast empire in India. Patriotism and national consciousness are two different qualities. The patriot lives in a rapture of service to the motherland; he perceives her everywhere, looks upon her as a godhead, and to her offers all work done as a sacrifice for the good of the country, his own interest merges in the interest of the country. The English of the eighteenth century did not have this feeling as it cannot abide permanently in the heart of any Occidental materialist nation. The English did not come to India for the good of their country. They came here to do business, to make money for themselves. Not out of love for their country did they conquer or pillage India but they conquered it mainly in their own interest. However, without being patriots, they had the national feeling; the pride that "our country is the best, the traditions and customs, religion, character, morality, strength, courage, intelligence, opinion and work of our nation are inimitably perfect, unattainable by others"; the belief that "the good of my country is my good, the glory of my country is my glory, the prosperity of my fellow countrymen is my prosperity; instead of seeking only personal ends, I

shall advance at the same time the interest of my nation; it is the duty of everyone in the country to fight for her honour, glory and prosperity; it is the religion of the hero, if need be, to die bravely in that fight"; this sense of duty exhibits the main characteristic of the national consciousness. Patriotism is in its nature sattwic, whereas the national consciousness is rajasic. One who can lose his ego in the ego of the country is the ideal patriot; one who aggrandises the ego of the country, all the while maintaining intact his own ego is a nationally conscious individual. The Indians of that epoch were wanting in national consciousness. We do not mean to say that they never cared for the good of their nation, but if there was the least conflict between their personal interest and that of the country, they often sacrificed the good of the country to achieve their own. According to us, the lack of national consciousness was a more fatal defect than the lack of unity. If full national consciousness spread everywhere in the country, then unity could be realised even in this land afflicted with division. Mere verbal repetition, "We want unity, we want unity!" is not sufficient. This is the principal reason of the conquest of India by the British. The Asuras fought against the Asuras; but the nationally conscious and unified Asuras defeated the Asuras equal to them in all other qualities but disunited and devoid of national consciousness. According to the Divine law, one who is strong and efficient wins the wrestling contest; one who is fast and enduring arrives first at the destination. High moral qualities or merits alone cannot make one win a race or wrestling bout; the necessary strength is indispensable. Thus even a wicked and Asuric nation, conscious of itself, is able to found an empire, while for want of national consciousness a virtuous people possessing many high moral qualities loses its independence, and eventually forfeiting its noble character and good qualities falls into decadence.

From the political point of view this explains best how India was conquered. But there is a greater truth hidden behind it. We have already mentioned that tamasic ignorance and rajasic impulse had become very predominant in India. This state precedes a downfall. Concentration on the rajasic quality increases the rajasic power; but pure rajas soon changes into tamas. Arrogant and disorderly rajasic endeavour soon gets tired and exhausted and finally degenerates into impotence, dejection and inactivity. The rajasic power can become durable if it is turned towards sattwa. In the absence of the sattwic nature, at least a sattwic ideal is indispensable; that ideal imparts order and a steady strength to the rajasic power. The English always cherished these two great sattwic ideals, order and liberty, which have made them great and victorious in the world. In the nineteenth century this nation was seized by the desire to do good to others, and thanks to it, England rose to the summit of national grandeur. Moreover, the insatiable thirst for knowledge, which drove the Europeans to make hundreds of scientific discoveries and people by the hundred to lay down their lives willingly in order to gain even a drop of knowledge, that strong sattwic yearning for

knowledge was active among the English. It was this sattwic power from which the English drew their strength; their supremacy, courage and force are diminishing, and fear, discontent and lack of self-confidence are on the increase because the sattwic power is waning. The rajasic power having lost its sattwic aim is sliding into tamas; on the other hand, the Indians were a great sattwic nation. It was because of this sattwic power that they became incomparable in knowledge, courage and in spite of their disunity were able to resist and throw back foreign attacks for a thousand years. Then began the increase of rajas and the decrease of sattwa. At the time of the Muslim advent, the widespread knowledge had already begun to shrink and the Rajputs who were predominantly rajasic occupied the throne of India. Northern India was in the grip of wars and internal quarrels and, owing to a decadence of Buddhism, Bengal was overcast with tamas. Spirituality sought refuge in South India and by the grace of that sattwic power South India was able to retain her freedom for a long time. Yearning for knowledge and progress of knowledge slowly declined, instead, erudition was more and more honoured and glorified; spiritual knowledge, development of yogic power and inner realisation were mostly replaced by tamasic religious worship and observance of rajasic ceremonies to gain worldly ends; when the cult of the four great orders of society disappeared, people began to attach more importance to outward customs and actions. Such an extinction of the national dharma had brought about the death of Greece, Rome, Egypt and Assyria; but the Aryan race which held the ancient religion was saved by the rejuvenating flow of heavenly nectar which gushed from time to time from the ancient source. Shankara, Ramanuja, Chaitanya, Nanak, Ramdas and Tukaram brought back to life a moribund India by sprinkling her with that divine nectar. However, the current of rajas and tamas was so strong that by its pull, even the best were altered into the worst; common people began to justify their tamasic nature with the knowledge given by Shankara; the cult of love revealed by Chaitanya became a cover for extreme tamasic inactivity, the Marathas, who were taught by Ramdas, forgot their Maharashtrian dharma, wasted the power in selfish pursuits and internal conflicts and destroyed the kingdom founded by Shivaji and Bajirao. In the eighteenth century this current attained its maximum force. Society and religion were confined within narrow limits as ordained by a few modern law-givers; the pomp of outward rites and ceremonies came to be designated as religion; with the Aryan knowledge vanishing and the Aryan character dying, the ancient religion abandoned society and took shelter in the forest-life of the Sannyasi and in the heart of the devotee. India was then enveloped in the thickest darkness of tamas, yet a stupendous rajasic impulse under the cloak of an outward religion relentlessly pursued vile and selfish ends, bringing ruin to the nation and the country. Power was not lacking in the country, but owing to the eclipse of the Aryan dharma and of sattwa, that power unable to defend itself, brought about its own destruction. Finally, the Asuric power of India vanquished

by the Asuric power of Britain became shackled and lifeless. India plunged into an inert sleep of *tamas*. Obscurity, unwillingness, ignorance, inaction, loss of self-confidence, sacrifice of self-respect, love of slavery, emulation of foreigners and adoption of their religion, dejection, self-depreciation, pettiness, indolence, etc., all these are characteristic qualities of *tamas*. Which of these was lacking in nineteenth century India? Each and every endeavour of that century, because of the predominance of these qualities, bore everywhere the seal of the *tamasic* force.

When God roused India, in the first flush of her awakening the flaming power of the national consciousness began to flow swiftly in the veins of the nation. At the same time, a maddening emotion of patriotism enraptured the youth. We are not Europeans, we are Asiatics. We are Indians, we are Aryans. We have gained the national consciousness but unless it is steeped in patriotism our national consciousness cannot blossom. Adoration of the Mother must be the foundation of that patriotism. The day "Bande Mataram", the song of Bankimchandra, crossed the barrier of the outer senses and knocked at the heart, on that day patriotism was born in our heart; on that day the Mother's image was enshrined in our heart. The country is Mother, the country is the Divine, — this sublime precept which forms a part of the Upanishadic teachings is the seed of the national rising. As the "Jiva" is a part of the Divine, as the power of the "Jiva" is also a part of the Divine power, so also the seventy million Bengalis, the collectivity of three hundred million Indians are part of all-pervading Vasudeva; in the same manner, Mother India, adorned with many hands and powers, shelter of these three hundred million, embodiment of Shakti, is a force of the Divine Mother, the Goddess, the very body of the universal Mahakali. Excitement, passion, clamour, insult, oppression and torture endured during these five years in order to awaken the love for the Mother and establish Her image in the heart and mind of the nation were decreed by the Divine. That work is over. What next?

Next, the ancient power of the Aryans has to be resurrected. First, the Aryan character and the Aryan education must reappear; secondly, the yogic power has to be developed again; lastly, that yearning for knowledge, that capacity for work worthy of an Aryan must be utilised in order to assemble necessary material for the new age; the mad passion worked up during these last five years has to be harnessed and directed towards the accomplishment of the Mother's work. Young men all over the country, who are seeking a path and looking for work, let them get over the passion and find out a means for acquiring power. The sublime work that has to be accomplished cannot be achieved by passion alone; strength is necessary. The force that can be acquired from the teachings of your ancestors can do the impossible. That Force is preparing to descend into your body. That Force is the Mother Herself. Learn to surrender to Her. The Mother by making you Her instrument will accomplish

the work so swiftly, so powerfully that the world will be astounded. All your efforts will come to nothing without that Force. The image of the Mother is enshrined in your heart, you have learnt to serve and adore the Mother; now surrender to the Mother within you. There is no other way to accomplish the work

THE FIRE IS LIT

THE fire is lit, flames lick high,
Tongues flick hither and thither
Searching, seeking, with desire
To engulf and devour all that exists.

The five senses forage, grasp, and offer
All they find unto the great fire,
But the flames remaining insatiate
Burst and hiss, splutter and sparkle.

The fire grumbles, grows and glows
Until the laughing blade of grass
Swaying with joy in the deep centre
Of the inmost shrine of the fiery temple
Is unveiled and finally consumed

Now pure and aflame in its virgin splendour
The Fire reveals anew Love and Delight
That give form to the Formless,
A promise of ascent to Life Divine

DINKAR PALANDE

THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

IN THE LIGHT OF HER *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1989)

THE Mother's Prayers and Meditations sum up the essential and fundamental qualities of the new manifestation which is waiting to come. What is the best means of bringing about the fullness of this manifestation? We depend not only on our strength and power but upon the Grace and Force of the Divine. The Mother who does Sadhana for us says in her prayer on 18 June 1914:

“Always the same Will is at work. The Force is there awaiting the possibility to manifest: We must discover the new form which will make the new manifestation possible. And Thou, only Thou, O Lord, can grant us this knowledge. It is for us with our whole being to make the effort, to ask, to aspire. But it is for Thee to answer with the Illumination, the Knowledge and the Power ”

Sri Aurobindo has clearly mentioned that the possibility of a new manifestation is here, as the following extract shows: “In a manifestation in Time new realities can emerge, truths of being not yet realised can put forth their possibilities and become actual in the physical and terrestrial existence; other truths of being there may be that are supraphysical and belong to another domain of manifestation, not realised here but still real. Even what is nowhere actual in any universe, may be a truth of being, a potential of being, and cannot, because it is not yet expressed in form of existence, be taxed as unreal.”¹

Sri Aurobindo further comments on the theme of manifestation.

“ .It can prepare a liberation into action of the highest Knowledge and an intensity of Power that can transform the world and fulfil the evolutionary urge. It is an ascent from which there is no longer a fall but a winged or self-sustained descent of light, force and Ananda.

“It is what is inherent in force of being that manifests as becoming, but what the manifestation shall be, its terms, its balance of energies, its arrangement of principles depends on the consciousness which acts in the creative force, on the power of consciousness which Being delivers from itself for manifestation. It is in the nature of Being to be able to grade and vary its powers of consciousness and determine according to the grade and variation its world or its degree and scope of self-revelation. The manifested creation is limited by the power to which it belongs and sees and lives according to it and can only see more, live more powerfully, change its world by opening or moving towards or making descend a greater power of consciousness that was above it.”²

The Mother's unflagging aspiration and surrender for a new terrestrial manifestation runs in her prayer dated June 16, 1914: “Like a sun the splendour descends upon the earth and Thy rays will illumine the world. All those elements

which are pure enough, plastic enough, sufficiently receptive to manifest the very splendour of the central fire-nucleus are grouping themselves together. This grouping is not arbitrary and does not depend on the will or aspiration of one element or another, it depends on what it is, it is independent of any individual decision. Thy splendour wants to radiate, what is capable of manifesting it manifests it, and these elements together reconstitute as perfectly as possible in this world of division the divine Centre which has to be manifested ”

Again on June 22, 1914 she says:

“What has to be will be, what has to be done will be done....

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

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCES

- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 18, p 480
- 2 *Ibid* , Vol 22, p 30

GOLCONDE: A LOOK BEHIND

5. THE BUILDERS (2)

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

Shraddhavan

Frantiček Sammer

When Raymond came to Pondicherry for the Golconde work in 1938, he brought with him as assistant another Czech, Frantiček (or François, as he was known here) Sammer. The following account is based upon information given by his wife, Agnes, to Mrityunjy in 1974.

SAMMER was a student of Le Corbusier, and was part of the team that went with him to Moscow in 1933 to work on a vast housing-project there. He and his wife, Agnes, had met in 1931 in Paris where she was studying sculpture. He was Czech, she was born in Honolulu, of Norwegian parents. They had gone to Russia together and married there—which in Russia was as easy as going to a hotel to book a room: no church-going or other formalities were involved, except signing a register. In those days they were both convinced atheists; it was a fashion among the younger generation in those days, mainly because they confused God with the Church; they were very much against the Church for they saw how it exploited the ignorant masses.

In the summer of 1935 the Sammers visited Japan from Russia and there met Raymond and his family. The two Czechs quickly became friends, and the Sammers spent about a month holidaying with the Raymonds in their beach house near Tokyo. François and Agnes then returned to Russia.

By 1937 it was evident that all foreigners would have to leave Russia as war was coming and the Government was not renewing visas. So Sammer wrote to Raymond to enquire whether he could give him a job. Raymond replied immediately, "Yes. Come at once." Sammer went to Japan, while Agnes returned to Paris where she wanted to study etching for some time before joining him in Tokyo. But then Sammer was chosen by Raymond, along with George Nakashima, a Japanese-American, to go to Pondicherry to build Golconde. So Agnes received a letter from her husband telling her not to travel to Tokyo, but to meet him in Pondicherry where Raymond was taking him to build a house, which would take six months. He gave the address, "c/o Mr Sri Aurobindo Ashram".

It was only after she arrived in Pondicherry by steamer from Marseilles in February 1938 that she discovered that Sri Aurobindo Ashram was not a person but a community. François and the others had arrived a few weeks before her. Agnes was quickly accepted into the Ashram family. The Mother put her to work preparing trousers, shorts and shirts for the Golconde workers. She remembers François telling her of the Mother's advice: "Don't consider the amount of money or the length of time: I want a good building." It was the first time in his life he had heard this from a client.¹

Mrityunjoy records his remembrances of the Sammers as follows:

MRITYUNJOY: This young man Sammer was quite tall, in contrast with Nakashima who was rather short, but equally handsome, energetic and simple. He was Czechoslovakian by birth and nationality, and spoke French better than English in communicating with non-Czech people. I still remember his first meeting with some of us, as we were working on the site that was to become Golconde. Without waiting for any introduction by Raymond or Pavitra, this simple-natured person came directly to us and said, "*Mon nom est Sammer.*" This was enough for us to accept him quickly into our fold and into our hearts. After that he remained with us in the Ashram for four years, working with us on Golconde, although his work was more in the office making drawings and calculations. We did not see him frequently, as we saw Nakashima, on the concreting site before the form-works were laid. He rather came when the actual concrete laying was being done.

In 1938 Hitler began threatening Czechoslovakia; so naturally these two Czechs, Raymond and Sammer, felt extremely anxious and wanted to return immediately to their country to help and protect their family people. The Mother had to explain to them for some days that going away from here would not help their people in any way: firstly, they would not be able to enter their country since it was surrounded by the Nazi forces, and secondly, if they did manage to enter, the Czech government would conscript them at once and send them to the Front: so their purpose would not be served. Instead if they would remain with Her here, She would work through them for their country, and that was destined to be so—otherwise why should they have come here at such a time? They understood the Mother's words: we saw that they did not go to Czechoslovakia.

But Raymond shortly afterwards went to America, and in 1942 Sammer joined the British army as a volunteer, wishing to do whatever he could to help his country, which by that time had been entirely occupied by the Germans. Later we heard that Sammer had been posted in Burma as a Captain in the Royal Engineers, and there was a rumour that he had been injured and flown to England for urgent treatment. As there was no further news of him, we presumed that he was either dead or suffering as a prisoner of war in the hands of the Nazis—a fate worse than death! Then, twenty-five years later, in the

summer of 1968, Pavitra surprised me with the sweet news that not only was Sammer alive in his native land of Czechoslovakia, but he had heard about Auroville on the radio and television and read about it in the papers and was very interested. He had written to Pavitra, expressing his wish to come here and work for Auroville as one of its town-planners. The Mother was very pleased, and we all expected him to arrive soon afterwards. But he did not come, and since then we have heard that Sammer left his body just a month before the Mother, that is, on 17th October 1973. He was still hoping to come to Pondicherry.

His wife, our dear sister Agnes, came to the Ashram in February 1938, a little more than a month after the arrival of her husband and the Raymonds. She came here to join her husband of course; she was not obliged to do any work, but nevertheless she devoted herself fully to the service of the Mother and did many useful things. Agnes showed her capacity to adapt herself to any work and any situation—something remarkable to us Indians! We knew it could be achieved by yoga and the discipline of spiritual life, yet she was unaware of any such thing. It was an eye-opener to us that someone coming in contact with the Mother and receiving a touch of her Grace could get tuned into the atmosphere of spiritual life without consciously knowing it. Her husband and Raymond were there professionally for the Golconde work. Agnes simply did whatever the Mother required of her to help the Ashram. The Mother soon used her too for Golconde work, but indirectly: she asked Agnes if she knew how to prepare men's trousers, shorts and shirts. Actually she had never done that, but she took the initiative, got a sample of each, opened them up and made a start. In those days we had no tailor to do that kind of work, as there had been no need of such clothes; we had Kanai who made *punjabis* for us to wear with our *dhotis*. Now for the workers of Golconde, more practical work-clothes were urgently needed. Pushpaben, the mother of our present tailor, Albert, worked with Agnes making these clothes. In 1972, Agnes was happy to hear that though Pushpaben was no more, her son was carrying on the tailoring department and it had increased a hundredfold. Agnes also designed some bedcovers for Golconde, a few of which are still in use.

In those days, we who were living in the Ashram did not usually go for outings; but these newcomers, especially the Europeans, liked to do so. Benjamin, a local Tamilian, was a good friend to them and served as their guide on excursions into the interior of Pondicherry State; they used to go almost every Sunday to remote villages, to meet the local people, see temples, chariots and festivals, and make watercolour paintings.

Agnes left at the beginning of 1939, before the Second World War started. Then after thirty-two years, we met her again in February 1972, with a similar feeling of surprise as on receiving news of her husband after so long. She was lucky enough to see the Mother and receive Her approval to come back and

settle in the Ashram. She told us that since she left the Ashram in 1939, she had seen the violence of the War and had passed through a series of wars in her own life, but had never lost contact with the Mother; she realised that not only was her return to Pondicherry destined, but her going away was also necessary for the evolution of her soul. We were happy to hear this from her.²

(To be continued)

SHRADDHAVAN

REFERENCES

1 Mrityunjoy Mukherjee's notes of a conversation with Agnes Sammer in October 1974 ms in Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library

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

A CORRECTION FROM UDAR

From a Letter to the Editor

THE articles you are printing in *Mother India* about Golconde are, by and large, good.... But in the second article there are some factual errors. It is mentioned, for example, that in Golconde there is no glazing at all. This is incorrect, as there are sliding glass panels over the door of each room, which can be adjusted to give more ventilation if found necessary.

Then for the floor, it is said that black granite was used. This is not quite correct. It is not granite, but more like slate, though a bit harder. It is a layered limestone found in several places in India. Here in the South it is known as Cuddapah Stone, as it comes from that district. It has been used for ages—but not as we have done in Golconde: highly polished, and with the sides cut by machine to a very straight edge. As the machines to do this were not available here at that time, I had to design and make our own machines at as low a cost as possible. The architects had specified that the floor slabs should be laid “butt-joined”—as is done with glazed tiles in bathrooms and so on. But for such large slabs, this meant very high-precision edge-cutting, which my machine could not manage. So Sammer, who was the architect in charge, and truly an artist, said that they should be laid with wide joints. This was done, and the result is much more beautiful than a butt-joint would have been.

This is how Mother works. She has often created difficulties so that in overcoming them we arrive at a much truer and more beautiful result.

HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

P WAS born in a typical village of U.P. Before his birth two or three children of his parents had died. The result was that his mother became extremely protective concerning him. Except for school, she would not let him go out of her sight nor allow him to eat anywhere for fear that someone might poison him. She did not even allow him to be vaccinated against smallpox with the result that at the age of nine he had a very terrible attack of this disease but death cannot claim those who are marked out for the Divine's work.

In his boyhood P had to walk about three miles to reach his school which was situated at the district headquarters. As a student, he was above average. In 1937, he went to Delhi and there met an eye-specialist who was a staunch devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. P became his apprentice-assistant. On every Sunday, the eye-specialist used to hold meditation at his residence and a few other devotees used to join it. Books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were also read. P became attracted towards Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and began to read their books, *The Mother, Bases of Yoga, Yoga and its Objects, Lights on Yoga*, etc., and the inner urge increased. Now he felt a strong aspiration for the darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In those days it was very difficult to get permission for Darshan and one had to write beforehand to get it.

P's request was granted for 24th April 1940. He was allowed to go upstairs for pranām to the Mother a day before the Darshan day. He had brought cases of apples and pomegranates which he placed at the feet of the Mother who was happy at his offering. He also had a talk with her. On 24th April, during Darshan, he stood before her and Sri Aurobindo and kept gazing at them for a long time till the Mother herself beckoned with her finger to him to move forward. P was very happy since the Mother was also gazing at him. In those days, she used to give Balcony darshan early in the morning, Window darshan at about 8 a.m., Terrace darshan at about 11a.m., and he enjoyed all the darshans during his stay in the Ashram. At that time, rules were very strict, one could not go even to the market or have a swim in the sea without the prior permission of the Mother.

The inner opening widened and P's faith in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother became an established fact as the Mother herself had penetrated into his psychic being. He began to come for Darshan regularly.

In 1946 at the age of thirty-one he left his work at Delhi in order to establish an independent practice. He was invited by the Premier of Sind, Sir Ghulam Hussain Hydayat Ullah, for the treatment of his eyes. The Premier had already been under the treatment of international eye experts, but without any benefit. By the grace of the Mother, he was cured by P. P's name became well-known. Sir Ghulam Hussain wanted him to start an eye-clinic at Karachi. By this time, P's

contact with the Mother had grown and become quite intimate. He wrote to the Mother for permission to start a clinic at Karachi where prominent persons had become his patients and money was flowing in. Nolini-da wrote to P: "The Mother does not approve of your starting the clinic at Karachi." P at once dropped the idea since the Mother's word had been a law for him and is even so today. Then P suggested two more places but each time the Mother refused to grant permission.

Ultimately he wrote to the Mother through Dr. Indra Sen seeking permission to start a clinic at Lucknow. Dr. Indra Sen wrote: "The Mother approves." P's life found a firm anchor and he arrived in Lucknow in August 1948. He had already applied to the U P Government for a place for the clinic and got it.

In Lucknow his first work was to start a "Sri Aurobindo Study Circle" in the clinic premises for which the Mother gave permission and he maintains the same till today. Sittings of the Study Circle were held on every Sunday and about twenty to twenty-five devotees attended them. Meditation used to be held for 30 minutes and then readings from the books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In 1950, Shri B. K. Ukil, a great devotee of the Master and the Mother, and manager of Hindustan Cooperative Insurance Society, was transferred to Lucknow from his Patna Office. He was of immense help to P in the work for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. His devotion to the Mother and his capacity were worth appreciating and the Sri Aurobindo Study Circle flourished. On the four Darshan days many people used to join. Public meetings were also held on a grand scale, sometimes attended by two or three hundred people.

In his early life P had delved deeply into English literature. At the meetings of the Circle he used to speak only in English. But many persons wanted him to speak in Hindi also. Later on he learnt Hindi for this purpose.

In January 1955, after a long gap, P sought the Mother's permission for Darshan and to stay in the Ashram for a longer time. The permission was granted and the Mother made arrangements for his lodging at Golconde. P was never charged anything for boarding and lodging. Of course, he made offerings to the best of his ability to the Mother.

During his stay in the Ashram, he used to sit at the Samadhi of the Master and pull the Force into him from above, though the Mother had advised Sadhaks not to pull it. The result was a disaster for him. When he returned home, he had a nervous breakdown, the *adhār* was very weak and not yet ready, and so could not bear the Mother's Force. For months a dozen doctors had to be called in a day. No doctor could help him. An eminent cardiologist said with certitude that P had no heart disease though the symptoms were alike. He could not work at all, could not sit in the office, could not go alone outside his residence. Even while going to the toilet, someone had to stand outside to be at call. A strange fear engulfed him.

After each attack of the disease he would send a telegram to the Mother

who was constantly kept informed about the disease and he would receive from her a telegram: "BLESSINGS"—THE MOTHER. Once he had a very severe attack. P and his family were very frightened. The Mother was informed. She wrote in her telegram "BLESSINGS, NO ANXIETY", since she knew well what was happening within him.

P remained seriously ill from 1955 to 1958. Those were the days of great financial, physical and mental hardship and suffering. But at the same time the Mother's grace was there to sustain and uphold. P felt as if the Sadhana was going on in the subconscious part, for which the *ādḥār* was not ready.

After 1958, he started recovering very slowly. Even in that period of trial, the reading of books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the meetings of the Study Circle had continued without any break. P felt his inner contact with the Mother was even more intimate. Sadhaks from the Ashram would visit Lucknow frequently and the arrangements for their boarding and lodging were made to the best of his capacity. A very sweet aspect of P's contact with the Mother was that he would not leave Lucknow without the prior permission of the Mother. If he had to go out suddenly at any time, he would immediately send a telegram to the Mother. Even till to-day he does not go out of Lucknow without informing the Mother though she is not physically present. When he comes to the Ashram, he always writes to the Mother for permission.

For long he could not face the long journey from Lucknow to Pondicherry. Time passed and Sri Aurobindo's sacred Birth-Centenary year approached. It was celebrated in a befitting manner in 1972. The State Government had also formed a State Committee for these celebrations. With the help of enthusiastic devotees the Centenary celebrations were held on a large scale in different parts of the city.

The Sri Aurobindo Society came into existence in the year 1960 and P was the lone member of the Society in Lucknow. Later on the number of members increased and in 1972 the Second Annual Conference of the Sri Aurobindo Society was held in Lucknow at which Sadhaks from the Ashram spoke on the Integral Yoga and gave expositions in detail of the work Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had done for the Divine's manifestation in humanity and were still doing from the subtle planes. Besides Sadhaks from the Ashram and the members of the Society from all over the State, political leaders from most of the parties were invited to participate in the conference so that they might also know about the work of the Master and the Mother. Many persons came to the Ashram through P.

Some time later, three names including P's were submitted to the Mother for the Chairmanship of the Lucknow Society. The Mother made a tick mark above the name of P. Since then, P continues to be the Chairman of the Sri Aurobindo Society, Lucknow, and does its work as much as his health permits.

Now P feels that his outer work is over and the soul wants to be absorbed

within and feels very uneasy and tired on meeting outside people except the devotees of the Mother. He prefers to stay in solitude. His vital being had all along a strong aspiration to get a befitting building called "SRI AUROBINDO BHAWAN" constructed, but his dream has not materialized yet. Still he has not given up hope and has started fresh efforts.

While at Tapogiri recently, he felt a descent of divine peace and bliss. He feels the work is going on in the cellular mind and there the struggle becomes very painful. He has unflinching faith in the working of the Mother and feels a day will come when even the physical will awake at last and feel all her powers permeating from above, below and all around. Sri Aurobindo has declared: "The Supramental change is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of earth consciousness, for its upward ascent is not ended and mind is not its last summit. But that the change may arrive, take form and endure, there is needed the call from below with a will to recognize the light when it comes, there is needed the sanction of the Supreme from above." P recites these words of the Master every morning and night. They bring him peace and joy. At the same time he feels something in him denies the light and fear envelops him. He is trying to break this resistance. Success or failure, he has left to the Mother.

(To be continued)

Compiled by K

YOGA—LIFE—POETRY

LETTERS TO FELLOW-PILGRIMS

YOUR account of your various experiences is a clear sign to me that you have a fine inner life. The darshans of gods and goddesses must have brought great joy to you. Even to read about them brings a sparkling smile to my thought. I was specially interested in your experiment with a flower I too have tried to fetch something from the subtle planes to the physical. In fact, it was also a flower I tried to carry with me back to my body from a trip to an enchanting Otherwhere. The flowers on the subtle planes are wonderful—often luminous. One of them I clasped in my right hand and resolved to keep it there until I woke up to the ordinary condition. Very carefully I took my way back, all the time mindful of the delicate treasure in my hand. Right up to a point where I thought I was about to wake up I could feel the precious possession. Then a thin border was crossed between the subtle and the gross and I opened my eyes and found no flower!

The ugly things you see at times belong to the vital or the subtle-physical plane. I have marked many such scenes and figures—more deformed, more desiccated than anything on earth, just as on the opposite side there are beauties far transcending anything in our world. For instance, the subtle counterpart of the Pondicherry sea is a magically sinuous, many-colour-crested mass of liquid laughter set to some ever-varying rhythm of rise and fall like a poet's unrealisable-seeming fantasy!

Thanks for your fervent wish that I should live up to 120. It is a tall order. Of course, the Rishis of the Rigveda must have looked beyond even what they called "a hundred autumns", for they speak of seeing their grandchildren born when they would themselves be a century old. You may wonder, in the first place, how Rishis who were highly spiritual persons, could consent to be grandfathers and, in the second place, why they had to wait such a long time to have grandchildren. In ancient days the continuation of the race—especially in the form of sons—was regarded as a sacred duty. Furthermore, the Rishis were not like ordinary begetters. Their minds must have been different from those of the common householders by the very fact that they could dandle grandsons and granddaughters on their knees at only so ripe an old age. The basis of this fact is the prolonged period of brahmacharya—sexless studentship—in the Rigvedic epoch. The period was 48 years. Old books mention several periods—12 years, 24, 36 and finally the extreme I have mentioned. I remember reading in the *Indica* of Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to the court of the Indian king whom the historians of Alexander the Great called "Sandrocottus" (=Chandragupta), that the age of marriage for the Brahmins was 37. Evidently, around 300 B.C., this was the extreme. In the most ancient India it went still beyond. If it was nearly half a century, then naturally the sons of the Rishis would follow the

same plan, so that when their fathers reached almost 100 years the sons would have their children.

The Upanishadic limit appears to be less than the Rigvedic. Don't we read in the Isha Upanishad the injunction about desireless and detached activity: "Doing verily works in this world, one should wish to live a hundred years"? In ancient Greek books too the longest life-span was put at a century and they equated this length of time to three generations. Nowadays we count a generation as 25 years instead of a little over 33 as did Herodotus.

How is it that you get fatigued when people visit you? They must be drawing upon your vital energy and you must be letting it flow out in sympathy according to your generous nature. Whatever inner help goes forth from you should be out of a depth of serenity—the Divine Force using you as a calm pellucid medium.

The suggestions that sometimes harass you—"No progress, I am hopeless"—are from invisible hostile beings. You are going on quite well in your quiet way. All of us have the aspiration to come nearer and nearer our divine Gurus—Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—but we should never despair and never accept such notions of non-progress. We are in their hands and they will always help us go forward. Our one aim should be to give ourselves to them more and more in devotion and surrender and leave the problem of our progress to their profound and far-reaching vision. Our standards of advancement may be egoistic, looking only at apparent immediate results. A lot of spiritual working by the Divine is done behind the scenes for one who is dedicated to Him. We must trust in His wisdom and judgment and cast our gaze ahead. Advancement is assured if we can always pray to the Mother: "Please never let go your hold on me—even if I am foolish enough at times to lose my hold on you!" Not our own serious-minded strength so much as our all-confiding light-hearted weakness before her enfolding presence is the true way to our goal of integral transformation.

My good wishes are always with you, along with the prayer that the Mother may look after you and make you an ever sweeter child of hers.

(20.12.1988)

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Congratulations on your coining a new word and enriching the English language! It is new and yet the most natural-seeming. You have written of my "lightful letter" and added to the store of beautiful English adjectives. I wonder why nobody before thought of a word-formation which could jump so easily from the pen. If we can speak of "delightful", why not of "lightful"? Especially fitting it looks in the phrase you have made: "Very many thanks for your loving and lightful letter. ."

I on my part must thank you not only for the pleasure you have given me by this verbal coinage in so well-turned a sentence but also for the compliment you

have paid to my writing and, through the writing, to the writer. To be at the same time “loving and lightful” is to be expressive from the depth of one’s being. People can be “loving” from the vital-emotional nature or they can be “lightful” from the ideative mind, but it is only when one acts from the true soul that one can be both warm and illuminative and bring the atmosphere of a consciousness which has a spontaneous sense of the truth of things.

(24.1.1989)

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The dream you have recounted is very significant. The fact that you find yourself in Pondicherry shows at the same time your soul’s sense of its true home and of its true relationship with me as a companion of your inmost being. My sitting in a chair is the most natural pose for me. The greater part of my day is spent like that—in reading or writing or typing, when I am not talking to people who come with their questions. In your dream you also came with a question about my accepting a gift from you for February 21 this year. And my answer, “We should ask the Mother,” is typical. For when anybody puts me a question, my first instinct is to put it inwardly before the Mother and let the answer stream out, as it were, on the warm flow I feel going out of my heart towards the Divine. In your dream, the immediate appearance of the Mother in our midst shows how close she always is to those who appeal to her—all the closer is she when the appeal is from one who really feels helpless without her aid but who also feels that

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

Once, when a few of us were gathered, as we were wont to do, in the “Prosperity” room in the Library House, in the evening before the hour of the Soup Distribution by the Mother in the room downstairs, the Mother brought her file of Prayers and Meditations written in her own hand. She asked each of us what his or her favourite sentence was. I chose the one which in the English translation reads: “O divine and adorable Mother, with Thy help what is there that is impossible?” The Mother immediately cut out for me from her manuscript the passage which opens with these words, stuck it on a separate piece of paper, wrote “à Amal” on top in the right hand corner and the date at the bottom on the left. The date was *Pondichéry, le 21 Juin 1932*. The Prayer itself bore the date: *Pondichéry 25 Septembre 1914*. She gave to everyone present a manuscript-clipping like this of the passage they liked best.

Suggestively enough, my sentence is the beginning of the Prayer whose ending served, with an appropriate change of the tenses, as the Mother’s Message soon after the Supramental Manifestation on February 29, 1956, in the earth’s subtle-physical layer, what she called the earth’s “atmosphere”.

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.

This Message is reproduced on the imprint-page of *Mother India* every month. *Mother India's* motto from the very start has been: "Great is truth and it shall prevail." We may say that with the manifestation of the Supermind, the supreme dynamic divine plane which is both creative and transformative and which Sri Aurobindo designated "Truth-Consciousness", the prophecy about Truth prevailing has essentially proved right, and the seed has been sown for a Divine Life to emerge for man in the future.

Indeed there has been the realisation of what had looked "impossible" in the midst of modern materialism and its rat-race and, on a backward gaze, the burden of the long career of human folly down the centuries despite the appearance of sage and saint and prophet and Avatar. Perhaps the most "impossible"-looking event from my own personal viewpoint—a change in the life of fumbling, stumbling, grumbling though luckily never crumbling Amal Kiran—could also take place just by his constant appeal to the divine and adorable Mother for help.

It may be of interest to you to know what the Mother said when once in the meeting in the "Prosperity"-room the question arose as to who most often made a call to the Mother for help. She named Duraiswamy, a well-known advocate of Madras who used to come to the Ashram on weekends, and the fellow who is writing this letter. Evidently, we two were most in difficulties again and again and finding ourselves in dire need of more-than-human guidance and assistance. Her picking us out did not mean any special spirituality in us but simply the sense we had of our own weakness and our being constantly confronted by inner problems and outer quandaries.

To go back to your dream. Your spontaneous gesture of putting your head on the Mother's feet without the slightest delay is exactly like you—the child-soul's straight answer to its spiritual birth-giver's presence. What the Mother did and said are quite significant. She sweetly encouraged you and fully supported your idea of celebrating her birth-date. Your hearing her words in Gujarati is no illusion. She has explained in one of her talks that when a message is sent from a region beyond words, the region of pure ideas which is beyond that of thoughts, the word-formulation in whatever language is natural to the speaker can be received by the hearer in the hearer's own habitual tongue. My smile at the close of the dream is not uncharacteristic, for I believe in what the Mother has written somewhere: "If you smile at life, life will smile back at you."

(8.2.1989)

As regards the Samadhi and you, both are very much together. Quite often you are on the stream of self-offering that flows out of my heart. Sometimes it is like the Ganges “pacing leonine to the sea”. At other times the gentler Jamuna would represent the inner movement—Jamuna with its memories of Krishna and the Gopis. Your presence can go well with either, for there is in you something delicately soft as well as something bravely strong—the former spontaneously yields to the Mother, the latter is what you are when the Mother has accepted you. Both these aspects of you I see in your dealings with your illness. You leave everything to the Mother and at the same time stand up to the illness, looking with a quiet courage beyond it. Yes, you must always cast your gaze into the future—a free and firm future with all the trouble left behind.

The disease you mention must be kept at bay by change of diet and whatever medication may be necessary. I am sure it will be so with your profound faith in the invisible Skill that exceeds the capacity of a million doctors and with your taking to heart the statement: “A smiling equality of attitude as the wide background of the constant act of remembering and offering—such is the state in which we are expected to be.” You are bewailing that “precisely this *constant* is still the main problem” in your endeavour. I should think that if you feel its absence so acutely, the constancy desired is very much there behind the scenes and is pushing towards being a presence in the days ahead. Along with aspiring for it as an emergence from your own soul, pray to the Mother for it as a gift of Grace. The Mother has always been eager to do our sadhana for us and the more we put ourselves helplessly in her hands the swifter we are carried forward. We must learn to surrender to her not only our non-sadhana, the dull dragging part of us, but also our sadhana, the bright winging part, so that her strength and swiftness and not just our own soul-power may take us up and keep us lifted in

The shining blue of the immortal light.

Mention of “blue” brings me to your first dream-vision. The pebbly foot-path, at which you were looking while walking along it, seems to me to represent your none-too-easy life-movement. The green meadow-lining which you mark may be a sign of the vital plane. What next happens is really an enchanting discovery: “Suddenly there shot up between the stones and out of the lawn small lovely blue flowers.” What I have called “discovery” is in fact “revelation”. The spiritual world which we are seeking is shown to be secretly with you even here on earth and not only in what is high above. You receive—

Out of a sky whose each blue moment bears
The sun-touch of a rapt omnipotence—

the grace of those moments in the very midst of the ordinary course of time in the form of these little blue flowers. The hidden soul-element in earth-existence has given you a pre-view of the spiritual Reality that is your true home. The soul-element is clearly indicated by the flower-symbol—and, as the psychic being in us is a representative of our highest Spirit-Self, its pushing into your sight sparkles of a blue beauty is quite natural. This dream-vision is a reminder to you of the Divine's presence pervading your life and penetrating with its love and bliss all your hours.

The other dream-vision—a bright flame burning vividly on your horizontally lifted right forearm and giving you a happy feeling afterwards—strikes me as signifying two things. First, the activity going forth from you towards the world in general. Second, the dynamic guidance of a greater light than our own intelligence—simultaneously enlarging the range of your sight and imparting the truth-touch to all your work. To be the effective bearer of this inwardly satisfying as well as outwardly creative force, one does not have to be a wide-scale worker, much less an epoch-maker. Within one's own private circle this force can act with equal authenticity. The problem is the same everywhere: to be the instrument of the inner being's Truth-Will

(1 12.88)

*

You are never absent at the back of my mind and quite often you spring into the front. Yes, smiling, though occasionally your eyes are a little wistful. I am glad for this combination; without that peering into unknown distances, without wondering, as a poem of mine puts it,

what visionary urge
Has stolen from horizons watched alone
Into your being,

the smile on the mouth will be just a surface rose with no roots in the soul, a smug satisfaction with common humanity's present state, lacking the secret sense of the Mother's depth of beauty to be explored and Sri Aurobindo's height of truth to be scaled

(18.7.1988)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

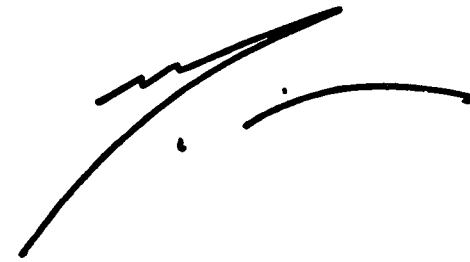
THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1989)

The Mother's Message

This is the
interesting story of
how a being became
the Divine Self



Vol. Three 1959

No. 29

ON 3rd August 1960 the aircraft after terrible bumps touched down at Bombay airport.

I had a cracking headache which became sharper as each moment passed. It was impossible for me to sleep in the plane.

There was nothing glaring to declare at the customs. Two Officers after checking my British Passport asked me whether I wished to exchange pounds for rupees. I said "No".

Mrs. Saralaben Shah welcomed me at the aerodrome and took me to her house. I stayed overnight. The next morning I flew to Madras where I was received by Laljibhai, his son Suresh and his Manager Mr. Pathak.

Nobody informed me that I was to meet the Mother that very afternoon. I was longing to see her. But everything was amazingly changed. I felt as if I were a stranger. My apartment also appeared to me alien.

The whole night I passed wondering what world I had landed in. The Mother must have observed and tested my consciousness during the night in order to tune it up.

The following morning I took out from my suitcase a number of gifts for the Mother and kept them ready to offer her at 4 p. m. on 5th August.

I entered her Dressing Room and stood in front of her. She studied my face for a long moment, her eyes full of warmth and compassion for what seemed to me almost an eternity of time without words. Our eyes spoke to each other. Then slowly I knelt down at her feet. She folded me into her arms. The sweetness of relief filled my heart. My soul whispered: "Oh, at last to my true home!"

I looked at her. Tears of joy streamed down at the sight of her. Time still lay suspended. Then finally she spoke:

"You were pretty and now you are prettier."

My cheeks flushed, a slight smile touched my lips. The Mother said:

"Didn't anybody inform you that I had been waiting for you yesterday?"

I said: "Unfortunately, no."

Then she saw all the things I had brought for her. She expressed her pleasure by touching and feeling them. She told me:

"Child, come to me every day at 4 p.m."

I thanked her and took my leave.

Thus I resumed my journey on the spiritual path.

*

The heat was enervating. I remembered desperately the most wonderful weather of London at that time of summer. I transported myself back in my thoughts to those days when I felt frozen in shivering waves of cold and recalled the heat of Pondicherry.

Indeed, the human mind is so complicated. It doesn't get adjusted easily to the changing moods of seasons and situations.

My only solace was to meet the Mother and talk to her.

On 9th August she gave me the book, *The Eternal Wisdom*, to finish typing

the quotations of the Second Part. The quotations of the First Part she had written to me when I had gone to East Africa in May 1958.

She cautioned me that I should be very careful with the book. For, she had only one copy.

Then suddenly she asked me:

“What perfume have you worn?”

I said: “Apple-Blossom. Mother, do you like it? Tomorrow I’ll bring the bottle for you. But, I am afraid, it has been used. Do you mind?” She smiled and said: “No, my child.”

So I brought her the perfume the succeeding day. There and then she sprayed it on herself and enjoyed its fragrance. She got up, opened her cupboard and took out a cut-glass bottle of rose-perfume and gave it to me saying: “Ah, my child, we exchange perfumes!”

Those days I was often clad in slacks which she liked very much—she specially admired my butter-fly white glasses.

I was wearing lipstick. Some people remarked: “You have become fashionable.” I said: “Why not?”

People see only the outer appearance. If they were in the right consciousness, they would have a deeper impression of the way the Mother did her work in her children.

Often interested people are led away by superficial observations.

Some people thought that I had gone to London to get married and settle there. Some thought that I had gone for study, to take a job and earn money. They could not think otherwise. Their notions were petty, limited and meaningless.

Their only intention was to hurt my feelings. But I did not care, because the Mother approved of my “fashion”.

During my stay abroad I realised perfectly well the outer struggles, difficulties, troubles and setbacks. Nonetheless, all the experiences, good or bad, made me strong, steady and confident.

*

A few days later I showed the Mother the flowers and the bead-bag I had made in London. She regarded them with enthusiasm. She was amused to see the tools used for the flowers.

Some flowers had become askew; she straightened them.

I told her that I intended to make a rose-spray for her gold-silk dress which I would stitch and embroider with beads. She gave me a smile. Her eyes shone with delight.

Vasudha who was present there expressed her wish to learn the art of flower-making from me.

Later the tools were made in Harpagon for Vasudha's Embroidery Department
 Soon she would start her lesson.

*

Now it was Sri Aurobindo's birthday The Mother distributed the following message to every one:

THE MOTHER OF GOD

A conscious and eternal Power is here
 Behind unhappiness and mortal birth
 And the error of Thought and blundering trudge of Time.
 The Mother of God, his sister and his spouse,
 Daughter of his wisdom, of his might the mate,
 She has leapt from the Transcendent's secret breast
 To build her rainbow worlds of mind and life.
 Between the superconscient absolute Light
 And the Inconscient's vast unthinking toil
 In the rolling and routine of Matter's sleep
 And the somnambulist motion of the stars
 She forces on the cold unwilling Void
 Her adventure of Life, the passionate dreams of her lust.
 Amid the work of darker Powers she is here
 To heal the evils and mistakes of Space
 And change the tragedy of the ignorant world
 Into a Divine Comedy of joy
 And the laughter and the rapture of God's bliss.
 The Mother of God is master of our souls;
 We are the partners of his birth in Time,
 Inheritors we share his eternity.

SRI AUROBINDO

I finished typing the Second Part of *The Eternal Wisdom*. The Mother asked me to keep the scripts which I still have with me.

I asked the Mother what work I should do. She said: "I don't know." Then after a pause she asked:

"Would you like to work in H.E.C.?" (Honesty Engineers and Contractors).

I answered: "No, Mother, I am sorry."

Both of us remained quiet for a few minutes. She went into a trance. When she awoke, she stretched her hand towards the stool nearby and picked up a toy-rabbit with ruby eyes. While giving it to me she said:

“This is from Paris. Isn’t it cute? Child, take this rabbit with you when you go to sleep ”

I said: “Eh, no, Mother, if I do so, it will turn into a distorted ball of wool. I’ll cherish it as your sweet memento.”

She smiled and nodded.

According to the Mother, a rabbit signifies “Surrender.”

Wasn’t she hinting to me to surrender exclusively to the Supreme Lord?

*

August came to a close.

I painted the face of a woman and showed it to the Mother. She encouraged me:

“I like it. I am very happy that you still remember the Truth. The beauty of the soul must come out.”

(To be continued)

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NOTICE

I have received several requests for permission to print copies of the paintings of *Meditations on Savitri* and the paintings of *About Savitri* for various purposes, such as making the covers of books, greeting cards and so on. But it was the Mother’s view that it would be best if these paintings were not used in the ways proposed. It is felt that they will have their best value if they appear only in the series of books—*Meditations on Savitri* and *About Savitri*—as planned by the Mother herself. *Savitri* is sacred and should be left untouched, otherwise the truth behind each painting which is the creation of the Divine Mother will be distorted and everything will become common and meaningless. The Light and Power will not be there any more.

I am also asked to give my permission to record the commentaries of the Mother from the book—*About Savitri*. The same idea and feeling hold for this matter too.

Many of my other paintings directed by the Mother are already printed as greeting cards without my permission. Besides, the writings from my books are taken without my knowledge and without acknowledgment of their sources. So I request all the Centres and their members, disciples and devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to consider the matter seriously.

Whatever the Mother has given to me I shall be very happy to share with everybody. Everything will surely appear in book-form in the course of time, according to the Mother’s Will and Vision.

Let us all respect Her wish. Thank you.

HUTA

ADORATION

THOU whose gentle hand has kindled
The lone flame burning
In the secret chamber
Of my quiet heart,
Whose touch it has awaited
While seeing many golden suns depart
Beyond rose-twilight eves of time.

A hope Thou settest a-fire,
Whose warmth unveils the sign
Of the ancient wedding gift—
Nature's occult design!
'Twas Thou whose heaven-charmed hand
Touched this stone of pale desire
And let its hidden honey flow
To Thy feet's transfiguring glow.

Now this candled stone of time
Shimmers before Thy azure eyes.
In a passion of discovery it cries
For a glory of mysterious birth
Upon sun-burnished shores of earth.

I dream a dream of beauty
Deeper than diamond's white muse,
Becoming richer by wisdom,
Catching Thy alchemist hues.
A golden love shall grow forever
In adoration to offer Thee
The gem of a thousand gods' labour

RAJESHWARI

EUGENE O'NEILL

THE MAN WHO DARED

*If Eugene O'Neill's canvas was wide—the setting for his plays ranged from a small American town to Imperial China—so is his appeal, as has been confirmed by the worldwide celebrations that have marked his birth centenary. In India, several universities have held plays, seminars and workshops on the playwright and his works. Some of these events were hosted by the U.S. Information Service (USIS) in New Delhi which also presented a photographic exhibit, a bibliography of his works, a travelling book exhibit and a festival of films based on his plays. The high point of the celebrations was an unusual Indo-American collaboration—USIS invited American director Rodney Marriott to direct a Hindi version of O'Neill's *Marco Millions*, translated into Hindi as *Karori Marco*, for the National School of Drama in New Delhi. In this article, the author recalls the genius, intensity and innovative daring of the man who single-handedly created a world-class American theater.*

WE will never know exactly how many plays O'Neill wrote, especially since he and his third wife, Carlotta, destroyed several of his unfinished manuscripts during his final years. More than 30 plays appeared on New York stages alone between the first production of an O'Neill play (*Bound East for Cardiff*) in 1916 and the Theater Guild production of *A Touch of the Poet* in 1958.

What we do know is that during the 1920s, O'Neill's heyday, no other playwright in the Western world—with the arguable exception of George Bernard Shaw—had dared the creative odds as did O'Neill. He tried to fuse past history with present circumstances, for example, in *The Fountain* (1921), an exploration of the eternal human quest for immortality and riches, based specifically on the adventures of Ponce de Leon and more broadly on the invasion of the New World by the Spanish conquistadores.

He also fused traditional theater styles with revolutionary theater practices, as when he used masks adapted from classical Greek, Roman and Oriental theater to convey Freudian theories about the unconscious in *The Great God Brown* (1925).

Many, if not most, of his scripts were strongly influenced by the three epochal intellectual movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For example, O'Neill applied Darwin's theories of natural selection in *Beyond the Horizon* (1918) and *The Hairy Ape* (1921); Marx's theories of self-destructive capitalism in *The Great God Brown* and *The Hairy Ape*; and Freud's theories of psychoanalysis in *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), *Strange Interlude* (1927) and *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931).

O'Neill repeatedly attempted to synthesize these great biological, political and psychological formulations with ancient ways of looking at the tragic extremes of the human condition. Thus he said, at the height of his success, "Most modern plays are interested in the relation between man and man... I am interested only in the relation between man and God."

Writing in 1961 about O'Neill, American literary critic Joseph Wood Krutch noted, "No other American writer for the stage has so constantly produced plays which so closely approximate the Aristotelian ideal" of tragedy as a form of catharsis. Many critics see *Desire Under the Elms* as a virtually "perfect" modern adaptation of Aristotle's prescriptions for tragedy.

Whether the hero was a simple man, like Yank in *The Hairy Ape*, or the heroine was a complex, fate-driven, regal woman, like Lavinia in *Mourning Becomes Electra*, O'Neill intended audiences to behold their tragic deaths as a symbol of the power of human nature ultimately to prevail.

The worldwide activities marking O'Neill's centenary have brought into focus an aspect of O'Neill's genius that has been too often neglected. He possessed a cross-cultural sensitivity unusual in artists of the first half of the 20th century. For example, in the early sea plays, which launched O'Neill's career (*Bound East for Cardiff*, 1914; *In the Zone*, *The Long Voyage Home*, 1916; and *The Moon of the Caribbees*, 1917), his characters included Irishmen, Swedes, Scotsmen, West Indians and cockney Britons. In *The Emperor Jones* (1920) and *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1923), his main characters were black Americans. In *Lazarus Laughed* (1926), he took his audiences back to ancient Judaea. In *Mourning Becomes Electra*, O'Neill transplanted Greek tragic theater in New England; and in *Marco Millions* (1925), he transported audiences to Venice, Persia, India and China. The academic accuracy of his cross-cultural attempts is less important than the fact that he tried to project what he believed to be essential in the behavior, thinking and speech patterns of other cultures.

O'Neill won his first Pulitzer Prize in 1920 for *Beyond the Horizon*, a love tragedy set on a farm in New England. That same year he also achieved a second full-length play triumph, switching his setting to a mythic country in the West Indies, where a black American train porter victimizes the native population, only to be hounded to death on stage by his own fears; in *The Emperor Jones*, O'Neill used symbolism and expressionism, two of the major innovations of the recent European stage. He also wrote in two different dialects: Negro speech for Jones and cockney for Smithers, the other important character.

Switching gears again, that same year he gave American theater *Anna Christie*, in which he created the fullest portrait by an American playwright to date of a "fallen woman" who is redeemed by the generosity of her nature and the loyalty of her "man", Mat Burke. The language was at once intensely colloquial and poetic; the play earned O'Neill his second Pulitzer Prize (in 1922).

A short time later, Broadway saw the premiere of *The Hairy Ape*, which

appears more often in American literature anthologies than any other American play. In eight riveting scenes, O'Neill portrays the alienation and dehumanization that had become major themes in European and American literature. The themes were staged with relentless power by means of expressionistic sets and stage action. Expressionism was a technique perfected on the German stage, by which the sets and the actions of the characters were intended to portray the "essence" of the playwright's theme rather than literal actuality. The play is a masterpiece.

In 1925, *Desire Under the Elms*, his second undisputed masterwork, made it clear that he had reached his creative maturity. The most produced O'Neill play in India—and perhaps throughout the world—this is a perfectly constructed tragedy, transferred from Greek theater to the stone-bound farmlands of New England. It involves adultery, infanticide, lust, renunciation and sacrifice.

Then, after a decade of nearly unrelieved triumph, critics and audiences began to sour on his next set of plays, which were, if anything, even more experimental. As noted earlier, in *The Great God Brown* O'Neill employs masks to represent "inner" and "outer" psychic states. In *Lazarus Laughed*, he shifts to epic pageantry as a vehicle to explore life, death and the afterlife. In *Marco Millions* he dramatizes the excesses of American and Western materialism and expansionism.

In *Strange Interlude*, O'Neill dramatizes Freud's theories and elaborates the age-old technique of the stage aside into an "interior" monologue to express each character's subconscious.

Mourning Becomes Electra, his most ambitious work, consists of three full plays. Writing about it in his book, *Tragedy, Modern Temper and O'Neill*, Professor Chaman Ahuja of Panjab University comments that while all the elements in this 13-hour play were at the ready to create a "great modern tragedy... in the execution of the plan, he bungled, because he chose the psyche rather than the soul as the battleground of the opposing forces."

Reviews of O'Neill's plays between 1926 and 1934 were, often, an interesting mixture of condemnation and commendation. Describing *The Great God Brown* as a "superb failure," the *New York Post* critic remarked: "His imagination has soared on wax wings too near the sun of dramatic illusion and, though he comes tumbling from the skies, it is a brilliant thrilling fall, since he has dared greater heights than any other." Said *The New York Times*: "What Mr. O'Neill has succeeded in doing in *The Great God Brown* is obviously more important than what he has not succeeded in doing. He has not made himself clear. But he has placed within reach of the stage finer shades of beauty, more delicate nuances of truth and more passionate qualities of emotion than we can discover in any other single modern play."

Strange Interlude, five hours long, attracted ridicule (for its length, mainly) and admiration. Commenting that the audience was "astonished, perhaps, at

finding it is still 1928," when they emerged at the end of the nine-act dramatic marathon, the *New York Evening Journal* critic went on to pay, in a more serious tone, his tribute to the playwright: "Admit that it is an ordeal by watered dialogue, admit that its sprawling size does, at times, convict O'Neill of reckless waste and artistic laziness... and yet... it does manage to be profoundly engrossing. .. The play. in spite of its serious defects, remains the most provocative and interesting event of the season, and probably the most significant contribution to the American drama."

Dynamo (1928) "irked" critics, but *Mourning Becomes Electra* won mostly ecstatic reviews, one of the exceptions being the *Billboard* critic who described it as "a good three-act melodrama pulled out to a marathon by an author who takes himself too seriously... who wastes his own and his audience's time."

Days Without End (1933) was condemned by the *New York Post* as "among the feeblest of his works," along with *Dynamo* and *Welded* (1922).

The mixed reception that O'Neill received from critics during this period, generated further media hype, with the "for" and "against" writers holding forth in fiery prose. While George Jean Nathan described those indulging in O'Neill baiting as "pathetic jackasses," H. G. Kemelman charged that the "intelligentsia whose patronage has raised O'Neill to his present eminence... mistake [the] little tricks of the showman for bold originality .. They mistake 'purple passages' for poetry and a maudlin pathos for power."

Kemelman added that in the handling of the dramatic situation, O'Neill "shows all the delicacy and subtlety of a circus advertisement " He ridiculed O'Neill's use of masks in *The Great God Brown* ("only a poor artist needs labels to make his intentions clear") and the aside in *Strange Interlude* ("a confession on the part of the playwright that he cannot express himself in a dramatist's medium")

Kemelman found O'Neill's language "unreal, grandiose and extravagant." The length of O'Neill's plays and the divergent themes and worlds they portrayed did prove a challenge in terms of language for O'Neill. The spectrum of combinations with which he experimented called for stage language ranging from the most vernacular and everyday to the most poetic.

The question of O'Neill's language was raised and reraised during a recent seminar, titled "Eugene O'Neill: Interpreter of the American Dream," held in Chandigarh. Thirty-five Indian academics from English and theater departments throughout north India met with Professor Jackson Bryer of the English department, University of Maryland, who has coedited two editions of O'Neill's letters with professor Travis Bogard. Bryer commented that non-American audiences generally do not have the "trouble" with O'Neill's language that Americans have, perhaps because non-Americans are not geared to the exact idiom patterns of Americans, and can therefore accept the dialogue more easily in the stage context for which O'Neill wrote.

In *Mourning Becomes Electra*, O'Neill himself was frustrated by his attempts to write verse dialogue. He confided to Krutch, "Oh, for a language to write drama in! For a speech that is dramatic and isn't just conversation!... I'm so fed up with the dodge-question of dialect! But where to find that language?" While critics generally hailed the 1931 opening of the play, and some considered it his masterpiece, Krutch summarized the reservations of critics and audiences, saying, "It lacks just one thing... language—words as thrilling as the action which accompanies them."

But O'Neill was nothing if not resilient. In 1933, when critics were writing him off and audiences were deserting him, he came up with his only comedy, the wholly successful, modest masterpiece, *Ah, Wilderness!* Creatively, it makes perfect sense that O'Neill should turn away from the pageantry and experimentation of the middle-period to the safe stage arena of a well-made, at least semiautobiographical, domestic comedy set in his native Connecticut. It provided comic relief to his bruised artistic sensibility and safe haven on his home ground. It also underlined the fact that O'Neill *needed* to write again and again about his own family.

From 1935 to 1945, there were almost no O'Neill plays on or off Broadway, even though he had by now won a third Pulitzer Prize (for *Strange Interlude* in 1928) and the Nobel Prize for literature in 1936.

Traditional reasons given for O'Neill's slump during this period include failing health, alcoholism, an unhappy marriage and jealous (or in O'Neill's view, petty and vengeful) critics. My own theory is that O'Neill lacked the inner discipline that most American writers have continued to lack: he could not bring himself to cut and slash through the thickets that theories and endless experimenting had nurtured in his fertile imagination.

But it is true that by now O'Neill was a very sick man. Not only had alcohol taken its toll, but he had a deteriorating nerve disease that would leave him unable to write legible longhand during his final years. Many of his characters were notable for their ability to endure. Now, O'Neill himself would show remarkable endurance by writing two more undisputed masterpieces, *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1955). *The Iceman Cometh's* publication date is not known; it was copyrighted in 1940. It was probably written during his decade of silence—when there were no known stage productions of his plays—as was *A Touch of the Poet* (copyrighted 1946).

The year 1946 saw the production of *The Iceman Cometh* and O'Neill's first and only press conference. But the O'Neill revival had barely started—and not very successfully (all the plays produced from 1946 to 1952 had modest runs)—when, on November 27, 1953, he passed away. Surprisingly, cruelly, his death was given scant attention by the media. But the Off-Broadway 1956 production of *The Iceman Cometh*, directed by Jose Quintero, sparked a revival of interest in and admiration for O'Neill, which continues to this day.

In November 1956, three years after his death and ten years after the last O'Neill play on Broadway, *Long Day's Journey Into Night* won a fourth (post-humous) Pulitzer for O'Neill and opened to rave reviews: "Magnificent," said the *New York Daily News*, "A stunning theatrical experience," declared the *New York Herald Tribune*. In 1957, *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1952) and in 1958, *A Touch of the Poet* each opened on Broadway. Although the former play is flawed in structure, its central character, Josie, remains one of the most unforgettable women characters in modern theater. The critics were, once again, glowing in their tributes to O'Neill. "He is majestically alone in American theater," said the *New York Journal-American*, adding, "One is apt to forget his extraordinary talents: The great gift of drawing characters in depth, then pitting them one against the other with all nerves exposed."

Academic and theater critics, including this writer, have often taken for granted the fact that O'Neill single-handedly created a world-class American theater in the second decade of the 20th century.

The fortunes and reputation of Eugene O'Neill will continue to be controversial, but they will also continue to be international. Whatever his limitations, he wrote at least six full-length and four short plays that are acknowledged as masterpieces. This is an incredible achievement by itself.

JAY GURIAN

About the author: Jay Gurian, a program officer with the U S Information Service in New Delhi, entered the American Foreign Service after three decades of teaching. He was professor of American studies at the University of Hawaii till 1986. He has directed several plays, including some written by him, in the United States and India.

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VIDYAPATI—THE BANDIT

A DREAM-STORY

NIRODBARAN'S NOTE

I have full faith in the truth of this extraordinary account, the contents of which were personally told me. The writer is, in my opinion, incapable of having fabricated it.

IT all really began in 1981, though in which month or on what exact date, I cannot now recall. All I remember is that it was summer and I was disturbed by all sorts of family and monetary problems. Actually they were rather petty, but when problems and differences exceed financial bounds and begin to touch upon one's self-respect, they no longer remain unimportant. So much so that in those days, I often thought of giving up the worldly life and becoming a recluse.

One night, therefore, when I had fallen asleep with the profound desire of taking up an ascetic's existence, I suddenly felt shaken out from a deep slumber with a feeling that I had been dreaming—though what the dream had been, I could not quite remember. Anyway I tried to fall asleep once again and just as a gentle slumber began to envelop me, I found myself as if sitting in a cinema hall and scene after scene of a well-knit story began to unfold before my mind's eye. This went on for a while, but just when I began to ask myself what was coming next the whole show stopped.

On the succeeding night, when I tried to review all that I had seen on the previous one, I found it taking the shape of a beautiful, though unfortunately, an unfinished, tale. I thought that if I had been a writer I might have completed the story, but since I wasn't one, I couldn't do it. The next night, I vowed that if there were any visions once again, I would absolutely not try to find out what was to happen next, and accept whatever would appear of itself before my eyes. Having decided thus, I fell asleep. But not only did I not see anything on that occasion; I also did not see anything in my sleep for several nights afterwards.

Then, one night, just when all these events had begun to fade and my sleep had started to become deep and tranquil once again, those visions reappeared. This time, I remained more conscious. The sequence of images too continued uninterruptedly and much more clearly than the previous time. For a while, it continued thus, then just when the story was reaching a climax, my mind once again made the same mistake of becoming curious and of wanting to know the end of the story. But how extraordinary! The moment I formulated that desire the visions stopped. I understood then that these images could not be brought on by any effort and so I felt depressed and even somewhat angry with myself.

The next morning I decided to note down whatever I had seen, then wait for

the last visions to come. But when I began to write down the experience I found that several necessary details and pieces of information were still unknown to me. For example: what were the names of the places or the people around which were woven the events? I had seen no name. As I sat wondering how to call them, two names floated up into my mind, which I later found to be very befitting.

A few nights after this I saw a dream which seemed very logically to be the conclusion of my earlier visions. When I woke up the next morning I recalled the whole experience and sat down immediately to note it down since I strongly felt, I don't know why, that if I did not record it straight away, I would never be able to remember it correctly later. On revising what I had written I found that the whole thing had taken the form of a story, a story for which I could take no credit other than having seen and related it.

THE STORY

Bairinagar—the city of Hostility. Whoever had named the little town Bairi had indeed described it well. For on all sides of the town was a dense jungle filled with thorny bushes and poisonous trees. No fruits and flowers grew there and dangerous wild beasts roamed in it freely. Their fierce roarings would make men quake and rare indeed was the man who would dare to cross the forest since paths there were none. The forest extended over a wide rough terrain. The men who dwelt in that town seemed to be as savage and heartless as the beasts around them. Their chief who called himself their king was a man of terrifying appearance. He was the Robber Vidyapati. Strange name since he seemed to incarnate all that was the exact opposite of wisdom and light. He appeared to be the living expression of all the various forms of Ignorance. His favourite pastimes were murder and pillage and tyranny, as if he were born to smash whatever was good and beautiful in this world. What a huge mockery of the word “Vidyapati”! His was a far-flung empire of burning and sacking and robbery, and from wherever he found priceless treasures he brought them to Bairinagar. Every night he and his henchmen would loot a village, leaving behind them trails of inhuman cruelty. Anyone who tried to check or impede him was hacked to pieces and, if the victims were wealthy, the ornaments they wore were cut away with the limbs they adorned. Few therefore dared to raise against him a righteous protest.

One day, one of Vidyapati's men brought him the news that in a small town, not very far away, there dwelt a man called Narayan who lived in a richly decorated palace. On his head he wore a magnificent golden crown encrusted with the most rare and precious gems. He had bodyguards to protect him and he never slept.

Vidyapati and all the other citizens of Bairi were totally ignorant of God or the gods. For them, man was everything and they themselves were the kings

among men. Therefore, to them a temple seemed a palace, the devotees filing past the deity were bodyguards while the idol installed in the sanctum sanctorum was believed to be unsleeping. Actually, a follower of Vidyapati had asked one of the worshippers whether Narayan ever slept and he was told "The Lord never sleeps, for if He did, the universe would cease to be "

Vidyapati guffawed loudly on hearing this "That fellow Narayan must have heard about me," he cried, "and fear of me does not let him sleep. He knows that sooner or later I will come and snatch away his crown. And listen, all of you, that precious bejewelled crown was meant only for me, for Vidyapati, your master." "Yes, lord," they agreed with one voice. "None else but you deserves to wear that beautiful crown On your head, it will shine resplendently."

Soon after, Vidyapati set out in the night, with his band of robbers, to steal Narayan's crown. They were filled with a noisy glee, as if they were sure to steal the finest and most unforgettable treasure of their lives. Their hoarse shouts and raucous laughter frightened the sleeping birds away from their nests. The wild beasts fled panic-stricken to the densest heart of the forest, for so violent was the tramp of those feet they believed an earthquake was approaching In this manner, spreading terror on all sides, they arrived at the temple of Narayan.

They besieged it from all sides while Vidyapati himself, holding a naked sword, entered the temple The chief priest, on seeing him, sought to flee, but the robber chief caught him by the neck and shouted, "Where is your Narayan? Call him here to me and tell him I want his crown." The frightened priest answered, "He will not come. I think you will have to go to him yourself." "Is that so?" yelled Vidyapati. "I'll show him right away who is master here You, go and wait outside and don't dare move an inch, if you want to keep your head on your shoulders." So saying, he pushed the priest away and, twirling the sword in his hand, marched confidently into the heart of the temple. But amazement! The whole hall was ablaze with light, although only a small oil-lamp seemed to burn before a throne where sat, smiling at him, a regal figure, luminous and beautiful, wearing the envied crown. For a while, Vidyapati was taken aback, then he recovered his usual self-assurance and growled, "Give me your crown. Don't dare refuse, or you'll regret it." But the Man answered, gently smiling, "Of course. I have been keeping it for you But I will give it to you on one condition only " "What condition?" demanded the robber, somewhat puzzled, and added, "Tell me quickly. I can't ever bear waiting." The quiet reply came, "I want your very precious sword in exchange for the crown." Startled, Vidyapati looked at his sword and was dumbfounded to see, instead of his dear old sword burnished with use, a golden sword inlaid with gems and jewels. What amazed him still further was that this beautiful new sword was much more brilliantly shining than Narayan's crown. At that point, a voice broke into his puzzlement, "So you agree to my condition?" Vidyapati started out of his daze and called for the priest to ask him if all that he had seen and heard had been

real The head-priest understood nothing. He saw the dazzling naked sword in Vidyapati's hand and thought that he was to be beheaded. Blind terror made him take to his heels but this made the bandit decide that all that had happened had been true and not a dream. So he went against his own fundamental nature and refused to accept Narayan's condition. He said, "Now I'm leaving," as he staggered out of the temple like a drunken man.

When his companions saw him come out, they all shouted in loud triumph, for they knew that their leader always and everywhere took whatever he desired. They also knew that he never cared for others' feelings nor was there ever any question of give-and-take. He always acted and lived for himself. That was why they were astounded when they found that he was not holding the much longed-for crown in his hands as he approached them as if in a stupor. He told them, "That fellow Narayan thought that he could fool me. He believed I would exchange this sword inlaid with so many precious gems for his small and dull crown decorated with merely a few stones. But I'm not stupid, am I?" His companions stared uncomprehendingly at him as he spoke, not recognising in this remote stranger their dear and familiar lord. And yet they dared not disagree with him, so they spoke with one voice, "You did well, master." Then Vidyapati recounted to them all that had occurred within the temple.

*

Just as when the sun rises in the east, night must take her leave however reluctantly and try as one may to hold her back by shutting all doors and windows, for though the sun's rays may not penetrate the room yet a glow of growing light will dispel the cold gloom, so also in Vidyapati's life the carefully hoarded darkness began to dissolve in spite of the myriad efforts of the hostile forces lodged in his mind and his life. The sun had risen for him and the change within him had begun. The very sword, which until that day had fed the demoniac hungers of his cruelty and his wrath, now became a treasured possession. The weapon that had helped him to amass wealth by killing and sacking and pillaging now became more precious to him than all other riches. His only thought now was how to keep it, secure and safe, close to himself, forever. From time to time his men would come to inform him of all the invaluable treasures to be robbed from the wealthy in the various neighbouring towns, but they were always turned back, dissatisfied and dejected.

One day, one of his men, one who may be called his right hand and likely successor, finally burst out in annoyance, "How long are we to continue in this manner? If we do not work, how shall we survive?" To which Vidyapati answered by giving him the key to his treasury and saying, "Divide this wealth equally among yourselves. There is more than enough for all of you, for generations to come." But the man insisted, "This is not what we want. We want the

Vidyapati we knew, he who inspired us to great deeds of violence. That is the man we need." But Vidyapati explained quietly to him, "You see, this dear sword of mine can no longer be used to kill. I did not understand its value all these days, therefore in my ignorance I may already have lost so many of its jewels." The man laughed disdainfully "You have surely fallen under the spell of that Narayan, which is why you live like a coward." With a deafening roar, Vidyapati threw the man down and trampling him underfoot cried out, "Never again dare to utter what you have just said, otherwise I will bury you alive." His eyes blazed like a hundred suns and the terrified man ran for his life as far from Bairinagar as he could.

Vidyapati then proclaimed to the people of the town, "All those who wish to live here must follow my dictates. I hereby ordain that henceforth all forms of killing and violence are forbidden. Work and earn. Till the fields and clear the jungles. The wealth of others belongs to them, not to you."

A vast change had begun to remould Vidyapati's nature. In place of cruelty, wrath and greed, there grew in him love and tenderness, softness as well as strength. He was like one who, having tasted the crystalline waters, could no longer satisfy his thirst by drinking from a muddy and filthy stream. With the passage of days, his companions and the other citizens too began to feel a change growing upon them. For it was but natural that the streaming in of the new transformation should wash over them. It flooded the surrounding land and made even the wild beasts of the forest forget their savagery. The trees that had borne nothing but poisonous fruits now gave to the earth fruits as sweet as immortality's nectar. The dark frightening forest-ways where few had ever dared to walk were now cheerful with the sound of many feet, with the trees offering a restful shade to many a tired traveller.

One day, the former henchman of Vidyapati who had run away from Bairinagar stole back. He believed that it was the sword that held a magic power. If he could kill Vidyapati and take possession of that jewelled sword, then surely he would become king of Bairinagar.

Deepest darkest night. All the town was plunged in sleep. Suddenly the bandit attacked Vidyapati's house. For just one moment the chief was dumb-founded at the daring insolence of his erstwhile follower. For just one moment. The next minute he saw his sword blaze with a wonderful light and there, where had been the jewels, appeared Narayan. "Take up this sword, O Vidyapati," commanded He, "and free Bairinagar of its enemies, of its Bairi. Free it from all that is hostile. Such is your duty. Only then will the sword recover all its riches." Vidyapati charged at his attacker with a might the latter had never before witnessed in his leader. Terrified and quaking, he sought to escape, when, once again, the face of Narayan shone on the sword, and His voice spoke out, "Let not the enemy escape out of kindness, O Vidyapati. He will then return with double strength and seek to snatch your treasure from you. Behead him, here

and now.” The next instant, the bandit’s head was rolling in the dust. And then all was over, as if in a dream.

When Vidyapati was himself again, he found his enemy’s corpse lying on the ground. The sword in his hand was once again adorned with all its jewels, shining now with greater brilliance.

But he was not happy. Days passed. From time to time, he saw as in a dream Narayan telling him, “Don’t you want my crown, Vidyapati? Come and get it then. Give me your sword and I will give you my crown.” When he had seen and heard this several times, Vidyapati finally decided to return to the temple in order to give Narayan his sword. When he arrived at its gates, the head priest welcomed him in with much honour, for he no longer seemed a frightful bandit but a beautiful, luminous man. When he entered the holy of holies this time, there was no living and breathing Being of Light. To his dismay, Vidyapati found instead a seated stone image. Desperingly he turned to the priest and sobbed out his story. The latter soothed him, “Keep faith,” he said, “Since the Lord has told you that he will receive your sword and give you his crown, surely He will come. Remain calm and patient.” But Vidyapati’s grief at not finding his Lord knew no bounds. He took up the sword to cut his own throat and, that same instant, One spoke from a hidden recess, “Await the hour of my coming, the given and ordained hour ” It was the voice of Narayan, he knew. He lowered his sword-laden arm; his being grew calm. The jewels on the sword were no longer visible, but this did not trouble him. For until today, he had been blind, his eyes had been sightless. Now he had learnt to see. The precious gemstones no longer tempted him. He returned to his city of Bairi and began to wait for the Coming of the Lord, the blessed day when Narayan would come and relieve him of the burden of the sword.

It was in this frame of mind that one day, when Vidyapati was looking at his own reflection in a still pool of clear water, he found another face rising up next to his. His heart leaped with joy, for it was the long-desired Face of Narayan. He turned to find the Lord standing next to him. Just for an instant. The next moment He was gone. Vidyapati’s heart called out to Him in love and agony, “O my Narayan, where have you disappeared once again? Come back, my dear Lord, come and relieve me of the burden of this sword.” In the water of the pool the Form reappeared. And this time Vidyapati saw another figure emerge out of his own, a being of golden light on whose head Narayan was placing his crown after having taken the sword from him. And then the golden Vidyapati was no longer Vidyapati but had become Narayan.

The next morning the citizens of Bairinagar found the body of Vidyapati lying in the golden sunlight, as if in a deep sleep, on a bed of velvety green grass. It seemed enclosed in a ring of brilliant light. Then one of them spoke aloud, “Our town henceforth will no longer be called the City of Enmity, but the City of Joy, not Bairinagar any more but Anandanagar will be its name ”

Vidyapati, the Lord of Wisdom, had indeed fulfilled his destiny and justified his name.

X

RIDER ON THE PEACOCK

SPLENDOUR incarnate, wings gloriously spread
That shadow the universe from edge to edge,
Dancing in its all-conquering battle-joy,
A golden peacock marches down the world-stair,
Past myriad stars floating in space,
Past mighty mountains and oceans' waves.

From our whirling dot of matter in infinity's expanse,
Life's glories and mind's achievements
Will vanish in a moment's holocaust,
When descends astride that victory-bird
The falsehood-trampling feet of the Lord.
Then will wander on a transformed earth
Beauty and Truth of the in-lit soul.

SHYAM KUMARI

A PIONEER OF THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

MANY an eminent historian of India reckons 1856 as the birth-date of India's Struggle for Freedom. But the thought of regaining India's freedom had its root in the soil of Khurda in Orissa and the seed of that revolution was sown by Baxi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar. Baxi Jagabandhu could not stand long against the developed weapons of the mighty East India Company and at last he had to give in. By this the fire of revolution was put down, but never put out. It lay smouldering under ashes and re-emerged in another part of Orissa, viz , the district of Sambalpur Which flaring up may justly be called the dawn of India's Struggle for Freedom. Bearing the torch of that revolution Veera Surendra Sae made his début in the arena for the liberation of his motherland

Now-a-days a great many writers and historians of India have put in black and white the lives of those heroes who plunged into the Indian war of independence. But concerning the initiator of this movement and his whereabouts few of them have cared to wield their pens. If we unearth history we shall find that this movement had its birth in the land of Orissa and its two leading figures were Baxi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar and Veera Surendra Sae.

Veera* Surendra Sae was born on January 23, 1809 in the village of Badkhinda in the Sambalpur district of Orissa. His father's name was Dharm Singh.

Surendra Sae was born in his maternal uncle's house. His maternal uncle was a great horse-rider and wrestler. He learnt from him horse-riding and wrestling. Though deprived of higher education, he was well-versed in ethics and strategy

He was a descendant of Maharaja Sae, a ruler of the Chauhan dynasty of Sambalpur. The Maharaja died in the year 1827. Since he had no son, Surendra Sae was to ascend the throne of Sambalpur as his heir. But the East India Company declared Narayan Singh, the landlord of Borapali, the heir of the Maharaja instead. This provoked the people and a great wave of unrest spread across the state. Prior to this incident the countrymen were all aware of the pillage and untold coercion inflicted by the Company upon the Indians. So the landlords of Sambalpur assisted Surendra Sae with a view to taking revenge upon the Company for their coercion. Hundreds of fighters organised themselves and learnt the art of warfare in the forests, hills and mountain-caves.

At last they leaped into the battlefield with a challenge for war. These tribal fighters fell upon the residence of Duryodhan, who was the landlord of Rampur and an ally of Narayan Singh They did away with Duryodhan and his father and brother. Now a great opportunity came to the British. In 1840 they accused Surendra Sae and his brother Udanta of the murder of Duryodhan and his father. They were proved guilty and sent to the distant jail of Hazaribag.

They remained in the jail for seventeen years. Later in 1856 during the

* 'Veera' is the title awarded to Surendra Sae, which literally means 'hero'

Sepoy Mutiny when the sentries broke open the gate of the jail and released the prisoners, he and his brother Udanta were released too. They returned to Sambalpur in the month of August in the same year.

In 1858 Queen Victoria declared amnesty for the freedom-fighters. So the rebellion that broke out in different parts of the country subsided.

Surendra Sae's chief aim was to free India from the British rule. For he believed a nation which is not free cannot rise and cannot present to the world what is best in its culture. The dominance of foreigners does not allow its wisdom to flourish and expand either within its territory or outside. Winning back his throne was only a secondary hope. Had he fought against the British for the sake of the throne, he would have accepted with humility the declaration of amnesty for freedom-fighters by Queen Victoria and would have stopped fighting.

Surendra Sae knew well that the granting of amnesty by Queen Victoria was like worshipping the Ganges with her own water. If India had made an invasion of England and been beaten and then Queen Victoria had pardoned all the offenders, her generosity would have been really proved. But there was nothing praiseworthy in the act of her granting pardon to Surendra Sae and other fighters for freedom. The fighters were fighting against the plunderous British Government in order to rescue their motherland from the foreigners' clutches. So Surendra Sae rejected Queen Victoria's declaration of amnesty and continued his war against the British from 1857 to 1863. The confrontation took place in different places of the Sambalpur district such as Khadapat mountain, Debrigarh, Sangar Ghati, etc.

During the long six years of his struggle he met the British soldiers at times in open places and at times in the jungles and hillsides as in guerilla warfare. Hence the British Government tried by all means to capture him alive or dead. When all their attempts failed, they sent Mr. Leigh to him with a proposal of peace. But Surendra Sae could not at all put his trust in this proposal of the British who pillaged and ruled India with a crafty policy.

Again on May 16, 1862 Major Impe sent the proposal of peace along with some presents to him. This time Surendra Sae had some hope that peace could be permanently restored in Sambalpur. But due to an irony of fate this could not come to pass. Major Impe breathed his last and his successor Captain Cumberland, the district Magistrate of Sambalpur, denied the agreement reached previously. As a result the fire of revolt flared up again. But it is a pity that Surendra Sae's intimate friend Dayanidhi Meher, yielding to the temptation of a 'Jaygir' (rent-free land got as a reward), betrayed him into the hands of the British. The necklace became the noose.

Surendra Sae was arrested by the Police at 11 a.m. on January 23, 1864 and the then district Magistrate passed a sentence of life-imprisonment on him. But Surendra Sae filed an appeal in the Court of the Judicial Commissioner and was set free at Nagpur.

Maybe God willed differently. Martyrdom was written on his forehead. The British Government arrested him again under the third Regulation Act of 1881 and put him in the prison of Asirgarh fortress in Raipur District (now in the Khandwa District of Madhya Pradesh). There the candle of the life of this great hero burnt to extinction on February 28, 1885 at the age of seventy-five

GUNANANDA DAS

(Translated by Gourmohan Mohanta from the Oriya)

LOOK DEEP AND BEHOLD

Do not brush it aside as a poet's frivolity
 Nor as a dreamer's air-borne castle of flowers
 Made it is of bricks kilned in the fire-bed of experience,
 Set in mortar softened with the heart-blood of life.
 Death is a non-event in life's forward march;
 But birth is significant; man is a working partner
 In Nature's job of beautification in countless varieties,
 Of sobs and smiles, touches and repulsions.
 Man is man after ages of laundering processes
 Partially cleaned of the dirt of imperfections,
 Ignorance and ignominious imputations, inanity.
 He can cull from the many shells of revelations
 Pearls of lustrous wisdom born of eternal truth
 To adorn his unholy humdrum existence.
 Look instead! the atrocity—the beast of beasts he is
 With the crust of culture scaled off his corrosive skin.
 What cruelty, what crime would he not commit!
 The venomous vaults of patrician hatred
 Overflow in fiery sludge to scorch and scar
 God's bountiful gift of beauty to the human race—
 Crawling caterpillars with the bright prospect of butterflying.

DEBANSHU

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

(Continued from the issue of March 1989)

News Desk

THE German radio station Deutsche Welle beams regular broadcasts in Sanskrit (!) to India, every second Monday from 15.45 - 15.58 GMT (= 21.15 IST). The frequencies are the same as those used for daily broadcasts in Hindi (mainly in the 49 - 13 m bands, via Relay on Sri Lanka).

*

The Hare Krishna People have established themselves in Moscow and face better times after a long period of harassment. In June 1988 they were officially recognized as a religious community and the Soviet Government has given to understand that their activities are viewed in a more positive light now. No matter what one may think about them, some courage is evident here

*

US-physicists have explored the possibility of time travel in a mental experiment and concluded that it "cannot be ruled out" Readers of their article, published in "Physical Review Letters", will have to struggle with terms such as quantum foam, energy impulse tensors, Reissner-Nordström geometry, etc. when entering this Wellsian wonderland As DER SPIEGEL (12-12-88) points out in its presentation of this difficult subject, it is conceivable that you open a precious 1870 bottle of wine, empty it, return to the past and then re-fill it—provided of course (we may add) that you have nothing more important to do in the past

*

Supramental Language (Addendum)

Meanwhile, new facts have been published regarding *Ulysses—The Corrected Text*, which reveal the incredible proportions of this project

According to a report in DIE ZEIT (10-3-89) a German research institute has paid the staggering amount of DM 695 664 (about 385 000 dollars) to finance the work Prof Hans Gabler (Munich) has carried out some 5000 corrections in the text, mainly changes of punctuation and spelling which hardly affect the

meaning. However, his main critic, the American scholar John Kidd of Boston University claims to have discovered 20,000 mistakes in the “Newlysses”, which suggests, as DIE ZEIT writes, that “he got lost in extraterrestrial zones of precision work”

Random House as the main publishers have asked a jury to look into the issue and to examine whether the complete edition is to be pulped. In case they should ever master this superhuman task, the reader will certainly be informed about it

Correction

In my article “Green Power”, last paragraph, I had wrongly written that the Swedes have entered their national assembly as “the second ecological party in Europe”. In fact, several other Green and alternative movements did so before them

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Tributes to Nolini Kanta Gupta, Pilgrim of the Supermind, *edited by* Nirodbaran, Pondicherry, Sri Mira Trust, 1988

THIS is a simply, yet handsomely, presented collection of tributes to Nolini on the occasion of his Birth Centenary. It begins with translations from the French of the eight Birthday messages he received from the Mother from 1965 to 1973—the year of her passing. Just over 10 years later, three weeks after his 95th birthday, Nolini too left his body. On that occasion the Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi—only a few months before her own tragic death—honoured his memory with a letter of condolence to Nolini's eldest son, which appears as the second item in this collection.

Shortly after Nolini's passing, his fellow-sadhak of many years' standing, Nirodbaran, gave a talk, enlivened with many personal touches, about him in the Ashram Playground, which is reproduced here as the first and principal essay. Sixteen other tributes follow, among them a touching poem by Anima, Nolini-da's personal attendant, and enlightening essays by such Ashram figures as Arabinda Basu, Indra Sen, Jayantilal, our own K.D. Sethna, M P. Pandit, and R.Y. Deshpande. Shyam Kumari contributes a collection of anecdotes instancing "The Human Nolini-da", while Satadal portrays "Nolini Kanta Gupta: the Vyasa of the present age." Despite inevitable repetitions (some of the Mother's birthday messages, for example, are referred to by several writers, in varying translations, and certain incidents in Nolini's life crop up again and again) each tribute has its own light to cast on the highly-evolved and many-faceted man that Nolini was.

Nevertheless, the light remains dim. One feels that had he not stood in the shadow of his Master, Nolini's stature would have been more strikingly noticeable to his contemporaries. As it is, although some of these tributes are written by people who stood physically close to him through many years, none of them claims to have known him intimately or thoroughly. And these are, after all, tributes, not biographical portrayals. One gazes at the cover of the book, which reproduces a portrait of Nolini drawn by the Mother, presumably sometime in the late thirties, and wonders about this man with the firm mouth, dreaming eyes and lofty brow—revolutionary, footballer, father, Vedic scholar, writer and poet in English and Bengali, who, according to his Master, had previous incarnations as Virgil, Ronsard and Le Notre, and who towards the end of his life was considered by some as in a sense the Mother's 'successor' as head of the Ashram. Then one wishes for a profound biographical study which could give us a deeper insight than these tributes attempt into the events of his life and the development of his personality.

But he was, above all, a sadhak of the Integral Yoga; and Sri Aurobindo has warned us against the attempt to chronicle lives whose significant currents do not lie on the surface for all to see. Nevertheless, we cannot help feeling, if anyone

were able to reveal to us the deeper course of Nolini's life, what an illuminating story that would be! Meanwhile, we have his own *Reminiscences* to turn to, and the hints and glimpses gathered in this book.

SHRADDHAVAN

The Chessmaster and His Moves by Raja Rao. Vision Books, New Delhi. Pages: 735. Price: Rs. 275.

Raja Rao's literary output may not be copious when compared with other Indo-English fictionists. Before the present book, he has to his credit only four novels—*Kanthapura* (1932), *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965) and *Comrade Kirillov* (1976)—and two collections of short stories—*The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories* (1947) and *The Policeman and the Rose* (1978). Yet his works have won him international fame. To a long list of honours that have come his way—including the Sahitya Akademi Award, India's highest literary honour, and the prestigious Padma Bhushan—Raja Rao, born in Mysore in 1909 and now settled in U.S.A., has added yet another award.

The \$ 25,000 Neustadt International Prize sponsored by the University of Oklahoma and its international literary journal, *World Literature Today* is given every two years to outstanding world writers. Raja Rao, recently retired from the University of Texas, Austin, where he was a professor of philosophy is the first Indian to receive the award. "I read his work and liked it enormously. And when he got the prize I was delighted," said Jon Silkin about Raja Rao and the award in an interview given to Richard Walker (*Literature Alive*, June 1988) Jon Silkin, the eminent poet and editor of *Strand Magazine* was one of twelve jurors judging for the Neustadt prize.

The Chessmaster and His Moves (1988) is Raja Rao's most important novel to date, to which he devoted a decade of research and writing. It is the first part of a trilogy and is a metaphysical work rooted in Indian tradition, ideals and sensibility. It is a love story—an impossible one, of course—of Sivarama Sastri, a Tamil brahmin mathematician working in Paris, and Jayalakshmi, a princess married to Raja Surrender Singh. The gist of this voluminous work lies in the following few lines: "But how could I marry Jayalakshmi? She was already married. There is no divorce in Hinduism, though the liberal Nehru gave us the freedom to undo what was immaturely made. Would Jayalakshmi ever become my wife?" (182) When woman is magic and man is logic, marriage becomes Karma's chess game. The protagonists are quite sure that their wish would end only in sorrow and despair. So to come to terms with its impossibility they turn inward in their search for an answer and meaning, and Raja Rao devotes 708

pages to their metaphysical exploration.

Raja Rao lived in France from 1929 to 1939 and again from 1946 to 1956. His long stay and his love for the country—"One is always amazed at the vastness of French culture wheresoever you see" (354)—makes him bring Suzanne Chantereux, a young French actress, into the life of the hero perhaps to underline the differences between the East and the West. Thus Ramaswamy, Savitri and Madeleine of *The Serpent and the Rope* find their counterparts here. No! They are reborn here. "Fortunately, the Hindus believe in reincarnation." (181)

Apart from Sivarama Sastri who will not hurt even an ant, Jayalakshmi whose shyness, her precision, her silences speak so many things at one and the same time and Suzanne whose self-deceptions are as deep as her convictions are firm, "her secret tied like some brahmin woman's choli-knot" (287), we come across several unforgettable characters. They include Jean-Pierre Vauxgrand, a gynaecologist, one of those extravagant creatures (creations) you meet only in Paris who is most inventive in his myths; Raja Surrender Singh (Jayalakshmi's husband) who is satisfied with his Buick car and his lovely servant maid; Padu (Jayalakshmi's sister) who loves American slang and uses it to advantage and teases her mother by saying "Wait and see, I'll marry a rich American, and then we'll have more palaces than we've ever lived in" (100); Ashok Sinha, Raja of Dharampur, who plays grand polo with his feelings; Mireille (Jean-Pierre's wife) who loves talking to men when they shave for that seems to be the best moment of their lives; Rani Sahiba who believes that everybody is good who does not murder; Raja Sahib's great grandfather who was affluent enough to throw gold, silver and pearls into the sea and told the fishes there to eat them; and Uma (the hero's sister) who loves to chatter and could not bear the ceremonial silence.

The most memorable of all is Rao Bahadur Sivasankara Sastri, an Assistant Commissioner under the Raj, who is never tired of reading. But all his Sanskrit learning gave him no thumbspace of peace. The father of the hero, he finds no answer, in spite of his meetings with sages, to his question: "What is the nature of death? Why should my beloved wife die when she was so gentle and so wise?" (389)

In a talk with an Indian writer in 1977 Raja Rao observed: "By force of circumstance, purely accidental and sentimental, I have lived abroad. My roots are in this country. That is why I come to India every year." The hero of this novel too declares: "India is no country, I told you. India is a metaphor. Wheresoever one dissolves is India. When Camus knows he is Camus, that is there is no Camus, Camus becomes an Indian." (37) Perhaps this is the reason why we find here pages and pages of musings on death and life, Brahman and Truth, Heaven and Hell.

But this is not to say that the novel is a glorification of India. In a good number of pages, Raja Rao goes hand in hand with V.S. Naipaul, Nirad C.

Chaudhuri and Balraj Khanna who practise “mudslinging” as an art. For instance, he makes fun of Indian ministers, their daughters chasing foreign diplomats, folk beliefs, India’s Independence and even popular Gods and Goddesses. Here follow the words that tell us the side-effects of Independence: “India also became free. India’s freedom was the doom of all Western imperialism. But what did we do? We now have Tamil separatists, Andhra unifiers, Kerala communists and Punjab regionalists. As long as we play the game of the adversary, we might win, but we will have to fight the same battle, over and over again.. ” (236)

Since the impossible love story plays only a minor role, philosophy takes the upper hand. Hence there are philosophical discussions on almost all things in Earth, Heaven and Hell. However, Raja Rao keeps the reader interested in the spheres he explores and the information is compelling. He substantiates his views with quotes from Vedas, Upanishads, ancient Tamil religious poetry and from French literature. “Gide influenced my literary form and Malraux my literary expression,” Raja Rao once confessed. His knowledge of Sanskrit and modern European literature is profound. For the benefit of the readers who cannot understand the original, the author has added a 26-page translation and glossary.

We also listen to talk on the wretched chemistry that man is made of. Sivarama Sastri, the mathematician-philosopher, finds delight in making comparative studies of not only Buddha and Moses, Muslims and Hindus, Chinese and Indians, but also of the feminine features of Suzanne, Jayalakshmi and Mireille. For what after all is life? “Life is only one game, chess or tennis, it makes no difference, all laws are expressions of one Law, all dharmas of the one Dharma, the Truth ” (331)

What about the book’s basic theme? “The Chessmaster’s moves, are, so to say, subtle, magnanimous, sure His hand is on your shoulder, not to tell you where to move, but to show the nature of essensic movement. And movement itself is the play.” (506)

Those who go to the fiction of Raja Rao in search of entertainment will be quickly disappointed. But those who wish to know what things are worth thinking about will find much satisfaction

P. RAJA

Knowledge, Value and Other Essays. By *Dr. H.M. Joshi*, Jay Prakashan, Baroda pp: 239, Price. 95/-

The book presents some bold and courageous thinking in philosophy as well as psychology. The author stands firmly on his Indian ground of thought, in advaita

Vedanta, in the Upanishads, in Sri Aurobindo and then thinks out the problems of contemporary philosophy and psychology. His judgments, on the whole, are sound and convincing except that at times he has expressed himself too strongly and radically.

Dr. Joshi's appreciation of the Psychic Being of Sri Aurobindo or the self-existent soul in man, is a most remarkable fact in his personality as a philosopher. The Psychic Being is the home of intrinsic values where Truth, Beauty and Goodness become spontaneous appreciations and not inhibited and partial appreciations as they are at the mental level. It is unitary and self-existent. There fact and value are one, as knowing, feeling and willing, which are relatively independent at the level of the mind, become unified in the Psychic Being. The true is pleasant and it is spontaneously willed too. And it is holistic in its perceptions. The problems of separation get automatically solved. It spontaneously knows and feels the Real in existence. This one fact, if experienced, shows the way to the solution of various philosophical problems.

But this involves the collaboration of yoga in philosophical seeking. Philosophical seeking by itself cannot come out of its problems. This also brings a realisation that the human personality has many levels, of growth and each has its needs and requirements of further growth. Thus philosophical formulations of truth and Reality must always be many, each catering to a particular type or form of personality.

There can be two ways of looking at a problem. One from our present general level where diversification and separation are strong and the other from above, from the selfhood of the Psychic Being.

At the psychic level self-existent bliss is a patent fact. The facts of sorrow, suffering, anxiety, etc. get automatically answered. The existentialist has just to get an experience of that self-existent bliss at the core of his personality and he will be satisfied as by nothing else. Apart from this, it is a philosophy arising out of the tense atmosphere of present-day industrialised living and it has a relevance and value for that situation. Existentialism and phenomenology have a permanent contribution to make inasmuch as they make the human predicament a fact for philosophising.

Similarly Logical Positivism has value for those whose seeking for the Ultimate is not strong but find great joy in the intellectual activity of conceptual analysis. It affords satisfaction to such individuals. It will, of course, leave a mark on the progress of philosophy inasmuch as it infuses a spirit of carefulness in the use of language.

In psychic experience Fact and Value are not separate. It is a high value above many lesser values. It is also a fact above ordinary facts. Its knowledge too is clear and sure, which gives a standard and criterion for other standards and criteria of knowledge. Scientific truth is a part of the empirical, but philosophy is concerned with the ultimate.

Disagreement among philosophers need not be a matter of complaint. There are enough people to respond to each philosophy and benefit from it.

The question arises: how then to compare one philosophical system with another? This would involve a description of the self-hood from which a system arises and the self-hood it responds to. The rest can be left to the reader to select the personality and take the philosophy that evokes the best response in him. He should choose and live by the personality and the philosophy of his choice and grow to another. Can this not take us out of our confusion of many philosophies and each convincing enough? Can this not be helpful and a constructive solution of this problem? We cannot blindly insist on one universal truth. Truth is infinite, and variable in expression.

Dr. Joshi has a good command over Indian opinions on Personality and on Philosophy and an equal command over Western opinions and the book he has produced is truly learned. And he has the confidence to differ from any of them. We wish him to evolve his own creative system out of the vast knowledge of the East and the West that he commands.

INDRA SEN

A REVIEW-LETTER TO DR. INDRA SEN

I AM sorry for the unconcionable delay in writing to you about your pioneering and illuminating new publication, *Integral Psychology*, a complimentary copy of which was kindly sent to me by Paru, Registrar of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. I made a reference to the book when we briefly met near the Ashram main building on 24 November 88, but this letter is long overdue.

Sri Aurobindo the revolutionary and nationalist, the dramatist and futurist poet, the philosopher and yogi, the Seer and Columbus of the Supermind, has received a fair measure of serious and respectful attention. But that Sri Aurobindo was a path-finder in psychology too, that his integral Yoga has its seminal links with psychology, is not usually conceded or appreciated. For myself too, it is largely a virgin field. In this context, your work based on almost half a century's purposeful and sustained exposure to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and to the Ashram ambience, is very welcome indeed. I have learnt much, and I should read it again and again to be able to measure up to the demands of the book and qualify for the rewards. You have done well to cast the book in the form of *sutra cum bhashya*, and theory cum practice, the selections from Sri Aurobindo providing the sutra-base and your competent elucidations and elaborations the superstructure. Your references to the great Western thinkers (Bergson, Freud, Jung and the rest) give your work somewhat of a global sweep of comprehension, the integral centrality being provided by Sri Aurobindo. I was deeply interested in particular with the record of your discussion with Prof. Ganguli on pp. 185-191 and of your own inner history on pp. 229-234. The identification and description of the Psychic Being is excellent, and the photographs and diagrams play their supportive role to good purpose. Altogether a mighty job done with a rare efficiency which is the fruit of your Yoga sadhana. Both Prof. Ganguli and Prof. Bose have said the right thing about you and your achievement.

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K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Sixty-fifth Seminar

19 February 1989

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1989)

THE MOTHER—CREATRIX OF THE NEW AGE

Speech by Deepa Hariharan and Somosree Biswas

THE subject of this Seminar, as has already been announced, is: "The Mother—Creatrix of the New Age."

As we all know, the New Age, which is the Mother's mission to create, is the age of the Supramental Truth which is the next higher step in earth evolution beyond mind. After a lifetime of Herculean labour She succeeded in Her mission on 29 February 1956, when She manifested the Supermind in the earth's inner atmosphere. We have, however, to note that it was not a full manifestation but only a beginning. Yet the supermind's eventual complete advent on earth is an absolute certainty. And when that happens, the New Age of the Divine Life upon earth will be a living reality.

But we must remember that the descent of Supermind from above by itself is not sufficient to complete its full establishment on earth. There must also be a call and receptivity from below—at least from a small section of humanity.

What exactly is needed to create this receptivity? Here we have the Mother's own answer. She says that what is needed is a spirit of adventure, for She compares the endeavour needed for receiving the Supramental Truth to a great adventure—not a physical adventure like climbing the Himalayas or exploring outer space, but a psychological adventure, an adventure in the inner and higher realms of consciousness, for which the usual word is yoga.

So in our speech we wish to deal with the subject from this angle. We shall try to explain: "Why is our yoga an adventure?"

The best answer to this question is provided by the Mother Herself. She says: "It can be called an adventure because it is the first time that a yoga aims at transformation and divinisation of physical life instead of escape from it."¹

In one of Her evening talks, the Mother has given a distinct call for this adventure in these inspiring words: "There are people who love adventure. It is these I call, and I tell them this. 'I invite you to the great adventure.'"²

¹ *The New Age*, edited by Kishor Gandhi (1977), p. 345

² *Questions and Answers* '57-58 (Cent. Ed.), Vol. 9, pp. 150-51

So the question that arises is: What is this adventure to which the Mother invites us? And how can we take part in it?

This adventure is a journey which will lead us to the supramentalisation of our being. It is that which will bring us a new creation through many risks and hazards. Therefore, it is a real adventure of which the road is yet unknown because every step on it is an exploration. It is like walking on a razor's edge where a little faltering step can lead to grave disaster. Yet the goal is destined and the victory certain. "What will happen to you tomorrow—I have no idea,"¹ says the Mother. Because the bridge that links the earth to the supramental world has not yet been constructed. We must leave aside the past and construct the new bridge with our own endeavour. That is why the Mother says: "One must put aside all that has been foreseen, all that has been devised, all that has been constructed, and then—set off walking into the unknown. And—come what may!"²

We must always remember that this is not an ordinary adventure. Our aim is transformation of nature, and that indeed is a formidable task demanding remarkable strength, courage, inexhaustible patience and untiring endurance. But more than all these the essential quality required to take part in this adventure is faith. Why is faith so supremely important in our yoga? The Mother's answer to this question is: "Because we are aiming at something quite new that has never been done before."³ Faith always puts a person under the protection of the Supreme who is all-powerful. That is why Sri Aurobindo says in *Savitri*:

"Only were safe who kept God in their hearts:
 Courage their armour, faith their sword, they must walk,
 The hand ready to smite, the eye to scout,
 Casting a javelin regard in front,
 Heroes and soldiers of the army of Light."⁴

There are indeed great obstacles and difficulties on the way to the fulfilment of this adventure, but when one is on the way one cannot rest content with only a partial result. Because on this path a partial result has no value; nothing is accomplished if all is not accomplished. Ours is the Integral Yoga, very different from all other yogas. All other yogas have achieved some limited spiritual realisation. If that was also our aim, then our yoga would be neither different from others, nor an adventure. It would be a retreading of the same yogic road towards some incomplete spiritual realisation. And what has that realisation

¹ *Questions and Answers* '57-58 (Cent. Ed.), Vol. 9, p. 151

² *Ibid*

³ *The New Age* (1977), p. 346

⁴ *Savitri* (Cent. Ed.), Vol. 28, p. 211

brought to mankind? It has only shown a way of escape from this world, whereas the world has remained the same and the same questions have been haunting mankind:

“Why is one born if only to die?
 Why does one live if only to suffer?
 Why does one love if only to be separated?
 Why does one think if only to err?
 Why does one act if only to make mistakes?”¹

None of these perennial problems have been finally solved and man continues to suffer as before. So, if man wants to find a lasting solution he has to take recourse to other means. He has to leave the past spirituality and its escapist attitude and find the new path of a new yoga. This new yoga is Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga which begins where all other yogas end. His is the yoga which promises to give the lasting solution for which man has always yearned. Other yogas have a limited vision and scope, seeking the quickest possible liberation. But Sri Aurobindo tells us that man does not need to escape from life in the world, man has the capacity to change himself and change the world. He has shown us the way to the transformation not only of mind and life but even of the body—it is an integral transformation of nature. His yoga seeks not only to evolve the spiritual man out of the mental man, but the supramental being beyond the spiritual man.

Till today, in the history of spirituality, no yogi has ever considered it possible to transform matter and change the world. That is why the Mother, while inviting us to this adventure, tells us: “.. it is a completely new road which has never been traced out—nobody has gone there, nobody has done that! It is a beginning, a *universal beginning*. So, it is an absolutely unexpected and unpredictable adventure.”² And the same assertion is made by Sri Aurobindo. He has stated: “Our yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.”³ We must therefore not make any compromise with the past, however splendid it may have been. Ours is an endlessly new adventure of consciousness and joy because the delight of the spirit is ever new. As Sri Aurobindo has said: “There is a height still to be reached, a wideness still to be covered by the eye of the vision, the wing of the will, the self-affirmation of the Spirit in the material universe.”⁴ This “height” and “wideness” which the Vedic Rishis also speak of are different levels of spiritual consciousness which have to be scaled. And our aim is to reach through these levels finally the highest level of the supramental

¹ The Mother, “Helping Humanity”, *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed), Vol 12, p 99

² *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed), Vol 9, p 150

³ *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed, Vol 22), p 101

⁴ *The Life Divine* (Cent Ed, Vol 19), p 890

consciousness. With faith and courage as our armour we must ultimately reach the supramental Truth. Every difficulty, obstacle and denial has to be surmounted. The path is untrod and therefore unknown and dangerous. But if one has faith in the Divine and heroic courage, then there is no fear because faith and courage carry in them the certitude of success.