

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SEPTEMBER 1989

PRICE: Rs 4 00

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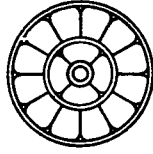
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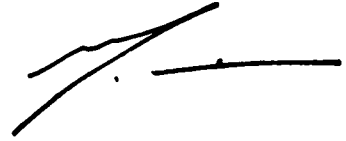
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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All correspondence to be addressed to

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India

Editor's Phone 24782

Publishers Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor K D SETHNA

Published by P COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST

PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY - 605 002

Printed by AMIYO RANJAN GANGULY

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry - 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No R N 8667/63

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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLII

No. 9

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 5 SEPTEMBER 1956

Some Extracts

HASN'T anyone any questions to ask?... I have some here (*Mother shows a packet of questions*), but they seem to belong almost to another world.

Somebody asked me some time ago this question:

“What will be the effect of the Supermind on the earth?”

I thought I had already answered, for I told you immediately that before the effects of the supramental manifestation become visible and tangible, perceptible to everybody, perhaps thousands of years may go by; but still I suppose these ideas are disturbing for the human consciousness with its sense of its short duration and the kind of impatience this brings. So I have been asked:

“Will it take long for the Supermind which is involved in material Nature to emerge into the outer consciousness and bring visible results?”

That depends on the state of consciousness from which one answers, for.. For the human consciousness, obviously, I think it will take quite a long time. For another consciousness it will be relatively very fast, and for yet another consciousness, it is already accomplished. It is an accomplished fact. But in order to become aware of this, one must be able to enter into another state of consciousness than the ordinary physical consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo has spoken—I believe I have read it to you, I think it's in *The Synthesis of Yoga*—of the true mind, the true vital and the true physical or subtle physical, and he has said that they co-exist with the ordinary mind, vital and physical, and that in certain conditions one may enter into contact with them, and then one becomes aware of the difference between what really is and the appearances of things.

Well, for a developed consciousness, the Supermind is already realised somewhere in a domain of the subtle physical, it already exists there visible, concrete, and expresses itself in forms and activities. And when one is in tune with this domain, when one lives there, one has a very strong feeling that this world would only have to be condensed, so to say, for it to become visible to all. What would then be interesting would be to develop this inner perception which would put you into contact with the supramental truth which is already manifested, and is veiled for you only for want of appropriate organs to enter into relation with it.

It is possible that those who are conscious of their dreams may have dreams of a new kind which put them into contact with that world, for it is accessible to the subtle physical of all those who have the corresponding organs in themselves. And there is necessarily a subtle influence of this physical on outer matter, if one is ready to receive impressions from it and admit them into one's consciousness. That's all

Now, if nobody has any questions to ask, well, we shall remain silent
 Something to say, over there? (*Mother looks at a disciple*) Oh! he is burning to speak!

Mother, after having realised all that, one still goes back to the lower mind to find the solution

After having understood, one falls back into the same old mistaken ways?
 What a pity!

And every day

Every day! Why, more's the pity! And so, what remedy do you propose?

That's what I am asking.

Oh! you are asking me! Why, to me it seems that when one has *seen* things in this way, well, if one has enough sensibility, one can no longer accept them as they are. One must truly be very insensitive if, realising to what an extent all this is degrading, one continues to accept it.

Yes, this is one more thing I have noticed and one that has always astonished me. It has always seemed to me quite normal, easy, almost elementary to eliminate from one's consciousness and nature things one considers to be unacceptable. The moment one knows, the moment one sees them as they are and doesn't want them any longer, it seems to me to be quite indeed almost childishly simple. But I have noticed that in most cases—almost in all cases—when I tell somebody how things really are, when I give him a true picture of the condition he is in or of the nature of a movement, of what it represents, and when I express that forcefully, so that, according to me, he would immediately have the reaction which seems normal to me, and say: "Oh, if it is like that, I don't want it any more!" and almost every time I find myself before something which breaks down and tells me, "Oh, you are not very encouraging!" I must confess that this leaves me quite helpless. So, to see is not enough? To know that certain things ought not to be there, that's not sufficient? It should give you that kind of inner stimulus, a dynamic force which makes you reject the error in such a way that it can't come back again!

But to fall back into an error which one *knows* to be an error, to make a mistake once again which one *knows* to be a mistake, this seems to me fantastic! It is a long time—well, at least relatively, by human reckoning—it is a long time I have been on earth, and I have yet not been able to understand that. It seems to me—it seems to me impossible. Wrong thoughts, wrong impulses, inner and outer falsehood, things which are ugly, base, so long as one does them or has them through ignorance—ignorance is there in the world—one understands, one is in the habit of doing them; it is ignorance, one does not know that it ought to be otherwise. But the moment the knowledge is there, the light is there, the moment one has seen the thing as it is, how can one do it again? That I do not understand!

Then what is one made of? One is made of shreds? One is made of goodness knows what, of jelly?... It can't be explained. But is there no incentive, no will, nothing? Is there no inner dynamism?

We exploit the Grace!

Ayo, like a jellyfish!

But the Grace is there, It is always there, It only asks to be allowed to help—one doesn't let It work.

And nothing but this feeling: "Oh, I can't!"—that's enough to prevent It from working.

How can you accept the idea that you can't? You don't know—that, yes, you may not know—but once you know, it's finished!

Still...

(Questions and Answers 1956, pp 291-295)

THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

IN THE LIGHT OF HER *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1989)

THE book *Prayers and Meditations* is the secret story, the inner history, of the Mother's profound realisations and experiences. It is a revelation of her mission and work. All prayers are a spontaneous flow of her inner being's expressions. Sometimes the prayers are records of her personal aspirations and sometimes they stand for the universal urge. She speaks on behalf of all men. But the Mother is not merely a representative of humanity, she has identified herself with all beings.

In her prayer dated December 5, 1916 she records her beautiful experience of an immutable identification. She says:

"Thou hast granted me the grace of Thy repose in which all individual limits are dissolved, in which one is in all and, more clearly still, all is in oneself. But the mind, merged in this divine ecstasy, cannot yet find any power of expression.

(Factual notation of the experience)

"'Turn towards the earth!' The usual injunction was heard in the silence of the immutable identification. Then the consciousness became that of the One in all. 'Everywhere and in all those in whom thou canst see the One, there will awake the consciousness of this identity with the Divine. Look...' It was a Japanese street brilliantly illuminated by gay lanterns picturesquely adorned with vivid colours. And as gradually what was conscious moved on down the street, the Divine appeared, visible in everyone and everything. One of the lightly-built houses became transparent, revealing a woman seated on a tatami in a sumptuous violet kimono embroidered with gold and bright colours. The woman was beautiful and must have been between thirty-five and forty. She was playing a golden samisen. At her feet lay a little child. And in the woman too the Divine was visible."

Again in her prayer on December 8, 1916, she tells us what the Lord has said to her:

"...I have appointed thee from all eternity to be my exceptional representative upon earth, not only invisibly, in a hidden way, but also openly before the eyes of all men. And what thou wert created to be, thou wilt be."

Indeed the Mother's voice is the voice of all men, all creatures, all beings. She sings the joys and sufferings of all beings and things. The total terrestrial being is embodied in her aspiration.

She writes in her prayer dated April 7, 1917:

“A deep concentration seized on me, and I perceived that I was identifying myself with a single cherry-blossom, then through it with all cherry-blossoms, and, as I descended deeper in the consciousness, following a stream of bluish force, I became suddenly the cherry-tree itself, stretching towards the sky like so many arms its innumerable branches laden with their sacrifice of flowers. Then I heard distinctly this sentence:

“‘Thus hast thou made thyself one with the soul of the cherry-trees and so thou canst take note that it is the Divine who makes the offering of this flower-prayer to heaven.’

“When I had written it all was effaced; but now the blood of the cherry-tree flows in my veins and with it flows an incomparable peace and force. What difference is there between the human body and the body of a tree? In truth, there is none: the consciousness which animates them is identically the same.

“Then the cherry-tree whispered in my ear:

“‘It is in the Cherry-blossom that lies the remedy for the disorders of the spring ’”

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

VIGNETTES OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1989)

MONEY

FOR the Mother, the supreme consideration was the growth of consciousness. She cared nothing for money in the ordinary sense.

1: Ice-cream

The Mother did not like her Ashram children to eat food prepared outside. Yet she also knew that little children cannot resist ice-cream. So after many a hurdle had been crossed, an ice-cream machine was obtained from abroad. That was more than forty years ago. The Mother fixed the price for a cup of ice-cream at twenty-five paise. The person in charge of the machine protested that this did not even cover the cost of the ingredients. But Mother explained, "The outside ice-cream sells at twenty-five paise. If we charge more, the children will be tempted to buy outside."

In such situations, the Mother never took the ordinary commercial view, nor cared that the Ashram was incurring a financial loss.

2. Guest-house charges

The person in charge of one of the Ashram guest-houses informed the Mother that he was spending more on providing the guests with food than he was charging them, and asked her permission to increase the rate by five rupees per day. The Mother replied sweetly, "If you want to increase the boarding charges by five rupees, then reduce the lodging charges by five rupees."

The lodging-charges were being offered to the Mother, and the boarding-charges were given to the person in charge, for the running of the guesthouse. The rates remained unchanged.

3: "My children..."

The Mother once said, "I will not sell education." But a nominal charge was made for the boarding and lodging of the students at the school. Even so, the Ashram spends much more than what the students are asked to pay.

The Mother vetoed all suggestions for any increase in the charges. She said, "If you increase the charges, my children will not come; only rich people's children will come."

Compiled by SHYAM KUMARI

GOLCONDE: A LOOK BEHIND

(Continued from the issue of July 1989)

8. THE BUILDERS

(4)

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

George Nakashima's account of his experiences while working on Golconde continues:

AFTER about a year of working on the construction François [Sammer] came. I don't know just how that happened but he was a very good man. He had been on a building project in Moscow with Corbusier. He left it and came to help us on Golconde. I did the furniture for the miniature Golconde, but he did it for the building after I left Pondicherry.¹

The furniture which I designed tested our technical skills. The chairs, benches and tables were fashioned from great teak timber squares, sometimes two feet by two feet. These were sawn by hand with a pit saw, which requires two men—one on the timber and one in the pit. It would often take half a day to a whole day to cut one board. Our method of sharpening tools was as elementary as one could imagine: we simply spread hard, coarse sand on a board and began our rough sharpening. As we worked, the sand grew finer and finer, and our tools sharper and sharper. Furniture making at Pondicherry was an elemental baptism in the craft of woodworking.

Our undertaking, I felt, in some small way helped further the process of eliminating the caste system, still pervasive in India then as now, for we were all labourers and craftsmen together in a common cause. When a group of people concentrate with absolute sincerity and devotion on the common objective of a divine life, a creative spirit permeates the group's whole existence.... Everything becomes the handmaiden of a deeper search for consciousness; all fades into an awesome light. Movements are slow and measured, smiles heart-warming. There is none of the frenzy of the outside world. Conversations revolve around a simple, unique theme of search for divine union, for all are believers or near-believers.

One cannot construct a highly sophisticated building or run a large-scale Ashram by being inactive, negative or pessimistic. Thus, there is an intensely active side to many aspects of Karma Yoga, the path of action. The Ashram itself carried on various practical activities: a book-printing and binding shop, a blacksmith and machine shop, a bakery and a kitchen, a farm and a dairy. In addition, there were unskilled laborers performing the many ordinary tasks necessary to bind a community together.

There were evenings of great beauty, with music and dance, usually held in the quarters of Dilip Kumar Roy, who had a large room and terrace overlooking the Bay of Bengal. Dilip was an accomplished instrumentalist, and he was often joined by Sahana, who had one of the loveliest voices in all of Bengal. Sahana's room was on my street, and her voice, raised in devotional songs, would often fill the still, soft air of the evening. There was a great variety of instrumentalists and dancers. It was pure delight, and the "*Atcha!*" of approval would ripple through the room.

The Ashram was not an institutionalized religious organization, actually not a religion at all. There was no structure or dogma of any kind. It was a collection of men and women of all ages from all parts of the world, which was quite an unusual thing in India at that time. Tamil was the language of the Pondicherry area, but Bengali was also largely spoken at the Ashram, since many *sadhaks* were Bengali. French and English were the most common European languages. Whatever one's nationality, the salutation in the Ashram was made by placing the hands together as if in prayer; sometimes one would touch these to the forehead and bow slightly, or say "*Namaste*", or "*Namaskar*". We were of many races, nationalities, creeds and religions, but all were united in a driving quest for an ultimate truth. There was absolute equality and, in a sense, freedom. There were no impositions on what one could do, so long as it was done with the spirit of sincerity.

Most of the problems that seem to bother the outside world were not problems at the Ashram. It was an extremely "low-energy" non-consumer-oriented society, there was no wasting of resources. People even went so far as to straighten out old nails so that they could be reused. There was a certain amount of technology employed, but this was of an intermediate nature at the most. In a cenobitic society, problems such as the population explosion seemed far removed from us. Perhaps some day all the world will be able to move in this fashion.²

I didn't stay until Golconde was finished because of the war. The Japanese were in Burma. I was told that unless I left at that time it would have been impossible for me to leave. I thought that I should relate to the world rather than stay in the Ashram then. It was at that time the most heavenly place on earth. It was an ideal society. There wasn't a bit of rancor. During the whole time I was there I don't think I heard a harsh word. There was such joy, such beauty. A lot

of it was the way the Ashramites walked down the streets and how they looked, the depth of their eyes. Pavitra especially had the most beautiful eyes one can think of. They had such depth. And he would look at you straight with such beautiful eyes and it would just overwhelm you. And everybody thought that way. There was a blacksmith, Manibhai, who evidently had been given up for dead when he went to the Ashram. I don't know how he got to be a blacksmith but he had become a person of great physical strength. He never walked—he always ran. We asked him why and he said that he thought if he walked, the Mother would think he wasn't feeling very well. So he'd always run.³

After two years, the time came for me to decide whether to stay on for life at the Ashram or return to the outside world.

In a sense, I participated in life at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram during its golden age, when all of the disciples were in close touch with both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. It was, in a way, an ideal existence on earth, without a trace of rancor or harsh words, arguments, egotism, and with all in concert in search of a divine consciousness.

But outside the Ashram there was difficulty in the air. Japan had already invaded China in 1939, and a larger war seemed imminent.

It became for me a question of living a life of great beauty in isolation, or of going out again into the world. I think there was within me an instinctive resistance to withdrawing from life as I'd known it. I concluded I would have to fight for truth outside the Ashram's protective environment. It was a most difficult decision.⁴

As I remember, we all had our notebooks where we put questions to the Mother and discussed problems. She would write on the opposite page her answer. I asked the Mother if I could leave India, and this time she wrote "yes" in the middle of the page, which I could hardly see, it being so small.

As with all of us, I had no funds and the only income was the two rupees a month .. that all of us received, but she did give me a small funding which enabled me to return home. I went via Calcutta, travelling in third class trains, and although I didn't have plans, Udaisingh gave me a letter that I should take to his house. Although I knew no one there, I did present this letter and it turned out that I was to be a guest there for some days before catching my ship. I became almost a member of the Nahar family and in between I took a short trip to Darjeeling, which I enjoyed very much.

Ultimately I did get back to Japan, and it was necessary for me to travel through China. It was a very dangerous route for me as a Japanese and at one point I almost did not make it. When I left India I had to go to Hong Kong. I had to catch a boat there to Shanghai. I was along the wharf in Kowloon. I was about to be beaten up by a bunch of Chinese. There were about six of them. I didn't know what to do. I thought I'd try to make a run for it. But actually, before I had to make a run for it, the Chinese dropped off and left me alone. The only way I

can explain that is the Mother's presence. I did spend a short time again in Japan and then returned to the United States.⁵

It is interesting to note that when Nakashima returned to the United States, he went again to Antonin Raymond, who was living in New Hope, Pennsylvania, now famous as the home of Nakashima's unique wood workshop, Mingeren

(To be continued)

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- 1 "Sundarananda: an interview with George Nakashima" in *Collaboration* Vol 13, no 1, p 47, Fall 1986
- 2 *The Soul of a Tree a woodworker's reflections*, by George Nakashima, Tokyo 1981
- 3 *Collaboration* loc cit
- 4 *Sri Aurobindo's Action* Vol 16, no 9 p 7, Sept 1986
- 5 *Sri Aurobindo's Action* loc cit

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME LETTERS IN A PERSONAL VEIN

WHAT IS this talk of depression and weeping? Let me tell you a small true story.

You must have heard of Martin Luther, the German priest who initiated the Reformation and started Protestantism as opposed to the Roman Catholic Church. Once he got into a mood of great depression. For days he would not smile and would hardly talk. One day his wife, fed up with his “blues”, dressed herself in total black as if for mourning and appeared before him. Luther was surprised and asked why she had worn such clothes. She exclaimed: “God is dead!” Luther angrily retorted: “God can never die!” Then his wife quietly said: “If that is so, what is there in the world to depress anyone?” Luther immediately came to his senses and from that day never wore a gloomy look.

As long as the Supreme Light and Love exists behind all the changing play of sun and shadow that is human life—even more when “that many-splendoured Thing” has become not only a mental intuition but also a golden presence in the heart—how can we let any cloud hang over our consciousness? Until we have established complete equanimity, little pricks are bound to occur, yet they should not last: each prick should rather be a further call to the Divine within us to come to the surface of our being and meet the hurting touch with a smile—a smile lit up with the sense that there can be no loss ever while deep in us dwells the “crimson-throbbing Glow” which can never be quenched and which holds the quintessence of every possible delight and is a self-subsistent fullness.

I have gone through many difficult times—even what the world would term “tragedy” has struck at me on a number of occasions, but from the day I saw Sri Aurobindo I realised his all-soothing power and this power took its place in my heart. Vasari, the biographer of the great painters of the European Renaissance, wrote of Leonardo da Vinci: “With the splendour of his most magnificent countenance he could make whole every broken spirit.” You must have heard that in one of his past *vibhuti*-embodiments the one whom we name Sri Aurobindo was this master-painter who gave us that unforgettable as well as that unfathomable beauty of a picture known as “Mona Lisa”, the picture of a noble lady who is said to have been a past emanation of our Ashram’s Divine Mother. Once, looking at the long finely moulded fingers of the Mother in a certain pose, I remarked to her: “How much your hand resembles Mona Lisa’s as depicted in Leonardo’s great painting!” She very quietly said: “Sometimes even small physical characteristics are carried over from life to life.” Then she smiled. Eternal bliss seemed to radiate through that delicate curving of her lips and I knew once again what had come as a conviction to me ever since my eyes first fell on her face—a conviction which a line from *Savitri* has best served to express for me:

They who have looked on her shall grieve no more.

And I am profoundly grateful for the lavishness of the joy the Mother has heaped on her spiritual children so that we almost take overflowing grace for granted, failing to realise intensely enough what a gift we have received. A poem of mine starts:

Because you never claim of us a tear,
 O Silent Love, how often we forget
 The eyes of countless centuries were wet
 To bring your smile so near!

Perhaps you would like to know the continuation of this poem? Here it is:

Forgive if I remember not the blaze,
 Imperishable, perfect, infinite,
 Of far omnipotence from which you lit
 Your lamp of human face.

Make me a worship-vigil everywhere,
 Slumber and wakefulness one memory
 That you are God. O let each pore of me
 Become a mouth of prayer!

Apropos of the phrase "mouth of prayer", may I make a comment on a bit of news you have given me? You write, a little ruefully, that on 17 May a tooth from your lower row of teeth fell out. That's nothing to worry about. I have only 22 teeth in my mouth now. I believe I never had 32 as is said to be the rule. I had only 26 or 27, from which the first extraction of a left molar was done when I was 56 years old. Now there are only 16 in front (8 upper and 8 lower) and the rest distributed on the sides. At over 84 years of age, what can one expect? The path to the Supermind, which is our Integral Yoga, is a long one which is to be trodden through several lives. Time and again we shall be supra-dental before becoming supramental. But surely even a toothless mouth can pray and be happy?
 (31.5.1989)

*

Your appeal to clear the confusion in which the members of your Centre have fallen sets me thinking along several lines. What you quote from the *Advent* of February 1988, p. 12, seems to give a picture of the general process of higher powers from beyond the mind coming down to act in the aspiring consciousness

in the course of the Integral Yoga. Here the Supermind, no less than the Spiritual Mind with its four levels—Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind—has been at play, but more indirectly than otherwise. The first direct action of the Supermind in the human constitution in a regular way took place on December 5, 1950, when, as the Mother told me and as she also declared in a Talk of hers in the Ashram Playground, the “Mind of Light” which had hitherto been elusive or at most an intermittent power had been permanently realised in her the moment Sri Aurobindo had left his body. I may remark, in passing, that this fact gives us some insight into what Sri Aurobindo achieved in giving what we have come to consider a sublime strategic sacrifice, his glorious body’s absorption of all hostile destructive forces in order to clear for the Mother and thus for the future world the way of the descending Supermind. The Mother defined to me the new state as “the physical mind receiving the Supramental Light”. In a poem which I wrote a few years later she found the first two lines to be a perfect revelation while the rest were an imaginative reconstruction. These lines, according to her, caught in exact word-form the truth of the Mind of Light, the precise experience which had got fixed in her. They ran:

The core of a deathless Sun is now the brain
And each grey cell bursts to omniscient gold

But, of course, this realisation is only the first, though extremely momentous step towards complete supramentalisation. The latter would imply, as an ultimate consequence, a total divinising of the human body, rendering it infinitely adaptable, entirely invulnerable, quite free of inertia, full of a subtle radiance, ever-energetic, immune to disease, decay and death.

This point brings me to another dimension of the subject. I may distinguish two sides here—what I may rhetorically call the Yoga of evolutionary transformation and the Yoga of revolutionary transformation. The one means the slow progressive march of the human race through centuries under the influence of the Supermind established in the earth-nature. The establishment was done on February 29, 1956 in an initial though definite manner. But the Mother made it clear that it was achieved in the subtle-physical layer of the earth, what she termed the earth’s atmosphere, and not in the gross-physical. Once this was done the mission of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother could be said to have been fulfilled so far as the evolution of man as a race was concerned. The supramental principle was made a part of the earth’s future history. Not with full strength even in the subtle-physical but with a gradual potency would the new entrant in the cosmic field operate, for, as the Mother said, the agelong entrenched agencies of darkness arose in revolt to overwhelm it. Through their siege the Supermind has to push its powers. As compared to their long-standing existence in the evolutionary arena it may be considered a new-born child, but one who is

essentially almighty and intrinsically destined to triumph in the long run.

Revolutionary transformation means the bodily divinisation about which I have written. It is an individual process and, in the early days of the Ashram, it was openly thought feasible in one life-time. Not only were Sri Aurobindo and the Mother sure to be the grand exemplars of it. Their followers also were considered candidates. No doubt, they were expected to observe certain conditions in order to qualify. But these conditions were not such as would be beyond their capacity. Thus one sadhak was told to have an inner detachment that would keep the human heart free from its usual sentimental ties and to see that he did not let any accidental damage happen to his body, which might permanently affect its vital organs. What was incredible was that he could be given the intoxicating assurance of the plenary achievement. He can never forget the absolutely amazing occasion in May 1929 when the Mother told him that he would have "the great transformation" in his present life itself. Neither can he get over the ecstatic shock on 31 January 1934 when Sri Aurobindo, in answer to this sadhak's inquiry whether like a self-deluding fool he could have misunderstood the Mother, replied that what the sadhak had reported was "quite accurate". Nor can this sadhak feel sufficiently grateful for the gracious statement of the Mother's to him on 19 May 1944: ". . . there were things which might act to delay your spiritual realisation and might be otherwise dangerous for you. This does not mean that the realisation will not come." Even less than a decade before she left her body she could allay his doubt and diffidence with the words: "I have not withdrawn my assurance. You are perfectly capable of participating in the realisation and will participate in it." All these personal memories—difficult for so faltering a person as that sadhak to credit—I mention here not for boosting his all-too-human career, but to underline the enormous hope held out to the disciples up to a very late period in the Ashram's history. Sri Aurobindo's departure, which was like an earthquake to many of us and to me in particular who had never for a minute wavered in my faith that he would fulfil in entirety the idea he had set before us, did not deter the Mother from holding out supreme expectations to us. When, however, she quitted her body, I for one knew for a certainty that the programme had changed for all of us. The revolutionary transformation was, for some reason beyond our comprehension, postponed, as *Nolini* once put it

Apropos of this kind of earth-change I should clarify two terms often mixed up. Strictly speaking, the word "descent" which has been so much in the air in relation to the Supermind is proper only to an individual being who is turned towards the Integral Yoga. We have various levels at which diverse forces in us work. The level of the life-force is centred in the region of the abdomen, the emotional in the area of the heart, the mental in that of the brain. Pragmatically, there are lower and higher levels. Above the brain-mind are planes of consciousness to which we may be said to ascend and from which there can be descents.

But this terminology fails to apply under another set of circumstances. The Supermind “descends” so far as the individual being is concerned. When a universal breakthrough by the Supermind occurs we have to speak of a “manifestation”. This is the distinction the Mother herself made when referring to the event of 29 February 1954 in a talk with me. Though the terms are somewhat flexible, it is best for clarity’s sake to observe the distinction. The irrelevance of speaking of descent in connection with the 1956-event was hard for me to grasp. But the Mother cut short my intellectual curiosity. It would seem that there is only one universal existence with diverse aspects which from the individual viewpoint we may describe as planes below and planes above.

The descent of the Supermind leading to bodily divinisation would be the crown of the Aurobindonian Yoga. As late as 1969, on my birthday, the Mother told me, among other things, that though it was an error to say that the Supermind had not descended into Sri Aurobindo’s embodied being, for indeed it had done so a long time before, yet his physical substance had not been supramentalised. Then she caught hold of the flesh of her own arm and said: “This too is not supramentalised.” However, there was no relinquishment of the ideal intended to be materialised. For, on my saying I wanted to live long enough to see her Victory she said: “Bon”—which means “Very well.”

Even when that Victory had not been won, the presence of the Supermind in the bodies of both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother brought about some effect on their bodies’ own functions so that we felt that they were not like us at all and could transmit inner force and light and bliss, and could influence purely physical movements in us too. Right down to their subtle-physical there was transformation and naturally it had its radiant result in their gross-physical but not to the extent aimed at by the Integral Yoga. So we may opine that now when Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are not with us gross-physically, that power is operating on us from their achieved perfection in the subtle-physical counterpart of the earth. And, along with this phenomenon of descended Supermind behind the gross earth-scene, there is the phenomenon of the manifested Supermind pressing on that scene from behind it. Today none of us in his senses hopes to divinise his body in his present life. But a movement has been set going towards that grand goal in some shining vista of the future. For the present, whatever is possible short of bodily divinisation is the legacy our Gurus have left us. And indeed a tremendous amount of inner transformation verging on a broad effect on the outer self is within our range and it can be realised if we practise as wide an equanimity as we can and keep up the practice of remembering the Mother and offering to her all our movements inner and outer.

By the way, the statement you have quoted about the Supermind and 29 February 1956 from *Mother India*, February 1988, p. 96—“Now on February 29, late in the evening it came down for good. What Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had worked for during 30 years happened at last”—was made before the details

of what had happened had come to my knowledge. It speaks in terms of coming down—of descent. It represents what I thought and not what the Mother afterwards told me. Even your closing item which provides the picture of the manifestation has the word “down”, so difficult it is to avoid it: “The Mother has declared that ‘the Supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow’, after she had shattered to pieces the massive golden door separating the world from the Divine.” But the picture is of a universal event as contrasted with the individual event which I had in mind.

This picture, in its specific contents, was not laid bare in 1956. It was disclosed on 24 April the next year. Only the general import of it was given in 1956—except to a couple of people. One was verbally told the specific contents and he tried to write what he had been told. He sent the report to the Mother after getting it touched up by an English friend. The Mother remarked to me that human beings make such a mess of things. Most probably if the actual note in French, which, as the Mother informed me, she had made of her experience had been seen and understood, the report might have been better. The other person who came to know the specific contents had the rare luck to read the very note. On his birthday, 25 November, in the year of the manifestation, when the Mother asked him to select books as a gift, he asked only for the grace of being shown the note of which she had spoken. During his interview with her in the evening she let him read the marvellous account. Of course he had to keep the disclosure secret. I have told elsewhere the full story of the grace. I am sketching here merely the bare outline of it. (31 5 1989)

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1989)

The Mother's Message

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



Vol. Four 1960

No. 1

It was a fine morning—1 January 1961

I went to the Samadhi for pranam. Flowers' fragrance and the aroma of incense sticks permeated the air. People were sitting near the Samadhi in utter silence.

After climbing the staircase to the north of the Samadh I sat in the corridor. A few people were already there

A swish of the Mother's elegant gown caught my ears. I looked up. Her mouth quivered in a fleeting smile as she crossed the corridor, leaving a trail of her French perfume and entered Pavitra's (P. B. Saint-Hilaire's) study.

The Mother announced the New Year message first in French and then in English:

“This wonderful world of delight waiting at our gates for our call to come down upon earth ”

In the afternoon the Mother distributed calenders to all of us with her blessings.

*

As always the Mother gave me diaries to write my journal.

At night when everything was hushed I opened one of them I wrote: “I do not know what is hidden behind the mask of the approaching months Everything seems frightfully hazy ”

A subtle fear crept on me.

There were countless defects lying in the dark nooks and corners of my subconscious which had to come under the Mother's Light and change.

It was not easy to tackle the obscure, obstinate and rock-like subconscious. A cold tremor ran through my body

Just to forget the uneasiness, I took refuge in detective novels as well as in the classics. Sometimes I visited the New Horizon Sugar Mills Ltd with Mrs. Laljibhai My second brother, Vasantbhai, and his wife lived at the Factory. During that time my third brother, Paroobhai, his wife and their children were here for a short period. I could not confide my inner and outer problems to anyone except the Mother. But she was often busy Besides, her health was not up to the mark.

I failed to comprehend the Mother's way. I felt as if she showed a calm indifference to me and this filled me with fresh fear and increased my painful sense of total aloneness, which often made me shed tears. I was in a perpetual abyss of agony.

I vented my wretched temper upon her As a result I sent her outrageous, impulsive letters. Afterwards I requested her to send them back to me.

“My dear Mother,

I can very well feel that you are terribly annoyed with me because of my letters, which I could not help writing. Now the thing done cannot be

undone You know me right from the very beginning, so it is useless to say anything—it's a bore.

I cannot possibly dare to take up anything in my hand because I am scared of failure. As I have failed in everything, I am sure of my failure in finding the Truth also. My heart is completely broken and, to tell the truth, I do not feel like doing anything. Everything is too late for me. I have ruined myself both ways purposely, I suppose, because of my constant failure Now there isn't any alternative except giving up my life. Mother, you will never understand me and my present situation, otherwise surely you would have done something for my miserable soul. Of course, you have done as much as you could and I am thankful to you for this.

You haven't sent me back my letters.

With love."

Huta

She answered the same day on the 14th:

"I did not send you back your letters because I do not see any meaning in sending back letters which give you no pleasure and no help.

However I am *not* 'very much annoyed' with you and you can *always* come to me when you want a flower, I shall give it with plaisir, *always*.

With love "

The Mother

I still hesitated to face her A twinge of nervousness rose in me My stubborn, fanatic Ego seized me and drove me crazy. I gave myself a hard mental shake and forced myself to be sensible but the deep feeling of desolation and despondency brought me sadness and unrest.

Surely I was not setting out on an easy voyage to my subconscious. Would it be possible to combat and vanquish the subtle, invisible, dark forces?

*

I studied *Savitri* with Mr. Purani It was impossible to do paintings. The Mother kept quiet about her direct guidance to this project. Perhaps she was testing me and preparing me for the task, I thought.

*

On the 21st morning on Saraswati Puja-day the Mother came to the Meditation Hall downstairs to distribute folders She looked grand in her sari People filed past her to receive them When my turn came I saw her eyes enormous, shimmering lakes of sympathy and love.

I opened the folder and found five different photographs of her. Underneath them she had inscribed their meanings:

“trust, realisation, aspiration, certitude, perception.”

There was also a line from *Savitri* in her own handwriting:

“For ever love, O beautiful slave of God.”

After many days I went to the Mother at 4 p.m.

She stared sternly at me. I knew she was displeased with the wrong attitude I had taken towards the spiritual life. She called one small part of my being “wicked.”

My Ego was hurt, offended. A fury exploded in me—the restored confidence ebbed away. My whole being felt shattered into splinters in which I could find no theme of unity. A hot wave of humiliation and shame enveloped me.

In answer to my letter the Mother wrote the next day:

“My dear little child Huta,

You *know perfectly well* that I have not said that you are a wicked girl.

What I have said is exactly as follows:—Huta is not made of a single person; there are in you three parts.

The central part, the true Huta, your soul luminous and white, capable of beautiful realisations, artistic, refined and pure, your soul that I love and will love for ever, it is immortal and can and will do things of beauty. It is your *true* self.

There is a smaller, much smaller part which comes partly from a past life, partly from heredity and education in this birth. It is full of doubts, disbeliefs, despondency, despair and sense of failure. It is the cause of all the apparent and momentary failures of your life.

Finally there is a tiny bit, tiny but obstinate and missing no opportunity to become active. This one takes its pleasure in saying and still more in writing to people the things that can hurt them or that you believe will hurt them most. It is that part (that part only) I have called wicked, because it is hurting *you* much more than anybody else. It is the instrument of your own unhappiness.

That is exactly what I wanted to tell you with my deepest knowledge and love.

P S I am sending back your writing corrected.”

I had noted her conversations with me, which I had sent her for correction. I wrote to the Mother that it was rather awful to show my “wicked” face to her. She replied:

“The best is to come to me in all simplicity—I can see all your faces, I know them all and it makes no difference to my love that sees behind the appearances ”

Suddenly these verses from *Savitri* flashed across my mind:

“Our Nature’s glass shows not our real self,
The greatness still abides held back within.”

After all, human beings have a sprinkle of saint and sinner in them.

The Mother pointed out to me my numerous defects and faults directly and indirectly to make me collaborate totally with her work in me.

Since I was conscious, I was desperate to improve and convert myself. But unfortunately the psychological struggle and setbacks were so acute that many a time I could not think straight. I was abysmally ignorant.

My main trouble was an inferiority complex which seemed a chronic disease—an endless nightmare

I had gone to London to gain confidence. True. Yet I felt that I was a nobody in front of “intelligent” and “wise” people

I was hypersensitive and ultra-emotional. I thought that it was too late for me to do anything worthwhile. It would take an eternity to find the Divine Life. Time and age could not wait. They slipped by too rapidly. I received from the Mother a letter dated 31-1-61 in answer to mine:

“Huta, my dear little child,

First of all, it is *never too late*.

From the point of view of spiritual realisation, the time has no concrete reality; all depends on the sincerity and intensity of the aspiration, on the steadiness of the effort. Some can do in a few weeks and even days, what takes years for others. Moreover, as the mind and the vital, the chief factors of progress, are not submitted to the same rules of decay as the material body, the age factor loses all its importance when we speak of spiritual and intellectual growth; there is no time limit nor age limit for the mental progress which can go on steadily for hundreds of years.

Secondly, failure is not the sign of incapacity—far from that.

Repeated failures come always to those who have something exceptional to do; it is only those who are satisfied with a commonplace and ordinary realisation who succeed easily in what they attempt to do.

The natures of a special value have always to face many ordeals

And thirdly, when I say to take refuge in the Divine’s love, I do not mean that it is all sufficient in itself. Not so, personal effort and favourable circumstances are also necessary for the promptness of the advance. But

those who can take refuge in the Divine's Love, find there a support, a protection and a joy that gives them strength to face all the ordeals and surmount all the difficulties.

Finally, I understand you wish to go to Japan, because it is a very beautiful country. But it is not an easy journey, to live in Japan is difficult and I shall never advise a woman (especially an Indian woman) to go there alone. If you can go with friends, in a party, it is quite all right.

I am always ready to help you according to my possibilities, and I need not tell you my love—you know it."

I never went to Japan.

While writing this chapter, I really wish the past could be retraced so that everything might be as it was before—only with an accurate conception, sensibility, receptivity and understanding such as I have now.

If it were in my hands, I would want to put the clock back. BUT...

However, if I would not have gone through a difficult time, I would have never grasped the true meaning, the true purpose of my life.

I am extremely lucky that the Mother guided me directly and put me on the path which leads to the Supreme Truth and the Supreme Love. My whole being aspires for nothing but the everlasting union with the Divine. Sri Aurobindo's promising words are encouraging:

"In the end a union, a closeness, a contact,
companionship in the soul with the Divine,
and yet more wonderful oneness in living."

(To be continued)

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THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1989)

I TURNED to look at Mother. This was not the ten-armed goddess of Rishi Bankim nor the Mother of Sri Ramakrishna garlanded with human heads. No, she was a flesh and blood Mother..

She said, frowning at me—"Why not?" I understood. Yes, thou art indeed that Mother. The ten directions are thy arms, O many-weaponed destroyer of Evil who ridest on the mighty Lion. On thy right hast thou Lakshmi, the fair and fortunate, on thy left Saraswati, mother of Art and Science, the mighty victor Kartik is with thee and so is Ganesh, the master of all realisations. And now, wearing a mortal frame, thou hast descended upon earth, the "Mother" of Sri Aurobindo.

Mother entered Sri Aurobindo's room, smiling radiantly, holding a glass of ice-cold water on a plate. A pale pink sari was softly wrapped around her fair delicate frame and her hair was drawn back in a bun. Fresh from her bath, she seemed to waft a gentle wave of grace and beauty. On her red-tinted feet glistening with two gold anklets was a pair of white sandals with golden straps. She came into the room and instantly it was filled with light and sweetness and perfume.

We turned eagerly towards Sri Aurobindo. Leaning against the back-rest, he was watching Mother. Two plaits of hair hung over his broad bare chest, his silky white beard floated gently in the breeze of the fan. The right leg was stretched out before him, while the left one was bent and the left elbow leaned on the hard bolster beside him.

He sat up straight as Mother neared him and with a broad smile took the glass that she gave him. She sat down on the edge of the bed while he drank the water slowly, ever so slowly. Not water, surely it was nectar. Then Mother turned to glance at us and we moved away to a distance. They talked for a while. Before she left the room she looked again towards us and said in a clear ringing voice—"This evening the children will come again."

Evening. Sri Aurobindo was resting on his bed, perhaps he really was waiting for his young guests. His closed eyes were like two lotus-buds.

The little children assembled very silently in the outer hall, since Champaklal was signalling to them with his finger on his lips to keep quiet. Then he led them in one by one and placed them around three sides of the bed, like a garland. They all stood, with folded hands, silent, unblinkingly gazing on the Lord's face. In their green and red uniforms, they no longer reminded me of Shiva's companions but of Durga's soldiers.

The lotus-buds opened a little and with a somewhat surprised smile he said, "So you have come? Good. Sit down." One girl suddenly touched his feet and made obeisance, and then they all followed suit

"Didn't you know we were coming?"

"Of course I did. Mother had told me. In any case, I already knew."

"You knew? How?"

"Well, you see, whoever calls to us, thinks of us, loves and is devoted to us, comes close to us and his thoughts, feelings and experiences reach us faster than radio-waves."

"So you can find out all about us, even though you never leave your room?"

"This sounds exactly like one of Dr. Manilal's questions. Have you heard of Dr. Manilal? He was the Chief Physician of the Maharaja of Baroda. Baroda is where Champaklal comes from, where I used to live, long ago. Well, he too used to ask me childlike questions like yours. He believed we knew everything about everything. But does that mean I have got to know what your mothers have cooked for your lunch?"

"But then, when... we.. are... naughty? Even that?"

Sri Aurobindo laughed at these last words that were fearfully stammered out. "Children are usually naughty. What is so surprising about that?" he smiled. The girl felt very relieved. "But we know all we need to for our work," he continued, "You understand?"

"Not quite, but.. " Just then one little girl rushed in, panting and tearful. "The others left me behind," she almost wept.

"Oh! is that so?" Sri Aurobindo turned his head towards Champaklal who took the child to the bathroom nearby. She washed her face, drank some water and, much calmed, came out and joined the others

"Where was I? Oh! whether I knew all about you? You see, it's not easy to explain. Look, do you know that the sun has innumerable invisible rays? Good. Similarly, we too have rays or fine threads that link each one of you to us. The thread unwinds itself or rolls itself up according to whether you go far away or come close. Somewhat like a spider's web. You've seen one, I hope?"

"Of course! It's so funny to see the spider hang down from its thread and then suddenly move swiftly up, just as the Tamil toddy-tappers slide fast up the palm trees. But it's fantastic! Supposing we were to go to England or America, would the thread stretch that far?"

"Yes, it would. I told you it is just like the sun's rays. When you are in trouble or danger, we feel a tug at the thread and we know what is happening. When you grow up you will understand."

"We saw in the film 'Sri Ramakrishna' that he could see and hear from a distance."

"Something like that. All yogis have such powers. But why only yogis, even your own mothers can sense if danger or ill-fortune approaches you."

“Oh yes, I remember our Bengali teacher telling us about something like that which happened to Bijoy Krishna Goswami.”

“Bijoy Goswami? What was his story?”

“Well, when he was a small boy, he had gone to Puri on a pilgrimage, but his mother had stayed back home. When a big stone hurt his foot, the boy began to weep, ‘Ma, ma ’ Well, after he came back his mother asked him if he had been crying out for her because, he had hurt his foot on a stone. ‘Yes, ma,’ answered the child. ‘Yes,’ continued the mother, ‘the other afternoon I was resting in my room when I felt a stone strike my foot and I heard you cry out. I looked everywhere, but didn’t find anyone or anything. Then I understood for sure that it was your foot that had been hurt.’ ‘How did you hear my voice?’ asked her son. But his mother answered that mothers could do things like that.”

“Yes, that is a beautiful example. Did you know that Bijoy Goswami was a great yogi? Anyway, from this story you learn that if human mothers can have such experiences, then how much more may the Divine Mother have ”

“Yes, the Mother too has told us that She is always with us, sees and knows all that we are doing and is helping us all the time.”

“Exactly! Well, perhaps now we could return to our main story. Does anyone remember where we stopped last time?”

“Of course! It was that your father sent you and your brothers to England.”

“He didn’t send us, he took us there with him. We all went, our mother, we three brothers and even our little sister Sarojini. Nowadays travelling to England is a commonplace event. Even here, sitting in the small town of Pondicherry, you get to know about the whole world, you can see Europe, America, China and Japan and all the rest in pictures and films. Even in the Ashram you can meet and make friends with people from all over the world, even those in African jungles.”

“That’s true. But I wonder why some kinds of people sometimes scare me.”

“Scare you? Why? Fear is born of ignorance. But if we enter into these discussions, I’m afraid we may lose ourselves in one of the jungle paths of densest Africa, so I think I had better leave the subject for your teachers to tell you about. You know, some races have sharp features, while others have flat or snub ones. Similarly, mankind speaks various languages. Even in our country there is so much diversity. You see, manifold are the Lord’s ways. Sitting right here, in the Ashram, which may be described in Tagore’s words as ‘the beaches of the vast ocean of humanity’, you can discover so many mysteries of the visible and invisible worlds. In the Puranas it is said that Ganesh learned all about the universe by running around his mother Parvati.”

“How is that?”

“Don’t you know the legend? It says that Shiva and Parvati had two sons, Kartik and Ganesh. You all know what Ganesh looks like, don’t you?”

“Yes! He has a fat round belly and a long trunk.”

“Well then, it was decided that one of them would get married. But which one? Finally they were told that he who would go round the world first would be the winner. Kartik was overjoyed, he was swift and strong and, moreover, the Peacock was his mount. So he set out right away, confident and cheerful. Not so Ganesh who was aware that apart from being rather overweight, he had only a Rat for his mount, and so he could certainly be no match for Kartik. But being very intelligent and wise, he decided to go round his parents. He did so and when Kartik returned, tired and panting, he found Ganesh calmly sitting on his mother’s lap and claiming to be the victor. When Kartik demanded how this could be, he answered very calmly—‘Why? Isn’t it written in the Scriptures that one’s parents are the whole universe!’ Ganesh, though fat, was indeed a very clever chap! (*Laughter*) And so poor Kartik lost... Well, in our day, there was neither any Ganesh nor the World-Mother Parvati, and so we had to cross the seven seas and the thirteen rivers. Do you know that in those days crossing the black waters was a most daring and rare happening?”

“The black waters?”

“Yes, black stood for something fearful, and waters meant the ocean. That is why all my father’s relatives and friends tried their best to stop my father and us from going to England. Actually my father was one of the first Indians to have gone to study in England. And now he intended to return there with his wife and children! My father was an extremely strong-willed person and would always do whatever he thought best in spite of anything anyone else might say or think, including the Lord God! Actually he didn’t even believe in God. In those days many people had all sorts of strange notions about England and it is because of them that Dwijendralal Roy wrote his ironical poem. Haven’t you read it? Well, then, here it is—

(Sri Aurobindo began to recite slowly the translation)

England’s soil is made of mud, ’tis not silver nor gold,
 Into England’s sky rises the sun, England’s clouds bring down
 the rain;
 Its mountains are made of rocks, and on its trees blossom flowers,
 You may not believe this, friend, but ’tis so, ’tis so.
 And if you do go there, O friend, you too will say ’tis so.

There in England, men are men and all its women just women.
 And young and old and fat or strong, they all must eat to live.
 All their heads are on the top, their feet are down below.
 Smile not, my friend, nor doubt me for I do know ’tis so,
 And if you do go there, dear friend, you too will say ’tis so.

(*Laughter*)

"But all this is far back in the past. Nowadays the black waters have become white."

"Have you seen the white waters?"

"Of course I have. The blue sky above, the blue-green waters below where the fresh white foam runs and plays like little rabbits! And there we were, brown sahibs on a white ship, with mother and father and a sister, young and sweet like you."

"You had a sister?"

"I had everything, then lost it all, and now I have everything once again."

"Oh! you are playing with us, teasing us!"

"Playing with you? Well, if I didn't laugh with you now and then, would you come to me just to listen to serious things? However, I did have a sister, who loved me very much indeed, I'll tell you about her another day. On the ship my brother Manmohan was very very happy, almost bursting with joy. In fact, now and then, his thrill and pleasure would seem so excessive that father had even to rebuke him."

"And you too?"

"No, I wasn't like that. I was supposed to be a rather timid boy who often loved to be by myself and read books. That was why, perhaps, father loved me more than the others. Manmohan would drag me along with him. He was an easy mixer and even had English friends, though I never did. I remember the shock my first impression of London gave me. The crowds and the noise and the traffic made it difficult almost to breathe. After the peace of Khulna, Deoghar with its hills and Darjeeling surrounded by its mountains and snows, this place with its tall houses from the top of which long spires of smoke rose into the sky was a new and not a very pleasant experience. I would smile to myself, though remembering Tagore's excellently vivid simile about London—it was as if the city lying flat on its back was smoking a huge Burma-cheroot! (*Loud laughter*), while its smoke blackened with annoyance the face of its sky, just as your faces darken with anger when your teachers scold you!"

"No, no, no one scolds us. Mother does not approve of scolding or caning, and, anyway, our teachers are our elder brothers and sisters, like Pavitrada, Sisirda, Sanatda, Aratidi, Amitadi and Parudi and so many more. Don't you know them?"

"How can I? The rate at which you are increasing in number, it would appear that someday, soon, all the children of the land will come and stay here!"

Another thing that amazed me in England at first was the fact that even the servants and porters were all white! I hadn't read D. L. Roy's song then, you see. The porters called us 'Sir', and carried our luggage. They were so different from the Sahibs in India where even the smallest white man behaved like a Lord! So that even at that tender age, my heart cried out—'Who would live a bondsman who knows not freedom!' Now you are free."

Did you then make a vow to free your motherland even though you were just a schoolboy?"

"Yes, I did, but my father is partly responsible for that."

"How? He had wanted to turn you into Westernised gentlemen "

"Just Westernised! My goodness! When he left the three of us at the house of Mr. Drewett in Manchester, he requested the latter, specifically, not to let us meet any Indians or read any Indian books and newspapers so that we might become full-fledged Sahibs. Though afterwards he did change his way of thinking. But we'll talk about that later."

"You seem to put away many things for later. You're sure you won't forget about them by then?"

Sri Aurobindo laughed. "You'll remind me, if I do so, won't you? Now back to our story. Father left us at Manchester and our mother in London and then returned home. That was the last time I saw him "

"Last time? Why?"

"Because he died just a little while before we came back, and this is partly due to me."

"How is that?"

"You see, he was ill and then he received, mistakenly, an unfortunate piece of news, that the ship on which I was to travel had sunk in mid-sea, so that he believed I had been drowned. The grief and the shock were too much for him to bear and he died crying out my name 'Auro, Auro' with his last breath." (*The children all sigh deeply.*)

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

(Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali)

HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

LALJIBHAI'S STORY

The Mother's Yoga in the Material World

IN 1902, a fourteen-year-old boy called Devjibhai Hindocha walked out of his village home in Gujarat, carrying nothing more than a laddu and a handkerchief and headed for the nearest port. In exchange for painting the main mast of a waiting dhow, the Arab captain agreed to take him to East Africa, where on arrival he was asked whether he wanted to settle in British or German territory. On learning that the British gave 5 shillings more than the Germans as a settling-in contribution to new pioneer immigrants, he opted for British patronage and began hunting for a job.

Devjibhai Hindocha was a born entrepreneur and businessman. After a year as a cook for a small shop, sleeping and eating on the premises and spending nothing, he saved enough to buy himself a partnership. Next he travelled by bicycle inland and began opening other shops. He joined in partnership with four others and together they formed a company by the name of Vithal Das Hari Das and Company Ltd. in Jinja, Uganda, and in fifty-five years they created a huge complex of businesses, dealing in everything from sugar, cotton, rice, tobacco and soap to cinema-houses, hotels and property, all on a big scale. He had his headquarters at Jinja, Uganda, and had subsidiary interest throughout East Africa.

Javerben, the wife of Devjibhai, was a pious and extraordinary woman. A mystic soul, she had a special relationship with Sri Krishna and also, unknowingly, with the Mahālakshmi aspect of the Mother, but of this a little later on. This rare lady gave birth to four sons and three daughters, amongst them two chosen souls destined to become great instruments of the Divine Mother—her first-born Laljibhai and a daughter named Savita whom the Mother would later re-name Huta.

Laljibhai was born in Modpur village of Jamnagar state in Saurashtra in India in January 1917, as if India with its spirituality had wanted to put its stamp on him. His family was so poor that his mother and aunts had to work in fields apart from the household chores. It was a joint family and they were staying with his uncle who had a small ration-shop. When he was three years old his mother went to join his father in Africa but within two years she returned to India for Laljibhai's education as in those days there were no schools in Africa. Laljibhai had his early education in his village. His childhood passed in hardship. Later he went to Bombay and there while in matriculation his formal education stopped. At nineteen he left to join his father in Africa. There he and his cousins were trained in all the branches of the various family businesses. But in each business they had to start right at the bottom. They were given no special privileges. It

was a harsh training but it succeeded in making Laljibhai strong and hard-working and gave him a thorough knowledge of the business world and its practices. Though he had no turn for formal schooling, he inherited an astute business sense and acumen from his father and at an early age became an industrialist in his own right. Apart from the vast industrial estate his family owned, he established a sugar factory in Africa in 1945.

The ways of the Divine are mysterious. The Divine Angler awaits a soul-moment to cast his line. In Laljibhai's case this moment arrived in 1953. Before that the Divine Mother chose to keep herself veiled. And even though two of his friends, A. B. Patel and Shivabhai Amin, were running Sri Aurobindo Centres in Africa and were in constant touch with the Ashram, surprisingly they never spoke of this to Laljibhai. Till the 30th July, 1953, all he knew about Sri Aurobindo was that he had been a great revolutionary and had been involved in some bomb conspiracy, for which he had been jailed by the British Government and that after serving his sentence he had gone to Pondicherry where he lived in a cave to do Yoga, and that some French lady was looking after him.

One day his friend Mr. Jamna Das Modi asked him, "Do you want to see a Yogi?" Laljibhai said, "Why not?" One auspicious morning he went to see the Yogi, Shri A. B. Purani. When he found that this Yogi had neither long matted hair, nor put on ashes, nor wore a loin cloth he felt at ease and thought, "Here there is nothing to fear or hesitate about. One can talk freely with him." That day through Purani he entered consciously the Divine Mother's aura. Purani told him about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother and their Ashram, their philosophy and their work. Laljibhai was impressed and he made arrangements for Purani's tour of Uganda and Kenya.

During his tour, once when he was staying with a friend of Laljibhai's, it was decided that next morning at about 10 a.m. Purani would come to Laljibhai's sugar mill and meditate with him and his family. An hour or two before the appointed time Purani phoned Laljibhai and said that he wanted to come at once. Even though Laljibhai wanted him to come a little later, Purani insisted and left immediately for the sugar mill. Laljibhai and Javerben and all the family members were standing at the gate to receive their distinguished guest. During the meditation Purani made a gesture of breaking something over the head of Javerben. Throughout that day Javerben had the darshan of Sri Krishna, sometimes with open eyes and at others with closed eyes. And from then onwards this faculty of occult vision remained with her. Laljibhai and the rest of the family, who had meditated with Purani, also concretely felt a Divine Presence during the day.

After the meditation Purani told them that during his morning meditation the Mother had appeared before him and told him that Mahalakshmi was descending into the mother of Laljibhai and that she would not be able to bear the full descent, she might be shattered. He should hurry and break the connec-

tion. So he had broken the connection during the meditation, thus averting any untoward result

On hearing of this occult experience of his mother Laljibhai asked Purani, "We were also meditating Why didn't we get these visions?" Purani replied, "The faculty of vision will come when you meditate with great sincerity and faith without an agitated mind Then your progress will be quick and you can achieve these visions "

The same night Laljibhai had a beautiful vision He saw that all his family members and some others were sitting in a line under a big tree near their house and they all saw Lord Shiva appearing on the tree and blessing them. Then Laljibhai started rising up bodily and someone from the line shouted, "You will touch the electric wire line and die." Laljibhai replied, "The Shakti which is taking me up, it is her duty to protect me So nothing will happen Don't worry " Laljibhai rose very high. Then on those heights he saw Sri Aurobindo and the Mother dressed in pure white Soft sitar music was going on in the background Laljibhai bowed before them and they gave him their blessings and went away. In the rest of the vision, Laljibhai went into his room with Purani and told him, "I got everything from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Now take away all the money for the Ashram." Then due to some greediness Laljibhai tried to keep back a five-rupee note thinking it might be of some use, some day Immediately his soul came forward and said, "You have given away all your wealth to the Divine. Do you think that your five-rupee note can save your life?" When he heard this, Laljibhai immediately gave these five rupees also to Purani

Later he narrated this vision to the Mother. She was very happy and said, "It is helpful. Very good experience "

While leaving for India Purani invited Laljibhai to visit the Ashram on his next trip to India

The Hounds of Heaven had got the scent of this chosen soul and it so happened that in connection with the marriage of his sisters, Savita and Usha, Laljibhai along with his family was to come to India in November of the same year He remembered Purani's invitation and wrote to the Mother that in November-December he would be in India and would like to visit the Ashram. Dyuman replied on the Mother's behalf that they were welcome and that the Mother had made all arrangements for their visit

Pondicherry was still a French colony There was a customs post and a barrier Dyuman received them at the customs barrier and escorted them to the Ashram Just as they reached the Ashram the Mother was leaving for the Tennis Ground They had her first darshan in front of the south-facing staircase. She just glanced at them and left for the Tennis Ground without a word Dyuman escorted them around and for one and a half days showed them all the Ashram activities When that was over, Laljibhai said to Dyuman, "All right, now that we have seen the Ashram, tomorrow we will leave for Africa " Dyuman said,

“Before leaving, it would be better to take permission from the Mother.” Laljibhai replied, “I have to go back to my home For that why should I take permission from the Mother?” Dyuman said, “No, not permission, you take her blessings.” Laljibhai replied, “Oh, that is all right After all she is controlling such a big institution and is a respected person. We will bow not once but a thousand times to her. Please ask her.”

Dyuman went to ask the Mother and the Mother said, “Tell Laljibhai to stay for two weeks more.” On hearing this Laljibhai protested, “Dyuman bhai, I am very busy. I cannot stay for fifteen days. I have important commitments to public bodies and social works and business and the affairs of all the companies in Africa. I have to look after my Miwani Sugar Mills Besides, I have not even spoken to the Mother, nor has the Mother spoken to me. We don’t know each other How is it that she is asking that we should stay for fifteen more days?” And consulting his diary he said, “Look, I have so many appointments in my diary ” Just then Laljibhai’s wife Mukta’s soul as if came forward and she said, “What would happen to all these appointments if you fell ill? Would not they have to be cancelled? During the past fifteen years you have not taken even a single day’s holiday. So this is an opportunity. Stay here for fifteen days as the Mother has suggested There must be something good in it.” Laljibhai agreed But for her, Laljibhai’s and his family’s divine destiny might have been left unfulfilled Though her name is Mukta, which means pearl, the Mother would always address her as Mukti which means liberation.

When Dyuman took the news to the Mother she said, “All right, I am giving Laljibhai some work. Let him visit all our farms and small industries Let him observe and give me a report on how we can improve their efficiency and increase the production ” When Dyuman conveyed the Mother’s wish, Laljibhai exclaimed, “Dyumanbhai, she has not spoken even a word to me. How then does she know that I am capable of doing what she has asked me to do?” Dyuman smiled and replied, “You don’t know the Mother She knows you better than you know yourself ” Accordingly Laljibhai visited the various Ashram concerns and prepared a report. Eight days passed. All this time he was wondering why the Mother did not see him nor call him for an interview. Then the Mother sent word, “Let Laljibhai come with his family.” Now Laljibhai became a little nervous He said to Dyuman, “What will the Mother speak about? I know absolutely nothing about Yoga, so I would not be able to answer if she talks about Yoga I will become nervous Can you come with me?” Dyuman replied, “To take me along, you will have to get the Mother’s permission ” “Then please get her permission,” pleaded Laljibhai When Dyuman informed the Mother about his nervousness she said, “Tell Laljibhai, ‘Don’t get nervous, everything will be quite all right.’”

Laljibhai consoled himself with the thought, “The interview will be over in five or ten minutes. The Mother will ask about Africa and I will ask about the

Ashram, how things are running and this and that, and give her the report and then come away.”

On that auspicious day when Laljibhai and his family went to the Mother, a sweet scenario unfolded. On seeing them the Mother went into a trance for a few minutes. When she came out of her trance she smiled broadly, patted Laljibhai and showered her love upon his family. Then she started talking and Laljibhai responded. This talk did not last the five or ten minutes he had imagined it would but continued for one full hour. Laljibhai felt no awkwardness at all. The norms of their sweet relationship, that of the Mother and her son, were set that day. They went on talking freely about many subjects. Then expressing his wonder at this, Laljibhai said, “Mother, how is it that we are here?” The Mother replied, “Among those who come here, each soul is destined to come, guided by the Divine planning. You are also under the Divine planning and that is how you are here. You do not know but your mother prayed for a child to Uma (Parvati). Do you know who Uma is? I am Uma—Parvati. Her prayer was granted and with my blessings to your mother you were born. Since your childhood, in your school and in your business I have been with you at each step. We have been also together in our past lives.” (Laljibhai knew nothing about his mother’s prayer to Uma; later on she confirmed it.)

Filled with joy and wonder of it all, Laljibhai stood up to take leave. The Mother said, “Au revoir.” Laljibhai replied, “Au revoir.” The Mother asked, “Do you know the meaning of ‘Au revoir’?” “No, Mother,” replied Laljibhai. “I thought that since you said it, it must be something nice.” The Mother said, “It means that we shall see each other again.” Laljibhai protested, “No, Mother, that will not be possible at least for four or five years, because I have lots of responsibilities and work in Africa.”

At these words the Mother must have smiled because within a few months after Laljibhai’s return to Africa his sister Savita parted from her husband and renounced the world and joined the Ashram. In such a situation parents will naturally think that renouncing the world at such a young age may be painful for her in the future. Laljibhai’s parents told him, “You have just visited Pondicherry and seen the Mother. It would be better if you send a telegram to the Divine Mother requesting her to explain to Savita not to join the Ashram and not to renounce the world at this young age.” At the request of his parents Laljibhai sent the telegram. The Divine Mother replied, “Laljibhai, where is your faith in the Divine? Savita has offered herself to the Divine and the Divine has accepted her and now she is no more Savita but Huta. And tell your parents to keep calm and peace in their hearts and then my presence will be with them always.”

Then to settle Huta’s affairs Laljibhai had to come to Pondicherry within six or eight months of his first visit. After his arrival when he went to the Mother she said, “Do you remember my ‘Au revoir’?” “Yes, Mother,” he replied. He

wondered at her omniscience, at how her words had come true.

The Mother arranged for the divorce of Huta, and Laljibhai's work was over. When he went to take leave of the Mother she said as after his first visit, "Au revoir." Again Laljibhai protested, "No, Mother. Only after four or five years."

On this visit Laljibhai's daughter Shobha was enchanted by the Ashram and prayed to the Mother, "Mother, I like the School and Group [physical education activities] and would like to stay here." The Mother replied, "At present we have no accommodation. But your father and mother will come to reside here permanently after two years. Then you can stay with them and study in the school."

When Laljibhai heard this he was surprised. He had no intention of coming and settling in Pondicherry permanently and now the Mother was saying that they would come to live here permanently. Little knowing the Mother he thought she might have said this to please his daughter. But exactly after two years, on 5th December, 1957, they would come to live in the Ashram permanently.

Laljibhai went back and the Mother sent him a telegram that there would be celebration of the Supramental Manifestation that had taken place on 29 February the previous year, and that it would be good if he could come here. The Mother also asked Huta to write a letter to Laljibhai to ask him to come with his family. How could Laljibhai refuse? He had to come. He realised that a deep bond between him and the Mother had been forged. With Huta settling here the destiny of the family was linked with that of the Ashram and it would be better if he could start some business in India. There was another reason too. Times were changing in Africa. The spirit of nationalism was growing among the Africans. Laljibhai decided to consult the Mother about his idea. At that time the Savana Textile Mill in Pondicherry had come up for sale. He asked, "Mother, may I buy the Savana Mill?" She replied, "No, start a sugar factory instead. It will be better for you." Laljibhai said, "But, Mother, there are a number of problems in starting a sugar factory. It is an agricultural industry, so it is difficult. I do not know if sugarcane grows here or not." The Mother said, "Have faith in the Divine, and everything will be all right. Don't worry about it. This will be my yoga in the material world and I want you to do it."

When he heard the Mother's mantric words Laljibhai took the leap without any hesitation and replied, "All right, Mother, I readily agree to establish a sugar factory in Pondicherry, without giving any thought to economic or commercial considerations."

The following year on the 24th November, a license was obtained from the Government of India to build a sugar factory in Pondicherry. The Mother sent a telegram to Laljibhai in Africa.

"Sugar factory license received. It is the Divine's Victory. Now come and make your arrangements. Blessings."

The day the license was obtained was an auspicious one—an anniversary of

the Day of Realisation thirty years earlier, the day of the descent of the Krishna Consciousness into Sri Aurobindo's body. On this great day—later to become one of the four Darshan days—Sri Aurobindo established the Mother as the presiding Supreme Deity of the Ashram and himself retired into his room to carry on his great work in privacy.

On 11th January, the Company was registered in Pondicherry. Laljibhai returned to Pondicherry shortly after. He started an office. The Mother declared open the office of the New Horizon Sugar Mills Private Ltd. at about 4 p.m. on the 14th May. She entered the room with a broad smile and took her seat in the special chair which had been made for her. She looked deeply into Laljibhai's eyes for a few seconds, in order to pour her Force, Grace and Love. She distributed sweets to all. Before she left she spoke these words

“A happy beginning,
A good continuation,
And no end—an endless progression ”

After a week Laljibhai sent word to the Mother that in the new Budget which had come out that very week the Government had introduced heavy taxes and so he could not say whether his family would agree to establish the Sugar Factory in Pondicherry.

In answer, the Mother asked him to wait. Then after a few days she gave him an interview. Strangely enough, throughout the interview, she did not utter a single word about the Sugar Factory and its complications. On the contrary, she talked for more than an hour about spirituality, the Supramental Manifestation, the Gods and Goddesses, the temples and the religions. She also spoke about hideous difficulties:

“There will be boundless difficulties for me, for you, for the Ashram, for India and for the whole world. There will be such a crisis that people will even lose faith in the Divine. But out of this mess and chaos a New World will emerge that will be the Victory of the Divine.

“In the present circumstances what difference does it make whether you undergo sufferings and difficulties here in Pondicherry or in Africa?”

Moved by these words Laljibhai said to her, “Mother, I prefer to suffer, to face whatever comes, near you—under your protection and guidance. The Sugar Factory will be built according to your wish in spite of everything. I pray for your Victory. ”

The Mother was extremely pleased and taking Laljibhai's hands in hers, said joyously:

“Bien, très bien ” [“Good, very good...”]

(To be continued)

Compiled by SHYAM KUMARI

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND THE REALM OF VALUES—A NEEDLESS DICHOTOMY

by C. V. Devan Nair

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1989)

LEFT to itself, unguided by the wisdom of spiritual values, insights and intuitions, the one-pointed pursuit of economic growth must result, as so many current examples testify, in dehumanised, artificial creations. The creators have no time to be human. Eventually, they forget to be human. They are inspired and motivated, not by the multi-faceted divinities of culture, and all the non-material aspirations and endeavours which provide human life with its deeper value and significance, but by the projections of development statistics and charts, and the prospects of unlimited wealth creation through the heightened productivity of commercial and industrial robots. Everyone talks about the new technological Menu to be provided by new electronic paradises, where angels will no doubt have wings, smiles and songs computed by microchips. Nobody speaks of the new Man.

The human element is relegated to the back-waters of awareness. Towering structures of steel and concrete replace human beings as objects of pride and adulation. One can embrace in affection a brother, a sister, or a friend, but, and there are several buts, who would care to embrace and kiss a skyscraper? In other words, mutual affection and regard, and the higher human aspirations do not enter modern industrial and technological equations. Statistical digits and units of production do not call for love. They exist only for productive manipulation. One recalls the moving question of a poet:

Why build these cities glorious,
If man himself unbuilt goes?

Our machines, and the graphs and statistics they churn out, are already credited with knowing us better than we do. If we believe the new-fangled whiz-kids who increasingly man the economic and manpower planning bureaus of the world, our machines can see, calculate, measure, decipher and analyse better than we can. So why depend on merely human perceptions?

The human being is statistically simplified and falsified beyond recognition. One wit described statisticians as "men who know that if you put a man's head in a sauna and his feet in deep freeze, he will feel pretty good—on the average." Tears of pain and grief are caught in the diagnostic trap of another expert, a chemical chap this time. We are told that our tears are no more than "a copious discharge of hydrated chlorine of sodium from the eyes."

Even our consciences are anaesthetized by modern language. For instance, we are distressed when we hear of a poor child. We naturally associate a poor child with cruel deprivations, with a poor family living in poor circumstances. Then we read that in a doctoral dissertation in sociology a poor child was classified as "an underprivileged pre-adolescent." One would have thought that the man who achieved this monstrous obfuscation deserved a kick in the seat of his pants. He didn't. He was awarded a PHD instead.

Modern science and technology have fathered a new barbarism. The luminously percipient observer of modern trends that he was, Sri Aurobindo described this phenomenon in language which cannot be bettered, and which it would be criminal to paraphrase. He wrote:

"But if Science has thus prepared us for an age of wider and deeper culture and if in spite of and even partly by its materialism it has rendered impossible the return of the true materialism, that of the barbarian mentality, it has encouraged more or less indirectly both by its attitude to life and its discoveries another kind of barbarism,—for it can be called by no other name,—that of the industrial, the commercial, the economic age which is now progressing to its culmination and its close. This economic barbarism is essentially that of the vital man who mistakes the vital being for the self and accepts its satisfaction as the first aim of life. The characteristic of Life is desire and the instinct of possession. Just as the physical barbarian makes the excellence of the body and the development of physical force, health and prowess his standard and aim, so the vitalistic or economic barbarian makes the satisfaction of wants and desires and the accumulation of possessions his standard and aim. His ideal man is not the cultured or noble or thoughtful or moral or religious, but the successful man. To arrive, to succeed, to produce, to accumulate, to possess is his existence. The accumulation of wealth and more wealth, the adding of possessions to possessions, opulence, show, pleasure, a cumbrous inartistic luxury, a plethora of conveniences, life devoid of beauty and nobility, religion vulgarised or coldly formalised, politics and government turned into a trade and profession, enjoyment itself made a business, this is commercialism. To the natural unredeemed economic man beauty is a thing otiose or a nuisance, art and poetry a frivolity or an ostentation and a means of advertisement. His idea of civilisation is comfort, his idea of morals social respectability, his idea of politics the encouragement of industry, the opening of markets, exploitation and trade following the flag, his idea of religion at best a pietistic formalism or the satisfaction of certain vitalistic emotions. He values education for its utility in fitting a man for success in a competitive or, it may be, a socialised industrial existence, science for the useful inventions and knowledge, the comforts, conveniences, machinery of production with which it arms him, its power for organisation, regulation, stimulus to production. The opulent plutocrat and the successful mammoth capitalist and organiser of industry are the supermen of the commercial age and the true, if often occult rulers of its society.

“The essential barbarism of all this is its pursuit of vital success, satisfaction, productiveness, accumulation, possession, enjoyment, comfort, convenience for their own sake. The vital part of the being is an element in the integral human existence as much as the physical part; it has its place but must not exceed its place. A full and well-appointed life is desirable for man living in society, but on condition that it is also a true and beautiful life. Neither the life nor the body exist for their own sake, but as vehicle and instrument of a good higher than their own. They must be subordinated to the superior needs of the mental being, chastened and purified by a greater law of truth, good and beauty before they can take their proper place in the integrality of human perfection. Therefore in a commercial age with its ideal, vulgar and barbarous, of success, vitalistic satisfaction, productiveness and possession the soul of man may linger a while for certain gains and experiences, but cannot permanently rest. If it persisted too long, Life would become clogged and perish of its own plethora or burst in its straining to a gross expansion. Like the too massive Titan it will collapse by its own mass, *mole ruet sua*.”

The predominantly economic man, with primarily economic goals, was not always at the head of the human column. Historically, his ascendancy is a very recent phenomenon, coinciding with the socio-economic and political transformation of human societies ushered in by the discoveries of modern Science.

We might note that there were quite different social arrangements, which persisted over millennia, in the earlier curves of the human cycle. Initially, the men of knowledge, the Brahmins, priests or shamans were the acknowledged repositories of social wisdom and power. All accepted their guidance and rule. The age of the warriors followed, and warrior kings, emperors, warlords and the like, had their turn as governors of society. They had as ministers or tutors the men of knowledge, while the representatives of the economic functions in society, the merchants and the producers, were only barely tolerated as humble petitioners in royal courts, and that too only because of the not unwelcome tributes of wealth they brought with them. The triumphs of modern science and the ensuing bourgeois revolution changed all that. It saw the emergence, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, of “the opulent plutocrat and the successful mammoth capitalist and organiser of industry.”

But waiting in the wings for their turn on the centre-stage are an entirely new breed, the direct offspring of the modern disciplines spawned by the Age of Science and Technology, who are well on the way to becoming the most influential and powerful decision-makers in society—the development experts and technocrats. Indeed, in the present day and age, they are likely to become, where they have not done so already, the new supermen and “the true, if often occult rulers of society.” For they are found indispensable in both the private and public sectors of modern nations. It is their expertise which presides these days over fortune-making, and therefore, increasingly, over decision-making.

Like their predecessors, the new supermen also fall prey to the sin of Hubris which, as the ancients well knew, is always relentlessly pursued and overcome by Nemesis. A good number of curves of development the new supermen plot with the aid of their supercomputers end in a crash, for the good reason that all this is done without reference to conditions outside that curve. Infinite Reality lies outside that curve. One is reminded of arguments that attempt to prove that each of us will live the biblical span of fourscore years and ten, because that is what the developmental cycle dictates. Robert Burns captured the folly of human cocksureness in his immortal lines "To a Mouse (On Turning Her Up in Her Nest with the Plough)":

But Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
 In proving foresight may be vain:
 The best laid schemes o' mice and men
 Gang aft a-gley,
 An' lea'e us not but grief and pain
 For promis'd joy.
 Still thou art blessed compar'd wi' me!
 The present only toucheth thee:
 But oh! I backward cast my e'e
 On prospects drear!
 And forward tho' I canna see.
 I guess and fear!

Economic development curves suffer distortion precisely because government leaders and economic planners, who see themselves as champions of the collective ego of the State, are prone to ride rough-shod over the rights of the individual. Reasoning from the conclusions of modern Science, they tend, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, "to regard the individual as if he were a cell of its (social) body, a stone of its edifice, a passive instrument of its collective life and growth. Humanity is not so constituted "

There is a profound symbolic truth at the core of the great spiritual traditions of mankind, which saw man as made in the image of God. Robots are not made in the image of God. The individual human being houses all human potentiality in his or her own being. Call it what you will, soul, self or divine spark, but it is that from which has issued the sacred and even secular values we live by, and which is capable of love and sacrifice and fellow-feeling and the pursuit of justice, of art and poetry and music and yes, also of higher mathematics and nuclear physics. And we may safely assume that no expert or technocrat cares to be romantic with a robot or, in a court of law, take an oath on the latest book on cybernetics.

Here, one of Sri Aurobindo's aphorisms comes to mind. "To see the

composition of the sun or the lines of Mars is doubtless a great achievement; but when thou hast the instrument that can show thee a man's soul as thou seest a picture, then thou wilt smile at the wonders of physical Science as the playthings of babies ”

Sri Aurobindo also warned: “The society has no right to crush or efface the individual for its own better development or self-satisfaction, the individual, so long at least as he chooses to live in the world, has no right to disregard for the sake of his own solitary satisfaction and development his fellow-beings and to live at war with them or seek a selfishly isolated good And when we say, no right, it is from no social, moral or religious standpoint, but from the most positive and simply with a view to the law of existence itself. For neither the society nor the individual can so develop to their fulfilment Every time the society crushes or effaces the individual, it is inflicting a wound on itself and depriving its own life of priceless sources of stimulation and growth.”

Deprived of the individual, our societies are dreadful anthills, our cities no more than termite colonies hidden from the sun. Deprived of society the individual vegetates and rots, for his fellow-beings in society are “his source and stock,” even if he individually may surpass the present or immediate social level. Either the individual and society flourish together, or not at all.

Our economists and technocrats are nurtured in the belief that we need not look beyond the triumphs of the human reason, of science and Technology, for all the answers we need Not true at all. There are other estates in the realm, where purely utilitarian considerations are ludicrous as measures of value. We need to recall that some of the greatest contributions to human civilisation, art and culture originated with idealistic oddballs who dared to wander off the beaten track. Increasingly these days, ideals and idealists have almost become terms of abuse. On the contrary, they are very necessary for all-round development Indeed, idealists have been the most powerful dynamos propelling the upward human endeavour in history. A sane and wholesome society will therefore accord an honoured place to the artist, the poet, the idealist, the visionary and the man of God.

(To be continued)

ROMANTICISM AND HISTORY

A SURVEY OF SOME OPINIONS

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1989)

MANY German philosophers interpreted the story of Adam and Eve as a mythical representation of man's departure from the happiness of ignorance and self-unity into multiple self-divisions and conflicts which were due to the emergence of self-consciousness and the analytic intellect. Fichte, for instance, deduces five epochs in the history of mankind, moving from the stage of "the unconditional dominion of instinct over reason" up to the ultimate "epoch of the art of reason." These stages constitute "way stations" on man's journey from a paradise lost to a paradise which shall be regained.

Schelling, who influenced the German and English literary movements, represents the course of human history as a journey which constitutes the plot of a double Homeric epic.

History is an epic composed in the mind of God. Its two main parts are, first, that which represents the departure of humanity from its centre out to its furthest alienation from this centre, and, second, that which represents the return. The first part is, as it were, the *Iliad*, the second the *Odyssey* of history.

Hegel reveals his vision of the history of mankind in *The Phenomenology*. He embodies the spiritual and intellectual history of man in the vehicle of the Bildungsweg, the educational journey "To become true knowledge. . . spirit has to work its way through a long journey." Hegel's dialectic of thought is a dialectic of history and of human consciousness. For spirit unfolds itself not only in pure thought but also in the evolving consciousness of the race and of each individual, constituting all of human experience. Hegel pointed out that nature and history differ from each other inasmuch as the process of nature is cyclical whereas historical movements travel not in cycles but in spirals always acquiring something new. He also maintained that the State is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth. The individual has no rights which the State ought to respect.

If romantic historiography got its idealism from these German philosophers, it imbibed the spirit of nationalism found in the writings of Lamartine and George Bankroft. The chief English practitioners of this type of historiography are Carlyle, Froude and Macaulay.

In Carlyle's works there is froth and thunder, but not much that is solid and capable of analysis. His method is essentially biographical. He seeks out the hero, the Superman, the benevolent dictator, who can compel others to do

better Denouncing the Dryasdust who kill the living force in history he aims at making history alive. His masculine imagination and pithy style enable him to record vividly the infinite detail of life and opinion He forged for himself a peculiar style, which is at times rude and uncouth but lyrical at its best Carlyle in his most lyrical mood can be seen in the following passage from *The French Revolution*.

“In this manner, however, has the day bent downwards. Wearied mortals are creeping home from their field-labour; the village artisan eats with relish his supper of herbs, or has strolled forth to the village street for a sweet mouthful of air and human news. Still summer-eventide everywhere! The great sun hangs flaming on the utmost North-West; for it is his longest day this year. The hill-tops rejoicing will ere long be at their ruddiest, and blush Good-night. The thrush, in green dells, on long-shadowed leafy spray, pours gushing his glad serenade, to the babble of brooks grown audibler, silence is stealing over the earth ”

In Macaulay's historical writings, the desire for brilliant effect results in a lack of broader outlines and deeper views His opinions are often one-sided and his parade of knowledge is often flawed with error or distortion by his craving for antithesis and epigram He once said, “I shall not be satisfied unless I produce something which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies”. His *History of England* achieved this success which was naturally followed by distrust and neglect.

Froude's *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth* followed the lead of Carlyle in its great detail and picturesque description. It is an indirect and unfair attack upon the High Church views of Newman. Though marred by partisan bias, it is composed with vigour. Free from the rhetorical flamboyance of Macaulay, his style has a persuasive ease and charm.

Historical writing of the nationalist period in India was characterized by elements of romantic historiography As a reaction against the bitter attack on Indian culture and way of life by Western historians like James Mill, Elliot, Dowson, Maine, Stephen, Wheeler and others, historical studies were undertaken by Indian scholars with a view to vindicating India's hoary past with its vast variety and profundity of thought in every aspect of human life. They attempted to push back the antiquity of ancient culture and belittled the contribution of the British to the development of India. Their noble aim to serve the national cause urged them to sacrifice truth and history at the altar of patriotism

Romantic historiography with its distrust of reason, its indifference to objectivity and its taste for fanciful, picturesque, sentimental and idealistic concepts in history could not understandably have a long life Though it could set right the rigidities of the purely intellectualist approach to history, it proved

more a curse than a blessing by halting the development of historiography along scientific lines. It was bound to be replaced by the Ranke type of history with its emphasis on accuracy, authenticity and the employment of methodology and documentation

If the union of romanticism and historiography did the greatest damage of sowing the seeds of racial pride and arrogance leading to disastrous consequences, one of its boons was the birth of a new kind of literary genre called historical romance. The alliance proved harmful to history but beneficial to literature. In the hands of Sir Walter Scott, the historical novel became a first rate literary form and his example was emulated in almost all the countries of the world though not with so much of success

The origin of another genre may also be ultimately traced to the impact of romanticism on historiography. Psychoanalysis is, in fact, a culmination of Romanticism because the Romantic poets were the first to be concerned with the hidden element in human nature, sexual revolution and the death wish, which later became the preoccupations of psychologists like Freud, who, of course, conceded that it was not he, but the poets, who discovered the unconscious. Erik H. Erikson, in his biographies, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*, and *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence*, successfully used psychological insights, leading to a vogue for what is called "psychohistory". Though, unfortunately, this movement does not seem to have produced any other works comparable to these exemplars, there is a valid case for psychohistories since a psychologically oriented biographer or historian has a definite advantage over others in any attempt at understanding and unravelling the mysterious nature of some great historical figures. In a letter to Schiller, for example, Goethe complained of the failure of history to explain Napoleon. This only emphasises the value of and the need for psychohistory, which may prove to be the best offshoot of the marriage of romanticism and historiography

(Concluded)

DR. P. MARUDANAYAGAM
Professor of English,
Pondicherry University

PRAPATTI—A CHOSEN SOUL

As a Warrior

I REMEMBER how on the last New-Year's day Professor Prapatti's disabled body was making the utmost effort to climb the staircase leading up to the room of Ramkrishna Das (known as Babaji Maharaj in Orissa and the Ashram). There the Circle for the study of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had its usual meeting. In the room the spectators felt as if a determined devotee was gathering all his strength to reach near God. By that time the meeting had already commenced. Some of us were sitting on a bench outside on the veranda. Prapatti with the help of his attendant Roy Babu came with much pain and sat by our side. One of the visitors had started reading the life-history of a great devotee of the past. The reading was very fast. Prapatti looked at me and remarked: "Oh, he is moving like the Coromandel train!" Thus even in the midst of acute physical pain and suffering he had not lost his sense of humour.

There were many instances in his life which show that he was above the ordinary ways of men and had mastery over the physical nature and instincts. The body's suffering did not shake his inner being. He was firm and unruffled. Undoubtedly he was an extraordinary personality.

Babaji Maharaj has written: "When the Divine comes to earth to fulfil a special work, He brings with Him special chosen persons to speed up that work. Prapatti was one of the chosen souls." Babaji's statement proves true if one analyses the life-style of Prapatti.

Life before Pondicherry

Prapatti was the name given by the Mother. His original name was Kangali Charan Pati. He was born in a village named Varagola of the Cuttack district of Orissa on April 30th 1924. His father's name was Banambar Pati. Among the four sons Pati was the second. He was the most intellectual of them. He took his M.A. degree with first class in philosophy from Allahabad University. After that he was appointed lecturer of philosophy in different Colleges of Orissa.

The Spiritual Flame Grows

At that time one of his classmates named Mr. Abani Mohan Ghose, son of Mr Lalit Mohan Ghose residing in Cuttack, came to visit the Pondicherry Ashram for the first time. In the course of his visit Mr. Abani Ghose discussed some aspects and objectives of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and philosophy with Babaji Maharaj. After returning to Orissa, Ghose reported some impressive points of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga to Prapatti. Prapatti's questing

mind wanted to probe into the matter and wrote a letter to Madhav Pandit. Soon after getting the letter Madhav Pandit called Babaji and said: "Well, a professor from Orissa has written a letter. Take it and reply soon."

Prapatti's letter was full of philosophical antagonism and sought to refute Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga by showing the importance of Shankara's philosophy. Babaji read that letter scrupulously and wrote a long critical answer to it. Perhaps that answer touched the depths of Prapatti's mind and kindled a fire in his inner being. It was the precious moment in which his intellectual and philosophical trend of life turned towards Sri Aurobindo's yoga and sadhana. After going through that letter he wrote to Babaji seeking his permission to publish it in a local daily newspaper, and showed his inclination to visit the Ashram. Babaji did not appreciate the idea to publish it. He replied that his letter was not meant for publication. Instead of that Prapatti should himself come to visit the Ashram. Perhaps this was a clarion call from the Divine for Prapatti.

He came in the next summer vacation. It was the year 1949. After reaching the Ashram he first met Babaji. A room had been allotted to him in Golconde. So he went there. He spent the whole summer vacation in the Ashram. During that period Babaji and a retired Judge named Charu Chandra Dutta used to get together and spend one hour every day to translate Sri Aurobindo's work into Oriya. Prapatti took part in this activity and helped them in the translation. Most of his time he was engrossed in discussing with Babaji the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. His questing mind was a-thirst for the proper knowledge and guidance. Babaji took up this hard task and made a persistent effort to convince him about the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. But it is interesting to note that at the time of his departure from the Ashram, as soon as he got into a rickshaw tears rolled down from his eyes. He could not get Sri Aurobindo's Darshan as Sri Aurobindo was giving Darshan only at four particular times during the year. There was no possibility for him to have Sri Aurobindo's Darshan during that vacation. After that first visit he spent every summer vacation in the Ashram, till 1954. Each time he went back full of tears. His work of spreading the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's teaching started before he joined the Ashram. In the year 1952 he was transferred to Jeypore in Orissa. He formed a study circle there and arranged meetings to discuss Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. During the year 1954, while he was lecturing at Jaipore College he made up his mind to join the Ashram permanently. With that view he came to the Ashram. At that time the Mother used to come to the playground every day. She was giving Darshan to the aspirant visitors in the playground. Prapatti met the Mother there and prayed to her to give him permission to stay in the Ashram. The Mother gave him permission. Soon after this within a few days he resigned from the professorship and joined the Ashram on 28th September 1954 as an inmate.

The First Phase of his Ashram Life

A room was provided to Prapatti by the Ashram and he continued to live there till his last breath. Now the place has been expanded to become a well-established and crowded institution named Navajyoti Karyalaya. Although it became a regular institution in the year 1958, truly speaking he started developing it from the very day of his arrival. The first work given to him by the Mother was in the dining room. After a few years the Mother changed his work and told him to teach Philosophy in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. He taught there for quite a number of years. When he felt the need of doing some creative work of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for the Orissa people he gradually left teaching at the Centre of Education.

His Unflinching Aspiration to Work for Orissa

Soon after settling in the Ashram he started translating the various books of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo under the direct care of Babaji. He became editor of *Navajyoti*, a quarterly magazine in Oriya which was printed in Bikash Press at Jaipore in Orissa. Thereafter with the recommendation of Babaji, Prapatti took up a manifold programme of work in order to infuse a spiritual awakening into Orissa. He organised a group to translate the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library volumes and the Mother's *Questions and Answers*. His intense love for the Mother's works impelled him to make arrangements to sell them. He determined to spread the message of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo through various magazines such as *Navajyoti*, *Navaprakash* and *Integral Education Letter*. He sponsored women's Study Circles, Youth Society, and Student Society in every corner of Orissa. It was his daily occupation. Due to the crisis in the educational world and the need of the time Prapatti's greatest and last contribution for the people of Orissa was to take a lead in the movement of Integral Education. Now there are 93 Integral Education Centres in Orissa. Besides, in Bhubaneswar there is a Central Institution named "New Light Education Trust". It has become popular among both Government and private circles.

Another major work has to be mentioned. In his life-time he installed twenty-five Relics Centres in the important places of every district of Orissa. The greatest achievement of his life is his Dalijoda project, a small complex of manifold activity in the cause of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

He is not any more. He left his body on June 28th, 1989 in the morning at 8.40. The above account of his work for the Divine should give an eloquent proof that really he was a chosen instrument of the Divine to fulfil His work.

RAMNATH PANDA

(Translated by Nilima Das from the original Oriya)

CONVERSATIONS OF THE DEAD

TRANSLATED BY SATADAL FROM THE BENGALI OF
NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

4

Alexander, Puru

Alexander

My first defeat was at your hands, Puru¹ I admit this today, whatever history might say or whatever I might maintain out of pride Even now I cannot forget the scene of that dreadful night The blinding darkness, the terrible storm, the repeated thunderbolts, the swirling torrents of the Jhelum in spate, and the devastating confrontation of elephants, horses, chariots and men—all these have still left a sort of shiver in my mind I remember your giant frame upon a massive elephant compared to which probably even Alexander on his great war-horse Bucephalus looked unimpressive I was not ready to face such a consequence in a land of barbarians

Puru

You had assumed that beyond the Indus all were vigourless and ease-loving like those in Taxila, and would stand aside leaving your path unobstructed, feel fortunate to welcome you and offer the country as a present at your feet, hadn't you?

Alexander

I don't think that would have been necessarily bad, Puru. Alexander did not come with arms alone, Alexander came with the light of Greece. I would have unified the whole of your India and the world with the genius of the occident. Having become one, mankind would have prospered You thwarted that ideal But you can see now that my ideal was not a false one What a truth, what a life was there in it! You have defeated my body only, Puru, not my soul

Puru

It is that affliction that still cuts through my heart You have broken the ribs of India to make an open path—I couldn't have blocked that path by even defeating you. The Scythians, the Huns, the Tartars, the Moghuls—all came as invaders along that path and rendered this golden country miserable and wearied in body,

¹ Here I have slightly modified the prevailing history It is for the historians to judge whether something can be said in my favour even from the viewpoint of history —Author

life and mind Look at her condition today! She can't move about without foreign support. She has nothing of her own in her religion, work, education, culture and life,—she is nothing but a feeble echo of others. India is no more an Aryan race but a dying race of a heterogeneous mixture.

Alexander

I, on the other hand, see that your country has survived so long because of me. I started infusing new blood into her body, I showed the way to introduce new ideas into her mind from abroad If Alexander had not awakened it with a shove, infiltrated its body and life with the light and life of the occident, your pure Aryan race with its pure Aryan culture would have disappeared long ago.

Puru

This is mere arrogance of the young occident, Alexander. Take a look into the hoary past, when the uncouth hand of the alien, hostile and infidel race had not yet defiled our life and culture. How great was India, the ancient mother of civilisation! The day she came in contact with the alien, she became alienated at the cost of her own culture. From that very day, being deprived of her soul, she moved towards death. If she could have saved herself, her culture and her identity, and if the awful foreign culture had not pressed upon her soul, you would have seen what beauty, prosperity and glory India would have had today. India could not keep herself pure, for thousands of poisonous foreign influences have come to infect her, have crippled her true creative and life-developing capacity. What a land was India of the Vedic seers and see what it is now, this artificial India of the British.¹

Alexander

Your self-conceit also is no less, Puru What are you talking about Vedic India? Isn't it all about some small villages or towns in a corner of the country, petty kings, rustic living, an immature primitive society, from time to time a flicker of a few wise men whom you call seers? Even in the epic age of your Ramayana and Mahabharata you had not progressed too far beyond this Who had first dreamt of uniting the whole of India under one government as one country? Who had built that framework of foundation which is now visible under the superstructure of the British and the Muslim system? Do you remember that boy with the beauty of a royal face whom I pointed to you and prophesied about, saying that this boy would be like me? That Chandragupta Maurya is the founder of your Modern India. And who was the ideal and the inspiration of Chandragupta? It was this Alexander From then onwards, one after another, kings and emperors of the land or from outside have come to grow, develop and integrate

¹ Editor's Note Mention of "the British" was appropriate to the time this piece was written

India. See, art, culture and everything else developed after me, and everything carries the touch of the influence of Greece. It is Greece that has fostered all these things and made them pervasive in your country. Greece was followed by the Persians, the Moghuls and the British. It is the foreigners who have poured their riches into your store. That is why you have Kalidasa, Ajanta, the Taj Mahal

Puru

Please don't give me any more of your interpretation of history, Alexander. If you had the capacity to understand what India was in the bygone days, not even one sage or seeker would have lost his life at your hands. I too am not going to raise that topic. Let me only say that even after being struck by the foreigners if India showed some signs of life in some spheres, the achievement cannot be attributed to you. It is not because of you but in spite of you that her life-genius has blossomed forth. You are taken aback to see the emission of the fiery sparks in spite of such tremendous pressure. If that tremendous pressure had not been there, you would have seen what an image of glory India would have been. All this goes to prove that the immortal soul of India is lying hidden somewhere and biding time to manifest itself.

Alexander

You manage to forget, Puru, that no nation or individual, however great and powerful, can remain alone, separate or self-fulfilled in this world. Nothing is absolutely pure—things have developed as a result of interchange. He who cannot do this interchange is dead or dying. The great ones give to the small, the small ones receive from the great. Even if the small ones have something to give, they give to the great and the great ones too receive it. This is what happens always—it's a huge blunder to try to resist it. Look at the modern world and you will understand quite clearly how the whole of humanity is gradually progressing towards the same culture, the same ideal, even a single society or a single state.

Puru

Seemingly, of course it was like that, but the fact that to be one is not to be uniform has also been recognized. Self-identity must be preserved. Each one must be self-governed and must follow the law of one's being, *svadharma*. It's no use to abolish self-government and become a part of some huge machinery, particularly of a foreign make. He who tries to wipe out diversity from the world will surely make of it a lifeless inert mass

Alexander

And if diversity means each one becoming independent, becoming narrow in outlook in order to keep oneself pure, to build a Chinese wall around oneself for

fear of losing one's *svadharmā*, then those dwarf beings, that dwarf society too will not survive for long in this world.

Puru

I say, "*svadharme nidhanam śreyh*"; one must first find oneself before one can mingle and unite with others. It is better even to cut off all contact with others if that is needed to find oneself. A little self is much superior to a great foreign identity. I am not a seeker of *sāmrajya*, the outer empire, but of *svarājya*, the inner kingdom.

A PASSING AWAY

WHEN the tremulous dawn
Is shyly wooing
In the eastern lawn;
And the cuckoo is cooing
From a distant bower;
Let that be my happy
Passing hour

Delicate dropping Sephali
Will tinge this end;
Twittering birds in mirth
My passing commend.
On the lap of mother Earth
Shall I lie.
And the light
Will glow bright
Across the sky.

KAMALAKANTO

ALL ABOUT THAT BIG BANG

APROPOS OF A *BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME* BY STEPHEN HAWKING*

- 01: Einstein's General Theory of Relativity did not propose a Big Bang Universe; but it does lend itself to such possible models. Having nothing to go by, Einstein constructed a static Universe by proposing a repulsive force in the equations, the famous 'lambda'-term. This Universe is characterised by "matter without motion". This was around 1917; the boundless finite.
- 02: Not being happy with the repulsive term, Friedmann in 1922 worked out expanding models from Einstein's equations. He defined a space-curvature parameter k and found that for k equal to or less than zero the Universe would be ever expanding, for k more than one it would first expand but eventually come back to zero size. $k=0$ is flat surface, $k=+1$ positive curvature as of a sphere; $k=-1$ negative curvature, imagine a saddle-surface.
- 03: As against these mathematical curiosities, the real breakthrough came with Hubble's observations in 1928. He discovered a definite relationship between the red-shift and the distance of a galaxy from us. This simply means that the galaxies are receding from us. The farther a galaxy is, the faster is it going away from us.
- 04: Two important postulates are made in making the mathematics of cosmology tractable. According to the Weyl postulate the world-lines are considered to stream out from an enclosed surface not in a jumbled but in a regular way (1918). The cosmological principle, the second postulate, assures that the Universe is homogeneous and isotropic. This means that there are no preferred points or regions in the Universe.
- 05: We may now define the expansion factor S for the Universe. Although we are calling it 'expansion', it could also mean 'contraction'. The distance r of a galaxy from us is a function of time, because of its recession. S is a measure of r . Expansion factor S is therefore time-dependent. If S always increases with time, then we have an ever-expanding Universe; this corresponds to $k=-1$ or $k=0$. But if S should decrease, as in $k=+1$, the Universe would eventually shrink to a point.
- 06: From the observed fact of red-shifts—recession of galaxies—we must conclude that S is presently increasing with time. Extrapolation backward in time must therefore mean $S=0$ at some moment in the past. The time elapsed from this moment to the present is taken as the age of the Universe.
- 07: But what does $S=0$ mean? It corresponds to zero-size of the Universe. All the galaxies were at a single point. In mathematical language $S=0$ corres-

* Introduction by Carl Sagan (Bentam Books, London, 1989)

ponds to a singularity where all formulations break down. Here no physics can be read.

- 08: If this intrapolation can be considered to be valid, then $S=0$ is taken as the Big Bang moment, the beginning of the Universe, of space and time, of any conceivable physics. This is supposed to have happened some 16 billion years ago. So many billion light-years is also the present size of the Universe.
- 09: The Big Bang is thus a possibility in the Friedmann type of models. Is there an independent experimental confirmation for it, apart from the backward movement in time postulated after Hubble? Any tell-tale signs of its occurrence? Anything that blanks off knowledge is singularly repugnant to physics and the $S=0$ singularity is no exception. It is an abdication of the sense of responsibility on the part of the physicist, but could it be a temporary phase, a provisional arrangement?
- 10: According to Gamow the early Universe was more dominated by radiation than by matter. With expansion radiation cooled down and matter became prominent. The whole process of the formation of matter as we know started at this stage. The elements that go to make up this immense material expanse, including the life-forming chemicals, have evolved in the course of these 16 billion years of the Universe's life. Theories concerned with nucleosynthesis proceed along these lines, though there are too many loose ends to be tied.
- 11: Gamow also proposed, in 1948, that if the Universe started with high-intensity radiation, a state of extremely high temperature, then we must feel its warmth even today like that of a cinder when the white glow has disappeared. And so indeed was this observed by Penzias and Wilson in 1965.
- 12: The temperature one second after the Big Bang is estimated to be about 10 billion K which must be now 3K. The uniform microwave radiation received from all directions of the Universe provides experimental confirmation to the idea of a hot cinder cooling down with time; the 3-K radiation corresponds to the microwave background we feel as the left-over warmth.
- 13: Thus we see that the observation of red-shifts, study of the nucleosynthesis processes, and detection of the background microwave radiation go, broadly speaking, to support the Big Bang model of the Universe. There are, however, several incomplete details and uncertainties in the picture. The evolution of the Universe is still a hot subject in the professional field. The issues have to be settled more by experimental observations than by theoretical models. The Universe may be "queerer than we can suppose", says Haldane.
- 14: The question of the curvature of space has yet remained unanswered. Is space flat or curving inward or outward? The future course of the Universe will essentially depend upon this. If the rate of expansion is increasing the

Universe will keep on expanding forever; but if this rate is decreasing, then, after the expanding phase, the Universe will begin to contract and implode. The red-shift data tend to indicate slowing down of the expansion. But Sandage's observations on which this conclusion is based cannot be taken definitively as there is a considerable spread in the experimental points where theories start parting. The data are inadequate where they matter the most.

- 15: The anomalous red-shifts observed in the case of Quasi-Stellar Objects (QSOs) have complicated the matter further. A distant galaxy and a QSO close to each other should show the same red-shift, as both recede at the same rate away from us; but several QSOs are found to show higher red-shifts than the corresponding galaxies. Our present knowledge about the QSOs is too elementary to figure out the anomaly.
- 16: The question of the present-day abundance of elements in the Universe is linked up with the physics of elementary particles. Starting with quarks and leptons as the basic building blocks of matter, it is seen that the estimated rate of expansion of the Universe immediately following the Big Bang cannot account for the observed abundance; it is not fast enough to take care of what we have now. If tomorrow the particle physicists should discover more fundamental units of matter that go to make up quarks and leptons, then the Big Bang age may not turn out to be sufficiently long to produce or evolve matter to the degree of complexity such as we witness presently. The cosmological problem thus gets compounded by particle physics.
- 17: The observed microwave background radiation is the strongest support for the Big Bang model. But it is not clear how a violent event like the Big Bang could give rise to the observed isotropy of radiation, unless we assume that the objects of the Universe are in constant communication with each other.
- 18: Apart from these observational aspects we must also look into the two postulates we have framed to make the mathematics of the Universe tractable. Take the Hubble interpolation leading to $S=0$ of the Big Bang moment. Strictly speaking under Weyl's postulate we cannot do this interpolation. Immediately after the Big Bang the world-lines were all jumbled up and it took a finite time for them to get smoothed out. It is from this moment onward that we can talk of S , the expansion of the Universe. Intrappolation to $S=0$ is hence an artifact; so too could be the singularity and the beginning of the expanding Universe.

The postulate of homogeneity and isotropy of the Universe may be true on the large cosmic scale, but it may not be valid on local considerations. It is observed that our own solar system is drifting in the background of the microwave radiation, making the red-shifts in two opposite directions for equidistant objects somewhat different.

- 19: Will the Universe eventually collapse into a singularity or will it continue to

expand forever? This depends upon the total quantity of matter in the Universe. It is suspected that there is a large quantity of dark matter lying undetected which will play a crucial role in deciding the Universe's fate. If the total quantity of matter corresponds to 3 hydrogen atoms per cubic meter, then we have flat Euclidean space; if this number is less than 3 then the open Universe will continue to expand forever, eventually matter disappearing in the form of energy; on the other hand, if the number is more than 3, we shall end up in a Big Crunch.

In addition to the dark matter, it is also suspected that neutrinos have a small non-zero mass. These particles are copiously emitted by the stars in their thermonuclear processes. If the total sum of the mass, taking into account the neutrino mass also, adds up to more than 3, then we shall be heading towards the collapsing singularity.

- 20: In the context of this experimental situation the theoretical models can be no more than scenarios of varying scientific validity. Much would depend, apart from individual aesthetic tastes, upon the kind of verifiable predictions these models can make

In any case we are at the moment in a very piquant situation as far as the two pillars of modern physics are concerned. If the General Theory of Relativity (GTR) is needed for solving the cosmological problems, Quantum Mechanics (QM) is a 'must' in the domain of the microscopic. It is a challenge to the unitary sense of a physicist that the two should remain uncombined. Attempts towards unification mean finding a superforce from which should ensue the four forces of nature as we know them in the physical world. But the two theories rather seem to be incompatible with each other.

In all these discussions we have also assumed implicitly that the so-called constants in physics are absolutely time-independent. Apart from a physicist's faith, there is no justification in it, particularly when we are dealing with cosmic or microscopic time-intervals. If we assume, for instance with Dirac, that the gravitational constant G decreases slowly with time, then the red-shift can well be attributed to it. Decreasing G means a decreasing force between two objects, which is equivalent to their going away from each other in the constant- G model.

- 21: When did Kali Yuga begin? According to tradition, 17 February, 3102 B.C. When did the Universe begin? According to the Puranas, 4320 million years ago. According to the Big Bang model, 16000 million years ago. It looks as though there is nothing much to choose between the two. Is there anything to choose between the 'First Cause' of the one and that of the other? Or is it just a matter of taste?
- 22: Let us now go along with Hawking. He takes the pragmatic approach of dealing with partial theories; it seems that thus only can science make some tangible progress, by joining pieces together in the construction of knowl-

- edge. Efforts towards combining GTR and QM, though tentative and hesitant, could bring home some insights into the nature of the physical world. One attempt is to formulate a quantum-gravitational theory; the gravitation, the postulated particle of gravitation-force, should forge the link
- 23: A collapsing star may turn into a black hole; this amounts to a singularity in space-time from which no information can come out. Big Bang is the reverse of it; out of an unknown, and perhaps unknowable, singularity a whole Universe is emerging to our utmost surprise. If the GTR is correct and if there is enough matter as we have now, this is inevitable. In this context Hawking says (p. 54) one cannot argue with a mathematical theorem. But what about the assumptions on which it is based? If GTR is partial then this cannot hold. In fact he himself proposes a quantum-gravitational model to remove the singularity.
- 24: In the real world as we know it and if the two postulates on which cosmologies are based are correct, a Big Bang singularity is inescapable. A Big Crunch at the moment is a matter of speculation. The inner boundary—the singularity that started off the Universe—is known but not the outer. Hawking proposes to take away this inner boundary. That will wipe away the outer too if it exists.
- 25: This “no boundary proposal” will indeed be a great breakthrough as it will make the laws of physics constraintless; to say that the laws break down at the singularities is also to give to singularities their parenthood. Such a situation means that at the singularity anything could happen. Further, if the laws can break down once, they can always break down and anywhere, that’s no physics.
- 26: “The boundary condition of the universe is that it has no boundary” (p. 144) and hence, in Hawking’s view, no need to appeal to God. The Universe has always been there and will ever remain there—but in imaginary time.
- 27: The proposal is to formulate quantum-gravity in terms of “a sum over histories”. A particle is supposed to follow every possible path in space-time and the probability that it passes through some particular point is found by adding up the waves associated with every possible history that passes through that point. But this can be successfully done only by making time imaginary. The three space coordinates and now imaginary time on a par with them make a perfectly Euclidean geometry of four dimensions. In this picture space-time could be finite in extent without any singularity in it. The Big Bang singularity that could have given rise to any type of Universe, —because there were no laws of physics at that moment,—doesn’t exist in this imaginary domain. Preserving the sanctity of these laws for all time is the great merit of the model. But what is the sense of imaginary time? Hawking says it is more real than real time because it holds physics for all imaginary times

- 28: Hawking is modest in saying that this is just a *proposal*. "Like any other scientific theory, it may initially be put forward for aesthetic or metaphysical reasons, but the real test is whether it makes predictions that agree with observation. This, however, is difficult to determine in the case of quantum gravity. ." While we should appreciate the positivist's approach adopted by Hawking, the whole thing finally seems to reduce to aesthetic and metaphysical considerations. We do not know which theory of quantum-gravity to take; we cannot handle the involved mathematics to make exact predictions. Finally, how does one bring imaginary time to real terms?
- 29: Hawking would like to dispose of the question about real or imaginary time by simply saying that it is "meaningless" (p. 147). His refuge is in the sheer utility of a description: "It is simply a matter of which is the more useful description" (p. 148).
- 30: Such a utility—or else a futility—can hardly be a sound philosophical basis for a good scientific theory. A physicist would then just prove to be a great or successful professional trickster. His opinions on matters philosophical or religious would have, in such an eventuality, no meaningful contributions to make. He will be said to be in a hurry to talk about the existence or non-existence of God, without doing his homework fully and properly.
- 31: Again, it is not for physics to say that "... a scientific theory is just a mathematical model we take to describe our observations: it exists only in our minds." Eddington's subjectivism at least identified itself with the object; in it the materiality of matter lay in mind. But here we are even denying that as if the physical world exists only to tell if a particular mathematical model is valid or not. Such a cerebral approach is non-physical.
- 32: Having landed himself in imaginary time, Hawking has now to reconcile it with the arrow of time. This he does by invoking the weak anthropic principle. The teleological element of the anthropic is absent in the thermodynamic and it is surprising that the two incongruents can be brought together to support each other.
- 33: If it is "... very difficult to construct a complete unified theory of everything in the universe all at one go" (p. 163), then it would be prudent to reserve our comments or ideas about the course of the Universe for better times.
- 34: About St. Augustine, God, Time, and Hawking—which time Hawking has in his mind, real or imaginary? Perhaps God is not concerned about imaginary stuff. This is particularly so if the Uncertainty Principle is the boundary condition of physics. Is this Principle applicable for imaginary time? (p. 176)
- 35: "... we know the basic laws that underlie all the chemistry and biology" (p. 179). This is amazing. We have not proved that life is a product of matter.
- 36: Will there be a complete theory ever? (p. 185) This amounts to saying that

we will have discovered all that the material world is capable of offering. Certainly no theory has been put forward that we shall exhaust the whole of Nature in the course of endless time, particularly when there are no boundaries to the Universe.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

SANCTUARY OF BEAUTY

SANCTUARY of beauty for my worshipping heart,
Without Thee I suffered, plunged deep in gloom.
I longed and prayed to have Thee near
And lo! Thou camest in my life's dark room.

Thy face is like the Summer's full moon
Thy hands outstretched for showering of Grace,
Wherever Thou goest or puttest Thy Feet
Thy smile washes out all sorrow's trace.

Pray stay for ever and kindle a light
In my heart that longs for a home in Thee.
For me Thou art my health and my wealth,
My Goddess, my Queen, life's sweetest Melody.

O Mother! without Thee I am barren and bored,
With Thee, I feel like the whole world's lord.

DEVAKI NANDAN

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

(Continued from the issue of June 1989)

José Lutzenberger

José Lutzenberger (J.L.) was in the service of a large multinational concern in Venezuela, as an agro-chemical engineer. One day a farmer called him and complained that the pesticides of his farm were totally ineffective. J.L. immediately went to see the land and found that the potato plants were hopelessly infected with plant-louse. As he walked over the fields, he got a headache. There was a terrible foul smell because the farmer had used five times more pesticides than prescribed. So J.L. sat down at the border of the field where there was a stripe of untouched virgin forest terrain. He saw some potato plants, grown obviously from potato seeds the farmer had dropped, and looked at the leaves. They were without any plant-louse!

This was a shocking experience in the life of the engineer. He started making experiments, studied deeply the literature on bio-dynamic cultivation and finally reached the conclusion that he was a man in the service of falsehood. "Agro-chemistry starts from the assumption that the plant is ill because the parasite is there. The latter has attacked it. It can be an insect, a crustacean, bacteria and fungi. Thus the parasite is an enemy. But I say, reversely: the parasite is on the plant because the plant is ill. The paradigm is wrong."

J.L. left his well-paid job, forfeited his pension and all benefits in order to make a new start on a plantation in Brazil which he had rented. He gave advice to farmers who sought his help whenever they had problems with pesticides and their side effects. J.L. told them to drop the herbicides, sow grass and clover under the coffee bushes and put sheep on the meadow. It was all a question of reestablishing the balance in nature.

J.L. is very successful in his work and has become a respected environmentalist fighting on numberless fronts. In 1988 the German-Brazilian engineer was awarded the Alternative Nobel Prize in Stockholm. His fame spread over the globe now and his little office in Porto Alegre is flooded with requests for interviews, talks, speeches at international conferences all over the world. Thus the simple man is pushed into most hectic activities which he accepts since he feels that humanity is running out of time. He believes that the industrial societies have become victims of a wrong religion: "It has a force of conviction like no other movement before and well rewards its priests. All previous religions and messianic movements expected sacrifice, hard work, austerity, moderation from their followers. But the modern industrial society demands an

orgiastic attitude from us, it has a reverse scale of virtues. We are constantly being incited to consume more. So it is a devilish religion. What used to be vice has now become virtue.”

J L is a very determined crusader in the service of a right cause. Sometimes he feels mankind may be beyond redemption, but then he sees that more and more citizens of the world protest against the destruction of our planet. “Humanity is readjusting its views. I have some hope,” he said in an interview. No need to mention that he, “the Green conscience of Brazil”, is much concerned with the protection of tropical forests. However, he says that the image of well-meaning environmentalists who call them “the lungs of the earth” is not quite correct, since they do not absorb oxygen like our lungs, nor do they produce more than what they require for their own needs. “No, the tropical rain forest in Amazonia has a very different global task—it is a gigantic heat pump. The Amazonas is a global air conditioning, as it were, regulating the temperature on earth.”

(Translated from *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 8-6-89)

Rikshas in Giessen

Cycle rikshas are found on the streets of many East and South-East Asian cities, but not in Europe, of course. This will change now, because a hotel-owner in the German university town Giessen has decided to use them as a practical and ecological means of transportation in pedestrian zones (where cars are not admitted). Thus, citizens who have done heavy shopping will travel to their cars which are often parked at a considerable distance, or to the next bus stop.

The city council of Giessen approved of the idea and soon two rikshas were imported and slightly modified in order to comply with German specifications regarding road safety. Since May 6, 1989 the vehicles have been in action. They are driven by students who are happy to earn some pocket money through this unusual job. And yet more happy are their clients, because they are all given a free ride. To finance the whole enterprise businessmen in the shopping area are allowed to display advertisements on a small board fixed to the riksha, and they pay fees for it. The drivers have to move at a slow speed and must concede priority to pedestrians.

Considering the fact that cars in many major European cities can move only with an average speed of 10-15 km/h all day long, the introduction of cycle rikshas may just be the right thing. Therefore, it is to be hoped that the Giessen experiment will be successful.

(Translated from *Der Spiegel* 24-4-89, *Die Zeit*, 19-5-89)

Germans and Rebirth

Rebirth has never been part of the credo of Western culture, although some great poets and philosophers such as Pythagoras, Goethe, Kant and Emerson believed in it.

Recently, the reputable Allensbach Institute held a poll among Germans and asked them whether they thought to have had a past life - The result was surprising: 12 out of a hundred answered "Yes " The rate was still much higher in the lower age groups: 18% of the group 30-44 and 19% of the group 16-29 believe in reincarnation.

A newspaper in South Germany comments: "The Allensbach researchers emphasized that, related to the absolute number of citizens, about six million W. Germans believe in soul-migration and rebirth, although this idea belongs rather to the Hindu-Buddhist religious conception and is, properly speaking, foreign to the Christian-Occidental sphere "

Foreign? Not any more Even sceptics should realize now that something is "happening".

(Translation from *Badische Neueste Nachrichten*, 7-3-89)

WITHOUT AND WITHIN

REMEMBERING the wounds and the scars
 The body has no trace of past delights
 The mind itself or even the heart
 Is in no way wiser: each recalls the griefs

More than the flashes of sudden joys
 Seeking happiness, we cherish pain
 Yet, deep within, in our eternal seat,
 Awaits the bliss from which there is no retreat.

K. B. SITARAMAYYA

THE TIDES

A NOVELLA

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1989)

HAPPY and satisfied, I prepared to take leave, saying, "So my work is finished. You can keep the note-book and read it at your leisure. Simply let me know the result of your observations. Here is my address," I gave my address to Mr. Roy.

"Manju, why don't you read the note-book just now? The sooner the work is done the better for all of us," and then he addressed me, "Can't you give us a little more time, please?" Even before I consented, Manju Devi picked up the note-book and started reading it aloud.

THE NOTE-BOOK

The train whistled to start. I ran and got into a third-class compartment. It was packed full, even the place between the benches was crammed with men and luggage. One young man took pity on me and made room beside him for me to sit. Immediately the train moved and before long picked up its normal speed. I was fleeing from Calcutta for fear of being caught. I had been trying to leave Calcutta for the last three days. But only today I could manage to reach Howrah station under a sort of disguise. I booked a ticket for Benares, went to the scheduled platform and sat down on a cement bench, keeping my small suitcase at my feet. The train was yet to near the platform.

Suddenly I felt the presence of my pursuers nearabout. I stood up and started walking up and down hiding my face as far as possible. But then the train glided into the station and at once a confusion and competition ensued amongst the huge crowd of passengers to get in. I also hurried to take up my suitcase, but where was it? It was not where I had left it. I went on searching unsuccessfully from one end of the platform to the other. Oh, what to do now! I had kept everything, even the ticket, in the suitcase while having a wash in the bathroom of the waiting room. By then the train whistled to start. I had to catch it empty-handed.

Time rolled by in the usual course, noon was succeeded by afternoon, afternoon gave place to evening and finally darkness descended. I felt terribly hungry. I had not managed to eat anything since morning. Now the question of eating did not arise as I was penniless. The music of the running train lulled me to sleep. I lay down somehow, keeping my head on the stomach of a sleeping Sadhu with a beard and matted hair. All on a sudden my sleep was disturbed by a finger poking into my belly. I opened my eyes and was startled at the sight of a ghostly figure in front dressed all in black, black hat, coat, tie, pants, even it had

a black beard and moustache. The figure stretched its hand with the clumsy sound, 'Ticket?' I rubbed my eyes as if to remove sleepiness. Meanwhile the checker was after the Sadhu. But to break his transcendent sleep was not an easy job. Poking and tickling went without effect. Then he called him aloud while shaking his body roughly, 'Hai, Sadhubaba, get up ..'

I did not fail to avail myself of the opportunity. Slowly I slipped away towards the door. Luckily the speed of the train diminished in time. I jumped out of it even before it entered the station ahead. Now I was a free bird. The urge of freedom was inherent in me. It was in my blood from boyhood. But was it this kind of freedom I yearned for all my life? Perhaps not. But what could be done? I was helpless under the circumstances. I was not at all responsible for the killing of that tyrant Burra-Sahib. But the facts were so nastily against me that to prove my innocence was next to an impossibility.

However, it was the dead of night. The earth, nature and air were still covered with a thin blanket of darkness, yet they were vibrant with the aspiration of imminent light. Amidst the network of rail lines I moved along towards the platform. In the station the Benares Express was throbbing with life and action, the tired engine seemed panting for breath. I did not dare to get back onto the same train. Suddenly I felt as if a hand from behind were trying to catch hold of my neck, or was it simply my apprehension? I quickened my pace and before long came across a sweetmeat shop with a pair of dusty burning bulbs on both sides like the two red eyes of a drunkard. In the show-case the residue items of the previous day were lying. The sight inflamed my hungry stomach. But I was helpless, there was not a single coin in my pocket.

I hardly crossed the lighted shop, the ticket checker, dressed all black, appeared just beside me as an apparition. Within the twinkle of an eye he stumbled down on the platform and I ran off to get into a passenger train waiting to start from the nearby metre-gauge line. I saw through the window that the checker was busy brushing aside white dust from his black dress while stooping to see if it was a brick, stone or something else that he had struck against. I was happy that I could apply my jiu-jitsu trick on him quite successfully. The passenger train stopped at every station ejecting some travellers and sucking up others, keeping the crowd more or less the same. I was ticketless and always remained absorbed looking at the panorama of morning Nature outside. After about an hour the train reached its destination, a small station in a beautiful rural surrounding.

The name 'TARIGHAT' of the station, tinged with the golden hue of the rising sun, reminded me of Swami Vivekananda. Because it was here that one summer-noon he got down from a train, hungry, thirsty and dead-tired. He was observing then the vow of non-asking (Ajagar Vrata) during his all-India tour. So he had nothing else to do than to suffer mutely and to meditate in that terribly scorching heat, sitting under a tree. But by his guru's grace food and drink came

to him unasked for, through the owner of the sweetmeat shop of the station.

Was the shop still there? Yes, there it stood crowded with innumerable customers. The state of my pocket did not allow me to become one of them. So I turned my head and walked along aimlessly. "Where are you going, my child?" I heard and at the same time felt a soft touch on my shoulder. The man was none else than the Sadhu of the express train on whose stomach I had rested my head. To me he seemed to be of a doubtful character. Was he a policeman in disguise? I hastened to step away without a word. "Ha, ha, ha... you seem to be afraid of me, my boy! But listen, if you want to go to Ghazipur, the ferry-boat waits for you there beyond the small field in front." Pointing with his finger he showed me the ghat. "Thank you very much," I threw the words at him and hurried to cross the field with renewed vigour. The word Ghazipur struck me with a sudden joy. 'Oh Ghazipur of Tagore's Naukadubi (Shipwreck), Vivekananda's Paoharibaba, Opium Factory, the biggest in Asia, of essence, perfume and rose-water, is so near!' I reached the Ghat thoughtfully. The boat was waiting packed with people and marketable materials, milk, eggs, vegetables, etc. No sooner had I elbowed my way into the boat than it started."

At this stage Mr. Roy interrupted, "Excuse me, I wonder why, writing everything in detail, he at all disappeared from your house." "Perhaps during sleep he was assailed by doubt about me and fled away forgetting the notebook." "Yes, that is quite possible. Now read on, Manju." Manju Devi continued:

The sight of the flowing Ganges with its beautiful natural surroundings made me forget thirst and hunger. I appeared to hear the voice of the great scientist, Sir Jagadishchandra, 'O River, wherefrom do you come?' But I could not hear the reply the river gave to him, 'From the matted hair of Mahadeva.' However, I simply went on hearing the music made by the striking waves at the bottom of the boat and seeing the movement of cranes and fishermen pulling up a huge net from the Ganges onto the half-submerged sand dune.

Meanwhile during my absorption the boat reached its destination. The passengers pushed their way to get down. I also followed suit but was obstructed by an extended hand. "Payse," the ferryman demanded. I turned my face towards Tarighat. "All right, let me get down," the man permitted me to do so. Perhaps he was afraid lest he should lose the fare both ways.

I got down, but did not feel like scaling the high sandy bank as I sensed a noisy market high up there which I wanted to avoid. What I needed now was a solitary place, some food, drink and sound sleep. So I walked along the river-side over the wet and soft sand. On my way I saw at places that shadows falling from the trees above had created various figures of light and shade. I observed them minutely hoping to find the shadow of a house or building. For in that case I should have scaled up and asked for food and shelter from the dwellers. But by ill-luck I could find none even after a long walk. Still absorbed in thought I

moved ahead and was stopped suddenly by the presence of a huge stone-Ghat in front I guessed that surely there must be some dwellings up there. So I went down into knee-deep water and with a vigorous thrust managed to pull myself up onto one of the steps of the Ghat. Then in no time I was on its wide and spacious roof. No, there was no sign of habitation nearby excepting a dilapidated building far off to the left. It was unclean and ugly, looked rather like a prehistoric dinosaur with fangs bared, ready to charge at any moment. I was afraid even to look at it not to speak of seeking shelter there

It was about noon, the sky was clear, the sun's rays scorching, only here and there fleecy clouds and kites moved about like sailing boats The pleasing shadow of a big tree nearby invited me. I went and sat on the carpet of grass under it Hungry, thirsty and tired, I fell asleep without my knowing it ..

The barking of a distant dog woke me up. I opened my eyes, there was a mystic twilight around. In the half-darkness I saw an object slowly coming down towards me. Tickled by a hairy touch on my face I jerked myself up shouting, "Who are you, what do you want?" I heard, "Oh, it's you, my boy! You seem to be very hungry. If you want some food, come along with me." He was the same Sadhu whom I had met in the train and Tarighat. I was stupefied first by the appearance of the same man over again, but the prospect of food made me stand up and follow him But when I realised that he was leading me towards that fearful broken building I stood still Immediately the Sadhu looked back and observed, "My house looks awkward from outside only Come inside and see If you don't like it, you are free to leave at once."

Reassured and allured, I followed him again. It was dark and the way was difficult. Still hoping to have something to eat I proceeded somehow till I reached a door through which the Sadhu had already stepped in I entered and by the dim flame of a table-lamp could see a really clean and tidy room The Sadhu brightened the lamp and asking me to sit down disappeared into an adjacent inner room A glass book-case at the far end attracted my attention. I approached it to find that it contained a good collection of books, on Science, Philosophy, Religion, History, Literature and what not. The Sadhu was not a layman then! He was quite educated indeed But my food? My stomach went on craving for it. An interesting book at the right corner of the book-case reminded me of the saying, 'A fast of the stomach is a feast for the brain.' I prepared to bring the book out Just then I heard a voice from behind, "Tell me now, who are you, why are you after me?" I looked back and shivered at what I saw. I saw the fiery eyes of a clean shaven old man with a revolver in hand levelled at me

While observing the revolver with frightened eyes I tried to guess if he was the Sadhu or someone else If he were the Sadhu where were his beard and matted hair! With suppressed wrath he uttered again, "I know, you are a spy, a policeman of the British Government in disguise But didn't anybody warn you

that to meddle in my affairs is like playing with fire? So there is no escape, today is the last day of your life..." He came forward a step or two. But I could not step back due to the book-case. By now I could guess from his voice that he was the Sadhu himself stripped off his false beard and hair. But was he drunk or gone mad? At Tarighat he came to help me of his own accord. Here also he led me, a hungry man, to provide me with food. Were all his gentle dealings meant for this end only? A fine riddle indeed! I myself was fleeing from the Police and this strange old man mistook me for one of them before independence. Suddenly it occurred to me that if I had to die, why should I die as a coward? I steadied my shaking body and asked with a firm voice, "Why should the Police catch you, for what crime?"

It worked like magic. He lowered his revolver and murmured, "Yes, for what crime? That, I also ask myself, for what crime?" At the next moment he burst into a delirious laughter, "Ha, ha, ha, ... You don't know that, eh? I am Khudiram, I am Prafulla Chaki and what not? Ha, ha, ha, ..." His revolver was pointedly levelled at me again. Now I was sure that the man was fully mad and to argue with him was meaningless. But there was also no doubt that my life was seriously at stake. I remembered my Creator perhaps for the last time. Just then an old lady rushed out from the side-room and caught the mad man by the hand, "What's this? Come inside, your dinner is ready," She slowly directed him into the other room.

I released a sigh of relief and stood dumbfounded for a while and then dashed towards the door to escape. But a kind female voice arrested my movement, "Please don't go, my child, wait." The old lady hurried to stop me, "You seem to be very hungry and exhausted too. Sit down, let me fetch some food for you." "But, but..," I fumbled. "No, never mind my husband. It is his temporary mental derangement. It happens with him at times, but very rarely. I am certain that you are not from the secret police. If I can convince him of that, you will find him exceptionally gentle, kind and affectionate. To enable me to do that, please let me know your name, your father's name, address and the fact that makes you come here to this God-forsaken place. Her soft and soothing words brought tears to my eyes. At the same time I shook inwardly for fear of being shot at. However, I told her my name, address, where I had spent my early life but my father's name I could not recollect. Instead I mentioned the name of my uncle.

Whereupon the lady looked vacantly at me for a while and then abruptly she clasped me tenderly with both hands and pillowing her head on my shoulder started shedding silent tears. It happened so suddenly that I could hardly find time to move aside. Besides, her touch incited in me a warmth that surged up from the core of my heart and engulfed my whole being. By its influence my body seemed to dissolve like wax, as it were. A subconscious perception brought home to me that the feeling was not quite unfamiliar to me. Perhaps it en-

wrapped me integrally while I was in my mother's womb and afterwards nourished me also in the form of her milk. Incessant tears streamed down my cheek and mingled with those flowing from the lady's eyes.

"Ha, ha, ha..," a roaring laugh coming from the inner room alerted me. It came closer and the lady left me and with lightning speed entered the side-room saying, "Hide yourself somewhere, I am just coming back." Soon I heard her beseeching voice, "Do you know who he is? Come, I shall show and explain to you everything.." "No, no, I don't care to hear anything, he is a British spy and I shall do away with him forthwith .."

Horrified, I dashed outside in the darkness and started running aimlessly as fast as I could. Luckily I reached the Ganges within a short time and jumped straightway into the water. I started swimming against the current to prevent my pursuer from overtaking me easily.

*

The note-book ended here and Manju Devi closed it. Pin-drop silence prevailed amongst us three. After some time Mr. Roy opened his closed eyes with tears sparkling in the corners. He cleared his throat and said, "Manju, I must go to Ghazipur tomorrow, please look to it." "Why to Ghazipur in haste, papa?" "I want to meet the old couple in the dilapidated building." "But what for, what's the good of meeting a madcap at the risk of your own life?" "Manju, please know that I can risk my life a hundred times for such madcaps. Because, because.." he could speak no more, his voice choked. Manju Devi gave him time to recover and then asked softly, "Because what, papa?" "Because I presume that he is my long-lost elder brother Kalishankar Roy!"

"Papa, papa... but, but how can it be, papa? You told me that he had died in an encounter," her voice trembled. "Yes, but that was a rumour, a hearsay to hoodwink the people and the authorities as well. In fact I could not get definite proof of his death in spite of my thorough investigation at that time. Another thing, the writer of the note-book and presumably of the diary also is, most likely, his only son, Deepu, *i.e.*, Deepshankar Roy."

"You never told me that he had a son!"

"No, because it was to be kept a secret for the good of both the father and the son." At this stage I could not but open my mouth, "It is a strange disclosure indeed. But it is no use your going to Ghazipur now. They left the place immediately after the episode of the night. I myself went there with a friend only two days after that night and found the building without any human beings. We found on the floor some burnt and half-burnt papers where a few lizards and cockroaches were playing hide-and-seek."

"I see, but they could have come back later on," observed Mr. Roy.

"Yes, that is quite possible. In that case I shall also request you not to go

now. I shall go first and investigate and if the situation is found favourable, then only both of you can go to Ghazipur.”

“It is a very nice arrangement. Thank you very much, gentleman.”

“But, Mr. Roy, I have my own interest in the matter as well, to unravel the mystery of Atanu ”

(To be continued)

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

O BREEZE!

EVERY time you kiss me, O breeze!
with your dream-made lips,
you set ablaze all my nerves
to feel the chill-cool spray
from the imaginary sea

Whenever you give voice
to the leaves,
both alive and dead,
I realize
that behind you blows through
fields and seas,
a joyous cosmic dance,
the ecstasy of life-eternal

How I crave to see your secret self, O breeze!

P. RAJA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Sixty-fifth Seminar

19 February 1989

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1989)

THE MOTHER—CREATRIX OF THE NEW AGE

Speech read by Sucharu Rai

THE subject of this Seminar—"The Mother—Creatrix of the New Age"—has vast dimensions. So, instead of covering it as a whole, I propose to limit myself to a specific aspect of it. But though limited and specific it is of crucial importance because it relates to the most urgent problem of the world today pressing for an imminent solution. And if it is not urgently solved it is likely to engulf the whole world in a catastrophic disaster

That problem is the near possibility of the outbreak of a global war. At the present moment, the forces of strife and division and conflict have swelled to such menacing proportions all over the world that unless some drastic measures are taken to curb them effectively and to establish a secure basis of unity and harmony, there is every likelihood that humanity may plunge into a global conflagration of such unprecedented magnitude that it may possibly annihilate itself. The recent remarkable endeavours of the great dynamic Russian leader, M. Gorbachev, have raised world-wide hopes that this possibility may be averted, but unless the trends set in motion by him are sincerely reciprocated in an adequate measure by the other super-powers, what he may succeed in achieving may not be sufficient to avert it.

Though the need for unity is pressing, there is hardly a clear understanding of its true nature and the proper means to realise it effectively, even among those who bear the responsibility of leading humanity in this crucial hour. Many conceptions and formulas are advocated, offering solutions which eventually prove to be failures or at best palliatives because they fail to tackle the problem at its very roots. It is for this reason that I intend to speak on this problem because if it is not solved then the creation of the New Age by the Mother, though it is eventually certain, may for some time be jeopardised.

I propose to do this briefly by explaining Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's view of the root-cause of this problem and the only sure remedy for it.

This is of special significance because the realisation of world-unity has been

an essential part of the life-work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Not only has Sri Aurobindo mentioned it as one of the five cherished ideals of his life in his birthday message of 15 August 1947 but he has also dealt with at great length this whole problem in his work *The Ideal of Human Unity*. The Mother has also expressed her identical views in some of her talks and brief writings and messages. In the very short time at my disposal I can only give a summary statement of their views.

First, what is the root-cause of humanity's failure to achieve world-unity in spite of continuous endeavours throughout history to realise it? The modern mind with its superficial understanding always looks for the causes of life's difficulties in external conditions—political, economic and social. And it also seeks to remedy these difficulties by the same external means. So, too, when it tries to find out the basic causes of the failure to achieve human unity, it finds them in external political, economic and social relations of men and nations and attempts to remove them by external mechanical adjustments and devices.

But, according to Sri Aurobindo, the root-cause of humanity's persistent failure to achieve enduring unity lies not in its external conditions but in its inner consciousness. So long as men and nations live in their egoistic consciousness it is impossible to eradicate all those tendencies which create divisions and conflicts, jealousies and hatreds in all spheres of human life.

Since ego—especially the vital ego—is the root-cause of all disunity, disharmony and conflict among men and nations, true unity, harmony and peace can be realised only by a decisive rejection of the ego-consciousness in the individual and the nation. So long as ego—individual and collective—persists and rules man's mind and heart, unity and harmony can have only a shadowy and precarious existence. It is not that the urge for union and harmony is absent in man's egoistic nature but that urge in it can never find its secure fulfilment because it is constantly contradicted by the more powerful opposite urges in it that create conflict and discord. So without the elimination of the ego there cannot come the true spirit of inner unity which alone can create an outer life-form of oneness.

And this elimination of the ego can only be achieved if our present imperfect nature develops beyond itself by an evolutionary mutation because, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, "we can construct nothing which goes beyond our nature; imperfect, we cannot construct perfection, however wonderful may seem to us the machinery our mental ingenuity invents, however externally effective. Ignorant, we cannot construct a system of entirely true and fruitful self-knowledge or world-knowledge."¹

The only way to remove the imperfections of our present nature is to break the bonds of our ignorant and divisive ego and to become universal in our self

¹ *The Life Divine* (Cent Ed., Vol 19), p 1034

and consciousness. Then alone we can find lasting conscious unity with our fellow beings. This conscious unity of the universal self is “not merely the sympathy created by love or the understanding created by mental knowledge” which are always superficial and imperfect but an essential spiritual oneness founded on the realisation of the one common self of all.

The universal consciousness itself has many grades and levels and the nature of unity that we realise will depend upon the level of the universal consciousness to which we attain. The full and perfect unity with our fellowmen can be realised only by rising to the highest level of the universal consciousness, the Supermind. As Sri Aurobindo points out: “This conscious oneness can only be established by entering into that in which we are one with them, the universal; and the fullness of the universal exists consciently only in that which is superconscious to us, in the Supermind... The Supermind alone commands unity in diversity.”²

It is for this reason that Sri Aurobindo emphatically asserts that it is only by transforming our present ego-bound nature by the supramental Power and consciously establishing the supramental unity in human life that humanity can ultimately find the lasting solution of all its life’s discords and conflicts. Mark the sovereign power of his own words in which he affirms this truth:

“... in the founding of human life upon the supramental realisation of conscious unity with the One and with all in our being and in all its members humanity must seek its final good and salvation.”³

That supramental Truth-Consciousness carrying in its bosom the power of the Supreme Love has now manifested in the earth’s inner atmosphere on a global scale, and from there it is preparing for its unveiled emergence in the external physical life of earth and humanity. It is that Supreme Love that holds in its hands the sovereign power of unity because it is itself the all-uniting power of the One Eternal. Its unveiled manifestation upon earth will create the new Age in the earth’s evolution, and that age will be “the Age of the One” as the Mother has called it, because it will establish the reign of the One Eternal in time, of the One Divine in the world. Man can find his true and lasting unity with his fellowmen only by uniting with them through union with that One Eternal and not by any other means. Listen to this profound utterance of Sri Aurobindo which contains in a seed the supreme secret of human unity or world union:

“In him we are one with all.”⁴

The call of that One (who is both He and She, both Sri Aurobindo and the

² *Ibid* , (Cent Ed , Vol 18), p 214

³ *Ibid* , p 217

⁴ *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 21), p 565

Mother) is now ringing in every human heart to unite with Him so as to unite with all. Each one who responds to His call and opens his heart-gates to His Love will help the realisation of world-unity in the only way it can be achieved.

Will you hearken to His call? Will you open the gates of your heart to His all-uniting Love? or let Him open them?

Friends, I have given you an extremely brief statement of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's view of the root-cause of the present dangerous world-situation which may any time explode into a global conflagration, and the only lasting remedy for it. And I have said that their life-mission of creating a New Age has an intimate relation with finding that remedy and making it effective in the life of humanity. But I must point out that however alarming the present world-situation may be, it need not drive us to a pessimistic view of the world's future because even if a third world war breaks out, it cannot finally prevent the realisation of world-unity, for the emergence of world-unity is an inevitable necessity of human evolution, since behind it is the imperative necessity of Nature and of the Divine Will. As Sri Aurobindo has announced in his birthday message of 15 August 1947 in most assuring words: "The unification... is the necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement"⁵... "Only human imbecility and stupid selfishness can prevent it; but these cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will... A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race."⁶

Since there is this seal and sanction of the Divine Will on the creation of world-unity, it will surely realise itself, however serious may be the obstacles standing in its way at present.

⁵ *On Himself* (Cent Ed., Vol 26), p 405

⁶ *Ibid*