

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

DECEMBER 1990

PRICE: Rs 4 00

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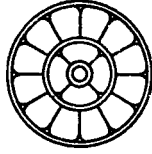
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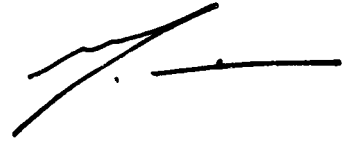
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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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

# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLIII

No. 12

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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## A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 7 MAY 1951

Mother reads the first part of Chapter 6  
of *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo

### *What is a “hierarchy”?*

It is a grouping organised in order of merit. For instance, you have a chief at the centre and you may have four persons around him, and around these four 8, then 12, 24, 36, 48, 124, and so on, each with his special mission, his special work, his particular authority, and all referring in an ascending order to the centre. That is a hierarchy. In governments they try to form hierarchies, but these are untrue, they are arbitrary and not worth anything. But in all ancient initiations there were hierarchies which were expressions of individual merit—individual powers and merits—having always at their centre the representative of the Supreme and the Shakti; sometimes having only the Supreme, depending on the religions. But the groups were always organised in that way, that is, with a growing number of individuals, each one having to refer to the officer immediately above him. For instance, the 124 had to refer to the 48, the 48 had to refer to 24, the 24 refer to the 12, the 12 to the 8, and so on. That is a hierarchy. The word is used in a very imprecise and vague way. They speak of a hierarchy and think it is the men who govern and have subordinates. But the true hierarchy is an occult hierarchy, and this occult hierarchy had as its purpose the manifesting, the expressing of a more profound hierarchy which is a hierarchy of the invisible worlds.

### *What is the “transcendent Mother”?*

Don't you know that there are three principles: the transcendent, the universal and the individual or personal? No?—the transcendent which is above creation, at the origin of creation; the universal which is the creation, and the individual which is self-explanatory. There is a transcendent Divine, a universal Divine, and an individual Divine. That is, one may put oneself in contact with the divine Consciousness within oneself, in the universe and, beyond all forms, in the transcendent. So these three aspects are also the three aspects of the Divine Mother: transcendent, universal and individual.... Do you know the flower I have called “Transformation”?<sup>1</sup> Yes. You know it has four petals; well, these four petals are arranged like a cross: one at the top which represents the transcendent, two on each side: the universal, and one at the bottom: the individual.

<sup>1</sup> The flower of the Cork-oak of India (*Millingtonia hortensis*)

*The petal at the top is divided into two.*

Exactly, the transcendent is one and two (or dual) at the same time. This flower is almost perfect in its form. This was the original meaning of the cross also, but that was not as perfect as the flower, for it was one, two, and three. It was not so good—the flower is perfect.

*The Divine Mother is the divine Shakti, that is, the creative Force. She is identified with the cosmos. How can she have a transcendent aspect?*

But perhaps the Divine Mother was there before the creation! She must certainly have existed before the creation, for she cannot be her own product. If it is she who has created, she must have existed before the creation, otherwise she could never have created.

*She existed in the Supreme, then, before the creation?*

“In” the Supreme.... It is a little difficult to speak of “within” and “without” when one is outside all forms! If you like, say that she is a movement of the Supreme (if that makes you understand better) or an action of the Supreme or a state of the Supreme, a mode... You may say what you like, what most gives you an understanding of the thing. You see, the human mind likes to cut things into little bits. ... I am going to tell you a little story meant for children. The Supreme, having decided to create a universe, took a certain inner attitude which corresponded with the inner manifestation (unexpressed) of the divine Mother, the supreme Shakti. At the same time, he did this with the intention of its being the mode of creation of the universe he wanted to create, the creative power of the universe. Hence, first of all, he had to conceive the possibility of the divine Mother in order that this divine Mother could conceive the possibility of the universe. You are following? I tell you once again that it is not quite like that, but after all, it is meant for childish minds. So, we may very well say that there is a transcendent Divine Mother, that is, independent of her creation. She may have been conceived, formed (whatever you like) for the creation, with the purpose of creation, but she had to exist before the creation to be able to create, else how could she have created? That is the transcendent aspect, and note that this transcendent aspect is permanent. We speak as though things had unfolded in time at a date which could be fixed: the first of January 0000, for the beginning of the world, but it is not quite like that! There is constantly a transcendent, constantly a universal, constantly an individual, and the transcendent, universal and individual are co-existent. That is, if you enter into a certain state of consciousness, you can at any moment be in contact with the transcendent Shakti, and you can also, with another movement, be in contact with the

universal Shakti, and be in contact with the individual Shakti, and all this simultaneously—that does not unfold itself in time, it is we who move in time as we speak, otherwise we cannot express ourselves. We may experience it but we can express it only by saying one word after another (unfortunately, one cannot say all the words at the same time; if one could say them all at the same time, that would be a little more like the truth).

Finally, all that is said, all that has been said, all that will be said, is always only an extremely clumsy and limited way of expressing something which may be lived but which cannot be described. And there is a moment, when one lives the thing, in which one sees that the same thing can be expressed almost with the same exactness or the same truth in religious language, mystical language, philosophic language and materialistic language and that from the point of view of the lived truth, it makes very little difference. It is only when one is in the mental consciousness that one thing seems true to you and another does not seem true; but all these are only ways of expression. The experience carries in itself its absolute, but words cannot describe it—one may choose one language or another to express oneself, and with just a very little precaution, one can always say something approaching the Truth in all instances.

I am telling you this not to throw you into confusion but simply to let you understand that there is a considerable difference between the truth of experience and the way of expressing it, whatever it may be, even the best.

*(Questions and Answers 1950-51, pp 392-95 )*

# LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

## THREE PERSONAL LETTERS

YOUR lament sounds genuine and, since it is so, you are sure to break open the closed recesses of your being. The fact that you have not come into physical contact with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother though they were on the earth in your life-time is certainly unfortunate, but the conviction which you have that they were Divine Visitors to our world is strong enough to put you in inner contact with them. And remember that even now they are not merely discarnate spirits. Sri Aurobindo has given the assurance through the Mother that he would remain as a personal presence in “the earth’s atmosphere”—that is, the subtle-physical plane, which is the plane closest to the earth—until the work he had undertaken would be fulfilled. According to the Mother, he is there in a subtle-physical body very much like the form he had before but now perfect, “with the light of immortality upon it”. At present the Mother too must be taken to exist on that plane in the same manner and active in the same way to fulfil in our world her transformative work. Always think of both her and Sri Aurobindo as still embodied beings and not only as pervading and guiding consciousnesses. By thinking thus, you will draw greater help from them towards your ultimate realisation.

Obstacles to the spiritual pursuit are there for each of us. The path is arduous and long, but once the innermost self has been awakened—the true soul within—we are never alone on the path. For, the true soul is a part of the Divine, a projection from the Supreme, and the Glorious Whole from which it has been put forth into the earth’s evolutionary career is always with it. For us this Glorious Whole wears the august face of Sri Aurobindo or else bears the sweet features of the Mother. And since our Gurus have subtle-physical bodies we should be able to have with that Glorious Whole a more concrete and intimate sense of relationship than would otherwise be legitimate to assume. Of course, we can think of our Gurus as not only within us but also in front of us or above us, for the Glorious Whole is not confined to one place. It is not bound by our material space-laws. But, wherever we may feel it to be, we should be justified in believing that its essential eternity and infinity possess a concentration of them in a subtle-physical form in close rapport with us.

You may say: “The subtle-physical has still a distance from us and is not as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were at one time.” True, but I may remind you that even at that time they were not always accessible to sight and hearing and touch. No doubt, other signs of their accessibleness were there—*e.g.*, letters—but our sadhana used to go on with Sri Aurobindo mostly an imagined presence—a compassionate power in a far-off room. Can his absence now from that room make a radical difference? Here an incident from my own life may shed light on this question.

From the end of 1927 to the end of 1950, everything that I wrote—prose or



poetry—was written with Sri Aurobindo in view. Each writing of mine was either read by him or read out to him and he commented on it. And I used to appeal to him for help with a sense of his bodily being. When he left his body I felt most disheartened. “What will happen now? Who will help my writing work as he used to do?”—such was my anguished cry. I spoke my thought to my friend, Udar, who at that time had access to the Mother in those few days after the passing of Sri Aurobindo when she had suspended her usual round of activity. On December 17, if I remember aright—12 days after the great Transition on the 5th—she met her children again. One by one we went to her. When my turn came, she looked into my eyes and held my right hand with hers and said: “Nothing has changed. Ask Sri Aurobindo for help as you have done in the past and you will get it in the same way as then. Nothing has changed.” Her words put some heart into me, but my mind was still vague.

Two or three days later I had a special interview with her. I was to fly back to Bombay where I was living at that time. *Mother India* was being edited and published from there every fortnight as a cultural newspaper covering all fields, even politics, from the Aurobindonian viewpoint. I said to the Mother: “Hundreds of people are waiting to get some light from us on what has happened. Will you kindly tell me the meaning of the event so that I may tell them?” She answered: “It is perfectly clear to me. But I am not going to tell you. You must find out by yourself.” Then I said: “Mother, give me the power to do so.” I bowed at her feet and she blessed me. Before I left her, some words broke out from me, which are not relevant to the theme I am dealing with but which meant a great deal to me at the time and may be mentioned to complete my record of the interview. Spontaneously I said: “Mother, your life is most precious. If it is possible in time of danger to give a sacrifice for your safety, if the offering of anyone’s life in place of yours can be allowed, I shall be most happy to give mine.” I knew that my life was a very small thing and it was foolish to think of its substituting hers in an occult transaction, but my sense of her preciousness, all the more after Sri Aurobindo’s departure, was so intense that I could not help this gesture of love as of a son for his cherished mother. I am sure all of us would have been ready to save her, if we could, in this way.

Now back to my subject. After I reached Bombay I spent several days without writing a line. But an appeal was there to Sri Aurobindo: “If I cannot write something adequate to what has happened, all that I have written so far in my life means nothing. And if I can do justice to the tremendous event, I won’t care whether or not I write anything else in my life. Help me!”

More than a week passed. Then suddenly I felt as if a light had fallen on my mind. I went to my table and sat at my typewriter. I typed without stop for a number of hours. My article was ready with the title: “The Passing of Sri Aurobindo: Its Inner Significance and Consequence.” It was posted to the Mother. A few days later I got a telegram from Nolini: “Article admirable. Fully approved by Mother. Nothing to change.” I may add here what I heard from my

Associate Editor, Soli Albless, who was in Pondicherry at the time. He wrote to me that the Mother had told him at the Playground: "Amal's article is excellent. Tell him I am extremely satisfied." The next evening she said to him: "It's quite the best thing Amal has written. I would like fifteen thousand copies of it to be printed. He can get this done in Bombay. Otherwise I'll have the printing done here." My article first appeared in *Mother India*. Then it was made into a booklet, fifteen thousand copies as the Mother had wanted.

What do you gather from this story? As the Mother had told me, I asked Sri Aurobindo for help as if nothing had changed because of his leaving his body. The result was the best thing I had ever written. It proved the Mother absolutely right in assuring me that I would get inspiration from Sri Aurobindo just as before. And I have found during all the years since December 5, 1950 that Sri Aurobindo has never failed me. Whenever in my writing-work I have been up against a difficulty, even like facing a blank wall, I have put to him at night before going to sleep the exact problem and aspired for his help. Invariably something or other has turned up to pull me out of my predicament. Either the solution has come directly to my mind or I have come across a piece of writing in a book or an article to set me on the proper course or even presenting me with a ready-made answer. The long and short of my tale is that the lack of Sri Aurobindo's physical presence has not stood in the way of his assistance.

The same holds for the Mother. But I have observed that the response is most satisfying and even most prompt when I have offered my difficulty of any kind to her and stopped worrying about it myself. With a mental blank in me following the appeal, a confident complete detachment on my part from the problem, she has often brought about surprising results. Of course we cannot expect a recognisable solution every time. But neither did such a miracle happen when the Mother was in her physical body, though I have the faith that in all circumstances an answer from her was always there in some form or other we didn't immediately recognise. Our inner life is helped in however secret a way and sooner or later we discover the benefit. Her apparent denials are still acts of grace, for her love is ever present to bring our souls closer to felicity and fulfilment.

I hope I haven't bored you with going on and on about just one point in your letter. The other important point is your concern that your wife, your son (12 years old) and your daughter (aged 17½ years) should follow along with you the Path shown by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It is a worthy concern, but don't let it be an oppressive one to them. Live your life as much as you can in our Guru's light but don't preach too much to your family and don't seek to impose anything on them. Let your own life influence them without your having to point out its merits or your reminding them every now and then of what they should do. Every soul has its own curve of development, its own destiny. We should not try to pressurise people to fall into one pattern. The old-time fanatic single-tracked religious spirit is wrong. Invoke the Mother's grace for your family, live

in the atmosphere of inner communion with her and she will do the needful for the souls of your people. Encourage them when required, indicate quietly the right direction but never try to push. Stop worrying about their destinies. Your children are quite young and it is natural that they should be not as serious as you may be about matters like sadhana. If they have love and respect for the Mother, it is enough to start with. Let this seed sprout in its own fashion under gentle rain and mild sunshine. There should be no attempt at a forced “hot-house” growth. I expect your wife is in tune with your own aspiration and is spontaneously turned towards the Divine, but even with her you should not dogmatise or set up rails along which she must run.

As regards your own sadhana, I don't know what exactly to say. You speak of “the resistance of inconscience and unfavourable circumstances” and “fears of weakness and depressions leading to unspiritual mental processes in us”. It is the common lot of all who try to swim upstream. The real remedy is to find something within us to which swimming upstream is the most natural thing in the world. It is the psychic being of which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have written such a lot. Once you get into touch with this true soul, there is a happy spontaneity in turning towards the Divine. The psychic being makes no effort to find the Supreme, for as I have said, it is itself a part of the Supreme. From its deep place within our hearts, devotion and self-dedication flow automatically. There are several parts which are not in accord with its unforced movement. Instead of fighting with them in the name of an Ideal held by the mind, it is more practical to put these parts into contact with that inner fountain of surrender to the Divine. A general equanimity, a quiet confronting of circumstances, including those of our own many-shaded nature, is called for and, along with it, a gesture of putting them all before the Mother. Visualise her face and figure and remember those lines from *Savitri*:

Immortal rhythms swayed in her time-born steps;  
 Her look, her smile awoke celestial sense  
 Even in earth-stuff, and their intense delight  
 Poured a supernal beauty on men's lives....  
 A deep of compassion, a hushed sanctuary,  
 Her inward help unbarred a gate in heaven;  
 Love in her was wider than the universe,  
 The whole world could take refuge in her single heart.

If you can conjure up the Mother's presence before you in a bodily shape and let the inmost being in you put into her hands all your difficulties gathered together as if in a heap, the poignancy of your problems will disappear and the way will be clearer for your soul to suffuse the rest of your psychological self. The “unspiritual mental processes” will cease to bother you. If you are worried about your family's future because of certain tendencies which seem to you

unspiritual in them, take them up again inwardly as though in a bundle and put them into the Mother's guiding and gracious hands. I may say not only "gracious" but also "graceful", for indeed they had an exquisiteness about them. I recollect once telling her: "Your hands in a certain posture remind me of Mona Lisa's as painted by Leonardo. I almost see those hands passing from that picture into yours." She replied: "It sometimes happens that certain features of one's past birth are repeated in one's new form."

Your letter ends with the words: "Regards to your great self." The term "great self" translates accurately the Upanishad's *mahān ātman*. This *mahān ātman* is not anybody's private possession, except in the sense that it is a profound non-public secret, but it is in that sense the private possession of everybody, a universal consciousness which is one in all, hidden in you no less than in me, and waiting to be felt through an ever wider practice of what I have called "equanimity". (13.7.1990)

\*

X would be wrong in conceiving me as ambitious to make anybody my disciple. I offer nothing else than the deepest friendship I am capable of and I strive always to communicate my small attempts to be a mere tool in the all-guiding hands of Sri Aurobindo and be taken by them through every movement of life to the radiant feet of his companion and co-worker, the Divine Mother—feet that hold the sense of all journeys done and the promise to us that we world-wanderers will at last reach home by surrendering ourselves to them.

You have given me a good glimpse of your life when you were in service. It is a rare quality to pray to God to pardon whoever hurts one. And it is also rare to search for some fault in oneself which may have brought about the criticism, instead of being so filled with one's own merit as to resent the critical word or act. But the sensitiveness of which you speak is a weak point. One should have a calm and a poise which are beyond disturbance. Short of them, one should say to oneself: "Am I so important that nobody has the right to criticise me? Surely not. On the other hand, why should I attach such importance to people that what they say would have the power to hurt me? Neither I nor they really matter. Let me inwardly offer everything to the Divine. Whatever He wants should be done with me and in me."

To be strict about truth is a fine trait too, but the strictness must not be schoolmasterly. One should not be always on the watch to find reasons to punish: rather one should seek excuses to forgive. There is a Latin tag: *Fortiter in re, suaviter in modo*, which may be translated: "Firm in principle, gentle in practice." What is called "the human touch" has to be in action everywhere. My physical mother taught me in Parsi Gujarati: "Don't look simply at the *chaal* of a person, consider chiefly his *haal*"—that is, not just the conduct of a person but first of all his condition and his circumstances are to be kept in mind. Utmost

clarity in the head, utmost charity in the heart—these must be our guides in all domains of life.

I am very much moved by your concern about me, your constant prayer for my health. I am sure your prayer will be answered—and I pray to be worthy of your love. (22.7.1990)

\*

It was most heart-kindling and mind-stirring to receive your enthusiastic response to my series in *Mother India*. Rarely does one get such appreciation—and not only appreciation but also insight. An additional pleasure in reading your letter is the eloquent way it is written. There could not be a better review of my “Life—Poetry-Yoga”. If this is what you call at the end “childish chattering” on your part, I wonder what unthinkable masterpieces would flow from your pen when you reach articulate adolescence and then pass on to expressive adulthood!

You have asked me what source my mind draws from in these monthly communications. I don’t know how to reply on my own. I’ll convey to you—for what it may be worth—the memory which floated up when I closed my eyes and put your question to the Mother. I heard her repeat the words she had once spoken to me: “You have been painting pictures of flowers for me for years. Now I have the idea of putting in each room a flower-picture with its significance written below. For your room I am choosing the flower which means ‘Krishna’s light in the mind’.” (22.7.1990)

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

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## FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND

ONE night I had a dream. I was walking along the beach with the Lord, and across the skies flashed scenes from my life. In each scene I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand. One was mine, and one was the Lord’s. When the last scene of my life appeared before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand and, to my surprise, I noticed that many times along the path of my life there was only one set of footprints. And I noticed that it was at the lowest and saddest times in my life. I asked the Lord about it. “Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you would walk with me all the way. But I noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life there is only one set of footprints. I don’t understand why you left my side when I needed you most.” The Lord said, “My precious child, I never left you during your time of trial. Where you see only one set of footprints, I was carrying you.”

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

## IN MEMORY OF SAHANADI

A TALK BY NIRODBARAN TO THE SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY  
ON 14 AUGUST 1990

1

TODAY I propose to break the tradition. Instead of speaking on the Master on the eve of his sacred birthday, I intend to speak on one of his close disciples who lived in the Ashram for many decades and is now gone to the higher worlds after completing her mission here. Her name is Sahana. I shall confine myself to her spiritual life.

I offer two reasons for this choice: one, we have been speaking on the Master for many years. Though he is inexhaustible, for me at least, I have exhausted for your sake the little stock he gave me about himself. I am not like my versatile friend Arindam over there who can speak on many wave-lengths. That is why the month of August has now become a kind of nightmare for me and, perhaps, for the Society as well. For they know that they would have to approach me and receive a growl. But this time both sides have been spared this tension, for the Lord has given me a prepared subject and I readily agreed to their proposal, to their happy surprise.

Besides, this subject is very relevant today. When there is the danger of our forgetting life's central aim it is good to remember what the Ashram stands for, what sadhana is, how to practise it, where it leads and what crowning result waits for us. The saga of Sahanadi's spiritual life will be an exemplar to us in this respect.

Affectionate niece of Deshbandhu C. R. Das, beloved 'Jhunu'<sup>1</sup> of poet Tagore, nightingale of Bengal whose melodious voice once ravished the heart of that province and who was the unquestioned authority on Tagore's music, she heard suddenly one day a call from within and threw away the world's glamour like a trinket—even the asylum offered by Tagore. Inspired and assisted by her intimate musician-friend Dilip Kumar Roy she started for Pondicherry *via* Bangalore. While she was waiting there for permission, she had the darshan of Sri Aurobindo in a dream. Long ago, when Sahanadi was just a little girl, she had seen him at the place of C. R. Das. It was on the day he was released from jail, and was invited to come there along with all his young companions. Her memory of Sri Aurobindo was that he was of a fair complexion, thin, and very quiet, as if in-drawn. At Bangalore it was different. In her dream he was going somewhere, crossing a green field or perhaps coming in her direction. She rushed towards him and, making her pranam, said, "I want to come to Pondicherry. Please give me permission." He replied in a sweet playful voice, "What's the hurry? Why

<sup>1</sup> Pet-name

not continue your singing for some time longer?" She broke down and began to sob. Then, patting her on her back, he added, "All right. Your place has been fixed; tomorrow the permission will come." Overjoyed, she fell again at his feet. The next day the permission came and she started for Pondicherry. Two sadhaks received her at the station and took her to her appointed lodging. Nolini came to see her later on. Thus she found her abode in the Mother's sanctuary and did not take a single step outside Pondicherry for the rest of her long life. This fact, which she very proudly used to repeat to her friends, is enough to prove that she belongs to the rank of devotees like Mirabai who had left the world for God.

The next day she was to see the Mother. Let us hear her own words:

"As soon as I saw her I felt that she was no human being. She smiled and looked at me. What a smile, what a look! I did pranam and she touched my head. My eyes closed of themselves. Then my consciousness began to rise; at the same time a power descended and, passing through the head, it passed through all the chakras. I felt that the body was a vessel which was getting so filled up that it began to swell and become hard; the body went on expanding. The Mother was touching my head from time to time but I couldn't open my eyes. At last she put one of her fingers on the middle of my brow. Suddenly I saw she was sternly looking into the very depths of my being. What power in those eyes! Then I told her my past story. At the end she drew me with both her hands towards her bosom and kissed my forehead. After a while she gazed at me; there was a supreme assurance in her look. My eyes were overflowing with tears. I went home, locked myself in my room: tears started flowing and flowing!

"The next day she came to my room. She asked me to sing. I sang three or four songs of Mirabai. Then she departed filling my entire being with love and gratitude.

"The Darshan was at 7 a.m. next day. When my turn came, I glimpsed Sri Aurobindo from a distance sitting majestically on a sofa, immobile like the Himalayas. Of a fair complexion, he wore a white silk dhoti and chaddar; the bust was half-covered, the hair and beard were flowing down to the chest. As I came near I saw the Mother, all radiant, sitting on his right side. As I bowed to her she placed her two hands on my head and poured her ineffable honeyed smile as her blessings. Then my eyes turned to the feet of Sri Aurobindo. How beautiful they were! As I laid my head on them, slightly leaning forward he put his right hand on my head. I could not say what magic was in that touch. I felt I received something inconceivable.... As I looked at his eyes, I could not turn away my gaze and the very bottom of an immeasurable sea was, as it were, exposed to my vision. He then lowered his eyes, I got up. How I found myself back in my room, how the whole day passed I had no idea. The image of his eye-entrancing beauty filled my entire day."

This was in 1928 I believe, soon after her arrival. Sri Aurobindo had of course gone into seclusion by that time and could be seen only three times a year,

but he kept contact with the sadhaks through correspondence. I do not know exactly what form her sadhana took at that time. Was it through work or through meditation? The only thing I know from a letter written to me by Sri Aurobindo is that she had cut off all connection with the outer world and was living a sort of secluded life and doing intense sadhana. From her own writing we come to know that she used to see the Mother and that the Mother herself would visit her room once a week in return. She also had the special privilege of going out in a car accompanying the Mother's car once a week—along with a few sadhaks like Nolini, Dilip, etc. Further, the Mother used to meet some of them once a week at Dilip's place. There used to be meditation, conversation on various subjects. She had also permission to cook for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Of course her singing was there too, which she practised all by herself. One thing that comes out quite clear from this description is that her life was turned inward.

When I arrived in 1933 I found that there was a good number of sadhaks in the Ashram and with it there was increased outer activity. I came to know that Sahana had made good progress in sadhana. As I knew very little of sadhana at that time, I was interested to observe the ways of life of such disciples. And as it happened to know Sahana through Dilip and was interested in her singing, some of the traits in her outer nature did not seem to me quite in accord with her sadhana. A bit puzzled I wrote to Sri Aurobindo: "I am tempted to ask you a delicate question about Sahana. She seems to be in a good state of sadhana though I find that she spends much of her time in a very ordinary manner. . . Still she seems very happy and her sadhana must be very good, since she suffers from no depression." Sri Aurobindo replied: "You forget that for a long time she was often keeping much more to herself. During that time she built up an inner life and made an attempt to change certain things in her outer movements. There is still an enormous amount to be done before the inner change can be outwardly visible, but still she is not insincere in her resolution. As for her not having any depression, it is because she has established a fundamental calm . . . She also a day or two ago had the experience of the ascent above and of the wideness of peace and joy of the Infinite (free from the bodily sense and limitation) as also the descent down to the Muladhara. There are 3 or 4 others who have had this experience recently so that the working of the Force is not altogether in vain as this experience is a very big affair and is supposed to be, if stabilised, the summit of the old yogas. For us it is only a beginning of spiritual transformation. I have said this though it is personal so that you may understand that outside defects and obstacles in the nature or the appearance of unyogicness does not necessarily mean that a person can do or is doing no sadhana."

Then I asked: "But what is the secret of it? I think she has a great love for the Mother. Is that the reason?"

Sri Aurobindo: "Partly. She got hold of the sadhana by the right end in her



mind and applied it—just the thing D failed to do because of his doubts and pride of intellect and denials, etc.”

This was written in 1936. This letter helped me much in having a right view of sadhana. I learned not to judge people and things too hastily, depending on the outer appearance which is often misleading. Later on I came to know that Sahana was passing through periods of great inner difficulties so much so that she was once on the point of going away. I shall refer to it again later.

After 1938 I saw her taking up supervision work in the Building Service. She used to move about from site to site wherever construction work was going on. She was the first and only woman, I believe, to do this kind of work. But the wonder of it was that she used to have experiences of what Sri Aurobindo called ascent and descent even during the supervision. Once she had an experience of her consciousness rising high up and disappearing into a Void as it were and she was almost losing her body-consciousness. On hearing of it from me—I was then attending on Sri Aurobindo—Sri Aurobindo remarked that it was an experience of the Nirvana of her personal being. In spite of all these high conditions, he hinted that some days earlier she had passed through a period of revolt by her outer nature. I give one or two examples of her dark periods.

At one time for small and trifling reasons her wrong understanding of Sri Aurobindo's words made her stop going to Pranam and sending her daily diary to the Mother. Sri Aurobindo noted this and wrote to her: “I see that you have not sent your book nor any letter and I am told you did not come for Pranam. Are you then determined to reject us and our help and shut yourself up in your despondency?”

Mark here Sri Aurobindo's humility in the expression, “determined to reject us”; as if we were going to oblige him and the Mother by our stay in the Ashram and doing sadhana!

At another time she was in a more serious mood of revolt and had decided to leave the Ashram. Here are her own words about it: “In January 1937, my condition started with my *abhimān* (hurt pride) towards the Mother, my reason being that she didn't appear to love me...the situation rose to a climax and I took the decision to leave.... As I was ready, Nolini came quietly and said, ‘What? Are you going?’ ‘Yes, Nolinida,’ I replied with tearful eyes. He kept quiet, then again: ‘Mother asked me, ‘Is Sahana going tomorrow?’’ He repeated it thrice. My being was then filled with silent sobs.... Utterly broken I cried, ‘Nolinida, please tell Mother I won't go.’ After this, there was no further repetition of the dark moods.”

Let me cite one small instance of Sri Aurobindo's humour from her correspondence. Once she had a strong desire to eat some sweet. She pleaded with the Mother for her permission. Sri Aurobindo wrote, “No, certainly not. Eat your desire.” Reading which Sahana laughed and laughed and the desire was swallowed!

## 2

Now I shall say a few words about other aspects of her personality that opened up as a result of Yoga. About the literary faculty some of you may know how at one time the Ashram was buzzing with poets. She also turned into a poet and was receiving inspiration from Sri Aurobindo even while working as a supervisor. She was writing mystic poetry. As she could not understand her own poems I would carry them to Sri Aurobindo. Once she threw away some beautiful lines since she could not make out their meaning. When Sri Aurobindo was shown these lines, he said, "If she throws away such lines, then what's the use of my sending her inspiration?" She used to receive lines in English too. Her last poem in Bengali on Sri Aurobindo's samadhi excels all others. It is a supreme achievement, indeed.

Now, a few words about her singing. You have been told that she was the nightingale of Bengal. But when she arrived in the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo says that for the first few years she lived exclusively in herself, cutting off all contact with the outside world, even with D, which made him very sad indeed. She used to sing to herself all alone and the music had an uplifting effect.

Once while singing she had a very strange experience. She was singing a song of Kabir at about 7 p.m. on her terrace. She writes: "I felt that a force was descending in me, the volume of voice was increasing and the music was becoming exquisite. Suddenly I felt that another voice was expressing itself through my own, I had no control over it. I was just a passive instrument and the music was superb in every way. I had never sung in this way. I was simply charmed beyond words." She wrote to Sri Aurobindo. He answered, "Yes, it was a very high experience."

Then she speaks of another experience quite the reverse of this one. She says it was for the first time in her long singing career that she realised what is known as nervousness. She writes: "It was the day of Darshan in 1929. In the afternoon of the Darshan Dilip and myself were to sing in the Meditation Hall upstairs in the Mother's presence. Sri Aurobindo was to hear our song from the next room. Instead of offering my best my song became an utter failure. The voice would simply not come out however much I tried. I was extremely nervous as never before, though I had sung a lot in great gatherings. When I asked Mother for the reason, she answered, 'You forget before Whose Presence you were singing. Your vital being became nervous before that Divine Presence.'"

There was another demonstration later which I myself witnessed. It had a comic ending. It was in the Meditation Hall downstairs. The Mother was sitting where now hangs a big picture. Sahana, Dilip and his party were to sing. It was Dilip's turn now. The atmosphere was surcharged as if higher powers had been called down. Now as soon as Dilip started with the accompaniment of *Tabla*, an old sadhak, Purushottam, started dancing in a very rhythmic manner. We were

astonished and didn't know whether to smile or keep a straight face. But the Mother was simply observing. After a while the dancing stopped. The next day when Dilip asked Sri Aurobindo what had caused this strange event, he replied that it was the *Tabla* that was responsible for it.

A few months after Sahana arrived here, she started feeling a sort of uneasiness because she could no more be moved by the name of Krishna nor could she sing the songs about him as before. Love, devotion, etc. were diminishing and in their place emotions were crystallising around the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The change brought about an inner conflict. She says: "I thought they are all divine...Why then this difference?" This tormented her for a long time. Then she had a splendid experience while meditating, which removed all her doubts. She had a vision of Krishna. There appeared before her a Radiant Image, a-gleam with blue light. She fell prostrate at his feet with tears flowing and kept repeating, "O my Lord, my Beloved God!" In that utterance she felt such an unknown exquisitely sweet feeling of 'oneness' with him that she exclaimed, "Oh, how intimate, so intimate that there can be none so much 'my own'."

Overwhelming her with this feeling he vanished, uttering these benedictory words: "Why this lassitude? I am united with Sri Aurobindo."

She wrote everything to Sri Aurobindo and asked, "How shall I, so unfit a person,...take this experience? Have I understood it rightly?" He answered, "Who else can unite with me except Krishna?"

A similar experience of another devotee comes to mind. She was offering food to the photos of Krishna and Sri Aurobindo. Then she saw the right hands of both of them take the offering from the dish and leave the rest as *Prasad*.

Another faculty that opened up in Sahana was embroidery. Women in the Ashram at that time were doing this embroidery work as a part of sadhana on the designs drawn by our artist Sanjiban. The Mother asked Sahana to do one piece, the one that is even now hung between Sri Aurobindo's room and Champaklal's. She finished it in a specified time working 10 to 12 hours a day. The Mother was very pleased. It was meant to be shown to Maurice Magre, a noted French writer on the occasion of his arrival here.

Now I shall cite a letter of capital importance from Sri Aurobindo, probably written in 1937, where he explains the import of Sahana's experience. He writes: "The experience you have is the experience of the true self. Untroubled by grief and joy, desire, anxiety or trouble, vast and calm and full of peace, it observes the agitation of the outer being as one might the play of children. It is indeed the divine element in you. The more you can live in that, the firmer will be the foundation of sadhana. In this self will come all the higher experiences, oneness with the Divine, light, knowledge, strength, ananda, the play of the Mother's higher forces. It does not always become stable from the first, though for some it

does, but the experience comes more frequently and lasts more till it is no longer covered by the ordinary nature.”

We can understand from this letter what Sri Aurobindo wrote to me about her already in 1936: “She was on the way to a very high stage of sadhana, though still not quite free from the troubles of the lower nature.”

At this moment came the big interruption in our sadhana and in the entire course of our life. Sri Aurobindo met with an accident, fracturing the thigh-bone of his right leg. As a result all correspondence stopped and we were engaged in different fields of activity. One year later, World War II broke out. The Ashram was invaded by an influx of devotees from outside with their families. Consequently, the sadhana underwent a radical change. It became a collective sadhana. In this reorganisation of life, my contact with the outside world was reduced and meetings with Sahana were very rare. There was virtually a break with her due to our preoccupation with Sri Aurobindo in the latter part of 1950 before the great calamity overtook the Ashram on December 5. And it was long afterwards, when life had regained its normal tenor, that I came to know how that calamity had affected her and what a great storm she had passed through. She gives a long historic account of her experience from the moment she heard that Sri Aurobindo had left his body till he was laid in the Samadhi—an account that in my opinion surpasses all that we others have written about it. I shall deal only with that part when she was all broken down and desolate. She was witnessing the last scene of Sri Aurobindo’s body being laid in the Samadhi. She was in a flood of tears during the whole procedure and took note of every detail but with an impassive attitude as it were. When the last touch had been given she returned home along with others in a mechanical manner. A few days passed. Then again an utter desolation seized her and she felt as if she was drifting into a limitless darkness of Inconscience and would herself pass away. In that gloomy condition of soul she came to the Samadhi, uncontrollable tears flowing in incessant streams. Then suddenly she saw three lines of a poem as if carved out in light before her eyes and she was startled. She felt Sri Aurobindo himself standing behind her head and whispering these lines into her ears and at once a spate of light swept away the deep gloom in which she was plunged. She returned home, sat down to transcribe the lines as they were coming down in a constant flow. She went on scribbling for days and long hours of the night, almost without sleep and very little food. When the poem was complete she had also taken a new birth into Light and Bliss.

As regards the poem itself, it is a veritable *tour de force*. There is nothing like it in Bengali and it will be hard to surpass this magnificent creation in sublimity, splendour, power, eloquence and every other poetic excellence one can think of. I have a strong feeling that the entire poem is inspired with an overmind rhythm, at least with what Sri Aurobindo calls an overhead rhythm. There is no doubt that Sahana was seized by an *enthousiasmos* and in that mood

composed the entire piece running into nearly 350 lines. It is extremely difficult to translate it into English; at least my power is insufficient. The poem starts with only the physical body of Sri Aurobindo passing away, but he is not confined to this small area of the body, his supreme Being has become in its illumined consciousness one with the universe. His origin from the Supreme and manifestation as the integral Avatar, his descent into the world of Inconscience to create a new supramental race and eventually transform the world itself into its original divine consciousness—his infinite Love, supernal Knowledge and Power: this in short is the theme.

After Sri Aurobindo's passing, my knowledge about Sahana's sadhana and her life is not precise and I shall give just a brief summary of it. I know that she was busy with her creative writing, publishing her books, letters of Sri Aurobindo, teaching music to the young and setting up a tailoring department where sadhikas worked under her supervision. It seems that she had found at last a vocation native to her own temperament. I used to be called now and then for advice about literary matters or about her health. Her field had enlarged; more and more people came to know about her; particularly among the Ashram women she became very popular and they used to hold her in great respect and love. The greatest attraction about her was her songs and her talks about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. People from Calcutta came to record her voice, and others when they visited the Ashram made it a point to see her and hear her voice. Thus she had become an institution. She was living in the Mother's consciousness, always cheerful and never tired of speaking about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to people.

This is what one would call the psychic path of love and devotion. She was at the same time frequently suffering from one illness or another. She told me once that she could not sleep for nights and nights due to severe nervous pain in her lower limbs. At one time her condition was so bad that she thought she would pass away. But she had no fear or regret. She had completely surrendered herself to the Mother. Then the Darshan came and she had a marvellous experience. She saw that she was being carried by her soul in a boat and she felt so happy that she recovered from her illness.

During the last two or three years of her life she was always living in this psychic condition and people have been astonished to see her so happy and particularly her singing kept its original charm even at that old age. She attributed this capacity to the Mother's Grace.

From her example, I would say that two clearly demarcated paths came out distinctly in our sadhana—one, essentially, the path of knowledge, and the other the path of love. Of the former Nolini-da was the exemplar, Sahana-di was the exemplar of the latter. They were the two pioneers and pillars, so to say, of the twofold path, the path of karma being common to both.

At one time I used to wonder, seeing so many apparently uneducated

women in the Ashram, what sadhana they would do of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. I vented my feelings in my egoistic pride of the male to Sri Aurobindo. He replied somewhat to this effect: your doubt may have some justification, but the letters I receive from these women show that they have experiences of a high order, and though they cannot label them, their description of the experiences are very precise and vivid. Seeing Sahanadi's example I realise that one need not have knowledge of Sri Aurobindo's great philosophy to do his Yoga. There is a path of Love and Devotion which can unfold all the mysteries of the Divine and which I believe is more natural to women and gives them their right to achieve the Supreme Goal.

In conclusion, let me read out a letter from a friend of Sahanadi's written about her after her departure. She wrote: "During this visit I could be in Sahanadi's company for some time. I felt as if it was for the last time. The sweetness, calm, happy trust in the Mother that I was witnessing have made me feel that we are not worthy even of touching the hem of her *sari*."

# SAINT JOAN OF ARC

AN ESSAY BY MARK TWAIN

*(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1990)*

## III

THE Trials ended with her condemnation. But as she had conceded nothing, confessed nothing, this was victory for her, defeat for Cauchon. But his evil resources were not yet exhausted. She was persuaded to agree to sign a paper of slight import, then by treachery a paper was substituted which contained a recantation and a detailed confession of everything which had been charged against her during the Trials and denied and repudiated by her persistently during the three months; and this false paper she ignorantly signed. This was a victory for Cauchon. He followed it eagerly and pitilessly up by at once setting a trap for her which she could not escape. When she realized this she gave up the long struggle, denounced the treason which had been practised against her, repudiated the false confession, reasserted the truth of the testimony which she had given in the Trials, and went to her martyrdom with the peace of God in her tired heart, and on her lips endearing words and loving prayers for the cur she had crowned and the nation of ingrates she had saved.

When the fires rose about her and she begged for a cross for her dying lips to kiss, it was not a friend but an enemy, not a Frenchman but an alien, not a comrade in arms but an English soldier, that answered that pathetic prayer. He broke a stick across his knee, bound the pieces together in the form of the symbol she so loved, and gave it her; and his gentle deed is not forgotten, nor will be.

## IV

Twenty-five years afterward the Process of Rehabilitation was instituted, there being a growing doubt as to the validity of a sovereignty that had been rescued and set upon its feet by a person who had been proven by the Church to be a witch and a familiar of evil spirits. Joan's old generals, her secretary, several aged relations and other villagers of Domremy, surviving judges and secretaries of the Rouen and Poitiers Processes—a cloud of witnesses, some of whom had been her enemies and persecutors—came and made oath and testified; and what they said was written down. In that sworn testimony the moving and beautiful history of Joan of Arc is laid bare, from her childhood to her martyrdom. From the verdict she rises stainlessly pure, in mind and heart, in speech and deed and spirit, and will so endure to the end of time.

She is the Wonder of the Ages. And when we consider her origin, her early

circumstances, her sex, and that she did all the things upon which her renown rests while she was still a young girl, we recognize that while our race continues she will be also the *Riddle of the Ages*. When we set about accounting for a Napoleon or a Shakespeare or a Raphael or a Wagner or an Edison or other extraordinary person, we understand that the measure of his talent will not explain the whole result, nor even the largest part of it; no, it is the atmosphere in which the talent was cradled that explains; it is the training which it received while it grew, the nurture it got from reading, study, example, the encouragement it gathered from self-recognition and recognition from the outside at each stage of its development: when we know all these details, then we know why the man was ready when his opportunity came. We should expect Edison's surroundings and atmosphere to have the largest share in discovering him to himself and to the world; and we should expect him to live and die undiscovered in a land where an inventor could find no comradeship, no sympathy, no ambition-rousing atmosphere of recognition and applause—Dahomey, for instance. Dahomey could not find an Edison out; in Dahomey an Edison could not find himself out. Broadly speaking, genius is not born with sight, but blind; and it is not itself that opens its eyes, but the subtle influences of a myriad of stimulating exterior circumstances.

We all know this to be not a guess, but a mere commonplace fact, a truism. Lorraine was Joan of Arc's Dahomey. And there the Riddle confronts us. We can understand how she could be born with military genius, with leonine courage, with incomparable fortitude, with a mind which was in several particulars a prodigy—a mind which included among its specialities the lawyer's gift of detecting traps laid by the adversary in cunning and treacherous arrangements of seemingly innocent words, the orator's gift of eloquence, the advocate's gift of presenting a case in clear and compact form, the judge's gift of sorting and weighing evidence, and finally, something recognizable as more than a mere trace of the statesman's gift of understanding a political situation and how to make profitable use of such opportunities as it offers; we can comprehend how she could be born with these great qualities, but we cannot comprehend how they became immediately usable and effective without the developing forces of a sympathetic atmosphere and the training which comes of teaching, study, practice—years of practice—and the crowning and perfecting help of a thousand mistakes. We can understand how the possibilities of the future perfect peach are all lying hid in the humble bitter-almond but we cannot conceive of the peach springing directly from the almond without the intervening long seasons of patient cultivation and development. Out of a cattle-pasturing peasant village lost in the remotenesses of an unvisited wilderness and atrophied with ages of stupefaction and ignorance we cannot see a Joan of Arc issue equipped to the last detail for her amazing career and hope to be able to explain the riddle of it, labor at it as we may.



It is beyond us. All the rules fail in this girl's case. In the world's history she stands alone—quite alone. Others have been great in their first public exhibitions of generalship, valor, legal talent, diplomacy, fortitude; but always their previous years and associations had been in a larger or smaller degree a preparation for these things. There have been no exceptions to the rule. But Joan was competent in a law case at sixteen without ever having seen a law-book or a court-house before; she had no training in soldiership and no associations with it, yet she was a competent general in her first campaign; she was brave in her first battle, yet her courage had had no education—not even the education which a boy's courage gets from never-ceasing reminders that it is not permissible in a boy to be a coward, but only in a girl; friendless, alone, ignorant, in the blossom of her youth, she sat week after week, a prisoner in chains, before her assemblage of judges, enemies hunting her to her death, the ablest minds in France, and answered them out of an untaught wisdom which overmatched their learning, baffled their tricks and treacheries with a native sagacity which compelled their wonder, and scored every day a victory against these incredible odds and camped unchallenged on the field. In the history of the human intellect, untrained, inexperienced, and using only its birthright equipment of untried capacities, there is nothing which approaches this. Joan of Arc stands alone, and must continue to stand alone, by reason of the unfellowed fact that in the things wherein she was great she was so without shade or suggestion of help from preparatory teaching, practice, environment, or experience. There is no one to compare her with, none to measure her by; for all others among the illustrious *grew* toward their high place in an atmosphere and surroundings which discovered their gift to them and nourished it and promoted it, intentionally or unconsciously. There have been other young generals, but they were not girls; young generals, but they had been soldiers before they were generals; she *began* as a general; she commanded the first army she ever saw; she led it from victory to victory, and never lost a battle with it; there have been young commanders-in-chief, but none so young as she: she is the only soldier in history who had held the supreme command of a nation's armies at the age of seventeen.

Her history has still another feature which sets her apart and leaves her without fellow or competitor: there have been many uninspired prophets, but she was the only one who ever ventured the daring detail of naming, along with a foretold event, the event's precise nature, the special time-limit within which it would occur, and the place—and *scored fulfilment*. At Vaucouleurs she said she must go to the King and be made his general, and break the English power, and crown her sovereign—"at Rheims." It all happened. It was all to happen "next year"—and it did. She foretold her first wound and its character and date a month in advance, and the prophecy was recorded in a public record-book three weeks in advance. She repeated it the morning of the date named, and it was fulfilled before night. At Tours she foretold the limit of her military career—

saying it would end in one year from the time of its utterance—and she was right. She foretold her martyrdom—using *that word*, and naming a time three months away—and again she was right. At a time when France seemed hopelessly and permanently in the hands of the English she twice asserted in her prison before her judges that within seven years the English would meet with a mightier disaster than had been the fall of Orleans: it happened within five—the fall of Paris. Other prophecies of hers came true, both as to the event named and the time-limit prescribed.

She was deeply religious, and believed that she had daily speech with angels; that she saw them face to face, and that they counseled her; comforted and heartened her, and brought commands to her direct from God. She had a childlike faith in the heavenly origin of her apparitions and her Voices, and not any threat of any form of death was able to frighten it out of her loyal heart. She was a beautiful and simple and lovable character. In the records of the Trials this comes out in clear and shining detail. She was gentle and winning and affectionate; she loved her home and friends and her village life; she was miserable in the presence of pain and suffering; she was full of compassion: on the field of her most splendid victory she forgot her triumphs to hold in her lap the head of a dying enemy and comfort his passing spirit with pitying words; in an age when it was common to slaughter prisoners she stood dauntless between hers and harm, and saved them alive; she was forgiving, generous, unselfish, magnanimous; she was pure from all spot or stain of baseness. And always she was a *girl*; and dear and worshipful, as is meet for that estate: when she fell wounded, the first time, she was frightened, and cried when she saw her blood gushing from her breast; but she was Joan of Arc! and when presently she found that her generals were sounding the retreat, she staggered to her feet and led the assault again and took that place by storm.

There is no blemish in that rounded and beautiful character.

How strange it is!—that almost invariably the artist remembers only one detail—one minor and meaningless detail of the personality of Joan of Arc: to wit, that she was a peasant girl—and forgets all the rest; and so he paints her as a strapping middle-aged fishwoman, with costume to match, and in her face the spirituality of a ham. He is slave to his one idea, and forgets to observe that the supremely great souls are never lodged in gross bodies. No brawn, no muscle, could endure the work that their bodies must do; they do their miracles by the spirit which has fifty times the strength and staying-power of brawn and muscle. The Napoleons are little, not big, and they work twenty hours in the twenty-four, and come up fresh, while the big soldiers with the little hearts faint around them with fatigue. We know what Joan of Arc was like, without asking—merely by what she did. The artist should paint her *spirit*—then he could not fail to paint her body aright. She would rise before us, then, a vision to win us, not repel: a lithe young slender figure, instinct with “the unbought grace of youth,” dear and

bonny and lovable, the face beautiful, and transfigured with the light of that lustrous intellect and the fires of that unquenchable spirit.

Taking into account, as I have suggested before, all the circumstances—her origin, youth, sex, illiteracy, early environment, and the obstructing conditions under which she exploited her high gifts and made her conquests in the field and before the courts that tried her for her life—she is easily and by far the most extraordinary person the human race has ever produced.

*(Concluded)*

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## A PRAYER

REMOVE the veil, O Lord!  
 That I 'Myself' may face;  
 To cut the EGO's cord  
 Grant me Thy succouring Grace.  
 A smiling look be cast,  
 A blessed word be said,  
 With blissful mind and heart  
 That I may march ahead.  
 O Thou! my Friend and Guide,  
 Stretch forth Thy good right hand,  
 That I may cross the sea,  
 And reach Thy luminous Land.  
 The sea is wild with gale,  
 Through darkness I can't see,  
 Let Life of truth prevail,  
 That Falsehood forthwith flee,  
 Open my blinded eyes  
 That I may find the way  
 To reach Thy Lotus Feet,  
 Where I may ever stay.

SAMAR BASU

## MOOT COURT HEARING ON SHAKESPEARE AUTHORSHIP

### WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE OR EDWARD DE VERE?

*Few readers of literature know of a recent event of great interest to the literary world. On September 25, 1987, the American University, Washington D.C., held a trial to decide a question that has vexed scholars for a long time. Mother India has the privilege to serialize the fascinating proceedings, thanks to the enthusiastic help of our friend Mr. William W. Jones of Memphis, Tennessee, U.S.A.*

*(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1990)*

STEVENS—As you will note, we are following the English practice of each of the members of the panel expressing his own views and I think it is a healthy one. I share the views of my colleagues that this has been a delightful experience and we've been blessed with an extraordinarily fine presentation by both advocates. I agree with what one might say is the judgement in so far as I must play the role of the judge in resolving what would be a case before us. I think that the burden of proof was not met on the basic issue, the threshold issue is: did Shakspere write Shakespeare's plays or did he not? But I want to stress what our chief justice indicated at the outset. Our ability to resolve the issue is really very limited because our time is limited and we have had limited access to the materials that have to be studied in depth to really be totally sure of where we come out. But given the problem of the prima facie case which counsel for Shakespeare first established—actually I guess it was his third point—I would say that I am persuaded that even if William Shakespeare was just a successful businessman and investor in plays, it is very reasonable to assume that he went to school in Stratford and received an education that would at least give him a start in life that was an excellent one. So I do not think it is correct to assume that he was an uneducated person. That is of course just part of the problem. I also think that if one takes at face value the first folio and the references by Hemminge and Condell and the references by Digges and Ben Jonson, if one assumes they are being forthright then that adds up to evidence that Shakspere and Shakespeare are the same person and it's the man from Stratford. Digges as I understand it was the executor of the will and Hemminge and Condell are named in the will and also were associated in business ventures, they are persons whom one would assume had first hand knowledge of the principal activities of the man from Stratford. So I think the prima facie is definitely made. And I would think the other bit of evidence that is quite persuasive is Meres' article or short paragraphs in 1599 where he refers to both of these gentlemen as being excellent writers in, I think it was, comedy. So I think that looking in the face of the documents one has to say that the prima facie case is made, and that what the scholars have

principally believed over the years is the correct answer. I must say however that I don't think the contrary view is totally frivolous. I have lingering concerns about some of the gaps in the evidence. The absence of eulogies at the time, in 1616 when Shakespeare died. The absence of writing about Shakespeare during his life, even though there is some evidence. The evidence that does exist is somewhat ambiguous and hard to understand. And it seems to me that one would expect to find more references in people's diaries about having seen Shakespeare somewhere or talked to someone who had seen him. So there is this sort of gnawing uncertainty about the gap, and I think that is part of what has made all these different people suggest that there must have been someone else. I'm also very much struck by much of the internal evidence that's assembled in great detail in Mr. Ogborn's book about the various skills that the man had. One just reading it cold would tend to draw the inference that the author of these plays was a nobleman. There are just too many places in which nobility is stressed as a standard. Even in the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy the standard is: which is nobler in the mind? There are just such sorts of references, so that you can't help but have these gnawing doubts that this great author may perhaps have been someone else. I would say also that I think perhaps, departing from my colleagues, I am persuaded that if the author was not the man from Stratford, then there is a high probability that it was Edward de Vere. I think his claim is by far the strongest of those that have been put forward. I think the evidence against the others is conclusive. I must say that I am not persuaded by the evidence on dating of the plays because I think that this is sort of a self-generating thing where some of the dates were established on the assumption that Shakespeare was in fact the author. There is in I think Henslow's diary which refers to performances in 1594 of *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, and everyone says those are earlier versions of plays but nobody seems to know for sure who really authored those plays, and if one could find out what those performances were and what the real sequence was I would not put to one side the possibility that the whole sequence has been misstated. I don't think it is something that is so clearly established now that it doesn't warrant further careful study. I would also make a comment or two about the adversary system, something that I am very proud to have something to do with from time to time. First of all I think the arguments that we heard today as well as the arguments in the briefs were of very high quality, and they were characterized by, among other things, respect for the opponent's position. I find that when I hear lawyers get off the issue and degenerate into disrespect for the opponent's position the argument always suffers, and I think unfortunately there have been times when this argument has suffered on both sides from failure to accept the good faith and honorable motives of the opponents. I find no merit at all to the suggestion that the scholars who are persuaded about the accuracy of the traditional view that the man from Stratford are anything but expressing their honest conclusions based upon their independent research and scholarship. Similarly I think that the Oxfordians are

also putting forth honest views that are based on careful and deliberate study and interest in a very very difficult problem. So I would say that both adversaries are entitled to be respected and to be thanked for their raising the questions that generate further interest and study of this really incomparable author who has given so much to our civilization and whose work does continue to merit the study that we've seen today and led up to this controversy.

Finally I'd just like to say one little thing: I think that the Oxfordian case suffers from not having a simple, coherent theory of the case. I think when pressed there are too many alternatives that might be true or might not be true, and I would submit that if their thesis is sound, one has to assume a conspiracy, and there's nothing necessarily invidious about the desire to keep the true authorship a secret. But this conspiracy had to have been participated in by the men I have mentioned early—Hemminge and Condell and Digges, and Ben Jonson for sure, and I would think it had to have been the result because the questions of motive are so difficult to answer. It had to have been the result of a command from the monarch. Unless the Queen, advised by her somewhat eccentric but distinguished prime minister, concluded for reasons that we may never thoroughly understand—she did a lot of things, I think, that people are not sure they understand why she behaved the way she did—but I think it's the strongest theory of the case that one would have to assume that for some reason we don't understand, the Queen and the prime minister decided, "We want this man to be writing plays under a pseudonym." And I won't go further. Of course, it may be so improbable that it's not even worth even thinking about, but I would think that the Oxfordians really have not yet put together a concise, coherent theory that they are prepared to defend in all respects, and maybe this one is not the right one. And finally, I would remind you that although we've done our best, and we agree on the ultimate outcome, the doctrine of *res judicata* does not apply to this, and I, like my colleagues, want to thank you for the opportunity to participate in this very fascinating endeavor.

BERENDZEN—On behalf of all of us, I would like to thank the three justices for taking time from their extraordinarily busy schedules to be with us in this thoughtful discussion today. I also would like to thank our two law professors for their stunningly beautiful presentations earlier this morning. I also want to thank David Lloyd Kreeger for helping to make today possible. And may I point out the final thing—in this busy city, on a magnificently beautiful fall morning at 10 a.m. on a Friday, more than 1,000 people packed into this hall, a couple hundred more elsewhere in the building, and a few hundred were turned away because of inadequate space—the news media from the national networks of the United States, Canada, and Great Britain were here too. I think that suggests that perhaps we have our perspectives right. Who won? It was I think all who care about the arts, about letters, about the law. Thank you for coming

*(Concluded)*

## “SATYAVAN MUST DIE”

### A DISCOURSE APROPOS OF A PHRASE IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1990)

#### 7. *The Designs of the God of Love*

It was a case of love at first sight. While a “mystic tumult” disturbed the heart of Savitri, Satyavan, suffering a “dream of beauty”, leaped up “like a sea to the moon”. It seemed in the suddenness of their love, and in it the identification of one with the other, Time had stepped into a great immeasurable moment. This lovers’ meeting perhaps was not after all just for the joy of love; it appears to be more functional with a secret intention of achieving some high aim:

To mate with heaven’s truth our mortal thought,  
To lift earth-hearts nearer the Eternal’s sun.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, it was with this purpose that

Love brought down power out of eternity  
To make of life his new undying base.<sup>2</sup>

There is a scheme and a thrust of the whole operation in accomplishing a certain result, the *modus operandi* tirelessly moving towards the ulterior motive it has set for itself. Life shall be Love’s immortal base. Our lovers, in the human figures, have thus become unwittingly Love’s tools and instruments; they do not know why they love. Perhaps that was a blessing in disguise too considering the uncertain ways destiny has to take in the process of Time. Out of this love shall arise a new life, not the life of perpetuity in mortality but the life born of the deathless aspects of the spirit. Savitri is the incarnation of the divine Mother herself and Satyavan of the God of Love who presented himself to her hiding behind him the figure of Death, the great Shadow. Hence espousing Savitri is not only to fulfil love; it is also to new-create an “undying base” for life by dissolving that Shadow. This God of Love now born of the inconscient stuff bears on his head the dark burden of his Fate. And Savitri, as the supreme Mother’s power to bring completeness to love, rises to defeat the designs of that retrograde Fate. The drama takes place in space and time, in the Shalwa Woods and at the appointed hour as foretold by Narad. The victory has to be won in the here-and-now. So the incarnate spirits come together and their God makes sure that they do meet for love’s fulfilment. And because it is a power coming from eternity, and is given to the great spirits, the ultimate victory is certain.

In the Designs of the God of Love, Love becomes the Lover and the

Beloved; then the romance of the incarnate Two steps into Space and Time for the Life of Love to sprout and flourish in Joy. For the effectuation of that process there is the acceptance of Fate and Circumstance as a necessary means and modality. As a matter of fact, it is Love himself who has entered into the horror-filled Cave of Inconscience and offered his self to die to be immortal. Now his other part, the Better Half, must arrive to rescue him. The marriage of Satyavan and Savitri is a legend and a symbol of this helpless lost forlorn Lover being espoused by the luminous conquering spirit of the Beloved. How can she stay away in the transcendent Aloof when her soul's Lord is suffering in the Hell of Darkness? It is to meet him and be one with him that she has been coming here again and again, through the endless cycles of creation. Not for the sake of humanity, not for this mortal race whose ingratitude is more unkind than the winter wind as was felt by Shakespeare, not for fighting against Fate or vanquishing Time or conquering over Death, not even so much for dissolving the Inconscience does she suffer to come as the holocaust of the Supreme. Her single quest, of going from place to place riding the beautiful carven car, is for her eternal Lover. She becomes Prakriti in pursuit of Purusha; she becomes Ishwari waiting for the hidden Ishwara; she becomes Radha in search of her mysterious and playful mischievous Krishna; she becomes Savitri to win back Satyavan from Death. Satyavan accepts death to make in the earthly groves his union with Savitri immortal.

The incarnate spirits have come together by the designs of Love. Soul meets soul. The uniqueness of this meeting is that it takes place in the Kingdom of Death. Indeed, it is here that, by the Power which knows everything beyond all our knowings, they recognise each other. The mystery is the straying away of Love from the original Source and getting trapped in the relentless Void of Non-Existence. The supreme Shakti has to invade that Void and rescue her Lover to complete the creative Urge's recognition. Satyavan is the Love divine who has taken his station in the Inconscience; Savitri is the dynamic spirit of immortality who has gone abroad leaving her golden realms behind to seek joy of an undivided life in *mrityuloka*, the mortal creation. About Satyavan and Savitri, as to what they represent, the Mother answers the questions as follows:

*Q: Savitri represents the Mother's Consciousness, doesn't she?*

*A: Yes.*

*Q: What does Satyavan represent?*

*A: He is the Avatar, isn't he? He is the incarnation of the Supreme.<sup>3</sup>*

He is the eternal Incarnation in the inconscient creation, the Supreme's soul

...that climbs from nescient Night  
Through life and mind and supernature's Vast  
To the supernal light of Timelessness.<sup>4</sup>



Savitri herself tells Death that she the Woman is the force of God and her mate the Eternal’s delegate soul in man.<sup>5</sup> They are “two lines of eternity”<sup>6</sup> presently meeting on the earth,

A dual power of God in an ignorant world.<sup>7</sup>

Such is the mystery and meaning of their mortal birth.

In this creation all is pre-ordained and ineluctable Fate becomes an agent serving the divine Cause; contrivances of Time turn out to be mere instruments in the hands of a superior Will. In these machinations Satyavan’s death is Savitri’s occasion. To confront, and triumph over, the Challenger of Love is the great Mission. To achieve this victory Savitri could not have chosen any lover other than Satyavan; for her work’s fulfilment she needed only him and none else. To encounter the Adversary through the death of any other husband would not have been possible for her. A lover’s death, in the scheme of things, was not a mere ruse for the Shakti to deal with Death. It is the union of the Lover and the Beloved that is sought in the entire process running through Death’s darkness. If Satyavan is to be considered as the lost Lover in the Ocean of Forgetfulness then the ever-awake Savitri, the divine Beloved in human form, has to plunge into it and bring him out through the death of the human Satyavan. The miracle has to be accomplished in the mortal world.

In this mortality, abounding with sorrow and suffering of feeble hearts, the whip of cruelty driving the primitive beast,

Rare is the cup fit for love’s nectar wine.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, the descent of the Supreme, the coming of the Avatar in a human form, happens only when his body is prepared over a period of a thousand years. The Manvantara has to prepare his body for a particular stage of evolution in its fulfilment. It is that kind of a rarity which goes in preparing the cup for love’s nectarean wine. Now here is that cup that has taken shape as the human Satyavan. But then before this vase could breathe its sweetest, it would be shattered by Death to pieces. This cup is too fragile and soon all the godly wine shall spill out of it. Though form is not all, and Ecstasy’s domains do stretch unto boundless infinity, the greater joy is to give to that ethereal spirit sun-splendid forms and figures and shapes, beauties bodying forth the Multitudinous’s multiplication. That joyous multiplication is the predestination in the death of Satyavan; he must die for the divine multitude to be born. The mighty Beloved has become the Bride of the Doomed to resuscitate him from a fallen state in the dark terrible Night. The child of their death-triumphant union shall be the New Life. That is the fulfilment of the promise given to Aswapathy.

Aswapathy’s role in the designs of the God of Love is the Transcendent

Person's bearing the burden of an inconscient creation's march to the worlds of Truth and Light and Knowledge. To the query "How long shall our spirits battle with the Night?" the answer was in the birth of Savitri in whose wake "Immortal Love shall beat his glorious wings" as if on his homing tree. Savitri was born as Aswapathy's daughter in answer to his prayer; but certainly she would have come here even otherwise, to find her Lord in Satyavan, as love's necessity. Again and again she has been coming to carry on her unfinished task, *viz.*, the discovery of love in the life of death. But too great is the power of her love, too impetuous her passion for her sweetheart. And that passion would have crushed the entire creation, bringing all to nought. Only in slow time can love become successful. Aswapathy's coming here before her and preparing the occult base for her dynamic action is the surety that love would not destroy what it is here for. The fusing splendour of the two could consume not only death but the whole universe; he gives a divine poise to that passion. With the father-figure of Aswapathy behind her she is safe in her love's pursuit. Savitri's mortal birth was compelled by the "world's desire"; being a world's desire it is no wonder that it is a mortal birth and no surprise that she should suffer for that. Aswapathy, however, lifts up the world's desire and gives it a divine dimension and turns it into a strong invocation to the supreme Mother. She, assuring him the birth immortal, guarantees in it Savitri's safety and with it the safety of her lover Satyavan.

*(To be continued)*

R. Y. DESHPANDE

#### REFERENCES

- 1 *Savitri*, p 397
- 2 *Ibid* , p 397
- 3 *Questions and Answers*, 9 December, 1953, p 391
- 4 *Savitri*, p 703
- 5 *Ibid* , p 663
- 6 *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, Vol 10, December 1986, p 156
- 7 *Savitri*, p 702
- 8 *Ibid* , p 398

## ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

### AN UNFINISHED CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

*People have been constantly puzzling over the fact that the body of Francis Xavier at Goa is still undecayed after centuries. There does not seem to be any embalming done. We should like to know how this "miracle" has happened. What keeps the body incorrupt?*

It is not a "miracle" but simply an unusual case.

He was a saint and an ascetic, even when he was alive the body was reduced to its minimum.

It is a phenomenon of dishydration. (16 9 1967)

*When you say that the condition of Francis Xavier's body is not a "miracle", I suppose you quite rule out any direct action from beyond Nature.*

What do you mean? There is nothing in this world which is not submitted to direct action from beyond Nature, but most of the men are unaware of it.

(18 9 1967)

*Of course there is a direct action from beyond Nature everywhere, but certain phenomena permit controlled scientific experimentation. If the present case is not a "miracle", could we say that a hitherto unrealised possibility within the scientific domain is here and that science by experimentation can exploit it? If any dead body could somehow be completely dehydrated, would it remain undecayed for centuries?*

Your questions are mental ratiocinations and are not interesting. (19 9 1967)

*I regret I came down to the level of mental ratiocinations. But there is a genuine inquiry behind them. If you could just overlook the too mental form of what seems like cross-examination on my part, if you could say something more in your own way, we would be benefited. My own problem basically is: "What exactly has made this 'phenomenon of dishydration' such 'an unusual case'? Some power in the Saint himself—some power outside him?"*

If you are so curious, ask the saint, he may tell you.

(20 9 1967)

#### ENTRY IN AMAL'S DIARY

*Oh Mother!*

*What a task you have set me as regards Francis Xavier! Won't I myself have first to become a Saint in order to parley with him? Even then, would he—a stranger—divulge secrets when my own beloved and tolerant Guru leads me such a dance?*

(20.9.1967)

## WHEN WAS JESUS BORN?

Now that it is all over, now that the 1990s have been welcomed in with loud acclaim, now that the 1980s have been reviewed to death and bidden a fond farewell—it may be safe to make a point about just when the new decade actually begins. Actually, the 1980s are not yet gone, and the 1990s have not yet arrived. It won't affect the celebrations, and it won't bother most of the population, but there are always a few people who want to get things straight, and I'm always willing to help them.

It started about the year 535, when a Syrian scholar, Dionysius Exiguus, decided to calculate the year in which Jesus was born. The Bible doesn't give dates in the ordinary way but it says that an event happened when someone was king or someone else was an official of some sort, and non-Biblical records can provide some corroborating information. Dionysius decided that Jesus was born in 753 A.U.C. (*anno urbe condita*—after the founding of the city), that is, 753 years after the founding of the city of Rome. After a few centuries, this was adopted as the official birth year of Jesus and it has remained so ever since throughout the world. And 753 A.U.C. became, and has remained, 1 B.C.

(Actually, it turned out that Dionysius had made a slight mistake, for the Bible clearly states that Jesus was born when Herod was king of Judea, and it is well-established that Herod died in 749 A.U.C. Therefore, Jesus must have been born in 749 A.U.C. or even a couple of years earlier. For that reason, most Bibles list Jesus' birth as taking place, paradoxically, in 4 B.C.) But let us suppose that 753 A.U.C. is the year 1 B.C., and that Jesus was born on Dec. 25, 1 B.C. One week later, a new year started. What do we number the new year? Now don't answer hastily.

Suppose we consider the 10 years before Jesus' birth. We have 10 B.C., 9 B.C., 8 B.C., 6 B.C., 5 B.C., 4 B.C., 3 B.C., 2 B.C., 1 B.C. These are negative numbers, which is why they count backward. Nowadays, we would write them, -10, -9, -8, -7, -6, -5, -4, -3, -2, and -1. (And in fact some historians today assign B.C. years the negative sign.) The ancients, however, had never heard of negative numbers. Those weren't invented until the 1500s. If mathematicians today wanted to go beyond -1, they would move into positive numbers, which would be counted upward. It would go as follows: -10, -9, -8, -7, -6, -5, -4, -3, -2, -1, 0, (plus) 1, (plus) 2, (plus) 3, (plus) 4 and so on.

The ancient historians couldn't do that, however, because they had never heard of the concept of "zero". It came into use only about 800 in India and took additional centuries to reach Europe. This means that one week after Jesus' birth on Dec. 25, 1 B.C., the new year that started was not zero, but A.D. 1. The series goes 4 B.C., 3 B.C., 2 B.C., 1 B.C., A.D. 1, A.D. 2, A.D. 3, A.D. 4 and so on. We have continued in this way by single-digit steps, without ever skipping,

all the way to the present A.D. 1990. But remember, we started our present numbers with 1, not with 0.

Consider the consequences. A decade consists of 10 years. If we consider the first decade (leaving out the A.D. abbreviation to make it clearer) and start with 1, we have the years 1 through 10. Those make up the decade, and it is the year 11 (with a 1 as the right-hand digit) that starts the second decade. If you keep counting, you will find the third decade starts with 21, the fourth decade with 31 and the fifth decade with 41, and so on. Always the right-hand digit is a 1.

Eventually, if you are patient, you come to the tenth decade: 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100. Notice that the year 100 is the last year of the tenth decade. It is the last year of the first century. The second century begins on Jan. 1, 101, not a day earlier. Again, the right-hand figure is a 1. We can follow the centuries like this. The third century begins on Jan. 1, 201; the fourth century on Jan. 1, 301 and so on.

To get our own time, the 20th Century began on Jan. 1, 1901, and that also began the first decade of the 20th Century. The second decade of the 20th Century began on Jan. 1, 1911, the third on Jan. 1, 1921, and so on. And the 10th and last decade of the 20th Century will begin on Jan. 1, 1991, not a moment sooner. The year 1990 is still part of the 1980s, in other words, and we must wait a year for the true celebration.

Of course, we won't. In 10 years, the year Jan. 1, 2000, will arrive and the whole world will burst with joy. It will be a new millennium. The celebrations will be unbelievable and the television people will all go wild. But just the same the new millennium will not begin till Jan. 1, 2001.

ISAAC ASIMOV  
*Los Angeles Times Syndicate*

## HOW FOREIGN IS THIS ENGLISH?

AFTER OVER a century and half of administrative, cultural, political and educational contact with the British, the English language has not only become deeply rooted in the Indian soil but has blended with our cultural and social milieu and has acquired an identity of its own.

It was way back in 1835 that the British rulers decided to launch a programme to educate a sufficient number of Indians to perform the tasks in the middle and lower levels of colonial administration.

Progressively, the Western type of education spread throughout the country. As literacy in English grew and more schools, colleges and universities taught in that language, English soon became the preferred medium for journalism, law, petitioning, oratory, political agitations and philosophical studies. There were more English newspapers and readers of such papers and Western classics were translated into regional languages.

New literary genres appeared on the Indian scene when Indian writers undertook to express their creativity in English. But these Indian writers with their Indian thoughts, Indian feelings, Indian emotions and Indian experiences had to submit to the discipline of the English language. It was both novel and difficult for them and many felt the need for a more flexible English that could convey the nuances of Indian life.

Raja Rao, the novelist, explains in the foreword of his book *Kanthapura*: “The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own, the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word ‘alien’, yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up—as Sanskrit and Persian were before—but not of our emotional make-up.”

The poetess, Kamala Das, wrote:

*“I am Indian, very brown, born in  
Malabar, I speak three languages, write in  
Two, dream in one. Don’t write in English, they said,  
English is not your mother tongue. Why not leave  
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,  
Everyone of you? Why not let me speak in  
Any language I like? The language I speak  
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queerness  
All mine, mine alone....”*

Thus the Indo-Anglian authors, tried to adopt in English an idiom, a rhythm and a tone which would more adequately describe Indian life and experience. In

their attempt, it is natural that they should look into the literary tradition of Indian classics and be influenced to some extent by their own mother tongue. After all, our native languages and literatures are products of our thought, culture and civilisation and all artists, whether painters, sculptors, writers or musicians, will rediscover their genius only by being true to the best of their own spiritual, cultural, philosophical and artistic traditions.

According to Firth, a well-known British linguist, the most important fact about language is its social function. The nature of a language is closely related to the demands we make on it and the functions it has to serve. In concrete terms, these functions are specific to a culture.

Consequently, any contact between two linguistically separate cultures, each having its own special institutions, roles and functions, is going to result in the modification of their languages, especially the language of communication. The foreign language permeates into local usage and words of Indian origin have been insinuating themselves into English, ever since the beginning of the 17th century. Words such as 'bamboo', 'calico', 'capass', 'cheese', 'chintz', 'gingham', 'gunny', 'candy', 'cheroot' and 'jaggery' were Indian terms used in trade transactions with the East India Company.

This trend was further promoted by the development of a vast literature dealing with Indian subjects as well as the regular appearance of Indian correspondence in English newspapers at that time. A considerable number of these expressions soon began to sound familiar to English ears and were later naturalised in the English language and received recognition in the Great Oxford Dictionary.

The range of linguistic innovations by Indian writers, continue to enrich Indian English and demarcate it from British English. Here is a report of a recent wrestling bout, which appeared in an Indian publication:

"The wrestling bout was part of the annual Khareshwar Mela, about 8 km. from the city. Contending for the title of 'Zila Kesari' were the pahlwans of Turrah Shah, a Muslim akhara and Shanti Kunj a Hindu one.... Nand Kishore Pandit who is a politician and a press correspondent and so many other things rolled into one, claims to have the 'closest contact' with all the 10 akharas of the city and their ustads and khalifas.... 'I'll tell you the real thing,' he goes on. "There is a cinema hall here whose proprietor employs the choicest goondas and pahlwans of the town...(its) pure dadagiri".

And here is a dialogue from Manohar Malgonkar's novel *Open Season*:

"Oh, yes; a whole lakh as well as a girl pretty as an apsara," his father promised recklessly.

"Unless he brings an apsara of his own—some muddam," his mother said.

"Chut-chut," his father protested.... "and why should anyone know that he

has eaten meat, hah, tell me that; if we keep 'choop' about it."

"But how can he retain his caste, remain a Brahmin! Even after he has eaten the flesh of sheep and chickens?—Chhi!"

These Indianisms which have specific meaning in an Indian culture are deviants in the sense that they are unintelligible to the users of other varieties of English. Thus, the more culture-bound our English becomes, the more distance is created between Indian English and other varieties of English so that only those who are acquainted with such typically Indian contexts can understand them.

This, then, has created an indigenous Indo-Anglian literature whose language is now accepted as a valid subject for linguistic studies the world over and is recognised by the term 'Indian English'. Originally Indian English was perceived merely as glossaries of Indian terms used in English and later on scholars used the terms 'Indo-Anglian' or 'Anglo-Indian' in a derogatory sense to identify Indian English because for them it was a sub-standard variety of English. Unfortunately, most Indians, especially the elite, look down shamefully upon this Indianised form and others think of Indian English only as native slang like 'yaar', 'dhaap', etc. that they use in spoken English.

Today, English is the associate official language of India and the second language of some 10-15 million Indians. It is in order to render Indian English a more complete means of communication among ourselves and assist creative writers in a more accurate description of the Indian environment, that we have been compelled to borrow from local languages. Words like 'dharamshala', 'sahukar', 'khadi', 'bidi', 'bania', 'sardar', 'bazaar', 'kurta', 'sadhu', 'bhang', 'dhoti', 'ghee' and so on are all very commonly used in Indian English. Some authors have also tried to establish equivalent formal items for those that exist in their mother tongue—'gopuja', 'jatibhoj', 'katidor', have been literally translated as 'cow-worship', 'caste-dinner' and 'waist-thread' in English. Other authors like B. Bhattacharya in his book *He Who Rides A Tiger* have devised phrases like 'brother-anointing ceremony' ('bhairya-duj'), 'nine-stranded thread' ('yajnopavit'), 'cow-dust hour' ('godhuli').

There are instances also when the Indian bilingual uses an item of his mother tongue with no attempt to establish an English equivalent. When M. R. Anand says in his novel *The Big Heart*, "a crow tried to strut like a peacock" he has obviously been inspired by the popular Hindi saying, "kaau chala hans ki chaal". Again, in his book *Coolie*, the Bengali curse, "tera bera gark ho" appears as "may the vessel of your life never float on the sea of existence" Such lexical transfers can, of course, have a serious impact on the intelligibility of Indian English to native speakers of English.

There is also a whole range of hybridised formations of words in Indian English which comprise two or more elements where at least one element is from an Indian language and one from English. These formations are typical to Indian



English only, as for instance, lathi-charge, bidi-smoking, congresswalah and so on. Indianisation can also be seen in the modes of address: the extensive use of 'ji' and 'sahib' is peculiar to Indians only. There is also a marked tendency to refer to people as 'bhai' or 'behen'.

This slow process of acculturation or Indianisation of the English language in India was first discovered and recognised at the phonological level. Spoken Indian English not only deviates in accent from the British and those in other Commonwealth countries, but also widely differs from region to region within the subcontinent. Formerly, spoken English was seldom taught in schools and the unattainable 'Received Pronunciation' was a common phenomenon. This can be explained by the fact that a population learning another language keeps its old speech habits when pronouncing the sounds of the new (foreign) language. Thus, in India, a bilingual identifies a phoneme of his second language (English) with a phoneme in his mother tongue, so that when he speaks in the newer language he subjects it to the phonetic structure of his mother tongue: 'appeal' thus becomes 'apil' and 'glass', 'gilas'.

Words beginning with the letter 'f' are often pronounced as 'ph' (e.g. 'phoren' instead of 'foreign'). The common clusters of 'sk', 'sp', 'st', in English never occur in the initial position in Hindi, therefore producing deviations, especially in the Hindi-speaking areas: 'school' becomes 'iskul', 'speak' is 'ispik' and so on. We also have the tendency not to distinguish between the two English phonemes 'w' and 'v' (e.g.—'waiter' is 'vaiter') because in Indian languages there is only one such phoneme for that sound.

Another typical Indian English feature is the high frequency of duplication of words, as for example, "Give them one one piece...." (ek, ek) or "He sells different different things...." (bhin, bhin). A commonly-used Indian English grammatical process is rank reduction. Take the following nominal groups of English: an address of welcome; the building of a nation; a box of matches. In Indian English they are reduced to welcome-address; nation-building; match-box. Phrases like 'foreign-returned' or 'England-returned' or 'B.A.-passed' are also widely used in India, especially in matrimonial columns!

These, then, are some of the broad examples of what we might call the Indianness of Indian English. The nativisation of the English language will have to continue if English is to remain a useful and sensitive medium for the various (Indian) functions it has to perform. And why not? Why can't Indian English develop into a language by itself, a pidginised form, different from the other varieties of English? Just as there is American English we can have Indian English, for this is the only way in which English can be an effective medium for us and truly express our cultural background.

ANJU and MEENA JAVERI

## SOME COMMENTS

### Speaking in Tongues

I read with interest the article, "How Foreign Is This English?" (December 16) by Anju and Meena Javeri.

I agree with the writers that the Indianisation of the English language could make it a useful and sensitive medium for the various functions it has to perform as a means of communication in our country, to express as it were our emotional make-up. But, unfortunately, the Indianisation of this language has not been developed in a systematic manner as, for instance, the like process has been in America.

American English differs from British English in two ways—in phonetics and in spelling. The basic rules of grammar and styles of expression remain unchanged. But in India, the "nativisation" of English is a totally different cup of tea. It is difficult to accomplish it for precisely this reason—that it is not even a second language for the majority of the population. Besides, we have such a great diversity of languages and dialects, that we don't even have a viable national language.

ROBIN H. VIRANI  
Bhavnagar

\*

This refers to your article "How Foreign Is This English?"

As in India, the English spoken in America is far from being uniform. Each variant reflects its own society. In England, people speak of brooks; in Pittsburg, of a run; elsewhere, of a small stream. A lake or a pond is often a tank in Texas and creamed cottage cheese is known as schmierkase around Cincinnati. Also, what is cream cheese in New Orleans is cottage cheese elsewhere, and Virginia's goobers are known as groundnuts in South Carolina and peanuts elsewhere. A snap in Virginia is a string bean elsewhere and if you want a salad in this part of the country you ask for kale and spinach. When citizens of Indiana speak of mangoes, guess what they refer to it as? Sweet green peppers!

In fact, English has always been a borrowed language. Such a language as pure English never existed. It is so aggressively mongrel—an interweaving of all the borrowings and their derivatives down the ages. It not only carries expressions and words from Indian languages but from Spanish, German, French, Arabic, Russian and various African languages. All this went to enrich what Ralph Waldo Emerson described as "the great metropolitan English speech, the sea which receives tributaries from every region under heaven."

RAVI KAUL  
Ahmedabad

(*The Times of India*, December 30, 1979)

## SOUL'S PROMISE TO LIFE

I AM a soul immortal at large and free,  
No longer hugged in mud like a banyan tree.  
Farewell, O narrow walls of ever limiting thought,  
O blind reason, seeking the black cat which is not.  
Dwellers of the dungeon, ministers in the Ego's court,  
Passion, Desire, Lust, Greed, smugglers at Life's port.  
O petty glitterings, beauty unreal, ugliness stark,  
I have lifted your veil and seen the face of the Dark,  
Pale imitations of joy, O sickly pleasure, hidden pain,  
A moment's smile under the shadow of tears' long rain.  
O Life! Liar and cheat, counterfeit in the cosmic mart,  
I take my leave till I return with thy glorious Counterpart.  
Farewell, O vain friend, void of truth's clear sight,  
A speck of clay, Disease and Death's eternal right,  
Too frail a frame to house Infinity's might,  
Too brief a span to hold the Eternal's light.  
No more can Nature trample my spirit's dream and joy,  
I sport with lightnings and with thunderbolts I toy.  
The welkin beneath my tread will crumble and cry,  
My breath of fiery winds can make the oceans dry.  
Free, I shall climb high, towards Infinity's shore,  
Storm the heavens, and light eternal I shall explore.  
Not to flee, ever aimless, the fruitless battle of Time,  
Not to escape in the hollow void I leave thy regime.  
Rainbow-hand firm-held, one day to thee must I bring  
With its deathless hue to paint thy life into eternal spring.

DWARIKA PRASAD

## VISIONARY TALES

*(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1990)*

### 2. THE CRIMSON BRIDGE

It was springtime in the valley and the anemone flowers in the south-east corner of the gardens had just bloomed as if in gratitude for the gentle climate that had just come after the passing of the snows. The squirrels ran about playfully from one oak to the next, gathering acorns and straw for each other and the rabbits hopped through the soft grass, whispering of how happy they were in this lovely place. The water in the lake was crystalline, showing the white sands like a sculpted marble floor beneath a rippling pool. The small brook that fed the lake from the hill nearby flowed like laughter with its criss-crossing streams cascading over rocks and pebbles and through deep places to the placid tank below.

The children came and visited here often, making their way through the quiet wood, reverently noticing the beauty of the flowers, herbs, shrubs and trees, always careful never to disturb the plant or animal life in any way, always feeling a great love for all that was beautiful around them and a oneness with all this mysterious life. They watched the kingfisher flying to the Ixora and the young sparrows come out for their first view of the world. They saw the bulbul dance through the clover on the pathways and felt the breeze the way the leaves do on a summer day.

Once they came across a tree that had a very long life but now had fallen across the path onto one of the boulders near the stream. One of the boys (a young sage, really) looked to the other children and said, "Usually death is a sad thing, bringing the feeling of a loss, but I know a way that we can make this fine tree live again in a new way and bring a lot of joy to many for a long time to come." All the other children eagerly awaited his word for they knew they could trust him; he had always guided them well in the past.

"We will make this tree into Imagination Village," he said. "I will ask the trustee of the gardens to have it taken to the lumber mill and carefully planed and cut into small boards, then we can fashion them into houses and other buildings by gluing, sanding and painting them until we have made a small town of moveable constructions. We can then put them in what is now the bare spot in the clearing and have a very interesting project for all who come to the gardens. Anyone who wants, child or adult, can then come and arrange the town, make miniature gardens in the sand using herbs and flowers for decoration or bring paints and re-do the buildings as they wish. We will call such a force of harmony and beauty into this work that nothing untoward will happen and no one will ever become unhappy with what another person does. It will go well and bring a deep peace to the hearts of young and old."

All the children enthusiastically supported this idea and soon permission was granted by the head of the Gardens and the log was neatly transported to the mill and the cutting done. The children then worked for weeks and weeks in a meditative mood among the trees and finally the day of the unveiling arrived. Marbled cloths, each of a different color, had been placed over different parts of the village, making a lovely array in the center of the wood. Even, by a channeling from the brook, a waterfall and stream had been arranged, and across the flowing water, supported by bamboo reeds at each corner, a white silk cloth was seen, shielding something that everyone intuited must be something very special. And, indeed it was.

Eon, the boy who had caught the Idea, lifted the silk to reveal an intricately carved arching wooden bridge, crimson in colour with gold trim. "I want to tell you," he began, "that I have walked to and fro across this bridge through many lives. I have walked it as a Chinese, a Japanese, a Roman, a Greek, a later European, and now as an Indian. It is the Bridge of Love that links the peoples, it is what carries us from one side of the earth to the other, from one culture to another, from one heart and soul to its fellows. It is the Bridge of Brotherhood and mutual understanding and the Bridge of Space that transcends time and circumstance and carries us to places within that we have never seen before. I offer this gift to you today with all my heart with the aspiration that those who see this bridge may be changed thereby and become citizens of the new and beautiful world we want to build."

His words sank deep into the minds and hearts of all, and from that day many persons came to the gardens and worked on Imagination Village, bringing their goodwill, love, and creative inspiration to help build something more beautiful on earth. They painted and repainted the houses, arranged the gardens, and formed new roads in the sand, but one thing was left sacred and never changed: Eon's Crimson Bridge. It was only garlanded and adorned with rose and jasmine and prayed to like a god, and people found it made their lives more happy and their noblest dreams come true. (13.6.1983)

### 3. THE SOURCE

"I am going to Gangotri," she said. "Yes," I thought, "to go back to the source." And within I took a trip of my own, winging north towards the high Himalayas, seeing in my consciousness the vast snows and the powerfully rushing waters, the high evergreens and the unequalled serenity on the rooftop of the world where the earth rises in its highest aspirations towards the heavens.

Streaming over rocks and sands and down into the deep valley, the Ganges comes, cascading like Grace pouring over the world. Here where the great gods live, poring over earth, I saw masses of colored light moving above the waters and through the groves of trees. They were the forces being put out by these

great beings and in their interaction were shaping the lives of men.

I saw a broad pillar of white light right over the source of the Ganges into which Divine Forces were descending and being carried from this sacred spring for miles and miles down the course of the river. During the Poornima day of the month of Chaitra, I saw a long ascending stream of white light going out from this pillar towards the moon. It gave me a vivid realisation of how the earth is linked to the heavenly bodies and the whole cosmos.

Every evening I saw above the center of the fastest part of the river a square of intermixing white and golden light. This was a generating station for supramental forces for the earth and it gave one a most marvellous feeling to look upon it, such utter tranquillity and at the same time an immense power. Gazing at it one could enter into its flow of substance and feel corresponding force moving within oneself, especially at the level of the diaphragm extending down to below the navel. Within this square, new forces for life on earth were creating ever new forms and passing them through the realm of the Cosmic Waters, *apah*, to the material world below. Just to look and try to identify oneself with this mysterious process was a wonder in itself.

I stood and concentrated day after day and let the inner flow go on. I felt one with the sky and the river, the mountains and the trees. I felt myself widened and lifted and made very young. I felt fresh and full of force. I felt I had just been born.

This experience was not merely an experiment for me. It was a participation in a cosmic process and I came to know the forces working above and around the earth and those that were streaming in particularly for the spiritualisation of India. I found I had become a human vehicle for this same process and was being transformed by it. I felt too that I had become more than a frail human. I felt my body was stretched out there over the waters and snowy peaks and from my own solar plexus these forces were streaming. Like the body of the great horse of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, my body had become immense.

In drinking the water near this spot, I partook too of the most material substance that these forces had touched. I felt them cleanse and sanctify my physical body and bring vivifying force into its very cells. The days passed in this unusual way and just by living there I felt it was the best I could be doing to change myself, India, and the world.

I lived and moved and took nourishment there even though my outer body was in the south. With a subtle body I had entered another clime, had gone out inwardly to another Space and Time. (2.7.83)

“BĀLAK”

## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

*(Continued from the issue of October 1990)*

SRI AUROBINDO'S vision of future India and Bal Gangadhar Tilak's contribution towards free India originated in the spiritual background of India, each from a different angle. Both gave a new impetus according to the need of the country. Both belonged to the same era in the history of India. Sri Aurobindo realised the strong resilient national spirit of Tilak. The step which Tilak had taken in the freedom movement was a landmark in Indian history. His Swadeshi movement brought him forward prominently as an all-India leader. But Sri Aurobindo, a mystic patriot, developed a new nationalism in the Indian National Congress whose career had continued for twenty years (1885-1905).

Sri Aurobindo spent six years in Indian politics (1904-1910) until he came to Pondicherry and dedicated himself completely to his Yoga of the Supermind. But in that brief span his passionate devotion to the national cause won him renown as an extremist leader, second only to Tilak in nation-wide popularity. Tilak proclaimed: "Swaraj is my birth-right." His speeches were lucid and straightforward. Sri Aurobindo has written: "His life, his character, his work and endurance, his acceptance by the heart and the mind of the people are a stronger argument than all the reasonings in his speeches, powerful as these are, for Swaraj, Self-government, Home Rule, by whatever name we may call the sole possible present aim of our effort, the freedom of the life of India, its self-determination by the people of India. Arguments and speeches do not win liberty for a nation; but where there is a will in the nation to be free and a man to embody that will in every action of his life and to devote his days to its realisation in the face of every difficulty and every suffering, and where the will of the nation has once said, 'This man and his life mean what I have in my heart and in my purpose,' that is a sure signpost of the future which no one has any excuse for mistaking."<sup>1</sup>

Descended from the Chitpawan Brahman caste, Tilak was born in July 1856. His work and life up to the end in 1920 maintained an uncompromising hostility to foreign domination. Sisir Kumar Mitra says: "Like his life and work, the year of Tilak's birth too has a historic significance," for it "saw the last days of the old order grey with a definite decline in the life of the country including Maharashtra whose great days in her recent past were yet fresh in her memory. The 'Sepoy Revolt' with which began a new order was proof positive that India had still in her the reserves of strength and would rise against the indignity of alien rule. Was it Tilak's to develop these potentials in his people? Anyway, that a Chitpawan brahman of Maharashtra had been chosen for this important work carries its own meaning."<sup>2</sup>

Tilak imbibed the spirit of his grandfather. He learned Sanskrit and English

from his father, a school-teacher and deputy inspector of Education in a small town on India's sea coast. When he was ten, the family moved to Poona, but at sixteen Tilak was an orphan. A self-reliant but weak-bodied youth, he devoted a year to building up his physique with exercises. After receiving his B.A. he took a Bachelor-of-Laws degree, but refused to enter government service. In College Tilak made a deep study of Western history, literature and thought. He was a scholar in Sanskrit and Mathematics. But his friend Agarkar and he studied Sociology and History. Both were determined to do some essential work for the country's liberation. Sisir Kumar Mitra records: "Agarkar thought it would come through social reform promoting the growth of national self-consciousness. Tilak would start by trying to create that consciousness as the condition for freedom; and with freedom, he held, it would be possible for India to achieve whatever she needed for her progress, social and other, as a free nation."<sup>3</sup>

During that period the political life and social life of India were tending towards a decline. There were all sorts of ignorance and obscurity; not only that, the country faced the evils rooted in a changing orthodoxy. Tilak was much influenced by Vishnusastri Chiplonkar, a powerful writer in Marathi, whose sole aim was to foster the spirit of independence among the youth of the country. Tilak formed a group to establish a base for national reconstruction. About the working of the group he said: "We were men whose plans were at fever heat, whose thoughts were of the degraded condition of our country, and after long thought we came to the conclusion that the salvation of our motherland lay in the education, and only in the education of the people." Mitra adds: "And this education should be carried out by Indians and for Indians. A concrete form of this idea was The New English School founded by the group in 1880, which soon became one of the most popular institutions of Poona and whose aim was 'the rejuvenation of the land of their birth'."<sup>4</sup>

Tilak started to improve the standard of the schools. For this efficient teachers should be there. For that purpose he founded a college named Fergusson. It was named after the then Governor of Bombay, who donated money to the society for the college. The society's name was Deccan Education Society. It started work in the year 1884. Gokhale and Ranade became the teachers in that college. Tilak's subject was Mathematics. When differences of opinion with Gokhale and Ranade arose on politics, he left the society and teaching. Gokhale and Ranade both stood for the moderate party of Congress and for social reforms. Tilak's views were expressed afterwards by Sri Aurobindo: "A subject nation does not prepare itself by gradual progress for liberty; it opens by liberty its way to rapid progress."<sup>5</sup>

Language is one of the important factors through which the work of arousing the national consciousness among the masses can be done. Tilak's Marathi style was particularly effective and made a direct appeal to the villagers. He launched two papers. One was the *Keshari* in Marathi, for the ignorant



masses, giving useful informations to them. The other was the *Mahratta* in English which was an authoritative source of views for the educated masses.

He advocated in his papers the celebration of two annual festivals—one dedicated to the Hindu God Ganesh, the other honouring the Maratha Hero Shivaji. His purpose in organising these festivals was to develop in the Maratha people a sense of pride in their common history and religion. However, on the other hand, the Muslim community could not ignore the fact of their spreading the Hindu message. It became hostile towards the Hindus.

Tilak's success in arousing popular enthusiasm through these activities began to worry the government. There was the assassination of two British officials in Poona in 1897. He was accused of complicity in it and was sentenced to jail for eighteen months. Imprisonment whetted his fighting spirit. In 1905 that spirit brought him to the front-line. He coined the slogan, "Militancy, not mendicancy" That was the motto which the extremists used to disparage the moderates. Tilak's cry swept over the country. Sri Aurobindo expresses Tilak's stress on Swaraj in the following words: "Swaraj, complete and early self-government in whatever form, had the merit in his eyes of making definite and near to the national vision the one thing needful, the one aim that mattered, the one essential change that includes all others."<sup>6</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's ideas on the work of Tilak were expounded thus:

"Mr. Tilak's career has counted three periods each of which had an imprisonment for its culminating point. His imprisonment in the Kolhapur case belongs to this first stage of self-development and development of the Maratha country for new ideas and activities and for the national future.

"The second period brought in a wider conception and a profounder effort. For now it was to reawaken not only the political mind, but the soul of the people by linking its future to its past. It worked by a more strenuous and popular propaganda which reached its height in the organisation of the Shivaji and the Ganapati festivals. His separation from the social reform leader, Agarkar, had opened the way for the peculiar role which he has played as a trusted and accredited leader of conservative and religious India in the paths of democratic politics.. Mr Tilak was the first political leader to break through the routine of its somewhat academical methods, to bridge the gulf between the present and the past and to restore continuity to the political life of the nation. He developed a language and a spirit and he used methods which Indianised the movement and brought into it the masses....

"A third period, that of the Swadeshi movement, brought Mr. Tilak forward prominently as an All-India leader; it gave him at last the wider field, the greater driving power, the larger leverage he needed to bring his life-work rapidly to a head, and not only in Maharashtra but throughout the country. The incidents of that period are too fresh in memory to need recalling. From the inception of boycott to the Surat catastrophe and his last and longest imprison-

ment, which was its sequel, the name and work of Mr. Tilak are a part of Indian History. These three imprisonments, each showing more clearly the moral stuff and quality of the man under the test and the revealing glare of suffering, have been the three seals of his career.”<sup>7</sup>

*(To be continued)*

NILIMA D'AS

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## MEETING A HERO

THE privilege of meeting one's hero in the very first decade of one's life is given to few lucky ones. I am one such. Even before the Quit India Movement began, the names of the revolutionary heroes—Jaya Prakash Narain, Aruna Asaf Ali, and Achyut Patvardhana were on the tongue of every patriotic man, woman and child.

I, at the age of nine or ten, worshipped them but above all Jaya Prakash Narain who was my hero. When I read of the horrible tortures the British had inflicted upon him in the Hazaribag Jail, I suffered intensely. One of these tortures I still remember: he would be laid on slabs of ice. My fear and ache were akin to those of the Jewish children whose parents were in the clutches of Hitler's hordes.

After his release from jail Jaya Prakash Narain toured the whole country. He also visited our city Muzaffarnagar situated eighty miles north of Delhi. My maternal uncle, who with many others was in the vanguard of the Freedom Movement of the District, took us kids to the various meetings that the National leaders addressed within a thirty-forty miles' radius.

It was a fairy tale evening for a ten-year old wide-eyed girl. From meeting to meeting I along with others followed the leader. After one of his public meetings Jaya Prakashji was to dine at the place of a sugar-mill owner, I do not remember where—probably Shamli or Rouhana. Agog with excitement we kids piled up in jeeps and followed his car trying to be as near to him as possible.

And it was thus that I found myself amongst an intimidating phalanx of grown-ups in the glittering dining-room of a sugar-mill owner, where soup had already been served on the table.

The leader was behind schedule. The public adulation at his general meetings is hard to describe. It was as if neither the speaker nor the audience wanted to part. Jaya Prakashji refused to stay for dinner but at the request of his host tasted a few spoonfuls of soup. And I was also asked to eat and, standing to his left, sipped a little of a most delicious soup, though I was feeling painfully shy.

Then the leader hurried to one of the waiting cars. First his wife Prabhavati got into the back seat. Then after a hurried leave-taking, Jaya Prakashji stepped in. Somebody spotted me standing by and pushed me in and shut the door. At the last moment the mill-owner put two large papaya fruits—which must have been the pick of his garden—on the back seat of the car. We were on our way.

I was feeling bad because my hero had no time to eat. I knew that he would get no time to eat afterwards, for the next meeting would last till the late hours of night. So taking my courage in my hands I suggested to Jaya Prakashji that he should eat some papaya and then was confused by my own audacity. He was

startled at this suggestion from an unknown slip of a girl and exclaimed, "What?" and then gently declined.

In my innocence I blamed Prabhavati and thought she should have made him eat, for had he not been starved in the British jails for months? But what more could I say?

The leader then spread out his arms on the back-rest of the car and relaxed for the thirty minutes' ride to Muzaffarnagar. He was a broad-shouldered, deep-chested, tall and handsome man. His long arms reached to his knees. Fair Prabhavati was a slim and dainty counterfoil to him. They did seem made for each other.

Slowly I rested my head on his spread-out arm and closed my eyes for half an hour of perfect happiness. This great man never moved his arms, I presume so as not to disturb a girl's sleep. Muzaffarnagar arrived too soon. The moment of enchantment was over.

Next day I met Jaya Prakashji once more when he dined at the house of our family doctor Captain Jagadish Chandra Sharma. Relaxed and happy the couple sat on a sofa. The occasion had a family-gathering's informal atmosphere. I felt so proud and honoured when I was allowed to put the 'payas' in bowls and with what loving care I covered the 'payas' with silver foil and served it to the couple. To me they seemed like a god and goddess descended on earth.

In my childhood diary, lying somewhere at my parents' place, one can find in bold letters in Hindi the autograph:

Jaya Prakash Narayan  
Kadam Koowa  
Patna

One wonders how the country would have fared had Jaya Prakash Narain, with the tremendous respect and good-will he commanded, remained in the main-stream of Indian politics.

SHYAM KUMARI

# PHANTASMAGORIA

## Scene One

FIRST PERSON: O, dear one, why are you so pensive and quiet today?

THE BOY: I am now indulging in fun and frolic but a time must come, I feel, when the call of other duties will force itself upon me.

SECOND PERSON: You are the idol in every home. Every mother loves you and lavishes you with milk and butter.

THE BOY: But more often I steal them.

FIRST PERSON: Not steal exactly. They are meant for you.

THE BOY: Well, maybe

SECOND PERSON: You hint at serious things to happen. What duties await you other than to be our eternal playmate in an eternal play?

THE BOY: I have won your hearts and those of the young maidens. That was to give you and them a great élan, a sense of freedom and a taste of the wide wide world and to break a lot of shibboleths. A foretaste of the life and world to come.

FIRST PERSON: You led us on so many of our adventures.

THIRD PERSON: You tamed the Serpent of the black waters.

SECOND PERSON: You drank poison from the breast of the monstress and killed her.

THE BOY: So that the life-force might be free to obey Heaven's command; so that a cruel king's conspiracy to eliminate an innocent champion could be foiled.

FIRST PERSON: I am filled with a sadness that one day you may leave us. You are a god and a god does not live amongst men for long.

THE BOY: I never leave them who love me. Wherever I may be I am always with them. They live forever in me.

THIRD PERSON: Balamurali, you poured honey into our ears and sweetened our hearts. You tended our cattle and became our comrade in arms and sharer of hardships and joys. You held aloft the mountain and forewarned your adversaries.

THE BOY: Not exactly to prove any particular point. They just came along on the way.

FIRST PERSON: Your modesty is sublime.

## Scene Two

LALITA: Vishakha, my friend, I consider myself fortunate to have hanging round my neck a darling like you, dearer than a sister

VISHAKHA: Sweet words flow from your mouth, as sweet is your heart. Nor

are you less beautiful. The Creator's living figure you are, carved to perfection even in the smallest details.

LALITA: Vishakha, you are all grace and perfume. Your voice consoles, your gaze illumines objects and your gait squanders on all sides in abundance a celestial rhythm.

VISHAKHA: Enough is enough about ourselves. Let us on to other topics.

LALITA: We are not trifles. We are what we are due to the two Persons we have hitched our wagons to.

VISHAKHA: He is a peerless Person with the peacock feather on his crown and a flute at his lips. His love cares not for anything in return. It also pervades everywhere and soothes the aching heart of mother earth.

LALITA: Our Lady has been equally worthy of His Love. She has known the agony and ecstasy of a crusading soul. Man has not seen a loftier example of self-giving to God.

VISHAKHA: We have basked in their sunshine and shall love to be reborn life after life in their company and dance in delight and taste the fruit of ambrosia.

LALITA: May their grace fulfil our most cherished dreams!

### Scene Three

PERSON: Like a giant tree on an endless prairie, like a lofty peak on a mountain range I stand today as a solitary figure. The immense loneliness is given to me perhaps to measure the stupendous task ahead. It provides me with an occasion to commune with the adorable Trinity.

WHISPER: You are not lonely: you are in the midst of a teeming multitude.

PERSON: Yet I trace a lonely path in my spirit's voyage.

VOICE: You are surrounded by friends and relatives of all ages, vocations and excellences.

PERSON: I know. But I am what I am and others what they are, even the venerables.

My sole purpose of being here, more than ushering in a new social order, more than binding the warring Kingdoms together, it is to inject in the world's sordid existence a new light, a new consciousness into the misus of evolution.

In the meanwhile there is so much bloodshed and killing of near and dear ones.

It daunted the prince of warriors. It made the moralist scream and squirm. But once I have taken the reins in my hands the chariot must move on till it reaches its goal. A better future for the people of Tomorrow.

Yes, a few may appreciate my work and understand the purpose I served but the majority of men will turn a blind eye. Even the relatives and dear ones may for personal reasons criticise and even curse me.

It hurts me. Yet I take it as a part of the game played on the sands of Mathura, Vrindavan, Kurukshetra and Dwarka. Praise and blame are but the two faces of the same coin and are meaningless to me.

I have lived amongst men as one of them and when the task is over I throw away this mortal sheath.

*Jirnanı Vasamsı.*

Another day another place.

Only, only, the exit must be in the natural human way.

SAMIR KANTA GUPTA

# NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

## The First Image of the Israelites

AN American Egyptologist has probably discovered the very first existing image of members of the tribe of Israel. It is more than three thousand years old. The discovery makes the history and ethnological affiliation of the early Israelites appear in a new light.

The Egyptologist Frank J. Yurco from Chicago studied the pictures on a wall in the upper Egyptian town Carnak which was one of the most important places of Old Egyptian architectural art.

The images show, amongst others, four scenes of fighting; in one of them you can see killed warriors over whom horses which pull a war-chariot are trampling.

The pictures had so far been ascribed to the times of Pharaoh Ramses II.

But Yurco discovered that an inscription referring to the fighting scenes had been altered at a later time. When a thorough investigation was made, the name of Pharaoh Merenptah appeared. Merenptah ruled from 1212 to 1202 B.C.

Yurco concluded that the images carved into the stone should represent proceedings from the war of Pharaoh Merenptah against the country of Canaan.

Then the Egyptologist examined the so-called Merenptah stone plate kept in the Cairo Museum. The text on the plate, describing the military exploits of the ruler during a campaign in Canaan, has the first known mention of the name "Israel". It runs, "Askalon was overrun. Gezer was conquered. Jano'am was extinguished. Israel was devastated."

Yurco also found that three of the pictures on the wall in Carnak show the conquest of established cities, but the fourth scene shows the battle against enemies on open ground. Yurco therefore concludes that therefore it shows the Israelites—men in gowns reaching down to the ankles. This garment was also worn by Canaanites. In Yurco's opinion this refutes the theory that the Israelites were descendants of the nomadic people of the Shasu, as held by many scholars so far. The Shasu are known to have worn short skirts and turbans.

The early people of Israel, says Yurco, split from the Canaanites living in the regions of the Mediterranean shore, and settled further to the East in hillside terrain between Hebron and Jerusalem—exactly as stated in the Bible and as is revealed by archaeological findings in that area. There they developed their own religious and ethnical identity.

The Canaanites disappeared. Since the conquest of the region by Rome two thousand years ago their traces in history are lost. The greatest part of the land of Canaan today belongs to the State of modern Israel.



# THE SUNDAL-VENDOR

## A SHORT STORY

ONE can understand how irritating at times this life can be when one is left with a crying baby in one's arms and there is nobody but you at home to soothe the baby who refuses to shut its big mouth. Gnani was once caught in such a situation.

It was five-thirty in the evening. Gnani had just returned from his office, tired and exhausted. His wife who was expecting his arrival took a bag and dashed out of the house to the market yelling to her husband to take care of the sleeping beauty till she returned.

No sooner had she left the house than the two-year old boy who was enjoying his afternoon sleep woke up and, finding his mother missing, opened his mouth.

“Mmmm...aaaa...”

Gnani who was relaxing in his cushioned chair bounded to the bedroom. Cuddling his crying son he tried to soothe him. He gave him biscuits and toffees and then toys. The baby did not seem to care for them. He cajoled the boy. It was of no use.

“Mmmm.. aaa...,” the boy went on non-stop. Irritated beyond limit Gnani threatened him. Tears poured down the boy's cheeks and he cried at the top of his voice.

Gnashing his teeth in disgust Gnani carried him to the balcony of his flat from where one could get a full view of the lane. The booming cars, the rattling motor-cycles, and the cyclists clinking their bells—oh, none of them could distract the baby from his stretching monosyllable: “Ma...”

Words are useless to describe Gnani's plight. He gave up all efforts to soothe the child and, sitting him on the floor of the balcony, he trudged his way to the bedroom to return with a magazine to distract himself till his wife would make her appearance again. He had decided to remain deaf to the hootings “Ma...”

Before Gnani could reach the bedroom the wailing came to a sudden halt.

Gnani was really put out. What could be the reason? Was the boy tired of screaming? Was he exhausted? Had he fainted? or...? His mind made a myriad guesses each wilder than the other. He darted towards the balcony.

The boy stood holding the iron rails and was looking through them into the street. Heaving a sigh of relief Gnani too peeped inquiringly.

“Sundal...karam sundal...” It was the sundal-vendor striding briskly with a big basket of wares upon his head.

Gnani smiled and picked the boy up. Cradling him in his arms he asked his son, “Do you want that?” pointing to the sundal vendor. The boy readily nodded

his head in approval. And quickly Gnani shouted 'sundal' to attract the attention of the vendor. When the vendor looked up, Gnani motioned him to stop.

In a trice Gnani was down the flight of stairs to the threshold of the ground floor with his son. The sundal-vendor stood there.

"Fresh from the oven, sir," he said.

Gnani looked into the basket of sundal. It was a mixture of peas with slivers of coconut and green mangoes, quite hot. A good number of newspaper cones holding one another lay on the hot mixture.

"Very hot, sir," he repeated, "just 25 paise per cone. Shall I give you three?"

"Why three!" Gnani replied. "Two will do. One for my son and the other for me."

"What about one for your wife inside the house? It is very tasty, sir."

The sundal-vendor made Gnani remember the absence of his wife. He feared that the boy in his arms might at any moment open his mouth wide again. And the only escape from this was to detain the sundal-vendor who was the baby's target of attraction.

"O.K. Give me three cones," Gnani agreed.

The sundal-vendor was at work. He separated a cone from the huddled cluster, poured a handful of sundal into it and deftly folded the mouth of the cone—all this he did in a trice with remarkable accuracy.

"How long have you been in this profession?" Gnani asked.

"Ever since my father died. That was some fifteen to twenty years ago," he said and heaved a sigh.

"How much do you make every day?"

"Not much, sir. Seven to eight rupees at the most...not enough to support my mother and myself."

"Why don't you switch to some other job?" Gnani was already inventing the next question.

"Who is there to give a job to an illiterate like me?" he giggled like a child and moved his eyes away from Gnani. "Of course my neighbour wanted me to join his gang. He is a smuggler, sir." He contemptuously made an obscene sound with his mouth, making his lower lip and his tongue vibrate by exhaling with great force. "But I have a conscience, sir," he said with a most serious air.

What to ask him next? Gnani had to detain him till his wife returned. But what next?

The vendor handed one cone of sundal personally to the boy. The boy looked at the giver who exhibited all his betel-leaf-stained teeth. The boy took the cone from his hand and thanked him with a heavenly innocent smile.

A towel that barely covered the vendor's chest inspired Gnani to a further question. "Have you no shirt to wear?"

The vendor made a deep clicking sound with his tongue. With some

hesitation he said: "Of course I have cloth at home to stitch a shirt."

"What are you doing with the cloth? Why don't you have it stitched and use it?"

"No tailor accepts to stitch it," he said running his palm on his pate bald except for a bristling hedge of grey hair surrounding the extremities of his head.

Startled, Gnani asked, "What? What do you mean?"

"Yes, sir. Unbelievable but true. Even the tailor under the banyan tree refuses to stitch cotton cloth," he said with a sarcastic smile and continued, "But for my neighbour I would not have purchased even that piece."

"Hm...How is that?" Gnani inquired into the matter.

"When I refused to join the smugglers' gang headed by my neighbour Periyannan, he pooh-poohed me by saying: 'Going to sell sundal all your life, eh? You will not be able to buy a cotton piece for a good tailor to stitch a shirt. That is what God has written on your forehead. Join my gang and wear a new terrylyne shirt every day. You can eat chicken biriyani twice a day.' "

"And what did you say?" Gnani made the vendor continue his story.

"A battered towel," the vendor said, "earned by sincere labour is more honourable than a new terrylyne shirt got by evil means." There was a sense of satisfaction on his face as if he had subdued his enemy.

Gnani nodded his head sympathetically at him and said, "It is because of a few honest men like you we still have rains."

"Honesty may not bring more money. And sometimes no money at all. But it ensures a place in Heaven. I am sure of being happy after my death at least", the vendor sermonised. "And so, sir, on that day when I was insulted by Periyannan I took it as a challenge to wear a new shirt at least on the coming Deepavali festival stitched by a good tailor. I started saving money from 5 to 25 paise every day...whatever coin I could spare even at the expense of my cup of tea, my only breakfast...I had determined to wear a new shirt on the festival and there were seven more months."

"Did you succeed in getting the means?" Gnani interrupted.

"Yes, sir," the vendor said beaming. "I counted the coins in the second week of October, a few weeks before Deepavali...Oh, I was a proud owner of Rs. 37 and 40 paise, saved by honest means. You know what I did next, sir?" The vendor paused.

"Continue, I am listening," Gnani encouraged him.

"The next day I met the tailor whose skill was the talk of the town. People from far off places, I was told, came to him to get their clothes stitched. I approached him and asked, 'How many metres of cloth do you need to stitch a shirt for me?' 'Full sleeves or half?', the tailor asked without even bothering to look at me. And my mind was at work. I have never in my life worn a full sleeved shirt and I planned to snub Periyannan by wearing a newly stitched full-sleeved shirt on Deepavali day and ram into his head the saying 'If there is a will, there is

always a way'. 'Full' was my reply."

"Very good! I can't but appreciate your will power," Gnani complimented.

"Two metres will be more than sufficient,' said the tailor. I met him again, after an hour or so, proudly with the newly purchased cloth. The tailor opened the paper packet I had given him and stared at me as if I were an abominable creature in a zoo. Before I could ask him why, the tailor said, 'We don't stitch cotton cloth here.' And with that he thrust the paper packet into my hands and showed the place of exit."

The vendor paused. Gnani saw tiny beads of perspiration breaking through his tight-drawn skin. "But I didn't leave him at that, sir," he continued. "I rehearsed to him my vow and begged him to help me. The tailor's assistants who were also listening to my pleadings had their belly laughs. At last the tailor opened his mouth and said: 'Look. There is no use in wasting our time. Even the fourth-rate tailor under the banyan tree will refuse to touch cotton cloths during this busy season.' I was offended. Hence I went away to another tailor. But curse my ill-luck. I went in search of one tailor after another. The second-rate tailors...the third-rate...and then finally the fourth-rate fellows under banyan trees...all of them refused to touch my acquisition got by honest means. They proudly showed me their racks stuffed with terryleyne, terry-cotton, terry-wool and nylon cloths waiting to be stitched."

Curiosity flowing into Gnani's heart, he enquired: "Then what happened?"

The sundal-vendor wiped the hot tears that rolled on his sunken cheeks with the back of his hand. Meanwhile the child had already finished one cone of sundal and was ready for the second. Gnani nodded his head and the vendor continued.

"At last I remembered an old tailor who had his shop on the pial of a house, a little far away from my place. He was one of my customers. I used to give him sundal on credit. I was sure that he would accept my cotton cloth to stitch. I have quite often seen him stitching old and torn clothes. But when I went to his place, I heard that he had been killed in an accident while trying to cross a road. And on the day of Deepavali I did not come out of my hut, for I had failed to fulfil my vow." He paused here. Two large tears struggled to slide out of his sunken eyes. "I still have the cotton cloth in my tin-trunk and I have not spent the balance of seven rupees and forty paise."

"Are the poor unfit to wear clothes?" While Gnani mused thus, the sundal-vendor filled one more cone with the mixture and held it before him and said, "Have this too and pay me a rupee, sir."

Gnani took the cone from him with a nod. "Wait. I am coming in a few seconds," so saying he went inside the house leaving his son with the vendor.

A minute or two later, when Gnani came back he saw his son looking at the basket with a sense of wonder and the vendor nibbling the child's chubby cheeks affectionately.

“Here is a rupee for your sundal. And these two shirts are for you,” Gnani said handing them to the vendor.

“Shirts, sir! For me, sir?” he exclaimed, all shining teeth.

“Yes. They are a bit old but not torn. You can use them.”

The vendor looked at the shirts in great admiration, and gratefully at Gnani. But the next second, his face turned pale. He returned the shirts to Gnani.

Gnani felt clumsy and unwanted. He gave the vendor a long look but said nothing.

“These are nylon shirts, sir,” the vendor remarked.

“Terrylyne,” Gnani corrected him. “So what?”

“So what!” the vendor shrank at the words with a hiss of indrawn breath and for a minute remained silent. He then continued.

“Once in a while the police raid Periyannan’s house. They do not hesitate to rummage even our huts, since we happen to be Periyannan’s neighbours. . Last time, they ransacked the ice-fruit vendor’s hut, opposite to mine. They found fault with him for keeping a nylon shirt in his trunk. They shot him with a quiver of questions, beat him with their lathies and finally carried away the nylon shirt with them. They came to my hut too. They saw the cotton piece but did not take it. They closed my trunk with a bang and went away throwing a glance of contempt at me ”

“Ah, is that so? But I don’t have a cotton shirt with me.” Gnani said cursing his inability to clothe the vendor.

“How can you have one, sir?” he asked and quoted, “Even the fourth-rate tailor under the banyan tree will not stitch cotton cloth.”

The vendor lifted the basket of sundal to his head. He was preparing to go.

“So you don’t want these shirts,” Gnani asked.

“I don’t want to be beaten by the police,” the vendor replied and headed towards the road.

Dumbfounded Gnani stood, holding his son in his arms near the compound wall of his house. He gazed at the back of the vendor who plodded his way alone on the road and took a turn and disappeared. Gnani found his voice: “Life has strange twists and turns!”

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Visions of Champaklal**, *compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva*. Published by Divyanand Kripandhi, 8 Sardarbag Society, Bardoli - 394 602 Pages: 198 + xxiv, Price: Rs. 150.00.

*Nani A. Palkhivala*  
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Sri Aurobindo observed that for the success of his yoga he did not need a large following, but only a hundred sincere persons. The Mother believed that Champaklal was one of those hundred. Only a man so chosen can be capable of dreams so meaningful and visions so rare. They catch impulses of a deeper birth and reveal a life which is in tune with the infinite.

It is fortunate that most of Champaklal's dreams and visions are recorded and preserved for posterity. Sri Aurobindo's interpretations of the earlier dreams and visions are profound. The valuable work in this line, for subsequent visions, is continued by those who have the enlightenment to put the poetry and the heart into them.

The comments on dreams and visions from the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother at the beginning of the book are useful for introducing the reader to the narrations that follow. Those already initiated will get glimpses of the eternal, and for the uninitiated the book may lead "from the non-being to the true being".

*Nani A. Palkhivala*

Bombay

Nani A. Palkhivala

October 8, 1990

**Study of the Psychological Foundation of the 'Free Progress System' as Evolved in Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education; by Chandrakant P. Patel; Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Study Centre, Bokhira (Porbander); Distributor: Sri Aurobindo Books Distribution Agency, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-605 002; First Edition, 1986; Price Rs. 100/-; pp. xix+290.**

SRI AUROBINDO wanted education to prepare man for the future and that for an integral living; he was complemented by the Mother with her declaration: "The aim of education is not to prepare a man to succeed in life and society but to increase his perfectibility to its utmost". With this aim in mind, the Mother started a school in 1943, which later became the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. An innovative system of education was evolved and that system applied Sri Aurobindo's integral (yogic) psychology to the secular field of education. The system that is being forged out at the S.A.I.C.E. is called the free progress system of education.

Dr. Chandrakant P. Patel's Ph.D thesis has taken the shape of this book. Dr. Indra Sen in his foreword says: "It is the first systematic study of the project by an independent psychologist and educationist." The author's research project critically explores and describes the three psychological bases of the system: (i) the consciousness structure of the human being whose integral perfection it aims at, (ii) the psychological goals, the specific psychological development in each of the areas of human consciousness it pursues, and (iii) the psychological principles that govern its organization. It also assesses the success of the system. The free progress system brings into effect what may be called, "the double *vice-versa* process of within-without change" by organising a special inspiring environment and dynamising the inner and the higher consciousness in the individual.

The author has not changed even the thesis format while bringing out his thesis in book-form. The book is divided into nine chapters. Chapter one states the problem and defines the terms employed in the book. Chapter two presents a review of related literature. Chapter three outlines the research design. In the fourth chapter Sri Aurobindo's Integral Psychology of the human being is described in detail. Sri Aurobindo's psychology is called integral psychology since it studies transcendental, universal and individual consciousness. The author quotes Jobst Mühlhling to state that "Sri Aurobindo took up the essence and many processes of the old Yogas" and synthesised them into an integral method of Yoga. The integral psychology is also called evolutionary psychology. Chapter five deals with the objectives, practices and facets of the free progress system of education as prevalent in the S.A.I.C.E. Corresponding to the six aspects of the total personality or consciousness of the individual, there are six aspects of integral education: physical, vital, mental, psychic, spiritual and supramental education. Chapter six attempts to enumerate the principles that

cover almost all the aspects of free progress system. In chapter seven, the author tries to assess the impact of the free progress system on the students of S.A.I.C.E. He admits that "it is almost impossible to have the real and the objective view of the psychic and spiritual developments in the student's personality, because such developments are too subtle for ordinary mental vision to cognize and consider". However, a serious and systematic effort is made here to fix how far the system has succeeded in achieving its goal in the areas of physical, vital and mental education. Chapter eight presents the assessment of the impact of the system on the students by the teachers of the S.A.I.C.E. The final chapter sums up the findings of the foregoing chapters and also has a list of suggested areas of further researches.

In the Appendix IV, Dr. Maheswari, Prof. of Philosophy at the S.A.I.C.E., explains the inherent shortcoming of this research project. He is of the opinion that "Free Progress" in the school is really *free* and it cannot be subjected to any set methodology for testing or assessing its working. In the words of Dr. Indra Sen, "On the whole, the thesis gives a wide feeling for the working of the centre, but it is an outside view of the institution. An inside view of a deeper identification with the spirit of its working is needed". The book is commendable in every respect in so far as it contributes something to Educational Psychology

D. GNANASEKARAN



## “THE IDEAL CHILD” AND “THE IDEAL TEACHER”

From Divine Life Society of South Africa,  
P O Box 19069, Dormerton 4015, Durban

To Keshavji, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry

IDEAL CHILD About 45,000 Children of primary schools have asked for copies of *Ideal Child*. These will be given to them this month. Five years back we distributed 1,00,000 copies of these booklets to children of primary schools

September 1990

From UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines,  
Department of Foreign Affairs, Roxas Blvd ,  
Manila

To Keshavji, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-605 002, India

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of June 30, 1990 and for sending me a copy of *Ideal Teacher*, which I find very inspiring

I shall pass it around to interested parties to elicit interest and support. Should we succeed, we shall keep in touch with you or with Dr Jacques Fisher of WAD, with whom I had the opportunity to work together for the cause of orphans and abandoned children

Congratulations for your dedication to a good cause

Sincerely Yours,

Sd/- (LOURDES R. QUISUMBING, Ph D ), Secretary-General  
01 August, 1990

Family Planning Organization of the Philippines,  
New Manila, Quezon City, 1112  
Philippines

Mr Keshavji, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-605 002, INDIA

Dear Sir,

This is to inform you that we are interested to order two hundred fifty (250) copies of *Ideal Child* and two hundred fifty (250) copies of *Ideal Teacher* which cost U S \$ 40 (for such total of 500 copies as per stated in the letter you sent us)

We hope that this request will be granted foremost attention so that we may soon deliver the much needed information which we believe these booklets can truly impart thru our IEC counsellings in all of our chapters in the Philippines

Kindly advise us with regard to the method of payment so we may prepare the check

Thanks for your usual generous assistance

Very truly yours,

Sd/- FAINA AGNES V FERNANDEZ, Information & Materials, Development officer  
Noted by Sd/- WILFREDO L TANEDO, Acting Chief, Program & Operations Group  
September 18, 1990

## *Students' Section*

### THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

27th Annual Conference

12 August 1990

Speech by Desikan Narasimham

#### SRI AUROBINDO AND THE WORLD-CRISIS

“At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny”<sup>1</sup>, said Sri Aurobindo in his prophetic vision. The exceptional significance of this crisis, unprecedented in the history of evolutionary nature, is brought into sharp relief by the Mother who explains:

“One thing appears evident that humanity has arrived at a certain state of general tension—tension in effort, tension in action, tension in everyday life—and at an overactivity so excessive, a restlessness so widespread that the whole human race seems to have reached a point where either one has to break through a resistance and rise into a new consciousness or fall back into an abyss of obscurity and inertia.

“This tension is so entire and general that something obviously has to break up. That cannot continue in this way.”<sup>2</sup>

The message comes out loud and clear and there is no need for further elaboration on its import. The magnitude of the contingency with which we are faced demands our urgent attention and only a myopic indifference can prevent us from giving it. Any delay on our part to arrest the current march of events is bound to lead us to an unremittingly bleak future. The world can ignore Sri Aurobindo’s prophetic words at its own peril. On the one side, Krishna’s flute beckons us on our journey towards the Eternal; on the other, the gaping abyss of ignorance and death lures us to keep its dismal company—the choice is ours.

There is hardly a clear appreciation of the fact that the root-cause of these inordinate tensions everywhere lies in the inner consciousness of modern man. All the cacophonous upheavals in the political, economic, social, moral and religious spheres are only symptomatic of a total spiritual bankruptcy from which modern man suffers at the very core of his being.

That inner malady is, in Sri Aurobindo’s view, the result of a one-sided and

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine* (Cent Ed , Vol 19), p. 1053

<sup>2</sup> *Bulletin of Physical Education*, August 1958

unbalanced development of human life in modern civilisation. Modern man has increased his knowledge and mastery of physical nature to an extraordinary degree of perfection but alas, the same cannot be said about his dealings with his psychological nature unless we deliberately shut our eyes to the glaring evils that now seem to be enjoying a free lease of life. Any attempt to do so will imperil the entire human race. Let us therefore face the problem squarely and set about righting this disequilibrium. That can only be done by a radical conversion of our present, imperfect cast of consciousness into the divine mould. It is here, under the most trying conditions prevailing in individual and collective spheres, that Yoga comes into its own.

Most philosophic schools and Yogic disciplines in India and the West have counselled the escape and release of the individual soul from the Empire of Ignorance, dismissing terrestrial existence as radically opposed to the incommunicable stillness of the Spirit. But is Spirit merely a detached and relationless pure self-existence and not an upholding, directing and ruling Power also? We must address ourselves to this crucial question before proceeding any further.

In an attempt to resolve this question it becomes necessary to explore avenues that lead to a fresh and comprehensive appraisal of the situation.

In the history of social philosophy several theories have been advanced to enunciate the concept and character of social change in a variety of ways. These theories may be broadly classified in four groups:

The first group conceives of social change as a ceaseless flux without any regularity of movement or any decipherable pattern in it.

The second group holds social change to behave in the way a periodic function behaves in mathematics, i.e., a constantly repetitive recurrent rhythm or cycle in the form of either an oscillatory movement or a circular one. In either form there is no upward or downward direction.

The third group avers social change to be a downward regressive movement, either linear or cyclic—a constant deterioration and downfall.

The fourth group asserts that social change is a constant upward movement of progress, either linear or cyclic.

In the graph of social change, as presented in the above-mentioned theories, we note with increasing perplexity various courses, each different from the other. But what is Sri Aurobindo's stand on this tangled issue?

Sri Aurobindo's conception of social development is that it is neither a repetitive whirl in a circle nor a regressive movement of downward decline, but a cyclic movement of upward evolutionary progress. Before we pursue our line of argument further it is necessary to comprehend two words that are of cardinal importance in Sri Aurobindo's theory of social development—"evolution" and "progress".

"Evolution", according to Sri Aurobindo, "in its essence is not the development of a more and more organised body or a more and more efficient

life—these are only its machinery and outward circumstance. Evolution is the strife of a Consciousness somnambulised in Matter to wake and be free and find and possess itself and all its possibilities to the very utmost and widest, to the very last and highest. Evolution is the emancipation of a self-revealing soul secret in Form and Force, the slow becoming of a Godhead, the growth of a Spirit.”<sup>3</sup>

Progress, in Sri Aurobindo’s terminology, is intimately and indissolubly linked with his concept of evolution since evolution is essentially nothing save a growth in consciousness.

We may therefore briefly sum up the situation thus: Sri Aurobindo’s conception of social or human development is that of an evolutionary progress, though not in a straight line but in upward-moving cycles.

If we grant Sri Aurobindo’s theory of social or human development, to be valid, there is yet hope for humanity, a lodestar to guide its faltering steps; since Spirit is not merely a relationless pure self-existence but a dynamic conscious Force constantly informing, pervading and uplifting all existence.

But we have to remember that Sri Aurobindo was not merely a philosopher propounding a theory of human progress. The great significance of his life and work lies in the fact that in his own Yogic development he realised the highest dynamic Truth-Power of the Spirit—which he named Supermind—and made it his all-engrossing mission to manifest it in earth-evolution so that humanity might not only solve its present crisis but radically overcome all the seemingly ineradicable ills by which it has been persistently dogged.

The stupendous task Sri Aurobindo undertook was not for himself alone but for the whole of humanity. The aim of his Purna Yoga is “to be perfect as God in His being and bliss is perfect, pure as He is pure, blissful as He is blissful, and, when we are ourselves *siddha* in the *purna yoga*, to bring all mankind to the same divine perfection.”<sup>4</sup> The sheer universality of his outlook gives to his hallowed purpose a height and amplitude hitherto unequalled.

The supramental Truth which after a Herculean labour of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother manifested in the subtle-physical layer of the earth in February 1956 and which is now imminently pressing for its unveiled manifestation in the earth’s physical consciousness and material life demands the willing consent and conscious collaboration of humanity to lend itself to its transfiguring light. But if that collaboration is not yielded, if instead there is opposition and resistance to its advent, then it will not tolerate that opposition. The result may be a cataclysmic destruction, for what humanity would not receive willingly the supramental Truth would compel it to receive by breaking down the obstruction “by the power of crashing circumstances”, as the Mother has said. Sri Aurobindo has also warned in a firm and severe tone:

<sup>3</sup> *The Hour of God* (1982 Edition), p 102

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* , p 23

“For this opposition, this sterile obstruction and blockade against the descent of the divine Truth cannot last for ever. Every one must come down finally on one side or the other, on the side of the Truth or against it. The supramental realisation cannot coexist with the persistence of the lower Ignorance: it is incompatible with continued satisfaction in a double nature.”<sup>5</sup>

The Mother urges us to prepare ourselves for this Hour of God. But what exactly is expected of those who are eager to answer her call and participate in the momentous task of bringing to effective birth the New World?

Here is the Mother’s own answer:

“At the basis of this collaboration there must be necessarily the will to change, not to be what one is, and that things must not be as they are. There are several ways to come there and all ways are good when they succeed! One can be thoroughly disgusted with what is and can want ardently to come out of all that and attain something else. One can, and it is a more positive way, one can feel within oneself the contact, the approach of something positive and beautiful and true and discard all the rest deliberately so that nothing may weigh heavily on the march towards this new beauty and truth. What is indispensable, in any case, is the ardent will to progress, the willing and glad rejection of all that is a shackle to the march, to cast away from oneself what prevents you from advancing and moving towards the unknown with the ardent faith that it is the inescapable truth of tomorrow, that will happen necessarily, a truth that nothing, nobody, no bad will, not even the will of Nature can prevent from becoming the reality—not perhaps in a distant future—a reality that is working itself out at this moment and they who know how to change, who know how not to be burdened with old habits will surely have the happiness not only to perceive but to realise.

“You go to sleep, you forget, you just go on living—you forget, you forget all the time. But if you could remember—remember that you are at an exceptional hour, in a unique epoch, that you have this great happiness, this invaluable privilege of being present at the birth of a new world, then you could easily get rid of all that impedes you, prevents you from advancing. Therefore, the most important thing seems to be to remember the fact. Even when you have not the tangible experience, to have the certitude, to have the faith, to remember always, to recall it constantly, to go to sleep with this idea, to awake with this feeling; to do whatever you do, having at the background, like a constant support, this great truth that you are present at the birth of a new world.

“You may participate in it, you may become this new world. And truly, indeed, when you have such a wonderful opportunity, you must be ready to give up everything for that.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 24), p 1311

<sup>6</sup> *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, Feb 1963, pp 65-7

And there is Sri Aurobindo's answer to the same question:

“...what is demanded by this change is not something altogether distant, alien to our existence and radically impossible; for what has to be developed is there in our being and not something outside it: what evolutionary Nature presses for, is an awakening to the knowledge of self, the discovery of self, the manifestation of the self and spirit within us and the release of its self-knowledge, its self-power, its native self-instrumentation. It is, besides, a step for which the whole of evolution has been a preparation and which is brought closer at each crisis of human destiny when the mental and vital evolution of the being touches a point where intellect and vital force reach some acme of tension and there is a need either for them to collapse, to sink back into a torpor of defeat or a repose of unprogressive quiescence or to rend their way through the veil against which they are straining. What is necessary is that there should be a turn in humanity felt by some or many towards the vision of this change, a feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible in themselves and to find the way. That trend is not absent and it must increase with the tension of the crisis in human world-destiny; the need of an escape or a solution, the feeling that there is no other solution than the spiritual cannot but grow and become more imperative under the urgency of critical circumstance. To that call in the being there must always be some answer in the Divine Reality and in Nature.”<sup>7</sup>

Let us renew our resolve on this solemn occasion which marks the 118th birth anniversary of our Lord and pray for his guidance and help in our effort to arrive at the “miracled summits yet unknown”.

<sup>7</sup> *The Life Divine* (Cent ED , Vol 19), p 1059-60