

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE

24 APRIL 1990

PRICE: Rs. 4.25

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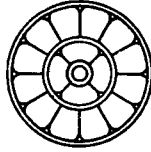
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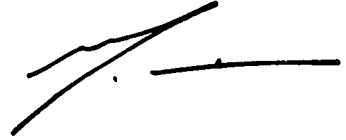
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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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. 4

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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THE MOTHER'S EXPERIENCE ON 24 APRIL 1920

I WAS on the boat, at sea, not expecting anything (I was of course busy with the inner life, but I was living physically on the boat), when all of a sudden, abruptly, about two nautical miles from Pondicherry, the quality of the atmosphere, of the air, changed so much that I knew we were entering the aura of Sri Aurobindo. It was a *physical* experience and I guarantee that whoever has a sufficiently awakened consciousness can feel the same thing.

17 3.1951

THE MOTHER

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH FROM THE MOTHER

HAVE a sincere faith in the Divine and you will clearly know what you have to do.

The first condition is to talk as little as possible.

The second is to think just of what you are doing at the moment and not of what you have to do or what you have done before.

Never regret what is past or imagine what will be.

Check pessimism in your thoughts as much as you can and become a voluntary optimist

THE MOTHER

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 2 APRIL 1951

What are the causes of accidents? Are they due to a disequilibrium?

If one answers deeply... Outwardly there are many causes, but there is a deeper cause which is always there. I said the other day that if the nervous envelope is intact, accidents can be avoided, and even if there is an accident it won't have any consequences. As soon as there is a scratch or a defect in the nervous envelope of the being and according to the nature of this scratch, if one may say so, its place, its character, there will be an accident which will correspond to the diminution of resistance in the envelope. I believe almost everybody is psychologically aware of one thing; that accidents occur when one has a sort of uncomfortable feeling, when one is not fully conscious and self-possessed, when one feels uneasy. In any case, generally, people have a feeling that they are not fully themselves, not fully aware of what they are doing. If one were fully conscious, the consciousness wide awake, accidents would not occur; one would make just the right gesture, the necessary movement to avoid the accident. Hence, in an almost absolute way, it is a flagging of consciousness. Or quite possibly it may be that the consciousness is fixed in a higher domain; for example, not to speak of spiritual things, a man who is busy solving a mental problem and is very concentrated upon his mental problem, becomes inattentive to physical things, and if he happens to be in a street or in a crowd, his attention fixed upon his problem, he will not make the movement necessary to avoid the accident, and the accident will occur. It is the same for sports, for games; you can observe this easily, there is always a flagging of the consciousness when accidents occur, or a lack of attention, a little absent-mindedness; suddenly one thinks of something else, the attention is drawn elsewhere—one is not fully conscious of what one is doing and the accident happens.

As I was telling you at the beginning, if for some reason or other—for example, lack of sleep, lack of rest or an absorbing preoccupation or all sorts of things which tire you, that is to say, when you are not above them—if the vital envelope is a little damaged, it does not function perfectly and any current of force whatever which passes through is enough to produce an accident. In the final analysis, the accident comes always from that, it is what one may call inattentiveness or a slackening of consciousness. There are days when one feels quite .. not exactly uneasy, but as though one were trying to catch something which escapes, one can't hold together, one is as though half-diluted, these are the days of accidents. You must be attentive. Naturally, this is not to tell you to shut yourself up in your room and not to stir out when you feel like that! This is not what I mean. Rather I mean that you must watch all the more attentively, be

all the more on your guard, not allow, precisely, this inattentiveness, this slackening of consciousness to come in.

Are there not accidents which are almost inevitable? I just read of a case cited by an American who had the gift of clairvoyance. A child was playing on a railway track, it was in danger. Suddenly the witness saw an apparition beside the child and he breathed a sigh of relief, thinking, "The child will be saved." But to his great astonishment the apparition put its hand over the eyes of the child and threw it in some way under the train. This man was much troubled, he could not understand why a being whom he had taken for a higher being would push a child to its death.

Certainly, this may be true, but without having the vision oneself, one can't explain it.

It may be a question of two absolutely different things. Perhaps, indeed, it was its destiny, in the sense that it was the end of the life necessary for its psychic being, it was a death which had been predestined for some reason, because that can happen. Or perhaps it could be an adverse force which he took to be an angel of light, for generally people make this mistake—when they see an apparition they always think it is something heavenly. It is heavenly if you like, but it depends on what heaven it comes from!

It is a strange thing because.... Yes, the moment of unconsciousness, the slackening of consciousness may be translated by this someone putting the hand over the eyes.

One of the most common activities of these intolerable little entities which are in the human physical atmosphere and amuse themselves at men's expense, is to blind you to such an extent that when you look for something, and the thing is staring you in the face, you do not see it! This happens very often. You search in vain, you turn everything over, you look into all possible corners, but you don't find the thing. Then you give up the problem and some time later (precisely when "the hand over the eyes" is removed), you come back to the same place and it is exactly there where you have looked, quietly lying there, it had not stirred! Only you were unconscious, you did not see. This is a very, very frequent amusement of these little entities. They also take pleasure in removing things, then they put them back, but at times they also don't put them back! They displace them, indeed they have all sorts of little diversions. They are intolerable. Madame Blavatsky made much use of them, but I don't know how she managed to make them so amiable, because generally they are quite unpleasant.

I had the experience—among innumerable instances—but precisely of two very striking cases, of two opposite things, only it was not the same beings. . There are little beings like fairies who are very sweet, very obliging, but they are

not always there. they come from time to time when it pleases them. I remember the time I used to cook for Sri Aurobindo, I was also doing many other things at the same time, so I often happened to leave the milk on the fire and go for some other work or to see something with him, to discuss with somebody, and truly I was not always aware of the time. I used to forget the milk on the fire. And whenever I forgot the milk on the fire, I felt suddenly (in those days I used to wear a sari) a little hand catching a fold of my sari and pulling it, like this. Then I used to run quickly and would see that the milk was just on the point of boiling over. This did not happen just once, but several times, and very clearly, like a little child's hand clutching and pulling.

The other story is of the days Sri Aurobindo had the habit of walking up and down in his rooms. He used to walk for several hours like that, it was his way of meditating. Only, he wanted to know the time, so a clock had been put in each room to enable him to see the time at any moment. There were three such clocks. One was in the room where I worked; it was, so to say, his starting-point. One day he came and asked, "What time is it?" He looked and the clock had stopped. He went into the next room, saying, "I shall see the time there"—the clock had stopped. And it had stopped at the same minute as the other. you understand, with the difference of a few seconds. He went to the third room.. the clock had stopped. He continued walking three times like that—all the clocks had stopped! Then he returned to my room and said, "But this is impossible! This is a bad joke!" and all the clocks, one after the other, started working again. I saw it myself, you know, it was a charming incident. He was angry, he said, "This is a bad joke!" And all the clocks started going again!

It is said that the material world in its unconsciousness has forgotten the Divine. Has it forgotten Him from the beginning?

It is concomitant. One cannot say that the material world is the result of obscurity and ignorance; one cannot say either that the obscurity and ignorance are the result of the world of Matter, but the two are concomitant, in the sense that both have exactly the same cause. What we call the material world came into being at the same time as the obscurity and ignorance, they are 'closely bound, but there is no cause and effect in the sense of a sequence in time. It is concomitant, both the things are the concomitant result of another cause' what has brought about obscurity and ignorance has at one go and at one time brought about the material world as we know it.

THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

IN THE LIGHT OF HER PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

(Continued from the issue of March 1990)

DURING the year from 1915 to 1916 the Mother hastened the process of purification and transformation. Her mystic movements of consciousness were working through her whole being that comprised her body, vital, mind. From it they were meant to extend to terrestrial and universal movements. She realised that gross matter which was being “churned and redeemed” was to be made fit for a total identification with the Divine. During that one year the Mother called upon the Supreme Divine alone to work in her, set right her limitations, cleanse the ruts and illumine her with power, peace and glory. At that time she was pulled by external forms of horrors, the battlefields of the First World War. But she did not lose hope. She felt a burst of aspiration and widened the consciousness and enriched it with profound insights. A startling revelation runs in the following prayer of January 15, 1916:

“O Thou whom I may call my God, Thou who art the personal form of the Transcendent Eternal, the Cause, Source and Reality of my individual being, Thou who hast through the centuries and millenniums slowly and subtly kneaded this Matter, so that one day it could become consciously identified with Thee, and be nothing but Thee; O Thou who hast appeared to me in all Thy divine splendour—this individual being in all its complexity offers itself to Thee in an act of supreme adoration; it aspires in its entirety to be identified with Thee, to be Thyself, eternally Thou, merged for ever in Thy Reality. But is it ready for that? Is Thy work fully accomplished? Is there in it no longer any shadow, ignorance, or limitation? Canst Thou at last definitively take possession of it and, in the sublimest, most integral transformation free it forever from the world of Ignorance and make it live in the world of Truth?

“Or rather Thou art myself divested of all error and limitation. Have I become integrally this true self in all the atoms of my being? Wilt Thou bring about an overwhelming transformation, or will it still be a slow action in which cell after cell must be wrested from its darkness and its limits?”

“Thou art the Sovereign ready to take possession of Thy kingdom; dost Thou not find Thy kingdom yet ready enough for Thee to link it definitively to Thyself and become integrated with it?”

“Will the great miracle of the integral Divine Life in the individual at last be accomplished?”

Again, in the prayer dated January 22, 1916, the Mother invokes the Divine to work in her cells which still harbour obscurities and limitations:

“Thou hast taken entire possession of this miserable instrument and if it is not yet perfected enough for Thee to complete its transformation, its transmutation, Thou art at work in each one of its cells to knead it and make it supple and enlighten it, and in the whole being to arrange, organise and harmonise it. Everything is in movement, everything is changing; Thy divine action makes itself felt as an ineffable spring of a purifying fire that circulates through all the atoms. And this flowing spring has brought into the being an ecstasy more marvellous than any it had ever felt before: thus to Thy action there answers the aspiration of that on which Thou workest and the aspiration is all the more ardent because the instrument has seen itself as it really is in all its infirmity.

“O Lord, I implore Thee, hasten the blessed day when the divine miracle will be accomplished, hasten the day of the realisation of the Divine upon earth.”

The above prayer reminds us of Sri Aurobindo's significant words about the Mother in which he flashed out his inner insights of her physical embodiment.

Sri Aurobindo writes: “In her deep and great love for her children she had consented to put on herself the cloak of this obscurity, condescended to bear the attacks and torturing influences of the powers of the Darkness and the Falsehood, borne to pass through the portals of the birth that is a death, taken upon herself the pangs and sorrows and sufferings of the creation, since it seemed that thus alone could it be lifted to the Light and Joy and Truth and eternal Life.”¹

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had concluded that unless a new spiritual power that is what Sri Aurobindo called Supermind came down into the earth-atmosphere failures and feeble successes were bound to happen.

Her prayers show her as the manifesting instrument of the supreme Light. They pinpoint that nothing is repressed or renounced but all must be illumined and transmuted to serve the Cosmic Will. In her prayers she is expressing that this Will can be known by her inner identity with the Divine and be fulfilled throughout her entire being.

The Mother throws a flood of Light upon the complexity of human nature and upon the need to divinise all of it.

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCE

¹ *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 25, pp 24-25

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

YOUR beautiful New-Year card enshrining your soul's hope and aspiration has been lying in front of me for quite a while. Whenever I looked at it my heart warmed up and wished to reply. The picture it carried—the tall tree stretching its branches towards the monastery—expressed my own mind. The branches lower down seemed to lift the building right from its foundation and pass it on to the upper boughs to bear it higher than its present height. All the fine things of the past need not only a new vision at the top but also a new impulse at the bottom. There is a greater sky than seen so far and a greater earth than felt up to now. The sense of a sky hidden within the very dust and the intuition of an earth waiting among the clouds—it is this double future that is calling us today.

The amazing events all over middle and eastern Europe are to be understood as pointing to such a future. What has burst out there should not be taken merely as a failure of totalitarian Communism and a justification of democratic Capitalism. Freedom, of course, is the general cry and all that the Berlin Wall symbolised has crumbled down by that cry's exhilarating resonance, but it is really a portent of a breaking equally beyond the old constraints and the old licenses. A certain discipline within the one system and a certain *élan* within the other have to join together and push past both the systems to realise something more fundamental than the supposed equality of the Eastern bloc, something more expansive than the so-called liberty of the Western. And this something is, as Sri Aurobindo said long ago, the third term of the triple slogan raised in the French Revolution which marked with a blood-stained glory the difficult birth of the modern world.

Not "Liberty", not "Equality" but "Fraternity" is the true summons of the future—the instinct in us of the one Father Heaven, the one Mother Earth, linking all of us at the source—the feeling within of the single Self that has gone forth and become the multitudinous universe. Thus alone, by the upsurge of the ideal of an inherent union of souls, an intrinsic spiritual brotherhood, can a genuine liberty which knows its own limits be established, an authentic equality which keeps its eyes open to distinctions and differences be practised—a state exceeding the old opposing 'isms. To make a pun, the *isms* of yesterday should be seen as *wasms* today and a novel drive felt to render actual the dream of fraternity which got lost in the nightmares of liberty and equality in the forms attempted by men in whom the inner being could not have its full say in the outer.

My notion that the crumbling of the Berlin Wall should direct us beyond the values of the 'isms cherished by the modern world finds a supporting sign in the strange phenomenon that the central power in the new prospect disclosed today

is an apparently atheistic product of a culture oriented towards materialist well-being: Mikhail Gorbachev of Soviet Russia. He has always struck me as a Vibhuti in disguise, an instrument of the Divine who does not know what force is impelling him. Though an atheist, he does not shun religious movements, but this non-shunning does not mean any sympathy for them: by not belonging to any of them yet letting them exist it is as if his atheism were a move away only from the religions of the past. Though a Marxist, believing in a materialistic view of history and with a stress on economic welfare, he has thrown his country's doors wide open to the winds of the non-Communist world, yet without subscribing to that world's Capitalist principles. Unknowingly he is a message from the time to come and his denying of the Divine is itself guided by the Divine. Through him, I think, we have what I may dub an indirect and undefined fore-glance of the Aurobindonian Age's adventure to awake the earth to its own secret heavenliness through a spirituality which overpasses all religions while fulfilling their inmost essence by a pull beyond the versions that have failed this essence.

For what indeed is this essence? An attainment of utter Godhead as Teacher, Leader, Sustainer, Lover may be realised when a mind that can compass all knowledge instead of groping for it step by step, a life-force that can meet every challenge and provide the key of success to all enterprises, a body that is immune to disease, decay and death, a soul that is in bliss independently of all objects and circumstances and is in spontaneous harmony with everyone and everything—in short, a completely Godlike existence in time and space. The extant religions have dreamt, each in its own manner, of a Kingdom of God here and now, but never known how to achieve it and have therefore fixed their eyes finally on a supraterrrestrial paradise or a transcendental Nirvana. The Supreme Power that can consummate the dream it had itself planted in the evolving consciousness on the earth has at last been clearly visioned and experienced on its Himalayan altitude and set working in the human sphere by Sri Aurobindo and his spiritual partner the Mother. A promising present and an assured future they have given us by means of their Integral Yoga with the helpful prodigality of their own vivid examples. (21.1.1990)

*

I have carefully re-read those lines on page 445 of *Savitri* (Centenary Edition) strikingly reminding us of Christ with their references to Gethsemane and Calvary, bleeding brow, crucifixion, two thieves and the last words "It is finished". We both saw that if the verse immediately following these lines—

Hewn, quartered on the scaffold as he falls—

had not been there we would have had a consistent picture reminiscent of the final act in the life of Jesus.

May I now point out that there is an explanation for the line which looks quite incongruous. Up to the expression—

He has trod with bleeding brow the Saviour's way— •

Sri Aurobindo is considering the Saviour under the aspect of the story of Christ going to his death on the Cross. But the very mention of "the Saviour's way" shows that he is using this story as a powerful illustration of a spiritual phenomenon wider than it. And after the full stop at the end of the line I have just quoted he passes from the particular aspect to the general case. For the next line is:

He who has found his identity with God...

This "He" is any Saviour and what follows the line has the aspect of a generality though not necessarily forgetting the particular aspect. Thus the reference to the Saviour being "hewn, quartered on the scaffold" is not unnatural or irrelevant: such a death is also part of the Saviour-history. The line in which this phrase occurs leads on to another immediately after it in which, as I have said, the Christ-aspect is not forgotten:

His crucified voice proclaims, "I, I am God."

But "crucified" here is metaphorical while still keeping a link with the Christ-remembrance

Looked at thus, the entire passage starting with the Christ-aspect and ending with this reminiscence and bringing in the middle the cruelty of the scaffold impresses me as a triumph of poetic art in which everything essential is vividly woven together with an eye at once to a famous particularity and to a comprehensive generality. Perhaps the comprehensiveness would have been complete if one more line like the one I have proposed had been inserted and the close had run:

Bound to the stake and set aflame or else
Hewn, quartered on the scaffold as he falls
His crucified voice proclaims, "I, I am God."

If Sri Aurobindo had shown me the passage in private I with the freedom he generously permitted and even expected might have suggested to him to compose an extra line about the Saviour being burned at the stake.

As regards your highly original idea of what must have been really the last words of Jesus on the Cross, namely, "I, I am God"—as caught by Sri Aurobindo's vast vision—the aspect of generality which I have presented would not nullify it but lead to it indirectly. For, what Sri Aurobindo says about all Saviours must apply to Christ. There is even a special touch here, however generalised, in regard to him in the adjective "crucified" qualifying "voice" So, according to me, your contention can stand. All the more since Sri Aurobindo has used the last words from John's Gospel—"It is finished"—which show Jesus in full control and conscious of the Divine Plan rather than in a state of dereliction as suggested by Mark's and, after him, Matthew's report. "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani"—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—an echo of the beginning of Psalm 22.

The words, "I, I am God", are, as you yourself said, typical of the Sufis whose doctrine and realisation are a blend of Islam and Vedanta and the Bhakti cult. Their crowning word is identity with God. In Christ's manifold declarations the Sufi element (which in the language current in the New-Testament period would be called "Gnostic") is most prominent in the words put into his mouth by John's Gospel: "I and my Father are one." Richard Burton, the famous nineteenth-century translator of the unexpurgated Arabian Nights which he entitled *A Thousand Nights and a Night*, a version Sri Aurobindo intensely admired, wrote a long poem called *The Kasidah* with an Arabian atmosphere. Among the lines I remember from it are these two:

"I am the Truth, I am the Truth," we hear the God-drunk gnostic cry:
 "The microcosm abides in me, eternal Allah's naught but I."

Now for the other lines you quoted to me from page 343 of *Savitri*, a passage which is part of Aswapaty's long speech to the Divine Mother:

A power arose out of my slumber's cell
 Abandoning the tardy limp of the hours
 And the inconstant blink of mortal sight,
 There where the Thinker sleeps in too much light
 And intolerant flames the lone all-witnessing Eye
 Hearing the word of fate from Silence' heart
 In the endless moment of Eternity,
 It saw from timelessness the works of Time.
 Overpassed were the leaden formulas of the Mind,
 Overpowered the obstacle of mortal Space:
 The unfolding Image showed the things to come.

To my understanding, we have here a new consciousness emerging from the

profoundly in-drawn state (“slumber’s cell”) reached by Aswapaty. It goes beyond the usual process of time and, from its thought-transcending poise in Eternity’s all-knowing Silence, foresees the future unrolling and fore-hears the divine decrees of Fate. What the Eye and the Ear of Superconsciousness catch is, as the subsequent passage shows, the portent of a world-upheaval and then the arrival of a new race of world-transformers. The lines which I have cited bear some resemblance to a stanza in Sri Aurobindo’s *Jivanmukta*:

He who from Time’s dull motion escapes and thrills
Rapt thoughtless wordless into the Eternal’s breast
Unrolls the form and sign of being,
Seated above in the omniscient Silence.¹ (14.1.1990)

*

I have received with great pleasure your letter, whose beginning—“It is very early in the morning, *brāhmo muhūrta*”—reminds me of the beginning of *Savitri*:

It was the hour before the Gods awake,

for there too the time when the temple-bells ring in order to mark the *brāhmo muhūrta*, the symbolic moment for the Powers of Light to resume their workings, is suggested and rendered more specific by the lines:

The huge foreboding mind of night, alone
In the unlit temple of eternity...

In the situation to which you refer, one of the Gods was already up and doing, somewhat forestalling the *brāhmo muhūrta*. Please don’t think my allusion to you *sub specie deitatis*—“under the deific aspect”—is just a joke. Whoever has had his Psychic Being awake enough to set his eyes in the direction of Sri Aurobindo and of the Mother has remembered his divine origin and is on the way to realising it and to standing, if not on a par with the great Cosmic deities, still at least in the company of glorious Godlings.

¹ Part of the interesting reply to my letter may be reproduced with advantage

“Thank you for the long and studied note with regard to the subjects we discussed together

“As to the ‘crucifixion’ lines, what you have explained now is what I had, myself, felt all along. But only recently the apparent incongruity of that one line came before me and I came to you about it. Yes, the addition of some such line as you suggest would have made it quite clear. However, it is now well understood.

“Regarding the other lines, your explanation seems rather involved, because I suppose it is a mental one. On my part, I find an intrinsic simplicity in *Savitri* but not of a mental kind. There is an inner understanding but not one I can put into words. Anyway, thank you for this also. It does help.

“Your quotations from ‘The Kasidah’ and from Sri Aurobindo’s ‘Jivanmukta’ are very revealing.”

(Udar)

Quite consonant with your waking up early this morning is your question prompted by the Mother's words to you at your first interview with her. After your childlike patter to her about your life up to that moment, she said: "It shows that your Psychic is awake." Your question to me—"What exactly does it mean?"—is also childlike. For it can only suggest that, though you know the Psychic Being by actual experience, you have not formulated its wakefulness in mental terms. Or if I go by your second question—"Can a Psychic which is once awake ever draw back?"—I may suppose that whatever mental formulation you may have does not take into account the full state of affairs in the course of the spiritual life. Let me touch upon both your perplexities.

I would say briefly that the Psychic Being in us is that which passes from life to life through the long series of rebirths. It is the Immortal in the mortal, a gradually evolving representative of the Supreme Spirit in the terms of mind, life-force and body. In general it moves spontaneously towards what our idealistic literature calls "the True, the Good, the Beautiful." This trio forms the goal of our philosophical, ethical and aesthetic life. Religion sees it in the light of a divine Presence and there the Psychic Being tends to go directly rather than indirectly towards the object of its aspiration. But even there its intrinsic movement does not find its full play, for our life gets only an aura of this inmost soul: the full substance and form of it is still behind a veil. Only when we take to a radically Godward living, start sadhana in a one-pointed way does the Psychic Being have a chance to come forth into open action. Then whatever of it was awake as in your case gets a full chance to get out of bed, as it were, and walk about in the sphere of mind, life-force and body.

Now this does not mean that it will keep walking about all the while. Not quite at home in the outer sphere and unfamiliar with the various forces there of a mixed sort it can draw back time and again to its bed. You mustn't think it has gone to sleep once more: But as long as it is reclining it can feel drowsy and fail to catch wholly the Spiritual Sunlight into which it formerly emerged. However, in spite of the misting over of the eyes, there is no question of real withdrawal. And let me assure you that it is not only my dear friend who can be afflicted with drowsiness. All the children of our Mother experience it now and then. Even Nolini, on occasion, must have been heard yawning and seen drooping his eyelids. At present—November 1987—I can't quite say "yawned" in our hearing with regard to another of our notable sadhaks, Champaklal, for that might break his 12-year old *mauna*, voluntary muteness! Yet some sign of semi-somnolence of soul must have been there at times for him too. In any case, though we may seem to recede from the Mother, she never recedes from us. Once she has seen our Psychic Being peep out, she is always with us, sweetly smiling at its fluttering eyes and helping them to keep wide open for good. So never let a cloud of depression add to whatever little shadow may flit because of common human frailty across the God-gleam in your gaze.

Especially since the Mother, at the close of your first interview with her, has put her hand on your head, blessed you, picked up a flower kept in a plate by her side and pronounced, “This is Successful Future”, you should banish all doubt over things to come. Go happily forward and if you like to have my company, it is always there for the asking. Even without asking, you will have it, for a barrierless warmth flows incessantly between Amal and his cherished friend
(14.11.1987)

*

There is a phrase in *Savitri* which, I am told, puzzled you considerably when you were in India. It occurs in the context of “ideal Mind” on “peaks” beyond our imagination. The nature of this Mind and of its workings are described:

In an air which doubt and error cannot mark
With the stigmata of their deformity....
Dreaming its luminous creations gaze
On the Ideas that people eternity.
In a sun-blaze of joy and absolute power
Above the Masters of the Ideal throne
In sessions of secure felicity.¹

I understand that in the last three lines you failed to find a grammatical structure: what is the subject and where is the verb? I believe the cause of your perplexity was chiefly the word “throne”, while the word “Above” added to the bafflement. Though one did not know what was done “In a sun-blaze”, the sun-blaze seemed to be above the Masters of a throne which was qualified by an adjective somehow capitalised: “Ideal.”

Nothing could be farther from the actual sense. In a few places in *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo uses “throne” as an intransitive verb—a practice rare but allowed in English—equivalent in meaning to “sit on a throne” or, in general, “sit in state, as on a throne”. And “Above” here is not a preposition governing “the Masters”: it is an adverb denoting that “the Masters” are high up in “a sun-blaze”. Nor is “Ideal” an adjective: it is a noun. Sri Aurobindo is speaking of “the Masters of the Ideal”.

I recollect at least two other instances of the intransitive “throne” in Sri Aurobindo’s epic. One is very much as in the instance which puzzled you; but with a more self-explaining context:

A divine intervention thrones above.²

¹ Centenary Ed , Vol 28, p 262. lines 16-17, 23-28

² *Ibid* , p 58 34

The other has clearly the past tense of the same verb in a line standing by itself:

Life throned with mind, a double majesty.¹ (2.10.1987)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

THE LAVISH

Translated from a famous ghazal of the Sufi Poet Bagh
by Dilip Kumar Roy

THOU wokest heart to thy memory
Which made the world's loom pale like sand.
How shall I chant of thy diamond gifts
Or limn thy bounty's wonderland?

My prayer was granted ere I prayed,
For deep sky-mooded is love of thine:
And the past became a scroll on waves
Beside thy new-lit summit-sign.

From me, who had no claim for meed,
No boon thy grace would ever withhold:
Who but thy self could answer earth
With squandering of heavenly gold?

18.10.1940

¹ *Ibid* , p 126 4

“DYUMAN—THE LUMINOUS ONE”

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

(Continued from the issue of March 1990)

Here is the inspiring life story of a great servitor of the Divine whom Sri Aurobindo named “Dyuman—The Luminous One.”

To a certain extent it is the story of the growth of the Ashram, of “God’s Labour”, and the part taken in it by one to whom the Mother said, “You came down to serve.”

Compiler: SHYAM KUMARI

WE arranged the celebration of 1947 in a big way. I wrote privately to some friends in Madras to get Sri Aurobindo’s message broadcast on Independence day. The All India Radio people came and took the message and broadcast it.

From 1920 onwards there was no new photograph of Sri Aurobindo. The Mother arrived in April, 1920. We had only a photograph of her in Japan. She forbade any photographs. Once Balubhai tried to photograph her and received a severe scolding. For thirty years no photograph was taken. But the Divine’s ways are inscrutable. On 23rd April, 1950, Cartier-Bresson of *Life Magazine* arrived. Through Pavitra he asked for permission to photograph Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. From 1.30 p.m. of 23rd April up to midday of 24th April he took about 300 photographs. The Darshan photograph in which we see Sri Aurobindo and the Mother sitting on the sofa was also taken by him.

Had the Mother not permitted, we would have had no Darshan photograph, nor any photograph of Sri Aurobindo.

After a few months this photographer started to sell the Mother’s photographs. He did not give any negatives to us, rather sent us the message, “Give me six thousand dollars with one hand, take the negatives with the other.” I said that even for that one Darshan photograph I would pay six thousand dollars. Cartier-Bresson was paid and he gave the three hundred negatives.

Our photographers headed by Pranab and Chimanbhai made prints. They prepared forty albums which were sold for a thousand rupees each. Each photo in each album was numbered and blessed by the Mother. Only by the Divine Grace we had these photographs of the Lord and the Mother. There was a big demand for these forty albums. We made about five hundred more albums and sold them for five hundred rupees each. These albums were also blessed by the Mother. This is how photography developed in the Ashram.

I asked a friend, “Have you got anybody in Calcutta who can make a movie?” “Yes, your friend Ajit Bose is there,” he replied. He called him and he made a film. Vidyavrata also took some shots. This is how the film, “Sri Aurobindo Ashram—Four Chapters” was made. I sent it to Bombay for

developing and for commentary. I spent plenty of money on it. But the film critics here did not like it. It was recast and approved. Some copies were made and sold and I recovered the cost.

The film was shown at different centres. In time, the copies became old and worn out. Then Pranab, with the help of Tej Babu, the Oriya film-maker and actor, cut different portions from these old copies and made a new film altogether. We all owe thanks to them for preserving this priceless heritage.

After Sri Aurobindo left his body, I became very severely constipated. I spoke to the Mother. At first she put out her Force for clearance but there was no effect. Then she gave me some medicines but there was no improvement. She asked Dr. Satyabrata Sen to examine me. He made a thorough check but could find nothing apparently wrong. The Mother said, "The shock of Sri Aurobindo's passing was so great for you that all got dried up within you."

Actually Dr. Satyabrata had suspected cancer. Years later when he operated upon me for a minor ailment, he examined the system from the angle of cancer but found nothing. The Mother had worked out the whole thing and nullified all possible effects.

Dr. Vyas used to examine the Ashram children. Once I took the fancy to go to him for an examination. After examining me he did not tell me anything but asked Pranab to tell the Mother that I must be at once examined by a throat-specialist in Madras. Dr. Sanyal immediately arranged an appointment with a specialist. I asked the Mother, "Why, Mother? Won't it be all right here?" "No, I want you to go to Madras and show your throat to the doctor." The doctor examined me and said, "I want to give you some medicine. Will you take it?" "Yes, whatever you order," I replied. "You will have to abstain from speaking for three weeks." I said, "It is so easy. For others it may be difficult, not for me." The doctor said, "Come after one week." Later he told someone, "It is a serious case." I came back and reported to the Mother. She wrote on a piece of paper, "*Maunam* [silence] for three weeks." Even when I had to work with her on the accounts, etc. I did not speak.

After seven days I went to Madras again. At the end of his examination the doctor asked me to speak but speech did not come. He thought I was deliberately keeping silent. He said, "I am your doctor. I order, 'Speak'." I tried and very faintly speech came. The doctor said, "You are three-fourths cured. You may resume speaking." On my return I told the Mother everything. In spite of the doctor's permission to speak, the Mother said, "No, we continue *maunam* for three weeks."

Soon, whatsoever was the trouble in the throat, it was cured. It never recurred.

In this way the Mother helped to work out many of my illnesses and each time she gave me a new opening in the body.

In the beginning all the assets of the Ashram, all its buildings, etc., were in the name of Sri Aurobindo; but after Sri Aurobindo's departure—the Mother

being a French citizen and Pondicherry being under the French—the assets were transferred to her name. Legally speaking they became her private property. She signed for everything, even the smallest item. And during French rule there were no taxes at all.¹

But with the merger of Pondicherry with India things became different. According to Indian law, as soon as a person dies a good part of his personal property would go to the Government as Wealth-Tax. In 1954 or 55 Shri K. M. Munshi told the Mother, “According to the Indian constitution, you cannot go on doing things this way. The best thing would be to make a Trust.” He said he would ask Shri Subramanyam, who was a minister in the Madras State, to help in the formation of the Trust.

The Trust was made with four people, and the Mother as the President. She chose Nolini, Amrita, Satyakarma and myself. I came to know of it when one day Dr. Indra Sen said to me, “You are a trustee now!” I was surprised and went to the Mother and asked her, “Mother! Have you made me a trustee? Why me? There are so many others,” and I named them. I further said, “I am a worker, I shall work.” She simply said, “I want you.” Then I said, “Yes, Mother.” The Deed of Trust was all done and completed in two days. On the first day, she gave us four Trustees the flower ‘Divine’s Love’; the next day she gave each of us the flower ‘Faithfulness’.

The strange thing is that Munshi gave this advice in 1954 or 55; but recently we found in one of the Mother’s notebooks from 1951 (she was always noting something down) a small draft for a Trust, with the same four names, and the Mother herself as President—even though at that time there was no idea of forming a Trust.

She knew us inside out. And as long as she was here the Trust was merely a formality. It was done only because of Government rules and regulations. We never thought that she would go away as she did. Though sometimes when I put some problem before her she would say to me, “You are a Trustee, you decide.” And whenever she asked me to decide I would utilise the opportunity to make my own decisions. Once there was the question of a family of seven. They had nothing. The Mother asked me to decide whether to admit them or not. I decided to admit them. That was long ago. Recently, by chance, I found out that one of the boys in that family was working abroad, and trying to clear off all that we had spent on them.

In our Trust-Deed it has been made clear that when one of the Trustees passes away, the remaining four would select someone in his place. The first one to go was Amrita; then Counouma came in. He is a lawyer. Whenever we needed to consult a lawyer Amrita would go to him. They came close to each

¹ As soon as the properties were transferred to her name, the Mother wrote to her son Monsieur André to give in writing a statement that he would have no claim on the Ashram property. Monsieur André sent statements by himself, as well as by his wife and their two daughters Janine and Purna Prema, renouncing all claims to Ashram property and wealth

other and when Amrita had to explain legal things to the Mother, Counouma would accompany him. And if Amrita could not go to the Courts because of illness, Counouma would go in his place. So when Amrita left his body, Counouma was immediately made the Managing-Trustee, and the Mother made the rule that everybody should accept his decision. All of us signed the resolution. And always, whatever the difference of opinion between us, I have honoured his decision; I overlooked the difference. For I do not want to bring dissidence into the Ashram. I love the Ashram more than myself, and that is why I could work with everyone. This Ashram is a unique creation. It was created to provide all the genuine needs of aspiring souls... to give them facilities so that they might devote all their energy and time to their sadhana, to the central aim of transformation.

Then Satyakarma passed away. For a few months the place remained vacant. Then one day the Mother herself said, "We must be five. Satyakarma is gone. We have not filled his place. If I take Pradyot (Bhattacharya), what do you say?" Of course we all replied, "Mother, take anybody you like." So Pradyot was selected, although at that time he was still in Calcutta.

Then the Mother herself left. It was a big question for us whom to take then. The question remained pending for almost a year. On 17th or 18th November 1974 we named Harikant, because he had been in charge of Prosperity for a long time and knew everybody.

When Nolini left, we learned that he had designated Manoj; of course we honoured his wish. When Pradyot left, the Trustees nominated Paru. Thus the process goes on.

In the beginning there was no Trust, only the Ashram. Now the designation is the Ashram Trust. For me it does not make any difference. My only God is the Mother. When we came here we left home and we left country, we left our gods and everything else. We came here simply accepting Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as everything. Today I serve her as I did before the Trust was made.

Previously there was no question of the Ashram doing business. We were completely dependent on the help of those who understood the ideal of Sri Aurobindo. Then the labourers began to demand higher wages, saying that their wages were not sufficient to meet their needs. It was suggested, "Instead of only increasing their wages, why not start a shop where we can supply them with goods at a concessional rate? Besides, we can earn more than a lakh of rupees each year if we open a shop like that." The Mother liked this idea. In 1953, a Bombay firm called the Eastern Trading Company, which had a branch in Pondicherry, wanted to close their shop here. The Mother took it with its entire stock. Then she sent a telegram to Dayabhai in Bombay to come and take charge of her shop. That was the beginning of the Honesty Society. The Mother was totally and completely behind this business. She attended the opening ceremony, gave detailed instructions about how much profit was to be charged, and how the

work was to be done; she laid down clear guide lines about everything

Afterwards some other businesses were started, and some of them failed, but Dayabhai never gave up. Apart from the stock in the shop the Mother gave him only fifteen thousand rupees to cover registration, etc. Slowly and steadily he built up the business. He lived at his own expense and gave the entire profit to the Ashram. He did not take even a single paise from Honesty Society.

Later the Society was divided into two separate branches: wholesale and retail. Dayabhai worked at the wholesale branch till the end. The Society has served the public of Pondicherry faithfully. Twice when near-famine conditions threatened Pondicherry the Government asked Honesty Society to procure and supply rice at a reasonable rate to the public, and Dayabhai accomplished that task.

The Mother wanted to take up and transform everything in life. She went so far as to say that she would like us to stand for the Legislative Assembly of Pondicherry, and for the Municipal Corporation. Nobody has tried that yet, but we used to go for voting.

In the beginning our carpentry, smithy and other such departments were to help the Building Service. Later on they became business enterprises. Then the Mother started a separate Trust so that if the need arose, these departments could borrow money for their business.

As far as the Ashram Trust itself was concerned the Mother absolutely refused to take any loan. Once we had a big project of one crore and fifteen lakh rupees at Lake Estate. We hoped that the Government would give the whole amount as aid; but it turned out that they would give fifty lakhs as a grant and another fifty lakhs as a long-term loan, at the nominal interest rate of 5%. At first the Mother accepted this, but when she came to know that we would have to mortgage some property she rejected the loan, even though a senior Government officer came with a cheque for seven lakhs and tried his best to persuade us not to refuse such an advantageous offer. But the Mother would not accept it.

With the other trusts it was a different story. They were allowed to take loans and overdrafts. The Mother encouraged their activities; and indeed, if these money-earning departments had not been there, it would have been very difficult to go on; without them we could not have managed to do all that we have done.

Even before the French left Pondicherry, some Tamil-French people started to leave town. Many buildings stood empty. In the huge building that is the Dining Room, only a ghee-merchant boiled ghee (purified butter). We started to rent some of these houses. Up to 1934 the dining room was in the Ashram main building. On January 4, 1934, we shifted from there to the present Dining Room building. Most of the sadhaks lived in rented rooms then. Gradually the rents doubled and tripled, and we decided to build our own houses as far as possible.

(To be continued)

THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(Continued from the issue of March 1990)

SRI Aurobindo continued:

“Let me first finish answering your question. So there we were, in the Lake District. In the daytime we wandered around in that lovely country, climbing mountains, wading through tarns and streams, lying in the shade of spreading trees.

“Sometimes, Manomohan would be so carried away by all the beauty that he would burst into loud declamations of poetry!

“But the dim glow of evening would find the three of us sitting in our cottage, contemplating our bleak future. Where could we go? Once the holidays were over, where could we go? In that vast city of London, who would give shelter to three indigent boys? If we had been wealthy, there would have been no problem, neither did we possess rich uncles or aunts to support us. Finally, after prolonged discussions, we decided to approach an Englishman, the brother of a friend of Father's. He would surely make some arrangements for us, we felt. Once we decided to do this, the burden of our worries diminished and we ended our vacation in a happier mood.”

“What did you do the whole day? Where did you live?”

“Oh, there were small cottages nearby, proper houses, not huts made of mud like those we have here. There were farm-houses too which, for a nominal fee, took in tourists and visitors. The three of us stayed in one such cottage. We would leave every morning after breakfast and return home late in the evening around nine or ten o'clock. It wasn't dark then because in summer the days are very very long in the northern countries.”

“So, you ate nothing the whole day?”

“Of course we did! Either we carried our lunch with us—hard-boiled eggs and sandwiches, or we dropped in at some farm-house for bread and milk. We had no problems with food. People in the West are very well-organised materially and all arrangements are always made for physical well-being and comfort. Therefore off we would go in the mornings walking along river banks which had hundreds of red and gold tulips and daffodils glistening in the fields. You know that poem by Wordsworth, don't you—‘I wandered lonely as a cloud'...? Well, we found ourselves in the same countryside and were equally thrilled. Especially Manmohan, he would often climb the hills, singing aloud his own compositions, or blithely jumping into mountain streams...”

“Didn't you swim?”

“We didn't know how to, no one had ever taught us. Don't forget that we

had left home as three small boys and had been wandering on the other side of the world ever since. I remember, on one of our rambles in the Lake District, Manmohan's foot slipped and he fell into a deep pool out of which he managed to climb only after drinking much water. Another time, the three of us were walking along in the gathering darkness of late evening. Mano, as usual singing and reciting poetry to himself, had fallen back. When we two came across a deep ditch on our path, we both shouted out to him asking him to be careful, since he seemed completely lost in his own world of poetry. But the louder we called out to him, the more loud became his singing! Finally we stopped and waited for him to catch up with us."

"He loved poetry very much, didn't he?"

"Enormously. Some of his English friends were poets and together with them he even published a book. You may say that it's from him that I have caught the contagious fever called Poetry. He would spend whole days lying underneath shady trees, reading aloud or composing poems. But this way of life could not last. Our holidays had to come to an end. One misty morning—I haven't told you, have I, how suddenly fog and mist or continuous 'fine drizzle' could unexpectedly come down and cover the lake glistening in the early morning sunshine—well, as I said, one morning we packed our bags and started back for London, never dreaming that I was about to face one of the hardest tests of my life."

"It is very hard for us to imagine you, Sir, as a young boy, just like one of us, laughing and playing as we do!"

"Do you mean to say that I was a sage from birth, another Kapilamuni well-versed in all the sciences and scriptures from the beginning? Or would you prefer to think of me born as a Hebrew prophet, old and solemn, with flowing hair and beard?" (*Laughter*)

"No, not quite so, but we have been told that you were always terribly grave and reserved, something like Shiva. Of course some of the notions were proved incorrect when we read Nirod-da's *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*. In fact, it's that book that has given us the courage to chat like this with you." (*Laughter*)

"So, what did you do on your return to London?"

"Well, the three of us went to the brother of a friend of Father's. His name was James Cotton and he was truly a gentleman. At first he seemed rather surprised to see us. We introduced ourselves and recounted to him our tale of woe. He listened to us very attentively, and seemed also rather shocked and pained. Then, after a while, he said, 'I believe I can make arrangements for you to stay at my club, until I hear from your father. The eldest of you three can help me in my work for which I shall pay him five shillings a week. Is that all right?' "

"Just five shillings?"

"Five shillings today may not be worth much, but in those days they were as good as five pounds today. But, of course, we who were accustomed to getting

two pounds a week each were now about to receive only five shillings for the three of us. It was certainly not an easy transition ”

“But if he was wealthy, he could easily have helped you more, since you really were in dire straits.”

“Maybe he could. But, then, the Western temperament is very different from ours. It is very independent, and believes that each individual must fight his own battle. In fact, it is by combating difficulties and poverty and pain that man becomes great. It is this attitude towards life that has helped the West to the pre-eminence it has acquired today. Charity and pity are not admired, they go against the very grain of its nature. Anyway, at least we had found a place to sleep, so after thanking him we went to his club. Later, it was this same Mr Cotton who wrote on my behalf to the British Government so that I might be selected for the I.C.S. The club was situated in one of the most fashionable parts of London—South Kensington—where one found all the big offices and the great homes of the rich. We were very pleased to know that we were to live in such elegant surroundings, but that was before we found out what it was like to live in a club. Every evening the members would gather together and their tipsy talks and loud guffaws would go on till late in the night. Unfortunately that was the only time which we could devote to our studies. We also discovered that clubs were the nerve-centres of British political and social life. Those gentlemen wore the masks of culture and refinement in their homes and removed them in their clubs where they felt free to be themselves. It has always been so, right from the time of the Mermaid Tavern, then the Coffee Houses of the 18th century to the age of Dickens, who describes this in his works. The club is to the Englishman what the salon is to the French. A club-less gentleman is akin to a Sikh Sardarji without his beard and long hair! (*Laughter*) So, it was in such a seat of raucousness that we lived. As for me, before I finished my school studies I appeared for the I.C.S. entrance examination as well as won the scholarship which would qualify me for King’s College, Cambridge. By then we had grown up sufficiently to understand that Father must be facing severe financial difficulties at home and that all our monetary problems could largely be solved if we passed the tests successfully.”

“How old were you then?”

“About fifteen or sixteen.”

“So young?”

“Not so young at all. In the West, children grow up faster, perhaps due to the education they get. When the youngsters of our country are still tied to the ends of their mother’s sari the youth over there are already set to make their own way through life. That was just one of the reasons why Father was such an admirer of Western culture and wanted to turn us into replicas of Englishmen. To this end, we were made to leave home at a tender age and were sent across the seven seas to the other side of the world. I was not even eight at the time.

That Father later stopped sending us money was also perhaps part of the same plan—to teach us to become independent, and I cannot deny that he achieved his aim.”

“But how did the three of you live on five shillings a week?”

“We had to manage, that’s all. Not that it was easy, it wasn’t, especially since the change in our life-style came so abruptly, after so many years of comfortable living. But one can adjust to any situation if one has to.”

“What did you eat and drink?”

“We ate cheap sandwiches and drank tea. For two years, we could afford no winter coats, no fire in the grate. My brothers were a little concerned about me, but I possessed a trait which was greatly to my advantage—neither food nor clothing ever preoccupied me. In fact, I would often forget to eat if I was absorbed in my books. Even the noise and laughter in the club did not affect me then. Poor Manmohan was different. Sometimes when he could not bear to live in those conditions any longer, he would dash off a letter to his friends, or he would end up by writing poetry!” (*Laughter*)

“So you were a yogi even at that early age?”

(*Smiling*) “Is that all it takes to be a yogi?”

“We have heard that once there was a terrible cyclone in Pondicherry and your room was flooded but you never noticed it, so absorbed were you in your writing!”

“I think that’s just a story, similar to many other stories about me which say that I live on air, or that I am always plunged in deep meditation or that I can levitate at will! (*Laughter*). Of course it is true that when I sit down to write, I do forget about everything else.”

“We have also heard that once when a cyclone was raging over the town, pulling down trees and houses, Mother entered your room to find it filled with a vast and concrete Peace. It was as though the terrible Death Dance dared not enter there. Isn’t that so?”

“Well, if Mother has recounted it, then it must be true.”

“But can the power of Peace be felt only during a storm or a cyclone? Not otherwise?”

“Why should it not?”

“But I cannot feel it.”

(*Smiling*) “First of all, you must become like Mother.”

“But, Sir, who really is Mother? Though we call her the Divine Mother, I don’t very well understand what that means.”

“You will, gradually. Love Her with all your heart, and ask Her to explain this mystery to you. She will make everything so luminously clear to you that, in the words of the Gita, it will be as if all the most secret knots in the mind were smoothed out and all the deepest doubts and hesitations dissolved. No other explanation can have a more profound effect on the being.”

“Nirod-da was once telling us, in class, about the intensity of your concentration.” (*Everyone turns to look at Nirod.*)

“What did he say?”

“He told us how, on a very hot summer day, he found you sitting up, writing. Maybe it was the revision of *The Life Divine*. And though the table-fan was whirring nearby, Champaklal and Nirod-da found that when you had finished writing, you were wet all over. Even the bedsheets were wet with your perspiration. There was a small pool all around you, though you seemed completely unaware of it as you sat there smiling angelically.”

“Really? He’s exaggerated terribly! Does he teach you these things in class?”

“Oh no, he is very strict. We plead with him so often to tell us stories about you, but he never does. It is as if he wishes to keep them safely locked away inside him. Only rarely, and that too, only when in the course of a lesson something relevant comes up, we get little illuminating bits of information—for instance, you never read books or never think any more.”

“That is true. I had done with both, long ago. Ever since the realisation of Nirvana.”

“Then how did you write so many books?”

“All that I have written in my books is the fruit of my experience, it is not based either on book-knowledge or on any external information. When you speak of any experience that you have had, do you need the help of books to make yourself clear? All wisdom, peace, bliss, power, everything is forever lodged here. (*Sri Aurobindo places his hand on the top of his head.*) Below it is a covered receptacle. If you manage to take off the lid you will find knowledge and peace pouring down in a shower of golden light. You follow?”

“Speaking of golden light reminds me of something that once happened to the French author, Rousseau. One day he was on his way to visit his friend Diderot who was in prison. He had in his pocket a journal in which a question had been set for discussion. Taking it out, he glanced at that question with a view to writing an essay on it. Suddenly he felt innumerable ideas pouring down into his head in a golden shower. Unable to bear the weight of this descent he lay down under a tree and was lost in a swoon. When he recovered he noticed that tears had coursed down his cheeks uninterruptedly so that the front of his vest was soaked through. But the article he wrote after this incident, though it reverberated throughout the land and won him renown and rewards, could not contain even one hundredth part of those golden inspired ideas that he had received.

“Yes, it could not because the being, which is a receptacle, was small. But the experience was very real. This is how knowledge flows down. Through the power of Yoga the lid is removed that covers the being and the whole ocean of knowledge comes pouring down. Beside it, mere book-learning resembles a tiny

pebble on the beach. Have you not read what the Mother has written in Her *Prayers and Meditations* where She says, 'There is a power'—I don't remember the text exactly."

"Yes, we have read it."

(*The book is given to Sri Aurobindo who now begins to read aloud*) " 'There is a Power which no government can command, a Happiness which no earthly success can give, a Light which no wisdom can possess, a Knowledge which no philosophy, no science can acquire, a Beatitude of which no satisfaction of desire can give the enjoyment, a thirst for Love which no human relation can quench, a Peace which can be found not even in death.

It is the Power, the Happiness, the Light, the Knowledge, the Love and the Peace which come to us from the Divine Grace.'

"The knowledge that Buddha, Shankara, Sri Chaitanya or Vivekananda realised was of this kind. Sri Ramakrishna had no learning of any sort but the Divine Mother gave him knowledge."

"Which mother?"

"Are there two Divine Mothers?"

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

(*Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali*)

IN THIS CHILL WINTER...

IN this chill winter of shuddering cold,
 Wrapped in the blanket of my silent void
 What strange flowers of gorgeous climes I see,
 Breaking over this fog-hazed city of confounded men.
 Its polluted air cannot accept their joy,
 But the Smile of a plumbless love awaits its hour,
 To charge the heavy atmosphere of our sable lives
 And the consoling sweetness of an unknown child in me
 Holds on to the passing hem of the World-Mother.

DAMODAR

SOME EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF AN “EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of March 1990)

Childhood: Contact with the Ashram

My uncle had come to stay in the Ashram for good. In 1930, my parents wanted to visit the Ashram, probably to see my uncle rather than for any deeper reason. Upon receiving their letter, he wrote back to say that we could come if my father had devotion for the Mother.

We made the journey along with a friend of mine, a girl and my little Pekingese dog. I was five years old. An old spacious house on the seafront was rented for us, possibly the house now occupied by the Sri Aurobindo Society. The Mother paid us a visit on the afternoon of our arrival. As soon as she had taken her seat my dog came running to her and, jumping into her lap, began showering her with affection. The Mother embraced it and said lovingly, “How sweet!”

Then I was asked to do pranam to her. I did it in the Bengali way, touching her feet with my hands. She patted me on the head. My parents followed me, my father doing his pranam with devotion. Afterwards, they talked to the Mother. She was very much at ease and my father was gratified by her intimate manner. After their discussion, they sat for meditation, but I was not allowed to join them. Of course, I was curious to know what they were doing, so I went on tip-toe to find out. I saw everyone sitting with eyes closed, but the Mother seemed to have noticed me and mentioned it to my parents.

We stayed at the Ashram for one or two months. My parents had the darshan of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, but once again I was not allowed to join them. When my friend asked me why, I answered peevishly, “You see, the Mother is Bhagavati, the Divine. She disappears into the air, while Sri Aurobindo, being human, doesn’t.” I thought it was he who would not permit us to the darshan, hence my remark.

Be that as it may, our life at the Ashram was happy. We could go where we wanted and stroll on the seaside, provided we were always accompanied by a servant.

After our prolonged stay, we returned to Calcutta where a near-disaster took place. My father had planned that we should leave the train at Howrah rather than going on to Calcutta. We could then cross the Ganga by country boat and so reach our house which was situated on the opposite bank. On the way, father intended to buy some fish from the fisherman on the river. He was

expecting that they had caught some Ilsha, a delicacy much prized by Bengalis, and was hoping to take it home with him. He hired two boats, one for the servants and the other for us. As we moved out into the river, he seated himself on the prow so that he might spot the fisherman with a catch of Ilsha. Soon a boat came gliding by with the much-sought-after fish, and father leaned forward to bargain with the fisherman. As he was engaged in haggling over the price, he suddenly lost his balance and fell into the choppy water. There was panic in the boat. My father did not know how to swim. As he began to sink, my distraught mother jumped after him. Needless to say, she did not know how to swim either and, with one hand raised, also began to be engulfed by the water. A relative was holding me firmly in case I too decided to jump after my parents.

It was the servants who came to their rescue. Being more capable than any of us, they plunged into the river, and with tremendous effort recovered the two unconscious bodies and pushed them into the boat. As soon as we reached our house on the opposite bank, the doctor was called and my mother and father were revived. The doctor later explained that as my father had high blood pressure, his leaning out of the boat might have made him giddy and so caused him to fall overboard. My father, however, was unimpressed by this explanation. Instead, he lost whatever faith he had had in the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and never visited the Ashram again. He did, nevertheless, allow my mother and myself to come on a number of occasions, in 1932, 1934, 1936 and 1938. The first time, we stayed in my uncle's house. I had brought my friend again, and once more we were considered too young for the darshan.

Instead, I was left to play in the compound behind the service tree, and amuse myself by throwing stones into a nearby tank while accompanied by the same elderly relative who had taken care of me in the boat-accident and who was now an Ashram inmate.

All of a sudden one day, I looked up and saw someone standing near the window observing me intently through the shutters, his face all smiles. I stood there agape with wonder. My relative who was with me, looked too, but said nothing. "Is it Champaklal?" I asked myself, perplexed. Then Mother came and stood at the window as well. Both of them enveloped me with their smiles and the Mother beckoned to me with her hand. I folded my hands and did pranam to them both. Then the window closed. When I asked, my relative told me I had not seen Champaklal, but Sri Aurobindo himself with the Mother by his side.

Once I plucked a flower from the garden. The gardener rebuked me for this and I ran home crying all the way. The Mother heard me crying and asked what was the matter. When she was told, she instructed the gardener to let me do whatever I liked.

That was the year I started to write letters to the Mother in Bengali, which she answered. Sri Aurobindo must have translated them to her.

My later visits were unforgettable chapters of my childhood of which I shall

speaking later. But that first year, the Mother's answers to my letters which had been written to her from Calcutta were as follows:

Pondicherry

29-5-32

My dear little,

I am not at all angry.

If I was not writing to you, it is because I was expecting you to come soon.

With our blessings and love.

9-7-32

.....,

I have taken a nice house for you. There is electricity and a fan. Come quickly, even if you are not quite well.

You know that here your health becomes very good.

With love and blessings.

12-8-32

To with our blessings,

I am so sorry to hear that you have been ill. I hope you are quite well now. This is to send you strength and our love. We never forget you and your dear mother.

6-9-32

To with our blessings,

About your coming here, my will is that you should come with your dear mother at once.

But...

Our love and protection are with you always.

11-11-33

To, our blessings.

So many times I have answered your letters with my heart, but could find no time to write the answer on a sheet of paper.

Hoping that your dear mother and yourself are quite well.

Our love and protection are with you always.

(To be continued)

“SATYAM”

“WHAT DO YOU DO?”

“WHAT do you do? Pray? Meditate?”

I paint, write, talk, listen, work, pray and even meditate .. but all are means,

I hunt, I search for the unicorn, for the fable, for the imagined, for Alladdin’s lamp, Solomon’s ring, Paris’s Helen, Rama’s Sita, for the gate behind which awaits an ocean of light....

I search for the ground beneath the blue seas, for the star-dust that the flowers collect only to disperse it...

“Tell me truly what is it that you seek?”

Discarding all biases and notions, clarifying and sharpening my vision I seek a beauty more profound, universal and entrancing than the sensuous, imaginative beauty sought and worshipped by the artist, a joy and sensibility far richer than human emotions. I seek neither bliss nor peace.

I seek, for I have found and lost it more than once, the unfolding of myself, the contents of my hidden infinite self.

“Infinite? How do you know?”

Those who have found have ‘come back’ and told us, described why and how and what it is that I have been seeking, they have shown the way, the method.

But those words are yet words Powerful and beautiful, yes, but still words—until I can touch, feel, sense, become the exceedingly beautiful, luminous ‘I’.

This I that I am wishes to widen, brighten, lighten beyond limits.

“But what convinces you? Just words?”

A faint memory together with my ever increasing awareness of the Divine’s Presence, vastness, grandeur within me and around—Presence that I feel, hear, but lose now and again—

Presence that is something often enveloping me in abstract terms and sometimes in sense of sound and dancing, laughing thoughts and waves of quiet joy that arise from deep within, unpredictable, unasked, without reason—

Presence that is a power and sweetness and delight, at once a goal and something to adore, to venerate, to embrace, to dissolve in ..

I search not for treasures but for the sense beyond the senses and sensations within myself, a sense which when awakened does come to the surface now and again, teasing, promising, and would enable me to touch, feel, eat, be what I seek—

What, maybe, I already am. in some Secrecy.

DINKAR PALANDE

THE SOLAR FAITH

*“Then I knew the child was Amenhotep...
And I know I was his mother ”*

The Mother. *Questions and Answers 1956*

OF all the Pharaohs Amenhotep IV—or Akhenaton as he later called himself—was the only one who has left us with an accurate idea of his physical appearance. This was not out of vanity: twisted in body and misshapen of head, emaciated and physically feeble, he had no illusion about his looks. But when he ascended the throne and changed his name he also adopted the phrase *Ankhem maat*, “Living in Truth”, as the governing principle of his life, and so one of his first decrees was that the idealized style of portraiture was to be abandoned, to be replaced by a more realistic representation. For truth was truth, no matter in what: in words, in work, in art. But never had there been a Pharaoh with more to gain from the old heroic style of sculpture. Never, in fact, had there been a less likely ruler, one less likely to inspire confidence and trust in his people at the most crucial time in Egypt’s history.

Egypt under the reign of Amenhotep III in the 14th century B.C. was the greatest country in the world; it received tribute and homage from all the neighbouring and nearby kings. Respected, feared, known as “the magnificent”, Amenhotep III, ruling in an age of splendour, was an effective king and a strong king. He was also a ruthless king, for he knew that all periods of order and comparative peace could disintegrate in a single moment if weakness was shown, or vacillation. To ensure stability the ruler had to be single-minded, indomitable, enduring. Watching his only son grow up the Pharaoh wondered whether the boy could ever acquire these qualities.

It was his wife Queen Tiy who reassured him and took on the early responsibility for the education of the weak and ailing boy. A rare woman for any age, Queen Tiy came almost as a miraculous intervention at this time in history. So remarkable was her appearance in Egyptian life that some historians have suggested that she came from outside the country’s borders but there is no proof of this. Her strength and governing perspicacity has led others to think she came from a family of the warrior caste but again proof is lacking. Nor is there any real evidence to support the belief that she was the daughter of a priest. That she was a commoner seems now to be widely accepted. But commoner or not, Egyptian or not, whether the daughter of a warrior or priest makes little difference: what is important is that this introduction into the pharaonic line had far-reaching implications for Egypt.

The Pharaoh relied on her advice from the very beginning of their marriage, even having her name inserted along with his own in the official caption at the head of royal documents. Throughout his reign she exerted a powerful influence

on matters of national importance and she was to mark the beginning of a remarkable era in which the queens of the pharaohs achieved considerable prominence in state affairs

Despite opposition from the advisers to the throne, Queen Tiy allowed the boy to avoid much of the practice of the warrior arts and to concentrate on those studies which seemed more appropriate to his nature. Under her guidance he spent a cloistered existence immersed in his studies. She did not discourage him when he began, at a very early age, to question the old ways, the old beliefs, the rituals and superstitions of religion and royalty. And she could not have been displeased when he showed signs of becoming something of a scholar, something of a philosopher. But there were some in the Pharaoh's court who became anxious for the security of the royal line. And when, with the boy only thirteen years old, his father died there seemed ample cause for anxiety.

But they had forgotten Queen Tiy. To forestall the action of men scheming to usurp the throne she assumed the regency, at the same time arranging for the young Pharaoh to take the beautiful Nefertiti as his queen.

For five years Queen Tiy ruled firmly and decisively in his name, without fear or doubt. But nothing in her reign prepared the country for the events which burst upon it when she withdrew from the regency in favour of her son.

Amenhotep IV was eighteen years old when he returned to the throne and the most that the country could expect of him was rule by surrogate. For here, at a time when a strong and practical ruler was needed, was no soldier, no man-of-action, no charismatic leader but a thinker, a scholar—more, some said, a mystic. Yet within that frail body was the inflexible will and iron resolve of the most innovative pharaoh in history. Immediately taking control he set about to put into effect his plans for the country: It was to be nothing less than to lay the foundation for an entirely new way of life.

Until this time the religion of Egypt had been polytheistic. The gods proliferated: men, birds, beasts, men-beasts, bird-men, rivers, heavenly bodies, all found their way into the Egyptian Pantheon. Worship was a joyless thing, dominated by fear, life depending on the propitiation of the gods, the priests, corrupt, ambitious, powerful, encouraged the idea of wrathful gods. But Amenhotep under the tutelage of his mother, had long ago lost faith in these ancient gods. Wishing to rid the land of this superstitious fear he declared that there was to be a new fundamental principle that ruled things. He called this principle Aton: "that which shines". Already under the reign of his father the name Aton had come into use in place of the old sun God Ra, but now it was given an additional significance. For Aton was not to be considered the sun itself, but the invisible force behind the sun. It was the source from which came all light and warmth. It was god the life-giver, from which all creation flowed.

But Atonism was to be more than a religion; it was to be the principle under which the world would be unified. He devised a symbol to illustrate this new

idea: it consisted of a circle, representing the sun, with rays coming out from the centre, each ray ending in a human hand clasping an Ankh, the Egyptian symbol of life. To the consternation of the priests he announced that there was only this, the one god, no other, and that he was not a wrathful god but a compassionate god.

Decree followed decree. Amenhotep changed his name to Akhenaton, "He in whom Aton is satisfied", he announced that Thebes would henceforth be known as "The City of the Light of Aton": he initiated a school of realistic art; he called for equal rights for women; he closed the old temples, forbade the old rituals (the new ceremonies seemed to be mainly giving praise to the source of the Light, the offering and receiving of flowers, the burning of incense); he stopped much of the pomp and ceremony of the courts, and not only made himself accessible to the people but was often seen among them with his mother and with his wife and children.

He started the building of three spiritual capitals in different parts of his empire: one in Syria, one in Ethiopia, one 300 miles south of Thebes. And it was to the last of these new cities—Akhetaton, "The Horizon of Light"—that in the eighth year of his reign as Pharaoh he moved the capital of Egypt and went to live with his family. This city was an architectural miracle which, despite the passing of 34 centuries, is still admiringly described in the books of architectural history. Nothing like it had been previously envisaged: it was the first garden city, the first planned capital. Spacious by any previous standards, orderly, uncluttered, it stretched in a curling ribbon along the banks of the Nile within the arms of protecting cliffs.

But for all the changes that he brought about in the everyday life of Egypt perhaps his greatest influence was in the unsurmountable force and obvious sincerity of his new belief. Aton was not only the giver of life, it was associated in his heart with immortality, with beauty and with love. In a hymn to Aton he wrote:

"Thy rising is beautiful,
O living Aton, Lord of Eternity
Thou art shining, beautiful, strong,
Thy love is great and mighty..."

All that was natural was to him true. Bel, the sculptor who immortalised his inharmonious features, wrote: "Akhenaton put truth in my body: he rejoiced in truth", and later he began to add the phrase "taught by Akhenaton" after his name when he signed his work.

Akhenaton was perhaps the first prophet, perhaps the first god-intoxicated man, perhaps the first idealist, perhaps the first real revolutionary, perhaps even the first true individual.

Not many however understood what he was trying to do, and of those who understood few appreciated it. He had enemies on all sides. Because he was a man of peace his army distrusted him; because he was looking towards the future his priests worked against him, because he had no territorial ambitions his envious neighbours began to have them. Even some noblemen at his court, realizing that he had no son to give continuity to his philosophy and security to his line, began to look elsewhere to support their prospects. While the ordinary people who had most to gain from his changes missed their old and familiar gods, particularly Osiris the god who had, until the coming of Aton, protected them after death on their way through the world of darkness.

His philosophy did not, of course, last beyond his death. When he died in his 29th year (perhaps by poison) he was not mourned by many. He was, like almost all visionaries, ahead of his time. It would be another 800 years and the coming of the Hebrew prophets, before similar men were seen upon earth. His work perhaps was merely some kind of preparation—perhaps only a sort of spiritual trial balloon to see how far mankind could be led towards the light. It turned out that it could not be led very far. Soon after his death the Egyptians turned their backs on him and his one-and-only universal God, dismantling his new structure, going back to the security of their old ways, their old beliefs, back to the old wrathful gods that understood the world of corruption and fear and darkness. And after a while Akhenaton himself became known as “the criminal of Akhetaton” and with the withdrawal of the royal court and the administration Akhetaton was abandoned. Within a very few years the dream city had become a place of phantoms with sand from the surrounding desert drifting into the empty streets.

Historians, though praising Akhenaton, often single him out as one of the main causes for the dissolution of the greatest of the Egyptian empires. But it may be that the empire started on its decline when it was clearly given a new direction to follow .. and it turned the other way.

The full story of Akhenaton’s reign was not known until 1922 when the tomb of his son-in-law Tutankhamen was discovered intact, complete with all the tablets and printings and carvings depicting the day-to-day life of those times, but crucial facts were uncovered in the valley of the Tombs of the Kings in 1907, when the tomb of Queen Ty was unearthed. For it was here, and not in his own tomb, that the embalmed body of the disgraced Pharaoh had been placed, protected over the long centuries by the presence of his mother, his guide and mentor, the teacher of the world’s first solar faith.

NAVODITTE

(With acknowledgements to *Sri Aurobindo’s Action*, May 1982, pp. 6-7)

MOOT COURT HEARING ON SHAKESPEARE AUTHORSHIP

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE OR EDWARD DE VERE?

(Continued from the issue of March 1990)

Few readers of literature know of a recent event of great interest to the literary world. On September 25, 1987, the American University, Washington, held a trial to decide a question that has vexed scholars for over three centuries. 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.

JUSTICE—Of course you're pressing for de Vere, but there are other suggested authors, are there not? Primarily perhaps Christopher Marlowe, Francis Bacon, and some others. I think there are as many as sixty names that have been advanced, and are you brushing these all aside in favor of...

JASZI—My particular charge today is to argue for the Earl of Oxford and I think there is a very good reason for the increasing focus in discussion of the so-called authorship question over recent years on the claims of the Earl of Oxford as against the others. Most of the others are in some very obvious way disqualified. Marlowe, for all we know, unless we make up a very elaborate story indeed did die at a time which makes his role unlikely. Bacon, great intellect though he was, was in no particular sense a literary man. And that is precisely what Edward de Vere was. He was praised and singled out in his lifetime as an outstanding author with respect to his privately circulated poems and his privately performed theatricals.

JUSTICE—Incidentally, not one of the sixty was a woman.

JASZI—Well, Queen Elizabeth has, I think, been advanced by some proponents as either an individual claimant or as a member of a group or coterie. Most of the theories that depend on group authorship, it seems to me, are fundamentally implausible because the plays and the poems are so clearly in every line or in almost every line the work of a single unified sensibility.

JUSTICE—But even if you proved, for example, that Shakspeare of Stratford was not the author, you still couldn't prevail, unless you prove that de Vere is the author. Right?

JASZI—That is correct. I would feel that it is some accomplishment to demonstrate that Shakspeare of Stratford was not the author but certainly my brief today requires me to prove the affirmative of the other matter.

JUSTICE—I would suppose so, you'd be quite disappointed if this court were to say, "No, Shakespeare was not the author, but he hasn't proved that de Vere was, therefore he loses."

JASZI—That is absolutely correct. My effort today is to convince you to the best of my ability, not only of Shakspere's non-authorship but of de Vere's authorship as well. And to that end, I'd like to say something about de Vere, his character and his attributes. He was...

JUSTICE—May I ask one other question before you get into that? You've made a point of the difference between the short a and the long a, Shakspere/Shakespeare and I know there are others who make a big point of that but your opponent in his brief referred the pages 99 and 100 to the 1904-5 Revels Account, which referred to three or four plays—*Measure for Measure*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and so forth—as having been authored by Shaxberd. Are you familiar with them?

JASZI—I am familiar with the Revels accounts.

JUSTICE—And they do refer to a writer, the playwright and use the short a. Doesn't that demolish the argument based on the

JASZI—I think it does not. The Revels accounts are one of the most difficult and refractory pieces of evidence with which both Stratfordians and Oxfordians have had to deal, if only because the Shaxberd spelling that they contain is consistent with no other known spelling of the name of the man from Stratford or the author of the plays. Professor Schoenbaum has theorized that the spelling, the peculiar spelling, in the Revels account may represent on paper the Scottish burr of a recently arrived clerk who had not yet fully assimilated the spelling customs of London. And there is also reason to believe, strong reason to believe, that the Revels accounts may in fact be a modern forgery, a part of John Paine Collier's elaborate efforts in which he had many or at least some helpers and assistants to add to our knowledge of the life of Shakspere or Shakespeare. Be that as it may, the Revels accounts I would argue are so roundly disputed, so questionable in their character that they really cannot be considered as part of the record such as it is. At this proceeding, to the extent that they are considered, we need, I think, to take account of the possibility that perhaps the uninformed clerk who prepared those financial accounts may have been confused as between the front office representative of the Lord Chamberlain's man, perhaps the individual arrived with his hand out to receive payment, and the true author of the plays on the other hand. Now if I may speak to the credentials of my client for a moment, I would emphasize first and foremost that he, unlike Shakspere of Stratford, was an amply educated and cultured figure. Privately tutored, student at the great universities and at the inns of court; he had all the background required to write the plays and poems that we now appreciate as the works of Shakespeare. His extensive foreign travel would have provided him with a knowledge of French and Italian culture and topography which those plays manifest and, more important still, his association from youth with court circles would have given him the knowledge of the intrigues and history and the character of highborn men and women in which those works abound. Moreover, from early manhood

he was conspicuous as a patron of the arts and he was intensely interested in the theater and he followed family tradition by spending liberally to organize theatrical troupes. He had an ancient title of which he was justly proud. That the works of Shakespeare, particularly the plays, were written by such a man is apparent in the pervasive evidence they contain of the author's aristocratic biases in matters relating to classes and social structures. He was an arch conservative, whoever this author may have been, in such matters.

JUSTICE—Incidentally, did he have any reluctance to have his identity revealed through his poems?

JASZI—Absolutely. There was only one poem of which I am aware which was published over his full name, the Earl of Oxford, and that was incidentally a poem published in a particular context that is a dedication to a friend.

JUSTICE—Didn't he write some poems?

JASZI—He did.

JUSTICE—Couldn't one tell, reading them, who the author was?

JASZI—I think whether one could tell would depend very much on who one was. Those poems were published and not always it appears with his authorization.

JUSTICE—Well, in those days, I know .

JASZI—Over in the initial...

JUSTICE—There was some kind of inhibition against nobility doing certain things, that is connected with actors or with plays and that sort of thing. But that wasn't true of a connection with poems and poets.

JASZI—Those poems .

JUSTICE—Of any poems. Noblemen in those days were proud to reveal the fact that they had written poems, were they not?

JASZI—They were proud to reveal the fact that they had written poems, but not proud of the fact that poems had been commercially published. Thus those poems of the Earl of Oxford, with the singular exception that I have just cited, have found their way into print during his lifetime signed with an initial "O" or the initials "EO" and never with his full name. And his plays, of course, so far as we know were never...

JUSTICE—No one would know who "EO" was?

JASZI—I think it is entirely possible that members of court circles—knowledgeable, upper-class, or aristocratic figures—would have had a very good idea, but the taboo was not against being known as an author...

JUSTICE—Well, he didn't get into trouble with the queen if they revealed that he was the author of poems, did he?

JASZI—I don't think that that would have been a possibility, no.

JUSTICE—Then I can't understand why he wouldn't be proud to let everyone know that he was indeed the author and so hold a place in the sun.

JASZI—That is extremely difficult for modern readers, myself, frankly, included, with modern concepts of authorship to understand. It's extremely difficult for us

to imagine that the authorship of the plays and poems in question could have been anything but a matter of pride. But the fact remains that the taint of commerce, the taint of money, the taint of association with common players, or common publishers was something which aristocrats and even gentlemen of the period avoided and they continued to do so.

JUSTICE—Is there any evidence that Elizabethan noblemen, perhaps clergy also, frequently used a front for their literary endeavors? There's no evidence of that, is there?

JASZI—There is certainly evidence of pseudonymous publication and publication signed by initials and otherwise, but a particular front such as this one, no.

JUSTICE—Well, if there was so much pride of authorship on the poem side, why was there such prevalence of the use of “anon” or “anonymous” in those days? Because the authors were women?

JASZI—I think not the latter, although I cannot be sure what or who may lie behind all of those anonymous ascriptions. The distinction that I think is important here is a distinction between the public and the private spheres. In the private sphere, pride of authorship not only in poems but in plays as well was well understood. What was taboo in the period, what remained taboo, what caused John Milton to publish his early works anonymously, was association with commercial publishing, or with the public performance of theatrical works and I would argue that there is no inconsistency in claiming that Oxford was known during his life as a poet and may indeed have had some—for all we know and we know nothing—pride in that reputation, and that at the same time he and his descendants were at pains to conceal the fact of his having written works that were addressed to a popular, general audience of commercial purchasers and playgoers.

JUSTICE—But that doesn't explain why he would not use his true name in *Venus and Adonis*.

(*To be continued*)

CONVERSATIONS OF THE DEAD

TRANSLATED BY SATADAL FROM THE BENGALI OF
NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

11

Buddha, Lao-tze, Kung-fu-tze*

Buddha

BITTER, bitter is the wine of life!

Lao-tze

Sweet, sweet is life's nectar!

Kung-fu-tze

Neither bitter, nor sweet—life's sap is only sour.

Buddha

I see clearly that life is bitter, undoubtedly bitter. What is this life? An embodied sorrow. Disease, old age, death—such is the end of life. And what are the constant companions of life? Grief and pain, greed and illusion, jealousy and spite—injustice and tyranny—universal pestilence and destruction. Evil spirits of affliction are roving all over the earth and man is their food. If man remains clasped to life then there is no remedy, no escape from them. Liberation means liberation from life. Desire, life's desire, is at the root of all sufferings. Therefore, in the rejection of this desire lies the supreme good of man. Therefore, I have taught, in fact the whole of my endeavour is this only, how to retire from life, how to be saved from being swept away by the life-current, how to arrest the current of life. Indeed, spiritual cessation of life—Nirvana—is salvation.

Kung-fu-tze

You are taking a magnified view of one aspect only—that's why creation is such a horror to you. There is affliction in life—all the imps and demons named by you

* *Author's Note* Kung-fu-tze, that is to say, Confucius in English (from Latin) was the religious preceptor in particular of North China. His religion is based on morality and virtuous conduct. He is comparable to the authors of sacred scriptures, i.e., social systems in our country. Lao-tze was the religious preceptor of South China in particular. We find in him much of a shade of the Vedanta doctrine of our seers, mainly the Upanishadic doctrine of 'Delight is Brahman' in his religion, in his inference and practice. Kung-fu-tze, Lao-tze and Buddha were almost contemporaries. There is a popular story in China that the three of them tasted wine from the same container and gave three different opinions about it—the present conversation starts with that background. There is also a famous old Japanese painting illustrating this incident.

are also there—but that is no reason to regard life as futile and I don't agree that the spiritual extinction of life is the supreme emancipation. Wants and complaints are there, pain and suffering too are there, but man has the capacity to master them. Nature's hazards are there, but that did not make humanity extinct. Tyranny of society is there, but man can stand and has stood against it. There is a play of passions in an individual, yet that can be controlled or at least fought against. It is true, man has no control over disease, old age and death, but these three are not the whole account of life. Man has disease, hasn't he health also? Old age is there; is there no youth? Death is there; is there no outburst of life? Life contains both good and evil—accept what is good, go on fighting relentlessly against evil, and there lies man's manhood.

Lao-tze

Rightly so—life is no monotone. It has found its rhythm through a variety of opposing movements. When we look at life piecemeal, then alone we stress a particular portion and say, here lies happiness. Again we look upon another portion in the same manner and say, here lies affliction—here is good, here is evil. The next step is to overlook or forget happiness and good, and make of affliction and evil the sovereign lord. But to see life that way is not the true seeing. See the whole of life simultaneously, see the creation with the integral inner vision and you will find that the discord between happiness and sorrow, good and evil has disappeared; you will perceive that though the rhythms of movement are different, the flow of delight is there in both. “Creation has sprung from delight, is moving to and fro in delight and has plunged in union with delight”

Buddha

You don't want to see the truth, the reality face to face with the naked eye, you are looking at life through glasses of colourful imagination, that's why everything here seems to you to be a thing of beauty, of delight. Disease, old age and death—are these very beautiful, things of great delight? Ask one who is sick. Ask one who is ageing. Ask one who is on his deathbed. Do you know what the sufferer says? Poets' fancy cannot reveal the truth.

Lao-tze

The fancy of the sorrowful sufferer also cannot reveal the truth—the feeling of the sufferer too is a fancy, but a fancy of ignorance. Rather the fancy of the poet reaches the vicinity of truth. Flowers bloom, wither away, fall off—what is there in it to afflict us? Flowers fall off in order to create new life, to give way to new flowers. One goes, another comes, the one who goes is the one who returns. This uninterrupted movement, this endless journey—this is known as “Tao”, the way, the ever-flowing stream of joy; on its breast we rise, blossom, sink and rise

again. On this great path, the intense delight of birth is known as pain, the intolerable happiness as sorrow.

Kung-fu-tze

Here I would like to side with Buddha. To say that everything of life is full of delight is a hyperbole. If the afflicted one is told that this is only superabundance of happiness and not affliction—that does not lessen in the least the affliction of the sufferer; he hardly remains in a position to appreciate such a wonderful joke. Affliction is there, a lot of affliction is there in life. Otherwise life would not have been life at all. Then again, where am I to go like Buddha, leaving this life alone? All of man's faith and work is with this life. Affliction is present, no doubt; that is the reality of life—but we mustn't be perturbed, we must endure and strictly follow the path of duty. This is the manly attitude. Life's path is full of thorns but I have the inner power, the strength of mind to meet them.

Lao-tze

What is this inner power or this strength of mind? What is that experience by whose grace life's resistances won't seem to be resistances any more? I say, it is not the seeing of the eye—the eye sees piecemeal, one thing at a time and that too the gross concrete form but man is much greater than his eyes. There dwells in him a consciousness which, once awakened, changes completely all the seeings of his little eye. This vast consciousness is the true reality of man and that is full of delight. It is only when man looks through his narrow vision that he feels as if all this grief and pain and suffering and evil etc. exists. But that is not the real healthy vision—that is a wrong seeing, a perverted outlook.

Buddha

I too say the same—this life, this creation is a relative truth. In fact the whole of this life-stream is made, as you say, of a small vision. Dissolve this small vision and life also will crumble, all suffering will cease to exist. This dissolution, this cessation is the ultimate goal of man. It is futile to ask whether life is full of delight or not. I understand that where life ceases, there may not be anything else, but that is peace; that is the needful truth for man.

Lao-tze

Not in the cessation of life but in its fullness lies the complete truth. Even if you want peace, there is no necessity to go out of life. There is no sense at all in destroying the eye because of its limited vision; strive to open your third eye behind these physical eyes, then you will see, even with these physical eyes, this world and life taking a transformed look. You will perceive the complete whole in each piece, the eternity in each moment.

Kung-fu-tze

I don't know where life ends, nor do I understand how man who is a fraction of it can grasp it integrally. Man is man with his manhood made up of vices and virtues. I am not eager to take part in a useless debate as to what will happen, and where, after the abolition of his manhood. What's the use of showing to man a castle in the air? Show him what he should do with his manhood and day-to-day life, what his duty is in the time and space fixed for him on the earth. The attitude with which you judge man gives the impression as if man were an ethereal creature, complete and fulfilled in itself. But it is not so. Man lives collectively—his fulfilment is commingled to a great extent with the fulfilment of the society. And this problem is the most pressing problem, for it is the problem of the present. You are racking your brain for what will happen in future without uttering a word about the provisions of today. I have no such leisure—if I can provide a solution for the immediate necessity of man at the moment, I shall deem myself successful.

Buddha

If man could have been happy with that, possibly I would have trod your way. But that is not so. Man, even though a man of society, thinks it to be a bondage and wants to surpass it, is that not so? Man wants a system, a solution which is not only for today but for all time to come. Even after satisfying all the demands and cravings of the body and mind, of the family and society, there remains in him an ever-burning question: "Then what?"

Lao-tze

No relation whatsoever of world and life is a bondage, if we can find the vaster relation, the relation beyond relation which underlies all relations. Not exclusively within life, nor again exclusively without, the problem of man is a simultaneous play between these two.

IN MEMORIAM

A PERSONAL TRIBUTE TO KRISHNALAL BHATT

**“All that denies must be torn out and slain
And crushed the many longings for whose sake
We lose the One for whom our lives were made.”**

Savitri

THIS he copied out in bold, unornamented letters, almost one inch high, on an 8×12 inch white piece of art-board. Under this firm resolve, the Mother wrote “Blessings” and then put Her signature.

He kept the card beside Her photograph and Sri Aurobindo’s in the book-shelf on his table. And there stands against it even today a peacock feather symbolising Victory. It was the shape of this feather that inspired the signature he used to place on his paintings: Victory to the Divine Mother!

In August 1933, he once and for all left the family he was born in, to join for ever the Mother’s eternal, all-inclusive Family

On 5th January this year, he suffered a massive heart-attack. For an eighty-four year old body, weakened by numerous illnesses, it cannot have been a light affair, but his face betrayed no struggle, only showed his usual serene detachment. Then, as was his wont, he did not allow the presence of others to distract him from the ONE for whom our lives are made. Quietly he slipped away.

As he lay on the cot in his room on Epiphany Day, one could see that his body had grown young, as do the bodies of all children of the Mother at that stage of transition. But, in addition, he seemed to be soaring upward, his limbs redolent of the young upward-rising figure of Joy he had once painted Out of a great uplifting Fire, the figure ascends the skies of God. The painting carries this inscription, penned in November 1956, in the Mother’s hand.

“Without care for Time, without fear for Space, surging out purified from the flames of the ordeal, we shall fly without stop towards the realisation of our Goal, the Supramental Victory.”

SANJAY

SAMADHI EPIPHANY

The author, Ariel Browne, is a psychotherapist in private practice in Atlanta, Georgia, in the U.S.A. She has seen auras and possessed clairvoyant (or occult) vision all her life. She is doing Ph.D research in Psychology at the Ashram, December 1989-April 1990.

APPROACHING the Samadhi of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, one takes a leap into the mystical unknown. One can be assured of Their presence because it is dynamically, palpably there. But one never knows quite what the quality of each visit will be precisely because Their presence is so dynamic. And one's very approach adds a committed, and vulnerable, integer. Their Love is assured us; the dance of "US" is ever evolving and open. Isn't this partly why we go to the Samadhi?

The approach to the Samadhi on Jan. 1, each year has a different quality. First, it is traditional at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram to meditate collectively at the Samadhi early in the morning, as the first day of the new year rises. Heralding the dawn, and the new year, at 6.00 a.m. is Sunil's music, originally composed for this occasion as a loving annual paean to Mother.

I too approach this annual New Year's meditation at the Samadhi with anticipation along with hundreds of others. But I am a visitor to the Ashram. This is a first for me. And I am bringing my gift of clairvoyant vision wondering if the exquisite light-energy phenomena which I see around the Samadhi will be different today.

It is recommended by the Ashram that if one wishes to have a seat in the large central courtyard around the Samadhi one must arrive early in the morning. I arrive with many others, both Westerners and Indians, at 4.45 a.m. We all, hundreds, slowly find places to sit on pavement, on verandah, on soil and steps. As always, around the Samadhi and despite being hundreds strong, there is silence. Incense wafts its sweet smoke in the wind. Many make their way directly to the Samadhi itself to pray, stand; kneel. Slowly, slowly the sky light grows despite thick clouds. But none of this peaceful appearance reflects the tremendous phenomenon which is building, that dynamic energy of Them which I feel even as I cycle to the Ashram this morning.

Two extraordinary things. First, the gathering of crows in the Service Tree, the branches of which overreach the entire Samadhi courtyard. All these branches are filling with crows, hordes of them. And many more keep coming in. Crows are ubiquitous in Pondicherry so their presence by itself is not so noteworthy. But *hundreds* of crows, pushing each other out of the branches so that they, flapping and cawing, are pushed down toward the crowd onto the lattice beams which run across the courtyard? This rouses my curiosity. Why are they here?

Second, compelling and extraordinary aurally (I have not seen this before) is a huge stream of vertical energy through the Samadhi which manifests as both direct and powerful yet soft and columnar. It isn't in the least frightening. Its locus is the Samadhi itself but it is directed deeply into the earth, to the very core, playing upon it. And it is simultaneously directed celestially, rising upward to a point which cannot be determined. Even clairvoyant vision, extended, cannot follow it. This column is extraordinarily beautiful and awe-inspiring. One has the sense that it is purifying since it is so straight and brilliant with a fiery course in behaviour, fierce and sweet. Its force, shape and colour all indicate unitive power: blue-white-crystalline, indomitable. However, it is not directly affecting anyone's energy field in the courtyard. The column involves just the Samadhi. I am compelled by the anticipation of how it will develop; how it will involve us.

At 5.45 a.m., delicate sitar and tabla ragas begin broadcasting as a preamble to Sunil's music. There is somehow a hush in the crowd. Just the silent rushing and fierce cry of the column. The lights in the Ashram go off. And just then, for one millisecond, the column brightens and tenses to an unbelievable force but completely contained. My breath stops completely. It is so strong: a sword. But out of time... and then the most unimaginable sudden widening of the column. Beyond sight it changes. Instantaneously! It simply is!.. a lowering into compassion and revelatory tenderness as if Love itself, the very essence, bends over the crowd, the Ashram, from heart to heart leaning with tenderness and evocation. And the music begins....

It is such perfection, such an unhumanly perfect orchestration that my body forgets itself. Like a child I am caught in the palm of Love, lifted by Music itself, working together in an embrace of swelling compassion and inclusion. The light has changed color absolutely. Now it is a warm soft, *soft* gold-yellow. And the music of Sunil, rising and receding, yet each rise into a crescendo of yearning almost beyond sensibility.

Involuntarily I begin to weep. A rather strange weeping: convulsive. A release of old longings and vested needs I had long forgotten. It rises in my chest with spasms. Around me, others too seem to be weeping. Quietly, handkerchiefs are being pulled out and held to faces. As I watch, all around the courtyard area comes a wave of release, like a sigh which is collectively expelled, and very much in concert with the music. As it recedes, the roll of release comes. As it rises there is a lapse back into the inner self, the individual self. And then... strange little formations begin to arise. At first just one or two, but then *en masse* these formations begin rising from bodies all over the courtyard, responding to the provocative tenderness and pulling-toward-itself of the Love and the pulsing, passionate collaboration of the music. The thought-forms (beings) which arise from the massed crowd are quite reptilian, not-beautiful things of the Sub-conscious: dark, snake-like stuff in forms which under other circumstances would

be repellent but here are captured, held by the Force. These are all rising into the sweet and finer air above and around us. As they rise, slowly, by ones and twos, the crows begin to flap away as if satisfied, finished. At the same time all the bodies around me begin to release sharp, acrid odours. Like those which can be released in strong physical exertion if the body is toxic. But this group is still, if in a somewhat nervous excitation.

Not everyone responds in this involuntary fashion. The collaboration of refined Love and music is compelling and most people are responding in a cellular and visceral way

Just before 6.15 a.m., a most delicate drift of rain begins to descend on all of us. Just a touch, a lightness, to substantiate, if you will, the blessing of reception and care which has contained us all on the body of the earth. And the crows continue to leave, as the carrion thoughts and odors, the subconscious formations, rise into transformative Love. As if their job is done: they have gotten what they came for.

The gentle rain continues. The exquisite music ends, as if it too has completed its work. And slowly, thoughtfully, the great crowd rises to leave. I sit for a time, noting that the odours have completely gone, as if they had never been

But the Love remains, exactly as it was, still so completely covering and accepting us: golden, tender, vastly kneeling vast. And so to each heart, each being, that touch.

As I leave I feel very vulnerable. There is still a spasm of weeping in my chest, a feeling that if I do not master myself I could again break into weeping. It is right there, a poignant memory in the chest. But this is not about weeping. Weeping is there, a prologue, but a great height is there also. A height of release, of surrender of the old, of victory by giving to Love and accepting Love's Grace. Of being willingly possessed in a perfection of Love.

Outside the Ashram is a huge crowd of people who look at us leaving, it seems, as if we are the chosen people.

Such quiet reigns. Such inward turned eyes. Such pensive faces. A new place for us. . . and then it begins to rain in earnest.

(Since 1983, when I first visited the Samadhi and noticed the supernormal energy dynamic there I have been keeping abreast, clairvoyantly, of what is developing. I cannot describe from before 1983, but since I began looking there has been a triple phenomenon: the numinous presence of gold, white and blue radiation from the Samadhi itself radiating out for about 9 feet in every direction, into the earth as well. This is the "field" of Samadhi pneuma which is very dynamic in energy. Then, above the Samadhi, both about 5 feet tall and also enormous, dually, there is the intertwining, dancing twin flames of the HE/SHE. This is an emanation of pure delight and joy, dancing and intertwining perpetually. This

beautiful flame is usually gold and green but iridescent in brilliance and also encompassing, most delicately and lightly within itself, every other color

Third is the enormous field of Their "working," one could say This is a concrete *BEING* which is alive and dynamic and effecting a work which we don't yet have words to describe It is vast and in partnership as it works in many dimensions Its power, its life, its force, its field is clear as total Lovingness. This field is most of all blue and white but it has a delicious pulling in of gold and then out again like a play which hurts to perceive but is delight beyond imaginable delight

These are all representative of what could be described as Their subtle dynamic forms with enormous power to effect)

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TO A POET

His voice resonates a strange delight
Effluent from a mystic cavern's deep—
A soul that has scaled Eternity's height
Yet never got lost in its blissful sleep
He has embraced our earth and its pain
That the cry of clay be not in vain
But by his touch heaven's splendour gain.
He draws life's curves with the Spirit's hand
Giving them glints from Truth's own land,
Secrets of a gold his wide eyes scan.
His youthful zest belies his age
I knew not so true was the scriptural page
That said, ' In His likeness God made man.'

VIKAS BAMBA

BEFORE THE DAY IS DONE

THE Dawn was born, and the little world rejoiced.
God's graces were strewn over the cradled glory,
Angels chanted the Heavenly Child's heraldry
And the Sun's kindly light cast its blessings.

The Morn tip-toed in, healthy pink and sparkling bright,
Wide-eyed with wonder, gay as a humming-bird;
Heavy with the nectars of Youth's Eternal Spring,
Weaving a web of joy and enchantment everywhere

The Noon pounced suddenly, hot, humid and all-demanding
Sinews are bent to back-breaking toil;
Endless chores belabour the mind and body.
Stresses and strains stretch the fibres of the spirit beyond limit

The Afternoon gratefully melts into a mellowed evening
Thunders subside, the cooling Sun smiles, and all's well
The boat has weathered all the storms
Deeds are done, sweat's honey-dew is gathered

The tyranny of Time has taken its toll,
But the Soul is unscathed, purged with acts of goodness and
beatitude,
And tempered with the strength of Felicity and Truth
"Well done, be in peace," writes the Scribe in the Day's
chronicle.

Now is the time to rest and reside in the temple of God,
And dedicate Life's evening at the Holy feet of the Lord.
The lamp of devotion is lit. Divinity is beckoning you,
And you shall be one with Him before the day is done

VIREN

THE SECRET OF SECRETS: ITS MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE GITA

(Continued from the issue of March 1990)

B. The True Teaching of the Vedanta (Contd)

WHEN we turn to the Upanishads for texts affirming the dual relationship between the two Purushas, they are easily identifiable. The Mundaka teaches that the formless Purusha *amūrtah puruṣa*, is the Self of all beings, *sarva-bhūtāntrātmā*. The dual relationship between the two Purushas is also mentioned in the Brhadaranyaka which says that they are united with each other as in the case of a woman and a man in close embrace, *yathā strīpumāmsau samparivaktau*. Here man and woman respectively stand for the Purusha in his poise as the immutable Self and the Purusha in his poise as the Self involved in the becomings of Prakṛiti. Elsewhere the Upanishad expresses the same idea without using figurative language. It speaks of the formed and the formless, the mortal and the immortal as the two forms of Brahman, *dve vāva brahmano rūpe*¹. Since they are mentioned as the two forms of one Brahman, the obvious aim of the Upanishad is to teach that they are a dual status of one universal reality.

The Gita's assertion that the immutable Purusha is the one Self of all beings in the world drives us to conclude that the two Purushas are not only a dual status of one universal existence but point towards the existence of a supreme Purusha of whom they are but two cosmic expressions. It is in this context that we have to understand the rest of the Gita's teaching on the doctrine of the supreme Purusha.

Apart from the two Purushas, the Gita brings to our notice the existence of a third known as the Uttama Purusha. What exactly is the nature of this supreme Purusha? How does He stand in relation to the other two in the world? This Purusha is other than the immutable and the mutable, *anyah*, for its original form is described as the unmanifest immutable, *avyakto'akṣarah*. However, it does not mean that the supreme Purusha is a separate principle opposed to the immutable and the mutable, for He is other in the sense of exceeding the limitations imposed by them and does not deny them as his real expressions in the world. He is present in the whole world, in the immutable as well as in the mutable, *sarvamīdam tatam*²; but His presence is not limited to either of them or both, *aītah, uttamah*. He is free not only in exceeding the world as the unmanifest immutable but also in extending Himself in the whole world as the all-pervasive principle, *sarvatragam*³. It is in this context that we have to

¹ *Brhad* 2-3-1

² *The Gita*, 2-17 ³ *Ibid* , 12-3

understand the Gīta's words which occur close on the heels of its reference to the transcendent position of the supreme Puruṣa: "The imperishable Lord enters into the three worlds and upbears them" (15-17). Therefore the Gīta's doctrine of the supreme Puruṣa is not a doctrine of three Puruṣas but of one Puruṣa in three aspects

We are now in the last stage of our search for the idea of the supreme Puruṣa in the Upaniṣads. So far our attempt has been fruitful in laying our hands on the relevant texts bearing on the two Puruṣas and their mutual relationship. But final success in our endeavour depends on the existence of the vital texts which deal with the transcendental Puruṣa. In fact, when the Brhadāranyaka speaks of the two forms of the Brahman, it suggests by implication that there is a supreme Brahman of whom the two forms are but two cosmic manifestations. Fortunately, this idea is brought to the surface in other Upaniṣads, particularly in the Mundaka and the Svetasvatara.

The Mundaka refers to the existence of a divine and formless Person, *divyo hyamūrtah puruṣah*, beyond the supreme immutable, *akṣarāt parataḥ parah*. But this supreme Puruṣa is not only present in the mutable forms of Nature but also in the immutable self of all beings, *viśvasya dhārinī*. In other words, the supreme Puruṣa is present in the world, although He goes beyond the world as the transcendent reality. In the Svetasvatara the idea of the supreme Puruṣa has acquired a prominent position. It speaks of this Puruṣa as the supreme immutable Brahman, *paramam.. brahma.. akṣaram*. He is beyond the world which is a combination of the mutable and the immutable, *samyuktam etat ksaram akṣaram ca.. viśvam*. But at the same time He is the Lord who supports this world, *bharate viśvam iśah*. Therefore, to know this supreme Brahman is to know Him in His triple aspect as the Lord who is beyond the world, as the Lord who supports the immutable on the one hand and the mutable on the other, *trayam yadā vindate brahman etat*. For the supreme Brahman is extended everywhere as the all-pervasive reality, not only beyond the world but also in the world, not only in the immutable but also in the mutable *sarvavyāpi*. That they are not three different entities, but a triple aspect of the same Brahman is brought out forcefully by the word *trayam*. That Brahman is threefold is reiterated in another text also, *trividham brahman*.

The unique significance of the Svetasvatara consists not in giving us a comprehensive view of Brahman, for we get such a view in the Iṣa Upaniṣad also, but in developing the idea of the supreme Brahman in its triple aspect from the teachings expounded in the past, *purākalpe*, and presenting it as the crowning knowledge of the Vedānta, *vedānte paramam guhyam*. In it all previous thoughts, all suggestions and unspoken aspects of the earlier utterances are taken up, elaborated and stated in a large synthetic spirit.

In this venture the help and guidance we received from the Gīta made our task relatively easier. We find that there are three advantages in the Gīta, first of

all, all the essential components of the main idea *i.e.*, the supreme Purusha, have been stated very clearly and systematically; secondly, the Gita itself is a work which is Vedantic in origin and spirit; thirdly, there is an amazingly close parallelism between the teachings of the Gita and those of the Upanishads. On account of these special advantages, we were able to proceed steadily and methodically in our work and reach the destination. Our initial faith in the Gita's claim, therefore, was not ill-founded; nor was the effort in vain. Now we are admitted into the very heart of the Upanishads and allowed to see even as the ancient sages saw the world and God.

As is evident from the Isha Upanishad, the ascetic tendency with its exclusive emphasis on *aksara brahma* began to assert itself even before the appearance of the Gita. The Brahmavadins became the authorised exponents of this exclusive view. The idea of the supreme Purusha in the Upanishads lost its significance and had to give way to the less important one that appeals to the ascetic urge of man. Even the Gita had to settle accounts with the asceticism of the Brahmavadins, as is seen from its references to *sannyāsa*. The Gita has developed the idea of the supreme Purusha and reaffirmed it in the face of the rigid attitude of the Brahmavadins. It is indeed a bold attempt on the part of the Gita to go beyond these authorised exponents of the Vedanta. Speaking of this aspect of the Gita's teaching, Sri Aurobindo writes. "It .. passes boldly beyond the Veda and the Upanishads as they were taught by their best authorised exponents and affirms a teaching of its own which it has developed from them, but which may not be capable of being fitted in within the four corners of their meaning as ordinarily interpreted by the Vedantins."¹

(To be continued)

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, p 85

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of March 1990)

THE Nineteenth Century saw the birth of the greatest leaders of the Indian Renaissance. These leaders may be said in general to have had a “New Dispensation”. Here Keshab Chandra Sen first stood out. This New Dispensation took a special phase in the Brahma Samaj. The Nineteenth-Century educated Indians could hardly conceive the power of the Spirit. They were products of English education and most of them were rationalists. About them Sri Aurobindo says: “The nineteenth century in India was imitative, self-forgetful, artificial. It aimed at a successful reproduction of Europe in India. . . If we had succeeded in Europeanising ourselves, we would have lost for ever our spiritual capacity, our intellectual force, our national elasticity and power of self-renovation.”¹

During this critical period of India the Brahma Samaj and the Arya Samaj had a beneficial and revivifying effect upon Hindu Society and both attacked the main body of traditional Hinduism and their appeal attracted a certain section of English-educated people and certain areas of Hindu Society. The mind of India under the influence of Western ideas had been torn up from its own roots for a while. The Brahma Samaj could not give affirmative answers to the questions of intellectual agnostics, believing only in Western positivism. During that critical moment of history, the quest of the intellectual group was more than an idle curiosity. Their minds were searching for a truth which is eternal and universal. In their view the Brahma Samaj was blindly groping in ignorance, and arriving at best at a half-truth. An organic and fundamental revival of Hinduism, however, came from within the general tradition of Hinduism. It was destined to work in the life of two of the most remarkable figures in the religious history of the world—Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. The very grain of Hinduism was realised, relived and revealed by Sri Ramakrishna. He could prove the existence of God by the intense aspiration of his soul and could see even in an image of stone the living presence of God and show it to others. At that time scepticism prevailed in the society. Some educated people doubted everything, including the existence of God and believed only in the world of their own self and senses.

Sri Aurobindo has expounded the luminous work of Sri Ramakrishna in the following words: “When scepticism had reached its height the time had come for spirituality to assert itself and establish the reality of the world as a manifestation of the spirit, the secret of the confusion created by the senses, the magnificent possibilities of man and the ineffable beatitude of God. This is the work whose consummation Sri Ramakrishna came to begin and all the development of the previous two thousand years and more since Buddha appeared has been a

preparation for the harmonisation of spiritual teaching and experience by the Avatar of Dakshineswar.”²

What was needed at that hour of Indian history was the vision of the harmony of all religions and of all the paths leading towards the same goal. This new thought started through the life of Keshab Sen's New Dispensation. But before starting it he met Sri Ramakrishna who had already gone through all the principal religious disciplines of the world and had arrived at the great truth that all religions lead to the same divine goal. He was in full possession of spiritual power. Keshab Sen's enlightened mind was struck by Sri Ramakrishna's unostentatiousness. Sri Ramakrishna broke conventional Hinduism's ignorance and obscurity.

Sri Aurobindo says: “The resistance of the conservative element in Hinduism, tamasic, inert, ignorant, uncreative though it was, saved the country by preventing an even more rapid and thorough disintegration than actually took place and giving respite and time for the persistent national self to emerge and find itself. It was in religion first that the soul of India awoke and triumphed. There were always indications, always great forerunners, but it was when the flower of educated youth of Calcutta bowed down at the feet of an illiterate Hindu ascetic, a self-illuminated ecstatic and ‘mystic’ without a single trace or touch of the alien thought or education upon him that the battle was won. The going forth of Vivekananda marked out by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake not only to survive but to conquer. Afterwards when the awakening was complete, a section of the Nationalist movement turned in imagination to reconstruction of the recent pre-British past in all its details.”¹

Sri Aurobindo says further: “The perfect expression of Hindu spirituality was the signal for the resurgence of the East. Mankind has long been experimenting with various kinds of thought, different principles of ethics, strange dreams of a perfection to be gained by material means, impossible millenniums and humanitarian hopes. Nowhere has it succeeded in realising the ultimate secret of life. Nowhere has it found satisfaction. No scheme of society or politics has helped it to escape from the necessity of sorrow, poverty, strife, dissatisfaction from which it strives for an outlet; for whoever is trying to find one by material means must inevitably fail. The East alone has some knowledge of the truth, the East alone can teach the West, the East alone can save mankind. Through all these ages Asia has been seeking for a light within, and whenever she has been blessed with a glimpse of what she seeks, a great religion has been born, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Mahomedanism with all their countless sects. But the grand workshop of spiritual experiment, the laboratory of the soul has been India, where thousands of great spirits have been born in every generation who were content to work quietly in their own souls, perfect

their knowledge, hand down the results of their experiments to a few disciples and leave the rest to others to complete.”⁴

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCES

- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 2, pp 36-37
- 2 *Ibid* , Vol 1, p 799
- 3 *Ibid* Vol 2, p 37
- 4 *Ibid* , Vol 1, pp 800-801

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

(Continued from the issue of March 1990)

Shuka Nadi

ONE of the most esoteric addresses in India is 33, 5th Main Road, Chamarajpet, Bangalore. Here we find a mystical library with 3665 volumes, each having 365 leaves. Pandit Jyotishacharya Ramakrishna Shastri keeps alive a tradition of "Shuka Nadi" which is said to be 5000 years old. The leaves are renewed through copying every 800 years by the respective family in charge of them.

When B. Schmidt, an economic adviser from Munich, entered the library, he was received by Shri Sastri in a kind of traditional robe. The German only gave the data of his birth to the Pandit and no other information. The Indian scholar went into the archives and came back twenty minutes later with two palm leaves, carrying an inscription written in minute Old Tamil characters, almost unreadable for untrained eyes.

The Pandit then started reading from the first leaf which contained details about Schmidt's past life. The latter was told, to his great amazement, about his three marriages and the recent death of his third wife. He heard significant details about his professional career as well as his private life. The second leaf contained information about his future. He was told, for instance, that he would reach the age of 87.

B. Schmidt was not the only visitor who had this astonishing experience. In fact, the palm leaf library contains precise past and future data of all those who come there as seekers. By some occult arrangement the esoteric information inscribed on the leaves exactly refers to those persons who come to seek it. The name of the visitor is noted on the leaf and it is stated which of his close relatives are still alive on the day of his visit. If the ancient Rishis who made these predictions had to deal with a profession they did not know of in their times, a locomotive driver, for instance, they wrote: "In charge of a device which enables transportation of many persons over long distance with the help of vapour or other energies." Another German seeker, who went there, was told he would marry a certain German lady on a certain date. He did so. At the time of the prediction he had not even known his bride.

Nevertheless, the science of Shuka Nadi (named after the ancient sage Shuka) does not propose that everything is predetermined fate. It provides a kind of reading of the hidden blueprint of a human being and shows his basic faculties and possibilities. Its aim is to help him make the best of his life by living in accordance with the divine plan for him. It advises him on his personal and

family life, finances, and gives him methods for correcting wrong thinking, through processes such as mantra sadhana. Assisted by these data and methods, man should be able to face less difficulties in his material life and dedicate more time to his spiritual evolution.

The mystical palm leaves kept in that Bangalore library are 48 cm long and 6 cm wide. The script is just 1 mm high. Who knows how much knowledge of the future may lie hidden there, in only slightly transcribed language! Evidently, those ancient Rishis had developed a kind of knowledge which surpasses our understanding, freely travelling over the boundaries of Time and Space. Whatever their race, those sages knew the important data in advance and noted them down. Incredible, but true—if the information which Johannes v. Buttlar gives in his latest bestseller *Zeitruß* (Herbig Verlag 1989) is correct.

Solar Energy (II)

Some first basic information on major break-throughs in solar energy was given in the issue of February '89, p 149. Meanwhile, more data have been published on the same as well as new projects

The photovoltaic modul of the Sandia National Laboratories in California has set a new world record, by transforming 20,3% of the received sunlight directly into electricity. Thus, it is three times more effective than conventional cells. The system consists of twelve plastic lenses which focus the light with up to a hundredfold power on twelve silicium cells. To further increase the light absorption, the surface of the collector has been given an anti-reflective layer of magnesium fluord. The modul is to be ready for mass production in less than three years. According to the inventors, Clement Chiang and Elizabeth Richards, it is inexpensive and does not require any sophisticated technology.

*

Even while photovoltaic cells directly transform light into electric current, the method of *solar farms* uses an indirect process. Numberless parabolic mirrors, having the shape of a large curved gutter, focus the sunlight on a long line of tubes in which oil is heated up to 400 C. The oil passes its energy on to a conventional water-steam-system to create electric current.

The largest commercial solar power station of the world, using this technology, went into operation at the end of 1989 in the Californian Mojave desert. It was constructed in less than eight months and will generate about 80 megawatts for 40,000 desert dwellings. The price for the electric current is nearly the same as that charged by German coal or nuclear power stations.

The solar farms were found to be rather robust. Earthquakes of up to 6,5 on the Richter scale destroyed no more than a hundred out of a few hundred

thousand segments. High speed sand storms could also be faced without damage, so it is really an ideal investment for countries in the sun belt. India is one of the nations which have shown concrete interest in these parabolic mirrors produced by a German company. A complete 80 megawatts system is projected to cost around 230 million dollars. And what investors get for it, is absolutely clean energy, produced on an installation which is expected to last 30 years, with relatively small service and maintenance requirements.

*

Three researchers in the North German town Kiel are developing a solar cycle (*Solarmofa*). This power cycle will operate at a very low noise level and without exhaust fumes, reaching a maximum speed of 45 km/h. The prototype weighs a rather heavy 39 kg because of the batteries, but this is to be reduced to no more than 20 kg. One battery charge will enable you to drive one hour, then you have to park the cycle in the sun or take power from an electric outlet, if necessary. The batteries are kept in the saddle-bags. This *Solarmofa* is projected to cost around 1200 to 1400 DM.

Sources: *Der Spiegel* (16-10-89; 15-1-1990); *Die Zeit* (12-1-90)

THE TIDES

A NOVELLA

(Continued from the issue of March 1990)

X

WHILE entering the Art House I asked, “Deepubabu, is it for the work of the ideal village that Saroj-da has gone abroad?” “Yes, of course, apart from him three other delegates from Madras, Maharashtra and Kerala have gone. Because in those places also the work of the ideal village has started ” It was a revelation to me, I had already sent a telegram to Bose-da. Now I have thought of writing a letter to him in detail.

I wondered at seeing the play of a soft-red light inside the house. No, it was not from any electric bulb, but seemed to be the projected rays of the setting sun by some special device. In fact, the light was reflected from a quite big and exquisite image of ‘Bharat Mata’ placed on an altar at the opposite end. On both sides of it there hung on the wall two nicely framed writings in bold and beautiful Bengali script. One of them was the national song ‘VANDE MATARAM’, the other a special kind of poem. the English rendering of which would be somewhat as follows:

“What is this query quivering in the common mind today?
Have they not heard of the Rishis of yore, the Vedic Hymns and the Mystic
Fire?
Do they not see the primeval sea joyously dancing around me
with the crown of white peace on the head?

Above, the mighty Himalayas overlook me, the abode of gods and
god-seekers,
the upholder of the flow of the holy Ganges down to the thirsty soil below
with atoms vibrant with green desire.

I have been adored from time immemorial as the Mother of peace and
compassion
Yet behold the irony of my fate, the torture I undergo throughout
centuries.
History has been written in letters of blood on my motherly limbs—
arson, looting, cruelty and killing!
Blood oozes out from each and every pore of my body of truth!

Even today the selfish butchers fight tooth and nail
 to possess and monopolise me part by part!
 It never occurs to their bestial mind that whenever they will renounce
 their evil design to devour, I shall nourish them all with the nectar
 of my SOUL.

At the taste of a drop of it their motive of selfish possession
 will vanish into thin air and their life will ever yearn for vast infinity!
 And finally a time will come when, dipped in the ocean of eternal Love,
 they will discover the law of the supreme nature, calm, pure, perfect and
 divine

Thus in the long run the mission of Mother India and her sons
 in the world of ugly strife and conflict will be achieved.”

As I finished reading, my head reeled at the impact of the poem I uttered the words ‘the nectar of my soul’ over and over again but they conveyed no tangible meaning to me. I remembered Bose-da to have uttered such words at times but then I had given no importance to them. Now I wondered who could be the writer of the poem? Was it Deepubabu, Smriti-di or someone else? I looked for Smriti-di and found her standing like a statue near the image of ‘Bharat Mata’. Perhaps she was waiting to say something, while Manju Devi with the villagers was observing the exhibited works of painting and sculpture, etc. Following my look Smriti-di said,

“Manju, let me tell you something about the works you see here Almost all of them have been done by our students and teachers In fact the system of education followed here is not simply academic and meant for reading books and passing examinations only. The students are not kept confined in the class room to read books or attend lectures. They are allowed to take up subjects and work according to their choice and propensities. Thus they learn handloom-work of Madurai, silk-culture of Murshidabad, clay-moulding of Krishnanagar, wood and woollen work of Kashmir and so on.

“Occasionally they go out touring to places like Ajanta, Elora, Konarak, Khajurao, etc. Unfortunately they cannot be provided, as they want, with the names, life-history, etc. of these artists and architects whose talent and genius were responsible for colossal and extraordinary creations in those places. For, those great selfless workers did not bother to keep their identity for posterity But so far as the life and work of the world-famous western artists and sculptors like Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael and others are concerned our students show a lot of interest and read about them

“Apart from these things we have here scope and facilities for learning dance and music, and practise athletics, gymnastics, swimming and all sorts of games.”

She stopped but the spirit and music of her voice lingered in the minds of the

listeners who seemed to be quite impressed. But in me a question bubbled and I could not but approach and ask her, "Your short speech is worth listening to but what about the study of modern science and technology here? You have not mentioned anything." "Of course there is scope for study of these subjects here. But I am not the right person to tell about them. Saroj-da could have told you; unfortunately he is out of station at present." At this point Asit-da called, "Smriti, we are already late, you know, we have to go to the other side of the village which we have not seen yet." "Oh yes, excuse me, Asit-da. I forgot, let us start at once."

On the way the villagers left our company one by one as there was nothing special for them to see in that part of the village. When all of them had gone Manju Devi neared Smriti-di and confided to her, "Smriti-di, seeing things here and listening to what you said I feel that I know nothing and have yet to learn a lot. Will you please make me a student here?" Smriti-di cast a deep intent look at her but said nothing. The reply came from Deepubabu, "Manju, your humility is praiseworthy but don't you know that it is not the students only who learn, the teachers also can learn if they so desire? So I shall request you to take charge of our English Department and relieve my mother from a part of her responsibility. You are an M.A. in English, this will be most appropriate for you."

Just as he finished Mr. Roy heaved a sigh and murmured, "It seems I am of no use here because in an ideal village litigation is out of the question." Patriot Kalishankar Roy replied, "Uma, please don't be impatient, wait till we meet Didi." Immediately Manju Devi exclaimed, "Pisima! does she stay here? But nobody told us about her." "No, we have not told you as we took it for granted that you had already guessed it. However, know it now that we are going to Pisima's house," said Deepubabu. At this Manju Devi quickened her steps and went much ahead of us but then had to stop as she did not know which way to go. This part of the village was mostly uninhabited and full of trees and bushes. So Deepubabu went forward and took the lead and led us even at a greater speed than Manju Devi. Pisima's house was in a lonely place with plenty of trees around giving it an air of ancient Tapovan (forest resort).

In the spacious courtyard Pisima sat surrounded by children, as if an old banyan tree amidst tender flower plants, telling them stories from the Purana or the Mahabharata. Seeing us she stood up and received us cordially. She then said, "Children, you can go home today, I shall tell you the unfinished story day after tomorrow." Now we started making pranam to her one by one. As Mr. Roy bowed down she observed, "Uma, how is it that you look older than your age? Anything wrong with you?" He fumbled but Manju Devi replied, "No, nothing wrong, Pisima, he started aging quickly after my mother's death." Deepubabu changed the topic. He said, "Pisima, Kakababu says that he is of no use here as there is hardly any litigation in an ideal village." Pisima's face brightened as she spoke. By virtue of her personality and intellect she looked fairly healthy and

beautiful even at this age. "Uma, you amuse me. Have you forgotten that you left home for fear of litigation, keeping helpless little Deepu at the mercy of his fate?" Mr. Roy lowered his head. "Oh no, Uma, I don't blame you, please don't misunderstand me. It is natural for gentle hearts to avoid quarrel and litigation. But one should not give up one's right out of fear. That was what Sri Krishna advised to Arjuna in the Gita during the battle of Kurukshetra."

"Yes, I understand, Didi. Now tell me if I can be of any service to the cause of the ideal village." "I think you can be of some use, but I don't know how. Perhaps your Jamaibabu can suggest something. Of course he is not here now, he stays in the farm house, a few miles away from here."

"What are you saying? Does Jamaibabu stay here? Didi, please excuse my curiosity. May I know how the change in him came about? He was dead against your work and ideology, was it not so?" "Yes, but he completely changed by the pressure of events, circumstances and surroundings." Pisma's smiling face turned grave and her eyes glittered with past memories. She continued, "It was the 'Quit India' movement of 1942. The big leaders were under arrest. But the hearts of common men were aflame with the spirit of violent revolution for the independence of India. Turmoil started throughout the length and breadth of the country. The Government took terribly brutal repressive measures, so much so that even your Jamaibabu, the protagonist of British rule, became bitterly aware of his folly. The rose-tinted glasses from his eyes dropped and he started seeing things in their true hue and perspective. But then it was too late and in despair he had no better means than to bite his own hands."

"Then to add fuel to the fire came the disastrous man-made famine, perhaps the worst of its kind in the world. One would find processions of skeleton-like hungry figures in streets, markets, cities and villages begging with feeble voices a handful of rice or a bowl of scum and failing to get even that, thousands died of hunger. The sight brought tears even to the most hard-hearted onlookers. Your Jamaibabu saw these corpses and suffered terribly with dumb helpless repentance. He also smelt the suffocating stench of the rotting food-stuff stocked in Government godowns. 'O Lord, save us from rotting and utilise us for the purpose for which we were made! Oh please save the lives of dying thousands.' The appeal came to him as a trident of Time (Mahakala) and pierced his heart through and through. He took to bed and a tug of war went on for months together between life and death. Finally life came out victorious and he stood up cured and purified, a completely changed man."

Mr. Roy was absorbed in thought, we looked at one another's face and then suddenly Manju Devi broke the silence and requested politely, "Pisma, why not let us go to see Psemashay tomorrow morning? I long to see him very much."

"Will you go? Very good. In fact I thought of requesting him to come here. But now I consider that it will be better if you go. In that case Uma can see and study everything on the spot and know how his service can be of use."

We were quite late in returning from Pisima's house. Jethaima was anxiously waiting with dinner ready for us. She said, "Oh, you have come after all! Now please don't delay any more, take your food and retire to bed as soon as possible. You have walked a lot and hardly taken any rest during the whole day."

Unlike lunch the dinner was sumptuous and the cooking superb. I wondered at Jethaima's efficiency in cooking and was about to praise her but then checked myself. She was grave and unconcerned and showed not the least interest to know about the quality of her cooking—as if it had been the most natural routine work for her. After dinner I went to the small room allotted for my sleep and found it very clean and tidy with a milk-white bed. There was a mini-window for ventilation and to see the nocturnal beauty of the ideal village.

I lay down on the cosy bed and relaxed but could not sleep. A kind of unidentified dissatisfaction disturbed my sleep. I tried in vain to pin-point the root cause of it. While coming in the train I had failed to understand Mr. Roy's strange psychology. Now I wondered that I could not decipher even that of my own. The more I tried to grasp the cause the more worried I became and my head got heated. I got up from the bed, helped myself to a glass of water from the kuja and sprinkled some on my eyes, face and neck. After pacing up and down for a while I went to bed again. This time I said to myself, "Look here, man, what are you here for? Mr. Roy and Manju Devi have come to see their own kith and kin and perhaps decided to settle down here. But you? You don't have the faith even in their work of the ideal village. According to you a few villages like this amidst hundreds of thousands of villages in India are like a few coloured bubbles in the vast expanse of sea-water. They can burst at any moment and disappear in the common mass." I went on thinking in this way and did not know when I fell asleep.

During sleep I dreamt. It was a dark night. I was travelling in a very fast-running train across a vast field. I gazed outside but could not see anything for a long time due to dense darkness. Suddenly it appeared that the darkness was gradually getting clearer and I observed that the horizon blushed faintly with the approach of dawn. Immediately I felt that the immortal India extending from Kailash to Kanyakumari was waking up from her slumber. A magic wind blew and the earth, sky and sea were laden with a mystic mood. The impact of it thrilled my body and mind and brought home to me the breath of the soul of India. Just then a hoarse hooting woke me up and I saw through the window a big owl sitting on the tree nearby. I looked at my watch, it was about 4.00 a.m. I got up from bed and went out to have a walk in the fresh morning air. It was an unprecedented experience, the feeling I had in the dream revived and flooded me with ecstasy and an understanding of the poem I had read in the Art House.

I reached the wide lawn leading to the reception office. Oh, what fine dew-soaked green grasses! My eyes feasted on them and the feet yearned to have

their touch I removed my sandals and stepped on them with bare feet. The touch brought home to me a rare sensation and my being sang spontaneously the famous Vedic lines: “মধু বাতায়তে, মধু ক্ষবন্তি সিদ্ধবঃ”—The English rendering would perhaps be like this—“The sweet wind blows according to the Truth and the sea exudes sweetness.”... I walked on aimlessly with the music of the lines ringing in my consciousness. After a while I found myself beside the big pond we had seen the day before. I looked towards the eastern sky beyond the sea of green paddy plants and waited for... the baby sun to rise. Meanwhile the presence of someone behind me made me turn round and I found that Asit-da was there. With a benevolent smile he asked, “How is it that you are here at this time, alone?”

“I came out for a morning walk and arrived here without my knowing it. And you? Have you also come for a morning walk?” “Oh no, I stay in the guest house beside the reception office at night. I saw you passing and followed.” “You have done well, we can appreciate the beauty of the rising sun together.” “Oh no, that is not possible, we will have to return just now. We have to go to the Farm House, perhaps they are waiting for us.”

I had no mind to go to the Farm House. Still I accompanied him without a word—because it was a great privilege and pleasure to keep company with a patriot-saint like him. While going I thought, yes it was a pleasure no doubt but I have to leave the place perhaps today itself. The earliest I could join the office, the better it would be for me. But the problem was: how to take permission from Mr. Roy and others? Suddenly Asit-da observed, “Why are you anxious to leave the place so soon? Stay, enjoy yourself, observe and let us have the pleasure of your company for a few days more.”

I understood that he was a thought-reader and replied, “I have to join my office as soon as possible. Moreover, I have to discuss a lot of things with Dr. Bose of Ghazipur, my best friend and adviser.” “That you can do by staying even here.” I was taken aback, what did he mean? Could I phone to him? Or were there other means? However, I waited for the clarification of the point without myself asking Asit-da anything. But he said nothing till we were back home. Seeing me with him Manju Devi exclaimed, “Strange, where did you disappear without saying anything to anybody? We are just starting for the Farm House, so please make haste and get ready.” I was hesitant but Asit-da replied, “Manju, he looks tired, please don’t press him to go if he is not willing to do so.”

What a mysterious man! He expressed the exact thing I had in my mind. Mentally thanking him I said, “Yes, I need a little rest, I could not sleep properly last night. You can start without me and let me know afterwards about your experience there.”

All left for the Farm House excepting Jethaima and myself. She came to me and felt my forehead with the back of her hand and remarked, “No, it’s nothing, a cup of hot tea will make you perfect.” She fetched me a cup of tea and said, “Please drink this and have a wash. In the meantime breakfast will be ready.”

‘No, Jethaima, I want to go without breakfast today. What I need most now is a little sleep.’ “Why, you can very well go to your room, the bed has been made afresh and sleep there as long as you like ”

I lay down relaxed on the bed and invoked the Goddess of sleep. This time she responded and I fell asleep even before I could count ten. My sleep broke with the mewling of a cat. I opened my eyes and saw a pretty white cat with yellow patches beside the ears sitting in front of me. It wistfully looked at me with half-closed dreamy eyes and mewed again. I felt an appeal in its sweet, soft, musical mewling, as if it said, “Won’t you eat? They have already started taking food Don’t you feel hungry?” In fact I was as hungry as a starving tiger. I looked at my watch. My God, it was about 2 p.m I had slept for such a long time! Led by the cat I went towards the kitchen. In the open kitchen-verandah all were eating and at the same time basking in the pleasant winter sun-rays. Jethaima was busy serving them. She said, “Oh, you have got up! very good, sit down, your plate is ready. I asked them not to disturb you.” “Thank you, Jethaima, food is better relished on a hungry stomach, I am terribly hungry. But I don’t see Deepubabu and Rasubabu; have they not returned from the Farm House?” “They returned earlier, finished their food and went for work,” replied Manju Devi.

“Now Manju Devi, please narrate in detail your experience in the Farm House so that I can visualise everything even without going there.” “No, I won’t tell you anything, why should I? But this much I can say that you have missed a lot by not going ” Jethaima smiled, perhaps she enjoyed the dialogue and added, “Manju says that she has never before seen a jolly, humorous and lovely old man like her Pisemashay.” Manju Devi joined in, “Yes, he is marvellous, you cannot find in him the slightest sign of what Deepuda has described in his diary. He is completely a different man, reborn, renewed and transformed.”

I looked at her glowing face and was about to say that by the magic influence of time she herself was going to change. But then I saw that Smriti-di was coming to our side. She came and asked about Deepu and Rasu. On hearing that they had already gone away for work she turned round to depart. I remembered that I also had to tell Deepubabu something regarding my going away from here and said, “I also want to meet Deepubabu for an urgent piece of work.” She said, “Is that so? Then let me wait till you finish your food.”

After food I started moving along with the adorable lady of my imagination in the direction from which early in the morning I had come with Asit-da, another extremely exceptional personality.

(To be continued)

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Themes in Contemporary Education, by *K. R. Ramachandran Nair*. Himalaya Publishing House, 'Ramdoot', Dr. Bhalerao Marg, Girgaon, Bombay-400 004. Pages 151, Price. Rs. 125.

"EDUCATION is a multi-directed activity that touches several vital points of the nation's existence and ethos. It is also an activity that should mould the individual as something more than a good citizen who slogs sincerely for his country. In its true sense, a good education system should serve both the temporal and spiritual aspirations of the individual in society," writes Prof. K. R. Ramachandran Nair in the preface to his second book on education. "From this point of view," he continues, "the contemporary Indian education scenario is far from satisfactory."

Prof. Nair's book throws light on the darker side of the Indian education system and suggests the various means by which the defects can be rectified. He focuses his attention also on some of the important issues that agitate the teachers, educational planners and administrators today. And the book running to 23 chapters gives a total coverage from preschool to higher education. However, his discussion gathers momentum when he takes up the issues concerning the elementary and secondary stages. Prof. Nair informs the readers not only about the two major ills that afflict our secondary educational system, but also furnishes the reasons for the failure of most schemes for educational development in the country.

Vocational education which is "looked upon as a panacea for the alarming growth of youth unemployment", is looked down upon by Prof. Nair. His sneer is not without its valid reasons: "Assuming that a vocational student gets excellent technical training, what are his prospects? He may join the middle level professional cadre or find out self-employment if adequate finances are available. As he is fit only for the first job, his job choice possibilities are generally limited, as his general education is meagre, his capacity to extend his abilities to the changing and advancing job situation is restricted. Thus vocational education marks him down to a particular track. In a developing economy still in the grip of scarcity and bitter job competition, education should impart adequate flexibility in the matter of job choice. Vocational education hardly does this."

Ever since the introduction of correspondence course education in our country, every Ram and Govind in the North, Kuppan and Subban in the South is a degree holder. A welcome change indeed. But how many of the degree holders deserve to be called so? Comments Professor Nair: "There is hardly any university education in our country which cannot be got through if the student is willing to exercise a modicum of intellectual effort. The Indian examination system is primarily designed for helping students pass examinations. Question

papers full of 'choices' exhibit a deliberate design to help even the dullest examinee to get through even the toughest examination."

It is no wonder that the Indians who go abroad in search of jobs are made to study again there and be worthy of the degree they hold. Chapters 10 and 11, dealing with "Making Degrees Respectable" and "Jobs Without Degrees" can easily serve as cud for any sensible thinker to chew. The author teaches us the art of discovering excellence in higher education, sets a new framework for students' unions, lays an elaborate code of conduct for teachers throughout the country and stipulates the ways and means of choosing a vice-chancellor. Prof. Nair is one among the rare species called "The Bold" who do not hesitate to call a fool a fool, come what may. Look at how he makes a dig at the Vice-chancellors who resorted to backdoor methods to occupy that post knowing fully well that the frontdoor could never open for them: "Today the vice-chancellors are a harassed lot as they are pushed about by politicians, the bureaucracy, students and teachers. This is mainly because the vice-chancellors themselves are more or less political appointments. It is not the academic experience, scholarship and integrity of the person that count in the appointment as vice-chancellors but political clout, skill and manipulation and flamboyance. Still the vice-chancellors are soon reduced to the level of nonentities by the combined harassment of the diverse elements that constitute the university system."

Prof K R. Ramachandran Nair's book deserves to be read by all those who are connected with the field of education. The author's ideas are bound to prick many an academician. What is after all truth if it fails to prick the guilty? If it pricks you, don't grumble. Instead take the right road to proper thinking and more proper action.

P. RAJA

Vers l'Avenir, issues of August and October 1989.

Mother India has received the August and October 1989 issues of *Vers l'Avenir*, the students' magazine of the SAICE. We are happy to note that, under a new editorial team, the magazine's pattern of improvement and innovation continues. The August issue is composed using the 'Ventura' desk-top publishing computer program, and printed out on a laser-printer; in the October issue colour appears for (we believe) the first time—appropriately in a constellation of contributions from 7-year old aeronauts. Apart from poems, puzzles, prose-pieces and stories in English and French, both issues also contain interesting interviews and factual articles: the one on the Masi Magham festival by Priya in the August issue and that on Krill by Himangshu in the October one are specially interesting. There is also, in August, the record of a thought-provoking

discussion between some 3rd-year physics students of 'Knowledge' and their teacher R. Y. Deshpande about future developments in physics.

Some small criticisms: It's a nice idea to ask for variations on a famous line of poetry... but it would be advisable to ask the participants to first read the poem from which the line comes; not only might the variations then be more varied—the line itself would not be so readily misquoted. I am referring to the item "What is this life, full of care?" What W. H. Davies originally wrote, of course, was, "What is this life, if, full of care,/ We have no time to stand and stare?" His simple yet subtle verse, which has suffered so much from over-quotation, would reward re-reading.

It would be nice too, if we were able to keep track of *Vers l'Avenir's* progress through the years by a system of volume and issue numbers such as more formal periodicals use: a volume number for each year, for example, and then each number brought out during that year numbered serially. Then we would be able to trace how many years the magazine has achieved, and be able to check whether we had seen each issue or not.

There is room for improvement too in the correctness of the writing, both in English and in French.

Nevertheless, we congratulate the hard-working editors and all the contributors; and wish *Vers l'Avenir* a long and vigorous life, under the banner, "toujours mieux, toujours en avant!"

AMS

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

26th Annual Conference

13 August 1989

(Continued from the issue of March 1990)

Readings from Sri Aurobindo

THE Mother, when asked once: "What is the secret of success in sadhana?" gave her reply just in one word: "Surrender." This means that of all the essential requirements of sadhana, surrender is the most essential, the central key that unlocks the doors to all the realisations in Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo himself repeatedly said that the total transformation of the being by the supramental Power, which is the aim of his Yoga, is impossible if there is no complete surrender. But even when the sadhak makes a sincere endeavour to surrender to the Master, a difficulty arises which may stand in his way. It is this that even when he thinks he has surrendered to the Master, he has his own expectations as to how and when the Master will work out in him the whole process of transformation. But the Master has his own ways and his own times which are very often quite different from the sadhak's expectations. And because of this, the sadhak is often baffled and his faith may even get shaken.

So, it is very necessary to know what is the Master's way of working and how it differs from the sadhak's expectations. Here the best help is a passage from Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga*. It is so marvellous that a careful reading of it is sure to remove many trepidations and hesitations and suggestions of doubt and despair which often encumber even sincere sadhaks.

We reproduce this passage below because of its paramount importance for Sri Aurobindo's disciples. It is especially valuable to recollect it on the occasion of his birthday, to celebrate which we have organised this Conference. This passage was not read at the Conference, but because of its exceptional value for this occasion we reproduce it here.

Another small passage from *The Human Cycle* bearing on the same theme is also placed after it

THE MASTER'S WAY OF WORKING

"The Master of our works respects our nature even when he is transforming it; he works always through the nature and not by any arbitrary caprice. This

imperfect nature of ours contains the materials of our perfection, but inchoate, distorted, misplaced, thrown together in disorder or a poor imperfect order. All this material has to be patiently perfected, purified, reorganised, new-moulded and transformed, not hacked and hewn and slain or mutilated, not obliterated by simple coercion and denial. This world and we who live in it are his creation and manifestation, and he deals with it and us in a way our narrow and ignorant mind cannot understand unless it falls silent and opens to a divine knowledge. In our errors is the substance of a truth which labours to reveal its meaning to our groping intelligence. The human intellect cuts out the error and the truth with it and replaces it by another half-truth half-error; but the Divine Wisdom suffers our mistakes to continue until we are able to arrive at the truth hidden and protected under every false cover. Our sins are the misdirected steps of a seeking Power that aims, not at sin, but at perfection; at something that we might call a divine virtue. Often they are the veils of a quality that has to be transformed and delivered out of this ugly disguise: otherwise, in the perfect providence of things, they would not have been suffered to exist or to continue. The Master of our works is neither a blunderer nor an indifferent witness nor a dallier with the luxury of unneeded evils. He is wiser than our reason and wiser than our virtue.

“Our nature is not only mistaken in will and ignorant in knowledge but weak in power; but the Divine Force is there and will lead us if we trust in it and will use our deficiencies and our powers for the divine purpose. If we fail in our immediate aim, it is because he has intended the failure; often our failure or ill-result is the right road to a truer issue than an immediate and complete success would have put in our reach. If we suffer, it is because something in us has to be prepared for a rarer possibility of delight. If we stumble, it is to learn in the end the secret of a more perfect walking. Let us not be in too furious a haste to acquire even peace, purity and perfection. Peace must be ours, but not the peace of an empty or devastated nature or of slain or mutilated capacities incapable of unrest because we have made them incapable of intensity and fire and force. Purity must be our aim, but not the purity of a void or of a bleak and rigid coldness. Perfection is demanded of us, but not the perfection that can exist only by confining its scope within narrow limits or putting an arbitrary full stop to the ever self-extending scroll of the Infinite. Our object is to change into the divine nature, but the divine nature is not a mental or moral but a spiritual condition, difficult to achieve, difficult even to conceive by our intelligence. The Master of our work and our Yoga knows the thing to be done, and we must allow him to do it in us by his own means and in his own manner.

“The movement of the Ignorance is egoistic at its core and nothing is more difficult for us than to get rid of egoism while yet we admit personality and adhere to action in the half-light and half-force of our unfinished nature. It is easier to starve the ego by renouncing the impulse to act or to kill it by cutting away from us all movement of personality. It is easier to exalt it into self-

forgetfulness immersed in a trance of peace or an ecstasy of divine Love. But our more difficult problem is to liberate the true Person and attain to a divine manhood which shall be the pure vessel of a divine force and the perfect instrument of a divine action. Step after step has to be firmly taken; difficulty after difficulty has to be entirely experienced and entirely mastered. Only the Divine Wisdom and Power can do this for us and it will do all if we yield to it in an entire faith and follow and assent to its workings with a constant courage and patience.”¹

SRI AUROBINDO

“All pessimism is . . a denial of the Spirit, of its fullness and power, an impatience with the ways of God in the world, an insufficient faith in the divine Wisdom and Will that created the world and for ever guide it. It admits a wrong notion about that supreme Wisdom and Power and therefore cannot itself be the supreme wisdom and power of the spirit to which the world can look for guidance and for the uplifting of its whole life towards the Divine”.²

SRI AUROBINDO

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, (Cent Ed , Vol 20), pp 233-35

² *The Human Cycle* (Cent Ed , Vol 15), p 168