

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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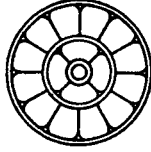
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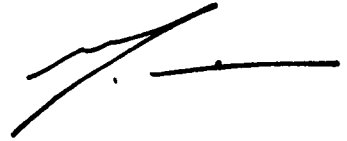
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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No. 5

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

IN the life of the Ignorance there is present and active the formidable influence of those forces of Darkness, supporters of evil and violence, whose interest it is to contaminate or destroy all higher Light that enters into the human existence. An opposition and intolerance or even a persecution of all that is new or tries to rise above or break away from the established order of the human Ignorance, or if it is victorious, an intrusion of the lower forces into it, an acceptance by the world more dangerous than its opposition, and in the end an extinction, a lowering or a contamination of the new principle of life, have been a frequent phenomenon of the past; that opposition might be still more violent and a frustration might be still more likely if a radically new light or new power were to claim the earth for its heritage. But it is to be supposed that the new and completer light would bring also a new and completer power.¹

*

The Divine works through our nature and according to our nature; if our nature is imperfect, the work also will be imperfect, mixed, inadequate. Even it may be marred by gross errors, falsehoods, moral weaknesses, diverting influences. The work of the Divine will be done in us even then, but according to our weakness, not according to the strength and purity of its source.²

SRI AUROBINDO

¹ *The Life Divine*, Cent Ed, Vol. 19, p 1063

² *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Cent Ed, Vol 20, p 239

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 29 MAY 1957

.. I HAVE been asked the question, “Why, after having posited as an ideal principle that when we deal with our body we ought to do it with the knowledge that it is only a result and an instrument of the Supreme Reality of the universe and of the truth of our being,—why, after having taught this and shown that this is the truth to be realised, do we have in the organisation of our Ashram, doctors, dispensaries, a physical education of the body based on modern theories accepted everywhere?” And why, when some of you go for a picnic do I forbid you to drink water from just anywhere and tell you to take filtered water with you? Why do I have the fruit you eat disinfected, etc.?

All this seems contradictory, but this evening I intend to explain something to you which, I hope, will put an end to this feeling of contradiction in you. In fact, I have told you many a time that when two ideas or principles contradict one another, you must rise a little higher in your thought and find the point where the contradictions meet in a comprehensive synthesis.

Here, it is very easy if we know one thing, that the method we use to deal with our body, maintain it, keep it fit, improve it and keep it in good health, depends *exclusively* on the state of consciousness we are in; for our body is an instrument of our consciousness and this consciousness can act directly on it and obtain what it wants from it.

So, if you are in an ordinary physical consciousness, if you see things with the eyes of the ordinary physical consciousness, if you think of them with the ordinary physical consciousness, it will be ordinary physical means you will have to use to act on your body. These ordinary physical means make up the whole science which has accumulated through thousands of years of human existence. This science is very complex, its processes innumerable, complicated, uncertain, often contradictory, always progressive and almost absolutely relative! Still very precise results have been achieved; ever since physical culture has become a serious preoccupation, a certain number of experiments, studies, observations have accumulated which enable us to regulate diet, activities, exercise, the whole outer organisation of life, and provide an adequate basis so that those who make the effort to study and conform strictly to these things have a chance to maintain their body in good health, correct the defects it may have and improve its general condition, and even achieve results which are sometimes quite remarkable.

I may add, moreover, that this intellectual human science, such as it is at present, in its very sincere effort to find the truth, is, surprisingly enough, drawing closer and closer to the essential truth of the Spirit. It is not impossible to foresee the movement where the two will unite in a very deep and very close understanding of the essential truth

So, for all those who live on the physical plane, in the physical consciousness, it is physical means and processes which have to be used in dealing with the body. And as the vast majority of human beings, even in the Ashram, live in a consciousness which, if not exclusively physical, is at least predominantly physical, it is quite natural for them to follow and obey all the principles laid down by physical science for the care of the body.

Now, according to what Sri Aurobindo teaches us, this is not a final realisation, nor is it the ideal to which we want to rise. There is a higher state than this, in which the consciousness, though it still remains principally mental or partially mental in its functioning, is already open to higher regions in an aspiration for the spiritual life, and open to the supramental influence.

As soon as this opening occurs, one passes beyond the state in which life is purely physical—when I say “physical” I include the whole mental and intellectual life and all human achievements, even the most remarkable; I am speaking of a physical which is the summit of human capacities, of an earthly and material life in which man can express values of a higher order from the mental and intellectual point of view—one can go beyond that state, open oneself to the supramental force which is now acting on earth and enter a transitional zone where the two influences meet and interpenetrate, where the consciousness is still mental and intellectual in its functioning, but sufficiently imbued with the supramental strength and force to become the instrument of a higher truth.

At present this state can be realised on earth by those who have prepared themselves to receive the supramental force which is manifesting. And in that state, in that state of consciousness, the body can benefit from a much better condition than the one it was in before. It can be put into direct contact with the essential truth of its being, to the extent that, *spontaneously*, at every moment it knows instinctively, or intuitively, what is to be done and that it can do it.

As I say, this state can now be realised by all those who take the trouble of preparing themselves to receive the supramental force, to assimilate it and obey it.

Of course, there is a higher state than this, the state Sri Aurobindo speaks of as the ideal to be fulfilled: the divine life in a divine body. But he himself tells us that this will take time; it is an integral transformation which cannot be achieved in a moment. It will even take quite a long time. But when it is accomplished, when the consciousness has become a supramental consciousness, then action will no longer be determined at every moment by a mental choice or be dependent on the physical capacity: the entire body will spontaneously, integrally, be the perfect expression of the inner truth.

This is the ideal we must keep before us, for the realisation of which we must strive; but we must not delude ourselves and think that it can be a rapid transformation, miraculous, immediate, marvellous, without effort and without labour.

However, it is no longer only a possibility, it is no longer even only a promise for a far-off future: it is something which is in the making. And already one can not only foresee but feel the moment when the body will be able to repeat integrally the experience of the most spiritual part of the being, as the inner spirit has already done, and will itself be able to stand in its bodily consciousness before the supreme Reality, turn to it integrally and say in all sincerity, in a total self-giving of all its cells: "To be Thyself—exclusively, perfectly—Thyself, infinitely, eternally .. very simply."

(*Questions and Answers 1957-58*, pp 108-111)

SAHANA DEVI

SAHANA, aged almost 93, passed away on 6 April after her dinner

A singer with an extremely clear and sweet voice, once companion in musical *sourees* to the celebrated Dilip Kumar Roy, she joined the Ashram along with him in 1928

The letters of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to her are evidence of her spiritual progress as well as to her deep intimacy with them. In her last days her body gave her a lot of trouble. Several times she told my friend Minna when the latter visited the Sewing Department: "Tell Amal that I feel fine within. Only my body is broken "

Three days before her death she came, helped by Vishwabandhu, to the Samadhi in the afternoon after months of absence. She met me there and said "Amal, I have come only to see you. You have so often inquired after my health." Then she did her fervent pranam to the Samadhi, walked back towards me and sat on a nearby stool for a while. Evidently this was at her soul's prompting the *finale* to the story of a long and happy relationship. Nirodbaran who too had been closely connected with her came out of his room to greet her.

In the old days I used to teach her English. I recommended Matthew Arnold as a model for reading. Sri Aurobindo fully approved the choice. Recently, after deciphering Sri Aurobindo's notes written to her over the years, often with a faint pencil, I had the pleasure of editing the last two books she published before her exit from her beloved Ashram.

With her goes one of the last of the Old Guard. Now I believe only four from the very earliest period remain, the youngest of them eighty-five years and four months old.

AMAL KIRAN

THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE
IN THE LIGHT OF HER PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1990)

DURING the period of the First World War, each part of the Mother's body represented the battlefield. Her physical sufferings coincided with the illness of the earth. She saw it, felt it and lived in it. She concentrated the divine Force in suffering and pain, so that it would speed up the preparation of the earth. So Her prayer on September 24, 1914 noted the descent of the force. She writes: "The things which seemed most difficult, most improbable, perhaps even most impossible, become wholly realisable, because Thy Presence is our assurance that the material world itself is prepared to manifest the new form of the Will and the Law."

Sri Aurobindo wrote to the Mother on 16.9.1915 about the chaos of the world in the following lines: "It is a singular condition of the world, the very definition of chaos with the superficial form of the old world resting apparently intact on the surface. But a chaos of long disintegration or some early new birth? It is the thing that is being fought out from day to day, but as yet without any approach to a decision."¹

In the year 1915 Sri Aurobindo knew that the world would never again return to its old form and that an irreversible process had started. The disintegration would be long and the battle slow. Once more he wrote to the Mother on 28.7.1915: "Everything internal is ripe or ripening, but there is a sort of locked struggle, in which neither side can make a very appreciable advance, (somewhat like the trench warfare in Europe), the spiritual force insisting against the resistance of the physical world, that resistance disputing every inch and making more or less effective counter attacks.... And if there were not the strength and Ananda within, it would be harassing and disgusting work; but the eye of knowledge looks beyond and sees that it is only a protracted episode."²

Three days later—31st July 1915—the Mother noted in her journal:

"The heavens are definitively conquered, and nothing and nobody could have the power of wresting them from me. But the conquest of the earth is still to be made; it is being carried on in the very heart of the turmoil; and even when achieved, it will still be only a relative one; the victories in this world are but stages leading progressively to still more glorious victories; and what Thy Will makes my mind conceive of as the goal to be attained, the conquest to be realised, is only one element of Thy eternal plan, but in perfect union I am this plan and this Will, and I taste the supreme bliss of the infinite, even while playing ardently, with precision and energy, in the world of division, the special part Thou hast entrusted to me."

Sri Aurobindo assured the Mother on 20.5.1915: "Heaven we have possessed, but not the earth; but the fullness of the Yoga is to make, in the formula of the Veda, 'Heaven and Earth equal and one.'"³

The Mother received the final assurance from Sri Aurobindo that the supramentalisation of earth-existence was their Master plan. The Mother became a full collaborator in Sri Aurobindo's work. She was not only a great Shakti, the Kali, but also destined to be a partner of his integral supramental Yoga in his great Yogashram at Pondicherry. She shifted from war-torn France to Japan for a four-year visit on her way to Pondicherry.

The Mother and her husband Paul Richard boarded the Kaga Maru at London on 13 March and arrived in Tokyo in April 1916. After a four-month gap, the Mother's spiritual diary is resumed in Tokyo on June 7, 1916 on a note of new fulfilment:

"Long months have gone by in which nothing could be said, for it was a period of transition, of passing from one equilibrium to another, vaster and more complete. The outer circumstances were manifold and new, as if the being needed to accumulate many perceptions and observations in order to give a more extensive and complex base to its experience. But, being entirely plunged within this experience, it did not have the necessary perspective to see it as a whole, to know what it was and above all where it was leading.

"Suddenly, on the fifth of June the veil was rent, and there was light in my consciousness.

"When I contemplated Thee in Thy individual form, O Lord of Eternity, and implored Thee to take possession of Thy kingdom of the flesh, Thou didst set again into motion, into activity this vital form, which, for the necessity of development and unification, had been living for years in a passivity that was receptive and harmonious but alien to all active manifestation of Thy will.

"This return to activity meant a completely new adaptation of the vital instrument, for its natural tendency is always to resume action with its old habits and methods. This period of adaptation was long, painful, sometimes obscure, though behind, the perception of Thy Presence and perfect surrender to Thy Law were immutable and quite strongly conscious for any disturbance to shake the being."

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCES

- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 26, p 425
- 2 *Ibid* , p 425
- 3 *Ibid* , pp 424-425

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

TWO LETTERS IN A PERSONAL STRAIN

YOUR letter has been in hiding for quite a number of days, but its place in my drawer did not mean that it was ever forgotten. Always my mind dwelt on it and it was securely lodged in my heart no less than in my drawer. Never to forget that it had been set aside for a less crowded time is really not to have set it aside at all in the true sense of the word. If, as Milton often says in *Paradise Lost*, small things may be compared to big ones, this morning when I have pulled your letter out I am reminded of what the Mother once told me after her son André's first visit to the Ashram. She said in effect: "Truly speaking, André was never absent. All through the years it was as if he were here but behind a screen. Now he has come out and become visible. That is the only difference in the way he has been present in the Ashram."

Of course, in André's case it was not just a matter of the Mother's constantly remembering him: it was also a matter of André's own incessant remembrance of the Mother. I am inclined to believe that something similar I may dare to say even in the case of your letter. When you write to me it is not mere words that come over. Your own self seems to get projected in the form of white paper and blue ink: they carry in intense symbol-suggestion the twofold aspect of your life—the purity of the in-world that is your natural ambience and the beauty of the over-world that is supernature softly expressing itself within that upward-looking soul-secrecy.

With this vision of you in my eyes I am not surprised at all at the unhappiness you feel whenever you notice "the paucity of kindness in the human heart" You have very finely and aptly said: "We always pray to the Divine for Grace but we are hardly gracious to fellow human beings." Yes, when we receive the "kindly light" which Newman invoked in a famous poem to "lead" him on, surely it is not meant to be looked upon with a miserly mysticism. Not that we should lose ourselves in a philanthropic frenzy as if service in any way to mankind were our object: we must never forget that God-realisation is our aim and what we have to bring forth in the midst of mankind is God-manifestation or rather what has to flow out of us is God manifesting Himself. This outward act of His has to be through a psychic spontaneity and not through a mind-managed intervention, though the mind's role of giving intelligent support is quite acceptable.

I may observe that spiritual graciousness towards fellow human beings comes more easily to a certain type of sadhak. By and large, there are two types. One has a marked capacity to go inward and meditate for a long time. When the born meditator emerges from his spiritual cell he is a good sight, for some aura of inwardness clings to his face. But often, instead of being calm and patient with

people, as do the best of this type, he shows irritation with them and is eager to give them short shrift. At the worst we have the example which the Mother once gave. Haven't I already written to you about it before? She said there was a chap who could get lost in meditation for hours. One day, while he was deeply interiorised, someone knocked at his door—hard enough to draw him out. The master of meditation rushed to the door, opened it and exclaimed: "You damn fool, don't you know I am meditating? How dare you disturb me? Off with you!" And the door was banged in the face of the unfortunate intruder. The Mother commented: "This sort of meditation is worth nothing."

The second type of sadhak does not do much of set meditation. But whatever little is done by him serves to invite the inner to come out and be present as a quiet active force in his day-to-day life. Rarely, if ever, does he flare up, and in his contact with people the out-drawn inner being flows like a warm stream towards them bearing an unspoken benediction from the smiling Splendour that is the Mother and the silent Grandeur that is Sri Aurobindo. This kindness, this helpfulness is not really personal, it is channelled by the giver and it is directed chiefly towards awakening in the receiver the hidden soul, the secret eater of a heavenly honey, the arch-healer by whose touch all physical handicaps and difficulties, all psychological hardships and entanglements get lightened and a soft bliss bathes the whole being.

The danger to which this type is exposed is the proclivity to throw oneself out too much, believing that the soft bliss will envelop all his doings. One must learn to draw a line, check the over-exteriorising tendency, stay clear of certain activities that are out of tune with the Dweller of the Depths who has graced with his presence the surfaces of life.

The ideal sadhak would combine the essences of both the types. To show us how this can be done we have the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The Mother's natural movement seems to have been profoundly meditative. Again and again we have seen her withdraw into a trance. Occasionally she would be lost in the inner world for hours. Of course, there too she would be at work and was not just absorbed in self-beatitude. In fact, beatitude was always with her and there was no need to withdraw into it. What I am referring to is the tendency to be in-drawn repeatedly, away from the pulls of the outer existence. But we have watched also how the Mother tirelessly toiled in the outer existence for our sake. It was as if Sri Aurobindo put her forward to face that existence while he remained behind in a sublime solitude of the Spirit. And yet the actuality is that throughout his intense exercise of the spiritual life Sri Aurobindo seldom shut his eyes! "Exercise" is indeed an appropriate word, for he at one time used to spend seven or eight hours walking up and down his room. I should know this best, for I occupied two old rooms of his in what was called the Guest House. He had lived there for about six years and I had the tremendous luck to spend nine and a half years in that place. By his walking across the floor he had dug a semi-

winding path to the Supermind. It had been plastered over with cement before my time. But the sign of the great passage still stood out. I used to follow it with my own feet, hoping to catch a glimpse of the mighty goal he had reached. The glimpse was never caught, but I would feel exhilarated by imagining myself in the atmosphere, if not of Sri Aurobindo's Supermind, at least of that magnificent mind of his with

Those thoughts that wander through Eternity,

as a Miltonic verse seems anticipatively to have figured it. Perhaps by the attempt to imitate his "exercise" of the spiritual life I got a far-away touch of the way he lived. For the point is that he who to all appearance remained behind, with the Mother put in the forefront, appears to have scaled spirituality's Himalayan altitudes and plumbed its Pacific profundities with his eyes wide open, apparently looking all the time at the non-Himalayan non-Pacific common levels of land and sea. Without plunging into unearthly trance, those eyes held perpetually

The light that never was on sea or land.

Thus in the Mother and Sri Aurobindo we have with a touch of paradox in both instances the blending of the two types raised to the *n*th degree. They set us the ideal. Till we come within some distance of it, let us develop whatever type is most congenial to us without falling into the perils of its exaggeration. I for one have mostly the bent of the second type—no doubt very poorly achieved in spite of my persistent effort. At least one shade of it has not been too far off, so that when people appear at various odd hours at my door and apologetically say, "We hope we are not disturbing you", I am able to quip: "What you are saying is hardly a compliment to me. Do you think I am so easily disturbed?"

Now to some other topics in your letter. You are right to think that callousness to people's sufferings does not imply the capacity in oneself to suffer courageously. Cruel men are mostly cowards. The example you have given of the notorious Eichman is very pointed. As you recount, he who had sent hundreds to the horrors of the Gas Chamber exclaimed when he was caught by his Israeli pursuers in Latin America: "Oh, do not kill me, do not kill me!" You have doubted whether a monstrous person like Hitler could ever have been courageous. What distinguished him was the boldness of his ventures, the confident strokes of his strategies. We have learned from our Gurus that these masterful acts were inspired by an occult Asuric force. They do not necessarily bespeak a courageous personal nature. His final suicide when defeated may show a desperate courage. But I suspect that he would not have been driven to it if the Russian army had not been his potential captor. He took his own life because he

dreaded being the prisoner of Communists—especially when they were headed by Stalin whom he had betrayed. Most probably he would have surrendered alive to the Americans. Perhaps one may ask: “Why could he not have escaped by air with his girl-friend Eva Braun?” My conjecture is that he knew that if he had tried to do so his followers might have shot him for a coward. He preferred to die by his own hand and be considered a hero. But can one be a hero when no course other than suicide is left to one?

I am touched by your intimating to me the “secret” of what you did when I was sitting with shut eyes close to Lalita’s lifeless body. Your standing quietly by my side for a few minutes was a very sweet gesture. Yes, we were not on terms of intimacy at the time but you seem to have had a presage of things to come. For I am sure it was a movement not only of natural kindness but also of spontaneous affection. You have wondered what my state of mind was. Of course I was unaware of my surroundings. What I was cherishing in my heart with shut eyes were two experiences. One was the observation of an exquisite beauty that had appeared on Lalita’s face *some time after* her death. It was as if her psychic being were still active within her physical frame and could somehow play the artist with the lines of her face, turning the preceding expression of peace to a hint of delicate delight at the subtle sight of the Divine Mother. I remember calling Richard Hartz’s attention to this sweet change. The other experience was caught from a large picture of the Mother hanging behind the bed on which Lalita had been laid. This picture is now in my own room, hanging behind me as I am typing my letter to you. When I looked at it intently on that late evening, it conveyed to me most forcibly the message: “All you have done in your Yogic life is not enough. You have to change still more radically. Rise above the various weaknesses which are lingering in you. Do not waste any of the time that is left to your life.” Along with the sense of Lalita’s soft beauty, I was concentrating on the depth-opening power of the picture’s silent command. I gave so much importance to the command that I requested Dyuman, who was attending to the general arrangements, to let me take the picture to my own place, so that its call to me to surpass myself might always hold my attention. Indeed it does so every day as I sit for hours in a chair facing it from the other side of my working room. Below it is a picture of Sri Aurobindo in his chair with his face fully fronting us. This picture is not the same as the one which is popular and in many people’s possession. There the eyes are a little lowered. Here they are looking straight ahead as though with a prophetic certitude in them of a glorious future for the world.

(7.2.1990)

*

Thank you for the note, both wise and warm, of the 19th, congratulating me on the 36th anniversary of my final settlement in the Ashram. Yes, you are luckier

than I in not having left even physically the Ashram once you had stepped into it on the 16th of the same month, exactly the same number of years ago! What I can say on my behalf is that, unlike the departure in 1937 which meant resuming the ordinary life though still without a snap of the inner link between our Gurus and me, my second home-coming was of a different nature. Even when it admitted a few visits to Bombay, it was always for work connected with the family there or, on the last occasion, for a cataract-operation, and never was there the idea to start again a non-Ashram life. So in that sense the poem I am going to quote speaks for both of us. I have myself a longer piece on the same theme which the Mother read with approval but I can't at the moment lay my hands on it. Here are the excellent lines of Arjava (John Chadwick before he joined the Ashram):

NEW COUNTRY

Precarious boat that brought me to this strand
 Shall feed flame-pinnacles from stem to stern,
 Till not one rib my backward glance can find—
 Down to the very keelson they shall burn.

Now to the unreal sea-line I would no more yearn;
 Fain to touch with feet an unimaginable land....
 The gates of false glamour have closed behind;
 There is no return.

Arjava is rather compact in his language and subtle in the turns of his expression. So perhaps a few elucidatory words from me to you would be in place. "Precarious boat": we come to the spiritual life, the "new country" of the title, through events and circumstances that have both a forward and a backward tension: hence the "boat" is "precarious"—that is, dependent on chance, uncertain, insecure, exposed to danger. It is also a possible means to go back, a temptation for a reversal of the voyage. Therefore it needs to be destroyed wholly, from the front part ("stem") to the hind part ("stern")—subjected to the fire of the soul's aspiration, the inner flame that rises upward: its horizontal body offered up to the "pinnacles" which that psychic intensity forms by its aspiring movement. But the destruction is done not only because the boat may tempt one to retrace one's way: there is also a firm resolve, a command from the inmost being. That is the suggestion of "Shall". And the totality of the destruction is driven home by mention of the boat's ribs. A rib is one of the curved timbers of a boat to which planks are nailed. "Not one rib" will escape the fire, which means that fire will consume all the ribs. It is with the sense of all of them that the next line uses the plural number "they". Not content with saying this, the poet goes

on to say that they shall burn "Down to the very keelson". The phrase points to the sheer bottom of the boat. "Keelson" or "kelson" is the line of timber fastening a boat's floor-timbers to its keel. A keel is the lowest piece of timber running lengthwise in a boat, on which the framework of the whole is built.

Parenthetically I may add that in poetry "keel" denotes in general a boat or ship by the figure of speech called synecdoche in which a significant part does duty for the whole. Before Keats gave the world those wonderful lines—

... magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn—

he had written "keelless" instead of "perilous", but, feeling some lack in both suggestion and sound, brought in the epithet which, instead of telling us that the waters concerned were barren of ship-traffic, hints to us that ships could hardly cross watery expanses such as these. Our imagination rather than the merely observant mind in us is touched and stirred. Besides, the second foot is converted from a two-syllabled iamb into a three-syllabled glide-anapaest which conveys in a subtle manner the threatening tremble of the seas, and the conversion not only catches up three of the several consonantal sounds which stream hauntingly through the lines: *m, n, f, s, r, l*, but, along with *r, l* and *s*, it provides an echo to the *p* of the previous line's "opening", thus enriching the music of the couplet. I feel that if "keelless" had remained in place of "perilous" the two lines would have just fallen short of the category in which Sri Aurobindo puts them: the sheer unclassifiable "inevitable", the ultimate voice of poetry, beyond the inevitabilities of the four styles he defines: the adequate, the effective, the illumined, the inspired.

Now back to Arjava from Keats—from the latter's "perilous seas" to the former's "unreal sea-line". This expression points to the horizon which is not a real terminus to the voyager but proves illusory as one sails further and further. One "yearns" towards it in pursuit of a terminus. Now that the voyager has disembarked on a marvellous land which surpasses every possibility of imagination he is so glad ("fain") that all the old lure of distances that keep deceiving one is lost.

Next comes the *grand finale*. The poet has turned his back on the sea-line. Behind him lies, shut off for ever, the "false glamour" of the ordinary human existence always searching for beauty and happiness but finding only deceptive and transitory appearances. Never more will he be attracted by them. Their call is over. And this profound finality is branded upon our minds by those few sweeping words: "There is no return." Mark how short is the line they make—compared to the preceding seven. Five of them—1, 2, 3, 4, 7—are pentameters. One—5—scans most naturally as an Alexandrine. The next, as if prepared by this length of six feet, flows into seven as though in answer to a sense

of a once-faraway yet now-reached region's vistas, lengthening on and on, of a heart-enrapturing future. It is a fine play of expressive art to introduce this substantial variation. But the variation is still part of a pattern to set off the shortness of the eighth verse. The phrase—"There is no return"—gets an absoluteness even technically by there being no return here to the long measures we have met before. The utter end of all the past, the end of all utterance of it, are here. The "unimaginable land" on which the poet has planted his feet is evoked by this two-footed concluding phrase as a sudden short-cut to the Ineffable.

Shakespeare in the famous Hamlet-soliloquy wrote of death as

The undiscovered country from whose bourne
No traveller returns. . .

Arjava points to the Immortal Consciousness, the goal of the spiritual seeker, as the bourne from which no traveller would want to return. In "New Country" the spiritual seeker in Arjava has expressed the action of the Supreme on the human soul's ancient cry which the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad has caught:

From Appearance lead us to Reality,
From Darkness lead us to Light,
From Death lead us to Immortality.

"New Country" is a very powerful, very perfect poem working out its details of the inner life in a vein at once visionary and concrete within a small compass which is yet packed with vivid significances and leaves nothing essential unsaid—a small compass raised to the *n*th degree of effectiveness by the markedly short ending to a run of seven long lines. (20.2.1990)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

A CORRECTION

In line 2 of the last para of the first letter in "Life—Poetry—Yoga" in the April issue (p. 228), please read "when may be realised" instead of "may be realised when"

“DYUMAN—THE LUMINOUS ONE”

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 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

FOR 29th February 1960, the first recurrence of the leap-year date of the Supramental Manifestation, I wanted to create a golden atmosphere in the Ashram. If somebody, anybody, would catch the Truth-vibration, I would be happy. I wanted to have everything golden for the Mother.

Upstairs and downstairs, everything was golden: we spread her room with golden satin; she walked on golden satin to the balcony; the stairs were draped with golden curtains; the buttons of her coat were made of gold; spoons and forks, cups and saucers—everything was golden. We got special crockery, golden-coloured cups and saucers with the Mother’s symbol on them, made in Japan and England.

The Mother asked me, “Why do you want to do all this?” I answered, “Mother, to create a proper golden atmosphere. If even one person catches it, I shall be happy.” She demanded, “And if I ask you to sell all these things off, later?” “Yes, Mother, I will do it, I will do it,” I answered.

She distributed gold-coated symbols to all the Ashramites and devotees who came on that day. The Mother made a condition. “I will give these medals only to those who have come here, who will receive them from my own hands.” Even some of those who had come for the occasion missed the Darshan for some reason or other. In spite of their pleading she refused to give them these symbols. Those also who were living outside for her work got excluded. These symbols were made and kept in the Mother’s room until the 29th February. The Mother said, “Dyuman, these symbols will be a temptation for robbers.” “All right, Mother, I’ll sleep nearby,” I answered. From then onwards for twenty-five years I slept in the corridor outside her room with only a mat and a pillow. Just recently, after I developed some urinary trouble, I stopped sleeping there.

It was difficult to prepare all this. I told my friends that they would have to offer the entire sum needed. In addition, all the food served in the Dining-Room that day was of a golden colour. It was a golden celebration of the Golden Day.

One day, though the Mother was not well, she still had to go to the

Playground. When she returned she said, “Dyuman, give me a pillow, give me a pillow. I want to lie down flat.” I gave her a pillow, and she went to the room she usually used for resting and lay down; she remained like that for half an hour.

But then I thought, “What should I do if this happened during the day?”—She had no proper separate room... in the daytime people would go in and out of her room constantly I was perplexed. Next day I asked her, “Mother, what shall I do if this sort of thing happens in daytime? Should you not have a room for your own private use?”

In those days there was a plan to break the wing in which Purani lived to make a new room for the Mother. The Mother said, “No, no, don’t give me that ” I said, “Mother, it will not be a burden to the Ashram. I will get the money from outside ” She said, “All right. Then make me a small room above this one.”

I asked Navajata who was a close friend, to give me one lakh rupees to make a room for the Mother. He sent the money directly to the Mother. She told me, “I have received the money.” I said to her, “Mother, we will not give it to the cashier. Because if I take money from the cashier for the construction of the Mother’s room, people might begin to say, ‘Now that Sri Aurobindo has gone, she is spending money for her own enjoyment ’ I do not want anybody to say such things. We have got this money from Navajata for this specific purpose. I will keep it with me and will pay all the bills with it directly, and then I can say that the room has been offered to the Mother ”¹

This new room was supposed to be for her exclusive use, a place where she could remain alone and have some privacy. But her habit was such that wherever she went the place became public In the beginning she lived alone in her room; but some time later, in 1962 to be precise, when she retired and went to live in her room all the time, everybody went to her there. Then she wanted to have another small room, since this one had no privacy any more. When the white carpet which is now spread in the Meditation Hall was offered to her, she said, “Dyuman, keep this carpet for my new room.” But the new room was never built.

Several times the Mother had said, “Dyuman, promise me that you won’t take up any new work. If work is to be given, I’ll give it to you. Promise me! Because when you take up any work you simply plunge into it ” I replied, “Yes, Mother.” But when I heard from Anil Bhattacharya that a large piece of land

¹ Shyam Kumari’s note At this point I asked, “Dyuman-bhai, was it possible for people to say such mean things about the Mother?” He answered, “Yes, I know such people In 1926 they started saying, ‘Who is this Mother? Is Madam Alfassa the Divine Mother?’ Sri Aurobindo replied, ‘Yes ’ Then when Sri Aurobindo left his body, immediately some people started grumbling To answer them we printed two thousand and one hundred copies of the de luxe edition of *The Mother* Each copy was numbered and the Mother signed each one They were given at Rs 10 each Still there was murmuring So we collected the original letters written by Sri Aurobindo, got their facsimiles made and had a hundred copies printed The publishing of these books had some occult effect and after that the grumbling and questioning fizzled out ”

which is now 'Gloria', was for sale, I asked him to buy it and to pay whatever price the owner asked, not a paise less. I managed the money from outside. The Mother came to know about it only when she had to sign the papers.

In Gloria we started a new chapter of Yoga in matter. We do not use chemical fertilisers there, we do not use insecticides because when I started Gloria the first thing the Mother said was, "Dyuman, I suppose you will not use these things?" I said, "No, Mother, we will not."

You see, after the accident to Sri Aurobindo's right leg, Dr Manilal prescribed fresh tomato juice for him. We offered it but Sri Aurobindo declined to take it. Then the Mother said, "May I try it?" "Yes, Mother," we said. We arranged to get fresh tomatoes from Bangalore and the Nilgiris and I served her fresh tomato juice regularly. One day she said, "Dyuman, this juice is from Bangalore tomatoes. There they must be using chemical fertilisers and insecticides." "Yes, Mother," I replied. "Then it is not good for my health, isn't it so? In that case do not give it to me." "Yes, Mother," I said. Then I told her, "Mother, I think there are some tomatoes grown at Gloria without these things. I will go there immediately and bring some to show you. If you like them, juice can be made from them." I went and brought the tomatoes and showed them to her. She liked them and said she would take their juice.

We followed what was good for her health. And what was good for her body was good for the universal body, for her body is a universal body. That is why we ventured into making this farm. People from all over the world come to see Gloria, and many seminars have been held there.

Thirty years have passed since Gloria came to me. I did not take it up as an agricultural work in the ordinary sense. Matter has to reveal the spirit, and the first condition for this is a peaceful, loving and harmonious atmosphere. And a perfect harmony has developed between me and the whole of Gloria. I have planted one hundred mango trees of the Baiganpalli variety at Gloria for I want each Ashramite to get one mango a day during the season. Now some of them are bearing fruit and in 1989 juice from their fruits was served at the Dining Room.

In her youth the Mother drank a lot of milk, but for some years she did not want to drink it any more.

One day while I was serving her another drink, I carried some milk with me, hoping that she would consent to drink a little of it. She asked me, "What is that?" I answered, "Milk." She said, "Then put some in this drink." And thus she started to take milk once more.

At first she would not drink orange juice. Then we planted some orange trees at Lake Estate. From the oranges we got from those trees I prepared some juice for the Mother. She tasted it and asked, "Have you put sugar in it?" "No, Mother," I replied. "But it is so sweet!" she exclaimed. From then on she started to drink orange juice. But I had to be very careful to avoid serving her oily foods.

This topic of food for the Mother has brought a flood of memories. Half a century back one day at about 3 or 3.30 p m. the Mother was having her lunch. Either Nolini or Amrita told her that C was not taking her food. “Why?” the Mother enquired. “Because there are no potatoes in her food,” was the reply. The Mother saw me passing by and called, “Dyuman, I have potatoes in my dish; why does not C have them? She must have them.” I replied, “Yes, Mother.”

Here is the story of potatoes. At the time the Second World War was at its height The Government had requisitioned all the potatoes for the use of the army. Not a kilo was to be had in the markets. Though the Mother ate sparsely and had no preferences I wanted to get some potatoes for her So during the War, I imported potatoes from Egypt and instead of six paise paid one rupee per kilo for them

Then olive-oil was required for the dressing of the salad for the Mother. In war-time it was not to be had in India. I learnt that it was available in Singapore. We got a barrel of three hundred kilograms. Then we bought sterilized bottles, emptied the oil from the drum into the bottles and machine-sealed them with golden foil and after wrapping them in straw, packed them in boxes. Whenever Pavitra needed it, we supplied pure olive-oil.

Sri Aurobindo liked the juice of grape fruits. They were not available in India. Even during the war whenever there was a possibility we imported grape fruits from Egypt, South Africa and Australia.

At one stage the Mother began to like fresh grapes. In those days they were only fifty paise per kg. We got fresh seedless grapes from Chaman, Afghanistan, reported to be the best in the world. As we found it was difficult to get them throughout the year, we felt the necessity of a cold storage and made one for the fruits. Ravindra was handling the fruits. He kept apples and grapes in the cold storage from season to season.

During the struggle for Pondicherry’s independence, the freedom fighters of Pondicherry put up road blocks and did not allow anything to come in by road. I was short of grapes for the Mother. As the freedom fighters did not block the trains, I told my servant, “Go to Kodaikanal. Buy half a ton of grapes and bring them back by train.” I did not hesitate to put so much money in the hands of a servant. Next day he brought the grapes.

We used to buy firewood from Tamil Nadu. Occasionally, as many as a hundred carts came at one time. They all had to pass through the customs. By rule, the customs officials had to weigh the contents of each cart but they always accepted my word. During this freedom struggle, volunteers stopped the carts at the Tamil Nadu borders. My servant, Shivalingam, came and informed me of this. I asked him to go to Subbaiya, the leader of the Communist Party, and ask him to help bring the carts in He allowed it that time but I understood it could not happen every time. So there was a problem. As nobody was allowed to go by road, I smuggled Shivalingam through the fields. He went to Panruti and got one

wagon-load of the best quality casuarina firewood.

The Mother put her confidence in me. So I took all these risks and informed her of them after the work was done. She knew she would get whatever she needed for herself or the Ashram.

Once under the leadership of Nanubhai a train-load of people came from Baroda. While returning from the market I saw him at the gate. He asked for lunch for five hundred people. Nolini came there. We looked at each other and talked with our eyes. I told Nanubhai, "Yes, you will have lunch at 11.30 a.m." All my life and work went on in confidence, not in questioning.

It was 13th August, during the war, either in 1942 or 1943. In those days the Mother used to distribute saris to sadhikas before each Darshan. These saris were kept in a store. Pujalal who was in-charge forgot to tell the Mother in time that there were no saris. On 13th the Mother called me and said, "We need saris for the Darshan distribution." I went straight away to the market and bought the needed number of handloom saris. Thus I came to handle the Mother's cloth requirements.

We were short of leather for chappals as all leather went for the use of the military. I was told we had no cured leather. I went to the butchers and asked them to give me leather. They were good enough to give and we made chappals. Then I wrote to Manibhai, Kumud's father, about the shortage of leather. He brought many bundles of leather from Bombay. His small son Navin carried a bundle on his head and I took the leather to the Mother.

During those days nobody could convey mill-cloth without Government permission. Once I wrote to Manibhai, "Mother has no saris for distribution." He bought and brought trunksfull of saris and offered them to the Mother even though he risked arrest and confiscation of goods while doing so.

Let us digress a little. I will tell you about my contact with Lele. In 1922 Lele visited my college in Ahmedabad. There he singled me out for special attention. He said to me, "Take me to see your parents." I arranged for a bullock cart as there was no bus service to my village, and took him to my parental place. He was happy to meet my mother and father.

Once he advised many of us students, "Go to Mount Girnar to worship Shri Dattatreya's feet." Some of us went. On our return he asked me, "What did you experience there?" "Nothing," I replied truthfully. He slapped me and said, "Come again with me." I went with him but again nothing happened, nothing developed. It was not to be. Even when I came to Pondicherry he kept enquiring about me from my friends in Poona.

Whenever Tagore and C. F. Andrews came to Ahmedabad they stayed with Shri Ambalal Sarabhai. Once without realising that we knew each other well, C. F. Andrews introduced me to Lele saying, "He is Chunibhai."

Talking of C. F. Andrews reminds me of Indira Priyadarshini and how later she would also become a student of Shanti Niketan and in my heart this forged

an extra bond with her. Though I came in close contact with many national leaders I loved above all two of them—Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and Motilal Nehru. I still remember the day when Motilal Nehru—that king of aristocrats—started to sleep on the floor to experience how his son must be feeling sleeping on the coarse blankets of a British jail.

My love and respect for Malviyaji remains the same, my love for Motilal Nehru has extended itself to the whole of his family. Since she was a tiny tot I felt a special love for Priyadarshini Indira. It has remained unchanged.

Once when she wanted to come to the Ashram and pass a night in it, we made Pavitra’s office on the first floor of the Ashram ready for her use. Her staff, including Dhawan, slept in my room. A sentry guarded her room. I asked him to leave. He protested, “Sir, it is my duty.” I said, “I will guard in your place,” and sent him below. Then from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. I kept watch at her door because I loved her. Myself, Pranab, Kumud, and C. P. N. Singh had our breakfast and dinner with Indira in the Mother’s old room on the first floor. And she moved freely in the Ashram as if she was in her own house. Whenever she came here she had no hesitation in drinking or eating whatever we offered her.

In 1966 I thought, “Sri Aurobindo’s Centenary is coming. I must prepare for it. The whole world must pay respect to him.” I wanted at least twenty thousand people to come for the sacred occasion. How to feed this large number? If we were to use ordinary firewood ovens, we would need fifty-three of them. To install them, the whole Dining Room would have to be demolished. Obviously it would not be feasible. I began to explore other possibilities. Steam-cooking seemed to be the only way out. But who would know about steam-cooking? Then I remembered that at the Avadi Congress Session in Madras they had steam-cooked for a.lakh of people.

In 1967 I began to search for a boiler, a cheap one. By a mysterious coincidence, the moment the first Americans who had landed on the moon came back to earth, at that very moment the boiler arrived at the Dining Room gate. From 1968 to 1972 we prepared for the Centenary. To make the cashew *barfi* we bought six hundred kg. of cashew-nuts from Panruti. People asked me what would happen if twenty-thousand people did not turn up. I said, “It doesn’t matter—we will go on distributing the sweetmeat.”

The Mother did not give me any instructions, she gave me inner strength and confidence and I went on.

(To be continued)

THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1990)

OUTSIDE a fine rain was falling from an overcast sky making the brightly lit room seem really cosy. As everyone sat, snug and comfortable, Sri Aurobindo announced, "Today's session will be short "

Immediately the lights seemed to dim. A small voice piped up, "Why?", breaking the silence of the room.

Sri Aurobindo laughed, "That is because by now I have come to the last chapter of my London story Also, I have some work to finish today."

"Why is it the last chapter?" inquired a newcomer

"I'll tell you. There we were, two out of the three of us, facing our final examinations after which we would go our own separate ways, each to follow the lines that fate and our own individual aims had drawn for us. I would go to Cambridge, Manmohan to Oxford, our eldest brother Benoy would probably settle for a solitary existence in London itself. Anyway the examinations were fast approaching. Actually I had three of them to prepare for: the School Final exam, the I.C.S. test and one for winning a scholarship to enter Cambridge. Only by this scholarship could I be of some help to my brothers.

"The I.C.S. was a very difficult competitive examination, wasn't it? Only the best Indian boys could appear for it. And you were very young then, weren't you? Barely 16 or 17 years old?

"That's not too young. And I didn't think the I.C.S. was all that difficult. Indian boys found it difficult because there were so many gaps in their education. You see, the British Government did not intend to give us a really fine and strong grounding in education; all they wanted was to produce a nation of slaves, as our leaders called it. Otherwise the intellectual capacities our youngsters possess are in no way less than those of their western counterparts "

"Why didn't you study with a tutor?"

"What? When I wasn't always sure of where my next meal was coming from, you ask why I didn't have a tutor? If it hadn't been for the kindness of Mr Cotton we wouldn't even have had a place to sleep."

"What about your father? Did he know about your circumstances?"

"His letters were few and far between, and only very very rarely would he send us some money—not enough for the needs of three young men (*laughing*). From time to time, instead of money, he sent us newspaper cuttings and a great deal of advice."

Every one sat looking at Sri Aurobindo, silent, curious, puzzled.

"Those cuttings described the acts of injustice and cruelty suffered by

Indians at the hands of the British. They were meant to arouse in us a sense of patriotism."

"But was he not a great admirer of the British?"

"He had been once, though only for a few years, at the beginning of his career. On his return to India from England, he had expected to find the British in India to be similar to those he had met in England who were noble and just and generous. But he soon found out that the Englishman in India was quite different from his counterpart in his home-country. In India the British were masters, we were their slaves. This was the usual relationship. Being in government service, my father was made to feel sharply the distinctions they made between the two races. When he was the Civil Surgeon, I believe it was in Rangpur, he was on very good terms with the District Magistrate who never undertook anything important without first consulting my father. The people there called my father the King of Rangpur. He had a canal dug through the town, a canal that was several miles long, to help the people. They called it the K. D. Canal. But when the previous magistrate was replaced by another, the latter could not tolerate the fact that my father was so loved and admired and he had him transferred. It was this sort of prejudiced behaviour that changed my father's attitude towards the British and awoke in him a sense of nationalism. Many other happenings, big and small, made him gradually realise that unless our country became free it could never make any real progress, and he wanted us to understand this. In fact, he played not a small part in arousing in me the patriotic feeling.

"But, you see, right then there were more pressing problems that needed to be solved. I had, first of all, to apply myself with more industry to my studies. Until then, I had breezed my way through the examinations, but the time had come to take matters more seriously. Of course, deep down inside, I was confident I would be given a scholarship. I have found that whenever I had willed anything earnestly enough, it always brought results, always, all my life. To give you two examples, I had willed that Ireland should become free, and she did; that India should attain independence, and again she did. Now, my elder brother Benoy too was studying for the I.C.S. Examination; that may have given an added impetus to my preparation. Manmohan would enquire, from time to time, how we were faring and would keep our father informed about our progress."

"Weren't you nervous?" (*Laughter*)

"He's asking you this because he himself becomes so easily nervous!" broke in another youngster. "He is a bag of nerves, just before a test or a match. I simply can't convince him that it is not all that important whether one passes or fails, or one wins or loses. Why should one become so terribly tense?"

"Exactly. What is important is to do one's level best. And if the results are bad, one should not feel crushed, just as one should not feel excessively elated by

success either. This is one of the most important lessons of life, to face all happenings with calm and poise. So, there I was, ready to face the examinations. When they were over, I found that one of my answer papers brought me a scholarship and the other a stipend.

“Thus, the road to Cambridge became smooth. And time it was too for our household to break up—the three of us who had lived so long together, quarrelling, sharing all our good and bad fortunes had now to strike out separately, each to follow his star. I was the first to leave. My brothers came to the station to see me off as I boarded the train to Cambridge. I had heard so much about both Oxford and Cambridge. It was said that the finest students from all over the world were there to pursue their studies, which, when they were completed, helped them to take their place among the greatest poets, writers, scientists and political leaders of their time. I wondered if I would meet other young Indians at Cambridge. There was so much to see, to learn, to know. Such were my thoughts as the train carried me to my destination. The first thing that struck me when I arrived there was the peace, the quiet. After the continuous turbulence of London, a veritable ocean of noise, the silence of the checkered shade along the banks of the river Cam was very welcome, a rightful setting indeed for a seat of learning. I found that my spirit was absolutely in harmony with its mood as I finally went up to the room that had been allotted to me. It was certainly not very big, but it was spick-and-span. Though there was nothing luxurious about it, it seemed to me like very heaven, coming as I was from my dark London days. I do not remember everything about my life at Cambridge, for so many important and eventful happenings have occurred since then that those tender memories of my youth have been crushed under their weight. Anyway, for your sake I’ll try to revive whatever I can of them. One thing I remember was that hardly had I settled in when I was invited to have coffee with one of my professors, or dons as they were called. Surprised, are you, at such an early invitation? But then you ought to note that the relationship one had with one’s professors, particularly at Oxford and Cambridge, was nothing like the one between students and teachers with the orthodox, old-fashioned *Pathshalas*. In England at residential universities like Oxford and Cambridge, professors and students eat and play together, and even relax in one another’s company, though the professors are treated with all the respect that is their due. Anyway, when I presented myself for that coffee, I found that it was to be in the company of the well-known professor of our college, Oscar Browning or the ‘great O.B.’ as the students called him. He began the evening by praising me very highly, saying something like, ‘Your results, in that excessively stiff examination, are very very good. In my long years as a university examiner, I have never come across such an excellent paper, particularly with regard to the Classics, Greek and Latin. Your essay, too, on Shakespeare and Milton was wonderful.’ And there was more in the same vein. I wrote to my father

describing all this, the way my life at Cambridge had begun.”

Sri Aurobindo had almost finished speaking when the light failed and the room was plunged in darkness. When the power came back, a few minutes later, we saw the Mother standing in the doorway. She was holding a piece of paper in her hand. Everyone turned to look at her, surprised and wondering. She advanced into the room smiling and raised her hand in a gesture of blessing. The children realised that it was time for them to leave.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

(Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali)

O LOVE...

THOU hast promised to be in everything I touch,
 O Love, but whither hast Thou gone?
 The agony of living without Thee
 A frozen monotone, a wilderness of forms,
 Ashen, with never a tint of rose:
 The agony of dreams that could never take off,
 Pinned to the snare, fluttering and bleeding—
 Flames that can soar not to their freedom in the Blue
 Nor sink into the sleep of the unconscious cradle,
 The passion of a sun-god smothered in a dungeon!
 I yearned to kiss each day thy face of dawning,
 Longed for Thy embrace in every breeze around me.
 Chained as I am which way do I look
 In this dead expanse of the frozen grip of things?
 O Love, thou hast promised to be in everything I touch.

DAMODAR REDDY

CONVERSATIONS OF THE DEAD

TRANSLATED BY SATADAL FROM THE BENGALI OF
NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

12

Satyananda, Nanasahib*

Satyananda

You are a great soul, Nana! Your heart wept for the wretched country; making a trifle of your life, sacrificing happiness and ease, you made poverty and sorrow and danger your constant companions without even glancing at anything else—your sincerity, your enthusiasm, your untiring diligence is exemplary. But, even then, you are forced to admit that the path you have followed, the instruments you have used were mostly erroneous, full of defects and shortcomings—it is not possible to deliver a country solely with the strength of an army or by effecting a revolution.

Nanasahib

My obeisance to you, Maharaj! I know why I was defeated, that is not very difficult to understand. But I could never grasp your intentions. You too effected a revolution, you too applied military force—but your soldiers were sannyasins for whom warfare is something alien, whereas my soldiers were truly soldiers. You too, just like me, did not achieve your goal.

You stepped aside before the work undertaken was completed. Now you say that there is no necessity of the strength of arms, no necessity of any revolution. Is it because of an anticipated failure as a result?

Satyananda

I don't mean to say that. I say that something else is required prior to physical strength and revolution—something greater and deeper on which physical

* *Translator's note*

Satyananda, an important character in Bankim Chandra's *Ananda Math*, was the leader of the group of ascetics who vowed to remain *brahmachāris* till their motherland would be free from the clutches of the foreigner. He organised an armed upheaval throughout the country and, though partly successful, was asked by his master to stop the movement in the midst of his triumph, and he withdrew into seclusion with his master after disbanding the martial ascetic group.

Dhandupanth, popularly known as Nanasahib, was the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II. He was one of the architects of the armed uprising against the British in Oudh and Bundelkhand in 1857, notoriously termed by them the "Sepoy Mutiny" which ended in failure. He then became a fugitive and his ultimate fate remains obscure till today.

strength and revolution can safely stand; even, one may not need physical strength and revolution if one acquires that.

Nanasahib

It's a riddle! I have realised that the first cause of the defeat of my army was that the opponents were very strong—they were the ruler and the master, expert in warfare; to mobilise men and arms at will was nothing difficult for them; this too wouldn't have mattered, but the real cause was that I did not receive the help I expected from my countrymen; not only so, most of them sided with the foreigners out of fear or greed. It was the people of my country who betrayed me, yet I was labelled as a "mutineer". Alas, my wretched country!

Satyananda

Do you realise, Nana, what it means? It means that the country must first yearn truly for freedom. What right, what capacity do you or I have to impose something, however beneficial it may be, if the country doesn't want it? If a handful of us want forcibly to bear the burden of the country on our shoulders, we ourselves will be pounded and crushed—the country will remain where she was. Both of us committed the same mistake. If the mind of the general mass is not prepared, how can a small group like ours shake off such a heavy burden? We did not awaken the whole country, nor did we revive the whole race with a new life!

Nanasahib

It seems you are content to leave the burden of that work to the foreigners.... But does it not amount to making the impossible possible? Who could ever have awakened the country as a whole? Subjection is the reason why the country is dead. Let the country be independent first, then you will see how she rises of herself! The very nature of one who is subservient is that he doesn't want independence, it has to be forcibly imposed on him—and that work is done by a handful only. If the country had realised the value of independence, why should she ever have become subservient? The life of a country is the fruit of independence, not the root of it.

Satyananda

No, Dhandupanth, independence does not create life, it is life only that can create life. Independence is only a favourable condition for the development and enrichment of life. A country may manifest the optimum excellence in her capacity, her education and culture after independence, but even to acquire that independence there must be some brilliance of vitality in the country, some expanse of knowledge within the nation. Acquiring independence does not necessarily mean acquiring the power to protect it. If the country acquires

freedom by virtue of a conscious and well-united capacity, only then can she enjoy the complete fruit of independence. Do you want to acquire independence through ignorance and incapacity?

Nanasahib

I am athirst for independence. Philosophy I don't understand. My path was straight and simple. I wanted to work even upon the ignorance and incapacity of those who were ignorant and incapable—their selfishness, their superstition and fear were the best means to make them dissatisfied, agitated and violent. You say, first make the whole country alive, sacrifice life to awaken life—I too have done it as best I could. It is the life of a few that scatters itself about and makes the whole country vibrant with life. Were not the tornado-lives of Jhansi and Tantia and myself enough?

Satyananda

The result itself gives you the answer. What life did you have, what life would you have been able to create? You aroused a life of smallness, selfishness, blind commotion and vengeance, you aroused confusion and disorder, a mass frenzy, a huge anarchy.

Nanasahib

My purpose was only anarchy. Which dependent nation has acquired independence without passing through a violent topsy-turvy in some way or other? If the ease and order of dependence is not first broken to pieces, then how will the ease and order of independence arrive? Why are you so afraid of anarchy and confusion? Is there no place for anarchy and confusion in the world's system, in the path of progress of humanity? What has happened in the French Revolution? What did we see in modern Russia, in Ireland?

Satyananda

You are seeing only the outer aspect of a revolution. It is the fruit that attracted your whole attention, you did not look into the causes. Whether in France, in Russia, or in Ireland—the war of independence did not come about simply by creating anarchy, nor was it done in a day by a handful. The inner world has come into being through years of rigorous discipline followed by a multitude—the country has inwardly at first not only severed the shackles of subjection, but also framed a radical structure of independence, then only has the external bondage started to snap under the pressure of that inner truth! I am not afraid of anarchy but one must see the source of inspiration, the focus of attention underlying it—what knowledge, what power is trying to get embodied through it.

Nanasahib

What knowledge, what power was there in your effort for a revolution? Why did that too end in failure? Isn't it ridiculous to attempt a revolution with the knowledge and power of an ascetic or a saint?

Satyananda

My anchorites have proved by their work that it is not. The object of my anchorite group was to become a centre of new life in the country, to prepare a seedbed for a new education, a new initiation, a new brain and a new life with which the future India would take shape. I did not want simply to snap the bondage of subjection, I did not want only the force of destruction—I wanted such a force of creation as would on the one hand continue to pull down with ease and on the other continue to build up infallibly. But that did not get realised—do you know why? First, my emphasis too was more on the work of destruction, I could not help making haste seeing the state of things in the country, I took an untimely plunge, the country was not ready. Secondly, under pressure of this immediate work my group remained only a group; of course a powerful group came into being but it had no contact with the country as a whole, it did not try to enter into the mind and heart of the country to make it ready.

Nanasahib

But to make the country ready that way is time-consuming—if it disintegrates during the process of preparation, what then? And we see that the fetters of the country are getting stronger and stronger day by day. Each moment is fastening a new chain on to her. I did not get the same advantage which you had a hundred years ago; it is now going to be nearly another hundred years, and see the deplorable condition the country is in, each and every limb is in novel chains in such a way that there is not even a small gap anywhere—can you think now that there is any possibility whatever of India's independence?

Satyananda

Probably it seems like that in an exclusively gross vision. But is the condition of the country so bad? Rather I see that never before was India's inner world as nicely prepared as it is today. As the external conditions are becoming difficult, the inner force of India is becoming alert and strong in the same proportion. Seeing the force, the genius that is blossoming in the life-stream of India to acquire independence, to protect the acquired independence and to raise this independence into a state of sublime greatness and glory, I have no doubt whatsoever about the future. Besides, if India becomes extinct in her endeavour to deserve independence, that means India's work is over, she is fit for extinction

Nanasahib

But why is so much misfortune heaped on India alone? See, all the other countries of the globe have become or are going to become independent; those who became dependent after us became independent even before us. Why did India only lag behind?

Satyananda

It is because of India's vastness and the greatness of her future. The experiment that is being carried out in India concerns the problem of humanity, of the universe. The child who is growing in the womb of India is the "Superman" of the future; it takes time for all his limbs to become mature, that's why his birth is so belated. It is not only the question of independence, the problem here concerns something greater even than independence—if that problem is solved, independence is inevitable. The soul of India did not become dependent under compulsion, it accepted subjection to fulfil a certain special purpose. That purpose also is being fulfilled, the hour is going to be struck.

Nanasahib

Let the hour strike with your blessings, O Great One! I do not know what is greater than independence; probably I am not fit to know that. Nana's thirsty heart will be content to see his country free and independent.

THE MOTHER GUIDES ME

A GREATER sense is made of all this, now
Life is a mystery-play unfolding;
She hovers over every moment
Gracing, guiding, enabling from within.
Power to influence, to change, not mine before
Flows from Her unending

A sweet patience, born of understanding,
A deeper way of seeing,
Swift insight into other beings,
Opening myself to them, through Her.
Their acts and mine, a cosmic blend
Explained by coincidence as cause,
Effecting acts that follow, bringing changes
Of great significance few can see.

No detail is left to be un-influential,
No true higher aim unheard, unhelped,
Essential elements come together
From corners of existence unknown to each.
Her crystalline light permeates the ordinary,
Gracing and lifting it to its extraordinary function
Of weaving the tapestry of how life goes
Changing threads of tendency
And colors of living circumstance
To more closely relate to the Truth they represent,
To the true circumstance of conscious progress.

Subtle proddings I may miss without complete attention,
May take my course off miles and moments
But, through Her grace, mistakes meet resistance.
Even a sensible logic is applicable to cognition
Her love, so overwhelming and complete,
Causes spontaneous tears of gratitude
And smiles of self-fulfilment
Even in the face of what would have been
Devastating to an untouched consciousness—
My source, my secret tonic,
Available elixir that can
Invisibly stir a moment's alchemy

Transforming it without missing its beat
 Shared in the silence with Her, as Her!

Without Her I am only all I am,
 With Her I am She as me.
 The quality of my devotion, showing
 As strengths I did not have.
 For with Her I am more
 Than any one I was could ever be.

STUART SCHOEN

THE ANNOUNCERS OF THE SUPRAMENTAL WORLD

AFTER A PAINTING BY PRAMODE KUMAR CHATTERJEE

PIERCING the vast blue with outspread wings
 And a voice vibrant with immaculate words
 Where do you glide, O twin birds?
 From which secret summit have you gathered
 Pollens of gold into the folds of your feathers?
 You cast them down on the way
 Creating expectancy in the infinite void:
 The clusters of clouds tinged with your hue
 And the boundless sea dressed in gold
 Await your advent with anxious hearts!
 But heedless you head on, where none knows!
 O Heralds, would you not check your flight
 And look at the green beauty below?
 Your mission is not to vanish into empty space,
 Nor simply to unify the scattered clouds!
 Know you not that from time immemorial
 Human aspirations, songs, prayers and hymns,
 For self-release and life divine,
 Have always been rising to the gold-gate of the Supreme?
 O lovely Swans, if your voices ring with the reply,
 Then please don't vanish into thin air ..
 Descend on this earth with resplendent bodies
 And kindle the lamp of the Truth-Consciousness
 In the obscure atoms of inert Matter...

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

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

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1990)

C. *The True Nature*: The ancient Sankhya teaches that Prakriti is the source of the subjective and objective existence, the inner instruments and the outer forms, and determines their character by her qualities and their combinations. There are three qualities, Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. Sattva is the principle of intelligence and conserves the workings of energy, Rajas is the principle of force and action and creates the workings of energy; Tamas is the principle of inertia and non-intelligence and the opposite of Sattva and Rajas, for it dissolves what they create and conserve. In all existences, formations, processes all the three qualities are present but in different proportions. They are in perpetual collision, intermixture and mutation with each other, because each one tries to achieve predominance over the other two. That which is predominant may remain so as long as possible, but cannot be in that position forever. For it has to give up its original position when one of the suppressed qualities gains predominance. Therefore the action of the gunas is an endless strife and a constant struggle which accounts for the rise and fall of things and persons, for the change of circumstances, gradual or sudden.

The crisis which Arjuna faces in the battlefield is a case in point. As a Kshatriya he is a rajasic man whose action is governed by a high sattvic ideal. He goes to the battlefield as one who is accustomed to move unquestioningly among the heroes who challenge him. To his dismay he now realises that he is facing a crisis. "The discharge of his social duty has suddenly come to signify assent to an enormous result of sin and sorrow and suffering; the customary means of maintaining social order and justice is found to lead instead to a great disorder and chaos. The rule of just claim and interest, that which we call rights, will not serve him here; for the kingdom he has to win for himself and his brothers and his side in the war is indeed rightly theirs and its assertion an overthrow of Asuric tyranny and a vindication of justice, but a blood bespattered justice and a kingdom possessed in sorrow and with the stain on it of a great sin, a monstrous harm done to society, a veritable crime against the race."¹ Arjuna is therefore depressed and incapable of decisive action. He now talks about renouncing life and the world. Evidently, the Sattva-rajasic element in him is no longer dominant, but gives way to the tamasic impulse which produces "a feeling of impotence, fear, aversion, disgust, horror of the world and life". As Sri Aurobindo remarks, "the recoil of Arjuna is the tamasic recoil from action of the Sattva-rajasic man".² The Sattva-rajasic element suddenly gives up its predomi-

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, p 436

² *Ibid* , p 51

nant position and takes shelter in the *tamas*. The result is that Arjuna behaves no longer like a great Aryan hero but like a weakhearted person who shrinks from war and is incapable of facing his enemies. Hence Krishna's rebuke, "This is not the way cherished by the Aryan man; this mood came not from heaven nor can it lead to heaven, and on earth it is forfeiting of glory". This typifies how the *gunas* can work in an opposite direction and turn a noble warrior into an ignoble creature. As long as one is subject to the *gunas*, it is impossible to avoid such problems in life, because the action of the *gunas* represents a ceaseless conflict and a struggle for the dominance of one over the other.

What then is the solution? Arjuna himself suggests a solution when he says that he will not fight and that it is more for his welfare that the armed sons of Dhritarashtra should slay him unarmed and unresisting. The solution is cessation from action, *akarma*, and allowing oneself to be overcome by the oppressive forces of life. But the question is whether it is practically possible. If for the sake of argument Arjuna were to try to let himself be killed by his opponents, it would be impossible for him to restrain the warrior in him and not to resist the onslaughts of his enemies. Therefore the Gita very rightly admonishes Arjuna that if in his egoism he refrains from fighting the enemies, he shall be compelled by his nature to do that work. Besides this, there is another alternative in Arjuna's mind when he says, "I have no desire for victory or kingdom or pleasures. It is better to live in this world even on alms than to slay these high-souled Gurus". Here Arjuna gives a higher version of *akarma*; it is no longer abstention from works, but a spiritual renunciation of life and works, *sannyāsa*. In fact he tells us that one way, perhaps the best way, is to withdraw from action by withdrawing from the *gunas* themselves—a solution offered by the Sankhyas.

The teaching of the Sankhyas is that man is not only a Purusha but a Purusha subject to the action of Prakṛiti. By himself the Purusha is the non-doer, but yet the witness and sustainer and the giver of the sanction to the works of Prakṛiti. As long as the Purusha permits the play of Prakṛiti, he is bound phenomenally by the ego and the action of her *gunas*. If he refuses to be bound by the ego and the illusion of doing works, he ceases to be the sustainer and Prakṛiti loses her power to bind him. As a result, her *gunas* fall into a state of equilibrium, all her actions come to an end, and the Purusha returns to his immobile repose. Therefore the way to free oneself from the warring *gunas* and their consequences of conflict, sorrow and suffering, is to renounce life and works and become a non-doer, *ātmānam akartāram*. This is the solution of the Sankhyas. The Gita recognises that this is an effective method of cutting the knot of bondage to Prakṛiti and her *gunas*. But certainly it does not accord to the Sankhya a superior position to that which seeks to solve the problem without renouncing life and works. This is borne out by the Gita's unambiguous affirmation that works are superior to the cessation of works (3-8) and its insistent forbiddance of the abandonment of works (2-47). The obvious reason

why the Gīta does not favour the Sankhya's solution is that it is not according to the real truth of our being, *svabhāva*.

But then how to do works without falling into the limitations of the *gunas*? The answer is to be found in what the Gīta calls the higher Nature (7-5). The Gīta says that apart from the Nature of the three *gunas*, there is a higher Nature which is one with the law of being of the supreme Lord of the worlds and constitutes His original power of becoming, *madbhāva*, and of which the lower Nature is but a deflected working. With a view to show that this Nature is only a derivation from the higher Nature, the Gīta clearly affirms that the becomings of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas proceed from the Lord in whose self-nature exist their corresponding divine potencies and their ultimate fulfilment (7-12). Unlike the lower Nature of the *gunas*, the higher Nature is founded upon the full and complete consciousness of the supreme Lord, *prakṛtum svām*, and therefore her will and action are possessed of a natural divine harmony, divine strength, divine light, and divine order. Her workings are inherently free from obscurities, perplexities, confusions, disorder, conflict and chaos. All sin, evil, suffering and grief are totally foreign to her becomings, because she is founded not only upon the divine consciousness but also upon the divine delight of the great Lord. To return to our question, how to do works without at the same time falling into the limitation of the *gunas*? The answer is very obvious. We have to discover the higher divine Nature behind the lower Nature and become united with Her Will and Action. We can now act, but still be free from the *gunas* of the lower Nature, *nīstraiguṇya*. The passage from the lower to the higher Nature is made possible by the fact that the workings of the inferior Nature originate from and arrive at their final fulfilment in the superior Nature.

There is one more question to be answered. Even if it is possible to pass from the lower to the higher Nature, is it really possible for the individual soul, *Jīva*, to put on the Nature of the Lord and function in unison with Her Will and Action? The answer is in the affirmative. It is the divine Nature of the Lord, says the Gīta, that has become the multiple soul in the worlds, *jīvabhūtām*. The individual soul is therefore essentially one with the being and nature of the supreme Lord; in its true law of being and law of nature the soul can exist and act like Him, *sādharmaṇyam*. It is with a view to demonstrate the possibility for man to be born into the divine consciousness and to do the divine works, *janma karma ca me divyam* (4-9), that the Lord of beings gives himself as an example to Arjuna in one of the early chapters. It is now evident that the individual soul, in virtue of its essential oneness with the Lord, can enter into his Nature and do works in union with Her Power and Will.

The *Prakṛti* of the three *gunas* is not, as the Sankhyas teach, the only power that expresses itself in the works of the world. If there is no other power besides *Prakṛti*, then works determined by the *gunas* cannot be freed from the limitations of ego and desire, and cessation of works is the only solution. But, as the

Gīta says, there is a divine Prakṛiti, which is the ultimate source of works and constitutes the real truth of the ordinary Prakṛiti. Since the divine Prakṛiti is inherently free from the limitations and imperfections of the gunas, works are possible even when the soul has dispensed with the action of the gunas. In fact, the Gīta takes the Sankhya notion of Prakṛiti and gives it an extended meaning from the standpoint of the Upanishads. Prakṛiti, in its view, is not merely the Nature of the three gunas but the divine Nature which constitutes the very law of working of the supreme Puruṣa, *mādhāva*. Commenting on the importance of the Gīta's idea of the higher Nature, Sri Aurobindo writes: "Here is the first new metaphysical idea of the Gīta which helps it to start from the notions of the Sankhya philosophy and yet exceed them and give to their terms, which it keeps and extends, a Vedantic significance."¹

(To be continued)

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

¹ *Essays on the Gīta*, p 254

MOOT COURT HEARING ON SHAKESPEARE AUTHORSHIP

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE OR EDWARD DE VERE?

Few readers of literature know of a recent event of great interest to the literary world. On September 25, 1987, the American University, Washington, 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.

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1990)

JASZI—The choice of the Earl of Oxford as a candidate for the laurels of authorship which are contested here today is I think the choice that appeals through its simplicity, through the intellectual economy so to speak which can be achieved by adopting it. Many fewer suppositions are required in order for us to believe in the authorship of Oxford than would in fact be required for us to believe in Shakespeare's authorship claims. For example, we have particular links between Oxford the individual and various plays and poems. I've already mentioned a bit about the sonnets but I should say a bit too about the plays. Take, for example, Hamlet. The essential psychological dilemma of Hamlet is reproduced in or from Oxford's life. That is, the remarriage, the hasty remarriage of Oxford's mother following the death of his father is paralleled in the events that give rise to Hamlet's campaign against Gertrude and Claudius. Hamlet's famous speech to the players is typical of what a theatrical patron of the day such as Oxford would have had to say to his player employees. The book which Hamlet is believed to have been reading when he first encountered Polonius is regarded by many scholars to have been a volume called *Cardanus Comfort*, the volume to which the dedication and signed poem by the Earl of Oxford, of which we were speaking earlier, was contributed and there is something approaching consensus that the figure of Polonius is a particularly apt caricature of Burghley whom Oxford would have known well, and would have had good reason to hold up to ridicule just as thereafter he would have had good reason to conceal the fact of his having done so. I might mention, too, the extensive piracy of the plays and poems, that is something which according to authorities on the publishing practices of the day marks them out as having been likely to have been the works of a nobleman. A nobleman could not complain of piracy. A common person such as Shakspeare of Stratford with a good business head and a strong developed self-interest not only could, but almost certainly would have complained.

JUSTICE—But he couldn't copyright them, could he?

JASZI—He couldn't copyright them but there were procedures in existence under the company of stationers to which all the printers of the day, both those authorized and those unauthorized, subscribed, by which an author who believed that a member stationer had taken his work without authorization could appeal and get relief, injunctive relief or damage relief. This is all set forth in professor Patterson's excellent book on the pre-history of English copyright. There are instances, from the time of the plays and poems in question, of authors who have been abused by publishers doing just that. No one did that on behalf of Shakespeare or Shakspeare and surely, if de Vere had been the author, that would present a sufficient explanation of why this did not occur.

JUSTICE—I leave you with one question that troubles me. You make a big point in your brief about the skills of the author involving military matters, falconry, medicine, law and all the different things, and it's unlikely that a man of limited education, a limited contact with the nobility would be able to write such plays. What about the theory that perhaps de Vere was closely associated with Shakspeare—that he was a man who was interested in the theatre, spent a lot of time in it and maybe they were very closely associated and the source of Shakspeare's best knowledge was de Vere.

JASZI—That supposition, and it's one that I certainly have considered, seems to me to fall on the following ground: If we assume Shakspeare of Stratford—a slightly, if at all, educated provincial, arriving in London to make his way in the theatre of that day or around the theatre of that day—he had a lot of work to do. He had a lot of particular crafts and skills to learn as well as a living to earn both for himself and for his dependents back in Stratford-upon-Avon. The notion that he could in those few short years of his London existence through occasional association—and that association in and of itself would have broken many of the taboos of the age—acquired by osmosis...

JUSTICE—Isn't it true that de Vere was criticized as associating with the wrong kind of people and maybe Shakspeare was one of those people?

JASZI—It is certainly not beyond probability or possibility that such a casual association may have existed, but...

JUSTICE—Why do you assume it is casual?

JASZI—I assume it is casual only because it appears to me that both Shakspeare and de Vere would have many things to do with their time other than to conduct informal tutorials so to speak in the art of gentle living.

JUSTICE—Maybe they spent every Saturday night at the local tavern.

JASZI—Well, it's said of course that Shakspeare was a regular at the Mermaid Tavern, but no record has ever been found of his actual attendance there, and similarly with other places where literary men and gentle people of the age did foregather.

JUSTICE—Well, they would not publicize such an association, would they?

JASZI—Presumably not, although the attentiveness with which Lord Burghley and his associates watched Edward de Vere suggests to me that whether such an association had been publicized or not, had it been as long term and as intimate as you'd suppose, it would undoubtedly have been brought out. That's precisely the kind of thing that Burghley would have picked on and made much out of.

JUSTICE—Thank you

JASZI—Thank you.

(break for applause)

JUSTICE—I'm sure there will be applause for you too when the time comes.

BOYLE—Thank you, Justice Blackmun. Your comment is deeply reassuring.

JUSTICE—Mr. Boyle.

BOYLE—May it please the court, my name is James Boyle and I have the honor of presenting the case for William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, the actor and theatrical entrepreneur who as all of us have always believed was the man who wrote the work conventionally ascribed to him. In one sense, the case is extremely complicated. It presents a jagged terrain under which the Justices have just driven my learned friend at some length showing the complications and difficulties which are presented by the attempt to find the true author of these works. But in another sense, I would suggest the case is very simple. There are, in fact, I would claim, only three issues to this case. The first is whether or not we can believe that Edward de Vere wrote the works traditionally ascribed to William Shakespeare under a pseudonym, under in fact the pseudonym William Shakespeare. Second, more simple still, is there contemporary and posthumous evidence which identifies my client, Shakespeare—the actor and theatrical entrepreneur from Stratford—as also being the playwright? Third, does Shakespeare's background, his education, the records he left behind, does it all fit the author of the plays in the ways which we would expect the background and education and so forth of the author to fit the works which he produced? To answer the first question, I'm going to argue that Edward de Vere had neither the opportunity nor the talent to write the works ascribed to Shakespeare, and even if he had written those works, he had no motive nor any means for concealing his authorship. I will argue in fact that not only did he have no motives or means to assume a pseudonym, which my client friend must assume, but that unfortunately for the Oxfordian case, he was dead before the plays were finished. This, I would find, barring the intercession of a ghost writer, would mean that he could not in fact have written them. Second, I will argue that there is in fact ample, direct evidence, both posthumous and during Shakespeare's lifetime, which identifies my client, the actor and theatrical entrepreneur from Stratford, as being the author of the plays.

JUSTICE—Do you think there is a possibility that there may have been one author of the plays, and a different author for the sonnets?

BOYLE—No, I would agree with my learned friend here, and I think that most of

the authorities on the subject agree that—if one looks at the canons—one thing is overwhelming, and that is the idea that the same mind lay behind all of these thoughts. So, second, I will attempt to demonstrate there is ample, positive evidence, evidence which alone would prove that my client was in fact the true author of the works. And finally, I will argue that the puzzles which my learned friend detects in the record in the history of Shakspeare of Stratford's life only appears to be a puzzle if we apply to Shakespeare's life and to his records present-day assumptions, assumptions which would be entirely inapplicable to a man of his day. Assumptions which are premised on our own ideas about education, our own ideas about authorship—those assumptions do not fit a man who has been dead for some 371 years. Let me turn to the first point. Can we believe that Edward de Vere wrote these works under a pseudonym? I would claim right at the start that this idea falls down. Why should de Vere conceal his authorship? The main Oxfordian argument, the one on which my learned friend relied, is that it was a matter of great shame to be revealed as the author of literary works. And yet, as we know, De Vere published poems under his own name or under an initial which would have revealed his identity. We know that he was publicly hailed as a playwright by both George Putnam and by Meres, and thus, since these public records of his being a playwright actually exist, it seems to me hard to believe that he was so scared of authorship, that he would wish to conceal his works under a pseudonym.

JUSTICE—Well, Meres' revelation was not contemporary, was it?

BOYLE—I'm sorry. Both of the revelations were in fact contemporary within the lives of both William Shakespeare and Edward de Vere, and so I would claim that, since de Vere was already publicly acknowledged as a playwright, what possible reasons could he have had to disguise his authorship of these great plays?

JUSTICE—May I make a suggestion on that? Of course it's hard to guess the motives, but suppose that he was ordered by either the Prime Minister or the Queen. He might have been. At least that's one theory that has been advanced. That would answer all of the questions as to his motives.

BOYLE—Yes, Justice Stevens. That argument has been put forth by Oxfordians. I would claim that each time a set of motives is constructed in order to explain de Vere's use of a pseudonym, it collapses under its own internal contradictions. I just demonstrated why I think that would work if de Vere was frightened of being an author. It was you who suggested that the problem about revealing his authorship is that he was ordered to conceal it. I would ask why he was asked to conceal it. The standard answer is that he was ordered to conceal it because the plays may have contained materials which were damaging to the throne; it was a criticism on the corruption of the day. Yet at the same time, the very people who suggest this fact, that de Vere was ordered to conceal his authorship, also suggest that those same people, the Queen and so forth, were funding de Vere.

JUSTICE—One doesn't have to go that far. It seems to me to at least raise the question about the Queen, who did a number of things which were difficult to explain. She was a person of certain idiosyncrasies and fond of secrecy and taking different positions. Maybe we don't know what her reason was. Perhaps if the monarch said, "I don't want your authorship to be public, the fact of your authorship known," that would be the end of it as far as Edward de Vere was concerned.

BOYLE—I would be the last to deny the idiosyncrasies of monarchy. However, I would claim that, first, we have no positive evidence whatsoever that this is true. Second, even if we assume that this is true...

JUSTICE—Burghley too was a man of intrigue, was he not?

BOYLE—Yes. I think I clearly described him as such. And yet it is strange to me that given the enormous powers which were available to the Elizabethan stage operata, if they found these plays obnoxious, they need not have stopped them by ordering de Vere to conceal his name. They could have had him executed; they could have had the plays themselves banned.

JUSTICE—Or perhaps they were happy to have the plays written and published, just so long as he wasn't identified because perhaps they wanted to use them for propaganda purposes and all sorts of theoretical surmises. But do we really have to understand the motive in order to analyze the question whether it might be possible?

BOYLE—I would respond by saying that, as Justice Brennan earlier pointed out, my client is the established candidate, and anyone who comes before us claiming that he or she has an alternative candidacy bears the burden of proof of presenting us with a convincing means and motive for de Vere to conceal his authorship. I am claiming that such means or motive has not been presented, and whatever have been presented are internally contradictory and collapsible.

JUSTICE—If there were clear, independent, relevant evidence showing that de Vere really did write plays, do you think it would still be necessary to prove his motive for concealment?

BOYLE—No, if there were clear, independent, evidence that Edward de Vere in fact wrote the plays for Shakespeare, I would not quibble over the question of means and motive.

JUSTICE—The motive is just one of those things that go to the probability.

BOYLE—Yes—and I would also say that if one is looking at a set of works which actually has an author attached to them before one starts substituting new authors, one should think: why should they have pretended not to be the author, and particularly with these works which surely even a nobleman, particularly a nobleman who already published, would be the last to be ashamed of?

(To be continued)

DESTINIES AND DEITIES

JEAN-CLAUDE CARRIÈRE AND PETER BROOK'S ADAPTATION OF THE *MAHABHARATA*

THE *Mahābhārata* is a massive epic from ancient India: its vulgate text consists of approximately 100,000 Sanskrit stanzas, making it—to quote the commonest comparison—eight times as long as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* put together. The work originates from the middle of the first millennium BC, and reflects a time when new perceptions of divinity were growing up to challenge the ancient priestly cult of the Vedic sacrifice. This period saw the birth of two great heterodox religions, Buddhism and Jainism, which rebelled openly and fully against the Vedic cult; but it saw also the gradual emergence of a highly syncretistic religion claiming allegiance to the four Vedas while simultaneously practising and preaching much that was thoroughly non-Vedic. This new religion, Hinduism, could claim the epic narrative as its first text, though typically it prefers to refer to it as the “fifth Veda”

Syncretism guarantees conflicts of interests, and it seems to have taken the best part of a thousand years before the *Mahābhārata* assumed a form that was generally acceptable to Hindus of all persuasions. The result was a vast encyclopaedia of religious narrative and doctrine; in particular, the text's brahmin redactors took the opportunity to insert into it long didactic tracts (these account for well over one quarter of its great bulk).

Despite this, the messages conveyed by the central narrative itself are still clearly readable, and what they have to say is often rather different from the thrust of the priestly passages. Like many popular Hindu epics performed in various parts of India at the present day, the story of the *Mahābhārata* is a highly fatalistic account of destruction visited on men by gods. Throughout, the Pāndava hero-brothers are “pressed by the will of the gods” into ever-worsening moral and physical conflicts, culminating in a cataclysmic war of annihilation. Different human responses are depicted: a man may acquiesce bravely in the fate the gods have prepared for him (Yudhishthira, the just king); he may strive to impose his own will over that of the gods (Bhīma, the violent giant); or he may seek to follow the impartial code of the soldier (Arjuna, the warrior-prince). But whatever he does, he will not avert the destruction the gods have called for; indeed, the gods have sent one of their number, Kṛṣṇa, to oversee events and to induce the Pāndavas to pursue the war by foul means if fair means prove inadequate.

This is the story that Jean-Claude Carrière and Peter Brook have adapted for the Western stage. The massive three-part play, with a running time of nearly nine hours, is unquestionably a theatrical triumph, with its confident blend of the

stylized and the spectacular, the funny and the bloody. It is magnificent—but is it the *Mahābhārata*?

The answer is a resounding Yes. The work of Carrière and Brook is remarkably faithful to the events, sometimes even to the wording, of the Sanskrit original, but, more important, it stays true to its spirit. This is not “Peter Brook’s *Mahābhārata*”; this is the Indian epic *Mahābhārata*, lovingly cast by Brook into a form which non-Indian audiences can share.

In a work of such ambition there are bound to be parts where it is possible to disagree with the interpretation of the material. For me the most important of these is the depiction of Kṛṣṇa. In the excellent programme-notes Carrière writes of him, “Man or God? It is obviously not up to us to decide... we have chosen to keep the two faces of Krishna that are in the original poem, and to emphasize their opposite and paradoxical nature ” That Kṛṣṇa is a paradoxical figure is beyond dispute—so are other Hindu gods, notably Śiva and the Goddess—and he is certainly the most “human” of the deities. But Carrière is simply not correct when he says that “in the Mahabharata, at least in those parts of the poem generally thought to be the earliest, nothing clearly indicates that he is an avatar, one of the earthly incarnations of Vishnu”. *Mahābhārata* 5.22 is a chapter that can be shown on internal (metrical) evidence to be uniformly early: at Stanza 10 Kṛṣṇa is referred to as “Viṣṇu the unassailable, the great overlord of the three worlds”. Unlike the *Rāmāyana*, the other great Sanskrit epic, the *Mahābhārata* acknowledges its central god’s identity with Viṣṇu from the start.

In condensing the *Mahābhārata*, Carrière and Brook have obviously had to make many difficult choices about what to include and what to omit. In general their decisions make excellent sense: minor simplifications are made in the involved domestic history which leads up to the war, and in the conduct of the war itself, with no ill effects for the overall narrative. A single unfortunate omission is Bhīma’s vow to break Duryodhana’s thigh, made after Duryodhana insults the heroes’ joint wife Dṛaupadi by baring his thigh at her, and paralleled by Bhīma’s vow to drink Duṣśāsana’s blood to avenge another similar insult. Both insults are included in the play, as are both of Bhīma’s terrible deeds, so it seems a pity to have lost the thread of motivation in one case.

Brook’s sense of mood is assured and accurate, moving easily between high farce and tragedy. Particularly praiseworthy is his handling of the events of the Book of Virāṭa, which he has recognised for what it is (the scholar E. W. Hopkins called it “an interlude of pantomime”), and which he plays for all it is worth, complete with drag act, ludicrous mustachioed villain and a grand conjuring trick. His use of many members of his international cast in multiple roles can become confusing (the same actor plays the young Ekalavya, then the young Uttara, then the young Abhimanyu, then Uttara again), and it has to be admitted that not all the actors are as fluent in English as would be ideal. Indianness is never aped, but is well suggested by music, costume and, above all,

by gesture to which Brook has clearly devoted much observant study. Before *The Mahābhārata* returns to India in its new guise it might be worth paring away the occasional inappropriate use of the left hand (and Kṛṣṇa might like to learn the correct pronunciation of Gāndhārī's name).

JOHN D. SMITH

(With acknowledgments to the Times Literary Supplement, May 13-19, 1988, p 531)

POOL OF LIGHT

UNDER the cranium-dome of my mortal head, in the space
 behind and between the meditation-merged eyes,
 a Pool of Light gathers gradually, submerging my senses,
 —a billowy ballooning plume-like phosphorescence
 holy-haloed, floating fluffy-white, translucent—
 spreading its splendour ever so surely under my bated breath.

The Soul-Spirit is purged, even as countless layers upon layers
 of clinging cloying consciousness are stripped off, gauze-like.
 Swept away are the trash tinsels of world's transient trivialities.
 The body's shell seems to dissolve, thick walls of darkneses are
 dispelled.

A vast radiance descends in a downpour from above and around;
 the physical paves the way for the onslaught of the Torch-bearer's
 Advent.

In this boundless ocean of luminous space,
 nothing stands now between Divinity and me.
 Poised only a miniscule distance apart, It stands there,
 —drawn out of me, inside of me—
 revealing itself to my Inner Eye while I wait
 for the I's identity to merge and wed with Its Omnipotent
 Essence.

VIREN B. SHAH

REMEMBERING DAKSHINAPADA

HIS VISIONS AND EXPERIENCES

DAKSHINAPADA Bhattacharya, the father of Pranab Kumar who is the Director of Physical Education in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, breathed his last in the Ashram Nursing Home on October 3, 1988.

As far back as the year 1950 I got acquainted with him in the Ashram Dormitory, Golconde. Due to some unaccountable reason we developed a happy intimacy. His childlike simplicity of heart, frank and outspoken demeanour, sociable manners and jovial mood attracted many to him. Even a serious type of man like me was not deprived of his sweet company in spite of the difference in our ages.

In January 1986 both of us were indoor patients of the Nursing Home. I was about to be discharged when he was admitted. In the evening I saw him along with many others. After some time they left and he opened his heart to me. In the dim light of his room he started narrating one by one the visions and experiences he had had in his Ashram life. I took notes and asked him if I could publish them. He said yes but after his death. I have already written in *Purodha* (Bengali) about him. Now, for the readers of *Mother India*, I am going to recount in my own language some of the things he told me.

1. It was a Darshan day. Dakshinapada had been to Dilip Kumar Roy's house. Absent-mindedly Dilip Kumar had gone out of the house after locking the main gate while Dakshinapada was still inside. The prospect of missing the Darshan made him so upset that he burst into tears. At last, in a desperate bid, he scaled the high wall of the house, jumped down on the other side and ran for the Darshan. But by that time the Darshan was over. The Mother had left her seat and gone inside. Only Sri Aurobindo was still on his seat and A. B. Purani stood nearby. Dakshinapada was still weeping. Sri Aurobindo's face revealed his compassionate heart and he said to Purani: "Ask him why he is weeping." Dakshinapada replied, "I could not see my father." Sri Aurobindo beamed with a sweet and charming smile and told Purani: "Call the Mother, we will have a good laugh!"

2. When Dakshinapada came for the first time in 1936, he was put up in an old tiled house situated exactly at the place where Golconde now stands. He was living there all alone. The place was quite secluded at that time and he was absolutely new to Pondicherry. The house seemed to him to be a haunted one and at night he had eerie sensations. Once he saw the Mother near his bed throughout the night. Next morning when he went to the Mother for Pranam she asked him "Why did you get afraid last night? I have driven out all the bad spirits from your place."

3. One evening he had been to Dilip's. At night it rained heavily. Dilip

suggested that Dakshinapada stay back for the night which he did. Next morning, when he saw the Mother, she looked very grave. In a serious tone she asked: "Where were you last night? I went to your place and found your bed empty!" Of course, the Mother did not go there physically but in her subtle body.

4. On another occasion, in Dilip's house, he smelt throughout a strong fragrance of the flower called Kanthali Champa in Bengali (the Mother's significance: "Clear Mind") When the Mother was asked whether she had been present there at night, she replied: "Yes, yes, I was there."

5. Somebody complained against Dakshinapada to the Mother. She asked him if the report were true. He said: "No!" The Mother gave him a sharp slap on his cheek. But he remained unperturbed. Later, Amrita, the Ashram Manager, consoled him saying: "Mother behaves thus only with those whom she loves dearly." Dakshinapada replied. "Please stop your lecture. Nothing has happened to me."

6. Once the Mother used to give blessings from the top of the staircase by the Meditation Hall to a small group of people. On approaching her, Dakshinapada, with a childish curiosity, requested her to show him her Mahakali aspect. At once the Mother's face turned black and wore a fearful look. Her eyes radiated an unbearably dazzling light. Dakshinapada closed his eyes in abject fear. Sir Chunilal Mehta was behind him. He too saw the same, but nobody else in the queue did. After that nerve-racking experience Dakshinapada lay bedridden for two days without food. The same thing happened to Sir Chunilal. When they met again the latter said jokingly to Dakshinapada: "Do you wish to see Mahakali again?"

7. The Mother was giving blessings to the Ashram members in the Meditation Hall. Some people sat on the floor. Dakshinapada sat there right in front of the Mother. All of a sudden he saw in a vision a crimson sun rising from below the feet of the Mother and she had a golden resplendent figure. When he went to her to receive her blessings, she placed a flower on his palm and closed his fingers round it so that nobody else could see it. Afterwards, from Parichand of Garden Service he came to know the significance of the flower: "Revelation." In the evening at the Playground, the Mother on being asked about it told him that what he had visioned was the Supramental aspect of her being.

8. It was during the evening meditation in the Playground. Rain started. Dakshinapada opened his eyes for a moment and saw that the lights were on. The Mother stretched one of her hands in front and a divine being stood in front of her. He had a club on his shoulder studded with luminous gems. He rested his club on the ground and looked at the Mother. She too looked at him. After this the lights were off again and the meditation continued. Throughout its duration there was no rain. But as soon as the meditation was over and the Mother went to her room it poured heavily.

Later, when Dakshinapada asked the Mother about this vision, she told him that the divine being was no other than Indra the God of rains and storms.

9. Dakshinapada had to go to Bombay for a surgical operation. He stayed with some rich devotees of the Mother. They bore all his expenses. After his recovery he was preparing to return to Pondicherry when they requested him to see one of their relatives who was behaving insanely. He complied with their request. He saw that the insane person was sitting with the photographs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother turned face-down. The relatives gave Dakshinapada a full report of the insanity and asked him to show it to the Mother.

He came back to Pondicherry by air. On the way the plane began to rock in such a manner that it seemed as if it was crash-landing and breaking to pieces. There was panic and a hullabaloo among the passengers. But Dakshinapada sat calm and quiet in his seat, placing his folded palms on his chest, all the time remembering the Mother. The plane landed safely at its destination.

After reaching the Ashram he went to see the Mother and handed her the report of that insane person. On taking the report in her hands, the Mother suddenly felt out of sorts and it took quite a few hours for her to come round. When Dakshinapada met her again she told him: "What have you done? You have brought hostile forces along with you!"

Happily for the host of Dakshinapada their insane relative became normal after this.

10. Dakshinapada saw in a dream a temple made of glazed chinaware with a design of white lotuses set all over. An old man with white hair and beard stood in front of the temple. He asked Dakshinapada: "Do you know the hymn to Shiva?" Dakshinapada replied in the affirmative and started reciting the famous hymn written by Shankaracharya. The old man said: "No, no, not that one. Repeat the *stotra* I am uttering." Thus saying he went on uttering the *stotra*. Dakshinapada repeated a few words and then failed to follow him. The old man told him: "Look here!" Then he turned round and round on his heels, revealing with each turn Shiva and Vishnu alternately. Both of the revelations were of a golden hue. Dakshinapada interpreted them thus: "Both the Gods were one and the same in the Supramental plane which was symbolised by the golden hue "

11. Dakshinapada was extremely emotional by nature. Such people suffer much due to oversensitivity. In his room there was a picture of Jesus Christ. Once when he was in a very depressed state he sat with his eyes closed. Suddenly he had a vision. He saw the glass of the picture shatter to bits. Christ came out of the picture and told him: "Have you suffered more than I did?"

12. Once the Mother gave Dakshinapada a flower signifying "The Divine's Friendship" (*Canna indica*—very small size) and told him: "I give you my friendship."

All glory to him who received such a boon!

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1990)

THE thought of one God was indeed the common ideal of all religious movements during the nineteenth century in India. But Hinduism alone had a vivid perception of the infinite aspects of the soul's nature. It has had this perception down the ages and was therefore called the 'Eternal Religion', providing truths of spiritual experience beyond the divisive mind. When distorted ideas entered in at a particular time, then the reformers came to renew and restore the ancient eternal truths of India. But the steps of spiritual consciousness have to be taken according to the needs of the time.

The need in the Renaissance period of India depended upon the stress laid then on mental learning and on material progress. The need was to establish the supremacy of the spirit over mind and matter. Sri Ramakrishna embodied the solution of the problem and lived it out in his own life. The direct knowledge latent in humanity which is above reason has to be evolved. About the qualities which were in Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo says that they were those "which are most needed for the new race that has to arise." Sri Ramakrishna's realisation of the highest truth became an oasis in the desert of dry reason and disbelief. In him, says Sri Aurobindo, "we see a colossal spiritual capacity, first driving straight to the divine realisation taking, as it were, the kingdom of heaven by violence, and then seizing upon one Yogic method after another and extracting the substance out of it with an incredible rapidity, always to return to the heart of the whole matter, the realisation and possession of God by the power of Love, by the extension of inborn spirituality into various experience and by the spontaneous play of an intuitive knowledge. Such an example cannot be generalised. Its object also was special and temporal, to exemplify in the great and decisive experience of a master-soul the truth, now most necessary to humanity, towards which a world long divided into jarring sects and schools is with difficulty labouring, that all sects are forms and fragments of a single integral truth and all disciplines labour in their different ways towards one supreme experience. To know, be, and possess the Divine is the one thing needful and it includes or leads up to all the rest; towards this sole good we have to drive and this attained, all the rest that the divine Will chooses for us, all necessary forms and manifestations will be added."¹

The inner life of such a realised man of God is always difficult to understand and to describe. But glimpses of Sri Ramakrishna's life were given authentically by his direct disciples, and they constitute gems of spiritual literature.

Gadadhar Chattopadhyaya, in his later life known as Sri Ramakrishna, was born on 18 February 1836 in a poor family at the out-of-the-way village of Kamarpukur in the Hooghly district of West Bengal. He got a very rudimentary

training in the three R's in the village school. While at school he was good in his lessons but he took no interest in book-learning or mathematics. Instead of conventional learning he liked most of the time to know about great spiritual heroes whose life-modes took him into contemplations and meditations. In the midst of sights and sounds of nature he lost his outer consciousness in ecstasy. Once when he was acting the part of Shiva in a village dramatic performance Gadadhar fell into a deep trance and it was with great difficulty that he was brought back to normal consciousness. He had no liking for school-hours and enjoyed far more the society of the ascetics who passed through the village.

When he was only 19 he went to Calcutta to live with his brother who had been appointed priest of a newly erected temple founded a short while before by an aristocratic woman named Rani Rasmani at Dakshineswar on the banks of the Ganga. This was the turning-point in his life. After about a year's service at the Kali temple his brother passed away, and Sri Ramakrishna became priest. While serving in the temple he was gradually seized with the idea that the idol he worshipped was not an image of clay but the Goddess Kali herself. He looked upon Kali as a visible deity with whom he could talk and share his joys and sorrows.

He could not follow the normal procedure of worship but became God-intoxicated and gave his mind and soul to the Ultimate Reality. In his later life he told Vivekananda that he had seen God, and obtained direct knowledge from Kali. He was a mouthpiece of Kali. He said that his Divine Mother was none other than the Absolute in Its Cosmic Becomings. She and Shiva are the parents of the world, and the world carries them in its heart. Those who go against the spiritual path cut themselves off from the true source of light and power and to them Kali presents a fierce and terrifying visage, while for her devotees who seek the Divine within and the spiritual truth of life, she has love and tenderness.

It is of interest to remark that Kali, known also by the terms Bhawani, Bhavatarini, Durga, had become the deity of most of the leaders who sought to free India from the bond of enslavement. We find that the great Maharatta warrior Shivaji and the heroes of Rajputana were followers of Kali. Even the revolutionary extremists of Bengal at the beginning of the present century, including Sri Aurobindo, all sought to derive strength and courage from the mighty Goddess. We shall see later that Sri Aurobindo planned to form a secret group of revolutionary sannyasis who would dedicate themselves to Bhawani, holding the concept of the Goddess as the source of all power.

During Sri Ramakrishna's stay at Dakshineswar, most of his time was spent in profound spiritual experiences, visions, trances, ecstasies. His intense aspiration and striving were to see God face to face, and finally it was fulfilled. Then he proceeded under various spiritual guides to all the experiments described in the Hindu Scriptures, ranging from the most intense emotional transports to the highest quietude of the Nirvikalpa (formless) Samadhi—the highest flight of the

Advaita philosophy. Totapuri, a master of the theory and practice of Advaita, came at this time to Dakshineswar to initiate Sri Ramakrishna into the mystery of his cult. Sri Ramakrishna undertook the Advaita practice under his direction and in three days he had the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. The Guru was extremely astonished to see this unique achievement. He himself had taken forty years to realise it.

Sri Ramakrishna was commanded by the Divine Mother to come out of that absolute spiritual state and remain in the outer consciousness for the sake of humanity.

Then he started to seek the experiences of all religions. It was of course utterly bold on his part—a Brahmin by caste and a priest—to adopt the spiritual practices of Islam. He followed the ways of orthodox Muslims. He repeated the name of Allah and performed *namaz* regularly. In a few days he had a vision of the Prophet and in no time realised the formless God of the Koran. He identified Allah with the Brahman he had realised on the Advaita path. After some time he made himself a Christian and followed the teaching of Christ. He thought of Christ and nothing else. Soon Christ appeared and merged in him and Sri Ramakrishna realised the truth of Christianity.

For the first time in the spiritual history of mankind Sri Ramakrishna made direct experiments in the unity of all religions.

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCE

- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 20, pp 36-37

LALA LAJPATRAI—THE LION OF PUNJAB

ON 28 January, 1990 India celebrated the 126th Birth-Anniversary of a great son of hers: Lala Lajpatrai. Lalaji was born in a small village of Punjab and studied in Lahore. He took a degree in law with distinction and started practising, soon to become a leading lawyer of his Province.

But a time comes in the history of a nation and its people when faint hearts take courage and bold people become leonine. That moment arrived in the life of Lajpatrai. He realized what lay behind the tyranny of the oppressor and the weakness of the oppressed. The bondage of the Motherland enraged him and like Balgangadhar Tilak and Bipinchandra Pal he also jumped into the fight for the freedom of Mother India from the shackles of an oppressive foreign rule. Like a raging hurricane his fiery spirit touched each son of Punjab and in no time at all he became a National leader. The Nation bestowed upon him the title “Lion of Punjab” and with Lokmanya Balgangādhār Tilak and Bipinchandra Pal he became the first name in a trinity: Lal-Bal-Pal. Lustily called out from a hundred thousand throats these lofty names in that bygone era echoed and reechoed from the Himalayas to the Cape.

Shortly after he joined the National Movement Lalaji shot into the lime-light. He carried forward the struggle for freedom with the utmost determination, absolute fearlessness and with a total disregard for self. He made the Motherland’s service his religion and his patriotism inspired all his long-suffering countrymen.

Besides his political activities Lalaji was an indefatigable social worker. He helped to build up the great organisation Arya Samaj based on the teachings of Swami Dayananda and along with Swami Shraddhananda he was the chief force behind the meteoric rise and spread of the Samaj, and he rose to become its undisputed leader. He also founded the D.A.V. College in Lahore. During this phase of his career Sri Aurobindo praised Lalaji’s “...attractive charm, self-sacrifice, moral force and steady, quiet work...”,¹ and said of him, “He is one of those men who act, more than they talk, a man with a splendid record of solid patriotic work behind him and to him above all belongs the credit of building up the Arya Samaj, the most powerful and practically effective organisation in the country.”²

Frightened of the growing influence Lalaji had on the nation in general and on the martial Punjabis in particular the British Government arrested and deported him to Mandalay in May, 1907. The entire nation was shocked and its reaction and outrage found expression in the Journal *Bande Mataram* which was in those days the mouthpiece of the nation’s aspiration. Sri Aurobindo took up his mighty pen and wrote a string of fiery editorials paying the highest tribute to

¹ *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 1, p 326

² *Ibid*, p 169

this patriot son of Mother India. Our eulogies to a leader after such a lapse of time may be only an emotional oblation. But the truest assessment of a man's character comes from his comrades-in-arms, his contemporaries and equals with whom he faced life's ordeals and adversities. The encomium they bestow upon him is of real value. So let me quote some passages from Sri Aurobindo who wrote on Lalaji's deportation.

“ ..Men of Punjab! Race of the lion! Show these men who would stamp you to the dust that for one Lajpat they have taken away, a hundred Lajpats will arise in his place. Let them hear a hundred times louder your war-cry—Jai Hindustan!”¹

In another editorial on 11th May 1907 Sri Aurobindo wrote about Lalaji—
“Happy is he, for his mother has accepted his service and given it the highest reward for which a patriot can hope, the privilege of not merely serving but suffering for her. When India raises statues to the heroes and martyrs of her emancipation, it will inscribe on his the simple and earnest phrase ‘An humble servant of the Motherland, Lajpatrai’—the simple and earnest phrase which remains behind to us as his modest boast and his sufficient message.”²

Sri Aurobindo again wrote: “By the deportation of Lala Lajpatrai they have destroyed the belief in British justice”³.

Then there is his final pronouncement:

“The work of an individual often becomes the work of a people, and such work reaches its glorious culmination only when it is taken up by the people at large from whom came the energy and the character of a nation. If the people are prepared to take up his work, then his deportation which has given them an impetus, will prove a blessing in disguise.”⁴

Even the British Government could not imprison this Lion of Punjab for long. He was freed after six months and he again plunged into public life. Lalaji believed in the equality of mankind and the emancipation of women. He foresaw the need for the upliftment of the masses and for this purpose established the Servants of the People Society with wholtime national missionaries who pledged their life to the service of Mother India. And as a living monument to this visionary patriot even after half a century of his passing this Society is still running numerous institutions and has multi-faceted activities. It runs charitable hospitals, schools with special facilities for the mentally retarded and deaf children, crafts-centres for women and Elders' Homes, etc. So various were Lalaji's activities that it would be difficult to list them all.

But his grand passion was the liberation of India and for this he was ever ready to lay down his life. That sacred moment of self-sacrifice was granted to

¹ *Ibid* , Vol 27, p 49

² *Ibid* , pp 49-50

³ *Ibid* Vol 1, p 336

⁴ *Ibid* , Vol 7, p 58

him He was one of those hero-souls who literally paid homage to the Motherland with their heart's blood. The ruthless repression of the British Government went on growing by the day. On 30th October 1928 this sixty-three-year old venerable leader was heading the boycott procession against the Simon Commission. There was a lathi-charge by the police and Lalaji received many blows on his chest as warriors of old had done. A few days later, on 17th November 1928, this great son of Mother India died of the injuries he had received

A martyr's death is never in vain. Freedom has come to India and we in independent India, who are reaping the rewards of the great sacrifice of these freedom-fighters, bow to them with love and gratitude. To pay real homage to a great and brave man like Lala Lajpatrai will be to follow in his footsteps and to uphold the ideals for whose sake he laid down his life.

SHYAM KUMARI

(Courtesy A.I.R. Pondicherry)

CHANDRASHEKHAR AZAD—HERO OF THE FREEDOM-FIGHT

IN the beginning of the twentieth century this holy land of ours, Mother India, gave birth to a number of brave sons who sacrificed their lives for the liberation of their country from the yoke of foreign rule. Among them the name of Chandrashekhar Azad deserves special mention. In 1905 Chandrashekhar Azad was born in the village of Bhawra in the then state of Alipur. His father's name was Pandit Sitaram Tewari and his mother's was Jagrani Devi. As a child he was courageous and simple-hearted. Once he took a work in hand, he never gave it up until it was finished.

In those days there was no school in the village of Chandrashekhar for those who had a keen desire for study. One day he went to his parents and said, "Please send me to Benares. I shall study there." At that time a cousin of his was living in Benaras. But the mother was unwilling to part from her son and she disliked the idea of sending him to such a distant place as Benaras. So Chandrashekhar left for Benaras without the knowledge of his parents. He secured admission into a Sanskrit School there. Since Sanskrit seemed insipid to him, he left the school and proceeded to Alipur. At Alipur his cousin, who was in government service, got him admitted into a government school.

In the new school Chandrashekhar found a good number of students to his liking. A few of them were skilled in archery. From them he learnt the art of archery and became an expert archer. Once while shooting an arrow he hurt the eyes of a man. As a result of this his cousin sent him back to Benaras.

Chandrashekhar continued his studies in Benaras. The good boys were his ideal. When the teacher told the tales of the heroes of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, he listened to them with rapt attention. He thought to himself, "I must one day, like one of these heroes, take up the sword and fight against the British for the liberation of my motherland from their clutches." He was only twelve then.

The Jalianwalabagh massacre took place in the year 1919. This incident roused the Indians from their torpor. Mahatma Gandhi called upon his countrymen to join the non-cooperation movement which he had initiated. In answer to his call men and women, young and old, all joined the movement. Chandrashekhar, too, played a part in it. One day, while the movement was in full swing, he was arrested by the police and presented before a magistrate for trial.

"What's your name?" enquired the magistrate

"Azad (Free)," came the reply from Chandrashekhar.

"What's your father's name?"

"Swadhin (Independent)."

"Where's your home?"

“Vandishala (Prison).”

The magistrate was enraged by Chandrashekhar's answers. He ordered him to be given fifteen strokes with a whip. Accordingly Chandrashekhar was stripped and whipped with a cane. While his body silently bore the blows, his mouth shouted, “Bharat Mata Ki Jai (Victory to Mother India).” The marks of the blows on his body remained till the end of his life. When he was released after the whipping, over a thousand people who were waiting outside the gate accorded him the warmest welcome. He was buried under heaps of garlands. His photograph appeared in newspapers. From then on he came to be known as ‘Azad’ and his fame spread throughout India.

A patriot of Benaras named Shiva Prasad Gupta arranged for Azad's further study in the Kasi Vidyapitha. There he studied only literature and political science, having no interest in other subjects. While studying in this school, he came into contact with a neighbour who was a revolutionary. Under his influence Azad joined the revolutionary group. Then he undertook the task of going from village to village and spreading the message of revolution among the youths.

Rajendra Lahiri was the main leader of the revolutionary group of Uttar Pradesh. His colleague was Pandit Ram Prasad Bismal. Their main task was to collect arms and ammunition in order to carry on war against the British for the freedom of India. Money was needed for their work. They thought of making their plan known to the rich as well as the ordinary citizens of the country by publishing a bulletin with the hope that they would contribute generous sums to their party. With this end in view Sachindra Nath Sanyal brought out a bulletin, copies of which were sent out to different parts of the country within a day. The bulletin was circulated overnight in Benaras by Chandrashekhar. A few copies of it were pasted on the walls, too, by him. He performed this task so skilfully that the police had no inkling of it. At this time Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, the prominent revolutionary leader of Bengal, came to Northern India to conduct the revolutionary work there. A few days later he went back to Bengal by rail. When he reached the Howrah Railway Station, he was arrested by the police. The police forced out a lot of secrets from him. Consequent upon this a warrant was issued for the arrest of Sachindra Nath Sanyal, the revolutionary leader of Uttar Pradesh.

The revolutionary group came to know that government money-boxes were being dispatched to Prayag by train. At once Chandrashekhar with some other young men led by Ram Prasad Bismal entered the train. They pulled the chain and stopped the train at Kakeri. They took away the money-boxes, tying the hands and feet of the guard. The government could understand well that it was the act of the revolutionaries. So all the revolutionary leaders of Uttar Pradesh were arrested and put into jail. However, Chandrashekhar managed to escape. Later the accused were tried in the court and from among them Pandit Ram

Prasad Bismal, Rajendra Lahiri, Roshan Singh and Asafakulla were hanged. This case is known as the 'Kakeri Conspiracy Case'.

After this incident it was not possible for Chandrashekhar to remain in Benaras any longer. A warrant had already been issued against him and the police were looking for him. Most of the people knew him and it was difficult for him to evade their notice. So he immediately left Benaras for Jhansi. At Jhansi he had further training in archery and acquired amazing skill in it. He could shoot off a coin placed on a man's head. Then he secured a fake motor-driver's license in the name of Harishankar Brahmachari.

Chandrashekhar was not daunted by the execution of his friends. He engaged himself in devising plans for driving the enemies out of his motherland. For this purpose he visited different places and at last arrived at Kanpur. At that time Kanpur was the centre of activities of the revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and Bhagabati Charan among others. He joined them. Their prominent leader Ganesh Prasad Vidyarthi grew very fond of him.

The Simon Commission came to India. When they arrived in Benaras, Chandrashekhar proceeded with a bomb to do away with them. As ill-luck would have it the bomb exploded on the way. Thus he failed in his attempt. There were several charges against him, such as looting of public money, throwing bombs in the assembly, etc. The warrant was in force, but the police could not succeed in arresting him. One day he was sitting at a certain spot of the city of Benaras. A Muslim Police Inspector had pursued him to put him under arrest. As soon as Chandrashekhar saw the Police Inspector, he drew his pistol out of his pocket and aimed at him. The Police Inspector trembled with fear. He saluted Chandrashekhar and departed from the place.

Another day Chandrashekhar was sitting in the Railway Station of Kanpur. The police came to know this and besieged the place. Chandrashekhar was now sure that his arrest was unavoidable. So he rose immediately from his seat and walked up to the gate of the railway station. He placed his hand on the shoulder of the sentinel policeman and said, "I am leaving. Do your work." Having said this he disappeared so soon from the place that none could find any trace of him.

The money collected by the revolutionaries for the purchase of arms was deposited with a rich man of Allahabad. Later the rich man grew avaricious. So when the revolutionaries asked for it, he went on deferring the matter, fixing one date after another. One day Chandrashekhar himself went to him and asked for the money. The rich man got very angry with him and as a measure of retaliation he divulged the secret to the police.

It was February 27, 1937. Chandrashekhar was sitting at Alfred Park. The Police Superintendent got a hint of the matter. He called up all the policemen of Allahabad and surrounded the Park. Chandrashekhar became aware of the impending danger. So he sent away the companion who was near him and got himself ready for the fight.

A white man came up to Chandrashekhar and asked him to raise his hands. Chandrashekhar at once opened fire and wounded one of the arms of the white man. He then sheltered himself behind a tree that stood nearby and fired ceaselessly from there for twenty minutes until there was only one bullet left. Finding no way out for his escape he fired the last shot at his own breast. His body dropped down on the ground. Azad breathed his last and became a martyr.

His dead body was removed from the spot by the police in a motor-van. But the tree under which he had died became a place of pilgrimage. Thousands of people gathered round it every day to worship their departed hero. To stop this the British Government cut down the tree. Though Azad is no more with us, he will be ever remembered by his countrymen.

GUNANANDA DAS

(Translated by Gourmohan Mahanta from the Oriya)

THE TIDES

A NOVELLA

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1990)

XI

IN the early morning when the sun from behind the horizon was spreading crimson on the blue of the sky I returned home with Asit-da, the saint-patriot, a man fully dedicated to the cause of the country. Now when the sun was bright and inclined towards the west I was silently retracing the same path with Smriti-di, another mysterious personality about whom I had come to know first from Deepu's diary. This was that glorious lady in whom Deepu had seen the radiant face of Mother Durga and also the jubilant figure of Radha who had playfully smeared his face through the window with lac-dye. "What is it that you are thinking of so deeply?" Smriti-di broke the silence. I got startled and replied instantly, "Nothing." I noticed that at my reply a beautiful smile played on her face and I reflected that she might also be a thought-reader like Asit-da. Immediately I rectified myself, "In fact I was thinking about Deepu's diary."

"Yes, the poor boy suffered a lot during his childhood. But luckily in the long run a change came about in the circumstances." "Excuse me, Smriti-di, there was a charge of murder against Deepu. How could that be settled?" "Charge of murder! Not exactly so, however," Asit-da intervened and settled the matter. "Perhaps the coolies were responsible for the death." "Smriti-di, I should like to know what work Deepu and Rasu are doing here? Do they teach?" "Teach and learn both and do a lot of other important work also. By the way, what's your opinion about our work and ideal?" "My opinion! What's the value of my opinion, that of a layman?" "To us every opinion has its weight and importance. You can express your view on the ideal village without reserve." "I expressed my appreciation yesterday. Was that not sufficient?" "No, so far as my understanding goes, you have kept back something." Just then we heard a call from Deepubabu, "Smriti-di, I am here. Have you come to see me?" This was the school-area and he was standing at the door of a small cottage just near the Art House.

Smriti-di responded and nearing him we saw that he had put on an apron with patches of mud and different colours. "What's this that you are doing here?" I exclaimed. "Come inside and see yourself," he replied. Smriti-di clarified, "This is the studio from where works are taken into the Art House for exhibition." Stepping inside I was surprised to see an exquisite idol of Durga with her associates, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartikeya, Ganesh and Durga's mount, the lion. Deepubabu was working on it which seemed to be almost complete. I

marked that something was wanting and I could not but point it out, "Deepubabu, where is the Mahishasura?" "It has already been killed. What's the good of showing him now?" "In that case you could have shown another Asura yet to be killed." "Yes, I could, but they are many. Which one shall I show?"

I did not notice at first that Rasubabu was also there. I saw him only when, disturbed by our discussion, he stood up from a stooping position. He was working with rapt attention on an idol of the Buddha. The image impressed me so much that I could not help looking at it for a long while. The profound peace and compassion expressed in its face and bearing were really unearthly. I could not find words to praise Rasubabu for the magnificent piece of art. Rasubabu, however, turned to Smriti-di and asked, "Smriti-di, have you come here for any special work?" "No, not for any work but to give information. Deepu, Pisma has invited all of you to her place for dinner tonight. But the problem is, Jethaima never accepts any invitation and does not go anywhere. So Pisma has specially asked to bring your mother with you at least for this time. I hope you will be in a position to persuade her to go." "I shall try my best. Smriti-di and Rasu also can help because she gives importance to his request."

I took the opportunity and requested, "Deepubabu, I have an appeal to you also. I have decided to leave the place tomorrow. Please arrange for me a conveyance up to Burdwan station." "What do you mean? Have you taken permission from my father?" "No, not yet." "Then take the permission first. Conveyance is no problem." "Where can I get Jethamashay now?" "Hopefully, you will get him in the reception office."

I stepped out of the studio and was about to start when Smriti-di called from behind, "Wait, I shall also come with you. I have got something to tell Asit-da." "Will he be in the guest house in daytime?" "Yes, occasionally he stays there in daytime also. He has a special room there." We moved along silently for sometime till we came across the vast lawn leading to the reception office and the guest house. I said, "Smriti-di, the sight of this lawn fills my heart with a peculiar joy and as I walk over it my being thrills with life and energy. Well, Smriti-di, who wrote the poem on India in the Art House? Was it you or Deepubabu?" "Neither of us. Asit-da wrote it." "He is a poet then." "Not exactly in the general sense of the term, but when inspired he can express himself in poetry."

In the reception office I could not find Jethamashay nor could Smriti-di find Asit-da in the adjacent guest house. Asit-da's room was small and simple but the things were arranged artistically, particularly his bookshelf. It was equipped with books on various subjects from astrology to art and culture. Amongst them a set of Sri Aurobindo's books attracted my attention. I asked, "Smriti-di, is Asit-da a devotee of Sri Aurobindo?" "Devotee! I don't know that. Why on earth should one be a devotee to read Sri Aurobindo's books? Sri Aurobindo is a universal figure, perhaps more than that. His books are read by people all over the world. As for us our work and ideal are in conformity with his teaching. We strive to

translate his vision in our own way as far as possible.

It was a revelation to me. At once Bose-da's words flashed into my mind. Once he told me about the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, that they were conducting an integral yoga in Pondicherry. I said, "Smriti-di, so far as I know, Sri Aurobindo was trying to bring down supermind or truth-consciousness to establish a divine life on earth. How can that be related to the organisation of the ideal village as it is done here?" "Yes, but where lies the difference? Supramental descent is a global affair and not confined to a particular place. It will function spontaneously in persons and places where there is the requisite receptivity. We were always inspired by Sri Aurobindo in our freedom struggle. Knowingly or unknowingly we can be helped and guided very well by Sri Aurobindo, the supramental yogi, in our present endeavour also. Our work may be considered as a field for the play of the supermind in a horizontal way so as to make the earth ready for the full descent. By the way, how would you explain the following statement of Sri Aurobindo on Rabindranath: 'Tagore has been a wayfarer towards the same goal as ours in his own way—that is the main thing, the exact stage of advance and putting of steps are minor matters. . ' "

"Smriti-di, my study is very limited, particularly in the field of higher thought, philosophy and ideals. But I am a lover of Tagore and enjoy reading his poems very much and never thought of supermind. So I am not the right person to discuss this with you. Rather as it is my long-standing practice at this hour of the day, I would like to go for a walk." "Is it so? Then you will enjoy doing it here. The place is ideal for the purpose. But I myself would like to wait a little longer for Asit-da. So make a start but please don't forget to go to Pisma's house for dinner."

First I strolled around the lawn for quite a long time and then entered the belt of green trees surrounding the village. I walked playfully in a zigzag way amidst the trunks of trees. It was twilight and the shadowy trees assumed a special melancholy appearance with aspiration for the departing light. It created in me a hitherto unknown pathos as I was alone and more or less identified with the whole surrounding area. I moved about at random and then suddenly I heard a noise of children issuing from somewhere nearby. My heart leapt up with a juvenile joy and I headed for the spot and arrived soon beside a mango grove where children were playing hide and seek. Some even ventured to climb up to the top of the trees. I entered the grove with the hope of acquainting myself with them. And then what I saw made me stand still with wide open eyes and a gaping mouth. I saw Jethamashay sitting at the centre, playing with the children as a ring-leader. He also saw me and murmured in the way of an explanation, "Didi is very busy today with the cooking affair. So I have kept the children engaged here; otherwise they will disturb her work. It is very good that you have come. Please take charge of them and let me go to help Didi. Please don't forget to come for the dinner. You see, that is the roof of Didi's house behind the trees."

Now I clearly understood why Mr Roy in disguise had such a hearty reception from the children at Haziganj

After Jethamashay had left, I tried to assemble the children to start the game afresh. But they dispersed and went away without paying any heed to my call. Apprehending that they might disturb Písima I hurried towards her house. I opened the gate and stood on the grass-way between the trees and gardens on both sides but could find no trace of the children. The place was quiet and lonely except for the sound of cooking inside the house. It was dusk and the garden was already dark except for some touch of light here and there. The crickets started creating their usual symphony and flickering fire-flies moved around some bushes. I neared one of them with the object of catching a fire-fly. Just then the gate creaked open and I heard the sound of low conversation. Suddenly the conversation stopped. Had they seen me in my white dress? Lest they should take me for a thief, I announced myself. "Please don't be afraid, it is me."

"Who?" It was the voice of Smriti-di.

"I mean, I am, that is to say.. "

"I see, it is you! What are you doing there in the darkness?" said Manju Devi. "Nothing, simply walking." "Walking in the dark bushy garden! What for?" "I want to catch a fire-fly". "Strange. What will you do with it?" "I want to see if there is warmth in the flickering light of the fire-flies." "Ho, ho, ho.." Both of them laughed aloud and then Smriti-di said with a mock rebuke, "No, there is no warmth. Take it from me and come back at once. Insects may bite you, there may be snakes as well."

As soon as she finished, the gate made a creaking sound and then came the call of an old man, "Manju, are you here? Deepu, have you come or not? Oh I see, you are here already, not only you, Smriti also! What are you seeing there?" "Oh Písemashay, you have come! How lucky we are. But nobody said that you would come." "Nobody knew that I was coming. Who is there in the garden?" "The guest who has come with us wants to catch a fire-fly to see if there is warmth in its light." "Is it so? How nice, a researcher, it seems. Come, brother, I have come to see you only. I heard that you were leaving tomorrow, so I made haste lest I should fail to meet you."

I approached Písemashay, an almost bald-headed old man with a long white beard. I bowed down to show him respect. He took both my hands in his and said, "Brother, I am very pleased to see you. Please tell me something about yourself." "What shall I tell you, Písemashay? I have come here to listen to you all." Smriti-di excused herself saying, "Manju, let us go inside to help Písima." As they went away Písemashay said, "I presume you don't know much about agriculture. In that case why don't you come to our farm house tomorrow? Postpone your departure for one or two days." "My going depends on permission from Jethamashay which I have not taken as yet." At that time Písima arrived and said, "What's this? Will you spend the whole night standing

outside? Go in with him and gossip as long as you like. It will take time for the cooking to be finished.”

“We are waiting for Deepu,” replied startled Pisemashay. “Waiting for Deepu! Is he new here? One who is new will stand outside in the cold and you will wait for Deepu. A nice hospitality indeed!” She hurried back to her work. Pisemashay ran his fingers through his long grey beard and observed with a benign smile, “Hope you have not minded, let’s go inside. In fact it had not occurred to me at all that you were new. On the other hand, as I come here very rarely, I had completely forgotten that I was not new.”

(To be continued)

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Sixty-seventh Seminar

18 February 1990

THE VISION AND WORK OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER FOR THE REALISATION OF WORLD-UNITY

Speech by Rashmi Choudhary

IN recent times, both in India and the world the forces of division and conflict between different races, religions, cultures and countries have assumed alarming proportions. So the need of establishing some form of world-unity has become imperative. The purpose of this Seminar is to explain what is the solution offered to this problem by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother from their spiritual vision and what they have done practically to fulfil it effectively

I am going to confine myself to what the Mother has said and done for world-unity. This is not because the Mother's vision and work is different from Sri Aurobindo's but because what she has said about it is simpler to understand. And also because it was her mission to give a dynamic effectuation to Sri Aurobindo's vision. To make this point clear I quote the Mother's own words, though written in the third person:

“The task of giving a concrete form to Sri Aurobindo's vision was entrusted to the Mother. The creation of a new world, a new humanity, a new society expressing and embodying the new consciousness is the work she has undertaken. By the very nature of things, it is a collective ideal that calls for a collective effort so that it may be realised in the terms of an integral human perfection.

“The Ashram founded and built by the Mother was the first step towards the accomplishment of this goal. The project of Auroville is the next step, more exterior, which seeks to widen the base of this attempt to establish harmony between soul and body, spirit and nature, heaven and earth, in the collective life of mankind.”¹

I may add that though she speaks here only of the Ashram and Auroville, there is also a third dimension to her work for world-unity, and that is the

¹ Written in 1969 for a UNESCO committee *The Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed.), Vol. 13, p. 210

International Centre of Education. All these three together constitute on an ever-expanding scale her work for giving a concrete form to Sri Aurobindo's vision of world-unity.

So I propose to speak very briefly about these three projects—about their aim, their role and function and their importance in bringing about world-unity.

But before I do this, I think it necessary to state what exactly is the meaning of world-unity as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother conceive it. The Mother has explained it in a succinct outline:

“The most important idea is that the unity of the human race can be achieved neither by uniformity nor by domination and subjection. Only a synthetic organisation of all nations, each one occupying its true place according to its own genius and the part it has to play in the whole, can bring about a comprehensive and progressive unification which has any chance of enduring. And if this synthesis is to be a living one, the grouping should be effectuated around a central idea that is as wide and as high as possible, in which all tendencies, even the most contradictory, may find their respective places. This higher idea is to give men the conditions of life they need in order to be able to prepare themselves to manifest the new force that will create the race of tomorrow.

“All impulsions of rivalry, all struggle for precedence and domination must disappear and give way to a will for harmonious organisation, for clear-sighted and effective collaboration.”¹

It was in order to make this ideal practically real that the International University Centre (later named International Centre of Education) was started. The Mother explained in an article that it was international not because students from all the countries were admitted, nor because they were taught in their own language, but above all because all the cultures of the world were to be represented here, not merely intellectually in ideas, principles, and languages but also vitally in habits, customs and art in all its forms, and physically through natural scenery, dress, games, sports, etc. so that the student could enjoy his own native culture and also introduce himself to the other cultures of the world. In this way he would learn to know and respect the true spirit of all the cultures in the world, which in turn would be a great help in bringing about world-unity.² And as the Mother further said:

“Only in order and collective organisation, in collaboration based on mutual goodwill, is there any possibility of lifting man out of the painful chaos in which he finds himself now. It is with this aim and in this spirit that all human problems

¹ *Ibid*, (Cent Ed., Vol 12), p 40

² See “An International Centre of Education”, *Ibid*, p 41

will be studied at the university centre; and the solution to them will be given in the light of supramental knowledge which Sri Aurobindo has revealed in his writings.”¹

Auroville is a further extension of the Mother’s work for the effective fulfilment of the ideal of world-unity. Explaining the aim of Auroville the Mother said:

“Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.”²

And in the Auroville Charter which was later translated in 16 other languages, she said:

“1. Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole.

But to live in Auroville one must be the willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.

2. Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.

3. Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future.

Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations.

4. Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity.”³

28.2.1968

Auroville is thus an attempt towards the collective realisation of human unity. The Mother says that it is a conception of the Divine, so anyone who comes to Auroville must be sincere, truthful and have an aspiration for the higher consciousness. He should not come seeking comfort and luxury. In Auroville each one follows his own path which is good for him alone; it is not to be imposed on others. Auroville is striving to hasten the advent of a harmonious Future, where money will no longer hold all the power, where the individual’s worth will have greater importance, and it will be his contribution to the society.

I quote two more passages in which the Mother states Auroville’s ideal:

“Earth needs

“a place where men can live away from all national rivalries, social conventions, self-contradictory moralities and contending religions;

¹ *Ibid* , p 42 ² *Ibid* , (Cent Ed , Vol 13), p 193

³ *Ibid* , pp 199-200

“a place where human beings, freed from all slavery to the past, can devote themselves wholly to the discovery and practice of the Divine Consciousness that is seeking to manifest.

“Auroville wants to be this place and offers itself to all who aspire to live the Truth of to-morrow.”¹

“Auroville is the ideal place for those who want to know the joy and liberation of no longer having any personal possessions.”²

Now we come to the Ashram and its role in the achievement of world-unity. The Ashram’s role is of crucial importance because the success of the Mother’s work in the International Centre of Education and Auroville depends upon the success of the aim for which the Ashram has been founded. This will become clear if we bear in mind that the successful realisation of world-unity ultimately depends upon the manifestation of the Supramental Truth upon earth. It is the Supramental Truth manifesting in the life of the world that can alone securely establish world-unity. And this precisely is the aim of the Ashram. That is why the Mother once said: “The Ashram has been founded and is meant to be the cradle of the new world.”³ The supramental manifestation on earth cannot occur unless a small section of humanity makes itself ready to receive it in itself. This section will form the central nucleus from which it will spread over the rest of the world. The Ashram is meant to be this central nucleus. The International Centre of Education and Auroville are meant to be further extensions of the Ashram’s work.

I conclude my speech by reading two more extracts from the Mother. The first contains in a nutshell her central idea of world-unity. Here it is:

“The World is a unity—it has always been, and it is always so, even now it is so—it is not that it has not got the unity and the unity has to be brought in from outside and imposed upon it.

Only the world is not conscious of its unity. It has to be made conscious.

We consider now is the time most propitious for the endeavour.

For, a new Force of Consciousness or Light—whatever you call the new element—has manifested into the world and the world has now the capacity to become conscious of its own unity.”⁴

The second is a forceful plea to all who wish to bring about human unity.

“Shake off all narrowness, selfishness, limitations, and wake up to the consciousness of Human Unity. This is the only way to achieve peace and harmony ”⁵

¹ *Ibid* , p 208 ² *Ibid* ³ *Ibid* p 113

⁴ *Ibid* , (Vol 15) p 68 ⁵ *Ibid* , p 65

ATOMISM THROUGH THE AGES

SEARCH FOR THE FUNDAMENTAL PARTICLES OF MATTER

ATOMISM in its broadest sense refers to any doctrine that explains complex phenomena in terms of aggregates of a few fixed particles or units. We are concerned with the atomistic view of Matter that proposes to explain the material universe as built upon these basic particles.

The atomic hypothesis originated with the Greek philosopher Leucippus. His ideas were carried forward by his follower Democritus. It is said that while strolling on the Aegean's shore Leucippus wondered aloud to his young pupil Democritus whether the water of the sea could really be composed of separate extremely tiny grains, like the beach that at the first glance appears continuous. By dividing the water into smaller and smaller drops could we arrive at "parts that are partless", to 'atomic' grains? In this observation was the beginning of Atomism. In Greek the word is "a-tomos", meaning that which cannot be cut.

The theories expounded by Democritus were in turn taken over by Epicurus who incorporated them into his materialistic philosophy of life. Their description survives in the Roman poet Lucretius's book *De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things)*. The essential features are:

1) All matter is composed of ultimate indivisible entities, the atoms; all changes in matter are merely changes in the grouping of atoms.

2) There are many kinds of atoms, of different sizes and shapes, and the properties of bulk matter reflect in some way the properties of the atoms of which it is composed. Thus, sour taste is the manifestation of needle-shaped atoms.

3) The only forces are those of collision between atoms and the only causation is that produced by atomic forces.

4) Apart from atoms, there is only infinite empty space through which the atoms move.

5) An atom, when it moves through the empty space, might collide with other atoms leading ultimately, through a succession of collisions, to the formation of a whorl that develops into a material object.

Of these principles the 1st, 3rd and 4th appear, with some modification or conceptual extension, as basic tenets of Atomism even today

Although we meet here with general ideas that can rightly be considered as precursors of classical physics and chemistry, the importance of the old atomic doctrines does not lie in their scientific anticipations. The greatest achievement of Greek Atomism was its general view of nature that the multitude of phenomena must be based on some unity and the ever-changing aspects of the phenomena are nevertheless aspects of a fundamentally unchanging world.

During the medieval ages Atomism shared the general decline of scientific

thought; with the rise of Christianity it encountered specific theological oppositions to its highly deterministic view of the world: the Greek atomists had considered the universe under the reign of Chance and laid emphasis on the material aspect of everything. But if God has to be the principle of Order, then the atomic chaos will have to be pushed into the province of the Devil. In fact, as late as 1624, the Paris Parliament had decreed that persons maintaining or teaching Atomism would be liable to the death penalty

The 17th century witnessed a revolution in the scientific approach; it was characterised by careful quantitative observations.

All the great scientists of that period subscribed to the atomic view and Atomism once more gained prominence. Newton wrote in his *Opticks*: "It seems probable to me that God in the beginning formed matter in solid, hard, impenetrable, movable particles..." The effect of the new scientific trend on atomic ideas is evidenced by the fact that in the 2nd half of the 17th century at least seven European scientists—Magnenus (1646), Charleton (1654), Gassendi (1658), Boyle (1669), Lewenjock (1680), Newton (1687), Halley (1691)—made or discussed estimates, derived from physical measurements, of an upper limit for the size of the smallest units of the materials used. These estimates were based on experiments with gold leaf, incense smoke, flame, dust, microscopic particles, etc. Most of them yielded an upper limit of 10⁻⁴ cm. In his *Opticks* (1704) Newton obtained an upper limit (based on optical properties) of about 10⁻⁵ cm for the size of the soap-atom. Newton had also proposed the atomic view of light.

Meanwhile, the atomistic view of matter gained ground through investigations in an entirely different field, viz. through quantitative research on gases. Boyle studied air and found that it could be compressed and expanded; a quantitative relationship was established on the basis of these observations. Boyle interpreted his results in terms of static and kinetic models.

1) If a gas is made up of static particles touching each other, the large compressibility of a gas demanded that the corpuscles must themselves be compressible.

2) On the other hand, if the corpuscles did not touch each other, then they need not be variable in size but must be in violent agitation.

The static model could not account for the ability of the gas to expand indefinitely in all directions. A new assumption was hence advanced according to which the corpuscles are capable of repelling one another.

Newton in his *Principia* (1687) lent some support to the static picture by demonstrating mathematically that if a gas consists of mutually repelling particles and if the force of repulsion between any two particles is inversely proportional to the distance between them, then it follows that the gas pressure must be inversely proportional to the volume. But "whether elastic fluids do really consist of particles so repelling each other" was a question which he could not answer.

In 1661, Robert Boyle in his *Sceptical Chymist* developed another basic concept which was destined to play a vital role in the development of chemistry which in turn would develop the atomic hypothesis. This was the concept of the chemical element as a substance that cannot be separated into different components by any means.

Lavoisier (1743-1794) was the man chiefly responsible for putting chemistry on a quantitative basis. By careful experiment and measurement he established the Law of Conservation of Matter—that is to say, in any chemical reaction matter is neither created nor destroyed

Accurate chemical data also led to Proust's generalisation, now known as the Law of Definite Proportions: the proportions, by weight, in which the elements enter into any given compound are invariable.

In the first decade of the 19th century, Dalton explained these regularities by making use of the idea of the atom.

The 5 main postulates of Dalton's atomic theory are:

1) Matter consists of indivisible atoms: "matter though divisible in extreme degree is nevertheless not infinitely divisible."

2) Each element consists of a characteristic kind of identical atoms. There are consequently as many different kinds of atoms as there are elements.

3) Atoms are unchangeable. The atoms of different elements can never be metamorphosed, by any power we can control, from one into another.

4) When different elements combine to form a compound, the smallest portion of the compound consists of a grouping of a definite number of atoms of each element.

5) In chemical reactions, atoms are neither created nor destroyed, but only rearranged.

From Dalton's postulates it follows that all the atoms of any given element are always of the same weight; and the molecules of any particular compound are always of the same atomic composition.

Dalton's theory initiated the search for the relative determination of atomic weights. With these determinations the first ordering of the elements became possible.

In 1808 Gay-Lussac experimentally observed that 2 volumes of hydrogen combine with 1 volume of oxygen to give 2 volumes of water vapour. The question was now to tie Gay-Lussac's discovery with Dalton's theory.

For this Avogadro came up with two remarkable ideas. One was his law which stated that under conditions of equal temperature and pressure, equal volumes of all gases contain equal number of particles. The second was his idea of molecules. All his predecessors had assumed that gases of elements were composed of single atoms. But Avogadro postulated that "at least for some elements the smallest particles were not single atoms but groups of atoms."

The Dalton-Avogadro theory offers therefore a very simple interpretation of the empirical Law of Definite Proportions.

The completion of this line of approach came with Mendeleef's Periodic Table—the ordering of the elements. With the help of the Table the study of chemistry was revitalised.

We shall now go back a little in time and follow another line of approach that led to the idea of atomicity of electricity.

In the beginning of the 19th century, thanks to the invention of the electric battery, a means for maintaining a continuous current became available. And one of the first consequences was the discovery of the decomposing effect of the electric current on certain liquids—electrolysis.

In the 1830's Faraday made a systematic study of the way in which electric charges pass through a conducting solution. On passing a current through a molten sample of common salt (NaCl), Faraday found that for each Coulomb of charge transferred between the two electrodes some specific amount of sodium (Na) is deposited on the cathode.

96500 Coulombs deposited 23 gm of Na. This quantity of Na corresponds to $6 \cdot 10^{23}$ atoms of Na, or the Avogadro number N .

If each atom of Na were to carry one positive charge then the value of that charge would be:

$$qe = 96500/N$$

Though his work on electrolysis led directly to the notion of a unit of electricity, Faraday himself did not go that far. It was only in 1881 that Helmholtz demonstrated that Faraday's work proved the atomic nature of electricity.

The conception of discrete charges began to take definite form by the end of the 19th century. This happened with the discovery of the electron by J. J. Thompson in 1893

If electrons are a part of the atom, then the inescapable conclusion is that the atom has a structure. The chemical atom was therefore not the *atomos* of the Greeks. Physicists touched a newer depth of Matter.

(To be continued)

RAJESH
Higher Course, 3rd year
Age 22 years

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