

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JUNE 1990

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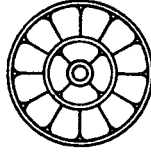
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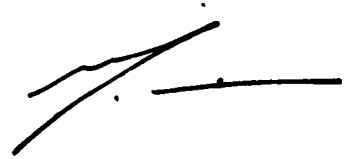


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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TWO TIMELY REMINDERS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

ONE needs to have a calm heart, a settled will, entire self-abnegation and the eyes constantly fixed on the beyond to live undiscouraged in times like these which are truly a period of universal decomposition.

6.5.1915

What happens is for the “best” in this sense only that the end will be a divine victory in spite of all difficulties—that has been and always will be my seeing, my faith and my assurance—if you are willing to accept it from me.

28.12.1931

SOME ANSWERS BY THE MOTHER

FROM THE TALK TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 12 FEBRUARY 1951

Are there any signs which indicate that one is ready for the path, especially if one has no spiritual teacher?

YES, the most important indication is a perfect equality of soul in all circumstances. It is an absolutely indispensable basis; something very quiet, calm, peaceful, the feeling of a great force. Not the quietness that comes from inertia but the sensation of a concentrated power which keeps you always steady, whatever happens, even in circumstances which may appear to you the most terrible in your life. That is the first sign.

A second sign: you feel completely imprisoned in your ordinary normal consciousness, as in something extremely hard, something suffocating and intolerable, as though you had to pierce a hole in a brass wall. And the torture becomes almost unbearable, it is stifling; there is an inner effort to break through and you cannot manage to break through. This also is one of the first signs. It means that your inner consciousness has reached a point where its outer mould is much too small for it—the mould of ordinary life, of ordinary activities, ordinary relations, all that becomes so small, so petty; you feel within you a force to break all that

There is yet another sign: when you concentrate and have an aspiration, you feel something coming down into you, you receive an answer; you feel a light, a peace, a force coming down; and almost immediately—you need not wait or spend a very long time—nothing but an inner aspiration, a call, and the answer comes. This also means that the relation has been well established.

Mother reads a comment made by someone during a talk in 1926

“In the case of some persons who turn to the Divine it happens that every material prop or everything they are fond of is removed from their life. And if they love someone he also is taken away.”

We enter here into a big problem.... The notion of what is good for a being and what isn't is not the same to his evolved consciousness as to the divine consciousness. What appears to you good, favourable, is not always what's best for you from a spiritual point of view. It is this which must be learnt from the beginning, that the divine perception of what will lead you fastest to the goal is absolutely different from yours, and that you cannot understand it. That is why you must say to yourself from the beginning, “It is all right. I shall accept everything and I shall understand later on.”

So often you come across persons who, before they began yoga, had a

relatively easy life, and as soon as they come to yoga, all the circumstances to which they were particularly attached break away from them more or less brutally. Then they are troubled; they do not perhaps have the frankness to admit it to themselves, they perhaps take recourse to other thoughts and other words, but it comes to this: "How is it? I am good and I am not treated kindly!"

The entire human notion of justice is there: "You try to become good and what cataclysms befall you! All the things you loved are taken away from you, all the pleasures you have had are taken away from you, all the people whom you loved leave you; it is indeed not worth the trouble to be good and to have made an effort." And if you follow your reasoning far enough, all of a sudden you come upon the canker—so, you wanted to do yoga out of self-interest, you wanted to be good out of self-interest, you thought your situation would be better and you would be given a bonbon for your wisdom! And that does not happen!... Well, this refusal is the best lesson that could ever be given to you. For as long as your aspiration hides a desire and as long as in your heart there is the spirit of bargaining with the Divine, things will come and give you blows till you wake up to the true consciousness within you which makes no conditions, no bargains. That's all.

When can one say that one has truly entered the spiritual path?

The first sign (it is not the same for everybody) but in a chronological order, I believe, is that everything else appears to you absolutely without importance. Your entire life, all your activities, all your movements continue, if circumstances so arrange things, but they all seem to you utterly unimportant, this is no longer the meaning of your existence. I believe this is the first sign.

There may be another; for example, the feeling that everything is different, of living differently, of a light in the mind which was not there before, of a peace in the heart which was not there before. That does make a change; but the positive change usually comes later, very rarely does it come at first except in a flash at the time of conversion when one has decided to take up the spiritual life. Sometimes, it begins like a great illumination, a deep joy enters into you; but generally, afterwards this goes into the background, for there are too many imperfections still persisting in you.... It is not disgust, it is not contempt, but everything appears to you so uninteresting that it is truly not worth the trouble of attending to it. For instance, when you are in the midst of certain physical conditions, pleasant or unpleasant (the two extremes meet), you say to yourself, "It was so important to me, all that? But it has no importance at all!" You have the impression that you have truly turned over to the other side.

Some imagine that the sign of spiritual life is the capacity to sit in a corner and meditate! That is a very, very common idea. I do not want to be severe, but most people who make much of their capacity for meditation—I do not think

they meditate even for one minute out of one hour. Those who meditate truly never speak about it; for them it is quite a natural thing. When it has become a natural thing, without any glory about it, you may begin to tell yourself that you are making progress. Those who talk about it and think that this gives them a superiority over other human beings, you may be sure, are most of the time in a state of complete inertia.

It is very difficult to meditate. There are all kinds of meditations.... You may take an idea and follow it to arrive at a given result—this is an active meditation; people who want to solve a problem or to write, meditate in this way without knowing that they are meditating. Others sit down and try to concentrate on something without following an idea—simply to concentrate on a point in order to intensify one's power of concentration; and this brings about what usually happens when you concentrate upon a point: if you succeed in gathering your capacity for concentration sufficiently upon a point whether mental, vital or physical, at a given moment you pass through and enter into another consciousness. Others still try to drive out from their head all movements, ideas, reflexes, reactions and to arrive at a truly silent tranquillity. This is extremely difficult; there are people who have tried for twenty-five years and not succeeded, for it is somewhat like taking a bull by the horns

There is another kind of meditation which consists in being as quiet as one can be but without trying to stop all thoughts, for there are thoughts which are purely mechanical and if you try to stop these you will need years, and into the bargain you will not be sure of the result; instead of that you gather together all your consciousness and remain as quiet and peaceful as possible, you detach yourself from external things as though they do not interest you at all, and all of a sudden, you brighten the flame of aspiration and throw into it everything that comes to you so that the flame may rise higher and higher, higher and higher; you identify yourself with it and you go up to the extreme point of your consciousness and aspiration, thinking of nothing else—simply, an aspiration which mounts, mounts, mounts, without thinking a minute of the result, of what may happen and specially of what may not, and above all without desiring that something may come—simply, the joy of an aspiration which mounts and mounts and mounts, intensifying itself more and more in a constant concentration. And there I may assure you that what happens is the best that can happen. That is, it is the maximum of your possibilities which is realised when you do this. These possibilities may be very different according to individuals. But then all these worries about trying to be silent, going beyond appearances, calling a force which answers, waiting for an answer to your questions, all that vanishes like an unreal vapour. And if you succeed in living consciously in this flame, in this column of mounting aspiration, you will see that even if you do not have an immediate result, after a time something will happen.

THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

IN THE LIGHT OF HER PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

(Continued from the issue of May 1990)

THE Mother with her husband spent four years in Japan, the country which helped to settle a 'sort of equilibrium' in her mind. The orderly, the steady, the polite attitude, the friendly collaboration of the Japanese, the congenial, harmonious and beautiful atmosphere of Japan made the Mother feel at home. On the 5th of June 1916 she wrote in her inner agenda that she had found "there was a light again in all parts of the being". She felt a "passive surrender". A "receptivity and passivity" was created in her being to work more completely for the Divine. The distinctive attractive beauty of the Japanese landscapes could help the poise or "equilibrium" she needed face to face with war-torn France.

The Mother spent about four years in Japan, mainly in Tokyo (1916-1917) and Kyoto (1917-20). She made friends with Japanese intellectuals and participated in "still-sitting" movements in Kyoto. She met Rabindranath Tagore too. He was extremely impressed by her mystic aura, intense sincerity and spiritual poise.

Later on, in a conversation she told some disciples in the Ashram on 14 April 1951 how the Japanese experience had left an indelible impression upon her. She said: "I spoke to you about those landscapes of Japan; well, almost all—the most beautiful, the most striking ones—I had seen in visions in France; and yet I had not seen any pictures or photographs of Japan, I knew nothing of Japan. And I had seen these landscapes without human beings, nothing but the landscapes quite pure like that, and it had seemed to me they were visions of a world other than the physical; they seemed to me too beautiful for the physical world, too perfectly beautiful. Particularly I used to see very often those stairs rising straight up into the sky; in my vision there was the impression of climbing straight up, straight up, and as though one could go on climbing, climbing, climbing. . . It had struck me, and the first time I saw this in Nature down there, I understood that I had already seen it in France before having known anything about Japan."¹

The Mother's four years' stay in Japan provided her with an opportunity to learn the ways of perfection in elegance and orderliness. The striking sense of beauty even among the ordinary peasant class touched her heart. She relates in a talk on 12 April 1951: "For example, a thing one sees very rarely in Europe but constantly, daily in Japan: very simple people, men of the working class or even peasants go for rest or enjoyment to a place where they can see a beautiful landscape."²

The unfailing beauty of nature, the contrived luxuriance of park and garden

brought the Mother into immediate contact with subtleties of the higher world. She had seen long avenues of colourful cherry flowers. She was not only impressed by the external beauty of the cherry flowers but felt a complete identification with their inner spirit. And flowers seen in Japan seem to have figured so deeply in her consciousness that she saw even the Divine's gifts to the world in floral terms and envisaged her role in connection with them. She writes on 5 January 1917:

"Love is nothing but the tie that binds and holds together all the flowers of Thy divine bouquet. It is an unobtrusive role, modest, unrecognised, a role essentially impersonal, which can find all its utility only in this very impersonality, gathering the scattered fragments of Thy consciousness and enabling them, by grouping them together, to reconstitute better and better Thy consciousness, at once single and multiple, it was possible for me to see clearly what love is in the play of universal forces, what its place and mission; it is not an end in itself but it is Thy supreme means. Active everywhere, between all things, everywhere it is veiled by the very things it unites, which, though feeling its effect, are sometimes not even aware of its presence.

"O Lord, Thy sweetness has entered my soul and Thou hast filled all my being with joy.

"And in this joy I have offered Thee a prayer so that it may reach up to Thee "

She keenly observed and found Japan a nation of "tremendous vitality." Everywhere and in everything she marked that vital energy. She set down some of her impressions in the following lines: "... With their perfect love for Nature and beauty, this accumulated strength is, perhaps, the most distinctive and widely spread characteristic of the Japanese."³

The literature of Japan was full of fairy lore. The Mother found that everything in Japan from beginning to end gave her "the impression of impermanence, the unexpected, the exceptional."

The Mother observed in various quarters that the mass tendency in Japan was to become Westernised, but the authentic Japanese were those who had retained the old Samurai traditions. She expressed her views in the *Modern Review*:

"The Japanese are taught from their infancy that life is duty and not pleasure. They accept that duty—so often, hard and painful—with passive submission. They are not tormented by the idea of making themselves happy. It gives to the life of the whole country a very remarkable self-constraint, but no joyful and free expansion; it creates an atmosphere of tension and effort of mental and nervous strain, not of spiritual peace like that which can be felt in India, for instance.

"Indeed, nothing in Japan can be compared to the pure divine atmosphere which pervades India and makes of her such a unique and precious country; not

even in the temples and the sacred monasteries always so wonderfully situated, sometimes on the summit of a high mountain covered with huge cedar trees, difficult to reach, far from the world below.... Exterior calm, rest and silence are there, but not that blissful sense of the infinite which comes from a living nearness to the Unique.”⁴

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCES

- 1 *Questions and Answers*, Vol 4, p 319
- 2 *Ibid* , p 306
- 3 *The Modern Review*, January 1918, p 69
- 4 *Ibid* , p 70

THE SOUL-PEBBLE

MY soul is verily like a pebble stone,
 Cast as one amongst billions like me
 On the vast crowded coast-line of Life's seashore
 By the Hands of Destiny.
 How, why, when, where are all unknown.

A crude, elemental rough-hewn rock when born,
 The soul-pebble was hustled, tossed, buffeted
 By eons of rising tides and receding ebbs,
 Sand-grated, water-washed, rubbed and rolled,
 Bathed in moonlight, shining in the Sun,
 As it watched the panorama of Births and Deaths.

Now it lies lodged in the palm of the Almighty,
 Cleansed of tinsel, polished perfect,
 Purified in quintessence,
 His will and pleasure to decide what to do;
 Though I prefer to remain
 As a speck of dust at His feet.

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

TWO PERSONAL LETTERS

YOUR experience, during 4 or 5 months, of seeing Sri Aurobindo smile at you from his photograph while you have been concentrating on it after a whole day's tiring work, has certainly a truth in it. Not that the picture itself undergoes a change but, since in every picture of Sri Aurobindo or the Mother the presence of them has been instilled, this presence responds and superimposes its gesture on your sight or, rather, on the consciousness behind your seeing, through the features in the representation.

I too have had a response from the photo of Sri Aurobindo or the Mother. Just a few days back the big picture of the Mother which hangs on the wall just opposite the chair in which I usually sit spoke quite a lot to me through her eyes which seemed to move. Actually the picture belonged to Lalita and I asked Dyuman to let me have it because while I was sitting next to Lalita's dead body the picture spoke to me very forcefully through its eyes and the message made a deep difference in my inner life. At both times there was no precise verbal formulation: my mind translated the message into the appropriate words according to the drive of the communication. But even a clear-cut formulation in words can come. I remember how after Sehra's death I once appealed to my favourite front-face photo of Sri Aurobindo: "What should I do to get over this sense of a knife turning in my heart in spite of all the peace that is still within me as usual everywhere else?" This photo is not the one that is popular in the Ashram. There the eyes are slightly lowered—in mine they look straight ahead: the vision of some luminous future appears to be in them. When my appeal went to the photo, the answer was immediate in unmistakable words: "Become like me." It was indeed a tall order but the only one really ultimate. And, of course, with the order came the help to follow it as much as I could. The occasion marked a great change in me—an intenser phase of the feeling I always have of Sri Aurobindo's unity with me.

Let me explain what exactly I mean by "unity". Generally people speak of Sri Aurobindo or the Mother being in their hearts. I once told the Mother: "When I kneel at the Samadhi I do not have the sense of Sri Aurobindo within me. He seems too big to be held within my small heart. Rather I feel that I am within Sri Aurobindo, a tiny creature nestling in his mighty heart. He holds me one with himself rather than my holding him one with me. I live enfolded by his greatness. What is the right feeling to have? Am I wrong to differ from the general experience?" The Mother answered: "Both the ways are right. It all depends on one's own turn of feeling. But perhaps what you feel corresponds more to the spiritual reality and relationship."

Sri Aurobindo's "Become like me" puts me in mind of two points from the

past. A vivid suggestion of how the inner greatness of Sri Aurobindo got expressed in his physical presence went home to me when I heard Purani say to someone: "After having seen Sri Aurobindo I feel no need to see the Himalayas!" And it is precisely apropos of this impression of Purani's that my second point acquires the most striking relevance. For it concerns an early poem of mine which expresses my own aspiration in anticipation, as it were, of Sri Aurobindo's compassionate command to me. Here is the poem:

AT THE FOOT OF KANCHENJANGA

I have loved thee though thy beauty stands
 Aloof from me,
 And hoped that dwelling in thy sight
 From dawn to dawn at last I might
 Become like thee—

Become like thee and soar above
 My mortal woe
 And to the heavens, passionless
 And mute, from dawn to dawn address
 Thoughts white like snow.

You may remark: "To hope to become like Himalayan Sri Aurobindo is one thing. But can one believe that such a hope could ever get fulfilled? Look at the grandeur that is Sri Aurobindo and look at us poor pygmies!" No doubt, he is not only superb: he is also an Avatar—and Avatarhood is not something one can choose to have: it is uniquely ordained. All the same, what the Avatar comes to do is to exemplify the possibilities open to us short of the Avatavic role. Let me quote to you the letter Sri Aurobindo wrote to me in April 1935 in reply to my question whether we—"poor pygmies", as you would say—could legitimately aspire to be supramentalised:

"I have no intention of achieving the Supermind for myself only—I am not doing anything for myself as I have no personal need of anything, neither of salvation (Moksha) nor supramentalisation. If I am seeking after supramentalisation, it is because it is a thing that has to be done for the earth-consciousness and if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others. My supramentalisation is only a key for opening the gates of the Supramental to the earth-consciousness; done for its own sake, it would be perfectly futile. But it does not follow either that if or when I become supramental, everybody will become supramental. Others can so become who are ready for it, when they are ready for it—provided:

"(1) One does not make a too personal or egoistic affair of it turning it into a Nietzschean or other ambition to be superman.

“(2) One is ready to undergo the conditions and stages needed for the achievement.

“(3) One is sincere and regards it as a part of the seeking of the Divine and consequent culmination of the Divine’s Will in one and insists on no more than the fulfilment of that Will whatever it may be psychicism, spiritualisation or supramentalisation. It should be regarded as the fulfilment of God’s working in the world, not as a personal chance or achievement.”

The letter contains a potent threefold hint of Sri Aurobindo’s Avatar-status—the awareness of a pre-existent conscious plenitude as if everything were already achieved, and the ardour of manifestation heroically ready to undergo the utmost labour as if nothing were achieved anywhere, and the utter selflessness which in spite of no need of one’s own seeks to pioneer an impossible-seeming accomplishment in order to make easy for others the path to their perfection through a whole-hearted dedication on their part to serve the Divine Will and nothing else. The letter assures also that what Sri Aurobindo can have is essentially open to all his followers in the terms of their individual make-up.

A general comment I may make that since Sri Aurobindo for some reason of his own did not exemplify the last stage of supramentalisation—the physical stage—we cannot look forward to it in our present lives, but all the marvels on the way to it are within our grasp in the measure of our devotion to the ideal and in accordance with God’s vision for our work. From what you write I think you are doing well enough what lies in your power, and that smile of Sri Aurobindo’s suggests that he is pleased with you. The detail you mention that, “while smiling, his left-side lip slightly goes up as also his cheek” brings to my mind an occasion when the Mother said to us that people had been saying that after Sri Aurobindo’s departure her face was looking more and more like his (minus of course the moustache and beard!) especially when she smiled. As far as I recollect, the smile was understood to be somewhat like what you have indicated.

(16.3.1990)

*

Speech after long silence is not unwelcome and is also likely to be both rich and studied, on the watch not to be superfluous or irresponsible. But it is also likely to be abundant and your letter is no exception. You have put a number of questions, a few of them of undoubted importance and one of them rather embarrassing to me, being of a very personal nature and with a flattering suggestion to the little ego that is always ready to pop up.

“Coil” in the expression to which you point on p. 731 of *Mother India*, November 1989 should hardly puzzle. Surely you must know, as does Macaulay’s famous “every schoolboy”, that to “shuffle off this mortal coil” is Shakespearian poetry for the prosaic act of dying. But “mortal coil” does not refer to our

perishable body, as most people think. It means “the turmoil of life”. In general, “coil” as an archaic or extra-literary turn of speech connotes “disturbance, noise” and could stand also for “fuss” in colloquial Elizabethanese. In Sri Aurobindo’s early poetry it has an Indian avatar with a trema-sign over the *i*: “coil”. It is the Hindi name for the cuckoo whose Sanskrit appellation is “kokila”. In common English the current spelling for this bird is “koel” with the accent on the first syllable which is intrinsically long.

Now for the query which embarrasses me. It raises some other issues too in the course of its formulation. It is so important that I have to face it. To get my answer into focus I would like to put together passages from two different places in your letter. You write:

“Further down p. 731 you speak of death as a suggestion which need not necessarily be accepted, after already having dropped some hints concerning your own self in this same connection on the two foregoing pages. You hint at some experiences at the age of 85 which are quite in line with what is to be expected of you as the only person to my knowledge of whom the Mother said that he would undergo the Great Transformation in the present body. I don’t really know what to think of it, but it’s such an extraordinary statement that—no matter what may be our difference of opinion in other fields—you are in this context the most important person remaining in the Ashram if not the most important person anywhere. If, as stated, the Great Transformation will take at least 200 years from the time of the definite installation of the higher consciousness (of which I don’t even know whether you have already achieved it), we may expect you to be seen on earth for much longer than we shall have eyes to see. So what I wanted to ask you is whether you may not have something more to say on the subject—which at least to me is of supreme interest and importance—than what you have hinted at on pp. 729 and 730...”

“Sri Aurobindo, as was indicated to us, could afford to leave because the Mother was there to continue the work. The Mother was in the same position after the Manifestation of February 1956 as she herself stated shortly thereafter in a most interesting and revealing passage quoted somewhere in *Champaklal’s Treasure*. In it she says that now that things are essentially fulfilled it remains to be seen whether and to what extent her own body is needed to complete the work or whether this body can be abandoned and the work be accomplished in other bodies than hers. And here is where, according to none other than the Mother herself, amazingly and incomprehensibly, you come in first and foremost by a long shot. For who could be the others? To Nolani, I believe on his 80th birthday, she spoke of many more years on the way to transformation. Perhaps that was fulfilled by his remaining for another 15 years. To Satprem she stated in the 1962 *Agenda* that in his meditations she saw him entering into the timeless and spaceless fields, the consciousness of Sat, a fact enabling him with the proper procedure to begin the work of transformation even from that moment. But

there is no indication of whether he has succeeded in carrying out that task. His external behaviour to me would seem to point to the contrary. Her statement concerning you was much more clear and sweeping. It does not seem to leave room for any possibility of failure. All eyes should therefore be glued on you, although people don't appear to know or realise it."

Let me assure you that on pp. 729 and 730 I did not at all have in mind the subject you have raised. I only mentioned my sense of not getting my life shortened by such rashness as sitting at my typewriter at times up to 3 a.m., and getting up at 6 in the morning as usual and not resting for more than half an hour in the afternoon. I never meant to suggest that this feat pointed to my getting younger and younger on the way to an ultimate immortality due to "the Great Transformation" which the Mother had prophesied in an interview I had been graced with in May 1929 and which Sri Aurobindo confirmed as her prophecy when on 31 January 1934 I sent him my report of the interview. I asked him whether the reporter had not been a self-deluding fool misrepresenting what the Mother had actually said. You want to know my comment on the matter now after all the decades that have gone since those two tremendous occasions.

Although I cannot make the lament that these decades have marked an increasing decadence, I must record that side by side with some progress in opening to the Divine in both the inner and the outer life the body itself has not kept pace in every feature. I indeed don't feel less fit in general at 85 than at 25 when the Mother made the grand declaration, but, as I have repeatedly written to friends, my legs have grown worse and worse in the last ten years or so. The lower body has suffered, though without affecting in the least my day-to-day mood which—while lacking the famous "flashing eyes" and very much the equally celebrated "floating hair"—is touched by something of the light and delight Coleridge ascribed to his visionary poet in *Kubla Khan*:

For he on honey-dew hath fed
And drunk the milk of paradise.

Perhaps the discrepancy between the lower body and the rest of me is the result of a defect in my sadhana. While I have opened more and more to the presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother within and around and above, I have not been able to experience it below. For bodily transformation it is the Divine crypted in Matter who is to be realised and released in full response to the free Divinity elsewhere. I believe that to get at this crypted Divinity a luminous pressure is required by an incarnate Divinity. You may recall the Mother once telling me: "I hope to cure your polio-affected leg one day. But only the Supramental Power can help. Not even the Overmind can have such an effect on Matter." Years after this, Sri Aurobindo himself got in trouble with his right leg owing to an accident in November 1938. He is said to have remarked: "It is one

more problem to tackle.” He would have had to work in the very domain where my own difficulty lay, and the descent of the Supermind into the most outward physical was needed. Twelve years later he chose to leave his body. About twenty years afterwards the Mother began to have trouble with her legs. The last words reported from her had to do with the possibility of her legs becoming useless: “Make me walk, make me walk!” When our Gurus themselves were concerned with the difficulty of setting free the crypted Divine and when they are no longer there in physical forms, how can I hope that my legs will become strong? How long these lower limbs will drag me on is anybody’s guess. Possibly much will depend on the way the rest of Amal’s body fares under the influence of that part of his consciousness which is the Supreme Mother’s child. Let us look forward to a progressive “second childhood” of this sort accompanying his advance towards a tottering nonagenarianism.

Here you may well ask: “How about the glorious prophecy of 1929 which singled you out so clearly?” All I can say is that it was the most clear crystallisation, in one particular case, of what was expected in general about several of us in the early phase of Ashram life, which coincided with our own youth. Do you remember Wordsworth’s lines about the beginning of the French Revolution which seemed to promise a new age and in which he took some part?—

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven...

With a perfectionist from Paris as our beloved spiritual Mother and leader we were in the ecstatic beginning of what I may call the French Evolution promising the most novel epoch in history—a stage beyond the human. And the goal aimed at—total supramentalisation—was conceived and seen as waiting for her followers as much as for herself. Nor were such conception and vision confined to the Ashram’s initial period though most overtly entertained in those days. Even less than a decade before she left her body she could allay my doubt and diffidence with the words: “I have not withdrawn my assurance. You are perfectly capable of participating in the realisation and will participate in it.” Some years earlier, when I was in Bombay and reported from there an extremely vivid experience of all of me giving itself up to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother she replied (19.5.1944) that the experience seemed to her “a valid promise” that the realisation would come if I made up my mind to it. In answer to my reference to a “warning” she had given me she explained: “as for what I meant in my last letter it was simply that there were things which might delay your spiritual realisation and might be otherwise dangerous for you. This does not mean that the realisation will not come.” A general statement of the Mother’s may be cited from *Questions and Answers* of 1957 (p. 165): “Sri Aurobindo expected of us to

become supermen—I think—I know—that now it is certain that we shall realise what he expects of us. It has become no longer a hope, but a certitude... let each one do his best and perhaps not many years will roll by for the first visible results to be apparent to all.” What, then, led to her own departure and the uncertainty in which we live today?

Of course this uncertainty relates only to the “Great Transformation”: wonders on wonders are possible short of it and all of them are within reach of us: full psychicisation, complete spiritualisation, life in the Overmind Consciousness touched by the Supermind. Only physical supramentalisation appears to be beyond us at present. Sri Aurobindo’s words to me in April 1935—a typical Avataric pronouncement if ever there was one—ring in my ears: “I have no intention of achieving the Supermind for myself only—I am not doing anything for myself, as I have no personal need of anything, neither of salvation (Moksha) nor supramentalisation. If I am seeking after supramentalisation, it is because it is a thing to be done for the earth-consciousness and if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others.” The last sentence sounds crucial. Here “myself” should be taken to include the Mother. So I would say that if he and she did not do it, we can’t either—at the current stage of spiritual history.

I must clarify two issues at this point. Please note that I have said that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother *did not* undergo physical transformation. I have not said that they *could not*. The supramental Avatars come from beyond the cosmic law. There is never a *could not* for them. They may observe the cosmic law but nothing binds them down. Their own choice and not any necessity stops them. If they appear to fail, it is because apparent failure—with all that precludes it—suits them for a reason we may not be able to fathom.

That is the first issue. The second relates to your reference to *Champaklal’s Treasure*. You quote the Mother as declaring that “bodies other than hers” might accomplish the work if she would abandon her own body. Your implication is that the bodies of people like us, or of those still to be born of our kind, might be the performers of physical supramentalisation. According to me, what she meant was a contrast between her present body and whatever body she might take up for herself in the future. On p. 96 of the book there is no reference to a number of bodies: there is a reference to only one body as an alternative to the body she is inhabiting at the time of speaking, and this alternative appears to be her own next embodiment. Her actual words simply are: “Is it that the mission of this form is ended and that another form is to take up the work in its place? I am putting the question to Thee and ask for an answer—a sign by which I shall know for certain that it is still my work and I must continue in spite of all the contradictions, of all the denials.” Over against her existing form, which is meeting with a lot of difficulty and obstruction, she puts another which she would assume in a birth to come. She did not have in view some Nolini or Satprem or, as you imagine, Amal Kiran.

No doubt, the Mother had no egoistic regard for her own body. She was bent on the embodiment of the Supermind by whatever instrumentation. If any of her disciples could do it after her departure or even instead of her while she was with them, she would have no objection. But I do not see the slightest evidence of her actually envisaging an alternative to herself. In 1969 (*Bulletin*, April, p. 89) she says that if her body, in spite of her persistence, did not “hold on”, she would be constrained to let the transformation “be for another time”. In a later talk (*Bulletin*, August 1972, p. 81), while referring to the new glorious body in which she had inwardly lived on February 15, 1969 as if it had been the most natural sheath for her, she points to her existing body and exclaims: “Is that going to change? It must change or it has to follow the old ordinary process of undoing itself and remaking itself.” I find in no place a clear-cut reference to anybody other than herself continuing her work of physical supramentalisation, whereas the pointer to her own future continuation of it is fairly explicit. I remember also, though at the moment I can’t quote chapter and verse, the Mother recording that she was told by the Lord that hers was the only body which could accomplish the difficult change—the first such experiment in human history.

I leave aside the idea sometimes entertained that the Mother would materialise her “new body” directly and not pursue the line of rebirth. She is said to have expressed in the *Agenda* a strong dislike for such a line. But the dislike of again being born and growing up and slowly developing may emphasise her wish and eagerness to complete her mission in the very life at her disposal. I don’t know whether the idea of precipitating a new body after the end of her existing one has been distinctly visualised in the way her rebirth is in the two talks I have mentioned. Even the possibility of that precipitation must be thought of after considering Sri Aurobindo’s announcement through the Mother that he would be the first to manifest in a supramental body built in the supramental way—that is, without the intervention of the common human birth-procedure. It is not easy to think of his return without the Mother being already there to represent the human supramentalised to complement his representation of the supramental humanised. This would imply her rebirth as one of us to pioneer the fulfilment of earthly evolution.

I come back to my main point: the unlikelihood of the Mother’s having had in mind the bodies of other people achieving supramentalisation in the wake of her relinquishing the attempt at it. So I cannot help concurring with Nolini that physical transformation, though not cancelled, has been postponed as far as our present age is concerned.

This does not signify that we must quite divert our attention from our bodies and not think of charging them with the superhuman, the divine. We should do our utmost to make them rhyme with our inner concords. But this is done by concentrating first on those concords and letting them overflow as much as

possible into our physical cells. To put in the centre of our work something like changing the “genetic code” is to set about in the wrong way. Our “genetic code” need not be neglected, but—as Sri Aurobindo always insisted—our chief task is to unite with the Divine by bringing forth our soul-depths and reaching out to spiritual heights and passing beyond ego, rancour, anger, desire, falsehood, ambition, unrest. Change of consciousness as a consequence of inner union with the Divine is the radiant core of the Aurobindonian life, the central fountain of the Integral Yoga. Unless this change is brought about in intense earnest, the attention given to physical cells will be a side-track and prove to be a blind alley. I know that the Mother was concentrating on them during the last years of her earthly sojourn, but with the background of a supreme divine consciousness held within her body and acting upon them from its profundity and its altitude and its circumambience. Without overlooking the cells, let our primary aim be to catch something of that consciousness.

Now I come to the German woman who proffered the information “that Sri Aurobindo was married away by his family as is the custom in India, but that he didn’t really want it and never touched his wife”. As you comment, it is as if she were writing about Sri Ramakrishna and his marriage. Sri Aurobindo’s situation was different. Nirodbaran once asked him why he had married when his destiny was spiritual. Nirodbaran made the pathetic remark with other cases in mind: “We feel so sad about Buddha’s wife, so too about the wife of Confucius.” After discussing the matter half jocularly and half seriously Sri Aurobindo concluded: “Do you think that Buddha or Confucius or myself were born with a prevision that they or I would take to the spiritual life? So long as one is in the ordinary consciousness, one lives the ordinary life. When the awakening and the new consciousness come, one leaves it—nothing puzzling in it.” Again, there was never any question of his family getting Sri Aurobindo paired off with Mrinalini. In 1900 he himself chose to wed and got many offers and personally selected the daughter of Bhupal Chandra Bose of Calcutta. A photograph of him and his fourteen-year old wife shows quite a poetic and romantic young man in full English dress sitting close to Mrinalini; there seems no aversion to touching her. It is also on record that they went to Nainital on “honeymoon” for a month. This was in April 1901. No doubt he did not prove to be a good family man. He had a fairly short spell of conventional family life owing to his absorption in political work, and afterwards in spiritual practice. In a letter to his father-in-law he explained. “I am afraid I shall never be good for much in the way of domestic virtues. I have tried, very ineffectively, to do some part of my duty as a son, a brother and a husband, but there is something too strong in me which forces me to subordinate everything to it.” But marriage was not from the beginning foreign to his life-style any more than it was to the Mother’s. Perhaps as representative leaders of the whole of human life’s activity to the spiritual goal both he and the Mother had to pass through all phases of it before founding the Integral Yoga.

As regards the French “imbécile” and the English “moron”, about which I made some observations in a letter in *Mother India* I am making unexpected discoveries. I suppose the French locution could have been directly translated by the English one with the same sound and spelling, but, apart from the colloquial meaning, the English word has a bearing worse than “moron”! The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines a moron technically as an adult with intelligence equal to that of an average child of 8-12. This is the definition I quoted in my letter. But I read now the same authority’s entry on “imbecile”: “a person of weak intellect, especially adult with intelligence equal to an average child of about 5.” So to be dubbed a moron is quite a compliment in comparison to being called an imbecile. The worst thing, it seems, is to be designated an idiot. Technically, “idiot” signifies: “a person so deficient in mind as to be permanently incapable of rational conduct ” I guess the most harmless term on the whole and most close to what the Mother intended is “fool” or, if a more lively English rendering is to be made, one may say “silly-billy”. (10.3.1990)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

THE FINEST FLOWERING

GOD is a kind of seed.
To grow He does not need
A sage, or saint, or priest,
But in one of the least,
Where there has been no sign
Of anything divine,
Without forewarning He
May of a sudden be!
The flower of God may start
In any human heart
And it will leave no room
For any other bloom.

★

JAMES BILLET FREEMAN

“DYUMAN—THE LUMINOUS ONE”

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

(Continued from the issue of May 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

THE Ashram was run on offerings. Only the people who came and liked the Ashram would offer something. The Ashram depended on such uncertain offerings. We did not receive any regular funds. Not a single one of the big business magnates gave anything. Once long ago Birla gave Rs. 10,000 to Dilip when Calcutta celebrated his Golden Jubilee; this money Dilip offered to the Mother. Otherwise only the common man, the very common man, gave, and it is so even today. The Government has exempted us from income-tax which has greatly helped.

Even though she needed money so badly, the Mother would never accept the property of minors. When any family came and offered its property she would say, “The children do not know me. When they grow up and give me of their own will, it will be all right.” So she would keep the share of the minors, and when they came of age, if any of them asked for the money she would return it. In those days very young children were not accepted in the Ashram. They had to be at least fourteen. The Mother was pleased when something was offered to her happily; otherwise she would return it. Once a couple came and the woman offered her jewellery. Later on they wanted it back; the Mother returned everything she could lay her hands on.

Up to January 1972, every day we had to struggle for our existence. Decade after decade we had to struggle, except during the period when the family properties first of Manoranjan Ganguly and later of Navajata came to the Ashram. We always had difficulty, but even when circumstances were strained, the Mother would not tell people, “Do this, don’t do that”, because human nature is such that if she said anything, it would rebound upon her. Letters of demand would pour in, “I want this, I want that.”

When volunteers were required, at first she herself would put up a notice. Later she stopped doing it, for she saw that only those came forward who were already overworked. She never imposed her will. Towards the end of 1971, we were so financially overstrained that the Mother stopped taking in new people

But when she knew that she might go, she arranged things in such a way that the situation started improving, and she left us in a strong position.

What she had seen in me, I cannot say. One day, probably in 1955, in the presence of Nolini, Amrita, Udar and Pavitra, she said, “Dyuman, I am telling you something; don’t get puffed up. When I saw you in May 1927, I went immediately to Sri Aurobindo and said to him, ‘Just now I have seen three people: the first one is ..., the other is ..., but the third one will go far, very far.’” I do not know why she revealed this to me.

Once before she had asked me, “In which year were you born?” I replied, “In 1903, Mother.” She said, “You have come down to serve.” And this still stands.

You see, after joining the Ashram, some of my colleagues had begun to learn various languages; they read and wrote many books. They would go to the seashore and sit there for hours. But I have done nothing except service. I was an athlete and was so active that my friends called me ‘deer’. They wondered how I would settle down to the placid life of an Ashram. But when I had Sri Aurobindo’s first darshan, a peace descended into me and all this vanished. I had healing powers and used to heal people. But I dropped these activities when Sri Aurobindo asked me to stop. I have not gone outside to see anything. I have not seen even the Ashram cinema because it would have interfered with my work. My life has revolved around this: to serve. All my movements were for service. By Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s Grace nothing seemed impossible to me. I tried to take all their material worries on myself. As far as possible I did not allow people to go to the Mother or Sri Aurobindo with such anxieties. Once during the Second World War Sri Aurobindo, knowing that all our wheat came from the North, asked, “How is your wheat position?” I replied, “Nothing to worry about.” This is to show how I tried to lessen their burden.

Once when the Ashram was passing through a period of financial difficulty, Sri Aurobindo was asked what he would do if five hundred people turned up. He replied, “Why, I will send them to Dyuman!”

One day in 1971, as the Mother came out of her bathroom, she suddenly said, “Dyuman, Sri Aurobindo is watching you. He is quite happy with you.” Little by little I had come nearer to her through my service and faithfulness.

On 19th June 1934 the Mother told me, “So, it is your birthday! Go and tell them in the kitchen.” Tara was then in charge of the Mother’s kitchen. It was a Wednesday which was a day of special cooking. She prepared eleven dishes. Since then something special is always served in the Dining Room on my birthday.

One year, at the behest of the Mother, the Playground invited me to celebrate my birthday. Two young men linked their arms and seated me on them and went around the Playground. The Mother was standing near the map of undivided India. Pranab, standing near her, shouted, “Dyuman, Bonne Fête to

Dyuman!" I thanked him. Afterwards this celebration became a regular feature. Only two birthdays used to be celebrated in the Playground: Pranab's and mine. When in 1958 the Mother stopped going to the Playground we put a stop to all such celebrations.

Usually the Mother gave me nothing on my birthday. Whatever she had to give she gave me inwardly and I received it within. She distributed countless things—books, etc.—to people on their birthdays, but nothing to me, never. When I came down to distribute napkins, I gave her the first packet of fifty napkins for her own use. Then she would give napkins to Champaklal, Pranab, everyone—but she would not give me anything, not even the Darshan message. I would be there, handing her the cards, and I would never receive any for myself. If somebody gave me one I would have it; otherwise not. She used to say, "You don't care to have these things." And I would answer, "Yes, Mother; as long as you are there I don't care."

On 19th June 1972 the Mother wrote:

"To Dyuman

Bonne Fête

and a long, long, long life of happy and remarkably useful life.

With love and blessings..."

On June 19th, 1973, while she was resting, my friends and companions, Pranab and Champaklal, woke her and said, "Mother, today is Dyuman's birthday." The Mother said, "Give me my photograph, a big one. I want to give it to him." There were only three pictures. She chose one, and said, "Bring me a pen, I will sign it." Then we found that it had already been signed.

You see I never cared to have things; but giving, that's another matter. When all the jewellery of the Mother was with me, I arranged for all her people, all those who served her, to have something of hers, even if they could not pay anything. Kumud was not there at that time, for previously Vasudha used to attend on the Mother. I felt that Kumud had nothing of the Mother's, yet no piece of the Mother's jewellery was left with me—all had been sold. But I wanted to give Kumud something through the Mother. I got a gold chain with the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's symbols made. On 13th June 1973 I gave it to Kumud, taking it for granted that through me the Mother was giving it to her. But I asked her to keep it in the Mother's room in case the chance came—then I would pray to the Mother to give it to Kumud with her own hands. And by her Grace the chance did come and we said, "Mother, today is Kumud's birthday. We want to give her something." Kumud brought the chain and the pendant out and the Mother put it around Kumud's neck herself.

Sometimes the Mother would say, "Dyuman, Lakshmi is your friend." Once she gave me a picture of Ganesh, and wrote a message at the back: "Let him become your generous friend."

One by one my colleagues have left. First Amrita left and much of his work came to me. The same happened when Satyakarma passed away. Then, two years later, Counouma fell ill. As he could not move, some of his work came to me. Each time when it came I asked my body, and my body said, “Go ahead.” It is a simple body but it has responded well. Sometimes I sign money-orders, etc. a thousand times in one day. But who gives me the energy? It is only She

The work of the Dining Room has gone on uninterrupted for the past sixty-three years. When any difficulty arises I pray to her

I have had no attachment to my work or things; they are useful, they were necessary, so I did them. But the Mother is infinite. She is always moving on the Vast Water of Being. Unless we understand her Infinity we betray her. Even in her individual Incarnation the Mother was Universal. In her transcendent form she is the Ananta, the Endless.

I want to work in total harmony. First Gloria farm came to me; then some other farms came, including Annapurna. But people in Auroville said, “It is ours.” I left it, although we had spent lakhs of rupees and had laboured there for four years. The Mother cared deeply for her Auroville children. One day I showed her a map of the place where Auroville and Ashram lakelands join together. Then she said to me, “You will have to give five thousand litres of milk to Auroville per day.” To that I said, “Yes, Mother,” and I worked for years towards that end at Annapurna Farm but.

Sometimes I had to live from moment to moment. Once for one month I did not take any money from the office because we were short of funds, but by her Grace I managed all the expenses of the Dining Room. Slowly things improved and the Mother made us strong. In January 1972 she put us on a firm footing.

When I came here, my dream was that our Ashram should not have less than ten thousand people. But then the inmates would have to live up to the purpose for which it was created. We do not care if people bring in money or not. When I came I did not have a single paise with me. I had only my heart to offer the Mother and she accepted it.

Here nobody needs any guidance from anyone. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have left everything in the atmosphere. Everything is established for coming generations. If people create their own difficulties it is their business. But as far as Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga is concerned, everything is worked out, worked out thoroughly. Even if people suffer and fall sick, inwardly they will advance. If the inmates put more stress on outward life, material life, they will have difficulties; outside needs should not block the inner developments. There is a vastness here. The Mother supported the aspirations of people here in every way according to their inner needs. My impression and my outlook for the Ashram are very hopeful.

My colleagues and friends had visions and experiences. My only experience in sadhana is this feeling of a constant contact, of a constant Presence. Nothing

has changed for me. Even if the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are not here physically, nothing and nobody can come between me and my Mother. The Divine has no escape: the sincerity of our aspiration and the intensity of our call will bring them to our side in a moment.

The young people of today have a greater chance to attain the Life Divine. But, of course, whether or not they do it depends entirely upon their aspiration and sincerity.

I have great hopes for the Ashram. In the beginning we actually thought that we would be supramentalised in this very life. But we were wrong. Even so, the body is trying to live and serve the Mother as long as it can. Its work is increasing; still it moves on. And even when I leave the body, my inner aspiration is to come again and begin my work and my service. I don't even want to go to the psychic world to take a rest.

I feel as if I have lost nothing, for I have not lost the Presence. I know the transformation has to come in our world; but when it will take place, today, tomorrow or centuries later, is in the hands of the Divine and in the hands of her children with their aspiration and consecration.

Today we are providing good rooms and food for those here. We are leaving everything for the younger generation. If I had not done it, it would have been a betrayal of my Lord, for the Mother made me a Trustee.

I have great hopes for everybody. The Ashram is progressing in the subtle world and light is descending. The light that is working now is much more powerful and will guide everyone.

Rome was not built in a day. There are ups and downs, differing vicissitudes of life.

Whatever we may have passed through, today we have a beautiful Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Wonderful is Divine Evolution. A day may dawn when a Supramental World of Truth-Consciousness, Supreme Law, Divine Vastness will be on the earth—Satyam, Ritam, Brihat.

Sri Aurobindo came, the Mother came to bring this upon the earth. They showed us this was possible. It will come to pass.

If we collaborate with the truth in an ardent aspiration it will be quicker, it will be easier. But in any case, it is decreed: there will be a world of Truth-Consciousness.

Compiler's Note

Once some beautiful extracts of the letters written by Sri Aurobindo to Dyuman were shown to the Mother. She liked them so much that she called not only Dyuman but also Amrita, Champaklal, Pavitra, Nolini and Udhar and read out to them these glowing testimonials from the Lord.

After reading what Sri Aurobindo had written, the Mother added: “It is still true.”

I end this unique story with these extracts and with one more long letter of Sri Aurobindo’s which was not seen by the Mother.

SHYAM KUMARI

(“Care only for the Divine’s opinion and not for that of men.”)

“The strength of Dyuman’s character is his essential straightness of aim, fidelity to the highest he sees and intensity of will to receive the Light and serve the Truth ”

10.4.1934

“You have done very well indeed and shown yourself as always a good and faithful instrument of the Mother’s force.”

18.7 1935

“Your spirit of economy is very precious and extremely helpful to us, the more so as it is rare in the Ashram where the push conscious or subconscious is towards the other extreme.”

6.3.1932

“If Dyuman and a few others had not made themselves the instruments of the Mother and helped her to reorganise the whole material side of the Ashram, the Ashram would have collapsed long ago under the weight of mismanagement, waste, self-indulgence, disorder, chaotic self-will and disobedience. He and they faced unpopularity and hatred in order to help her to save it.”

1936

“Loyalty, fidelity, capacity, strength of will and other qualities you have in plenty—a full calm and equality not only in the inner being where it can exist already, but in the outer nervous parts is a thing you have to get completely.”

27.9.1936

“I do not know why there should be so much difficulty about the instructions,—you have been doing this work for many years and must surely know the lines on which it has been conducted by Dyuman and what to do in most cases. In the others where there is no guide in past experience, you have to do your best

and in case Dyuman's instructions are incomplete and you have to act on your own judgment, you can point it out to him if he finds fault with what is done.

"For the rest your judgment about his method of work does not agree with the Mother's observation of him and his work. She has found him one of the ablest organisers in the Ashram and one of the most energetic workers who did not spare himself until she compelled him to do so, one who understood and entered completely into her views and carried them out not only with great fidelity but with success and capacity. She has known more instances than one in which he has organised so completely and thoroughly that the labour has been reduced to a minimum and the efficiency raised to a maximum. I may say however that the saving of labour is not the main consideration in work; there are others equally important and more so. As for the principle that everyone should be allowed to do according to his nature, that can apply only where people do independent work by themselves; where many have to work together, it cannot always be done—regularity and discipline are there the first rule.

"I do not understand your remark about the Mother. The whole work of Aroumé, of the Granary, of the Building Department, etc. was arranged by the Mother not only in general plan and object but in detail. It was only after she had seen everything in working order that she drew back and allowed things to go on according to her plan, but still with an eye on the whole. It is therefore according to the Mother's arrangement that people here are working. When it was not so, when Mother allowed the sadhaks to do according to their own ideas or nature, indicating her will but not enforcing it in detail, the whole Ashram was a scene of anarchy, confusion, waste, disorderly self-indulgence, clash and quarrel, self-will, disobedience, and if it had gone on, the Ashram would have ceased to exist long ago. It was to prevent that that the Mother chose Dyuman and a few others on whom she could rely and reorganised all the departments supervising every detail and aiding the heads to enforce proper methods and discipline. Whatever remains still of the old defects is due to the indiscipline of many workers and their refusal to get rid of their old nature. Even now if the Mother withdrew her control, the whole thing would collapse.

"You are mistaken in thinking that Dyuman conceals things from the Mother or does as he pleases without telling her. She knows all and is not in a state of ignorance. What you write in your second letter is nothing new to her. There were hundreds of protests and complaints against Dyuman (as against other heads of departments), against his methods, his detailed acts and arrangements, his rigid economy, his severe discipline and many things else. The Mother saw things and where there was justification for change, she has made it, but she has consistently supported Dyuman, because the things complained of, economy, discipline, refusal to bend to the claims and fancies and wishes of the sadhaks, were just what she had herself insisted on—without them he could not have done the work as she wanted it done. If he had been loose, indulgent, not

severe, he might have become popular, but he could not have been her instrument for the work. Whatever defects there might be in his nature, were the Mother’s concern; if there was too much rigidity anywhere, it was for her to change it. But she refused to yield to complaints and clamour born of desire and ego; her yielding would only have brought the old state of things back and put an end to the Ashram.”

7.1.1937

SRI AUROBINDO

Compiler’s Closing Remarks

Two years ago, I requested Dyumanbhai to tell me his life story so that I could write it. At that time he did not agree. Later due to the intercession of a friend, he allowed me to use the seven audio cassettes of his question-answer sessions with the staff of the Archives and Research Library.

In spite of their busy schedule Anand and Deepshikha Reddy transcribed the first of these seven cassettes. While typing the transcription, Maria Jain was deeply moved by the story and pleaded with Dyumanbhai to let us interview him. Dyumanbhai could not refuse Maria and we recorded two more cassettes. After that he gave me many more interviews.

Though now I had this gem of a story, eight cassettes remained to be transcribed, involving hundreds of hours of work. I wanted to incorporate the story in my projected book, *How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother* but could not, as I had no time for the transcription. Then as a tangible action of Grace, Major Rajendra Patel offered to undertake this painstaking task. He transcribed more than three hundred foolscap pages. From this material I wove this great story. Shraddhavan typed the manuscript and, as always, K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran) edited it. My sincere thanks to all those who have helped.

Soft-spoken and deeply emotional, Dyumanbhai hardly finishes his sentences. I have retained his words and language as far as possible and have used the first person mode throughout (even though the words may be mine) to preserve the personal tone of the narrative. Dyumanbhai has seen and approved the script.

Up to the end, he hesitated about granting permission for publication. “Do not publish in my lifetime,” he said. In the end, after repeated requests, he graciously gave in, saying, “Once I give my story out, it is no more mine. You are free to do what you want. Before publishing show me the script.”

I thank him for these priceless reminiscences, not only on behalf of myself and other devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother but also on behalf of posterity.

I hope to offer after some months the second part of this precious story.

(Concluded)

SHYAM KUMARI

THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(Continued from the issue of May 1990)

“As I told you last time, my life at Cambridge began with an invitation to have coffee with one of the Dons. There I met O.B who complimented me very eloquently on my work. Right away, I decided that I would pursue my studies with all sincerity and seriousness

“Did your professors ask you about your family?”

“Oh no! Englishmen don't usually ask you personal questions, unlike our countrymen. What we Indians call warmth and friendliness, they consider to be an undue curiosity and lack of respect, particularly with strangers. For example here, you may find that someone, travelling in the same railway compartment as you, will soon become familiar with all the complexities of your family life! But in England it is quite different. A gentleman who once tried chatting with the lady sitting next to him found himself very distinctly snubbed. If one must strike up a conversation, then there is a whole process to be followed. You must first let drop the book or newspaper that you were reading; the other person will then pick it up for you and you will then politely thank him. And only after that can a conversation begin (*Laughter*) Of course, I was perfectly happy with this mode of behaviour since by nature I am rather reticent. Anyway I'm sure you have heard a great deal about Cambridge. Both Oxford and Cambridge have been, down the centuries, proud centres of both learning and sports. Two whole towns have grown around them and they live solely by and for these universities. Students from far and near gather there in quest of excellence in knowledge, just as the great medieval scholar Abelard drew around him, in Paris, hundreds of seekers of wisdom. In these great English universities, each professor is an expert in his field. The students, dressed in caps and gowns, throng the streets lined with ancient colleges. During the holidays all these streets grow silent and empty, reminding one of the kingdom of the Sleeping Beauty. The high-domed colleges are beautiful with their big halls and refectories. Alongside the university where I studied flows the gentle river Cam, murmuring softly.”

“Is it a big river?”

“Oh no! A stone's throw can span it. But it provides excellent opportunities for boat races or, if one prefers, for spending pleasant evenings relaxing in a boat on its waters.”

“Why are there dining halls and refectories in the colleges?”

“Because all the students and their professors eat together, it is characteristic of the education there. The long tables are laid, with chairs on either side, and special arrangements are made nearby for the professors. Beautiful paint-

ings adorn the walls. Actually, eating is only an excuse or occasion for everyone to get acquainted with one another and exchange views about all kinds of subjects. Also, it brings the students closer to their professors. You understand, I hope, how much it helps to make their education really living. Mere lecturing in classrooms can become so very soul-less!"

"It seems there are several things in common between what we have here and the colleges there. Students here too come from various places and we all read and play and eat together."

"Do you too exchange views and ideas?"

"We do, yes, now and then. But since we are much younger than they are, we mostly talk about sports."

"Yes, indeed! I seem to hear mostly about cricket and football."

"No, it is not quite so. We also talk about Gandhi and Nehru, even of Johnson and Goldsmith. We are also curious about atom bombs."

"I remember that politics was a favourite subject, particularly among us Indian students."

"Were there many Indians at Cambridge?"

"Oh yes, indeed! It was at Cambridge that I first met other Indians. Together we formed a group which we called "Indian Majlis". It was primarily a political group. We discussed the British exploitation of our country and ways and means to free her from this slavery. I too would take part in those discussions and at one time became the secretary of the group. I think I have told you already that, during my stay in London I had had the first inklings of the direction my life was to take in the future. I had foreseen great and violent upheavals in my motherland in which I would have to play a major role. I had known this even as a boy and had been preparing myself inwardly for it ever since. By the time I came to Cambridge my political philosophy had become clear, and I knew in my bones that I would work for India's freedom. The meetings of the Majlis gave me the occasion to express these and other similar views."

"But did not the government or even your college authorities put restrictions on you and the Majlis?"

"No, England is a free country. It is true that the British insisted on keeping India a slave nation, but in England itself the government could not withhold the basic democratic rights from the people, among which were the freedom of expression as well as the freedom of association. But I am sure that the government kept watch on the movements and knew about the meetings. The college authorities concerned themselves only with our studies. We were free to do as we pleased provided we did not lag behind in our work. You see, every student in Cambridge was assigned a tutor who evaluated his performance. He followed him up closely and helped him, if necessary. Of course, I had no worries as far as my studies were concerned. I carried on my triple activities of

study, politics and writing poetry, without any difficulty whatsoever. One did not come in the way of the other two.”

“Was it because you wanted freedom for India that you failed in the I.C.S. examination?”

“Yes, you may say so, though many believe it was because I failed in the riding test. You are taught, aren’t you, in the Bengali nursery rhyme that whoever works and studies well gets to ride in cars and carriages. Well, I didn’t get to ride a horse! (*laughter*) Anyway, I believe that by then all the activities of the Indian Majlis were reported to the India Office. Whenever famous or prominent Indians visited Cambridge, we would invite them to attend the Majlis meetings. They were rather old and moderate in their views; we were young hotheads and so the arguments flew fast and sharp between us.

“But the Indian leaders of the time preferred that the youth, instead of meddling with politics, concentrate on studies and self-development. Wasn’t that so?”

“Yes, and in a way, they were right. But it is also true that there come moments in the history of a nation when her sons are required to sacrifice their all for the sake of their motherland. And that is just what our boys did. Of course, at Cambridge, we were not expected to go that far. This reminds me of an amusing detail about our Majlis. The majority of those young men who made the most fiery speeches returned to India either to become Government officials or to accept the contented and humdrum existence of well-married householders.”

“Was Chittaranjan Das a friend of yours?”

“Yes, but I met him in London, after leaving Cambridge.”

“Did you speak to him in Bengali?”

(*Laughing*) “No. I had only learnt to read Bengali then. I wasn’t yet accustomed to speaking it. My Bengali teacher at Cambridge was an Anglo-Indian gentleman who had lived for quite some time in India. His was a pedantic and stilted language, very limited too in its scope, and he spoke with a strong British accent. (*Sri Aurobindo imitates him, to everyone’s amusement*). One day, just for the fun of it we took one of Bankim’s works to him and asked him to explain it to us. But he told us that the text was not even proper Bengali! Actually, I really learnt my own language after returning home, from a scholarly Bengali gentleman.”

“Our elders tell us that the mother-tongue is the most sound and true basis for all education.”

“Yes, I believe so too and have said so quite often. But, on the other hand, in a school where there are children from various states and nations, a common language has to be used as the medium of instruction.”

“Your English poems, particularly the early ones, seem thoroughly English. It is as if English were indeed your mother-tongue.”

“What exactly do you mean?”

“They are rather difficult.” (*laughter*)

“Oh, then it means that your English is weak.”

“But I find no difficulty in understanding the poetry of Wordsworth or Keats.”

“That’s because they are romantics and so are primarily emotional poets. Some of my early writings were often compact and had a greater thought content, rather in the classical style. Perhaps that is why you find them harder to follow. But to the English readers they do not seem difficult.”

“Did you write a lot of poetry?”

“Yes, indeed, a great deal; I also destroyed much of what I wrote.”

“What? You tore it up?”

“Well, all of it was not equally good. Poems written in youth have the lushness of green fields after the first rains. But more is required to make them good literature.”

“Somebody’s told us that you could not join the I.C.S. because you failed in the riding test. We have often discussed this. Some of us feel it’s not true, since riding a horse is nothing very difficult. Others believe that you did not appear for the test on purpose. What exactly is true?”

“Actually, it was rather a ridiculous affair. What a dance I led those poor officials, often also playing hide-and-seek with them! (*Laughs*). It is really hard to describe. But you know, I never was attracted to becoming an I.C.S. officer, though they are a highly respected lot being the dispensers and upholders of the Law. I’m told that on the marriage market too they are supposed to be prize catchers. I was not really made for the kind of work they did: sitting at a desk all day, rummaging into files, studying reports about anti-governmental activities or whether educational institutions were run the way they should be: in short a purely administrative job. No, I could not fit myself into such a mould. I preferred pursuing my studies, learning various languages, writing poetry and, most of all, planning ways and means to free my motherland—I wanted not just to work out plans in my mind, but really to put them into practice as far as possible. That is why I ducked the I.C.S., though the results of my written examination were rather good.”

“But if you did not intend to join the Government Service, why did you take the trouble to study so much?”

“What was I to do? My father had a long-cherished dream that one day his sons would become Magistrates. To this end he sent us, in our earliest childhood, to England and spent all the money he could on our education there. At that age I had no idea of what the I.C.S. or the I.M.S. was, and like a good boy, did as I was told which pleased him. But later, as I grew older, I began to understand what I wanted to do in life, and it certainly was not to become an I.C.S. officer since by then I had formed a clearer idea of what it meant to join the British

Service. But I knew that my father had set his heart on my joining it and I just could not hurt him by telling him harshly that I was not going to. So I had to use a more devious method."

"That is to say?"

"Well, I studied hard and passed the written examination rather easily and, well, when it came to the Riding Test, I simply failed to appear."

"Is that so?" (*Some of the children try to hide their laughter.*) "But there are people who insist that you failed because you did not know how to ride a horse."

"That is true. But in order to join the I.C.S. one does not need to be a professional rider; one may simply spend a few shillings in order to learn how to sit on a horse."

"If your father had discovered the trick you had played on him, he would surely have been very displeased."

"Perhaps he would. But he was very generous-hearted as well as independent in spirit, so it is possible that he might not have been very displeased. However, both my English and Indian friends were very upset by my failure to join the I.C.S. When one of my tutors, Mr. Prothero, heard of the reason why I had failed, he was very annoyed indeed. Along with Mr. James Cotton, the gentleman who had given us shelter in London, he began a regular battle with the authorities. Mr. Prothero wrote them a long letter, more or less to this effect:

'I was very sorry to hear that because Ghosh failed to pass the Riding Test he was not selected for the post. During these last two years, he has been an exemplary student, winning a scholarship in the Classics as well as passing the Tripos with distinction at the end of the second year. Apart from this, the College has awarded him several prizes. Needless to say a student who can have done so well while preparing for the I.C.S. examination must be remarkably brilliant. Moreover, his grasp of English literature, at such an early age, is exceptional and he writes the language better than many young men of this country. I can think of few things more absurd than disqualifying such a young man just because he could not keep his seat on the back of a horse for a few minutes or failed to appear at all for the test. Also, apart from being brilliant intellectually, his character too, is of a very high order. The last two years have been very hard for him, since the time he stopped receiving allowance from his father. He cheerfully shared his stipend with his two brothers, his courage and his perseverance never faltered. Not once did his father answer to his repeated requests for money. Only when the son was faced with the threat of the debtors' prison did the gentleman finally manage to send the required amount. I firmly believe that Ghosh is no spendthrift, he lives very simply, even frugally. It was probably that he lacked the means of taking riding lessons, which again must have been the reason why he did not appear for the test.

'I sincerely hope he will be given a second chance and be favourably

considered for the post. To deprive him of it for this small omission seems to me a great injustice.'

"Such were the arguments advanced by Mr. Prothero. This one letter is enough to describe my student days to you. But the most amusing thing was that the very person for whom he was pleading so eloquently had already queered his own pitch completely. Several chances were given to me to pass the riding test. I was repeatedly asked to be present at a given time on the field. Several letters to this effect were sent to me, and many oral communications dispatched. But the examinee never answered, never showed up. Either he was not at home or he was late in coming home that day, or again he had not received the letters and the messages. And if he did appear for the test it would not be at the appropriate time, for example he would present himself at 1 o' clock whereas the test had been fixed for 10 in the morning. Finally, the authorities grew so tired and annoyed with all this that they failed him. They stated that Ghosh had bothered them excessively! Prothero's effort proved fruitless" (*All laugh*)

"Did you irritate them on purpose?"

"What else was I to do? Since they seemed bent on offering me the post, I had to use all my cunning not to get it. Though actually, towards the end, I doubted if they still would have agreed to give me the job. That I had not passed the riding test was not a very important consideration, since several others were allowed to join the I.C.S. even though they had failed it. Mr. Prothero did not know that in my case there were other graver complaints weighing against me."

The children were all ears.

"You see, poor Mr. Prothero did not know that I had become an out-and-out revolutionary who had openly declared his intentions to help destroy the British empire and this was the main substance of the fiery speeches I was making at the Indian Majlis. If Mr. Prothero had known about these activities of mine, he would most certainly have changed his opinion of me.

"Anyway, that evening when I was told that I had failed in the I.C.S., I returned home and told my eldest brother Benoy, 'I'm chucked.'"

"Chucked? What is that?"

"That is to say, I'm rejected! He seemed somewhat depressed at the news, though he did not say anything. He was always rather a quiet and patient chap, a realist who never argued against the inevitable. But when Manmohan heard it he was furious. You see, the poor fellow had built a whole castle of dreams on the strength of my being accepted for the post. This would fetch me a fat salary which would make it possible for him to fulfil his hopes and desires. But here I was, an ass, who had carelessly ruined everything for him. After a while, of course, his rage cooled and he said, 'Oh well! no point in useless recriminations. Let's play cards!'

"My days at Cambridge were thus over, and I returned to London without a

degree. All I had was a certificate stating that I had passed the written test for the I.C.S. Of course, I was entitled to a B.A. degree, though I did not take it. But perhaps I could tell you some amusing anecdotes about our Indian Majlis at Cambridge before I resume my story in London ”

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

(Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali)

SOME EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF AN “EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1990)

EXCEPT for the letters of the Mother, the other letters were written in Bengali by Sri Aurobindo and are given here in translation.

Letters to the Mother

My own Mother,

I was very happy to receive your letter. Mother, can I take the two castors from M? For, plenty of ants come to the place where I offer flowers before your photo and Sri Aurobindo's. If I can have those two castors then I can fill them with water and place the table on them. The flowers will thus be safe from the ants.

Mother, yesterday I received a book from Nolini. Its name is *The Ashram and the Teachings of Sri Aurobindo*. In that book there are pictures of you and Sri Aurobindo as well as of the Ashram. I shall get the pictures of both of you framed. To whom shall I give them? I will do as you advise. Please reply to my letter.

Yours,
E

SRI AUROBINDO: You can get them framed by Biren.

*

Mamma,

I was very happy to receive Sri Aurobindo's letter. Can I come to see you upstairs? I hope you have received my mother's letter. Can Manu come to the music? I like music very much. My pranams to both of you.

E

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, you can come. Manu will come with Nolina.

These are two of the letters I wrote when I visited the Ashram in 1932 for the second time. I was then seven years old.

During our visit in 1934, my mother and I stayed with my uncle. We had again brought my little friend who had accompanied us the previous time. The two of us were about ten years old. This time we were given permission to appear

for Darshan. My mother dressed me in a sari and put a tiara on my head. When my friend saw it she was taken with a fit of jealousy and insisted on having the tiara for herself. My mother gave it to her and I had to relinquish the precious ornament. My uncle did not help matters by coming and remarking that I looked most untidy in my sari, or perhaps he meant that I suffered in comparison to my friend who was now wearing the tiara. Whatever it was, I burst into tears and went to Darshan with swollen eyes.

Sri Aurobindo noticed this and later wrote to my uncle asking him what had made me cry. After uncle had explained, Sri Aurobindo wrote back that though I wore no tiara, he thought I still looked very pretty. This made me so happy that my heart melted towards Sri Aurobindo at once. I began to write letters to him in which I addressed him as "my Sri Aurobindo," even though my uncle was extremely displeased with this familiarity. He would rebuke me by saying, "How do you dare to address him as 'my Sri Aurobindo'?"

My uncle's attitude made me sad and unhappy. At last, another uncle of mine told him, "Look here, M, why do you come between her and Sri Aurobindo? If anything was amiss, he would correct her himself." At this, my uncle was compelled to stop his interference. But he continued to read Sri Aurobindo's answers to me. This prompted me to write to Sri Aurobindo, "Please write two letters to me, one private and the other the kind that my uncle could read." And he did indeed do so.

The Mother used to see me every day after coming back at five in the evening from a drive in her car. She would wait for me at the foot of the staircase opposite what is now the Samadhi with Nolini and Pavitra. One day I came about fifteen minutes late because I had been chatting with some friends. I found the Mother standing there, and running up to her I knelt at her feet. Without further ado she caught hold of my hair and pulled me up. Then looking at me sternly in the eyes she said, "Come in time."

The other occasion when I would be with the Mother regularly was when she was working in her room. Later, people would see me going up to the terrace with her where I would walk by her side. It was a wonderful and memorable time.

My next visit came in 1935, when we stayed for quite a few months. During my previous visit in 1934, I had become friendly with a young sadhika, Jyotirmayee, whom I came to call 'Auntie'. My uncle knew her well, and she became extremely fond of me. We spent a good deal of time together, and the Mother seems to have put me in her charge. So it was only natural that in 1935 too I should renew my friendship with my 'Auntie.' She added much to the pleasure of my stay in Pondicherry, for as there were no other children in the Ashram and my uncle and mother were too busy to pay attention to me, she gave me the companionship I needed. Whenever I could, I would run to her and while away the time talking to her. She, on her part, was happy to accept me as her own little child.

Aside from companionship, the Mother also concerned herself with my education. She appointed Nolini-da to tutor me, and I was requested to go to him every morning. As I had no love for studies, I was often absent. In the beginning, Nolini-da tried to be indulgent, but later he resorted to firmness, feeling perhaps that he was failing in his duty. Finally he said to me, "I shall complain to Sri Aurobindo that you don't want to study." When even this threat had no effect on me, the attempt to 'educate' me was given up.

In the letters of this period it will be seen that my concern was more with writing letters to Sri Aurobindo and getting his answers than anything else. I would write to him mostly about Sadhana. I need not dilate upon how much time he devoted to me and how much affection he poured into his replies.

After some months, I returned to Calcutta where he continued to send replies to my letters. I quote here some of them written in 1935. They appeared in *Mother India* in 1975

From Sri Aurobindo

To Esha with our blessings.

I am not sending you away from here. I know that here only you can be really happy. I would have liked very much to keep you with me. But you are too young to be able to do as you yourself would like. You depend on your parents. Your mother is returning to Barrakpore and has to take you with her. So I have let you go. When you are older, you will be able to choose for yourself; then you can come here. Meanwhile remember me always as I will remember you always. I will always be with you there and I will try to make you see me. Be happy and become strong and wait till things are changed and you can come back to me.

With love.

*

7-5-1935

The Mother said she would try to make you see her because it is not always easy for people to see her even when she is near them. It is also easier to see with eyes shut than with eyes open—though this too is possible—because it is a sight within you that has to open in order to see her. It is not necessary to call her for any fixed number of hours. It is enough if you love always, remember her often, sit every day a little time before her photograph and call her.

You must never doubt that the Mother loves you and you need never weep for that, for her feelings towards you cannot and will not change.

Of course you can take the photographs given to you by the Mother and keep them with you there.

*

8-5-1935

It is not that because the Mother loves you she can show herself to your physical eyes at a distance. The physical eyes of men are not made so as to see in that way. It becomes possible only after long sadhana. First one sees with the eyes closed, then afterwards it becomes more possible to see with the eyes open. So you should not be too eager to see at once in the more difficult way. It will come in the end, if you want it, but it does not come at once. Don't mind if it takes time. You must grow first more and more able to feel the Mother near you; that you can do by thinking of her and calling her often. Then seeing will be more easy.

*

9-5-1935

Do not mind about the time that it will take—one can't fix the time of these things beforehand. When you feel the Mother's presence more and more, when you begin to see her with the inner sight, then it can come.

It is better not to speak of the Mother to your friends—they do not know her, therefore they can take no interest in her. The more you live close to the Mother yourself, the less you will need to speak of her to others.

P.S. You can of course take your temples with you.
We shall certainly write to you when you are over there.

•

From the Mother

17-5-1935

E

Always remember me as I will always remember you.
My love and blessings will always be with you.

*

Pondicherry

Dear little Esha

I have received all the nice things you sent me; the sari and the cloth for the blouse, the slippers and the frame—they are all so very pretty.

Hoping you are quite in good health and happy.

Our love and blessings are always with you.

Mira

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

CONVERSATIONS OF THE DEAD

TRANSLATED BY SATADAL FROM THE BENGALI OF
NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

13

Conversation in Heaven

First Being

I HAVE left the earthly abode—but I feel no pain for leaving it. The separation from the places which were so dear, from the persons who were so entangled with me in flesh and blood, is, as I see, not at all heart-breaking. I have fallen away from the earthly family like a dry leaf—very easily and automatically.

Second Being

In the beginning I used to feel some sort of a pull—I had moved away from earth's lap; yet I felt as if the earth's atmosphere had come along with me and through that all the old apparitions were beckoning me—but all that has now disappeared.

Third Being

Move, move—move forward. There is no more time to look back into the past; there is no leisure even to delay on the way. We have to go to our own home, to rest in the Mother's lap just as the birds on earth fly straight to their nests in the evening.

First Being

The sap collected during the days of earthly life, the light stored in the consciousness through perception and experience, these are our rations on the way. Our beings are revived and inspired and calmly composed by that alone, and that too is the seed, the core, of our future birth.

Second Being

Once again we have to tread a new path, we have to develop the inner being and consciousness through new experiences. That is why we must forget the old—

Third Being

All the work and enjoyment are only fuel. They serve their purpose by being burnt to ashes, by kindling and fanning the inner fire. The fire is the soul's aspiration and yearning so that the soul may inhabit ever higher worlds.

Second Being

But that heaven is again within and upon the earth. We have come from a superior world, and are going back to it. In between is our stay on earth. But that does not mean that this stay is like staying in a prison, a meaningless illusion or something frightful. While coming we bring with us the blessings from above; while going we take with us the longings from below. In this coming and going just as we grow and develop, the earth too becomes clean and pure.

First Being

The relation we establish between one another on earth as earthly creatures, or the exchange we make with the things and events on earth is only a play of illusion and delusion and ignorance. It is being changed and gradually purified from birth to birth. But we are bodiless and birthless, essentially we are united in our lives and hearts and souls, one and inseparable.

Second Being

We are bodiless, birthless beings, one and inseparable in the superior world. In the inferior world, this earth, our goal of sadhana is to acquire the divine reality of our bodies, to discover the receptacle proper to each one. It is not feasible to acquire a divine body in this receptacle in a single birth; it has to be prepared gradually, built little by little through a series of births.

Third Being

Probably, that consummation of ours is very near; the earth may soon embody the full nature of the deity. So let us make a quick move to see the last settlement of accounts. The earth will enjoy the fruit of our realisation. Let us be in that close, calm and conscious material union so that we may realise how much our inner being has developed, how much our consciousness has bloomed. If the true nature is ready, if the divine being is full, then this time our collective descent on earth will bring about a culmination. No more will the earth remain mere clay; it will become a base of luminous consciousness.

MOOT COURT HEARING ON SHAKESPEARE AUTHORSHIP

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE OR EDWARD DE VERE?

Few readers of literature know of a recent event of great interest to the literary world. On September 25, 1987, the American University, Washington D.C., held a trial to decide a question that has vexed scholars for over three centuries. Mother India has the privilege to serialise 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 May 1990)

JUSTICE—Tell me, what's your view of the strength of the taboo against revealing one's identity?

BOYLE—I think that the taboo was of differing strengths with differing people, as is the case with most social taboos in most eras. Edward de Vere is not a man whose life reveals an extraordinary fear of social disapproval, he denies the paternity of his own son, openly lives with his mistress, is put in the tower for fathering a child by her, is reputed to be in the company of lewd persons, sells off most of his estates, has running battles in the streets. These, I would claim, are not the actions one would expect of a man deeply concerned with his good name.

JUSTICE—Sounds like the conduct of a playwright.

BOYLE—I think the fact that we believe that now, Justice Stevens, is simply evidence that our ideas as to what constitutes a playwright have changed from the Elizabethan era until the present day.

JUSTICE—The Elizabethans did not think much of playwrights.

BOYLE—The Elizabethans thought of playwrights in a particular class. They liked, I think, professional playwrights, such as my client, a man who worked as a professional dramatist to knock out scripts. The amazing thing is that those scripts were, in fact, enduring literary masterpieces, despite the fact that they were frequently the result of collaboration, that they were knocked out in a hurry, that they borrowed freely from each other. I think the appropriate imagery, the appropriate analogy perhaps if we are going to make historical comparisons, the appropriate analogy is to the early history of the film industry in the United States, in which a group of people create an art form over a very short period of time, borrow freely from each other, and engage in all kinds of practices, which later it's hard to reconcile with the enormous and enduring art form which they have created. Even if we assume that de Vere...

JUSTICE—I take it as true that many of these plays were played by actors who changed the script as to their parts.

BOYLE—That is true

JUSTICE—And we don't, I think, have a single manuscript, do we, of any one of the plays.

BOYLE—That is also true

JUSTICE—As soon as a manuscript was printed, then the manuscript was discarded, wasn't it?

BOYLE—I believe that that is the case, and in fact not a single manuscript which entered a printing house has survived from that period. Not just of Shakespeare's works, but of any playwright's.

JUSTICE—Well, then, often the resemblance between a play as written initially and a play as presented by actors may have been hard to find.

BOYLE—I think that that is exactly true. The aptly-named 'Foul Papers' which were the papers on which all of these revisions were made, and which would have presented a blotted copybook to say the least to any reader, were converted into play scripts, and then from these presumably some fair copy was made by a playhouse scribe and then published. If I may suggest, even if we assume that de Vere had the motive and means to conceal his authorship, he must have had the opportunity to write the plays. And since he died in July 1604, and since most authorities, as was called out in the question of Professor Jaszi, would date between one and four plays to a period after that date, I would claim that de Vere could NOT have, in fact, written the Shakespeare plays. My learned friend does not deny that the same hand wrote all of the plays; therefore if even one play was written after 1604 I would claim that the case for Edward de Vere is disproved. And I think that, although there is disagreement about the internal dating methods of the plays, there is consensus on the fact that at least one of these plays dates after 1604, and it is a very powerful argument on the side of my client.

JUSTICE—Which play is that, Mr. Boyle?

BOYLE—*The Tempest* is the one most generally agreed on. Recently *King Lear* has also been moved to a later date, and *A Winter's Tale* and *Macbeth* are also dated late by some of the authorities. So far I've argued that de Vere had neither the opportunity to write the plays nor the motive nor the means to conceal his authorship had he written them.

If I may now turn to the question of the evidence for my client, I would claim that when we look at the historical record, we should first think of what kind of evidence is likely to survive of Shakespeare's authorship. We might expect the testimony of friends and of enemies; we might expect references in diaries; we might also expect published accounts, and I think we have all of those. I will today concentrate on only three of the pieces of evidence demonstrating that William Shakespeare, the actor and theatrical entrepreneur from Stratford, was in fact the author of the plays. The first of these, the most striking in many regards, is the first folio; the publication of Shakespeare's works for the first time in 1623, edited in some manner by Hemmings and Condell, Shakes-

peare's actor-fellows. Now we know that Hemmings and Condell were in fact Shakespeare's actor fellows. We mentioned his will; both Hemmings and Shakespeare are mentioned in the will of Augustine Phillips, another member of the same theatrical company. They are listed together in the cast list, Ben Jonson's cast list, published in 1616. They were listed together in the cast list in the first folio itself. There are, I would suggest, a number of things which tied these people together and showed they were both colleagues and friends. I would suggest that since...

JUSTICE—Are they regarded as reliable witnesses as to the authorship of the plays?

BOYLE—I would argue that consistent with the principles of Anglo-American justice, we should assume they are innocent until they are proven guilty, and thus I'm not so willing to besmirch their character as my learned friend seems to be. I would assume that someone is telling the truth until strong evidence is produced that he is lying. Hemmings and Condell clearly have in mind their friend, their fellow. They say that they received not a blot from his paper. It may be somewhat an overstatement, given the horrible state of the foul papers which I mentioned earlier. But we need not simply depend on Hemmings' and Condell's testimony. There is the testimony of Ben Jonson, a learned playwright, someone in whose play Shakespeare actually appeared and also from his poem which I would say bears the mark of being eminently sincere—an actual friend of Shakespeare. Jonson says that he longs to hear Shakespeare's "buskin tread and shake a stage." Edward de Vere was not an actor; this is hardly a reference to him. Jonson talks about how Shakespeare's genius is more than merely natural genius, that "a good poet must strike the second heat from the muse's anvil." He is, I think, referring to the fact that although Shakespeare has small Latin and less Greek, he is nevertheless a great playwright. And I think Jonson unwillingly—perhaps because he was somewhat a jealous man—is acknowledging the greatness of Shakespeare's works. Then when we turn to the testimony of Leonard Digges, another of the people who write eulogies in the first folio, we hear of how Shakespeare's works will last, indeed outlast his name; that they will still last when time has dissolved the Stratford monument. Edward de Vere was of course buried in Hackney, a dubious fate for anyone, and Shakespeare was the one with the monument in Stratford. I would claim that these are as near to definite references as we could possibly expect and I think this alone establishes the case for my client.

JUSTICE—On the question of monument, I noticed your opponent really doesn't make this argument but some of the supporters of the opposing position argue that there was a change in the monument from when he held a sack of wheat to when it turned into having a pen and pencil or a pen, rather, and paper about a century later. Do you think that has any relevance?

BOYLE—I must admit that I don't think it has any relevance, although it shows the lengths to which people are willing to go in the interpretation of Shake-

spearean evidence. Here we have a rather dubiously executed monument in which Shakespeare's hand and pen are apparently resting on a cushion. However, those who believe that he was illiterate, cannot of course have this. Thus they make him into an illiterate merchant of bagged goods, and the cushion becomes the sack of wheat

JUSTICE—There are illustrations shortly after the seventeenth century, I think, that show the monument with the sack of wheat rather than the quill.

BOYLE—I would claim that the illustration as is the case with many of the illustrations from the same source was basically a post-hoc sketch made from memory. Many of the other illustrations in the same source demonstrate differences from the actual monuments. I think we can conclude nothing from this. In any event, even if it were true, which it is not, it seems to me somewhat ambiguous and doesn't directly bear on the case.

JUSTICE—Wasn't there a portrait that proved to be a forgery painted over the portrait of Oxford?

BOYLE—Yes indeed. The portrait to which I believe you refer, the Ashborne portrait was discovered by X-Ray and infrared means to be not a portrait of Shakespeare, as had been thought, but in fact a retouched version of a portrait of Edward de Vere which had been made to look like Shakespeare. This caused a great furor at the time. People thought, "Ah-ha since Edward de Vere is hidden under Shakespeare's face perhaps. ."

JUSTICE—Is there any suggestion as to the date when that was done?

BOYLE—I believe that the most likely suggestion here is that that was done in the mid-nineteenth century. It was done in other words in a period in which mementos of Shakespeare's life fetched an extraordinary value and thus any competent forger would place a high premium on being able to alter a portrait in such a way as to make it look as though it were Shakespeare.

JUSTICE—Incidentally, is the monument the tombstone?

BOYLE—The monument is not in fact the tombstone. Shakespeare lies under the floor.

JUSTICE—Isn't there an epitaph on the tombstone?

BOYLE—Yes "Stay passenger why goes thy "

JUSTICE—Who was the author?

BOYLE—We don't know who the author of that epitaph was. In my view...

JUSTICE—Any suggestion that your client was?

BOYLE—No, I don't think so. Before one is dead it's often difficult to foresee such things as the need for epitaphs on one's tombstone, and I don't think we can assume that William Shakespeare had that degree of foresight. So far I've argued that the first folio alone would identify my client as definitely being both the actor and the playwright. But there is other evidence.

(To be continued)

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

(Continued from the issue of May 1990)

D. *The True Law of Immortality* The aim of human life is to become free from the law of birth and death and live in the unborn consciousness of the supreme Divine from whom all beings are born. He who thus lives in the Divine is in possession of immortality, *amṛtam aśnute*.

The Brahmavadin's idea of immortality is to become one with the imperishable Brahman, *brahma bhūtaḥ*, which is beyond the world of mortal existence. There are many verses in the Gita which speak to this effect. Note the Gita's enumeration of conditions for becoming the Brahman in the concluding chapter (18-53) Note also its pointed reference to the idea of *nauskarmya siddhi* which leads to the attainment of the Brahman (18-50) Further, consider some of the verses in an earlier chapter: having established the mind in the equal Brahman, which is faultless, one lives in the Brahman (5-19); one who has inner happiness, inner ease and repose, and inner light becomes the Brahman (5-24) Mark also the words of the Gita: this is "the immutable Purusha of whom the knowers of the Veda speak" (8-11). Therefore one gets the impression that the Gita is in agreement with the Brahmavadin's idea of immortality

Though it thus admits that by becoming the immutable Brahman one is in possession of immortality, it does not regard this as the highest perfection, *samsiddhim* (3-20). For the highest perfection consists in becoming of one law of being and nature with the divine Purushottama, *sādharmyam* Nothing short of this can help us to achieve the highest perfection of immortality

What then is the law of the supreme Purusha? In His immutable aspect He is in possession of the immortal eternity, for in this supreme status He knows Himself to be superior to death and life, not conditioned by His manifestations in the world. But it does not mean that He can possess this immortal eternity only in the immutable beyond the mutable becomings of Nature. He can also possess it in the very conditions of His self-manifestation in cosmic forms and in individual bodies, because He is not limited by the immutable and contains the mutable as another aspect of His universal existence without losing His supreme status, *īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānām hrddese arjuna tiṣṭati* (18-61). Even so, the soul must possess the consciousness of immortality not only in the immutable but also in the mutable Nature from which proceeds the birth of existences¹ It is with a view to insist on possessing the supreme immortal Purusha in his entirety that the Gita asks us to adore Him with complete knowledge, *sarvavit*, and in all ways of our existence, *sarvabhāvena* (15-19). It is now evident why the Gita is not in

¹ See *Essays on the Gita*, p 408 "Liberation immortality, is to live in this unchangeably conscious eternal being of the Purushottama "

favour of the Brahmavadin's view of immortality, for it must be obtained not only in the immutable beyond the cosmic manifestation but also here in the very conditions which cause the birth of existences in the world.

In order to show that becoming the immutable is not the last word on immortality the Gita turns to the idea of the Purushottama in the verses that follow those which talk about the immutable Brahman. Note the Gita's unmistakable reference to the idea of the Purushottama in these verses:¹ "And by doing all actions always lodged in Me he attains by My grace the eternal and imperishable status (18-56); when a man has known Me as the enjoyer of sacrifice of all the worlds, the friend of all creatures, he comes by the peace (5-29)." The Gita's aim is to indicate that the highest perfection of immortality is not to be gained in the immutable but in the Purushottama. Hence it insists on doing all actions always lodged in Him, for to live in Him and act is to be conscious of His immortal existence even while using the body as the instrument of action. Likewise, when the Gita brings in the idea of the Purushottama as the enjoyer of sacrifice in all the worlds and also as the friend of all creatures, its aim is to tell us that we must know Him not only as the immutable but also as the unborn eternal who is seated in the cosmic bodies and enjoys the play of cosmic forces and whose presence in the bodies of His creatures is a friendly support to them. It is therefore wrong to take a few verses in isolation and hastily conclude that the Gita is in favour of the Brahmavadin's view of immortality

If enjoyment of immortality lies in becoming of one law of being and action with the supreme Person, then it is a reaffirmation of the teaching of the Upanishads. For example, the Isha Upanishad says that we must learn of the way of the Lord's existence, who embraces both the unborn status and the birth of existences, in order to enjoy immortality. The teaching of the Gita and that of the Upanishads are identical in regard to the fact that the Supreme must be known and realised in His entirety, in His being and also in His power of being, in His unborn status and also in His birth of existences

The teaching of the Gita and this side of the Upanishads," says Sri Aurobindo, "are so far at one; for they look at and admit both sides of the reality and still arrive at identity as the conclusion and the highest truth of existence."² Unfortunately, the Brahmavadins lay their emphasis on the unborn status as the whole truth of immortality; hence they miss the real teaching of the Upanishads and fall into the darkness of exclusive seeking *andham tamah pravisanti* (*Isha Up.*). Since the Gita does not commit this error and seeks to possess the Divine in his entirety it leads us into the very heart of the ancient teaching.

E. *The True Yoga*: What is yoga? It is both negative and positive: negative, because it is disassociation from pain—positive, because it is union with the Divine which results in unbroken spiritual bliss. As a book on yoga, the Gita

¹ The words 'Me' and 'My' in the verses stand for the Purushottama

² *Essays on the Gita*, p 424

promises to give us an imperishable means to arrive at a supreme spiritual freedom, *dharmyāmrtam*.

It speaks of three principal forms of yoga: the way of knowledge, the way of works, and the way of devotion. Each is an effective method and can lead to an independent result. In the way of knowledge, *jñāna yoga*, Buddhi or the intelligent will is the chief instrument. This Buddhi is of two types: one is concentrated and leads to the spirit inside, and the other is without fixed concentration and many-branching and leads to the world outside. In fact, they are not two types but two different functions of the same Buddhi, upward and downward. In its downward movement it is governed by desire and the senses. It is pulled in different directions by the objects of sense and the desire to possess and enjoy them. He who is under the influence of this downward function of Buddhi finds his life to be one of grief, pain, frustration, and restlessness.

But this downward function of Buddhi can be stopped and brought under control. The root-cause of the problem is desire which is seated in Buddhi. It is the great enemy which prevents Buddhi from returning to its original poise of fixed concentration. Therefore Buddhi can recover its upward function only when desire is slain. In order to get rid of desire we must find out its cause and eliminate it. The cause of desire is in the senses which irresistibly follow their objects in order to possess and enjoy them. When the senses are fully controlled and withdrawn from their objects, even as the tortoise draws in its limbs into its shell, all desires fall away from Buddhi. In consequence, Buddhi is now turned upon the soul inside. He who thus restrains the excitement of the senses by their objects and sits firmly founded in self-knowledge, attains peace, *prasādam adhigacchati*.

In the way of works, *karma yoga*, the chief instrument is will in works. This will belongs to Nature and expresses itself variously in the works of Nature. As we are identified with the ego, we wrongly think that we are the doer and the enjoyer of the results of work. We are therefore bound by works and the worldly possessions generated by them. This is the cause of all sin and evil. As long as works are done for the sake of ego and for the sake of personal enjoyment of the results, there is no way to overcome sin and evil. Nor can one be free from the dualities.

If we think that we can escape from the bondage of works by abstaining from works, we are mistaken. For none can ever remain without working; everyone is impelled unwittingly to work by the gunas of Prakṛiti. Hence we are forbidden to give up works, *māte sango'stu akarmaṇi* (2-47). What is really to be abandoned is the ego in works, for it is the ego and not work that creates bondage. If the bondage is due to egoistic attachment to works and the results they produce, then it is by dissolving the cause that the bondage is to be removed. First of all, works must be performed without attachment to the results they produce. Once this is accomplished the next step is to eliminate the notion

that one is the doer of works by eliminating all initiatives. This is to let Nature act in one and express her will in works without the limiting influence of the three gunas. Such a person is not bound by action even though he engages in action, *naiva kimcit karoti sah*. He who is thus liberated reaches the highest spiritual status, *param āpnoti*.

In the way of devotion, *bhakti yoga*, the chief instrument is self-giving emotion. Self-giving is giving oneself completely and without any reservation to the object of devotion. To the devotee the highest object of devotion is the Divine. With a great faith born of the soul, he lodges himself in God as his refuge, because he cannot find his true law of being in any other principle or entity in the world. All the powers of his being including his thought, emotion and work are turned towards Him. All his thoughts dwell only on Him; all his emotions flow only towards Him; all his works are given up only to Him; and even his body is possessed of an attitude of surrender to Him. Thus the devotee is in constant union with God in all parts of his being. Moved by compassion, God becomes the saviour of the soul. All obstacles are overcome by His grace, *matprasādāt*. He raises the soul out of the darkness of ignorance and leads it to the clear light of spiritual knowledge. Freedom from sin and grief comes as a spontaneous gift of God when the soul abandons all that constitutes his present law of existence, and surrenders to Him, *aham tvām sarvapāpebhyo moksayisyāmi*.

(To be continued)

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

Correction

¹ In the April issue, please read on p 269, lines 28 and 33, *brahmam* and not *brahman*.

“SATYAVAN MUST DIE”

A DISCOURSE APROPOS OF A PHRASE IN SRI AUROBINDO’S SAVITRI

1. *The Word of Fate*

NARAD’S visit from his home in Paradise to King Aswapathy’s Palace in Madra on the banks of the Alacananda is a unique occasion in the legendary annals of mankind, indeed in those of the entire creation. It is well-timed and opportune. Marking a great turning point in the epic developments of the events in *Savitri*, it gives a decisive mould for the future to shape itself as though with the rapidity of a divine sanction. Savitri is about to return to the Palace with her heart full of a mysterious happiness. She has just discovered in the brooding Shalwa Woods the one through union with whom she will know and feel heaven drawing closer to earth. In the enchantment of that hour she is oblivious of what could be unfortunate and what could break or shatter the spell of that secret sweetness. But Narad has already seen everything, cruel Time and evil Circumstance and the stealthy march of Doom, as also the Might ever standing behind Savitri and protecting and guiding her. Savitri, the young Bride-to-be, enters the Palace and presents herself to her father when the heavenly Sage throws his vast immortal look on her and surrounds her with the light of his inner gaze. Providing that luminous protection to her, he even tells her that she has come to this “great perilous world” where exist harsh sanguinary laws and where the safety of her new-found dream may not prove to be sufficient or impregnable. Despite her love being an “ideal’s gold” she shall soon discover that, in the midst of the earthly reality, it promises her nothing but frustration and failure. By staying locked in such a gold-dream she may remain safe but then that would be a safety of the dream-world and not a fulfilment in the actualities of life. Narad even wishes the impending doom to lie asleep and ineffective so that she may move without fear through the emerald groves of her love. But alas! It is not going to be so and the doom shall befall her and strike at her at the hour that has already been fixed in Destiny’s log-book. Fate, to whom even the great gods are subject, is inexorable and shall proceed with her pre-ordained task, unmindful of the little cries and wailings of the mortal creature.

Savitri has fulfilled the mission her father had bidden her to accomplish and reveals, in a calm poised moment of joy full of confidence, that she has chosen Satyavan for a husband. She further declares that, though his present dwelling is in a forest-hermitage and his father is a blind and exiled king, defeated in life, her resolve in the choice is firm and she should not be persuaded to change it in any way. She saw in the limpid pool of her soul the real image of Satyavan and as far as she was concerned that was absolutely sufficient. She tells her father:

Father and king, I have carried out thy will,
One whom I sought I found in distant lands;

I have obeyed my heart, I have heard its call.
 On the borders of a dreaming wilderness
 Mid Shalwa's giant hills and brooding woods,
 In his thatched hermitage Dyumathsena dwells,
 Blind, exiled, outcast, once a mighty king.
 The son of Dyumathsena, Satyavan
 I have met on the wild forest's lonely verge.
 My father, I have chosen. This is done.¹

The "One whom I sought"—that was her Satyavan; she was not just seeking a youth, handsome and noble, a heroic prince to marry, but one in whom her heart would truly recognise her life's partner. Such a choice, when made, has to be irrevocable.

The royal parents and the Sage are stunned by her announcement and more by the finality of her decision. Aswapathy, calm and wise, ever aware of the larger designs behind our movements, looks within and sees a thick and heavy shadow float over Satyavan's name; he also observes that the shadow is being chased away by a "sudden and stupendous light". Something of a foreboding nature, but with a happy ending, is noticed by him although he does not yet know the exact meaning or the full occult contents of these portents. He submits and accepts whatever may be stored by the future for them. But, at the same time, he expresses his wish for the birth of a godlike life and its growth "in a great light of inner suns" in the marriage of Satyavan and Savitri. However, the Queen, Savitri's human mother, sensing something disturbing, prays to the heavenly Sage to bestow his benedictions and to approve the happy marriage. She desires his blessings to

... put the immortals' seal
 On these bright lives' unstained felicity
 Pushing the ominous Shadow from their days.²

She has already reconciled herself to the present lowly placing of Satyavan; but she wants to be sure that no evil lurks around there, that no rough or cruel hand is waiting there to strike and destroy her child's happiness. The Queen is extremely fond of her daughter and in these matters she is simply displaying her practical sense, a female's uncanny pragmatism; her fear arises out of love and attachment and it is precisely to protect that love that she becomes realistic. Although foreknowledge shall be an "added pain", she is willing to accept in full its consequences. Her pragmatism goads her to argue that, by knowing beforehand the nature of the unfortunate circumstance, corrective action can be initiated well in advance; even the course of events can be altered by abandoning the calamitous route for a better and proper one. She doesn't intend, under-

standably, to stoop or bow down in front of the “stealthy doom” if it is really there awaiting Savitri’s arrival at the forest-hermitage.

Aswapathy would have liked Narad not to give utterance to the “dangerous word”; in fact, he tells him to hold it back, or let it be spoken only if he has a full control and command over the situation. He knows that the Sage, by his “native right” and not by “looking within” as he had to do himself, has at once seen everything, all that hides from the short mortal sight. And indeed it was because of that that he had hastened to Madra, singing the sacred Name and wanting to throw his own very precious weight in favour of the choice Aswapathy’s daughter Savitri had made. Though apparently recommending evil, he saw a larger measure in the heavenly working through her marriage with Satyavan. Narad has already hinted at the danger in what Savitri has decided for herself. But the Queen is now in anguish and insists on knowing fully and unequivocally the doom, if it is doom, into which her noble and lovely child is unknowingly going to step. True, evil cannot be stayed but neither can it be, nor should it be, accepted without resistance; submitting to it meekly is contrary to a hero’s dynamic and fighting spirit. Maybe sometimes to prepare ourselves against such a dreadful fate, it is good to be aware of it in advance and at the earliest. Savitri could then avoid it or else use it for some advantage. The Queen has asked for truth and Narad makes the truth known: in that hour, on being pressed by her, he unveils destiny. It was as though he has become a mighty instrument of the Truth-Power that she may begin her action in the cosmic play. Aswapathy has told him that he can speak the great “dangerous word” if only he can slacken the grip of adverse fate upon the helpless mortal’s soul. Therefore Narad knew what he was doing. He had a firm control over the events that were soon to unroll; as a matter of fact, it was rather with that control he tightened the grip so that it might get loosened in a certain and decisive way. It was to “steel the will of Savitri” that he had brought with him the Word of Fate.

Narad knows that it was the wedding of the Lord and His Spouse on the earth; he knows who Satyavan and Savitri are and what are the purpose and meaning are of their marriage in the lonely dwelling of the emerald forest. In his vast immortal look he has seen everything, the beginning of a “godlike life” as Aswapathy wished it to be but knew not how it was going to be. Thus he speaks glowingly about the soul-charged and soul-lit qualities of Satyavan:

His figure is the front of Nature’s march,
His single being excels the works of Time.³

Or, a limpidity flowing like the mirth and laughter of some heavenly spring,

He takes with bright surprise spirit and sense.⁴

Or, as the “radiant God” himself tells Savitri later on:

He is my soul that climbs from nescient Night
 Through life and mind and supernature's Vast
 To the supernal light of Timelessness
 And my Eternity hid in moving Time
 And my boundlessness cut out by the curve of Space.
 It climbs to the greatness it has left behind
 And to the beauty and joy from which it fell,
 To the closeness and sweetness of all things divine,
 To light without bounds and life illimitable,
 Taste of the depths of the Ineffable's bliss,
 Touch of the immortal and the infinite.
 He is my soul that gropes out of the beast
 To reach humanity's heights of lucent thought,
 And the vicinity of Truth's sublime.
 He is the godhead growing in human lives
 And in the body of earth-being's forms,
 He is the soul of man climbing to God
 In Nature's surge out of earth's ignorance.⁵

Satyavan has, in the process of evolving Time, taken on himself the burden of inconscient horror and suffering. This radiant God's soul wanders and fumbles in the wild thickets of life and attempts to climb back to the heights from which it has come. But the odds are tough and perilous is the path.

This sovereign glory that heaven has lent to earth is, unfortunately, short-living and will be soon called back. Satyavan came but only to die as a youth with his life unfulfilled. Only twelve months are given to the rare young couple, Satyavan and Savitri, to be together and

This day returning Satyavan must die.⁶

With the frankness of a heaven-sent prophet, but pouring at the same time the healing love of that wide infinity, Narad delivers the ruthless sentence. A lightning must strike and consume in its wild fires the large tracts of life reared through long ages so that the "godlike life" be born. Whatever be the purpose and intention behind this death, its inevitability has been asserted in a high and heavenly way by the Sage from Paradise who, borne by some divinely great afflatus, came here chanting the Anthem of eternal Love.

(To be continued)

R Y DESHAPANDE

REFERENCES

1 *Savitri*, p 424

2 *Ibid* , p 426

3 *Ibid* , p 429

4 *Ibid* , p 430

5 *Ibid* , p 703

6 *Ibid* , p 431

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1990)

A Book for All Times

IF I could have a Time Machine and three copies of K. D. Sethna's recently published *Talks on Poetry*, I would send the first copy to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. It would be fascinating to watch his reaction to Sethna's journey through the world of European poetry, his raised eyebrows when he notes that in an Olympiad of all-time poets he would finish only 11th,¹ or his great satisfaction when he finds a few of his best verses quoted in German along with an English translation.² Most probably, he would be astonished to discover verses in Latin, Greek, Italian and French in this book by an Indian author in the late 20th century.

The second copy I would send to Napoleon on Elba. Occupying his mind with inspiring topics, enjoying the numberless word-plays by Pun-dit Sethna, sharing the humour, knowledge and erudition of the author, Napoleon may change his mind about returning to the battlefield and realize that there are more elevating activities possible on earth than sending thousands of soldiers to death. Moreover, he would learn in *Talk Eleven*³ that his job in Europe was already done and that any attempt of a come-back would mean—Waterloo.

The third copy I would send 50 years into the future, into a world where a 200 channel satellite tv in almost every household has made good books (and the capacity to read them) a rarity. Imagine a person who has spent many sleepless nights, jumping from programme to programme on his remote control, always ending up "satiated but not satisfied", as Sri Aurobindo puts it in the first chapter of *The Life Divine*. And then suddenly he finds this orange volume on his table. Like a traveller who has lived on canned food for months and unexpectedly finds a basket full of fruits, he may cherish Prof. Sethna's high-spirited lessons on poetry, literature, everything. He may read with amusement that the author pleads guilty to "the charge of being a poet", follow with bated breath the story about Tagore's unconventional air-lift to the Pondicherry Pier, or note with surprise how the lines "Kangaroo! Kangaroo!" in the poem of a native Australian hunter are full of hidden content. As he keeps reading about the summits of Shakespeare, Sir E. Hillary and Narik Lama,⁴ he may suddenly

¹ p 42 ² p 321 ³ p 97

⁴ see p 61, if you don't find the name in any encyclopaedia, although he has written exquisite lines such as,

But everywhere I see Thy heaven
I love the night between the stars (p 93)

become a poet himself and write, inspired by a line of T. S. Eliot.¹

I have measured out my life with tv channels.

Finally, he may think how cultured and knowledgeable people must have been in the good old past. Indeed, as he keeps going through the many chapters of this book, he will agree with Keats that

A thing of beauty is a joy forever.

Fitness without (Too Many) Tears

What is precisely the right measure of physical exercise from the health point of view? To answer this question, the American aerobic guru Dr. Kenneth Cooper has carried out a most comprehensive investigation with 13,344 healthy citizens of all ages. Their individual data were taken, including weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, cigarette consumption as well as their performance on a computerized bicycle ergometer. The persons were monitored over a period of eight years and tested again and again on the ergometer. All their physical problems during this period were carefully registered.

I will simplify the results of this study by defining just three groups: 1) Those who do not exercise at all. 2) Those who do regular walking, cycling, etc., having an average fitness. 3) Those who do something like 50-60 km jogging every week.

If we imagine a ladder with ten steps, the group (1) persons are found somewhere on the bottom, with the greatest health risks. If you join group (2), you move up dramatically on the ladder to position eight or nine. If you belong to group (3), you reach the top, but your additional gain is comparatively small.

It must be noted that this study expresses health risks only in terms of probability. Theoretically, someone who is on the bottom of the ladder can spend a less troubled life than someone on the top, although it is much more likely to be the other way around. Furthermore, we can assume that group (3) persons may have individual benefits (increased stamina, for instance) which were not considered in this investigation. They may also have more far-reaching objectives such as physical perfection or athletic achievement.

Quite obviously, Cooper's study is good news for the group (2) persons. They can be sure now that about half an hour's daily activity or at least a few times a week gives them almost the maximum benefit. And Cooper discovered that (apart from systematic exercise) it might also be a brisk walk with your dog as well as some energetic house cleaning work or gardening. All this helps to

¹ p 192

gather points and to stay near the top of the ladder, optimizing your health condition and longevity prospects. In fact, Cooper must have been surprised to realize that, *from this point of view*, the rather expensive machinery of fitness studios is no more than a luxury.

This also applies to a new invention, the Stair-Master, an artificial stair climbing machine which is extremely popular in the U.S. Exercisers stand on two pedals that move up and down instead of in circles (as in stationary bicycles), while a computerized screen tells them how many steps they have climbed. "You can get the exact same benefit from just climbing stairs in the home or office," says Steve Farrell of the Institute for Aerobic Research in Dallas. "And going between floors on foot can be healthier for the bank account," comments a reporter of *Time Magazine*.

Sources: *Der Stern* (21-12-89); *Time Magazine* (18-12-89)

THE TIDES

A NOVELLA

(Continued from the issue of May 1990)

XII

THE sitting room had its bamboo walls painted white giving it a glare. We occupied two of the cane chairs arranged near the wall. The rest of the floor was covered with a fine mat painted green and yellow with landscapes, pleasing to the eye. On the opposite wall there was a painting of Sri Krishna seated in his chariot advising Arjuna. There was nothing nearby, not even a cat or a dog. But for the hissing and other sounds of cooking we would have felt quite lonely. After a while we were exalted to see Manju Devi coming with two cups of hot tea. "Please help yourselves; dinner is yet to be ready," she said and handed us over the cups. I was just going to give her hearty thanks as I missed my afternoon tea when I heard Pisemashay saying, "How kind of you Manju, you have brought just the thing I was thirsty for. I had to come a long way in the cold."

As I lifted the cup to sip, the outer door opened and Deepu entered with his mother followed by Smriti-di, Asit-da, Rekha, Rasu and two other girls. Pisemashay jumped up on his feet and greeted Asit-da, "Come, come, Asit. One of the two reasons I came was to ask you if you have received a letter from Saroj. Asit-da signalled him to sit down and dropped himself into the chair beside him. He said, "Yes, I have received a letter from Saroj. He will take some more time before he returns. Meanwhile he is trying his best to send one consignment of modern agricultural equipment."

Now Jethamashay asked, "Jamaibabu,¹ has the adjacent land-owner given any explanation for his illegal occupation of our land?" "No, he is evading it. The matter seems to be a bit complicated, legal steps may be necessary." Asit-da opined, "Before going to court it would be better, I think, to try to bring about a reconciliation." Thus the discussion went on for quite a long time and then Smriti-di came to announce that the dinner was ready. In the traditional way we sat on the floor of the kitchen to dine and Pisima served. The cooking was so superb that it was beyond any comment. Everybody went on eating without a word. Still at one time I could not but exclaim, "Oh, how delicious is the fish-curry with cauliflower! Pisima, from where have you collected such big-size kai-fishes?"² "Don't know, this is Deepu and Rasu's department. Three days earlier they procured the fishes and kept them in an earthen pot full of water."

Pisima's words brought to my memory an episode from Deepu's diary. As a

¹ Brother-in-law

² Kai-fish='walking-fish', Anabas

boy he wanted to tame two young turtles and he kept them in a bucket of water. With the thought something else flashed into my mind I asked, "Deepubabu, what about your world-tour and writing a new history of the world? You are not supposed to keep yourself confined within the limit of a small village like this." He cast a startled look at me and kept silent and contemplative and then after a while suddenly burst into laughter. "Ho, ho, ho." Never before had I seen him laughing so freely. Astonished, I looked at him with a frown. Had I said anything wrong? At the next moment he observed, "It's strange that you remember my diary even in such minute detail. I myself had forgotten, that is why I took some time to recollect. However, there is no need of writing history now. Rather we are on the threshold of creating history. Besides, we are not confined within the limits of a village. What you see here is an attempt to prepare a field and make room for giving expression to a very high and vast truth."

I understood very little of what he had said but my light-minded attitude gave place to a genuine query. I requested, "Deepubabu, please try to be a little more explicit. I could not follow what you said. He remained quiet and motionless and I doubted if he had listened to me. But then to my great relief he uttered slowly, "One who is the Lord of history, its upholder and dispenser and with the march of evolution whose anklets ring more and more clearly in the secret depth of human hearts, our aim is to make our life and living His conscious instrument so as to enhance the manifestation of his love, light, power and Truth."

Still his words conveyed no clear meaning to my mind. His sayings seemed to be of a God-seeker, saint or sadhu, something airy or heavenly, having no tangible contact with material growth and prosperity of the land. Then I thought, "Perhaps that is not also true. Had it been so, how could such a beautiful village like Mahanandapur have developed? It had not dropped ready-made from heaven but had been the result of collective effort and the work of people who had dedicated their lives for the cause..."

My soliloquy got intercepted by Asit-da's grave voice, "Dream and fact, imagination and reality are the two aspects of the same truth. One is complementary to the other." I was taken aback at first to hear the reply of my unuttered thought and then remembered that he was a thought-reader. He continued, "It is natural to consider the latent possibilities and unexpressed qualities of the Absolute as a fictitious dream with our unpurified life, limited mind, obscure ideas and vision. But this defect gradually gets rectified with the culture and development of true consciousness when life and vision become perfect and clear. Then we can perceive how dream and imagination materialise themselves into concrete reality." Awestruck, I gazed at Asit-da not knowing what to say. He went on, "But how does the true consciousness develop? How will the secret culmination come about? It will come by faith, aspiration, self-control, self-organisation, selfless work for the good of all, the enlightenment of

the obscure nature and descent of the divine truth, love, light and power from above. In short both the hemispheres should be given equal importance as one is incomplete without the other."

The thorough understanding of his exposition demanded a cool brain and quiet and acute thinking. The former I did not have at the moment; the latter, that is thinking, involved the risk of being understood by Asit-da, a thought-reader and there was a possibility of his giving another dose of lecture. But not to think, I mean, to control thought was impossible for me as I was not a yogi. In this precarious position Pisima came to my help. She asked, "What's the matter with you, why don't you eat?" "I can't take any more, I have taken more than enough with the tasty fish-curry." "Doesn't matter, at least take this porridge and tell me how it tastes." I took a little of that and found it alluringly tasty but I was helpless. I said, "Pisima, really it is high class but I can't take more, the fish-curry stands in the way."

After dinner we went to the sitting room and resumed our seats. And then discussion started once again about land and litigation but I wanted to be alone and relax, the chance for which seemed to be remote. But luckily Jethama eased the situation by asking, "Would anyone of you like to accompany me? I want to return for a bit of work at home." I accepted the offer at once before any one else could do so. I went out with Jethama under the open star-lit sky, and the calm, cold stillness soothed my brain and nerves. I remembered the tender affection I had received from Jethama in the morning. I deemed it an exceptional privilege to walk side by side with a lady of her stature who passed most of her life mysteriously.

The proximity of Jethama made me think of my own mother whom I had already lost and a childlike curiosity goaded me to ask, "Jethama, please tell me some interesting events of your early life." Evading it she said, "Try to listen to something, do you hear?" With attention I could hear the faint but sweet melody of a song coming from afar. "Yes, I can hear the sound of a song." "That is called Keertan, songs about the tales of Radha and Krishna sung by one of the master singers who has come only for this night and to listen to him I have come earlier." "Are you going there, then?" "No, in fact I am going to our house where the Keertan will be very clearly audible." "It seems you are fond of Keertan." "Oh yes, very much. During my childhood I used to sing Keertan myself and people would appreciate it also." After a light laughter she added, "You know, on the other hand my aim at revolver shooting was also very good, for which the party men praised and liked me very much."

Back home, I retired to the small room with Pisima's permission and she perhaps went to a place wherefrom Keertan could be heard most clearly. Even from my room I could hear the words, music and melody of the songs quite clearly. The deep, sweet and high-pitched voice of the master-singer (Sri K. C. Dey as I knew it from Jethama) impressed me a lot and I sat silently spellbound.

Suddenly it occurred to me that I had forgotten to ask permission from Jethamashay regarding my departure the next day. Then the happy and satisfied faces of Mr. Roy and Manju Devi appeared before my mind's eye. After coming here I had hardly any chance to talk with them separately and did not know if they had really decided to settle down here. But in fact they were temperamentally different from Pisima, Jethamashay, Asit-da, Deepubabu, Smriti-di and others who were born patriots and fully dedicated workers for Mother India whereas Mr. Roy and Manju Devi, like thousands of others, were brought up in comfort and luxury. Should I think that the latent fire in them suddenly got ablaze due to association and conducive surroundings.

Whatever it might be, I myself did not feel inclined to join hands with them for the work of the ideal village. Not that I did not want the good and prosperity of the country. But according to me the primary need of India was the total development, namely agricultural, industrial, scientific, technological and military but not simply piecemeal as was practised here. And that was how she could keep pace with the other developed and developing countries of the world. Suddenly I got conscious of the futility of these thoughts and did not want to disturb my sleep. So after sprinkling water on my face and neck I relaxed, lay down on my bed and closed my eyes.

After a while a tender luminous touch on my eyelids impelled me to open my eyes and I saw through the window the silvery rays of the rising moon. I also saw scattered fleecy clouds floating like sailing boats on the greyish-blue sky. The sight excited my imagination and a query cropped up, "What is the source of these clouds and what is their destination?" Immediately I visualised the vast, deep-blue sea with turbulent water which attracted by the warm love of the distant sun had undertaken its winged flight in the form of vapour aspiring to unite with its luminous lover. But in mid-way, overtaken and driven by the onslaught of angry wind, it dashed against high mountains. Then the frustrated lover melted itself away into streams of lamenting tears. Or else at the impact of deep sorrow solidified into snow and rested on a mountain top till the warm and anguished look of the beloved sun from above dissolved it into flowing fountains and rivers. Then it descended through rocks, valleys, forests and fields and touching the brink of important cities and ports, temples, mosques and forts and fertilising the land for green vegetation finally mingled itself again with its source, the limitless sea. This mysterious cycle of circumambulation had been going on from time immemorial, throughout the ages!

Symbolically the significance of water is life. And the cycle of life is also just like the water. So I asked myself for the first time, "Do you know in which sea you remained merged before birth and where you will go after death?" The question came but not the answer, in spite of my long groping within. Simply I knew this much that living beings pass through three stages, birth, life and death. But before birth or after death if any individual "I" exists or not I had no

idea and never before thought about it. I got the warning again, "Nonsense, what are all these things you are thinking about which are disturbing your sleep?" Whereupon I changed my side, tried to quieten my mind and then what happened I do not know

My sleep was broken by the sweet whistles of Doyel (Robin) from the tree nearby. I opened my eyes and did not know where I was. I marked that the floor was flooded with beams of light coming through the window. I sat up on my bed and grew aware of the surroundings Oh, I have slept so late in the morning! There was a commotion on the veranda of the kitchen; perhaps they were taking breakfast. I needed a cup of tea very badly and tiptoed towards the kitchen My inner being danced in ecstasy at what I saw there. I wondered how true Asit-da had been in his prediction Sitting majestically on the floor the great patriot Sri Kalishankar Roy was absorbed in telling something to Bose-da and Bela-di All others including Mr. Roy and Manju Devi gathered around.

Stealthily I moved ahead and stood behind Bose-da. Just as Jethamashay stopped for a respite I said, "Bose-da, is it you?" He jumped up on his feet and clasped me endearingly, "Yes, it is I, but where have you been so long?" "I am sorry, Bose-da, I was sleeping I am extremely lucky that you have come before I departed. I was preparing to leave today "

"It is my good luck also that I received your telegram on time. I was also preparing to go to the Pondicherry Ashram where I usually go once in five or six years. But before the Darshan of the supramental Yogi this time, I preferred to come here to have the Darshan of the legendary freedom-fighter and Karmayogi Sri Kalishankar Roy, his great sister and other associates.

(Concluded)

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

“IDEAL CHILD”, “IDEAL PARENT”, “IDEAL TEACHER”

From
C.D. Shah,
General Manager, Text Book Centre Ltd.,
Kijabe Street, P Box 47540, Nairobi, Kenya

To
Mr. Keshavji,
Sri Aurobindo Society,
PONDICHERRY - 605 002, INDIA.

2nd January 1990.

Dear Sir

We intend to reprint 5000 copies each of Ideal Child, Ideal Parent & Ideal Teacher here in Kenya and distribute them to the General Public in Kenya free of charge during 1990.

Please give us Authorisation to reprint. Please also send us 1 copy of Ideal Child and Ideal Parent

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,
C.D. Shah

From
Juan Ambrasio Sabio,
Agartado 1880,
Tegueigalpa, M.D.C.,
Honduras, C.A

To
Keshavji,
Sri Aurobindo Ashram, India.

28th November '89.

Dear Sir,

The object of this letter is to inform you that the 40 booklets of the “Ideal Child” in Spanish have helped me a lot in my class, ‘Education for health’ with the students of fourth grade (14 or 15 years old). I have seen in some of the students a change of behaviour in their relationship with their friends.

I thank you very much for this valuable moral training and spiritual education.

Your brother,
JUAN AMBRASIO SABIO

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 Desikan Narasimhan

HUMAN unity is a subject which has engaged the attention of social and political philosophers the world over through the ages. A complete and lasting solution to this colossal problem has however remained postponed *sine die*. Enlightened intellects have suggested several solutions but the problem itself has never been completely resolved. It is only with Sri Aurobindo that we come to the sanctum, the Shekinah of the problem. He has evolved a system which includes all possible viewpoints, yet exceeds them all in its synthetic vision. In this talk I shall try to explain, however cursorily, the solution Sri Aurobindo advances to solve this complex problem.

According to Sri Aurobindo, true and durable human unity can come about only if it has a spiritual foundation. This fact is borne out not only by stray, isolated passages from his writings which I shall quote here by way of example, but by entire chapters in his works devoted to this problem alone. The interested reader may pursue the slender thread I extend to him to have a fuller understanding of Sri Aurobindo's standpoint on this issue. In *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo says: "... to hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition; it is to ask for something unnatural and unreal, an impossible miracle."¹ A radical conversion of our present imperfect human nature into the higher spiritual nature is therefore what Sri Aurobindo enjoins us to effect. At this point it would not be remiss to reproduce a most illuminating message of the Mother given in reply to a question which concerns all of us today—how to make our world better? She says: "The world will be made a better place only in proportion as we make ourselves better. The Vedantic truth that the world is only a projection—a function—of our consciousness is as pragmatically true as it is spiritually true.... A yoga of self-purification is the condition precedent to a yoga of perfection."² (16.8.1967)

¹ Centenary Edition, Vol 19, p 1059

² *Words of the Mother, Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed), Vol 14, pp 297-98

Sri Aurobindo is a modern seer who raises and exalts an ancient anthem. The Vedic Rishis were the first to lay the epistemological foundation for a future human unity. Sri Aurobindo raised these early aspirations of the awakened soul of man to their high closing note. Let us see what light we can derive from the Vedas under the most trying conditions prevailing today in national and international spheres.

The Rigveda says in its last hymn:

सं गच्छध्वं स वदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम् ।
 देवा भागं यथा पूर्वं संजानाना उपासते ॥२॥
 समानो मन्त्रः मितिः समानी समानं मनः सह चित्तमेषाम् ।
 समानं मन्त्रमभि मन्त्रये वः समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि ॥३॥
 समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः ।
 समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥४॥¹

2. Join together, speak one word, let your minds arrive at one knowledge even as the ancient gods arriving at one knowledge partake each of his own portion.

3. Common Mantra have all these, a common gathering to union, one mind common to all, they are together in one knowledge; I pronounce for you a common Mantra, I do sacrifice for you with a common offering.

4. One and common be your aspiration, united your hearts, common to you be your mind,—so that close companionship may be yours.²

The theme of this hymn, as is evident from the translation, is one of mutual understanding and a perfect harmony and goodwill among the peoples of the world. A passage in Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* contains most of the elements that make up this hymn and may therefore be regarded as a free rendering and elaboration of the same. The passage I allude to and have read with a yet undiminished joy and fruitfulness runs in the following manner:

“Only by developing a mind which shall have knowledge of the mind of others as of itself, free from our mutual ignorance and misunderstanding, a will that feels and makes itself one with the will of others, an emotional heart that contains the emotions of others as its own, a life-force that senses the energies of others and accepts them for its own and seeks to fulfil them as its own, and a body that is not a wall of imprisonment and defence against the world, but all this under the law of a Light and Truth that shall transcend the aberrations and errors, the much sin and falsehood of our own and others' minds, wills, emotions, life-energies,—only so can the life of man spiritually and practically become one with

¹ 10 191 2-4

² Translation by Sri Aurobindo

that of his fellow-beings and the individual recover his own universal self.”¹

A great spiritual experience usually bodies itself forth in the language of poetry. Let us bathe awhile in the healing dew of Sri Aurobindo’s poetry where the same intellectual statement is mystically transformed. In a sonnet entitled “Life-Unity”, the visionary poet and seer in Sri Aurobindo reach out to embrace the whole of creation itself:

“I housed within my heart the life of things,
All hearts athrob in the world I felt as mine;
I shared the joy that in creation sings
And drank its sorrow like a poignant wine.”²

But there is a long preparatory intermediate stage to be gone through before we are ready to breathe the rare and pure air of these spiritual heights of universal oneness. What then are we required to do in the interregnum before arriving at the “miracled summits yet unwon”? We must address ourselves to this crucial question before proceeding any further.

All the crowded tablets of history bring one burning issue into sharp relief,—Nature’s endeavour to arrive at human unity. But man has so far thwarted all her attempts to achieve this by entering into a conflict with her process. Sri Aurobindo says most pointedly: “The artificiality of much in human life is the cause of its most deep-seated maladies; it is not faithful to itself or sincere with Nature and therefore it stumbles and suffers.”³ It is not a big leap therefore to suggest that it is man’s business to live according to Nature. In order to collaborate with her in her efforts in an effective manner it becomes manifestly clear that he must first understand her process.

Sri Aurobindo gives us peeps into the workings of Nature in a luminous passage in *The Ideal of Human Unity*. It cannot be more effectively stated than in his own words:

“Life exists by diversity; it insists that every group, every being shall be, even while one with all the rest in its universality, yet by some principle or ordered detail of variation unique. The over-centralisation which is the condition of a working uniformity, is not a healthy method of life. Order is indeed the law of life, but not an artificial regulation. The sound order is that which comes from within, as a result of a nature that has discovered itself and found its own law and the law of its relations with others. Therefore the truest order is that which is founded on the greatest possible liberty; for liberty is at once the condition of

¹ *The Life Divine* (Centenary Edition, Vol 19), p 216

² *Collected Poems* (Cent Ed, Vol 5), p 135

³ *The Ideal of Human Unity* (Cent Ed, Vol 15), p 491

vigorous variation and the condition of self-finding. Nature secures variation by division into groups and insists on liberty by the force of individuality in the members of the group. Therefore the unity of the human race to be entirely sound and in consonance with the deepest laws of life must be founded on free groupings, and the groupings must be the natural association of free individuals.”¹

The repercussions of this last sentence are far-reaching. I will mention briefly only one recent development in the context of the present world-situation which is of profound significance for world-unification. The stranglehold of Communism over Central and Eastern Europe is swiftly loosening today. This is clearly evident from the recent developments in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary and, last but not least, the cradle of Communism, Soviet Russia itself. As a result the world has moved closer even though at much cost of “bloodshed, suffering, cruelty, oppression and revolt”. This could have been avoided if Nature’s laws, which Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, had not been violated.

A brief resumé of the main points I have stated is contained in the following passage:

“... the ideal unification of mankind would be a system in which, as a first rule of common and harmonious life, the human peoples would be allowed to form their own groupings according to their natural divisions of locality, race, culture, economic convenience and not according to the more violent accidents of history or the egoistic will of powerful nations whose policy it must always be to compel the smaller or less timely organised to serve their interests as dependents or obey their commands as subjects.”²

The world at present is facing great trials and tribulations. Peace and unity seem to be the idle fantasies of a fevered brain. But let us not forget that

“All is not finished in the Unseen’s decree!
A mind beyond our mind demands our ken;
A life of unimagined harmony
Awaits, concealed, the grasp of unborn men.”³

To conclude, I would like to recite a verse from the *Garudapurana* which shows how the seers pray from the depths of their souls for an intimate friendship with all beings and creatures of the universe.

¹ *Ibid* pp 490-91

² *Ibid* , p 406

³ *Collected Poems* (Cent Ed , Vol 5), p 164

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद् दुःखमाप्नुयात् ॥

“May all become happy and free from diseases! May all experience and enjoy good and auspicious things! Let none undergo pain and suffering ”¹

I owe gratitude to all those from whom I have borrowed thoughts and ideas to compose this speech.

¹ Jagannatha Vedalankar, “The Vedas and World-Integration and Peace”, *Gavesanā*, 1989, p 50

ATOMISM THROUGH THE AGES

SEARCH FOR THE FUNDAMENTAL PARTICLES OF MATTER

(Continued from the issue of May 1990)

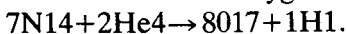
WITH Rutherford's alpha-scattering experiments, a clearer picture of the atom began to emerge by 1911. Rutherford bombarded a gold foil with alpha particles. While most of the alpha particles just went through the gold foil, some of them got a little deviated in their path; but some even bounced backward. Rutherford later recalled:

“It was quite the most incredible event that happened to me in my life... It was almost as incredible as if you fired a 15-inch shell at a piece of tissue paper and it came back and hit you. On consideration I saw that it was impossible to get anything of that order of magnitude unless you took a system in which the greater part of the mass of the atom was concentrated in a minute nucleus. It was then that I had the idea of an atom with a minute massive centre carrying a charge.”

This was the origin of the modern conception of the nuclear atom.

From his experiments Rutherford was able to calculate the size of the nucleus: 3×10^{-12} cm. The diameter of an atom is of the order of 10^{-8} cm, a hundred-thousand times larger than the nucleus.

Now the problem was to investigate the nature of the nucleus. The solution came in 1918, with Rutherford's artificial transmutation of atoms. Rutherford bombarded gaseous nitrogen with alpha particles and discovered that nitrogen gets transformed into oxygen.



The dream of the alchemists was fulfilled in its basic drift for the first time.

The appearance of hydrogen in this reaction convinced Rutherford that indeed it must be a constituent of all nuclei. The hydrogen nucleus was named proton.

With this the concepts of atomicity of matter and atomicity of charge got wedded together.

But it soon became clear that the nucleus could not be made of just protons. How are we to account for the difference between the atomic mass number (A) and the atomic charge (Z)? It was initially supposed that inside the nucleus there were A protons, and $(A-Z)$ electrons, electrons having practically zero mass. The problem was cleared with the discovery of the neutron, in 1932, by Chadwick. The nucleus is made up of Z protons and $(A-Z)$ neutrons.

The atom seemed now to be explained.

Yet not completely. For how were we to explain the stability of the nucleus? If the nucleus was made up of positively charged protons and neutral neutrons,

why did not the nucleus burst open due to the Coulomb force of repulsion between the protons?

In 1935 Yukawa worked out a theory for the nuclear force. He took as his starting point Dirac's successful theory of the electromagnetic force. In this theory the agent of the electromagnetic force is the photon. Yukawa said that there should be a particle that is the agent of the nuclear force too.

It is necessary that the nuclear force should be felt only at short distances, of the order of the size of the nucleus. Taking this fact into account, and the Uncertainty Principle, Yukawa estimated that this exchange particle, called the meson, had to be 270 times heavier than the electron.

12 years later, this particle—now called pion—was discovered in the cosmic ray studies; it is liberated when the high-energy cosmic rays bombard the earth's atmosphere.

The discovery of the pion and the study of cosmic-ray events opened up an entirely new realm of matter. While the antiparticles (positron, antiproton...), neutrinos and mesons were predicted before they were discovered, the latest discoveries—the K-mesons, the hyperons, the strange particles—were a complete surprise. These particles neither retained their permanence nor identity and, as Oppenheimer says, "they are elementary only in the sense that their properties cannot be understood by breaking them down into subcomponents."

With the proliferation of these particles many attempts at ordering them were made.

The earliest classification of elementary particles assigned them to three "weight classes", leptons, mesons and baryons. Admittedly crude, this scheme did have points to recommend it. For instance, all the leptons were immune to the strong force. Moreover, there was believed to be a conservation law—called the conservation of baryon number—which meant that the same number of baryons entered and exited any interaction, although the species of baryons might change. A further advantage was that all leptons have half spins, mesons integral spins and baryons half-integral spins. To explain certain aspects of elementary-particle behaviour, physicists introduced new quantum numbers for these particles.

One of the fruitful attempts at ordering the particle (baryons) behaviour was made in the Eightfold Way by Gell-Mann (1962). And the attempt led to the concept of quarks (1963), the fundamental units of baryons. Gell-Mann proposed that baryons are made up of 3 fundamental quarks. The quantum numbers of the quarks are.

Quark	1	13	S	Q	B	Y
A (u)	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	$\frac{2}{3}$	$\frac{1}{3}$	$\frac{1}{3}$
B (d)	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	$-\frac{1}{3}$	$\frac{1}{3}$	$\frac{1}{3}$
C (s)	0	0	-1	$-\frac{1}{3}$	$\frac{1}{3}$	$-\frac{2}{3}$

All the possible combinations with these 3 quarks give us the observed

baryons; for example, the combinations AAB (uud) gives the proton: the quantum numbers of the quarks, when added up algebraically, give the quantum numbers of the proton. Similarly all mesons are generated by the combination of a quark and an antiquark. In this way we can say that the fundamental constituents of matter are quarks and leptons.

The one thing that is revolutionary about the quarks is their fractional charge. All this while the electronic charge has been taken to be the unit of electricity. With the introduction of quarks, are we to suppose that electricity is not atomic in nature for we have now fractional electronic charges? But we might very well take the quark charge to be the fundamental unit, in which case the electron charge would become 3 units.

But why is this "fractional" charge never observed in nature? In other words, do quarks really exist? Do they really group together to make up protons and neutrons?

In 1968 physicists at Stanford, USA, turned up the evidence that the proton has a structure. In an experiment, similar to Rutherford's alpha-scattering, they shot high-energy electrons at a proton target and, by examining the results of the collision, came to the conclusion that there are point-like charged particles inside the proton. This is the first experimental evidence that the nucleon is not elementary, thereby indirectly supporting the quark-hypothesis. Quarks, however, gained credibility in 1974 with the discovery of a charmed particle.

It happened something like this. In the preceding few years, to explain certain observations, the existence of yet another quark charm (c) was postulated. While the combination of u, d, s gave all the known hadrons, the introduction of c should produce other types of hadrons udc, cc, etc. The charmed particle meson cc established this concept.

Why have quarks never been seen? How to explain their non-observance, their confinement?

To explain the quark confinement the string hypothesis was developed in 1970. It is supposed that hadrons are formed by flexible strings in rapid motion. At the ends of the strings are quarks which carry the quantum numbers of the hadrons while the string itself carries their energy and momentum. Quarks have never been observed as single entities because it would require infinite energy to stretch and snap the string.

The String Model, which in the beginning was proposed only to explain the quark-confinement, has become today the Theory of Everything (TOE). TOE assumes that the ultimate building blocks of nature are not point particles, but tiny vibrating strings. No one has ever come close to seeing these strings because they are far far too small (about 100 million million million times smaller than a proton).

The string hypothesis gets acceptability today because with it the unification of the four forces of nature becomes possible.

With this grand projected achievement of unification it is felt that the rock-bottom of Matter could be touched with it. The most fundamentally fundamental unit, the string, should become the building block for the physical universe.

But if we are to learn from experience, we shall pause before making such a categorical assertion. As we look back we see that just within a span of 100 years, 6 distinct levels of Matter have been proposed and modified: molecules, atoms, nuclei, hadrons, quarks, and strings. At each stage the feeling was that the end of the journey had been reached. But will it ever be reached?

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Higher Course 3rd year
Age 22 years