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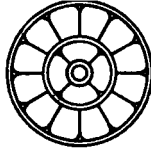
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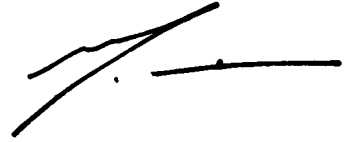
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

<i>The Mother</i>	
ON HERSELF	.. 629
A MESSAGE	... 630
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
CURRENT POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IDEAS	
A DICTATED LETTER	... 631
LIGHTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO	.. 632
INNER RELATION: A NOTE	... 632
<i>Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)</i>	
LIFE—POETRY—YOGA	
PERSONAL LETTERS	... 633
<i>Shyam Kumari</i>	
SILVER SOLITUDE (Poem)	.. 641
<i>Nirodbaran</i>	
THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE	
A DREAM-DIALOGUE	
(Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali)	.. 642
SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF "AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL"	
A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION	... 647
<i>R Y. Deshpande</i>	
HER LOVE (Poem)	... 650
<i>Huta</i>	
LABOUR OF LOVE	.. 651
<i>Nilima Das</i>	
SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA	.. 654
<i>Astrid</i>	
IDENTIFICATION WITH GRIEF (Poem)	.. 657

CONTENTS

<i>Dr P. Marudanayagam</i>	
MATTHEW ARNOLD AND ROMANTIC POETRY	658
<i>K. D. Sethna</i>	
HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA	
1. THE PRODIGAL POETIC PROMISE (A)	.. 663
<i>K. B. Sitaramayya</i>	
THE TANJORE DOLL (Poem)	. 668
<i>Chunulal Chowdhury</i>	
ASEEM'S LETTER	
A SHORT STORY	... 669
<i>Wilfried</i>	
NEW AGE NEWS	
ON WOMYN, WAITRONS AND PROFESSORINNEN	... 675
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE	
<i>Review by R. Y. Deshpande</i>	
FROM MAN HUMAN TO MAN DIVINE	
BY JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE	... 677
<i>Review by Dr S. Rajendran</i>	
BHAKTI SCHOOLS OF VEDANTA	
BY SWAMI TAPASYANANDA	.. 680

STUDENTS' SECTION

<i>Speech by Srijita Roy</i>	
THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION	
SEVENTIETH SEMINAR 21 APRIL 1991	
"WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA AND OTHER SPIRITUAL PATHS?"	. 682

THE MOTHER ON HERSELF

THERE are two things that should not be confused with each other, namely, what one is and what one does, what one is essentially and what one does in the outside world. They are very different. I know what I am. And what others think or say or whatever happens in the world, that truth remains unaffected, unaltered, a fact. It is real to itself and the world's denial or affirmation does not increase or diminish that reality. But being what I am, what I do actually is altogether a different question: that will depend upon the conditions and circumstances in which things are and in and through which I am to work. I know the truth I bring, but how much of it finds expression in the world depends upon the world itself. What I bring, the world must have the capacity and the will to accept: otherwise even if I bring with me the highest and the most imperative truth, it will be, absolutely as it were, non-existent for a consciousness that does not recognise or receive it: the being with that consciousness will not profit a jot by it.

You will say if the truth I bring is supreme and omnipotent, why does it not compel the world to accept it, why can it not break the world's resistance, force man to accept the good he refuses? But that is not the way in which the world was created nor the manner in which it moves and develops. The origin of creation is freedom: it is a free choice in the consciousness that has projected itself as the objective world. This freedom is the very character of its fundamental nature. If the world denies its supreme truth, its highest good, it does so in the delight of its free choice, and if it is to turn back and recognise that truth and that good, it must do so in the same delight of free choice. If the erring world was ordered to turn right and immediately did so, if things were done in a trice, through miracles, there would be then no point in creating a world. Creation means a play of growth: it is a journey, a movement in time and space through graded steps and stages. It is a movement away—away from its source—and a movement towards: that is the principle or plan on which it stands. In this plan there is no compulsion on any of the elements composing the world to forswear its natural movement, to obey a dictate from outside: such compulsion would break the rhythm of creation.

And yet there is a compulsion. It is the secret pressure of one's own nature that drives it forward through all vicissitudes back again to its original source. When it is said that the Divine Grace can and should do all, it means nothing more and nothing less than that: the Divine Grace only accelerates the process of return and recognition. But on the side of the journeying element, the soul, there must be awakened a conscious collaboration, an initial consent and a constantly renewed adhesion. It is this that brings out, at least helps to establish outside on the physical level, the force that is already and has always been at work within and on the subtler and higher levels. That is the pattern of the play,

the system of conditions under which the game is carried out. The Grace works and incarnates in and through a body of willing and conscious collaborators: these become themselves part and parcel of the Force that works.

The truth I bring will manifest itself and will be embodied upon earth, for, it is the earth's and world's inevitable destiny. The question of time is not relevant. In one respect the truth which I say will be made manifest is already fully manifest, is already realised and established: there is no question of time there. It is in a consciousness timeless or eternally present. There is a process, a play of translation between that timeless poise and the poise in time that we know here below. The measure of that hiatus is very relative, relative to the consciousness that measures, long or short according to the yardstick each one brings. But that is not the essence of the problem: the essence is that the truth is there active, in the process of *materialisation*, only one should have the eye to see it and the soul to greet it.

(Based on a talk of The Mother)

(Nolini Kanta Gupta, *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part VI)

A MESSAGE FROM THE MOTHER

HAVE no ambition,
above all pretend nothing,
but be at every moment
the utmost that you can be.

May 1, 1957

CURRENT POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IDEAS

A DICTATED LETTER BY SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO is in no way bound by the present world's institutions or current ideas whether in the political, social or economic field; it is not necessary for him either to approve or disapprove of them. He does not regard either capitalism or orthodox socialism as the right solution for the world's future; nor can he admit that the admission of private enterprise by itself makes the society capitalistic, a socialistic economy can very well admit some amount of controlled or subordinated private enterprise as an aid to its own working or a partial convenience without ceasing to be socialistic. Sri Aurobindo has his own views as to how the Congress economy is intended to be truly socialistic or whether that is only a cover, but he does not care to express his views on that point at present.

13-4-1949

LIGHTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

.. by reflection or instinct to get a clear insight into our position and by dexterity to make the most of it, that is the whole secret of politics.
politics.

*

To be clear in one's own mind, entirely true and plain with one's self and with others, wholly honest with the conditions and materials of one's labour, is a rare gift in our crooked, complex and faltering humanity. It is the spirit of the Aryan worker and a sure secret of vigorous success. For always Nature recognises a clear, honest and recognisable knock at her doors and gives the result with an answering scrupulosity and diligence.

(Essay on Dayananda)

*


Courage and love are the only indispensable virtues; even if all the others are eclipsed or fall asleep, these two will save the soul alive

INNER RELATION

A NOTE BY SRI AUROBINDO

AN INNER relation means that one feels the Mother's presence, is turned to her at all times, is aware of her force moving, guiding, helping, is full of love for her and always feels a great nearness whether one is physically near her or not. This relation takes up the mind, vital and inner physical till one feels one's mind close to the Mother's mind, one's vital in harmony with hers, one's very physical consciousness full of her.

24 4 1961



(S A B C L , Vol 25, p 173)

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

PERSONAL LETTERS

YOUR name was on my lips for a few days before your recent letter reached me. I said to myself: "I have told B to keep me in touch with her health. Somehow I feel a little concerned." I am indeed sorry that the dreaded backache has returned. Maybe, as you surmise, when it had gone, you exploited your good luck too much by taking up normal daily work at home. You have to be rather careful and not push yourself. I am sure the body will again respond to the Mother's grace. Don't think, as you may tend to do, that she wants the body to suffer in order that your soul may come nearer to her!

One can always use one's bodily ailments as an opportunity to intensify one's call to her. But surely she does not wish to repeat the old Christian asceticism which welcomed pain as the best *imitatio Christi* and therefore the quickest path to salvation. A welcome to suffering entered the Indian mind too during the last century—most probably owing to the influence of Christian missionaries. But it is no real part of Indian spirituality. You may ask: "Isn't there the term *tapasyā* meaning 'penance'?" I may assure you that this translation is a mistake and is most probably due to the Christian missionaries' influence.

"Penance" goes with a strong sense of "sin", especially the so-called "original sin" which is typically a Christian notion. According to St. Paul, God's sinless son Jesus came to suffer crucifixion as a sacrifice to cleanse men of the taint of the sin of disobedience which Adam had committed and which one who inherited its taint and went on sinning further had no power to wipe off. The Indian *tapasyā* derives from the root *tapa* which literally means "heat" and figuratively stands for a directed intensity of consciousness or a fiery concentration of energy. And Yogic aspirants of a certain type go in for severe bodily discomfort in order to prove the power of mind over matter, a masterful independence of the body by the soul. But normally *tapasya* does not call for aberrations like keeping one arm lifted for years or lying on a bed of nails.

Philosophically, the term should go back to what Sri Aurobindo has added to the old formula *sat-chit-ānanda*—existence, consciousness, bliss—describing the ultimate reality which is a threefold oneness. This formula may connote the Absolute as self-enclosed with no necessary bearing on the "relativities" of phenomenal experience. There need be no creative suggestion in it, so that phenomenal experience may even be conceived as having no basis in the ultimate reality and so may be considered "illusory". Sri Aurobindo's addition to the ancient formula is the word *tapas*. He speaks not simply of *chit* but of *chit-tapas*, "consciousness-force", suggesting "activity" and therefore "creativity" as inherent in "consciousness". Thus the creation of worlds by the Divine out of

Himself is a natural act and automatically confers reality—however phenomenal and secondary—on them. The Supreme is both Brahman and Ishwara, God no less than the Absolute.

And through this vision Sri Aurobindo goes even beyond the usual theistic concept. The God inherent in the Absolute, exercising his consciousness-force, implies a shaping power which organises a set of ideal forms, a multiplicity of interrelated truths constituting a divine cosmos, as it were, which is not only the supporting reality of our world but also a perfect original into whose image this world can be called upon to turn in the long evolutionary run. So the possibility of an all-round transformation is indicated by the very nature of ultimate things. This shaping power Sri Aurobindo designates *vijñāna* or supermind or truth-consciousness, a fourth term accompanying his new triple formula.

You speak of boring me with your backache. I am afraid I have bored you with a complex Absolute at the back of an aching universe. So I shall cut short my cackle about the Transcendent and the Cosmic. But I'll be inwardly busy with them and link them with my beloved friend's well-being—especially at the Samadhi. You have been more than repaying my heart's turn towards you by your most touching and undreamable sentence: "After the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's gracious names full of their Grace, I like to add your amiable 'Amal'." I understand why you bring in my name. You feel the divine help coming at the same time directly from your Gurus and indirectly through Amal's intense daily petition on your behalf. But I am sure you say my name some distance away from those two mighty mantric appellations. To the latter's enfolding greatness your heart must be moving vertically—to the former's loving littleness it must be getting linked horizontally. (12.7 1991)

*

You have written: "Would you resolve one problem of mine? There is this apparent contradiction between Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's words. Sri Aurobindo says, 'Reject the false notion that the divine Power will do and is bound to do everything for you at your demand...do even the surrender for you', while the Mother says, '...you have nothing to do, you have only to allow the Lord to do everything. And He does everything... It is so wonderful.' "

Even apparently there is no contradiction here. You have focused on the first part of the Mother's statement and not let the second part shed light on the first and have its effect. Allowing the Lord to do everything is an act expected from you: it is you who have to allow Him—activity and not passivity is demanded of you at the start. Later too, the activity has to go on in order to make you passively lie in His wonder-working hands. This amounts to Sri Aurobindo's reminder of "the false notion that the divine Power will... do even the surrender for you". What the Mother asks is a total whole-hearted putting of ourselves at the Lord's feet and receiving His grace and guidance rather than

following all the time the way of strenuous personal effort. But “the sunlit path” indicative of the inmost soul’s emergence and self-consecration is not reached at a bound and some labour of a daily gesture of love is required.

Your other question is about the significance, in spiritual terms, of a sadhak’s birthday. You ask: “Would it so happen that the decisive and path-breaking advance on the date, as suggested by the Mother, will take place inevitably or does it also depend on one’s aspiration and opening at that moment of the year?” The Mother has spoken of a creative rhythm repeating itself on one’s birthdays making one specially receptive and plastic on each such occasion and she has wished us to take advantage of this cyclic grace. Evidently one has to put oneself in the right frame of mind and be open to receive the gift waiting for one. I would like to add what I think the best way to avail oneself of the occasion’s boon. It is to regard every day as our birthday and aspire for God’s bounty, His gift to us of His own self, His leaning with all His love towards His child. Then the special rush of sweetness and light on the anniversary of our birth will be most easily received. Even if we are not able to recognise the special rush, we should not worry provided we have quietly prepared for it throughout the year. If there has been the preparation it is bound to take effect sooner or later. “Readiness is all.”

(12.7.1991)

*

I am indeed surprised to know from you the way I entered your life. It is highly significant that my entry should be connected with Sri Aurobindo’s book on the Gita and with your vision of him. You say that you read the book in the morning when you were in despair and in the evening you sat in an easy-chair under a tree of yellow flowers and suddenly our Master became visible, with the words: “We are with you. You are our Amal Kiran.” Your letter follows up this piece of information with: “I had never heard this name before or read any book of yours. I asked what Amal Kiran meant. Then the vision and voice stopped. Afterwards I got a list of books from SABDA and there was one book in a Gujarati translation. *Talks at Pondicherry* by Amal Kiran. Struck by that name I put an order for the book. In it there were talks also by Nirodbaran. When I read yours I felt ‘Amal Kiran was my brother in a past birth.’ I wondered what he would be in the present. This was at the end of 1983 or the beginning of 1984. Afterwards in 1986, by the grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, we got in touch with each other by means of letters and you accepted me as your little sister and student.”

The words you heard—“We are with you. You are our Amal Kiran”—are a bit of a puzzle. They can only be understood in a super-mystical sense. I interpret them thus: “The soul we have named ‘Amal Kiran’, meaning ‘The Clear Ray’, will be so mingled with your life that just as we consider and feel him to be ours, you will take him to be your own and thus get identified with him and we shall

take you as our child as if you were one with him. Soon you will realise this truth: we have already foreseen it. In showing you the shape of things to come, we are hinting to you our intimacy with your soul—an intimacy you will recognise when Amal Kiran appears in your life and you will know that having him as our child could be as though you were the same. The meaning of his name—the ideal to which he has been intended to rise in order best to unite with us, the ideal of combining a pervading clarity and a suffusing radiancy whereby there can be not only far-sight and in-sight but also a steady warmth and a quiet glow in the being with an intuition of the love and light of the Divine Presence everywhere—the many-aspected meaning of his name could be for you as it is for him a pointer and a guide to the goal, at once time-transcending and time-transforming, which we have attempted to make time-transparent through the labour and laughter of our 'Integral Yoga' "

You are right in seeing me as "absorbed" in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and as telling you to draw help at all times from them. I am absorbed not only to the exclusion of common mundane attractions, though I do not look down my nose at their play in the lives of people in general. I am absorbed also in the sense that I exclude even other spiritual influences from the world's past and present. Not that I fail to recognise their historical relevance or the gifts they bring today. I never do hot-gossiping on behalf of my Masters. When the opportunity arises for me to speak up I do so as fully and devotedly as I can and, if necessary, make comparisons with other paths of spiritual vision and practice. The comparisons are made not out of missionary zeal and with a one-track mind. I have sincerely studied what the great religions have to offer at their highest.

Judaism's fervent energetic self-dedication to its grandiose all-demanding God, Zoroastrianism's call for a purity of prayer like a fire rising up to an overarching truth-supporting Divinity and for a smiling service to one's fellow Truth-lovers in need, Christianity's ardour for a World-Saviour sent by a Deity of justice and mercy to a sinful mankind through a miraculous virgin birth and insisting on works of charity and on converting by all means possible the whole of mankind to faith in that one and only and exclusive Son of God, Mohamadanism's urge of forceful obedience to an all-commanding Master of the world who sharply distinguishes between the faithful and the unbeliever, Vaishnavism's sweep of passionate devotion towards a Lord of Love variously and endlessly at play in the cosmic movement, Tantricism's surge towards a World-Mother fighting earth's evils and towards a raising of all desires in her direction, Taoism's sense of a simple universal basis of being which can always rightly uphold and lead one along paths of peace, Buddhism's grand escape into infinite silence from the mind's "labyrinthine ways" and the wandering urgencies of the little heart, Vedanta's plunge into a boundless Self of selves ever free and serene in its eternity behind the march of the ages—all these turns of the searching human soul I have studied with sympathy. But I found them all

insufficient and some of them narrow in attitude when I stood in the presence of Sri Aurobindo and his gracious co-worker whom his disciples hailed as the Divine Mother incarnate.

Such intimate knowledge of the world-process, such illumined understanding of human nature, such evocation of the inmost soul to suffuse the commonest activity, such invocation of a supreme Light and Love from a transcendent Reality to awaken that Reality's own hidden counterpart in ignorant mind and stumbling life-energy and imperfect material existence, such depth and dynamism of spirituality and occult science as I discovered to be quietly put in action by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother from their poise in what they designated "Supermind" I had never come across anywhere. No wonder I am "absorbed" in these two personalities who struck me as having brought forth some most ancient secret which the Rishis of the prehistoric Rigveda seemed to have caught glimmers of and which took account of a most modern insight like the vision of an evolutionary earth and which considered as its natural milieu the complex field of progressive life today looking for a fulfilment of terrestrial values rather than a withdrawal from them.

Only two figures from the long train of past sages, saints, yogis, prophets, avatars are in my view most affined to the Aurobindonian Era of the Integral Yoga. One is Sri Krishna of the magic flute capturing the whole world's heart as well as Sri Krishna of the wide-visioned Gita in the war-chariot at Kurukshetra—Sri Krishna who revealed himself to Sri Aurobindo in the Alipore Jail and later secretly commanded him to leave British-ruled Calcutta first for French-ruled Chandernagore and then for Pondicherry. The other figure is Sri Ramakrishna of our own time with his manifold sadhana having a tremendous central motive-force in what Sri Aurobindo has called the psychic being, the soul in the inmost heart, and stressed as the greatest mover in his own Yoga—Sri Ramakrishna who after his death appeared to Sri Aurobindo on three occasions in connection with Yogic workings and whose chief mouth-piece Swami Vivekananda paid a visionary visit, day after day for a fortnight, to Sri Aurobindo in the Alipore Jail pointing beyond the mental consciousness towards the "overhead" planes whose culmination is the earth-fulfilling Supermind realised and rendered operative for the first time by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Apropos of the Aurobindonian Supermind it is quite interesting to me that you in your simple-hearted admiration of me should have written: "My dear brother's thoughts are like those of great sages—like Plato's thinkings." How did Plato of all "sages" swim into your ken? From my boyhood I have had a strong affinity with ancient Greece. Even in my school-days I delved with intense joy into the Socratic dialogues of Plato—the shorter ones: *Crito*, *Phaedo*, *Apologia* and the *Symposium*. In the B.A. of Bombay University I had the pleasure of taking Philosophy Honours with Plato's *Republic* for special study. When I came

to the Ashram, the Mother once told me that in a past life I had been an ancient Athenian. Later Sri Aurobindo, in reference to his general "impressions" about my past lives mentioned the time of the European Renaissance and the period in England called the Restoration. He took care to say these were only impressions, not intuitions. But he affirmed that there was not the slightest doubt about my having lived in ancient Athens. Somehow I never was curious as to who exactly I had been in that wonderful centre of the intellect's search for truth and beauty and goodness, the theme of Pindar's celebrated lines:

O shining white and famed in song and violet-wreathed,
Fortress of Hellas, glorious Athens, city of God!

Whoever I may have been, I feel it in my bones that I had very much to do with the Platonic circle around Socrates. I have heard from Nolani that Sri Aurobindo was Socrates. It should, therefore, be no surprise that I would imaginatively be so much at home in that circle. What is of special relevance in relation to your likening my thoughts to Plato's thinkings is that the foundation of Plato's metaphysics which was laid, according to him, by Socrates is an intuition that links up with Sri Aurobindo's spiritual vision of what we may term First and Last Things.

Sri Aurobindo's First Things in relation to the cosmos are the Supermind's perfect originals of the mind-vitality-body complex which has evolved as the human unit in the course of time. His Last Things are to be here amongst us: a mind which possesses truth instead of questing for it, a life-force which is a master-builder charged with inexhaustible vigour rather than a dreaming desire which strains after its goals and trips up again and again on the way, a physical organism completely harmonious, shapely, secure in place of one seeking health and beauty and longevity but with a flesh which is, as Shakespeare's Hamlet saw, heir to a thousand ills and doomed finally to degenerate and die. In manifestation the Last Things can be as the First because "evolution" is only the gradual outbreak of a Supermind buried in utter "involution" at an opposite pole to the Supermind in full flower in a luminous transcendence. A divine pressure mysteriously from above and a divine push secretly from below are the history of our world. The Socratic Plato glimpsed a realm of divine models or "archimages" beyond this world and perceived at the base of the cosmos an undifferentiated flux of being which is almost like non-being. Upon this flux a creative Power which he named the Demiurge (the Divine Workman) imposes reflections of the ideal forms that are above and he turns the lower chaos into an orderly universe. But as the forms themselves are never present below in their pristine power either by descent or by a hidden "involution" in the chaotic flux, there can be no future of perfection for travailing earth—only splendid yet evanescent spurts of God's light, like ancient Athens.

However, the intuition of a perfect world above throwing a shining shadow of itself below is a triumph of philosophical thought which Plato alone has achieved in some anticipation of Sri Aurobindo's vision.

Am I taxing your mind too much? Forgive me for being carried away by my enthusiasm at your breathing the name of Plato. Indeed the very word "enthusiasm" has a Platonic air and should be appropriate in this context. I remember Sri Aurobindo writing: "What we mean by inspiration is that the impetus to poetic creation and utterance comes to us from a superconscient source above the ordinary mentality... That is the possession by the divine *enthousiasmos* of which Plato has spoken." Literally the term means: "entry by a God."

The poetic *enthousiasmos* blows often through Plato's prose. He was an artist in language and not only a fashioner of philosophy. There is the saying: "If Zeus were to speak in the language of mortals, it would be in the Greek of Plato." How particular he was for the right order of vocables and the sovereign rhythm of their combination may be judged from the fact that he wrote twenty-five versions of the first sentence of his *Republic* before he struck the note that satisfied him. I am also a stickler after the correct expository or revelatory form in my writings. (13.7.1991)

*

The quotations you have given me from Shankara under the general caption "Dangerous Wealth"¹ are not devoid of sense, but properly considered they are not against money as such but against the "crazy pursuit of wealth, earning it, hoarding it or spending it" and against the "keenness of ego-glorification" and "the greed of misers". They also have the ideal of sannyasa (renunciation) in mind and, after saying that "one cannot hope to achieve liberation through wealth", assert: "The truly great souls...take recourse to solitude far from the madding crowd after renouncing their unwanted wealth". For those who do not or cannot follow the ideal of sannyasa Shankara says: "When one is without wealth, one is able to lead a carefree and peaceful life: one, rid of (unnecessary) wealth, is most respected in all company. He need not fear robbers, the wicked or the rulers (revenue-collecting agents). He can lead a happy life under any circumstances, whereas the wealthy are ever agitated and are constantly afraid of their own children and, therefore, suffer from chronic anxieties." Surely, these words are not a plea for poverty or non-possession of money? The poor may not fear robbers, the wicked or the rulers but they have other anxieties: for example, how to get sufficient food for themselves and their families or have sufficient and comfortable space for living? Here is a life not at all happy because of lack of money. What Shankara opposes is "the mad pursuit of wealth" and he rightly warns: "Surprisingly, even virtuous persons get addicted to the pursuit of wealth

¹ *The Indian Express*, Madras, May 19, 1991

and prosperity, thereby losing their power of discrimination of what is good and bad.”

As I have remarked, Shankara's ideas are not without sense and they certainly do not advocate poverty for those who have no call to sannyasa. An adequate amount of money is implied to be a good thing. Of course, even here it is implied that one should not be attached to whatever one has. I find the expression “inner harmony” in one of the quotations. It is a good starting-point for considering the attitude of our Gurus—Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—to the problem of money in general and of wealth in particular.

Their stress primarily is on the inner condition. There has to be peace and poise in the being and this peace and poise must cover all items of one's being and one's life. That means no lopsidedness, no contradiction between one part and another: in short, harmony has to prevail. Inner harmony naturally involves a balanced outlook. In the case of money-matters there would be no stress on extremes but at the same time the inner balance would see even the point of extremes and, if necessary, accept them. In other words, a wide equanimity which keeps a calm equal attitude to everything and on the basis of it appreciates with a free mind and heart the plus and minus of all occasions.

As regards money-making in general, Sri Aurobindo has said that it is not wrong to do business honestly and, by gaining reasonable profit, to reach a fairly flourishing state. Referring to himself, he says that he could well conceive of himself as receiving an *ādes̄h*, a divine command, to do business and if such an *ādes̄h* had come he would have gone in for business. Business as such has nothing contradictory to the Divine's purpose in the world. There is nothing intrinsically unspiritual in being in a flourishing condition or even becoming wealthy, provided honesty is not sacrificed.

Refusing to believe, as Shankara did, that in the ultimate vision the world is an illusion or a delusion, neither Sri Aurobindo nor the Mother accepts “the refusal of the ascetic” to grant material life a final goal, just as they do not accept “the denial of the materialist” to accord a reality to a “soul” or “spirit” exceeding material life and serving as its very basis and as the reason of its existence. Since money is an important force at work in the field of the spirit's manifestation and of the soul's evolutionary expression, our Gurus do not turn their faces away from it or look down their noses at it. They put an emphasis on the right means of making money as well as on the right perception in using it. To those who take fully to the Integral Yoga, their advice is to dedicate to its cause the money earned. But here also there are no cut-and-dried rules. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother judge each set of circumstances according to their insight into its truth and they make and break rules in the light of this insight. They have allowed and even approved various types of financial relationships between themselves and their followers, but they have always insisted on an inner self-consecration and the correct working out of whatever relationship has been

established—a working out in which the remembrance of them is never absent and in which one always feels that they are looking at us. The money is essentially theirs: we are only its trustees

As a broad guide-line for their disciples there cannot be a better quotation than the following from Sri Aurobindo: “The ideal sadhaka in this kind is one who if required to live poorly can so live and no sense of want will affect him or interfere with the full inner play of the divine consciousness, and if he is required to live richly, can so live and never for a moment fall into desire or attachment to his wealth or to the things that he uses or servitude to self-indulgence or a weak bondage to the habits that the possession of riches creates.”

On my own, keeping in view the background of all that has been said so far, I may sum up with an epigram: “There is nothing fundamentally wrong in possessing wealth, but it is a fall from grace if one is possessed by wealth.”

(19 5.1991)

AMAL KIRAN (K.D. SETHNA)

SILVER SOLITUDE

WHEN soft is the sheen of light
 And mystic the moods of night,
 When quietly whisper the winds
 And slowly sails the silent moon
 On the sable seas of the sky,
 And mute are the murmurs of life—
 In such a sacred solitude,
 An invisible current of bliss
 Suffuses the inner heart of things,
 And breaks the bound of mortal mind.

SHYAM KUMARI

THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(Continued from the issue of September 1991)

ONE of the children struck a slightly plaintive note:

“But you never told us that most frightful of your prison stories ”

“Which one?”

“The killing of Naren Gosain.”

“But that has nothing to do with my life story!”

“But didn't you know that they were planning to kill him? It was done for your sake, it seems.”

“The boys did not tell me all their plans. In fact, Barin was their leader, but even he had not been told of this one, for fear he might try to stop it ”

“But to have shot a young man in such cold blood!”

“Well, it may not have been a very pleasant incident, but do you think there was any other option? If he had not been killed, he would have revealed everything to the authorities, many would have been punished, some even hanged, perhaps myself included. Instead, now only two of them accepted to be hanged. You know, in such things one can't be sentimental. Once you take part in a battle, you've got to be ready to kill or be killed. And in that case, isn't the former alternative better than the latter? But if you begin to feel sorry for your opponent, then war-games are not for you. Yes, there are people who have condemned the murder and said that two bright young people have given their lives to save one man. There have been many examples in history where people have died for the sake of their beloved leader. I hope, however, you are not followers of Gandhi and Buddha and supporters of non-violence. Because, in order to uphold rightfully the ideals of non-violence, you ought to acquire first a power like the Buddha's. As for the fellow who sought to betray us, I knew him quite well. He even tried to flatter and cheat me—weak, cowardly, utterly spineless fool that he was, although, of course, believing himself to be extremely clever! Actually we all saw through him and knew him for what he was—a traitor and a spy, but he never realised that.”

“But the other two, Kanai and Satyen—they were so splendidly fearless, mounting up the steps of the scaffold with a smile!”

“Oh they, they were made of a different stuff!”

“Was the Judge a friend of yours who set you free because he knew you well?”

(Laughing) “He wasn't exactly a friend. It's just that we used to study together. We even sat for the I.C.S. examination together. I believe I was acquitted because of lack of evidence against me.”

“But everybody knew you to be the real *ringleader!*”

“That is not enough. In a court of law, one needs to substantiate statements with proof. They gathered a few hundred witnesses against me, a huge amount of material as evidence, they made the trial stretch over a whole year—something unheard of at the time, in India certainly, perhaps also everywhere else in the world. Both the Government prosecutor and the police tried their utmost to establish that I was the ringleader, as you say, and that I should be sentenced. But what can human intelligence and talent avail against the Divine's Intention? He had already decided upon my acquittal, Beechcroft merely passed the order for it.”

“Chittaranjan Das displayed a brilliant and remarkable mastery over the law, did he not?”

“Absolutely. And the Lord made him His instrument. Anyone with the least vision and perception could see a spiritual Power at work behind him. Of course that did not mean that he did not have to apply himself. On the contrary, he worked night and day at the case, after having given up all other commitments. He plunged into the study of innumerable books of law, pondering and studying situations and solutions.”

“Then how can one say that it was the Divine who won the case?”

(*Laughing*) “I see you have an extraordinary notion about the Divine and His Power! According to you, all one needs to do is to stretch out at ease in one's armchair and the Lord will drop the fruits of success right into one's mouth, isn't that so? (*Laughter*) Well, the Divine doesn't usually go in for such dramatic miracles, although those who obtain unexpectedly wonderful results, far beyond the scope of their efforts, often realise that nothing but the Grace could have brought them such success. The true worker knows to what extent he himself is the author of his success and what help another Power has given him.”

“That last speech C.R. Das made was magnificent. It was prophetic too, since everything he said then has come true, in every least detail.”

Sri Aurobindo smiled, a gentle sweet smile.

“Is it true that he came here for your Darshan?”

“Yes, he did. But his health was completely broken by then, after long years of prison which he underwent for the sake of the country. After Tilak, he was the only man who had the ability to lead the country to freedom. However, to come back to our story. After one year in jail, I found myself free, acquitted on all counts, a freedom achieved with the help of C.R. Das aided also by the Divine Grace.”

That was the end of one meeting. At the next, Sri Aurobindo, looking smilingly around the room, asked, “And what are we going to talk about today?”

“About the way your political career came to an end.”

“Oh, it ended in a dramatically quick manner. I was obliged to leave

Calcutta as suddenly as I had come there. I had barely ten minutes to spare, and so there was no question of letting anyone know. I think I have told you that the *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma*, the two papers I was editing, were very widely circulated, particularly the *Karmayogin*, so much so that the subscription rate for the paper was reduced by half in order that more people might be able to read it. I am not sure whether it was this great popularity of my papers or of my speeches or even of my person that began to annoy the government. They seemed to feel that my mind, or at least my pen, had to be silenced for them to be able to govern in peace. It was obviously intolerable for them that I would, with my fiery words, be able to destroy the order and superficial tranquillity imposed by their dictatorial ways. They were upset especially since the reaction of a renewed violence was again becoming evident. According to the police, I was the friend, philosopher and guide of these young revolutionaries. In fact, though I was found innocent at the end of my long trial, the police always believed me to be guilty. I was not at all as good-natured as I appeared, this was the firm belief of everybody from the officials in London's India Office down to the Police Commissioner in Calcutta. They were waiting for the right opportunity to remove this thorn from the political flesh, and all that I said or did or wrote was constantly scrutinised. But they could not find any legal justification for removing me, and even the British Government dare not take action without cause!

“However that may be, the Government then brought a new set of reforms that seemed to give us much more freedom and many more rights—a move that was meant to pacify us. And it did. At least the Moderates seemed very satisfied and many of them even began to side with the Government. I wrote articles, sharply criticising those reforms. I described them for what they were—deceitful traps. Obviously, such writing could not please our masters. At that point, Sister Nivedita informed me that they were proposing to send me out of Bengal, a form of political exile, and suggested that I leave Bengal immediately. I asked her not to be unduly troubled on my account since I had plans of my own which would force them either to alter or at least to postpone their intention of deporting me.”

“Were you in touch with Sister Nivedita?”

“You seem to have forgotten all that I have told you about her! She and I worked together for the country and its revolutionary activities, for articles in the newspapers and so on. On the other hand, she was on friendly terms with many of the Government officials. That is how she was often the first to learn about the plans of the police. When I came out of prison, she was the first to honour me with a beautiful reception which she and the students of her school arranged for me.”

“What did you do when she sent you her message?”

“I wrote an ‘Open Letter to My Countrymen’ which was published in our

paper, where I set down very clearly what our aims and methods were. I also mentioned that the methods would not go against the law. I wrote many more things which I don't suppose you will understand. Sister Nivedita had the satisfaction of knowing that the Government dropped its plans regarding me, at least temporarily, and I continued with my work. At first our Nationalist Party sought to arrive at some agreement with the Moderates, but failed. In the meantime a young man shot and killed a high official of the Police, Shamsul Huda, and the raids and arrests started again. Word reached me of fresh moves to deport me. I published in my paper a new set of articles which proclaimed that I had no hand in the recent killings, that I did not even approve of them, but that so long as the Government carried on with its repression such acts of violence would obviously continue. This too worked, for a while there was a stop to repression. Then, one evening, about eight o'clock, as I was sitting in our *Karmayogin* office with a few of our boys, busy doing some automatic writing, there entered a young man, in a state of extreme anxiety. Hurriedly he told me that a warrant for my arrest had been passed, that a relative of his who worked in the Police Department had told him so. I kept quiet for a while, then I said, "I shall go to Chandernagore."

"Why Chandernagore?"

"Because that was what I was asked to do, that was the 'adesh'."

"'Adesh'?"

"Your questions are like those Dr. Manilal used to ask! Haven't I told you that ever since my meeting with Lele, all my decisions were made for me by God? I received all my advice and indications, whenever they were needed, from above, and I obeyed them implicitly. They were really commands, so absolutely powerful in their nature that they were not to be denied. Later, when I left Chandernagore for Pondicherry, that too was a command."

"Why don't we receive commands?"

"Why do you need them? Isn't it enough for you to eat and sleep and play and study? And there is no question of your leaving Pondicherry! (*Laughter*) Whereas I left the *Karmayogin* office and within ten minutes found myself on the banks of the Ganges. A couple of boys came with me, one of them led me down to the river bank through dark lanes and bylanes in order to avoid the attention of the police, the other walked a few metres behind us. Quickly we reached the bank and hired a boat. The three of us sailed down the river all through the night and very early in the morning; before day had really broken, we reached Chandernagore. One of the members of our Party lived in that town, someone who had also been to jail with me. I informed him of my arrival and asked him if I could put up at his place. Instead of giving me shelter, he sent me a sarcastic reply, asking me to go to France."

"Why did he do that?"

"Out of fear."

“Was it expected that he should help you?”

“Yes, because all the members of our secret party had made a vow to help one another in times of trouble ”

“So what happened then?”

“I was sitting quietly in the boat with the absolute certitude that some way would be found. It was God’s will and His Will is always done A little while afterwards came a gentleman, who having heard of my predicament took me to his own house. I did not know him, had never met him, though he was a revolutionary. But he had read my writings and heard me speak at various meetings. He welcomed me without hesitation into his home on condition that no one else, no second individual, should learn about my staying there. My companions left me in his care and returned to Calcutta I asked them to request Nivedita on my behalf to take up the charge of editing the *Karmayogin*. Except for her and two or three of my boys, no one knew about my whereabouts ”

“How did the police fail to find out about you, in spite of keeping such a close watch over your movements?”

“Never forget that there is a Force greater than that of any Police or Government It is the Divine’s He whom God protects, no man can touch When the ‘adesh’, the command, was given, all the arrangements for fulfilling it were made. Haven’t you read in the Gita how Sri Krishna says, ‘Surrender yourself to me and my Grace will protect you from all harm’?”

“I stayed in my secret hideout in Chandernagore for a month Then there came again another command, ‘Go to Pondicherry’ So, with the same secrecy, I came to this far-off place The police found it out only after I had arrived here. This is how my political life in Calcutta came to an end ”

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

(Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali)

SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of September 1991)

BEFORE I continue my story, I would like to recount a few more recent experiences.

As I mentioned before, my Thakur Krishna had promised me that he would never leave me. One day as though to honour this assurance, he suddenly appeared to me holding his right hand outstretched in a gesture of peace and protection. But instead of setting my mind at rest, the visitation made me all the more worried and apprehensive that some calamity must surely be imminent.

A few days later in the early morning, I went down from my room as usual to fetch water from the tank when I slipped into it and got completely drenched. Fortunately nothing more serious happened, and I understood the meaning of my Thakur's outstretched hand. The question arises why he could not have prevented the accident altogether. But all I can say is that His ways are often mysterious and beyond our understanding. It is also possible that I was fated to have a worse accident and He rendered it harmless.

On another occasion, all at once I saw the Samadhī effulgent. This filled me with great joy, and I recalled how often Sri Aurobindo had answered my many questions there. Without a doubt the Samadhī is fully alive. Indeed I believe that the Mother said while she was still in her body that she could not leave the Ashram even for a day since the Samadhī was there.

Then again there was the time I sat down for my dinner, and found the lights dimming. I thought a power failure was in the offing. Not wanting to get caught in the darkness, I started to hurry through my meal. While thinking that lighting a lantern was more a bother than it was worth, I distinctly heard the words, *আন্তে, আন্তে* —“slowly, slowly.” How exceedingly sweet the voice was! “Don't hurry. The light will take some time to go. Be at ease.” And that is exactly how it happened. But the love embodied in the voice was unforgettable—no human voice could ever approach it. I had heard it only once before so full of tenderness. That was when I had completely run out of money. There was not a pie in the house, and I was desperately worried. Then the same voice came to me saying, “I'm here!”

In this way, I know Sri Aurobindo is protecting me all the while, but I don't know why, and He has never told me. He only asked, “If I am helping you, as you say, will you give me something in return?”

“Yes,” I answered without hesitation.

“Then give me your আমি—your ‘I’,” he replied, even though He knew full well that this was impossible for me, and I had no answer for him but silence

Now let us return to the unpleasant story of my life. I have described how my husband had been unfaithful to me but had continued to live with me in my mother’s house without our maintaining any marital relations. At the same time, our neighbours, having discovered his disloyalty, started criticising the fact that he still lived with us. Even my mother began pressurising me to cut all my bonds with him. But I was so afraid of losing the custody of my son in case of separation that I was prepared to tolerate not only the anomalous situation but my husband’s occasional rudeness and taking other advantages as well.

To avoid his presence and find some relief from my mental agony, I left Calcutta with my mother and my son, for Kalimpong. We stayed there about six months and I wanted to prolong the stay, but people assured us that we would not be able to bear the coming winter, being entirely unaccustomed to the snowbound state of the mountains. So we were obliged to return to Calcutta. But as the same situation still prevailed there, I suggested to my mother that we leave immediately for Pondicherry. In this, I was motivated by a strong inner pull, which was unfortunately dampened to some extent by a feeling I had harboured for a long time that Sri Aurobindo was kind to me only because of my uncle, and that otherwise I was nothing to Him.

In any case, my mother told my uncle, who was in Calcutta at the time, of our intention to visit the Ashram, whereupon he not only endorsed the plan but offered his house for our accommodation. We then wired the Ashram for permission to come and, upon receiving a prompt reply in the affirmative, we set out for Pondicherry. When we arrived at the Pondy station, we discovered that, surprise of surprises, Nolini-da was waiting there for us with a car. He told us that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had sent him with the vehicle and that we could indeed stay in my uncle’s house. This gesture served to confirm me in my belief that we were receiving special attention only because of my uncle.

During that November of 1949, my uncle returned for Darshan, and on that day escorted our entire family, including my child, to the Ashram. Darshan by that time had been reduced to the devotees and sadhaks standing before the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for a brief minute—nothing more. But as my turn came, Sri Aurobindo fixed me with his penetrating gaze. I felt overwhelmed, almost suffocated, and cried out to him that I couldn’t bear it. At once he lowered his eyes, and I was left to marvel at the dynamic power in his look.

The next day, Sri Aurobindo sent Nirod-da to me to ask how my son had been born with such a fair complexion when my own was darkish. The question took all of us by surprise, particularly my uncle, for he could not accept that Sri Aurobindo could take notice of such trivial details during Darshan. I could only

answer that I did not know. No one in his father's family was so fair, and though my own mother was fair enough, it could not explain my son's complexion which was like a European's

The following day, Nirod-da returned with the same question, Sri Aurobindo insisting that I knew the reason. I began to reflect. Then all of a sudden I remembered that during the child's gestation, I had prayed fervently for a son and that he should have a fair complexion. Sri Aurobindo had granted that prayer. Now my uncle was more astonished than ever to hear that Sri Aurobindo had taken interest in such trifles. Further, Sri Aurobindo used to ask through Nirod-da if the child could talk and hear properly I answered that he could, but Sri Aurobindo said that I did not know. He said so because he knew somehow that my husband's family was hard of hearing. Then he advised me to approach Sahana to teach the child how to speak. His legs were also somewhat bow-shaped.

We stayed in Pondicherry till the next Darshan in February which turned out to be my last, for Sri Aurobindo passed away the following December. No wonder I had felt such a strong pull to come to the Ashram.

Meanwhile my uncle found another occasion to feel put out. The first incident was in November. The Mother had asked me to take part in a dance performance during the 1st December celebrations. I was to dance with Anu Ben, she taking the part of Radha and I that of Krishna. When my uncle heard of it he strongly disapproved and wanted the roles to be switched so that I would dance Radha. But the Mother emphatically stuck to her choice because I was taller than Anu, and the roles could not logically be reversed. The Mother took it upon Herself to teach me the various movements and would come to my uncle's house for the purpose.

The Mother continued to follow my progress closely. For example, during a rehearsal in the Playground, she made the following correction. As Anu and I were dancing, I kept holding my hands together in front of my chest—an involuntary gesture of which I was not aware. In my childhood, it seems, I was used to sleeping with my hands folded upon my chest. After the rehearsal, the Mother called me aside and told me to stop this movement. The more I tried to shield myself, the more the attention of the audience would be drawn to that part of my body, she explained. At the same time she assured me that she would advise those in charge to costume me gorgeously so that I would have no reason to feel self-conscious.

The day after the performance, I went to see the Mother. She met me on the stairs and expressed her happiness and satisfaction with my dancing by drawing me close and embracing me.

The saddest part was that my uncle refused to see the show. It was the first time I had performed without him there, and when I remarked upon it, he did not reply

In February, we had to shift from his house to a certain Bhaskar Lodge in the town. There my son contracted measles and the Mother sent strict instructions that we must not enter the Ashram under any circumstances. After a week or so, my uncle asked the Mother if I could come to see Her after taking the proper hygienic precautions. She granted the permission, but when he asked if my mother could come too, She refused emphatically. This ruffled my uncle who could not accept such a distinction with equanimity.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

HER LOVE

THERE IS NO infinity
 Wider than her love.
 Even if you touch the edge of the bluemost
 Or turn inward the eye's sight,
 You cannot reach the bounds
 Where her gold fires burn.
 The overflowing sun
 Is her splendour's dream;
 The deep currents of the sea
 Are the calm passions
 Of her measureless force.
 When the mountains cataract
 Or the sky is full of sounds,
 It is the rush of her delight;
 Of the southern wind's gust
 Or the luxury of the stream,
 Her sweetness is the source.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

LABOUR OF LOVE

by

HUTA

(Continued from the issue of September 1991)

YEARS flew by on rapid wings, and now it was 1958 before me. I was unaware of my future: it was vague, uncertain.

I felt unwell. There was too much stress and strain owing to overwork. I lost weight at an alarming rate. The ivory complexion darkened—the long luxuriant silky brown hair started falling

My agony was inexpressible.

I continued my work. During that period I was mostly doing the pictures on tinted papers. As always, the Mother saw me in the evening in her playground room. Her eyes wore a far-off look—on her mouth was a soft smile when she assured:

“You will be inspired to do a nice picture. I too will draw a picture in my apartment. Then tomorrow evening we shall compare our sketches.”

I agreed, trying to empty my mind of all nonsensical notions and stupid speculations. But I did not really know what kind of inspiration I would receive in order to draw a sketch up to the Mother's expectation.

At night in the silent house I sat at my table in Golconde and sketched a picture—a half-open lotus bud emerging from deep water. In the heart of the lotus there was a face with a flame of aspiration. From dark clouds the Sun of Truth shone. The Truth responded to the aspirant soul.

The following morning the Mother sent me a card dated 22-1-58 and these words

“To my dear little child Huta,
With eternal love and compassion.”

How much, but how much, she loved me! She had not missed my faults, nor underrated them, but her eternal love encompassed both vices and virtues, was impregnable and lasting. That is why she was and is the Divine.

The Mother and I met in the evening. She asked me to show my picture. I looked at her sketch which illustrated an eye surrounded by clouds. Underneath it she inscribed:

“The eye of the Divine Consciousness shines like an eternal diamond in the depths of the inconscient.”

She was pleased with the similarity of our drawings and nodded repeatedly with full approval.

I believe, one of her experiments about the link between two consciousnesses—the Divine and the human—was a preparation for expressing the epic poem—*Savitri*—through painting. At that time I had absolutely no idea of the Mother’s plan.

Sri Aurobindo has stated quite aptly:

“All was the working of an ancient plan,
A way prepared by an unerring Guide.”

*

Now it was February—the same pattern of life continued except that in the evening I was with the Mother. She nourished my soul in various ways and disclosed the new things of higher worlds.

During this time she saw several visions of my true self and asked me to portray them on tinted papers. She never missed an opportunity herself to draw, which she loved to do.

Despite the unceasing strife between the outer and the inner being, my soul nestled in the Mother’s arms and witnessed the psychological struggle. It peeped time and again through the mist of obscurity. The tiny flame of my love for the Mother was unextinguished. One of her letters dated 22-7-56 is appropriate:

“..Indeed I am quite convinced that sincere love will overcome all obstacles, difficulties and deficiencies, that is why I am sure of the final victory, because I know *you love me* and *I love you*.

With my blessings.”

*

On 8th February, in the evening the Mother and I met. She looked at me for a few seconds and plunged into deep meditation. I could not care less, did not respond, did not concentrate. My vagrant thoughts rambled on. She was serenely peaceful, unruffled, untouched.

The Mother opened her eyes and said with great regret:

“Just now I saw in my vision beautiful luminous beings from above

bringing precious gifts for you. They wished to enter your whole being with these boons. But unhappily, you were completely shut up and denied them. So they went back where they had come from.”

There were no tears in my eyes—only solid, unutterable despair.

The Mother looked at me and smiled—a sad smile. I failed to collaborate, to receive, to assimilate. I was sick—very sick in my heart, mind and body.

She leaned from her couch, patted my cheeks and affirmed:

“The luminous beings will return one day and enter your whole being.”

I cannot help thinking of these lines in *Savitri* Bk.3, C.4:

“I saw the Omnipotent’s flaming pioneers
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
Forerunners of a divine multitude
Out of the paths of the morning star they came
Into the little room of mortal life....”

(To be continued)

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SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of September 1991)

SRI AUROBINDO's literary activities fall under four heads during the Baroda period: (1) Translations, (2) Narrative poetry, (3) Dramatic poetry, (4) Other poetry

Sri Aurobindo's poetic genius flowed spontaneously at an extraordinarily tender age in an alien land. There are a few unusual circumstances. A Bengali brought up both in India and in England till his twentieth year in ignorance of his mother-tongue, became a classical scholar and wrote verses in Greek and Latin and English in his Cambridge days. "Born in India but educated from his early boyhood in England and speaking the English language as if it were his mother-tongue, he was at the age of nineteen an unmistakable poet."

In the span of nearly fourteen years in England (1879-1892), the most formative in his cultural make-up and intellectual equipment, he read with great fondness and keen interest English poetry, literature and fiction and, as he himself says, "spent much time too in writing poetry."

His returning to India opened a way to keep contact with the Indian people and Indian culture. It seemed that Sri Aurobindo's hidden spring of literary activity burst forth and the flow of verse—whether translation or original creation—continued uninterruptedly year after year, even in his political career and sometimes indeed in the midst of his yogic experiences during the latest part of the Baroda period.

It is regrettable that some of his literary work during that period could not be preserved. Nirodbaran reports: "In May 1908, when Sri Aurobindo was arrested in connection with the Alipore Bomb case, his papers and manuscripts were seized by the police. They were scrutinised to dig up evidence to convict him for revolutionary activities. Afterwards they were stored away in the Record Room of the Court. Under the rules, they should have been destroyed after the lapse of some years. But, thanks to the sensibility and initiative of the record-keeper, the papers—although shown as destroyed—were preserved in a corner. Later, they were kept in a steel cupboard in the Judges' Retiring Room. Then, in the changed circumstances after Independence, the papers were found and a good many of the manuscripts belonging to the Baroda period were discovered. But unfortunately, not all—for some disappeared 'in the whirlpool and turmoil of my political career' as Sri Aurobindo once described it."¹

During the Baroda period he plunged into Sanskrit studies. He translated a large quantity of Bengali and Sanskrit poetry and also wrote numerous original poems and plays, some incomplete and others in fragmentary form. He was interested in the poetic genius of Kalidasa and translated in blank verse Kalidasa's *Vikramorvasie*, a fine rendering which was published under the title

The Hero and the Nymph. Though it was written in Barodā, it was not published till 1911. But the manuscript of his translation of *Meghadūta* in terza rima could not be preserved Nirodbaran reports: "I remember that once when we were talking of the subject there was a tinge of regret in Sri Aurobindo's voice at the mention of this manuscript. 'It is a pity that the translation cannot be found,' he said, 'for it was well done.' This makes the loss all the greater, for he seldom spoke of his own achievements."² He had been also inclined to translate some mediaeval lyrics of Vidyapati and Chandidas.

Sri Aurobindo translated parts of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. He took much interest in the *Ramayana*, but he was more fascinated by the *Mahabharata*. When Ramesh Chandra Dutt, a famous novelist, poet and historian, saw some of Sri Aurobindo's translations of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, he was astonished and remarked: "Had I seen them before, I would never have published mine. It now appears that my translations have been child's play before yours."³

Much of Sri Aurobindo's unpublished material during the early phases of the Baroda period has been sorted out and edited and given to the world posthumously. Sri Aurobindo did not adopt any orthodox and rigid principles for his translations. Once he wrote to Dilip Kumar Roy: "A translator is not necessarily bound to the exact word and letter of the original he chooses; he can make his own poem out of it, if he likes, and that is what is very often done."⁴ Dr. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar has observed: "But it should be equally clear that, if 'literalness' should not mean dullness, flatness or deadness (turning life into death and poetic power into poverty and flatness), equally 'freedom' should not mean a sheerly tangential escape into regions altogether new. A literary (literary not literal) translation is no students' crib, but neither should it involve a Bottom-like transmogrification! Good translations like Dryden's Virgil and Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam are equally poems by virtue of their finish and their essential fidelity to their originals."⁵ Sri Aurobindo gives a genuine pointer to the method of translation in the following excerpts:

"There are two ways of rendering a poem from one language into another—one is to keep strictly to the manner and turn of the original, the other to take its spirit, sense and imagery and reproduce them freely so as to suit the new language....

"The proper rule about literalness in translation...is that one should keep as close as possible to the original provided the result does not read like a translation but like an original poem in Bengali, and, as far as possible, as if it were the original poem originally written in Bengali."⁶

"I do not think it is the ideas that make the distinction between European and Indian tongues—it is the turn of the language.... Naturally, one should not

* Cf. George Sampson remarks "Dryden's Virgil is literally Dryden's Virgil. Its readers were already familiar with Virgil's Virgil, and wanted to know how a great English poet would treat that familiar story."

go too far away from the original and say something quite different in substance but, subject to this limitation, any necessary freedom is quite admissible.”

“I think it is quite legitimate to translate poetic prose into poetry; I have done it myself when I translated *The Hero and the Nymph* on the ground that the beauty of Kalidasa’s prose is best rendered by poetry in English, or at least that I found myself best able to render it in that way ”⁷

Sri Aurobindo once said that he was first a poet, then all the rest. He commenced writing poetry when he was in England, he got inspiration from his brother Manmohan. On reading a poem of Sri Aurobindo, his brother’s poet friend Lawrence Binyon told him: “You have so much talent, why don’t you write more often?” Dinendra Kumar Roy stated: “Aurobindo used to compose poems every morning. After his bath, around ten, he would read aloud whatever he had composed since the morning.”⁸

Throughout his long career, amid all the many-faceted achievements, he never abandoned his first love: poetry. He has given us lyrical, narrative, dramatic, epic poetry, which, in volume and in variety, in quantity and quality can be compared with the work of the greatest writers who have enriched the poetical literature of the world. But he is not a widely known poet, partly because his aim was not success and personal fame, but to express the spiritual truth and experience in all kinds of poetry. He tried to use the English tongue for the highest spiritual expression.

He realised that the English language has flexibility and adaptability. No other modern language than English can give full expression to mysticism and spirituality. In writing poetry he constantly perceived the potentiality of further developments than in the past for the embodiment of the spiritual truth proper to the New Age. There cannot be any doubt about the worth of his poetry, which in its outbursts of spiritual inspiration and vision achieved the utterance of the Mantra. We can safely say that he had been first and foremost a poet and then a politician and later became a Yogi.

Songs to Myrtilla, published in 1895 at Baroda for ‘Private Circulation’*, his first book of verse, contains poems written mostly between his 18th and 20th years (1890-1892). These youthful poems, mainly secular, bear the impress of his mind in those formative years and reveal at times a classical restraint and sense of structure. Here, as may be expected, it is Sri Aurobindo’s sensitive adolescence expressing itself. These are poems of love and beauty, outbursts of joy and despair.

To quote K.D. Sethna, “who can deny either music and imaginative subtlety to Sri Aurobindo when in his *Songs to Myrtilla* written largely in his late teens under the influence of a close contact with the Greek Muse, he gives us

* The 1st Edition was printed for private circulation only and contained a Latin quotation from Virgil with the inscription “To my brother Manmohan Ghose these poems are dedicated ” In the 2nd Edition the title was altered as ‘Songs to Myrtilla’ from ‘Songs to Myrtilla and other poems’

piece after finely-wrought piece of natural magic?"

During his early Baroda period he wrote *Urvashi* and *Love and Death* and many short poems in quick succession.

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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- 2 *Ibid* , p 29
- 3 *Ibid* , p 24
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- 5 *Sri Aurobindo*, by K R Srinivasa Iyengar, p 67
- 6 *S A B C L* Vol No 9, pp 431-432
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- 8 *Sri Aurobindayana* by Nirodbaran p 35
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IDENTIFICATION WITH GRIEF

THIS station, this abode of Godhead!
 Here
 is built
 the beautiful world of a tyranny!
 God is bearer, the Inner Lord.

Who is All-Lover,
 replacing pain?
 —Power and Guide, our Lord,
 —the one true aimless Being.

All our grievings now: movements for God.

We are seeking,
 preparing
 one day,
 His Force meeting, still, translucent,
 full of a light and deep exceeding happiness.

to stand with Him face to face,
 to see the undiminished mystery!

ASTRID

MATTHEW ARNOLD AND ROMANTIC POETRY

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S puzzling attitude to Romantic poetry has much to do with his complex mind and temperament. At least during his undergraduate days at Oxford, he was a merry young man, and his dandyism could be seen in his mannerisms, in his zeal for dress and fishing, in his proudly flowing mane of hair, 'guiltless of English scissors' (Clough), in his side burns, in his half-cynical conversation and in his taste for European actresses. But at the same time, the son of Dr. Arnold the great disciplinarian possessed an inner austerity. As Trilling observes, the superficial Byronism had an indirect, psychological connection with the maturing poet within. As a young poet, he could chafe "against the self-discipline which, however essential for an ordered life, exacted a high price" (Bush).

In his early poems, the ideal of a life of disciplined reason encounters the ideal of youthful, spontaneous feeling. Many of his poems, written when he was in his twenties, reveal a conflict between Romanticism and Classicism, between Dionysus and Apollo. His essays on the theory of poetry, especially his prefaces to the 1853 poems and "Merope", are assertions of classical principles. He emphasises, in these essays, the importance of the choice of a subject and reveals his Goethean concern with the structure of a whole and condemns the contemporary concern with unintegrated parts and incidental beauties. When it comes to practical criticism, his own basic Romanticism is revealed in his rejection of Dryden and Pope. In his poems, he is at his best when he is most romantic. No satisfactory answer can, therefore, be given to the question—was he a Classicist or a Romantic? E. K. Brown asserts that he was a Romantic. Ludwig Lewisohn maintains that he was not a Romantic. George H. Ford argues that he was 'something of a Romantic' who was extremely wary of the dangers of Romanticism. Perhaps "he might be called an individual mixture of 18th century rationality, Romantic idealism and Victorian scepticism" (Bush). He was very much like his master Goethe, who, though an upholder of classical principles, exhibited Romantic tendencies in his creative works. This explains Arnold's ambiguous attitude to the individual Romantic poets.

In "The Function of Criticism", he says, "the English Poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of creative force, did not know enough. This makes Byron so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, Wordsworth even, profound as he is, yet so wanting in completeness and variety. There was too much a great movement of feeling not...of mind." In the essay on Heinrich Heine, he observes, "The gravest of them, Wordsworth, retired... into a monastery. I mean he plunged himself into the inward life, he voluntarily cut himself off from the modern spirit. Coleridge took to opium. Scott became the historiographer-royal of feudalism. Keats passionately gave himself up to a sensuous genius, to his faculty of interpreting nature, and he died of con-

sumption at 25—their works have this defect—they do not belong to that which is the main current of the literature of modern epochs, they do not apply modern ideas to life; they constitute, therefore, minor currents.”

As these statements make clear, he found a deficiency of substance in the productions of the Romantic writers, disliked the Romantic looseness of structure and excess of imagery, considered the Romantic dissatisfaction with life “a sterile mood”, and made much of their defective knowledge of books and life, their subordination of thought to feeling and of the universe to the self. In his view, the thought and culture of Romantic England centred in the revolutionary ideal of men like Godwin and Hazlitt with whom he was not very much impressed. On the whole, he thought that the Romantic Movement, for all its splendour, was a failure. At the same time, while going through his essays on the individual Romantic poets, any reader will be aware of the presence of an undercurrent of sympathy.

In his various references to Wordsworth, we see Arnold admiring, criticizing, imitating and rebelling against the senior Romantic Poet. In his “Memorial Verses”, he points out that ‘Time’ may restore us in its course Goethe’s sage mind and Byron’s force but not Wordsworth’s healing power. Others may teach us to dare but they won’t be able to make us feel. In his essay on Wordsworth, he declares that Wordsworth’s achievement is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton “. . . undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time”. But if he should have a wide appeal, a proper selection of his poems is to be made. Pointing out that his best work is in his shorter pieces, Arnold admits only three short extracts from *The Prelude*. He asserts that we cannot do Wordsworth justice until we dismiss his formal philosophy as it is set forth in *The Excursion*. “His poetry is the reality, his philosophy—so far at least, as it may put on the form and habit of a ‘Scientific System of thought’ and the more that it puts them on—is the illusion.” He admires “Laodamia” and “Intimations of Immortality”. Yet he finds some artificial elements in “Laodamia” and some declamatory trends in “Intimations of Immortality.” To him, the best of Wordsworth is in such poems as “Michael”, “The Fountain” and “The Solitary Reaper”. In his criticism of Wordsworth, two points are to be noted: his rejection of Wordsworth’s philosophy and his criticism of Wordsworth’s style.

In his essay on “Celtic Literature” and in “A Guide to English Literature”, he calls Wordsworth a poet of natural magic. But in the Byron essay, the value of Wordsworth’s moral interpretation is given a leading place. His judgement is that Wordsworth was not a master of style, particularly in blank verse and this makes him reject *The Excursion* and *The Prelude* as failures. The truth is that Arnold is wrong with regard to both Wordsworth’s mystical poems and his style. After Milton, it was certainly Wordsworth alone who exploited fully the richness and flexibility of blank verse. Arnold committed a graver mistake when he ignored the so-called philosophical poems of Wordsworth. As Bradley rightly

points out, by this process he was eliminating the poems that are essentially Wordsworthian.

In his over-enthusiasm to make Wordsworth more popular, he represents his poetry as much more simple and unambitious than it really is. His selection indicates that he loves the pastoral, serene Wordsworth above the speculative and mystical "He does not quite recognize the intellectual subtlety and profundity of Wordsworth's poetry" (René Wellek). Coleridge considered him a great philosophical poet, but in Arnold's selections we come across a lyric poet with a considerable range of expression, a vigorous and powerful sonneteer and "a sometimes great narrative poet." Arnold chose 16 sonnets from "Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty" to indicate that Wordsworth was a patriotic sonneteer like Milton. He selects "Resolution and Independence" as a poem illustrating Wordsworth's special power. But when he says that Wordsworth's expression in this poem is 'bald as the bare mountain tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur', it is clear that he has not understood the real merit of the poem.

His editing of the poems is rightly considered unsound. He frequently ignores Wordsworth's own late revisions, and sometimes goes to the extent of manufacturing a text of his own by putting together readings from various editions. Gottfried cites the example of "Laodamia." It is a collection of readings from three early texts (1815, 20, 27). The later revisions (of 1836 and 1845) are ignored. "And the poem as printed by Arnold was never seen by Wordsworth."

On the whole, in his analysis of Wordsworth's style, he fails to explain its special quality and its peculiar defects. He refuses to be guided by Coleridge's examination of Wordsworth's poetry.

When he was young, Arnold had a sneaking admiration for Byron. It was at Oxford that he shifted his allegiance from Byron to Goethe. Actual echoes of Byron's poetry are very rare in the works of Arnold. He considered Byron an important figure, if not a great poet. In his letter of 1864, he writes, "I do not think Tennyson a great and powerful spirit in any line—as Goethe was in the line of modern thought, Wordsworth in that of contemplation, Byron even in that of passion." In another context, he says, "But Byron, it may be said, was eminent only by his genius, only by his inborn force and fire, he had not the intellectual equipment of a supreme modern poet; except for his genius he was an ordinary nineteenth century English gentleman, with little culture and no ideas." In his essay on Byron, he adopts Swinburne's earlier praise of "the splendid and imperishable excellence which covers all his offences and outweighs all his defects: the excellence of sincerity and strength." The impact of Byron's melancholy is mentioned in "Memorial Verses" and the "Grande Chartreuse":

What helps it now, that Byron bore,
 With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,
 Through Europe to the Aeolian shore
 The pageant of his bleeding heart?
 That thousands counted every groan,
 And Europe made his woe her own?
 ("Grande Chartreuse")

It becomes clear that Arnold places Byron high in the review of the Romantic poets only because of his role in the fight for the liberation of humanity and not because of his artistic merit. To Arnold *Childe Harold* and *Manfred* rank far above *Don Juan* and *The Vision of Judgement* which are now considered Byron's greatest achievements. To Arnold, Satire is not genuine poetry. The essential Byron for him is the poet of moody passion and rebellious energy. In the anthology consisting of 265 pages, we get only 40 pages of Satiric poetry. *Manfred* is reproduced almost completely. But there are only 8 stanzas of *The Vision of Judgement*. He chooses only the safe, familiar and popular passages from the long poems. Only 69 stanzas are chosen from the complex poem *Don Juan*. The Byron anthology did not please either Byron's detractors or Byron's admirers. The anti-Byron group was annoyed by Arnold's placing him above Keats, Shelley and Coleridge whereas the pro-Byron group criticized him for elevating Wordsworth above Byron. The selections do not adequately represent the outstanding qualities of Byron.

One of the main points of the Byron essay is that he was unable "to see the way the world is going". Arnold observes, "Both Byron and Goethe had a great productive power, but Goethe's was nourished by a great critical effort providing the true materials for it, and Byron's was not. Goethe knew life and the world, the poet's necessary subjects, much more comprehensively and thoroughly than Byron."

Arnold also mentions some of the defects of Byron's style. There is no detailed stylistic analysis or practical criticism; he resorts to the notorious 'touchstone method'. The critic quotes a couple of passages from *Cain* and remarks, "One has only to repeat to oneself a line from *Paradise Lost* in order to feel the difference." Then he adds, "Byron is so negligent in his poetical style, he is often, to say the truth, so slovenly, slipshod, and infelicitous, he is so little haunted by the true artist's fine passion for the correct use and consummate management of words, that he may be described as having for this artistic gift the insensibility of a barbarian."

Then he quotes five passages of "limping rhythm, painful diction, and barbarous grammar and syntax," and for contrast a line of Shakespeare and two lines from Milton.

Mentioning the defects of Byron the man, he contends that Byron's

vulgarity and affectation ought to be mentioned because they are related to his faults of vulgarity and crudity as an artist and to his defective critical judgement, as in his dictum that Pope is a Greek temple, and in other criticisms of the like nature.

In the 19th Century, the better side of Byron's personality was stressed by critics such as Taine and Ruskin while others saw only the worse side. But in Arnold's criticism, there is the simultaneous recognition of both sides. Arnold's judgement is that Byron is a splendid and unique personality, the greatest talent of the century lacking both in self-knowledge and in thinking power generally.

Lionel Trilling raises the question: why is it that Arnold, who holds Keats and Shelley so severely accountable for their sexual lives, appears to be nearly indifferent to Byron's? He himself suggests an answer: His leniency toward Byron may be due to the fact that Byron did not theorize about love like Shelley nor allow it to 'enervate' him like Keats. Perhaps, there is another reason also Arnold the moralist would have been satisfied with Byron's poetry which, though vulgar and brutal at times, is never sensual.

(To be continued)

DR P MARUDANAYAGAM

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

1. THE PRODIGAL POETIC PROMISE (A)

THE Irish mystic and poet, AE, has written.

The gay romance of song
Unto the spirit's life doth not belong.

And it is true that AE utters the core of himself best in chaste simple whispers. But the spiritual feeling caught in the series of great little books published by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya in his early days is like a jet of rainbow-flame. Sometimes the colours fuse into a white light, but usually they sparkle and quiver and trace in the veil between the outward and the inward a variegated rift, so to speak, through which may be poured with an ever-largening impetus the luxuries of the Eternal. No poet writing in English in our day has given such a prodigal promise to convey the Spirit's authentic thrill as Chattopadhyaya.

I had the good fortune to have my perusal of his works prefaced by a personal impression of him at the height of his career as a young man. It was in 1926, when he was 39 years of age, at one of the weekly soirées organised by an energetic Begum ambitious of having gifted artists appear under her auspices to a cosmopolitan circle. Every Sunday she made a new lion. I happened to be caught in the trap of her enthusiasm, just a fortnight before Chattopadhyaya was launched upon us as the most Numidian of all the lions she had rejoiced in. I must confess that my own poetry at that time was hardly even an articulate mew; all that was leonine about me was perhaps the sweep of my mane. My poetry, nevertheless, was applauded; and when on his Sunday Chattopadhyaya appeared, a well-meaning mutual friend intimated to him that a rising poet was in the audience. But there seemed at first no chance for him to meet that "poet"—so great was the pressure on his versatile genius to pack itself within the couple of hours during which he was to be on the stage. And I must say he was a volcano compared to the crackle of burning twigs that had been the talent displayed hitherto in that circle. I looked and listened and lost myself; for, as that resonant, richly flexible, deep-vowelling tone filled the ear and that expressive fiery-gestured figure crossed the eye, I felt a strange beauty run through my veins and beat upon the intellect's reserve and judgement, until the whole being awoke to the perception of some elemental force blowing through Chattopadhyaya's personality as through a flute of the most profound tremolo possible.

He recited his poems, sang his songs, acted snatches from his plays; uplifted, bewitched, impassioned his audience; and when the whole gorgeous hubbub was over, and the flashing eyes and floating hair became more recognisably a fellow

human being instead of a mouthpiece of incalculable magic, I found myself beckoned to view them at close quarters. The words spoken to me were very kind, though a trifle patronising, I could see at once a genuine love for poetry wherever it might come from, but before we could slip into the technical intimacies in which all writers of verse delight, there was a call on him to please the other artists who had gathered in his honour. So I retired, with a resolve to buy his complete works at the earliest opportunity and try him out in cold print away from his voice and gesture which I felt could pass off what might be thin pseudo-Sufism as fumes of the unmix'd Wine. When I did go through his books I noticed certain flaws which had been missed during the recital but which I had managed dimly to suspect by recollection in tranquillity on my way home. These were that his mind, very subtle and plastic though it was with an astonishing power of various profusion, did not sufficiently exercise a power of massive or concentrated control; and that his imagination lived in a state of dazzling speed capable of being magically creative but lacking somewhat in that self-understanding which broods and chisels and sifts patiently when the creative furor slackens. Deficiencies like these, if accompanied by a flow of inspiration whose tumultuousness can make them like weeds upon a mighty wave, may be negligible and on the whole nugatory; they may seem even inevitable as a price for that unique phenomenon—a poet possessed; for they can be the outcome of that peculiar and rare type of genius which can produce so much and so richly that there is neither the time nor the necessity to refashion and perfect what has been already done. In short, instead of correcting a slightly flawed poem, a poet may spend the same time writing half a dozen new ones, at least three of which may be born as miraculous as Aphrodite fresh from the foam. But Chattopadhyaya's verse did not give me the impression that he had reached such a height of lavish excellence: he had to his credit many brief masterpieces, but as often as not he betrayed a danger of letting his poems get finished without the substance attaining the true imaginative crystallisation, and there was also a danger of the vocabulary becoming more decorative than passionate. Hence the defects could not be excused; still, I had the firm intuition that the whole drift of his genius was towards the beautiful prolificity that covers up all peccadilloes; for I could not help marking that his fluency was exceptional though not quite marvellous and that not a single poem of his, even among those that were flawed, failed to exhibit in however partial a form qualities of the first order and through three-quarters of it a really valuable inspiration. It was this abnormal fact that confirmed my experience, during the recital, of contact with a poetic surge deep and original beyond measure.

Before looking at some of the short miracles by which Chattopadhyaya has given a secure longevity to his verse I must record a minor aesthetic irritation. For one thing, he makes an excessive use of certain hackneyed rhymes, though there also he is in the company of the Masters, for Crashaw in the most exalted

flare of his religious aspiration couples "fire" with "desire" twice, with less than a dozen lines in between and only the plural to make a variation, while Swinburne who had the ingenuity to overcome the supposed unrhymableness of "babe" by producing that neglected poetic gem "astrolabe" could yet allow his inventive power to suffer complete paralysis whenever "fire" gleamed at him from the end of a line: like a penny in the slot it invariably drew out the stale delight of "desire" The same fault is to be laid at the door of AE, forbidding us to read him at a stretch, "crystal purities" though many of his poems are Chattopadhyaya mixes this "fire-desire" cult with a side-worship of the "God-clod" twins, the former cheapening in a total survey the technical impression on a critic and the latter bringing in sometimes an almost bathetic turn.

Another tendency which jars on one when it is aimless or distorts itself in what may be called, in Max-Nordauese, "echolalia"—a tendency capable of a fine haunting or else epigrammatic effect but not seldom an easy result of negligence and an instrument of perverse ingenuity or rhetorical barrenness. Shakespeare is notorious for his pun-mania and in his comic scenes one may excuse him provided he is neat and does not torture the language too much; but nobody can help jibbing at the immortal Will's becoming so unrhymically wilful as to write "your eye I eyed" Chattopadhyaya, who with myself is in private life a victim to Shakespeare's disease, keeps punning out of his poetry, still, even an innocent line like

And be the being I was meant to be

does not make charming homophony, nor does his later and most magnificent poetic phase gain by the sudden cropping up of a lesson in grammar such as

Began before Beginning was begun.

Far from having powerful or profound reverberations the phrase jolts against the tympanum as nothing except a thought-saving blatancy. All this is rather by the way, for it would be perverse to insinuate that the genuine worth of his poetry is spoilt on the whole by occasional blots And what that worth is can be conveyed only by superlatives

It may not be out of place in appreciating Chattopadhyaya to defend him against a probable charge of being exotic and therefore overstrained or meretricious Exoticism need not always be an artificial hot-house product; when it blossoms directly from an imaginative thrill, there is a sovereign excess about it which carries a high artistic potency of suggestion. The Song of Solomon is exotic in its poignant richness of word and vision, the Book of Job is exotic in the figurative revel of its grandiose argument; Spenser and Keats are exotic when they diffuse their heavily-charged sensuousness. What is essential is that con-

fusion should be avoided and some clear outline cling to the warm colour-riot both *en masse* and in the details, just as tropical efflorescence comes to the eye not only with a clean-cut fiery impact in general but also with a vivid distinctness of colourful particulars. Wherever in Chattopadhyaya at his best a tropical brightness is perceived, the hues compose unmistakable pictures crowding towards a total significance, though I dare say those who are used to a less warm and fertile atmosphere of mind may take time to adjust their perspective.

The difficulty is perhaps enhanced by the peculiar source of this poet's opulent ardour; for that source is the ancient mystic insight which feels a supreme Oneness behind and within the universe, an unfamiliar light consciously playing through the pageant of sky, passion of sea, prodigality of earth, and transmuting even the dull dross of shadow and ugliness to a hint or symbol round which the divine joy can irradiate. Once, however, a sympathetic insight is opened, the reader moves with ease among the spiritually sensuous intensities expressed by Chattopadhyaya and realises how grievous the loss might be if he were to find no entrance to the heart of this God-drunk music. There is an early poem which very well represents his exoticism in a certain aspect of the mystic mood:

You flood my music with your autumn silence
 And burn me in the flame-burst of your spring.
 Lo! through my beggar-being's tattered garments
 Resplendent shines your crystal heart, my King!

Like a rich song you chant your red-fire sunrise,
 Deep in my dreams, and forge your white-flame moon....
 You hide the crimson secret of your sunset,
 And the pure, golden message of your noon

You fashion cool-grey clouds within my body,
 And weave your rain into a diamond mesh
 The Universal Beauty dances, dances
 A glimmering peacock in my flowering flesh!

Obviously, the stanzas do not grow according to an explicit logical method or paint their pictures with an eye to surface meaning. They must be considered by stepping a little back from the usual domain of the imagination and then the coherence and the clarity appear. The first two lines proclaim the combined peace and power of the divine presence as felt by the poet—the peace mellow and fruitful, the power a fiery bloom—in a kind of correspondence between the world without and the world within. The next two subtly connect up with the preceding pair by intimating with paradoxical felicity how the keenly felt divine

presence within is able to manifest its glory despite the faults and frailties of human nature. we are reminded of Plato's famous rejoinder to Diogenes—"Your pride peeps out through the holes of your raggedness", but here it is the high and rare splendour of the spirit taking by surprise the poor surface self: not only the so-called beautiful but even the wretched does the King of Kings use for a gateway into the universe. The language again joins the ideas of peace and power: "crystal" indicates the cool virgin beauty which is yet here not void of a royal resplendence. The second stanza continues the same theme with a different set of images and symbols: the pulse of life in the poet is in tune with the spiritual throb at the core of each day's procession of sky-moods—flaring sunrise and sunset, midnight's lucid trance of moon and midday's unperturbed lustre. A slight technical immaturity of expression renders the poem at this point not so finished as might be desired, for "deep in my dreams" is too far to be easily understood with "You hide. ." The final verse carries the dominant motif a step further by transferring the spirit's thrill to the very physical being, body and soul seem to fuse in one illimitable sensation of light, as if the entire cosmos were unfolding its secret to the individual. Clouds become soft serenities in him and the rain a gorgeous yet pure intricacy of life-movement whereby the flesh blossoms into perfection, and the whole cosmic spirit, drunk with its own infinite magnificence, traces there its rhythm of delight.

The Universal Beauty dances, dances
A glimmering peacock in my flowering flesh!

This is a climax of the exotic imagination, a figure and fantasy packed with the richest significance and consummating the fundamental idea by a last stroke of concrete colour

A vision analogous in breadth and vivid cumulativeness of meaning to this *grand finale*, though by a puissant rather than a rhapsodical utterance, is William Watson's symbolisation of the factor of disharmony in the world by the figure of the raven. he suggests the strange shadow whose raucous intrusion and weird touch are felt everywhere. The end of his concluding verse—

Coils the labyrinthine sea
Duteous to the lunar will,
But some discord stealthily
Vexes the world-ditty still,
And the bird that caws and caws
Clasps Creation with his claws—

compares very fairly in poetic excellence, while contrasting in psychological attitude, with Chattopadhyaya's close. It is of interest also as what Chatto-

padhyaya himself might have written in the period subsequent to that which gave birth to his first book. He came like a bacchanal of paradise, scattering largesse of poetic joy; but soon another mood possessed him or, more accurately, shared his soul—the raven and the peacock existing now side by side. That this should occur one could have predicted from the acute sensibility of his nature. I remember that when I saw his face during the recital I said to myself, “Here is a highly strung temperament—clearly a man who would be moved to intense passion, either joy or grief, and would most probably veer from one extreme to the other—a mind borne away on great impulsive gusts, plunging headlong into whatever seems momentous to him, living, therefore, dangerously but with prodigious possibilities of development along the bent his mood assumes.”

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

THE TANJORE DOLL

A TYPE of doll from Tanjore, turns
 Around if rolled upon the floor,
 And yet, in a second, it comes back
 To its own straightness as before.

Doll-wise the Yogi in his life—
 Never affected when he is hurled
 This way or that by circumstance,
 His poise returns in the moving world.

K. B. SITARAMAYYA

ASEEM'S LETTER

A SHORT STORY

AH, what heat! what a burning sun! As if the inverted furnace overhead were radiating not only heat and light but showering liquid fire as well. I was afraid lest it should scorch my beard and moustache like the road-side grasses. And my cycle tyre also might burst at any moment. But in cold countries of the west fleecy snow falls from above covering the greenness of nature with white. The thought itself brought a cool sensation within me, but the outer part...Ah!

I had recently been transferred to a college in central India and had no idea about the outdoor summer heat at noon. So when the college closed after half a day due to the sudden death of an eminent professor, I stepped out with my cycle and rode across the vast field bordered by rocky hills. Immediately the western wind assailed me with its fiery breath.

"Sir, sir. please wait a bit, here is a letter for you..." the call of the college-peon from behind. He handed me the letter, turned round and rode back forthwith. The letter created in me a soft sensation and I began to see with my mind's eye green fields, golden paddy, trees, flowers, birds and rippling ponds. But the letter was not from Bengal. Aseem had written it from Moscow. But it mattered little. Because his letter would always evoke in me the atmosphere of rural Bengal, irrespective of the place he might have written it from. But the strange thing was this that in his letter he would never mention anything about that place. Of course whatever he would mention would hardly be clear to me, because his letters were enigmatic, would not convey any message or information. Like his letter he himself was a strange creature, vague in his thoughts and ideas and unusual in his life-style. Apparently he was an artist, exceptionally gifted in folk dance and folk music. He would write about his thoughts and whims symbolically and in a clumsy handwriting making it very difficult to catch the import. I referred to him the difficulty more than once. But in reply he would write briefly, "Like modern poetry and painting this is the latest style of writing a modern letter."

Once he wrote to me from Japan, the part which I could make out was as follows: "When the rope attached to my neck got severed for the second time I plunged into a deep distress. Waves after waves rushed on me, the grimace of dark death. On a sudden my eyes fell on a flying bird, the vast blue above and the boundless green below. Oh, this was my real home.

"Down came the flood of Bliss."

Much later I came to know from my mother that Aseem's father was no more living. I had first seen Aseem as a small boy of seven or eight. During Puja Holidays I went to my native village. Our house was thronged with guests and relatives as usual. Amongst them I discovered a handsome boy of seven or eight

who seemed to be a fish out of water. Aloof, wayward, careless about dress and food, very grave and quiet, he always lived in his own world.

One day I asked my mother privately, "Mother, who is that handsome boy?" "You don't know? Yes, perhaps I have forgotten to tell you. He is Aseem, the only son of my second sister, your aunty Suprabha..." She could speak no more and turned her face to hide the onrush of tears. I felt awkward and very sorry for her. She had not recovered yet from the shock of the untimely death of her dear sister. After a while she resumed speaking in a broken voice, "He looks handsome only outwardly. God knows what is there in his mind. I have never seen such an obstinate, wayward and disobedient boy. His father married again but this child refused to accept his new mother. All her effort to befriend him went in vain. He would even avoid looking at her. Finding no other alternative his father came here the other day and kept him under my care. But I also am fed up with him. Now you have come, please see if you can tackle him and rectify his nature."

While trying to carry out my mother's wish I found that Aseem was really a hard nut to crack. He would roam about alone in jungles, bushes and sundry other secluded places by the river-side. At other times he would be seen to fly kites from the terrace. I wondered how at such an early age he could learn the art of flying kites. He would pay no heed to any words of warning or caution. He would give no reply to your call even. If you wanted to catch him by one way he would escape by the other.

One day I made up my mind to capture him in any way. Accordingly just as he prepared to depart after lunch I stealthily caught him by the hand from behind. He struggled hard to escape for some time but my grip was too strong for him. His fair face turned black in annoyance. Still he did not utter a single word and went on fidgetting like a rat caught in a trap. Suddenly an idea flashed in my mind. I asked, "Aseem, would you like to listen to a story?" It worked magically. His attitude changed, he calmed down and looked at me with expectation.

We both went upstairs, stretched a mat and lay down on the verandah. He rolled away from me to the other side of the mat and looked at me with questioning eyes, "What, why don't you tell me a story?" He hardly spoke and one had to understand him from his look, gesture and attitude. Suddenly the nature of his look changed meaning, "If you tell me a story, well and good, otherwise I shall be off."

I was in a fix. I had committed myself to tell him a story. But what to do? I was not a story-teller. Moreover, I did not know what kind of story he might like—story of travel, fighting, ghost or adventure? Watching me thinking Aseem got encouraged and gradually moved closer to me. I could not help telling him something extempore. I started :

"Once upon a time there was a king. He was very powerful and conquered

many countries. He did not believe in God and declared, 'There is no God; if there is any I am equal to him in power.' The pride of power made him blind to the fact that God is not only powerful, He is full of compassion, wisdom and ananda as well. As a result, in course of time he became very cruel, tortured and treated everybody with contempt, particularly the God-lovers. One day it so happened that...ah!" I stopped and asked him, "Let me see your hand, have you got nails on your palm, eh?" Instantly Aseem hid his hands behind his back. Absorbed in the story he came very close to me and spontaneously placed his right hand on my back across my body. Just then I felt a scratching sensation and wanted to check his hand but he would not allow me to do so.

"Do you know what happens if one does not show his hand?" I asked. He looked at me with wide open eyes and opened his mouth for the first time feebly, "No, what happens?" "His kites cannot fly." "Cannot fly? Not a single one? Not even when there is sufficient wind?" "No, cannot rise at all."

Within a moment Aseem placed his open palms before my eyes. I exclaimed in surprise, "Ish! how could you have these cut-injuries in the hands?" He remained mute I waited for him to speak. After a while I asked again, "Aseem, why don't you speak?" He did not reply. "O K , if you don't respond I won't tell you the story."

His lips trembled and then he uttered slowly, "Got cut by the thread of kites." "What? While you fly a kite does the thread cut the hands?" "No, while catching loose drifting kites," "What's the need? You have yourself a lot of them, haven't you?"

"If my mother makes a mistake..."

"Eh, what do you mean? Your mother.. !"

"Yes, my father told me that my mother had gone to heaven. So I let the kite fly high, high and still higher near the blue sky and I pray, 'Mother, I know that there is no postal-peon in heaven You cannot send me any letter. So I lift the kite to you. Now you can fasten a letter to it. Through that I shall listen to your voice Mother, it's ages that I haven't heard you speak.' " Tears sparkled in his eyes. Then to me, "But my mother hasn't sent me any letter as yet." After a while more intimately, "Well, what if my mother mistakes other kites as mine! Please tell me whether she will recognise my kite or not."

The impact of the unsatisfied longing of a lonely motherless child squeezed my heart and I had to wipe my eyes before I assured him, "Yes, surely she will recognise your kite." In fact I had no idea or knowledge about life beyond death, had read no books on the subject. I answered simply to satisfy him. But the intricate question goaded me on and I searched every nook and corner of my mind to ascertain the correctness of my assurance to Aseem. And while doing so I fell asleep without knowing it...

When I woke up I could not find Aseem beside me. I hurried out to look for him and found, instead of him, a small kite rising from the terrace high up

towards the far sky. Perhaps on being assured by me he had gone to the terrace with new hope and vigour and lifted his kite up to communicate with his mother.... The shrill sound of a horn made me aware of the surroundings. A lorry swiftly passed by me. My God! I had narrowly escaped a knock from it. I had marked before also that the thought of Aseem would always induce me into day-dreaming. So long I had forgotten even the fact of scorching heat. Now the sensation started again.

Aseem was no longer a child of seven. Perhaps he had crossed thirty and his yearning and despair for his dead mother had long since been over. I assumed that lately his concern had been with the living ones, he deeply felt for those who were half-dead though living. But in Marx's pragmatic philosophy he found no solution of his problem.

Once he had written to me from America. The part I could make out was as follows: "The kite got lost in the boundless sky. While rolling the thread the spool slipped off my hand. I pulled the thread to get back the spool. As much as I pulled so much it went farther away from me. I traversed almost all the world. But solution! where is the solution?..."

Aseem was an artist, as I have said, in the folk dance and folk music of India and elsewhere. According to him there is an inherent rhythm and melody in them which transcends all sectarian limits and divisions of time and place. The savour in them satisfies different tastes and tendencies and brings about a synthesis of diverse cultures. For the last few years he had been touring both eastern and western countries of the world with a team of artists sponsored by UNESCO...

Reaching my quarters I found that Haradhan, my servant-cum-cook, was enjoying his daily dose of sleep in the drawing room. I went upstairs without disturbing him, took off my dress and lay flat, half-naked on the floor of my room. Now I would leisurely go through Aseem's letter. I knew it would be a tough job to look into it!

The letter I had received from him previous to this was also from Moscow. The part which was legible ran thus: "I knew that there were flowers in Russia but I thought that they were of plastic; I knew that the Russian faces could wear a smile but I presumed that it issued from artificial teeth; I knew that the people of Russia had hearts but I had the impression that they were machine-made. But my apprehension has proved unfounded. I have found that which I had been ever pining for."

What he had pined for and what he had found was beyond me to conceive. Perhaps that was best known to him only. I had not bothered to write to him for clarification. So the letter remained unanswered. In spite of that he had written me again. "Let me see what kind of riddle it contains," I said to myself.

I opened the letter and was thrilled beyond words. Unlike other letters this was written on a smooth, sky-coloured, costly paper and the ink used was deep green in colour. Lastly the handwriting was not so illegible as before. It was

tolerably good. It said as follows

“In the battle of life I was a tired and despondent soldier. But my battle was not for my safety, nor for the freedom of my country nor even for self-liberation. Then what was it for? It must be for something. What was that something? I did not know, I had no clear perception and that has been the cause of my uneasiness ever since.

“Sri Chaitanya felt the presence of both Radha and Krishna within his own person; Chandidas sang immortal love-songs for Rajakini, the washer-woman,— Sri Ramakrishna found his Mother in the Image of the Goddess Kali. But I? Deprived of my mother in early childhood a vast void was born in me and that has remained unimpaired till today. No other mother could replenish that. Even my fanciful childhood dream or imagination could not bring forth any remedy.

“But a recent accident resolved the whole problem. It happened thus! We had been going by car from Moscow to a distant town for a dance programme and met with an accident on the way. I was lying senseless on the hospital-bed. Regaining my consciousness, to my utmost awe and wonder I saw my mother. Who could she be other than my mother whose winkless eyes showed so much love, affection, compassion and anxiety for me? But a moment later those eyes were lit with delight and her lips parted with a soft and soothing smile. Her slightly parted lips conveyed something new and additional to what my mother's smile used to give. Just as I was going to open my mouth I was thrilled with a tender touch, ‘Oh, please don't speak, you are sick.. Please take rest.’ The honeyed sweetness of her voice infused a sublime joy in me and I closed my eyes again with deep satisfaction.

“I don't know if you will receive my letter in time. It seems that the assurance you gave me during my childhood has come true after so many years. Now I should like to know from you about the secret and mystic knowledge of India regarding the reincarnation of souls.”

“Sir, sir...!” Haradhan's nervous shouting made me stand up with the unfinished letter in my hand. “What's the matter, Haradhan? Why do you shout like that?” He came up to the doorway of my room and announced in a low voice, “Someone has come, wants to see and speak with you.” “Who has come at this time? All right, go and inform him that I am just coming.”

I put on my shirt quickly and went downstairs. I stood dumbfounded in front of the drawing room door. A beautiful fresh flower was sitting on the sofa, as it were. Seeing me stand statue-like and speechless, the flower stood up and herself became vibrant with speech. Oh what a voice! sweet and musical like the tune of a harp! “Hope you have received Aseem's letter by now. He is my friend. Though an Indian by parentage I hardly know anything of India. I want to see, know and understand her with your help.”

Words failed me, my eyes dimmed and I doubted if I had heard her aright. Yet with my mind's eye I clearly saw a small kite rising higher and higher up

towards the distant blue sky... Suddenly parting the blue screen of the sky two ethereal golden hands with profound affection tied a fine green letter to the kite....

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

On Womyn, Waitrons and ProfessorInnen

OVER the millennia, human society has been dominated by males, with only a few exceptions here and there. Even today we find in most countries that women are at a disadvantage in many respects: they earn less for the same job, they are overburdened with too many duties, and mistreated in many ways. All those who fight for equal legal, political and social rights of women are called “feminists”. There is a fundamental truth behind this movement, also expressed by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in their own writings as well as their practical work. In this article I will discuss one of the slightly bizarre aspects of feminism, the linguistic quality.

If we analyze any language, we will discover that there is a general preference for males. Take a word such as *mankind*. All humans are meant by it, but there seems to be special reference to men. So the feminist-linguist becomes active and changes the word into *humankind*. Many modern American writers have already adopted the term. However, extreme “gender neutralists” are still dissatisfied, since *human* is derived from Latin *homo*, which means “man”.

Even a provincial German newspaper such as the *Badische Neueste Nachrichten* (30-6-91) addresses this question in a commentary. It refers to an article in the *New York Times* in which critics charge the new *Webster's* (see below) with having unduly yielded to politically motivated linguistic fashion. Prof. Jacques Barzun of Columbia University (New York) points out in that article that *man* is derived from Sanskrit *manu* which means “human being”, and the same is in his opinion true for Latin *homo*.^{*} In any case, I may note that the French and Germans have a less objectionable term than *mankind* with *l'humanité* and *Menschheit*, respectively. *Mensch* in particular is a rather neutral term.

But now take the plural of woman: women. The feminist will unhappily notice that the second syllable is strongly suggestive of ...—well, you guess it, of *men*. So he/she creates a new form, *womyn*, to suit his/her taste. As *Time Magazine* (24-6-91) reports in its article on the new Random House Webster's College Dictionary, many such creations have been adopted now. Examine, for example, the word *history*. That sounds suspiciously like “his story”. “Not acceptable in the context of females,” shouts the feminist and creates *herstory*. But actually the word was derived from Greek *historia*, which is based on *histor* = researching, knowing. If you don't like *herstory*, you may at least accept

^{*} I believe Prof. Barzun is right regarding *homo*, but *manu* was definitely a male being. Perhaps he means *manushya*, which can also mean “human being” (I am not sure whether he has been correctly quoted in the German newspaper.)

somebody's *chairpersonship*. But who serves a group of womyn dining in a restaurant? A Waiter? Not at all, it's a waitron or waitperson. *Time Magazine* guesses correctly that "future lexicons, perhaps, will give us *waitoid* (a person of indeterminate sex who waits on tables)."

A word still sanctioned by the Dictionary is *seminal*. But observers feel that it will sooner or later be eliminated along with *seminar*, *seminary*, because it is suggestive of *semen*. All of these words fail to pass the strict "gender-neutral test" (which is less strict on female terms). However, Indians will be glad to learn that "hopefully" receives Random's blessing. It notes that "hopefully" in spite of strong objections of some linguists "is standard in all varieties of speech and writing."

In English—unlike in German—you never know whether *professor*, *worker*, etc., are referring to males or females. Only in a few cases is there a specific female form: sportswoman, policewoman (may not yet be listed in every dictionary). *Fireman* has been neutralized into *firefighter*. Gods and Goddesses have traditionally been differentiated, and also duke/duchess, count/countess or steward/stewardess. In German, you add "in" to the word and get the female form: Professorin, Ministerin, Leserin (she-reader). The plural is "innen." However, if you write an article in a medical journal, for instance, you may find it unpractical always to refer to *Arzte* and *Arztinnen* (male and female doctors), which would be required to do justice to both sexes. Therefore, alternative writers, particularly of the Berlin newspaper *taz*, have introduced a new spelling: *Arztinnen*, *ProfessorInnen*, *LeserInnen*, with the capital I, which has initially confused many conservatives. It could be compared to English *Goddesses*, through which you include both Gods and Goddesses in one word. Some advertisers find this form useful for clarifying that a job, for instance, is open to applicants of both sexes.

But Englishmen—pardon me, I mean Englishpersons, of course—will have to live with the one-gender words, unless they introduce *professoress* and *workerness*. All readeresses will have to decide for themselves whether such word-creations are necessary, inevitable and progressive or simply a short-lived fashion without real substance. If they are necessary, there will be sweeping changes in the English-American language. Today the more vital American tongue is gaining more influence in the world. It is only a question of time before students all over the world may find sentences such as the following in their text books: "He will likely come tomorrow." That's modern American. Students all over the world will learn this and many other innovations in their academic syminars.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

From Man Human to Man Divine: Jugal Kishore Mukherjee

Published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry; 1990. Price Rs 80.00

To Alexis Carrel's "Man as the Unknown", Teilhard de Chardin adds "Man to be" as the solution of everything that we can know. After a long, almost a linear, anti-entropic process of chemico-biological evolution, there is the appearance of a complex mental activity on an unprecedented scale. This mental activity or awareness or consciousness in turn gives to evolution a new process or mechanism for the evolution itself to forge ahead in its unfoldment. According to Teilhard what is going to happen in the future are not somatic but vast mental and social transformations leading to an intense noogenetic activity. A critical point being reached, where the biological is exhausted, only a collective higher order must culminate in an impersonalised organisation of superlife. Based so much on scientific researches is such a thesis that it may look infallibly to be the last word to fix the possibilities for Man. But it has been proved more often than not that the conclusions of science are only provisional and, even when accepted, not always quite satisfying to our deeper sense. Collective life cannot, and should not, end in the death of the individual. Besides, we have also to know if there is any future for the body itself. Is not Man a transitional being in the secret urge driving evolution onward? We cannot get answers to these questions from the methods of science. Nor would the philosophical systems or propositions fill up the bill. For instance, Samuel Alexander's Space-Time endowed with a *nisus* that makes matter, life and mind emerge is so unconvincing; it is almost like saying that these come into existence out of non-existence. Sri Aurobindo's vision of the destiny of Man, on the other hand, is based on direct spiritual experience and has the authenticity of one who has meticulously tested the thousand aspects and modes of Nature in her evolutionary enterprise. Man is after all a mediator divinity and the real evolution, or the evolution in reality, is to start from this point onward. One could hence call it infinite progress.

Jugal Kishore Mukherjee's *From Man Human to Man Divine* presents in the context of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual Philosophy of Integralism all these human problems and the possibility of a twofold apocalyptic future as the inevitable outcome of the evolutionary thrust with which Nature began this marvellous experiment. A sort of source-book, it is comprehensive in its countless details based on "a very fruitful reading of numerous books, both ancient and modern, of the Orient as well as the Occident", as the Publisher's Note rightly informs us. The reading is well digested and offered to us with a consummate mastery which may be called Joadian.

Following the Introduction, which is a view in advance of what the book is

about, we have twelve main chapters forming a kind of prose epic. The first few chapters deal with scientific and secular matters before gradually slipping into the esoteric. Man was born, stood erect, and started acquiring power over his surroundings which itself, over a period of some sixty-million years, contributed to the development of his brain that made him a "thinking being in an unthinking world", as the author quotes from *Savitri*. He began to "laugh and weep", though Plato never did in his whole of 81-year life. He became the Protagorean measure of all things. He climbed noble peaks in the fields of science and philosophy and mathematics and soared with religion and art and poetry. And yet with all the achievements of Quantum Mechanics there looms the large Uncertainty and, as our attention is drawn to Henri Poincaré, for mathematics "there is no such thing as a solved problem, there are only problems more or less solved." In the author's view a complete and satisfying solution can come only if these savants consent "to enter the path of Yoga", their basic professional "sincerity" should eventually lead them towards it. Knowing, however, that there is so much of *à peu près*, is it in order to coax someone to take up the path that may not be his?

The set of three essays dealing with sight, thought, and speech are perhaps the best where Jugal Mukherjee is on his home ground. Take, for example, the discussion on the ineffability of knowledge. The mystic's inability to describe his experiences is a well-known predicament. The question is: Why so? We as a species have an innate capacity for inventing languages and stringing words together by a sort of 'deep grammar'. Out of 5000 languages in the world 850 are spoken in India alone. The ineffability therefore seems a paradoxical mystery transcending all grammar. Our author traces its cause to the "insufficiency of mind-made speech as a proper or adequate medium of expression." Very true, all cognition cannot be reduced to the mental and what is behind mind can be expressed only by what is behind speech; the supreme Vak is at once in possession of expression and cognition. The suggestion is, Man Divine will speak that language in its unhampered manifestive delight here, bearing in its creative power full knowledge of all its depths and hues and tones.

Talking about the problems of the present-day humanity, Jugal Kishore Mukherjee says that "in this epoch of spiritual malady, the Heideggerian *Angst* has taken possession of the minds of men. Modern Man is verily in a state of utter alienation." He has lost faith, he has lost belief in himself; he has even lent himself to the Marxian sun under which there can exist no God. But this is essentially an evolutionary problem and unless we take evolution, *à la* Sri Aurobindo, as the evolution of consciousness there cannot be any solution to it. The glorious "divine humanism" held in front of us by him is a possibility that can materialise soon with the conscious participation by Man himself. We are rightly told by this ardent Aurobindonian that it is a threefold effort: each individual awakening to his true secret individuality, his opening to the riches of

the Spirit, and his invocation to the supramental Gnosis to come down and transform his nature “in its absolute entirety”

The eleventh chapter is a brief but important discussion about the physical transformation, the Yoga carried by the Mother down to the cellular level. The first concern of the author is to dismiss the sceptic and to assure us that “the process of physical transformation has already been undertaken and is being executed with the full potency of Supermind in action.” True enough; but a certain occult-mystical insight would have brought us more light particularly when there is a gap in our understanding about the role of the ‘intermediate race’ the Mother has talked about. From Man Human to Man Divine—is there a direct leap and transition or does the ‘intermediate’ Man make us halt before that promised prospect? We may have to await some other occasion for these truths to be revealed.

While the scholarship of the author is on the whole impeccable, it shows a certain sign of unevenness across the length of the book. There are at places also unfortunate misstatements, take, for instance, the poser: “after all, does not mathematical physics reveal to us the existence of so many heretofore unknown real entities, such as gravitational force, electrons and a host more?” Gravitational force is not an outcome of mathematical physics but is an intuitively perceived law about which Newton refused to frame any hypotheses; in the Relativity physics its “reality” is knocked out where exist only space-time contours which in our everyday experience may be called centres of force. The discovery of the electron was made about thirty years before Quantum Mechanics was born. Similarly, Maxwell’s equations pertain to electric and magnetic fields and not forces. Then, on a more fundamental level we must recognise that a physicist will refuse to consider his micro-realm of elementary particles to be “trans-empiric and ultra-sensible”. Such a failure of empiricism and rationality based on it will be the failure of the physicist’s physics itself.

But more surprising than such technicalities are the cluster of lapses in proof-reading. And as many in quotations from *Savitri* as elsewhere! And Plank for Planck! A serious student, however, will not be put off by these slips: on the contrary, he will profit immeasurably by the wealth that has been laid at his disposal by the very learned author. In fact, we should all be thankful to him for this valuable gift made to us, the gift describing the great spiritual Ascent of Man.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

Bhakti Schools of Vedanta, by *Swami Tapasyananda*, published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1990 Price Rs 35/-

The term *vedanta* has come to signify not only the Upanishads but also the systems based on the teachings of the Upanishads. The latter sense came into prominence with the emergence of Sankara's system of Advaita, and subsequently other systems based on the Upanishads were also referred to by that word. But owing to several historical reasons Sankara's Advaita established itself as the most popular system of Vedanta, while other systems, though equally Vedantic in origin, had to remain in the background. As a result, it came to be recognised as the only system of thought which brought out the message of the Upanishads rationally and faithfully. But in actual fact it is far from the truth, because other systems also, the systems of Ramanuja and others, deserve the same credit. From the middle of the present century eminent scholars began to dedicate themselves to the cause of rectifying this mistake and to shift the focus of attention to the less popular works including those of Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Vallabha, and Chaitanya. The present work by Swami Tapasyananda is a concrete proof that the mistake has been considerably rectified.

The book under review has acquired a special significance in view of the fact that it has been issued under the auspices of the Madras division of Sri Ramakrishna Math. Apart from the works on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, as also on general spiritual and religious themes, the major works of Sankara were translated into English and published by the Math. Till recently the works of other Acharyas were not given the same importance. Swami Tapasyananda's book seems to be the result of a rethinking on the priority given to the works of Sankara. If this is true, it must be looked upon as a significant deviation.

The author of the book very rightly points out that the study of the Vedanta must be undertaken not with a view to establish one particular school of thought and reject the others as irrelevant. It goes against the spirit of Neo-Vedanta formulated and practised by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. "The genius of Neo-Vedanta," observes the author, "lies in its apprehension of the Supreme Truth from different frames of reference and the acceptance of the equal validity of them all without accepting the exclusive claims of any" (p XXIX). His comments are indeed scholarly and deserve careful consideration.

The book opens with Ramanuja and closes with Chaitanya, and those who fall between the two are Nimbarka, Madhva and Vallabha. Not only does the author of the book give a clear and systematic exposition of the teachings of the Acharyas, but he is at great pains to narrate their biographies and impress upon the readers that their teachings, though founded upon textual interpretations,

are the results of what they saw and experienced in the soul, for they are not "armchair philosophers" (p.XVI).

The author of the book, while presenting the life and teachings of the Acharyas, has made several comments. For instance, speaking of Ramanuja he says: "Ramanuja's system of thought was the store-house from which all the later Bhakti teachers drew liberally, making only some limited changes to suit their tradition of theology" (p 83). Of Nimbarka he observes: "The doctrine expounded by Nimbarka is not anything entirely new, what Nimbarka has done was mainly to adapt the Bhedabheda doctrine of Bhaskara to the Vaisnava theology" (p 86). Of Madhva he writes: "In his Rg Veda Bhāṣya on 32 Suktas, he departs from Sayana, and makes further advance from Yaska also, by giving psychological interpretations and by showing that they convey the knowledge of the one Supreme Being and teach the practice of devotion to Him. He thus anticipates Dayananda Sarasvatī and Śrī Aurobindo in the method of Vedic interpretation" (p.122). Of Vallabha he remarks: "He was till the last year of his life a householder living with his mother, wife and two children, demonstrating that the ascetic life was not essential in the Religion of Grace" (p.212). Lastly, about Chaitanya's view of the Supreme Reality he says: "The indefinite awareness of anything is the first and most primitive and, therefore, the most peripheral, understanding of anything. When awareness becomes definite, clear and defined then only anything is fully understood. This is true with regard to the Supreme Reality. The Bhagavan, the Divine personality, clear and defined, is the core of Reality and the indefinite and unmodified Brahman can only be his peripheral brilliance" (p.313).

This book will serve as a good introduction to the Vedantic works the main emphasis of which is on *Isvara* and *Bhakti*. By and large it is a valuable addition to the library of Indology.

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“WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA AND OTHER SPIRITUAL PATHS?”

Integral Yoga and Tantra (1)

Speech by Srijita Roy*

To compare Sri Aurobindo's Yoga with all the other spiritual paths would be too vast a field to cover within the limits of a single brief speech. So I have restricted myself to a comparison between Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and only one of the spiritual systems—viz. Tantra. I have specially chosen the Tantric system because I was not only mostly ignorant of its philosophy and practice but had wrong notions about it, on account of which I even feared it. This was because I had the idea that the Tantrics made use of occult powers for black magic and for indulging in degrading immoral practices. But when I studied Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of Tantra, it became clear to me that my fear was unfounded, because according to him in its original aim and principle Tantra was a great and noble spiritual system and that whatever degradation it underwent was due to a later distortion and perversion of its original intention.

Sri Aurobindo's own writings on Tantra are extremely meagre. My endeavour in this speech is to explain the main points of similarities and differences between the philosophy and practice of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and those of the Tantra in the light of his own writings.

I start with an extract from Sri Aurobindo in which he explains why the Tantric system has been discredited by those who do not follow it:

“...there still exists in India a remarkable Yogic system which is in its nature synthetical and starts from a great central principle of Nature, a great dynamic force of Nature; but it is a Yoga apart, not a synthesis of other schools. This system is the way of the Tantra. Owing to certain of its developments Tantra has fallen into discredit with those who are not Tantrics; and especially owing to the developments of its left-hand path, the Vamamarga, which not content with exceeding the duality of virtue and sin and instead of replacing them by

* Revised and enlarged

spontaneous rightness of action seemed to make a method of self-indulgence, a method of unrestrained social immorality. Nevertheless, in its origin Tantra was a great and puissant system founded upon ideas which were at least partially true. Even its twofold division into the right-hand and left-hand paths, Dakshinamarga and Vamamarga, started from a certain profound perception. In the ancient symbolic sense of the words Dakshina and Vama, it was the distinction between the way of knowledge and the way of Ananda,—Nature in man liberating itself by right discrimination in power and practice of its own energies, elements and potentialities and Nature in man liberating itself by joyous acceptance in power and practice of its own energies, elements and potentialities. But in both paths there was in the end an obscuration of principles, a deformation of symbols and a fall.”¹

What exactly is the central distinctive principle of the Tantric system and how does it differ from the other Yogic systems prevalent in India? Sri Aurobindo himself has explained this in a passage which I quote.

“If...we leave aside the actual methods and practices and seek for the central principle, we find, first that Tantra especially differentiates itself from the Vedic methods of Yoga. In a sense, all the schools we have hitherto examined [Hathayoga, Rajayoga, the Triple Path of Jnana, Bhakti and Karma] are all Vedantic in their principle: their force is in knowledge, their method is knowledge, though it is not always discernment by the intellect, but may be, instead, the knowledge of the heart expressed in love and faith or a knowledge in the will working out through action. In all the lord of the Yoga is the Purusha, the Conscious Soul that knows, observes, attracts, governs. But in Tantra it is rather Prakriti, the Nature-Soul, the Energy, the Will-in-Power executive in the universe. It is by learning and applying the intimate secrets of this Will-in-Power, its method, its Tantra, that the Tantric Yogin pursued the aims of his discipline—mastery, perfection, liberation, beatitude. Instead of drawing back from manifested Nature and its difficulties, he confronted them, seized and conquered. But in the end, as is the general tendency of Prakriti, Tantric Yoga largely lost its principle in its machinery and became a thing of formulae and occult mechanism still powerful when rightly used but fallen from the clarity of their original intention.”²

In the passage from Sri Aurobindo that I have quoted first, he has said that the Tantric system is in its nature synthetical. But he has also observed that his own synthesis of Yogic systems is different from that of Tantra. In what way is the Tantric system synthetic and how does it differ from Sri Aurobindo’s

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 20), pp. 37-8

² *Ibid.*, p. 38

synthesis of Integral Yoga? Sri Aurobindo himself has given an answer to these questions, which I quote:

“Tantric discipline is in its nature a synthesis. It has seized on the large universal truth that there are two poles of being whose essential unity is the secret of existence, Brahman and Shakti, Spirit and Nature, and that Nature is power of the spirit or rather is spirit as power. To raise nature in man into manifest power of spirit is its method and it is the whole nature that it gathers up for the spiritual conversion. It includes in its system of instrumentation the forceful Hathayogic process and especially the opening up of the nervous centres and the passage through them of the awakened Shakti on her way to her union with the Brahman, the subtler stress of the Rajayogic purification, meditation and concentration, the leverage of will-force, the motive power of devotion, the key of knowledge. But it does not stop short with an effective assembling of the different powers of these specific Yogas. In two directions it enlarges by its synthetic turn the province of the Yogic method. First, it lays its hand firmly on many of the mainsprings of human quality, desire, action and it subjects them to an intensive discipline with the soul’s mastery of its motives as a first aim and their elevation to a diviner spiritual level as its final utility. Again, it includes in its objects of Yoga not only liberation¹ which is the one all-mastering preoccupation of the specific systems, but a cosmic enjoyment² of the power of the Spirit, which the others may take incidentally on the way, in part, casually, but avoid making a motive or object. It is a bolder and larger system.”³

The synthesis of Yogic systems which Sri Aurobindo has enunciated is much vaster in scope and more perfect in its result than the Tantric synthesis. His own words explain this difference very clearly:

“In the method of synthesis which we have been following, another clue of principle has been pursued which is derived from another view of possibilities of Yoga. This starts from the method of Vedanta to arrive at the aim of the Tantra. In the tantric method Shakti is all-important, becomes the key to the finding of the spirit; in this synthesis spirit, soul is all-important, becomes the secret of the taking up of Shakti. The tantric method starts from the bottom and grades the ladder of ascent upwards to the summit; therefore its initial stress is upon the action of the awakened Shakti in the nervous system of the body and its centres; the opening of the six lotuses is the opening up of the ranges of the power of Spirit. Our synthesis takes man as a spirit in mind much more than a spirit in body and assumes in him the capacity to begin on that level, to spiritualise his

¹ *muktu*

² *bhuku*

³ *Ibid*, pp 585-86

being by the power of the soul in mind opening itself directly to a higher spiritual force and being and to perfect by that higher force so possessed and brought into action the whole of his nature.... To arrive by the shortest way at the largest development of spiritual power and being and to divinise by it a liberated nature in the whole range of human living is our inspiring motive.”¹

These, in brief, are the main similarities and differences between the philosophic doctrine of the Tantric system and Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga, stated in his own words. Now I will make a comparison of the practical methods adopted by the two systems to realise their aim.

(To be continued)

¹ *Ibid* , p 586